The Wisdom of Brainless Knights: Paradox, Dialectics and Literature's Conditions of Possibility

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Material Abstract

This product of doctoral labour is a reappraisal of Russian Formalism. It establishes the convergences between the thought of key Formalists Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, Yury Tynianov and German Idealist Philosophers Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel. The Formalists' conceptualization of literary art is shown to be consistent with Kant's programme of practical critique and Hegel's objective dialectics, albeit without the reductive closures which Kant and Hegel programme into aesthetic theory. On this basis, the Formalists' dialogue with the Bakhtin School is reconsidered, along with the utility of Formalist critique for how we are to understand the cultural environment of the Soviet 1920s, and the practice of theory in the present context of its own death.

The Wisdom of Brainless Knights:

Paradox, Dialectics and Literature's Conditions of Possibility

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For my Mother and Belka

Самое начало представляет собой столкновение, перерыв – резкую перемену тона…

Boris Eikhenbaum

A Note on Transliteration and References

Transliteration from Russian follows the Library of Congress system, with the exception of individual's names, which are given in their customary form. Thus Shklovsky, and not Shklovskii; Mayakovsky and not Maiakovskii.

References and citations are made using the 'author date' format. For sources where English translations exist of Russian texts, the Russian text is given first and the English translation second.

Preface

Stupidity (incomprehension) in the novel is always polemical… (Bakhtin 2012: 158; 2004: 403).

Between the rogue and the fool there emerges, as a unique coupling of the two, the image of the clown. He is a rogue who dons the mask of a fool in order to motivate distortions and shufflings of languages and labels, thus unmasking them by not understanding them (Bakhtin 2012: 159; 2004: 404-5).

I

Can academic writing ever be stupid? Some scholars may be offended by the suggestion. To call a doctoral thesis stupid is, for some, totally unacceptable and not exemplary of the 'high seriousness' academic writing deserves. When Bakhtin speaks of stupid incomprehension he is, after all, talking about the novel. The figures of the rogue, the fool and the clown who unmasks by stupid incomprehension are features of *novelistic* discourse. Scholars, unlike their novelist counterparts, must maintain the 'high' languages of the academic disciplines, as if they are isolated from a contingency upon other alien discourses. Yet for Bakhtin the clown's distortions and shufflings of discourses are a reflection of an inherent social orientation that has been present throughout the entire history of the novel; an orientation which has emerged in modern times with 'extraordinary surface clarity' (Bakhtin 2012: 160; 2004: 405). This social orientation claims that the fool, clown and rogue are all real embodied speakers, actively engaged in the social world of heteroglossia; a world where words are beset by an internal dialogism that awaits the living response of another's word.

Within Bakhtin's framework, the boundaries between the novel and its discursive others are problematic, and may even disappear entirely. In 'Discourse and the Novel', Bakhtin hints that internal dialogization extends beyond the confines of the novel, noting that all discourse is beset by the internal dialogism (Bakhtin 2012: 37; 2004: 284). Tihanov has perceptively noticed that Bakhtin's conceptualization of

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genre extends beyond the generic confines of the novel, the relationship between life and art, parody, chronotope, dialogue and inner dialogism, and amounts to a conceptualization of a 'rightful and unconditional reality' and 'an embodiment of modernity', where the 'novel' denotes an emancipatory discourse that combines elements of historicism and an ethical understanding of humanity and its potential (Tihanov 2000: 112, 152,161). For Bakhtin, the categories of the fool, clown and rogue have, over the course of the novel's historical development, been 'refined, differentiated and cut loose' [*utonchaiutsia, differentsiruiutsia, otreshaiutsia*] from static images, but their importance has been preserved in dialogue and 'the internal dialogic essence of language itself', whereby those who speak different languages constantly fail to understand one another (Bakhtin 2012: 159; 2004: 405). If the novel is, as Bakhtin implies, an emancipatory conceptualization of modernity, then we are all essentially clowns capable of engaging in the polemical unmasking of 'high' languages, of which scholarship must surely be one.[1]

Another proponent of an emancipatory conceptualization of modernity declared that: 'the University would have a certain autonomy (since only scholars can pass judgement on scholars)' (Kant 1994: 27). Kant's insistence that only scholars can pass judgement on scholars may sound haughty to twenty-first century readers, but the 'autonomy' that Kant demands for faculty members is, in fact, more akin to

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[1] For Bakhtin's later calibration of the disciplinary activity of the human sciences, see Bakhtin's 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis' [*Problema teksta*] and 'Toward a Methodology of the Human Sciences' [*K filosofskim osnovam gumanitarnykh nauk*] (Bakhtin 1997; 306-26 and 7-10); and (Bakhtin 2007; 103-31 and 159-171). I am aware that recent scholarship on Bakhtin, along with his collected works, tends to compartmentalize Bakhtin's thought into distinct periods (Tihanov 2000) (Brandist 2002), and foregrounds Bakhtin's shifting intellectual influences as grounds for this division. In light of the insights this scholarship provides, one must proceed with caution when outlining Bakhtin's ideas regarding disciplinary praxis throughout his career. For example, in 'Epistemology of the Human Sciences', Todorov outlines Bakhtin's programme for the human sciences with citations from Bakhtin's early aesthetic philosophy, texts by Voloshinov, his conceptualization of the novel genre in the 1930s, and Bakhtin's later works on methodology (Todorov 1984: 25-42).   In light of recent scholarship, it is unlikely that an article such as Todorov's would emerge in the present context. I do not wish to get bogged down in the specificities of Bakhtin's influences and the many inconsistences that pervade Bakhtin's work here. I do, however, contend that Bakhtin's thought is (implicitly and explicitly) consistently aware as to how method shapes both its object and its practice in academic discipline.

Bakhtin's emancipatory programme of polemical stupidity. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant suggests that a university should have two faculties, one of which is a philosophical faculty that is tasked with evaluating and critiquing *all* aspects of life, and therefore concerns itself 'with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publically'. 'Reason is', so Kant continues, 'free and admits of no command to hold something as true' (Kant 1998: 29). This scholarly autonomy is therefore entirely consistent with Kant's emancipatory account of autonomous reason provided in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*, where the critical praxis of freedom is entirely predicated upon the finite nature of all knowledge. Neither the properties of consciousness nor those of the thing-in-itself are ever knowable. Kant's paradoxical account of consciousness's 'conditions of possibility' famously reject any access to the roots of the tree of knowledge, deny the subject access to both consciousness and the thing-in-itself; and insist upon a fundamentally antinomic structure of consciousness where the faculties of the mind and their given object are located in mutually constitutive opposition to one another. Such is the price for the subject's *a priori* freedom and its capacity for contradiction. In Kant's ontological framework, freedom exists as an *a priori* fact of reason that can never be accounted for in a determinate formulation. Its combination with the faculty of the imagination enables the misunderstanding of accepted truths and their polemical contradiction. This Kantian variety of idealism encompasses not merely consciousness and its limitations, but also the problematic status of all that is at hand in the material world, and the antinomic relationships which constitute consciousness, thing and the free practice of critique through which we come to objectively reflect upon the world and participate in all aspects of life.

It is unlikely that Kant would have countenanced the suggestion that the philosophical faculty he proposes should be considered a faculty of clowns.

However, there are certainly areas of convergence between Kant's and Bakhtin's emancipatory programmes for modernity, in that both insist on the need to polemically engage with absolute claims to truth and hierarchical orders to obey. Both insist that the site of this engagement must be public, and both remain convinced that being human is innately moral and carries the ethical burden of living up to such a high moral standard.

Dieter Henrich has economically summed up Kant's praxis of critique as a principle of insight and a principle of real connection (Henrich 2003: xxiv). The following analysis is consistent with Henrich's remarks, in that it is has been written in accordance with a theoretical agenda that provides an insight into its material objects of inquiry and which provides an ethical basis for *how* that analysis is carried out. The autonomy which Kant grants his philosophical scholars is categorically *not* the immunity from judgement which their disciplinary superiors claim for themselves, but is indeed an acceptance of the finitude of all knowledge, and the accompanying ethical and emancipatory obligations to fulfil their critical duty accordingly. I shall stop short of stating that this analysis was written by a clown, or that it is in any way stupid. Nevertheless, I remain staunchly opposed to those who reinforce the arbitrary hierarchies of disciplinary life and those who would insist on absolute 'truths', be it in terms what scholars must engage with and how they should go about it.[2] Kant argues that national life is enriched by allowing scholars of philosophy to go about their practice of critique without official censor. I shall make no such bold

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[2] My opposition here is against what Bourdieu has termed the 'ordinary professor' in *Homo Academicus*, which in some ways can be viewed as an evolution of the Theological Faculty sketched by Kant. For Bourdieu, the ordinary professor seeks to preserve the hierarchies and disciplinary praxis of the university at the expense of the autonomous critique demanded by Kant. It is certainly true that Bourdieu perceives the fragility of evaluating a particular individual as a 'professor', and that such evaluations are not confined to those who work within the walls of the academy (Bourdieu provides the amusing example of Lenin giving a lecture in Paris from Trotsky's memoirs). Nevertheless, Bourdieu correctly contends that there is a substantive difference between those who work within the university to perpetuate the university as such, and those who work within the university to pursue an ethical commitment to their given area of research (Bourdieu 1990). For the latter, Henrich's principle of insight and real connection applies; for the former, academic discipline serves as both the principle of insight and connection.

claims here, but I believe that disciplinary life is indeed enriched by those who seek alternatives to its language of 'high seriousness', and seek a broader scholarly praxis informed by ethical connection at all levels.

II

The product of such committed engagement is not, however, an analysis of the convergences between Kant and Bakhtin. What follows is a reappraisal of Russian Formalism that is also a work of literary theory. Kant and Bakhtin are at once peripheral and central to its primary focus. To the best of my knowledge, the Formalist theory of Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum written in the decade following the Revolution never explicitly engages with the work of Bakhtin, the broader Bakhtin Circle or Kant in the first decade that followed the Russian Revolution. Their Formalist theory from this period cannot in any way be regarded as a historically grounded dialogue with either Kant or Bakhtin. Yet as Renfrew has noted, the methodological preoccupations of Russian Formalism cannot be separated from the Formalists' attempts to found literary theory as a discipline in and of itself (Renfrew 2010: 3), and in this regard the Russian Formalists are indeed comparable to both Kant and Bakhtin in terms of how they conceptualized the praxis of literary theory *and* the ethics which inform how that study was to be undertaken. For those even slightly familiar with Russian Formalism, the Bakhtin Circle and Kant, the assertion of shared premises between the three parties may seem perverse, and perhaps the work of a clown who has misconstrued his scholarly 'high-languages' and succeeded only in making a fool of himself. Nevertheless, it shall be argued throughout this analysis that it *is* possible to discern convergences between the three schools of thought once two fundamental propositions are accepted. First, such opponents of Russian Formalism as Trotsky were absolutely correct when they dismissed the movement as exemplary of idealism. Second, Formalism's principle innovation in the history of literary theory can only be termed dialectical materialism.

This paradoxical state of affairs rests upon Formalism's many opponents' and mis-appropriators' capacity to be right and yet totally (and not a little tragically) wrong. The idealism which Trotsky thought he had identified in Russian Formalism was entirely consistent with the idealism viciously and crudely attacked by Lenin in *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism* (Trotsky 1991: 138-154) (Lenin 2002). From this perspective, any suggestion that the mind has any constitutive role in how we apprehend the world is tantamount to the religious faith that has repressed the proletariat for centuries. The idealism of which certain Russian Formalists were in fact guilty is a far more complex phenomenon: German idealism, specifically the thought of Kant and Hegel. In addition to those elements of Kant's philosophy already noted, Hegel's objective dialectic further develops Kant's antinomic structures, and explicitly renders these dynamic relationships in their historical aspect. Hegel's historicism insists that all knowledge be grounded in its own historical context *and* that philosophy must be engaged with the adequate comprehension of historical reality in all its evolving complexity. Any philosophical conclusion which fails to account adequately for finite historical reality in its becoming is, for Hegel, an anachronism (Hegel 1977: 14-21). For both Kant and Hegel, the finite illusion is therefore a material reality, and any crude 'materialism' or 'positivism' untenable and therefore no less illusory. Russian Formalism is in no way preoccupied with thought and its properties, but it discerns these relationships in literature's immanent properties and in how literature relates with that which it is not, that is, with the life-world beyond its material boundaries. In will be established here that the Formalists consistently argued that literature was dynamic and driven by unspecified and inexplicable needs. Whether literary or extra-literary, the elements which constitute literature and what it is not were consistently designated 'material'; the relationships in which this material functions were, in certain key texts, termed 'dialectical'. Hence the Formalists can be said to have practiced, even at the most basic and nominal of levels, dialectical materialism in literary studies.

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III

The suggestion that the Formalists established a praxis of dialectical materialism in literary studies goes beyond the mere determinate properties of their method, and can even be conceptualized as exemplary of Henrich's principle of insight *and* practical engagement. However, there are certain glaring problems involving the application of the term which need to be addressed before the evaluation can be pursued further. Žižek has written at (great) length 'in and on' the properties of dialectical materialism, and can be regarded as rescuing the term from its use by the reified intellectual forces active in the Soviet Union and beyond, and which include Stalin amongst their number (Žižek 2012) (Žižek 2014) . For Žižek, post-Hegelian dialectical critique is the antithesis of officially sanctioned culture. Inspired by Hegel's finite treatment of the dialectic, Žižek contends that all dialectical analysis fails in some way, and asserts that the practitioner of dialectical analysis is a moron (Žižek 2012: 1-3, 8).   The failures of dialectical materialism are, of necessity, driven towards what is at hand, concrete and actual. For this particular reappraisal of Russian Formalism, two instances of the 'actual' are of acute significance, and which pertain to 'then' and 'now'. Kant died in 1804 and Hegel in 1831. Neither philosopher could be said to be 'at hand' during the heyday of Russian Formalist thought. Kant was hopelessly lost in the convoluted, dense discourse of neo-Kantianism, and attacked by Husserl, Shpet and Bergson (Schmid 2009: 157-168) (Bergson 1910: 222-240). Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* had not yet provoked the reappraisal of Hegel's significance, and indicated Lenin's intellectual move away from the crude materialism of his earlier *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism* (Anderson 1995). The historical boundaries between German Idealism and the Soviet 1920s preclude the possibility of any actual, historically grounded dialogue between Kant, Hegel and the Russian Formalists. This lack of immediate contact risks the accusation of hypocrisy, as the very element of the 'at hand' and the 'material' in dialectical criticism is lost, and any resulting assertion of similarities

between German Idealism and Russian Formalism could be dismissed as an anachronism. Žižek's response is simply to assert that this anachronism is to be welcomed, and all the phenomena of intellectual culture from Kant up to the present should be regarded as a continuation of the same problems of emancipation critiqued by the German Idealists (Žižek 2012: 8). This intervention is at once unwelcome and most welcome. From the crude standpoint of positivism or materialism, it is a disaster, as it risks perpetuating the understanding of 'idealism' as a structure that is timeless, abstract and 'blocks' the social. Yet, on a more moronic level, Žižek is implicitly arguing that anachronism is always the *de facto* state of affairs, and a core aspect of the moronic failures of dialectical criticism. The necessarily historical attribute of all knowledge means that it always comes afterwards, and the dialectical relationship with the unobtainable 'before' results in a profoundly paradoxical relationship between those elements constituted by its dialectical grip.

The contradictions, illusions and failures of dialectical criticism are *of necessity* historically grounded and actual. The utility of Žižek's embrace of the anachronistic presence of German Idealism in intellectual phenomena, as well as Hegel's own paradoxical treatment of anachronism, are their acceptance that phenomena can only be present in intellectual life once they are contradicted, and these phenomena accordingly live on throughout history in a deeply paradoxical manner which direct and linear models of historical development or evolution are entirely incapable of conceptualizing. Shklovsky's figure of the knight's move is entirely consistent with this dialectical paradox; as is Tynianov's insistence that anachronism is a necessary attribute of literature's dialectical evolution, where the phenomena of the past epochs emerge in historical presents in unexpected, yet necessary ways. Accordingly, Tynianov asserted that Shklovsky's *Zoo…Or Letters Not about Love* manifests many convergences with the work of Heine (Tynianov 1977: 166). The

Russian Formalists expressed a profound contempt for 'metaphysics' and embraced all aspects of the materiality of literary art yet, in positioning themselves against such theoretical phenomena, they inadvertently replicated many of the core attributes of Kant's and Hegel's thought some 100 to 130 years after the fact.

IV

The 'now' element of dialectical immediacy concerns this analysis's status as a work of theory. Once again the problem of anachronism rears its head, as theory is now commonly acknowledged as being dead (Tihanov 2004b). This moment in intellectual history is worthy of a doctoral thesis of its own, and a thorough examination of this matter is beyond the scope of the present study. However, a few remarks are necessary at this preliminary stage. Tihanov's article is of interest in on a number of levels, not least of which is a quietly polemical demonstration of the crucial significance of central and eastern European intellectuals in the origin and development of literary theory. The article concludes with demands for recognition and praise for those involved in this process, and unambiguous disdain (which I strongly endorse) for those who joyfully proclaim theory's demise (Tihanov 2004b). Rabaté and Osborne have provided similar voices of disapproval, and noted that such loud proclamations of theory's death are all too clearly examples of attempts at 'fashionable' debates where the interests of marketing and sales are not difficult to discern (Rabaté 2002: 8) (Osborne 2011: 19-20). However, Rabaté and the editors of the volume in which Osborne's essay appears are keen to differentiate between either 'Theory' and 'theory' or theory and 'Theory'. Whilst the choice and size of the typography may differ, there is a convergence at work here. All wish to differentiate between a theory that 'offers a diluted form lacking in both intellectual substance and institutional prominence' (Eliot and Attridge 2011: 1-2), and a theory that is prepared to challenge such a 'diluted form' of itself and whatever problems it identifies in the socio-politico matrix at large. Whether 'Theory' or theory, this

ethically committed praxis is entirely consistent with my elaboration of post-Kantian critique here, and it is this variety of theory of which, like Rabaté, I believe our historical present is in urgent need. It is precisely this variety of post-Kantian critique that enables us to denounce both 'fashionable' declarations of joy at theory's demise and superficial engagements with theory's dominant topoi.

Rabaté's commendable verdict in *The Future of Theory* is that the only way out the current malaise is more ethically engaged theory (Rabaté 2002: 1-20, 141-50). Rabaté is convinced that literary theory is the product of German Idealism and, mindful of Hegel's drive to adequately critique epochal reality, is profoundly suspicious of attempts to pronounce the death of such critical inquiry in the 'now'.[3] Rabaté identifies a constant drive towards the ethical and the political in the best literary theory, and valorizes its restless trajectory towards an emancipatory future through its endless critique of the present. Whereas Bakhtin identifies the figures of the clown, rogue and fool as the emancipatory essence of discursive modernity, Rabaté prefers the figure of the Lacanian hysteric as paradigmatic of the theorist. Drawing upon Lacan's well-known *Seventeenth Seminar*, Rabaté defines the hysteric as indefinable, a figure who is constantly opposed to any manifestation of a 'Master', and one who prefers to conceptualize meaning as immanently unstable ambiguous.[4] Hysteria 'gives birth to a discourse and maintains a quest for truth that always aims at pointing out the inadequacies of official, serious, and 'masterful' knowledge' (Rabaté 2002: 8). As such, the hysteric has obvious similarities with Kantian critique and Bakhtinian clowns, and it is telling that Lacan notes how 'masterful' knowledge and its restrictive and controlling understanding of signification can accrue around the disciplinary discourses of the university (Lacan 2007: 31-8, 43-53 & 147-8).

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[3] For a further treatment of Rabaté's suggestions regarding the future trajectory of theory, see (Rabaté 2014).

[4] Rabaté's argument is a continuation of Žižek's *The Most Sublime Hysteric: Hegel and Lacan*. See (Žižek 2014b).

The reappraisal of Russian Formalism undertaken here marks a return to the

moment that, potentially, signals a determinate origin of objective literary theory.

Through foregrounding the necessarily practical aspect of this School, both in terms

of how it conceptualizes the problems of 'how to write' and 'how to be writer-theorist'

in the face of institutional and political pressures, the intention here is to

problematize the reified understanding of 'theory' that was asking for its own death;

or, in other words, its accepted status as some variety of post-modern abstraction

that has nothing whatsoever to do with the material world.[5] On the contrary,

Russian Formalist theory manifests an ethics of fidelity to textual sources, patient

and considered reading *and* a challenge to the norms and restrictions of the

academy which conflict with and impede theoretical research. In short, the appeal

of Russian Formalism's iteration of dialectical materialism is that it managed to be

both innovative and ethically committed to its source material precisely due to its

adherence to an objective (if paradoxical) methodological orientation.[6]

V

Consistent with these more general attributes of German Idealism, dialectical

criticism and literary theory, this analysis has three particular conclusions that

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[5] There is little point regurgitating the well-known narrative of theory's decline here, which includes Alan Sokal's infamous article in *Social Text*, the death of prominent French intellectuals and shifting hegemonies in the academic disciplines. However, it is important to emphasise that the distinction between 'Theory' and 'theory' is almost always lost on theory's critics. A telling example is Cook's enthusiastic response to the publication of *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*, an anthology of essays that takes a highly oppositional stance to theory (Patai and Corral 2005). Cook complains that: 'It has always seemed to me that the principal purpose of Theory was ultimately to give English departments a sense of purpose and keep at bay the terrifying thought that humanities didn't really matter in cash-strapped universities'. Alienated by the emergence of women's, slave and LGBT writing on the university curriculum thanks to 'Theory's' institutional hegemony, Cook prefers the stability of the classics and the canon (Cook 2005). An ethically engaged critique might question why Cook's parochial comments are confined to the English department and indeed hostile to the inclusion of genres of writing which cause him such institutional insecurity. This variety critique has no such qualms as to the importance of the humanities, and it is precisely its own theoretical capacity to critique both itself and its object which serves to banish such anxiety.

[6] Žižek says that one of his books devoted to dialectical materialism 'contains chapters *in*—not *on*— dialectical materialism: dialectical materialism is not the book's topic; it is, rather, practiced within these pages' (Žižek 2014: 1). As with Žižek's above cited remarks on the failures of dialectical materialism, his words are once again productive with regard to conceptualizing the dialectical materialism practiced by the Formalists. However, I remain to be convinced that Žižek's and Rabaté's enthusiasm for Lacan is worth pursuing with regard to the Formalists, particularly the insistence that sexual desire and its discontinuities are the touchstone of all intellectual life.

conflict with previous scholarly appraisals of Russian Formalism. These concern the evolution of Russian Formalism, who was and who was not a 'so-called' Formalist, and Formalism's reception by the Bakhtin School. Regarding the first point, Russian Formalism can be said to span the period from 1914 to 1929, with two key texts by Viktor Shklovsky signalling the beginning and the end of the movement. This brief period spans war, the Bolshevik Revolution, Civil War, the New Economic Policy and the onset of the Cultural Revolution. In the words of D. Ustinov, the closing years of this period are marked by an ever more forceful 'no' in intellectual life (Ustinov 2001: 247-250), and ever increasingly levels of ideological conformity came to plague Soviet culture in the march towards the high-Stalinist culture of the 1930s. Since Viktor Erlich's ground breaking study, scholars of Russian Formalism have consistently sought to link the evolution in Formalist science to these rapidly changing historical contexts. The fact that Tynianov, Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky all come to incorporate the problem of 'life' into the purview of Formalist literary science has been (and is still) consistently mapped in conformity with these historical shifts towards Stalinism. Accordingly, there are usually two or three different stages of Formalism: a 'high'- Formalist period devoted to the device, followed by a sharp rupture towards art's relationship with life, and an eventual 'pragmatic' stage that maps Formalism's compromises with the ideological demands of the Cultural Revolution (Khanzen-Leve 2001). This study does not disagree that the determinate preoccupations of Formalism did change, however I have preferred to argue that Formalism evolves dialectically, with the 'content' of early Formalist critique of literary structures maintained in how it conceptualized new analytical material and their role in objective literary praxis. Accordingly, the turn to the problems of the relationship between art and life and the praxis of literary critique in the period of the Cultural Revolution do not, I argue, constitute clear ruptures with what came before.

This seemingly pedantic distinction is made upon the basis that it is wrong to evaluate Formalism purely with regard to the determinate objects of its analysis. The turn to 'life' and 'genre' may signal a determinate departure from the preoccupation with material, device and sound, but Formalism was first and foremost a preoccupation with the constructive relationships *between* the elements which constitute literary art. These constitutive relationships remain dialectical and paradoxical throughout the history of Russian Formalism, be it in terms of the relationship between devices threaded together into a narrative, the relationship between different literary genres and art's many and diverse relationships with life. Accordingly, it is argued here that Russian Formalism's evolution is non-linear and manifests consistencies and ruptures simultaneously. It is striking that scholars of Russian Formalism detail the movement's hostility to causal determinism and authorial intention, yet ignore these warnings in how they construct the Formalists' relationships with one another through personal correspondence and their capitulations to the demands of the epoch. The deeply paradoxical point here is that precisely through staging the anachronistic comparison between Formalism and its German Idealist forebears, the 'immediate' ideological pressures active in historical context of the Soviet 1920s and their causal linking with epochal compromises can be re-evaluated along with Formalism itself.

VI

As to who was and who was not a Formalist, it is important to acknowledge that there was not a coherent body of Formalists in the 1920s who all followed the same 'so-called' Formal method. It has become a cliché of critical discussion of Russian Formalism to note that there is not one distinct Russian Formalism, but rather Russian Formalisms. It could even be argued that there is not a Shklovsky, but many Shklovskys, whose work cannot be reduced to a coherent theoretical perspective. In outlining his concept of the literary personality, Tynianov observed

that Pushkin the historical individual is completely different from the Pushkin seized upon by the Russian Symbolists and the Pushkin identified by other epochs (Tynianov 1977: 259; 2000: 35). In the current epoch of the death of theory and proclamations of crisis in the humanities this analysis has seized upon its own Russian Formalism and passed over the work of certain card-carrying Formalists. Following Shklovsky's use of the term, this analysis argues that Russian Formalism can be seen as a poetics of non-recognition, by which it is meant that it resisted any reified understanding of literature, be it in terms of immanent structural analysis or literature's relationship with life. Non-recognition was not just one device of literary form best exemplified by the brainless knight Don Quixote who fails to recognize the world around him 'as it is', but an objective methodological principle of brainlessness that consistently refused to provide determinist accounts of art and the laws which govern literary form. It will not come as a surprise to many readers that this 'Formalism' encompasses the work of such brainless knights as Shklovsky and Tynianov; but it may be unexpected for some that Eikhenbaum has also been included. It is commonly acknowledged that Eikhenbaum's essay 'Literary *Byt*' was a key attempt to address the problem of art and life. Yet, it is argued here that Eikhenbaum's essay on Gogol´ (a supposedly 'high' Formalist celebration of autonomous device, concrete sound and self-valuable *zaum*) already programmes the dialectical treatment of authorial intention, colliding genres and material that comes to dominate the thought of Shklovsky and Tynianov in the mid to late 1920s. On this basis, the works of Tomashevsky, Yakubinsky, Brik, Polivanov and Vinokur are not included here. Jakobson's influence upon the movement is not denied, but the fact remains that he was absent from the immediate material world of the Soviet 1920s and that, as a member of The Moscow Linguistic Circle and not OPOIAZ, his thought is inclined towards a reified and rigid understanding of literature that lacks the dynamism and paradoxes of Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov.[7]

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[7] For an insightful discussion of the differences between OPOIAZ and Moscow Formalism, see

VII

Russian Formalism's scholarly reception has been greatly influenced by the contemporary thought of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle. Bakhtin's thought is in many respects a response to the perceived failures of the Formalist method and its preoccupation with material literary things. 'Dialogue', 'heterglossia' and 'polyphony' have to no small extent received a positive reception in English language scholarship precisely because they are regarded as providing a historically grounded alternative to the structuralist school of literary criticism which Russian Formalism is accused of having inspired. For Linda S. Kauffmann, the appeal of Shklovsky's *Zoo…* is its tendency towards heterglossia and its move away from the 'devices' of Russian Formalism (Kauffmann 1992: 44).   In emphasizing the movement's many parallels with the thought of Kant and Hegel, the Russian Formalism which emerges across the pages of this thesis is very different to that identified by Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle in the 1920s; but it is a Formalism in which the features of a Bakhtinian clown engaged in polemical stupidity can be clearly discerned. Accordingly, this analysis problematizes both Bakhtin's reception of Formalism and those elements of his early aesthetic philosophy which are held to provide alternatives to the extra-historical dictates of synchronic literary laws; yet remains sensitive to the convergences between Formalism and Bakhtin's emancipatory conceptualization of the novel. Bakhtin and Formalism are not an 'either/or' proposition, and in many ways their thought can be described as complementary. However, Bakhtin's treatment of embodiment in his early aesthetic theory has been taken, so to say, at its word as a viable alternative to Russian

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(Dmitriev 2009b: 70-95). Dmitriev's study is of particular interest, given that it includes a discussion of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, the State Academy of Artistic Sciences in Moscow and various academic and artistic circles in Moscow at the time. It is, however, subject to a disappointing positivism in how it understands intellectual influence and the exchange of ideas. As I shall argue in chapter four of this analysis, Tynianov formulates a highly productive conceptualization of how the literary personality emerges in different epochs. Dmitriev is particularly unsympathetic to reconstructions of Russian Formalism from the 1960s onwards, and prefers to confine himself to historical documents and data. As such, I would argue that Dmitriev remains blind to some of the insights that the Formalists had to offer for those engaged in academic labour. For another example of Dmitriev's approach directed at Formalism's legacy in the west, see (Dmitriev 2010: 63-91).

Formalism when, potentially, it is the latter and its dialectical treatment of materialism that provides a potential alternative for the praxis of literary theory and how it conceptualizes its own history as a discipline.

VIII

Hegel begins the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with a critique of the very idea of a beginning (Hegel 1977: 1-2). In his first two *Critiques* Kant establishes the essentially anachronistic nature of critique: it must always come afterwards. Kant did not, however, believe that this insight necessitated a radical restructuring of philosophical discourse. As Guyer has noted, the structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is (with the one exception of the section titled 'The Transcendental Aesthetic') generic and conforms to the structure of a contemporary textbook on logic (Guyer 2006: 51-3). Hegel takes a more radical approach to the structure of philosophical discourse and argues that the idea of a beginning in philosophy is misleading. Hegel sees no worth in organizing philosophical argument in a way that manifests a conventional beginning, middle and an end as his variety of dialectical reasoning is incompatible with such an a structure. It is worth repeating that Hegel's orientation is no less emancipatory than Kant's or Bakhtin's, and his rebellion against the reified structures of then contemporary philosophical discourse is consistent with his ethical drive towards freedom.

Given that this analysis is a doctoral thesis, and as such is compelled to work within much more restricted confines, Hegel's ethical (and liberating) critique of structure cannot be replicated here. Nevertheless, I have tried to remain true to the spirit of such emancipatory critique, if not the letter. Like Kant, my argument has a broadly conventional structure, and the subsequent analysis has eight chapters, each of which has a title which identifies a paradox that is exemplary of post-Kantian modernity in general or Russian Formalist critique in particular. The first chapter treats the paradox of objectivity in the thought of Kant and Hegel. It proceeds from

the proposition that all of the philosophers and theorists critiqued here are contradictory, and their work occasionally stages a retreat from an open, liberating contradiction to the surety of reified closure. Rather than glossing over such contradictions, I contend that they are to be welcomed, and explore how Kant's and Hegel's ground-breaking treatment of objective critique is contradicted by both philosophers' reductive aesthetic theory. The discussion of Kant's philosophy argues that Kantian consciousness is a structure of mutually constitutive contradictions, where the world and the faculties of the mind are opposed to one another. It is largely consistent with Henrich's account of Kant's philosophy, but includes the additional element of motion, as well as the import of Kant's practical philosophy as it is articulated in the essay 'What is Enlightenment?'. The sections on Hegel are limited to Hegel's dialectic and the role of anachronism in Hegel's thought. The aesthetic philosophies of Kant and Hegel are staged as reductive contradictions of both philosophers' emancipatory account of objectivity.

The subsequent five chapters establish Russian Formalism as an objective aesthetic theory that, unlike Kant and Hegel, does not retreat into reified closure. Russian Formalism, it shall be argued, is a manifestation of a paradoxical critical paradigm that facilitates many insights into literary art and the life world that resides beyond its material parameters. It is also a paradigm that demands an emancipatory engagement with its broader cultural environment, but one where that engagement is undertaken on the basis that an author-critic is a finite being active in an objectifying world where impersonal method is beyond intentional control. For this finite being to be free, she must polemically contradict others yet never forget her own ultimate brainlessness in the face of the objective world. It is, ultimately, a paradigm of dialectical materialism. Accordingly, the second chapter explores Shklovsky's treatment of device, narrative, *ostranenie*, non-recognition and literary material, and considers how he identifies literary structures that cannot be reduced

to automatized closure. I establish the convergences between Kant's structure of mutually constitutive contradictions and Shklovsky's calibration of literary art's paradoxical properties. I do acknowledge some convergences with Hegel, but I consider the extent to which Hegel's ambiguous treatment of sense certainty is different to Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*. The third chapter argues that Eikhenbaum's analysis of Gogol´'s *The Overcoat* replicates Shklovsky's elaboration of paradoxical structures in its analysis of the category of the grotesque. Eikhenbaum's polemical critique of traditional deployments of the author in literary criticism is also considered, as is the apparent consistency between how Eikhenbaum categorizes authorship and the broader category of the grotesque. Historically, Kant has not been regarded as a supporter of grotesque, but I argue that alienation and paradoxical differences figure in his philosophy in a way which is analogous to Eikhenbaum's critique of the grotesque in Gogol´. I also consider the validity of Bakhtin's objections to Eikhenbaum's calibration of *skaz*.

The fourth chapter is devoted to Tynianov, and outlines how his conceptualization of literary facts, genre and constructive relationships replicate the same tendency toward objective paradox provided by Kant, Hegel, Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum. In addition to considering Tynianov's programme for literary theory and its role in cultural construction, I argue that Hegel's dialectical logic manifests itself in many aspects of Tynianov's theory, particularly in his critique of an author's 'orientation', which he exposes as a 'literary fact', or, in other words, an impersonal objectification active in the life context around literature. Chapter 5 provides a much needed re-evaluation of Eikhenbaum's treatment of the 'literary environment' and establishes the many consistencies between this later concept and his earlier conceptualization of authorship articulated in the Gogol´ essay. Eikhenbaum's discussion of an author's social class reveals an interesting manifestation of anachronism in Formalist critique, and offers many apparent convergences with Tynianov's concept

of the literary personality. The sixth and seventh chapters concern two of Shklovsky's theoretical novels: *Zoo…* and *Third Factory*; and critique Shklovsky's treatment of ethical commitment in the face of attempts to limit authorial freedom in statist Soviet culture and in the brainless modernity of impersonal objective method which he and his fellow Formalists have set in motion. Both novels complement Eikhenbaum's and Tynianov's conceptualization of authorship as being alienated from an objective literary structure, but both *Zoo…* and *Third Factory* provide a stronger iteration of Kantian freedom, in that both novels imply that this alienation is painful, and one where the free play with objective literary structures is necessarily finite. The final chapter provides a highly sceptical response to the Bakhtin Circle's criticisms of Russian Formalism in their work from the Soviet 1920s. It includes a comparison between the modernity staged by Shklovsky in *Zoo…,* Konstantin Vaginov's novel *The Goat Song* and the Bakhtin Circle's early aesthetic philosophy. I argue that Bakhtin and Medvedev's accounts of Russian Formalism are highly problematic, both in terms of their descriptions of Formalism and the alternatives which they offer to Formalist thought. The chapter does, however, conclude with a possible point of convergence between the two schools of thought in Bakhtin's conceptualization of genre from his writings on the novel.

Hegel's contempt for reified structures which manifest a beginning, a middle and an end extended to his views on semantics. Bencivenga contrasts Hegel's views on semantics with those of Aristotle, and argues that Hegel consistently rejects any variety of reified semantics where the determinate meaning of a word can be fixed. The meaning of any given term is, for Hegel, *never* fixed. It will dialectically evolve and assume new meanings, and the practical site of its application in any one present is the best indicator as to its meaning, albeit in a trajectory towards its own negation (Bencivenga 2000: 16-41). Once again, the genre of the doctoral thesis is particularly ill-suited to such a dialectical logic, and I am duty bound (albeit not in the

Kantian sense) to provide a few definitions of certain terms which will recur over the pages of this analysis.

Even at this preliminary stage, it will hopefully be clear that by 'dialectics' I do not in any way endorse the reified paradigm of thesis – antithesis – synthesis. The sense in which I use the term here is broadly consistent with that sketched in Chapter 1, where I summarise Hegel's dialectic of objectivity. In this iteration, dialectics can be said to exhibit a trajectory of thesis to synthesis, but it is categorically not a reified or abstract relationship. In contrast, this dialectic manifests a dynamic, historically grounded site of struggle between two opposing and yet contingent positions. Shklovsky argues in *Third Factory* that abstract formal schemas are utterly inadequate to cultural phenomena, and it is important to study the phenomena in question in their contingent surroundings (Shklovsky 2002: 378; 2001: 64-5). By contingent surroundings, it must be noted that the very terms themselves have an important mediating influence on any one given instance of the dialectic, be it in terms of the relationship between opposing terms or the broader historical context in which they are situated. Accordingly, it shall be argued that Shklovsky's treatment of narrative, Tynianov's concepts of authorial intention and constructive functions, and Shklovsky's parody of crude dialectical materialism in *Third Factory* are all examples of dialectics.

My use of the term 'ethics' is informed by both Foucault and Critchley. For Foucault, there is not one ethics, but an infinite variety of ethics that can be grouped under the heading 'care of the self' (Foucault 2000: 253-80). There are a number of such ethics which could be used to critique Russian Formalism, such as how Shklovsky's *ostranenie* suggests an ethics of pleasure.[8] However, my analysis is largely confined to what could be termed an 'ethics of objectivity' or a 'scientific' ethics. The philosophies of Kant and Hegel are, from the very outset of their most well-known

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[8] See Emerson's discussion of Shklovsky's aesthetics of arousal in (Emerson 2005: 637-44).

works, actively engaged in formulating philosophical propositions on an objective and *scientific* basis (Kant 1998: 106-24) (Hegel 1977: 3-7) (Hegel 2010: 45-57). Russian Formalism is no less concerned with providing an objective, scientific basis for literary studies. Whether it be practical Kantian critique or the disciplinary praxis of laying bare the device, these scientific ethics all pertain to experience. For Critchley, ethics cannot exist as a formal or abstract category removed from experience, and he accordingly refers to ethical experience which 'is an *activity* whereby new objects emerge for a subject involved in the process of their creation' (Critchley 2012: 14). This variety of experience gives rise to an ongoing circle of experience, whereby the subject is endlessly *disappointed* with experience (be it with the world or with itself), which in turn gives rise to a new ethical *demand* to contend with whatever current disappointment plagues the subject. Formalist literary theory can usefully be critiqued on such an ethical basis, where the material object of their literary studies emerged along with the discipline itself. In the following analysis the terms 'ethics', 'disappointment' and 'demand' are all used in this sense outlined here.

Critchley himself provides a positive response to Foucaultian ethics which, after Foucault, he summarises as the work of the self upon itself (Critchley 2012: 11). However, Critchley is concerned that Foucault's ethics are continually preoccupied with the mastery of the self. This is, so Critchley argues, incompatible with that variety of post-Kantian self which is always divided, and which always gives rise to the demands and disappointments of ethical experience. I do not agree with Critchley on this point, and Foucault's suggestion that the care of the self is a 'practice of freedom' hints that he is not entirely blind to Kantian critique (Foucault 2000: 284). Indeed, there is a continuous undercurrent in this analysis which argues that Foucault's philosophy (be it early or late) can be productively deployed alongside Kantian critique, be it as a complimentary gesture or to contradict the

validity of a given proposition. Throughout this analysis, Foucault's concepts of 'genealogy', 'historical ontologies' and impersonal 'discursive formations' that cannot be attributed to a single voice are productively deployed to both critique Formalist theory and explain a particular discursive strategy.

All the above definitions and the subsequent analysis are, of course, entirely of the moment of their writing and await their impending contradiction by their readers, or the author in a subsequent work.

1: Objectivity

'Here a strange, unexpected course is revealed in human affairs, as happens elsewhere too if it is considered in the large, where almost everything is paradoxical' (Kant 1996: 22).

'*The figure of thought that dominated the theoretical work of the so-called Russian Formalists, exerting a centripetal force on often disparate positions, was paradox*' (Renfrew 2010: 1).

I

Amongst the broad corpus of scholarship concerned with early Soviet intellectual culture, two recent interventions stand out due to their ostensibly paradoxical conclusions. In the first, Galin Tihanov maintains that Russian Formalism, as an offshoot of late modernity, shares common characteristics with Marxism, positivism and classical Freudian psychoanalysis (Tihanov 2004a: 52-8).   Since Viktor Erlich's ground-breaking study of Russian Formalism in the mid-1950s, these three trends have been regarded as opposites (and disciplinary rivals) of Russian Formalism as it sought to establish itself in post-Revolutionary cultural life (Erlich 1965: 19-32 & 171-211). The fundamental opposition between the three disciplinary fields emerges most acutely around the tipping point of the aesthetic. One way or another, all three trends insist that art is a representational form that replicates (or sublimates) a state of affairs which exists elsewhere, beyond the literary work of art. Nominally, the so-called Formalists were steadfastly opposed to such a representational paradigm that insisted on art's relationship to any matters beyond the text, be they the world of 'life' or the psychology of the author intentionally writing a given text. Despite such irreconcilable differences Tihanov concludes that all three areas of intellectual endeavour aspired to scientific status, and were competitors in the field of rational enquiry into the objective laws of human activity (Tihanov 2004a: 57-8). By implication, aspirations towards scientific status, rationality and the discernment of laws governed and determined by objective principles all foster contradiction, paradox and struggle in human affairs. Instead of providing a calm order of

measured enquiry, the objective serves to limit human intention and self-determination, and fosters alterity and disciplinary conflict.

The second paradoxical intervention concerns not Russian Formalism, but one of its more enduring critics. In *Towards a New Material Aesthetics*, Alastair Renfrew argues that the thought of the Bakhtin Circle is an attempt to reconcile overlapping iterations of the two dominant forces in twentieth century intellectual life: materialism and idealism; life and art; fact and value. The more *inter*-determinate categories of heterglossia, voice, dialogue, embodiment and genre are, Renfrew argues, counterpoised in the thought of the Bakhtin Circle by the more reified and broadly materialist terms of carnival and chronotope (Renfrew 2006: 118-141). Rather than glossing over this contradiction, Renfrew implies that it is to be welcomed. Instead of undermining the on-going utility of the Bakhtin Circle's thought, Renfrew argues that this contradiction actively reinforces it, demonstrating its capacity for 'deconstructive synthesis through negation' (Renfrew 2006: 13-16 & 21). Renfrew's programme, whereby concretely inter-determinate dialogue serves to negate reified and crudely determinate material(isms) is certainly appealing, and reverberates with positive echoes of elements of Hegel, Marx and Foucault. Yet Renfrew's choice of such terminology as 'synthesis' and 'negation' is itself paradoxical, for it implies Bakhtin is a variety of thinker which he nominally was not: dialectical.[9] Bakhtin uses the term dialectic infrequently, and he appears staunchly opposed to those forms of the dialectic which have endured in a wide spectrum of twentieth-Century thought. Hegelian dialectics are, for Bakhtin, geared towards teleological closure. Negation is a concept with which Bakhtin is profoundly reluctant to 'tarry', and, in his early philosophy, is even actively hostile towards.[10] There is none of the 'restlessness',

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[9] There is an additional irony to Renfrew's suggestion that Bakhtin practices a deconstructive synthesis through negation, as Bakhtin and Renfrew himself can in no way be regarded as exemplars of the deconstruction practiced by, among others, Derrida.
[10] For an example of Bakhtin's hostility to negation in his early philosophy, he specifically differentiates cognition from the embodied aesthetic event by designating cognition as negative. As

'openness' and productive struggle which figures as diverse as Bakhtin's contemporaries Shklovsky and Yury Tynianov, as well as such later figures as Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Lacan, Fredric Jameson, Robert Pippin, Stephen Houlgate, Theodore Adorno, Judith Butler, Raya Dunayevskaya, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Louis Althusser and, most vocally, Slavoj Žižek have, in one form or another, identified in dialectics in the aftermath of Hegel. Despite their nominal preoccupation with distinct critical debates, Renfrew's remarks complement Tihanov's perceptive critique of Formalism and its methodological opponents, where a paradoxical convergence emerges between nominally divergent positions. In both cases, a collective self-identity predicated upon difference in the face of its other – that is, Formalism in the face of Marxism, Bakhtin in the face of dialectics – collapses through common methodological precepts that come to constitute the object of their respective critical praxis.

These general problems of paradox fostered by the impersonal forces of objectivity, method and dialectics have, perhaps surprisingly, a very specific point of origin that would prove prescient for much of the subsequent trajectory of literary theory: Bakhtin's reception of Russian Formalism. Tihanov's suggestion that Formalism exhibits the qualities of positivism implicitly echoes Bakhtin's reaching more or less the same conclusion in his early unpublished essay 'The Problem of Material, Content and Form in Literary Art', albeit without the negative connotations which positivism carries for Bakhtin. Renfrew's discussion of Bakhtin's more inter-determinate, embodied dialogue is specifically calibrated as Bakhtin's efforts to overcome what he regarded as Marxism's and Formalism's reified accounts of what

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such, the ethical and the beautiful are alien to cognition. In addition, Bakhtin is at pains to differentiate how the aesthetic event overcomes determinate language from cognition's negative capacity to overcome determinate language with algebraic symbols and abbreviations (Bakhtin 2003: 304-8; 1990: 296-300). For Bakhtin's attitude towards Hegel, see (Tihanov 2000: 153-9) and (Côté 2000: 20-42). Côté's study is of particular relevance for the present study, given that he notes how Bakhtin's concept of dialogue effectively replicates the features of Hegelian dialectics despite Bakhtin's ostensible opposition to the teleological closure provided by the Hegelian paradigm. As such, Bakhtin's reception of Hegel could be regarded as 'non-linear' or even dialectical.

constitutes literature's material. Renfrew even goes so far as arguing that such

ostensible opposites are, in their conceptualizations of literary material, two sides of

the same coin.   Indeed, the 'Problem of Material, Content and Form in Literary Art'

is commonly accepted as Bakhtin's attempt to provide an alternative basis for the

objective analysis of literary texts that does not, despite its very objectivity, succumb

to the positivist appeal of reified material things, be they in the 'materialist' world of

life or the material, thingly object of literary art itself (Bakhtin 2003 : 265-324; 1990 :

257-318).

Yet, in providing an alternative to Formalism's reductive attraction towards

'positivism', is not Bakhtin himself guilty of a reduction that distorts Formalist theory

in some way?   The paradoxes of objectivity clearly problematize direct and

simplistic readings of influence and reception—be they positive or hostile—at the

level of general theoretical inquiry and, inevitably, the particular level of Bakhtin's

reception of Formalist thought.   In the chapter from which the opening quotation is

taken, Renfrew is at pains to emphasize that conventional, positivist understanding

of historical change, cultural exchange and inter-personal influence are self-

evidently inadequate to the material events of twentieth-century cultural history:

This, consistent with figures of paradox, shift and nonlinear succession that have
driven the current essay, implies not only an alternative to straightforward, positivist
models of direct filiation or 'influence', but also a quite particular effect of that non-
linearity. Bakhtin, in other words, was partially and indirectly instrumental in
conditioning the context of his own reception (Renfrew 2010: 15).

These remarks state the core concern of an essay that underlines the complex inter-

connection between Bakhtin and Russian Formalism, and in many respects

compliments Renfrew's own preference for deconstructive synthesis through

negation stated in his earlier *Material Aesthetics*. Ostensibly a text which argues

that the reception of Bakhtin's thought in post-war literary theory was, to no small

extent, *indirectly* conditioned by Bakhtin himself, Renfrew adopts the Formalist

terminology of paradoxes and knight's moves to account for the mis-

comprehensions and contradictions that mark debates over the nascent disciplines of literary studies and linguistics in the early Soviet Union, and which effectively continued in the reception of Bakhtin's thought in the hands of Roland Barthes and Iulia Kristeva during the transitions from structuralism to post-structuralism and beyond (Renfrew 2010: 9-15 & 19-21).   On this basis, it is in no way given that Bakhtin's reception of Russian Formalism amounts to *the* 'truthful' summation of the movement's contribution to early Soviet intellectual culture, regardless of how productive the Bakhtin Circle's resulting capacity for deconstructive synthesis through negation may be in cultural studies.

This analysis will push the topoi of paradox, shift and nonlinear succession to altogether more radical extremes, providing a basis upon which certain Russian Formalists' aspirations towards scientific status, objective laws and their co-requisite conceptualizations of material can be recognized as being pervaded by contradiction, non-linearity and negation in a manner entirely consistent with those statements regarding the nature of literary evolution with which Renfrew perceptively critiques Bakhtin's relationship with Formalism, Soviet linguistics, Barthes and beyond. The radicalness of the knight's move here resides not in the non-linear trajectory which is pursued *beyond* Formalism in the field of twentieth-century literary theory, but in its retrospective glance to a distant figure, historically and geographically removed from the Revolutionary decade that followed the Bolshevik Revolution, in late eighteenth-century Königsberg. This turn to Kant is categorically not an attempt to establish the 'Kantianism' of Russian Formalism or figure the Russian Formalists as sympathetic Kantians who read and positively understood Kant, and wrote literary theory under the direct influence of Kantian philosophy. Such a move would be absurd and, as already noted, such positive accounts of influence and reception are inadequate. Rather, the turn to Kant is undertaken on the basis that the Bakhtinian alternative to what he regards as Formalism's scientific

reification of literary material is not merely a distortion of many attributes of Russian Formalism, but, more importantly, a solution to a problem that did not and still does not exist. This problem is objectivity, and it is, I argue, in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason* that the paradoxical attributes of objective knowledge are already realized, and objectivity is shown to be something altogether more profound than abstract empirical knowledge. It is vitally important not to confuse positivist science of material objects with objectivity. The latter term, unlike the former, is capable of accommodating paradox, both in terms of its object and in its awareness that objective method itself constitutes its object. Indeed, in its Kantian formation, it is precisely objective knowledge that is capable of accommodating empirical, positivist science *and* those elements which, of necessity, remain beyond the reach of such empirical knowledge. In addition, Kant himself appears to contradict the radical figuring of objective knowledge in his earlier *Critiques* in *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*, and it is precisely his reductive conceptualization of art that allows him to do so.

Ultimately, the wager here is that Formalism provides an objective account of art in a manner analogous to the treatment of objective knowledge in the first two *Critiques*, and which resists that problematic moment of closure provided by the third *Critique.* Yet, Bakhtin's 'correction' of 'positivist' Russian Formalism maintains precisely the Kantian error of the third *Critique*, where art affords the human subject a unitary relationship with the natural world.

There is no denying that the Russian Formalists showed great disdain for metaphysics. The Formalists' dislike of metaphysics prefigures Renfrew's suggestion that Formalist and Marxist conceptualizations of literary material are two sides of the same coin. For the Formalists, Oleksandr Potebnia's influential concept of thinking in images, textual manifestations of an author's class ideology, and representations of the life world's socio-economic reality are all metaphysics, and

should be dismissed from objective literary studies (Tynianov 1977: 270; 2000: 46) (Eikhenbaum 1987: 431-2; 2002: 60-2). How is this possible? The objective study of literature should make no recourse to elements outside of the text, particularly when engaged in the study of the construction of verbal art. In addition, the Formalists consistently rejected any iteration of the laws of literary construction as being representational or in any way causal or determinist. Therefore symbolic images, authorial intention, social class, representational determinism all perpetuate the metaphysical paradigm of object and the thing-in-itself that lies beyond. The object (in this case literature), is forever stuck in a subordinate role to the abstract thing-in-itself to which it has no access, and is merely an inferior copy. In the 'Potebnia' essay and the well-known 'Art as Device', Shklovsky clearly sees himself as providing an alternative to such 'Kantian' dualisms of 'fact' and 'value' with a new, scientific discipline of objective literary study where meaning is held to be immanent to literary form and categorically not located in an 'elsewhere' beyond the text, and which is discerned by the reader through physical sensations which demonstrate the existence of a concrete literary construction (Shklovsky 1919: 4) (Shklovsky 1929: 7-23; 1998: 1-14). As will be argued throughout this analysis, the *material* object-structures sought by the Russian Formalists share a great deal in common with those *transcendentally* deduced by their Kantian forebear, and in seeking to provide an alternative to 'metaphysics', they inadvertently and indirectly provide an objective methodological insight that comes close to realizing the potential of Kant's objective philosophy beyond the reductive 'fact' and 'value' binary that both Kant and Formalism are incorrectly deemed to perpetuate.

In what follows, it will be argued that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* provides an account of the conditions of possibility of consciousness (or, more specifically, synthetic *a priori* cognition) which, in turn, provide an objective, universal basis for the *a priori* morality of the categorical imperative, human autonomy and the natural

sciences. These conditions of possibility are structural yet, of necessity, contradictory and paradoxical. Within this overall structure of consciousness, the faculties of reason, understanding and imagination are located in opposition to one another; and this immanent matrix of contradictions is itself located in opposition to both the sensory intuitions of the natural world and the material 'thing-in-itself.' The *Critique of the Power of Judgement* constitutes something of a retreat from its more radical predecessor, in that the natural sciences, and the properties of the understanding and determining judgements which predominate in such disciplinary activity, are regarded as a destructive force that isolates, exploits and destroys the resources of the natural world out of self-interest. To counter-pose these forces, Kant argues that the beauty of the natural world and works of art are purposive. For Kant, when the subject beholds a beautiful artwork the accompanying feeling of pleasure, aesthetic ideas and judgements all lack any expression of the personal interest or gain that predominates in the determining judgements of the natural sciences, and therefore guarantee human moral freedom and limit the destructive reach of the natural sciences. The radical contradictory structure of consciousness in the first *Critique* is, in terms of the subject's relationship with the natural world, exempted from the potentially destructive forces of objectivity and method; and human autonomy is guaranteed through analogy with the beauty of art and the natural world.

In Russian Formalism, some one hundred and thirty years of knight's moves after Kant's critiques, and in a revolutionary intellectual climate largely hostile to 'idealism', these tensions between the demands for an objective methodology of scientific enquiry and an autonomous art which might, possibly, guarantee human freedom are debated, thematized and problematized to startling and endlessly productive effect; the competition over rational, objective inquiry into the human contradicted with concerns over autonomy, morality and what significance should be

granted to the human body's physical sensations. Or, in other words, might not

Kant and Russian Formalism provide complementary moments of radical insight

whose effects have hitherto lacked the scholarly attention they deserve?

II

The Kant who provides an account of consciousness's conditions of possibility, the

natural sciences and autonomous, *a priori* moral freedom is admittedly less familiar

than the conventionalized 'idealist' Kant, who insists that human subjectivity is

alienated from the material world of the thing-in-itself. This latter Kant, thought

erroneously to be a continuation of the Cartesian 'hopelessly riven I-think' (Holquist

and Kliger 2008: 613),[11] is by far the more familiar, and is doubtless exemplary of

the 'metaphysics' identified by the Russian Formalists themselves. The former,

more radical Kant has received its most sympathetic reception in the work of Dieter

Henrich. For Henrich, Kant's concept of the thing-in-itself lacks the pejorative,

alienating status accorded to it by Kant's more un-sympathetic readers, of whom

Lenin is a particularly vicious example. In *Materialism and Empiro-criticism*, Lenin

regards Kant's philosophy as being typical of idealist, dualistic nonsense that is

tantamount to an expression of religious faith, and which therefore denies the

human subject empowering, scientific knowledge of the material world and

perpetuates the oppression of the proletariat by the capitalist apparatus's religious

and scholarly apologists (Lenin: 2002).[12] Henrich acknowledges this

conventionalised meaning of the thing-in-itself as a 'thing to which we do not have

any access' (Henrich 2003: 49), but insists that this *does not foster a dualism* in

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[11] For Kant's own refutation that his *Critique of Pure Reason* amounts to such an 'I think' (or, in Kant's own words, a 'refutation of psychological idealism, and a strict proof (the only possible one, I believe) of the objective reality of outer intuition'), see (Kant 1998: 121-22 & 321-333).

[12] Lev Trotsky would repeat the crude materialist terms of this mis-guided attack on idealist philosophy in his no less misguided attack on Formalism in *Literature and Revolution* [*Literatura i revolutsiia*], equating the Formalists' 'idealist' emphasis on literary form with religious dogma (Trotsky 1991: 138-53). Given the Formalists' propensity to dismiss a materialist life-art determinism, authorial class-ideology and Potebnia's thinking in images as equally idealist or metaphysical, it is apparent that the accusation of 'idealism' in the Soviet 1920s is an altogether different discursive formation from the German idealism of Kant and Hegel, and effectively provides an indirect, positive reception of Kant and Hegel's refutation of a similar 'idealism' and 'metaphysics' some 120 years previously.

Kant's thought. Once the thing-in-itself is conceptualized amongst the many topoi that exemplify Kantian thought (which include appearance, the given and its being given in spatio-temporal form, sensibility and intellect, understanding and reason), it emerges as just one component of what Henrich conceptualizes as a multi-dimensional structure composed of active and passive elements, and which *cannot therefore be reduced to a mere dualism.* Kant, so Henrich argues, demands that the human subject is *active* and is therefore not the passive, deluded and dis-empowered subject identified by Lenin. It is this activity of the self, which processes the material givens of the thing-in-itself and appearance that Henrich and, for that matter, Theodor Adorno, regard as constitutive of an ontology in Kant's philosophy, and it is precisely the complex, multi-dimensional structure of Kantian thought that sets this ontological praxis in motion (Henrich 2003: 49-52) (Adorno 2001: 85-8, 93, 125-6, 164-5).[13]

This co-extensive interest in the complex structures of thought, and conceiving thought itself as a practical activity has consequences for the implicit relationship between form and content. As Henrich notes with regard to this self-as-praxis: '*What* I am thinking is something different from the structure 'I think' and *is contingent in relation to it.* There is no determinate thought that is analytically implied in the thought 'I think'. The self is, therefore, empty, and is an activity that *requires an object be given to it in order for it to exist*' (Henrich 2003: 43 emphasis added). Form and content are therefore contingent upon one-another, and it is only over time that the subject's identity emerges through repeated acts of synthesis: 'No self is possible unless it exists in such a way that there is an original relationship

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[13] Adorno is, I think, entirely correct when he notes that Kant's effort to 'salvage' ontology through a philosophy of contradictions is implicitly dialectical, and one where ontology is possible only through its impossibility. It is important to note that Adorno's insistence that Kant's philosophy manifests a 'block' that precludes knowledge of the social world (and a Marxist ethical engagement with social problems) merely reflects Adorno's own preference for dialectical critique, and is accordingly only one side of the delicate balance that is counter-posed with Kant's paradoxical edifice of contradictions (Adorno 2001: 170-9).

between it and something that is not itself but can be given to it' (Henrich 2003: 42). According to Henrich's reading, Kant's own conceptualization of transcendental idealism should in no way be regarded as a variety of that idealism that seeks to make the content of the natural world an image *according* to the categorical forms of the mind. Kant's notorious remark that nature is constituted by the categories of the mind should not necessarily be understood as a typical statement of 'value' that amounts to a flight from the material world of 'fact'; nor, *pace* Lenin, does it amount to imposing the value of the mind on the content of material facts, yet all the while leaving some 'true' status of the material thing-in-itself 'elsewhere' beyond the reaches of knowledge. Kant's orientation towards objectively accounting for consciousness's conditions of possibility is a transcendental deduction of how the mind *must be* in order for sensory perception (and the subsequent objective, scientific accounts of the natural world) to be possible. Kant's overall philosophical system is, therefore, a unitary construction, but it is an immanent construction composed of disparate elements that are fundamentally and of necessity other to themselves. It is, in short, a paradoxical, mutually constitutive contradiction.[14]

It is important to emphasize that the radical otherness and inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself is replicated in Kant's denial of the possibility of *self*-consciousness. As the mind is an act of spontaneity, and not something which can be intuited sensuously it remains a blank spot in Kant's thought. It is only through repeated historical acts of synthesis that the formal properties of the mind can be objectively figured in Kant's transcendental deduction. As Kant himself notes: '…I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor *as* I am in myself, but only *that* I am. This representation is a *thinking*, not an intuiting… and I therefore have *no cognition* of myself *as I am*, but only as I *appear* to myself' (Kant 1999: 259-60). As

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[14] As will become apparent in the subsequent chapters, this insistence on an immanent construction of mutually constitutive contradictions is replicated in Shklovsky's and Eikhenbaum's conceptualizations of literary art, and Tynianov's attempt to conceptualize literary art's constructive relationship of general and particular, life and genre.

with the thing-in-itself, knowledge of the self and the properties of consciousness can be intuited through sense (in the case of consciousness, *inner* sense), but such sensory intuition can, for Kant, only ever be a representation of consciousness through the activity of consciousness itself: '[consciousness] intuits itself not as it would immediately self-actively represent itself, but in accordance with the way in which it is affected from within, consequently as it appears to itself, not as it is […] as far as inner intuition is concerned we cognize our own subject only as appearance but not in accordance with what it is in itself'' (Kant 1999: 258-9). Accordingly, as Andrew Bowie notes, the self-conscious I in Kant is an emptiness that empirical intuition will never be able to apprehend (Bowie 2006: 20-1). What is more, as Kant notes in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, this representation of the I is 'nothing more than a feeling of an existence without the least concept and it is only a representation of that to which all thinking stands in relation' (Kant 2004: 86). The whole contradictory edifice of Kantian thought is predicated upon the subject's two-fold alienation from the thing-in-itself and the subject-in-itself. As Henrich notes, Kant correspondingly denied the possibility of accessing the roots of the tree of knowledge (Henrich 2003: 38), where we are provided with a definitive, all-encompassing explanation for why things are as they are before the fact of existence. Knowledge is only ever possible *after* the spontaneous act of synthesis of the manifold, and the subject is spatially and temporally removed from any original 'truth' that might serve as the root of all possible knowledge, be it of the natural world or the identity of the self.[15]

III

Given Kant's insistence on contradiction, paradox and the subject's necessary inability to access these roots of knowledge, it is entirely fitting at this stage to

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[15] As will become apparent, Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov all accordingly refuse to provide a root explanation of why the literary object is as it is, for such representational-determinist explanation of art amounts to 'metaphysics'. Instead they merely 'specify' the qualities and attributes of literary art as a unitary system of contradictions.

emphasize the truly radical significance of his philosophy. The co-constitutive

nature of the great many contradictions which *are* the subject are not intended as a

mere description of the subject and the conditions that make its consciousness

possible. The very act of critique, of philosophy itself, is itself constitutive of the

dynamic praxis of subjectivity. For Kant, the discipline of metaphysics and its

subject-object are mutually constitutive of one-another in a manner entirely

consistent with those elements of consciousness he describes in the *Critiques*. In

other words, (object)-ive method and its object are mutually constitutive.

In light of the present discussion, the one near constant topos of the *Critique of Pure

Reason* that best conveys this radical relationship between method and object is

Kant's paradoxical treatment of motion.[16]   Motion holds a particular fascination for

Kant, and could even be said to be one of the key 'devices' that hold the whole

contradictory ontology together, and which allows the narrative of the first *Critique* to

progress from the proclamation of his own Copernican Revolution in philosophy in

the introduction, to the transcendental deduction of the forms of Time and Space in

the Transcendental Aesthetic, through to the transcendental analytic and logic, and

on to the Doctrine of Method. At the simplest of levels, Kant is excited by motion

because it presupposes something in addition to the representations of time and

space elaborated in the Transcendental Aesthetic, and therefore pertains to

empirical experience. The *a priori* forms of time and space, in and of themselves,

do not alter; it is only objects within time and space that shift and alternate, and

therefore the additional elements of empirical experience and the determining

faculty of the understanding are required for an object to be recognized as being in

motion: '[f]or this there is required the perception of some existence and succession

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[16] Kant's paradoxical treatment of motion is, in terms of the Formalists' 'non-linear' reception of his thought, of considerable importance. Tynianov will insist that literature and the literary fact are dynamic, and engaged in constant movement. In *Zoo*, Shklovsky expands on his earlier treatment of narrative as both static and restlessly dynamic, and hints that modernity itself is denoted by the paradoxical tension between stasis and movement.

of its determinations, thus experience' (Kant 1998: 180).   To offer an example which

is already familiar, it is only through temporal experience that the contradictorily

opposed determinations of the knight on the chess board can be successively

encountered. This, in turn, facilitates the *concept* of time, which pertains to the

understanding, and therefore explains the *possibility* of the mind's capacity for

synthetic *a priori* cognition *and* the empirical, scientific theory of the laws of physical

motion.[17]   Motion is, therefore, crucial to Kant's account of the conditions of

possibility of consciousness, where the synthetic *a priori* cognitions of

consciousness must be so in order for empirical experience to be not only possible,

but also objectively valid: 'But motion, as *description* of a space, is a pure act of the

successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive

imagination, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental

philosophy' (Kant 1998: 179-80).[18]

The essential paradox of Kant's treatment of motion is revealed in the phrase 'the

successive synthesis of the manifold'. Kant has said that motion requires empirical

experience beyond the representations of time and space, yet he also insists that

consciousness itself cannot intuit itself and lies beyond the reaches of empirical

experience. Kant therefore distinguishes between motion as the determination of an

object, and motion as the activity of the subject, that is, the very act of synthesis of

the manifold in time and space. With this activity, the motion of the subject's

consciousness *produces* the concept of succession. The inner intuition of the I is a

production of the imagination through its *affecting* inner sense. Were the self not a

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[17] The fundamental import that Kant grants this paradoxical theory of motion is demonstrated in the following remarks: 'Only in time can both contradictorily opposed determinations in one thing be encountered, namely *successively*. Our concept of time therefore explains the possibility of as much synthetic *a priori* cognition as is presented by the general theory of motion, which is no less fruitful (Kant 1998: 179-80).

[18] Kant adds: ''Here I add further that the concept of alternation, and, with it, the concept of motion (as alteration of place), is only possible through and in the representation of time – that if this representation were not *a priori* (inner) intuition, then no concept, whatever it might be, could make comprehensible the possibility of an alteration, i.e., of a combination of contradictorily opposed predicates (e.g., a thing's being in a place and the not-being of the very same thing in the same place) in one and the same object (Kant 1998: 179-80).

dynamic activity in motion, where contradictory intuitions are processed by the contradictory structure of *productive* consciousness *successively*, then Kant's whole project would fail. Kant insists that the immanent production and successive determinations of inner sense be ordered in time, and that the subject is, by virtue of this motion, denied access to the root truth of consciousness as it is in and of itself:

…hence we must order the determinations of inner sense as appearances in time in just the same way as we order those of outer sense in space […] if we admit about the latter that we cognize objects by their means only insofar as we are externally affected, then we must also concede that through inner sense we intuit ourselves only as we are internally affected *by ourselves*, i.e., as far as inner intuition is concerned we cognize our own subject only as appearance but not in accordance with what it is in itself (Kant 1998: 258-9).

Kant argues that even when there is no empirical motion, which is to say that there is *no* motion, there is still motion in the productive activity of the consciousness. The Kantian self is dynamic, a constantly moving praxis of intuition and production, but, to repeat, it is a dynamic praxis that always comes afterwards, be it the given material of intuition or the productive affectation of inner sense. If it is to constitute the subject, the material object *has* to come before its cognitive processing.

Henrich, who does not explicitly address the paradoxical figuring of motion in Kant, argues that this insistence on the dynamic subject that emerges through processing its object renders Kant's entire project historical, be it in terms of how Kant understands the activity of the self, or, no less significantly, how Kant understands the objective function of critique in the discipline of metaphysics.   Kant's accounting for the conditions of possibility is, cliché as it is to say it, an attempt to overcome the impasse between Humean scepticism on the one hand and dogmatic rationalism on the other. Kant's project of critique must, of necessity, come *after* these moments in the history of philosophy, and, if Kant is to succeed, these moments must be shown to be illusory, just as, analogously, Shklovsky sees himself as rejecting the illusion of Potebnian thinking-in-images in preference for the objectively determined material

work of literature. Accordingly, Henrich argues, the concept of the beginning

becomes highly problematic, as 'one cannot get to the truth all at once at the

beginning' (Henrich 2003: 32). Instead of the 'truth', Henrich sees Kant as

demanding that philosophy must develop a system of metaphysical statements and

proofs that accommodates contradiction, that accommodates the movement of the

dynamic self in its cognitive activity, and that therefore accommodates that moment

of illusion that came before it. Kant's philosophy, which argues that form and

content, object and representation, self and object are mutually constitutive within

the parameters of his immanent ontology, is therefore radical, in that it has profound

implications for the study of philosophy and how that philosophy constitutes its

object.

IV

It should be emphasized that this dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship of

method and its object cannot be figured as a variety of world view [*Weltanshauung* /

mirovozrenie] that explains human identity and all objective phenomena according

to some all-encompassing schema.[19] The fact that the subject, and therefore the

discipline of metaphysics, comes afterwards insists that there is a 'crack' in

ontology, that is, a gap that cannot be bridged, and there cannot be one total

schema capable of explicating everything. On this basis, Žižek argues that Kant

should not be understood as creating such a world-view philosophy: 'One can say

that, at least with Kant's transcendental turn, the exact opposite happens: does Kant

not fully expose a crack, a series of irreparable antinomies, which emerges the

moment we want to conceive reality as All?' (Žižek 2012: 8).[20] In his attack on Kant

in *Materialism and Empiro-criticism*, Lenin clearly sees himself as the true radical,

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[19] The problem of world-view will resurface periodically throughout this analysis. Boris Paramonov
has controversially argued that Formalism, particularly in the work of Shklovsky, amounts to a
'Hegelian' world-view where literature comes to self-consciousness (Paramonov 1996: 35-52).
[20] That Žižek discerns a 'crack' in Kant's ontology is consistent with Adorno's account of the *Critique
of Pure Reason*. See above, n. 4.

exposing Kant's insistence on the subject's disempowering alienation from the thing-in-itself as tantamount to an apology of religious faith and bourgeois capitalism. In exposing such 'ideology', Lenin effectively closes the gap between subject and object, and locates the 'graduated flunkies' of academic discipline within the praxis of capitalism. Michael Heinrich, like many others before him, argues that much of the content of Marxist-Leninism, of which *Materialism and Empiro-criticism* is a particularly crass example, is a world-view that explains all phenomena under a totalizing schema that accounts for identity, history, social relations and economics under an intentional theory of the proletariat's domination by the bourgeoisie. Kant insists that the identity of the human subject is contradictory. Lenin is unequivocal in arguing that the subject's identity *is* its social class, and the laws of historical development clearly determine its future trajectory towards the revolutionary seizure of power (Heinrich 2012: 25-6, 92, 221-2).

In contrast to the world-view that would drive the Bolshevik Revolution, where 'objective' convictions as to the path of world history and impatience would combine to combustible effect, Kant's own Copernican Revolution in philosophy dramatizes the contradiction at the heart of Kantian objectivity, where the dynamic praxis of the finite self and determinations of the natural world made under the rubric of the natural sciences are, paradoxically, mutually constitutive. Copernicus proclaimed that the old certainty that the heavenly bodies orbited the earth was an illusion and, in accordance with Newton's theory of gravity, that the heavenly bodies and the earth orbited the sun. Paul Guyer perceptively notes how it is tempting to regard Kant as mistaken in his allusion to Copernicus. It is easy to imagine a pragmatic materialist such as Lenin stating that Kant's concept of the thing-in-itself does the exact opposite to Copernicus's thought, in that Kant's 'idealism' argues that it is the subject's consciousness that creates the universe, and therefore he perpetuates the pre-Copernican universe of the heavenly bodies orbiting the earth, with the subject

standing in for the earth. Accordingly, Kant grants the individual (earth) the most

significant role in the motion of the galaxy and its determination (Guyer 2006: 49-

51). Yet this reading rather misconstrues Kant's position in the introduction to the

Critique of Pure Reason, where he argues that it was Copernicus's going against

then established material fact through speculative reasoning, which entails the

dynamic interplay of the oppositionally situated faculties of imagination,

understanding and reason. Copernicus was then subsequently able to demonstrate

the illusionary quality of the preceding truth, and objectively establish the validity of

his speculations through recourse to empirical data. Kant's 'radical' revolution

correspondingly wants to account for the possibility of both of these phenomena of

speculation and empirical sensory experience, the motion of the mind and motion

observed in the empirical world. [21] Kant's revolution is grounded in an objectivity of

illusions and paradox; the Bolshevik Revolution in reified material certainty that aims

to overcome illusions and class contradictions.

There is a potential danger of over-emphasising the ostensible parallel between the

self-in-motion and the physical motion discernible in the natural world and, on the

basis that both spheres share the common term 'motion', argue that Kant is in thrall

to the certainties of the natural sciences and tries to establish a consciousness that

merely replicates the structures of the natural sciences in order to justify their

possibility.   It is certainly tempting to extrapolate further from Kant's obvious

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[21] It is accordingly apparent that Kant's conditions of possibility are of an entirely different order to those outlined by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* [*Les Mots et les Choses*]. For Foucault, the conditions of possibility are the effective structural grounds of knowledge, the changes and evolution in which facilitate ruptures in knowledge. For example, Foucault provides a well-known quote from Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, where Berkeley argues against cause and effect and instead insists on a relationship between sign and signified. Summarizing this quote, Foucault states that 'The knowledge that divined, *at random*, signs that were absolute and older than itself has been replaced by a network of signs built up step by step in accordance with a knowledge of what is probable. Hume has become possible' (Foucault 2002: 66). Thus Foucault argues that Humean scepticism is made possible by the structural conditions of knowledge established by Berkeley.   It will be argued here that this is anathema to Kant, who entirely rejects such an idealist-determinist configuration of the properties of knowledge. For Kant, the conditions of possibility are how the mind must be in order to guarantee the *contradiction* of all preceding illusions and facilitate an endless variety of contradictory, objectively formulated propositions.

attraction to Copernican and Newtonian theories of motion. His insistence that there

is always motion even when there is no motion has manifest parallels with the

Copernican image of the world in constant motion around the sun, even when this

fact is not always apparent to sensory experience. Kant's drive to provide an

objectively valid account of metaphysics that provides a reliable basis of scientific

enquiry could be (and has been) construed as Kant's desire for a mathematical

theory of consciousness, or even a mathematical ontology of the world. Such a

Kant is clearly subject to the gravitational pull exerted by the natural sciences and

their capacity for establishing objective truths, a gravitational pull to which the

Russian Formalists will find themselves subject to no small extent.[22] It is not difficult

to imagine how, from the perspective of a Foucauldian genealogy, Kant's discursive

formations figure the then 'warranted knowledge' of the natural sciences as

historical ontologies of meaning and power that serve to naturalize the natural

sciences, and their accompanying objective claims to empirical truth.[23] From this

perspective, the human subject that emerges from the first *Critique* is effectively a

means to this end.

Yet Kant's radical insistence that certain aspects of the world and ourselves are

beyond the reach of such empirical knowledge must not be discounted here.   Kant's

resolution to locate certain components of the structures of consciousness beyond

sensory apprehension is undeniably accompanied by a strong zeal to formulate a

systematic account of metaphysics on an objective basis, but such objectivity does

not amount to a total endorsement of facts arising from empirically observed data as

the only viable basis for human knowledge. By objective, Kant is understood to

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[22] Bakhtin's criticism of Formalism's attraction to positivist science is made in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art' (Bakhtin 2003: 266; 1990: 257-8), and is discussed at length in the final chapter.
[23] Like the Formalists', Michel Foucault has also been frequently (& incorrectly) labelled 'idealist' (Eribon: 1989, 162-4 & 174). My use of the terms 'historical ontology' and 'discursive formation' are taken from (Foucault 2000b: 262-3) and (Foucault 2002: 34-54), and are indicative of a departure from the reified structuralism of *The Order of Things*.

mean a basis which can be said to proceed from universally valid principles in a manner akin to the natural sciences, and which does not proceed 'from contingent individual sentiments and emotions of the moment' (Hegel 2010: 84-5). As such, Kant demonstrates his ambivalent attitude to the sciences. The drive towards an objective account of the forms of intuition, the formal categories of the understanding, and towards an account of consciousness which justifies the natural sciences is contradicted by his intention to locate certain elements beyond the reach of such objective inquiry, even though such elements can indeed be objectively critiqued. This apparent paradox in Kant's thought is explained through his insistence on *a priori* moral freedom as the *de facto* condition of the human. Kant remarked in a letter to a friend that:

I am a scientist by inclination. I know the thirst for knowledge and the deep satisfaction of every advance of knowledge. There was a time when I believed all this knowledge could be the honour of mankind and I despised all those who were bereft of such knowledge. Rousseau has corrected me. I learned to honour man, and I would consider myself less worthy than the average worker if I did not believe that all this [meaning 'philosophy'] could contribute to what really matters—the restoration of the rights of mankind. (Kant, cited from Henrich 2003: 55)

This restoration of the rights of mankind is, however, predicated upon a strict insistence upon human finitude, be it in terms of absolute access to the sensory material world or to the properties of self-consciousness. It is equally an injunction to submit to the moral law of the categorical imperative. Freedom, as Henrich notes, *is* autonomy precisely because it is a self-originating law that we impose upon ourselves without the slightest possibility of its being deductively demonstrated according to objective, scientific principles. Hence Kant's paradoxical concept that freedom is the *fact* of reason from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, upon which factual status is conferred precisely because it is self-evident that the subject must submit to its law in accordance with the categorical imperative (Kant 1996: 164-5). Accordingly, the critical results of the activity of reason provide the objective principles for the activities of the empirical sciences, and the source of laws which

we impose upon ourselves. Henrich therefore insists that reason is practical for Kant. By practical reason, Henrich sees Kant as denoting 'not only the origin of the law, but also a sufficient cause of action in accordance with the law. In other words, it is an ethical demand, and provides both laws and the motivating impulses for doing actions that are in accordance with these laws' (Henrich 2003: 57-8). Like the thing-in-itself and the properties of self-consciousness, freedom, if it is to grant any meaningful concept of autonomy, must remain *beyond* the grasp of sensible intuition, a fact that 'cannot be deduced from any proposition or principle' (Henrich 2003: 58).

Like the *a priori* forms of intuition and categories of the understanding, it is possible to deduce transcendentally the structural properties of freedom *after* the event of the subject being constituted through what is given to it. It is through freedom that the mutually constitutive, contradictory determinacy of the worlds of the intellect and the sensible, form and content, are ascertained: 'Because freedom is a kind of causality, it determines not only laws that belong to the intelligible world, but also actions whose effects are known in the sensible world. So we cannot speak about freedom unless we speak about the intellectual and the sensible worlds… [Freedom is] a principle of insight and a principle of real connection' (Henrich 2003: 58).[24] Accordingly, it is through freedom that the contradictory impulses towards scientific truth and a capacity for moral autonomy can co-exist within the range of objective human activities and even within objective consciousness itself (note that it is to the faculty of *reason* that Kant attributes freedom and not to that of the understanding). It can even be said that freedom is the dynamic movement between contradictions, be it those of the mind or the practical activity of the subject faced with the illusory

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[24] Over the subsequent chapter, this analysis will return to the question of Kantian freedom in terms of the Formalists' conceptualization of the creative author and her role in literary creation, that is, with a view to arguing that their insistence upon a contingent material object and objectively determined laws of literary construction do not necessarily imply the author has no freedom in the face of that which she is not.

material world. This motion between contradictions allowed Copernicus to advance

human knowledge, precisely because the mind's capacity for speculative reason is

free and *ought* to contradict the illusory discourses of established truths.

Contradiction is, for Kant, an indispensable attribute of freedom and the praxis of

critique itself. In a typically celestial analogy, Kant notes that it may occur to a dove

that flight would be easier in a vacuum, for it would not meet the resistance of the

air. Plato, according to Kant, made a similar decision when he left the material

world of the senses and the narrow limits it sets for the understanding, daring to 'go

beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of pure understanding.'

Neither the dove nor Plato realize that the prolonged flight of philosophical thought

requires contradiction if it is to sustain itself. Plato, Kant concludes, 'did not notice

that he made no headway by his efforts, for he had no resistance, no support, as it

were, by which he could stiffen himself, and to which he could apply his powers in

order to put his understanding into motion' (Kant 1998: 129).

From this vantage point, it is by no means impossible to map the convergences

between Kant's first *Critique*, practical philosophy and the essay 'What is

Enlightenment?', where he argues that enlightenment is the human being's

emergence 'from its self-incurred minority' (Kant 1996: 17). The path of this

emergence entails the exercise of the subject's reason in private and public, taking

responsibility for the arts, sciences and publishing criticisms of state legislation with

a view to its improvement. It is only through encountering the resistance of public

contradiction that the struggle onwards towards enlightenment is possible. This

ontology of contradictions is, as has already been argued in the present discussion,

a very delicately poised system, and attempts to bridge the gap that Kant insists

pervades all aspects of knowledge can disturb its balance. On the basis of the

essay 'What is Enlightenment?', the price for freedom's dynamic, precarious

balance is the socio-political structure of enlightened monarchy, where the monarch

does everything within her power to preserve the moral freedom of her subjects.

The alternative of absolute democracy is, for Kant, impossible:

But only [a monarch] who, himself enlightened, is not afraid of phantoms, but at the same time has a well-disciplined and numerous army ready to guarantee public peace, can say what a free state may not dare to say: *Argue as much as you will and about what you will; only obey!* Here a strange, unexpected course is revealed in human affairs, as happens elsewhere too if it is considered in the large, where almost everything is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom seems advantageous to a people's freedom of spirit and nevertheless puts up insurmountable barriers to it; a lesser degree of the former, on the other hand, provides a space for the latter to expand to its full capacity… (Kant 1996: 22)

It is not difficult to imagine Lenin insisting that Königsberg's ultimate graduated flunkey is prepared to pay too heavy a price for such a paradox, and that the imperative to '*only obey'* in the face of a large army reveals a conservative tendency towards the oppression of those 'average workers' to which Kant regards himself as being superior, and the masked ideology of religious faith. Viewed from this perspective, Kant's pretensions towards restoring the rights of mankind should therefore, of course, be judged with suspicion.

Whilst such objections to Kant's thought must be acknowledged, it is no less important to acknowledge that the many subsequent *contradictions* of Kant's precarious *balance of contradictions* risk distorting his entire project. In light of the current discussion that has argued that this paradoxical balance of contradictions can be figured in historical terms, and thereby map history in non-linear knight's moves, it must be noted that this paradigm is *not* applicable when figuring those contradictions of Kant's thought where the precarious balance is lost. Neither Lenin's stubborn insistence that idealism equates to repressive religious dogma,[25]

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[25] It should be noted that Kant is most insistent that, if the subject is to emerge from its self-imposed minority, then it must free itself from religious dogma and religious explication of all worldly phenomena. Kant also insists that the task of the ruling monarch in this society-towards Enlightenment is to 'leave it to his subjects to do what they find it necessary to do for the sake of their salvation', and only react negatively when the mutually beneficial law of the categorical imperative is violated by one self-interested subject seeking advantage over others (Kant 1996: 20). It is debateable whether the Soviet Union ever lived up to such a utopian formulation, both during and after Lenin's lifetime.

nor the argument that Kant conjures a mathematical self in order to justify the oppressive authority of the natural sciences are adequate to the full paradox of Kant's thought when it is considered 'in the large'. Lenin clearly believes himself to be the true radical when he effectively plugs the gap between thing-in-itself and subject with the argument that such idealism is an illusion that masks religious and bourgeois-capitalist ideology. Yet is not Kant the true radical here, in that he insists that the gap *cannot* be bridged and, correspondingly, that reality is of necessity an illusion and a contradiction? In terms of Lenin's world-view iteration of Marxism, it is certainly possible to map a degree of continuity through contradiction from Kant to Lenin concerning their shared desire for the restoration of the rights of mankind through the unmasking of illusions,[26] but the full import of Kant's philosophy of contradictory structures cannot be said to figure in Lenin's thought beyond his reified and crudely materialist iterations of class struggle and proletarian revolution, be it in the dogmatically rational *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* or elsewhere in his work.

Unlike Kant, Lenin sees no need to separate the fields of science and freedom, arguing that any suggestion that freedom pertains to some 'value' beyond the reaches of empirical knowledge is idealist obfuscation. Freedom can be objectively determined in the objective reality of proletarian solidarity, organization and revolution, and therefore empirical 'fact' must be separated from the illusory field of 'value'. Kant does separate all elements of knowledge into distinct spheres, but he also insists on their contradictory interaction once the act of consciousness is set in *autonomous* motion, and the outcome of this process is open-ended in a way which Lenin is not prepared to admit. As Andrew Bowie notes, 'Kant's separation of the spheres of epistemology and ethics into different aspects of ourselves mirrors the ways in which the spheres of science and technology become separated from the

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[26] There is a crucial difference here. Lenin insists that Kant's brand of idealism *is* itself illusory, but it is an illusion that masks reality as it is determined by the parameters of empirical science and the historical certainty of 'Marxist' historical laws. Kant denies this and insists that all claims to the real are illusory and must be so if we are to be free.

spheres of law and morality in modernity' (Bowie 2003: 24). Yet, such a separation is not, Bowie argues, programmed by Kant himself. Kant should not be understood as initiating the modernity of 'fact' and 'value' of which Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* is so crude an example. Bowie perceptively notes that '[t]he last thing Kant would have wanted are the concrete consequences of the division between what will become reduced in much of the philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to "fact" and "value". What he sought were ways of unifying understanding and reason without falling back into "dogmatic rationalism"' (Bowie 2003: 25).

Kant's practical variety of transcendental idealism therefore problematizes this modernity of 'fact' and 'value' even before it has been initiated, and is, potentially, an example of how what Renfrew terms a deconstructive synthesis through negation serves to limit and problematize much in modernity that would come after the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Russian Formalism will provide an unexpected opportunity for Kantian paradoxes to emerge 'in the large' through how it objectively figures the aesthetic object and its ostensible autonomy from all other fields. However, Kant himself would make a significant step towards bridging the gap which he programmes in all areas of knowledge in the first *Critique*, and, crucially, it is the field of art and the feelings it provokes in the human body to which he turns in order to make this regressive move.

V

Kant's desire to avoid dogmatic rationalism and his commitment to the practical would lead him further away from the objective, scientific mode of engaging with the natural world in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. In the third critique, Kant still adheres to the demand for a universal, objective discipline of philosophical inquiry, yet his reasoning is directed toward a conceptualization of the natural world which differs from that found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The natural world

found in the third *Critique* is both a unified system and one which is *a priori* endowed with a higher principle that, by analogy, guarantees the moral subject's freedom. The reasoning with which Kant arrives at this conceptualization of nature is found in the introduction to the third *Critique*, where Kant formulates the concept of the reflective judgement, which differs from the *determining* judgement so prevalent in the natural sciences (Kant 2000: 3-51, 66-8).   Kant is particularly pre-occupied with a determining judgement that will prove troubling and productive for the Russian Formalists in equal measure in how they figure genre: the move from the general to the particular (Kant 2000: 15-17). Bowie notes how, for Kant, this move towards the particular is, in the natural sciences, a move of domination over the object, isolating and codifying the properties of a given object in a manner which anticipates its exploitation (Bowie 2003: 25-7). The higher principle in the natural world discerned by Kant is that it is *purposive* and productive. Nature is, therefore, serving as a substitute for the Kantian *subiectum*, and, through analogy, accounts for a *purposive* synthesis of intuitions through the faculties of the understanding. In order to establish the validity of this analogy, Kant differentiates between physical *sensation*, which pertains to the objective experience of the natural world, and our *feeling* of the natural world (Kant 2000: 11-13).[27]

In contrast to sensation, feeling is not a representation of an object and relates solely to the subject, and provides no knowledge whatsoever about the object that provokes such feelings. Equally, this feeling cannot be reduced to the subject's self-interest, for if feeling were reduced to interest then it would merely facilitate the domination of the object. Such a dis-interested feeling pertains to the judgement of whether an object is *beautiful* or not, and such a judgement cannot, for Kant, be accompanied by any manifestation of self-interest or the prospect of material

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[27] In emphasizing the distinction Kant makes between feeling [*Gefűhl*] and sensation [*Empfindung, Sinnesempfindung*], and their significance regarding reflecting and determining judgements, I am following Bowie's account of Kant's aesthetics (Bowie 2003: 28-32).

advantage. The historical accumulation of judgements of whether an object is beautiful or not, grounded in the subject's autonomous feelings of pleasure, are judgements of taste that are based in the universal ground of common sense. As Bowie writes: 'The feeling of pleasure upon which judgement is founded derives from the sense of a harmony in nature, which the understanding, that activity of the subject which can be seen in some sense as dominating the object, cannot establish' (Bowie 2003: 30-1). In order to distance the judgement of taste from the potentially dominating power which often accompanies a determining judgement, Kant terms the judgement of taste an *aesthetic* judgement. Kant argues: 'By the designation 'an aesthetic judgement about an object' it is therefore immediately indicated that a given representation is certainly related to an object but that what is understood in the judgement is not the determination of the object but of the subject and its feeling' (Kant 2001: 25). Such aesthetic judgements are accompanied by the free play of the cognitive faculties of the understanding and the imagination, and as such can equally be considered as objective and subjective, and therefore merit the paradoxical term aesthetic judgement, which is, so Kant argues, a variety of the broader reflective judgement which he initially uses to counter-pose the oppressive power of determining judgement.

The extent to which Kant has moved on from the precarious structure of antinomies in the first *Critique* towards a unitary structure which can be said to sublate such contradictions is apparent in the following passage:

Thus an aesthetic judgement is that whose determining ground lies in a sensation that is immediately connected with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. In the aesthetic judgement of sense it is that sensation which is immediately produced by the empirical intuition of the object, in the aesthetic judgement of reflection, however, it is that sensation which the harmonious play of the two faculties of cognition in the power of judgement, imagination and understanding, produces in the subject insofar as in the given representation the faculty of the apprehension of the one and the faculty of presentation of the other are reciprocally expeditious, which relation in such a case produces through this mere form a sensation that is the determining ground of a judgement which for that reason is called aesthetic and

as subjective purposiveness (without a concept) is combined with the feeling of pleasure (Kant 2001: 26-7).

Thus the power of judgement Kant advances in the third *Critique* is an attempt to overcome the contradictions that exist in the first *Critique*: between reason and the understanding; and appearance and the given. On the basis of such 'reciprocally expeditious' activity, Kant proceeds to argue that this power of judgement, and the purposive art and nature with which it is analogous, guarantees autonomy. The aesthetic judgement is, so Kant argues, universally and of necessity valid, as its determining ground resides in feelings of pleasure and displeasure *and* in a rule of the higher, *productive* faculty of cognition. Such a rule, like that of categorical imperative and its status as a fact of reason, is legislative and, through the faculty of reflection, demonstrates autonomy. This autonomy, inevitably, cannot and indeed *must not* be demonstrated empirically and cannot be demonstrated as objectively valid. Kant terms this autonomy 'heautonomy', as it is only to itself that the power of judgement bequeaths its autonomy, and provides no law to nature or freedom. It exists solely 'for comparing present cases to others that have been given to it and thereby indicating the subjective conditions of the possibility of this combination *a priori*.' (Kant 2001: 27-8).

VI

Many of the tensions that run through the current discussion are restaged to dramatic effect in the work of Hegel. Along with Bakhtin and Kant, Hegel is yet another figure whose work is pervaded by a stark contradiction, where one more open-ended strand of his thought serves to contradict and limit a tendency towards reification and closure. In Hegel's case, the stakes are undeniably higher than with either Bakhtin or Kant, with questions of totalitarian domination, martial conflict and a teleological determination of history's trajectory in uneasy tension with open and ambiguous iterations of determinacy, social inter-relationship and a dynamic praxis of dialectical reasoning that resists final closure.   Hegel's early work on love aside,

it is possible to summarize (albeit crudely) the works which fall into the two opposing sides. The first, 'greater', *Logic* best exemplifies the latter tendency, whereas *The Philosophy of Right* and *The Philosophy of History,* exemplify the latter, with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* sitting uneasily in both camps. It is therefore Hegel's treatment of the mind and logic that is the more open ended, whereas his discussion of historical events in the material world tends to provide more troubling conclusions. And, as with Kant, Hegel's contribution to aesthetics lacks the truly radical potential of his critique of the properties of consciousness and its potential for autonomous cognition, and, like Kant, Hegel denies the aesthetic that same contradictory ontology bequeathed to consciousness in its dynamic activity.

If Hegel's thought merely reiterated those same problematics in Kantian thought that would paradoxically re-emerge in some aspects of Russian Formalism, there would be little point in incorporating a critique of his philosophy into the current discussion. Yet, with one far reaching contribution, Hegel's thought provides an additional deformation of Kant's treatment of antinomies, motion and the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge; and, a contribution that it is vital to address in order to adequately grasp the theories of Eikhenbaum, Tynianov and, particularly, Shklovsky. This contribution is perhaps the ultimate expression of that tradition in modern European thought that does not conceive of form and content dualistically, and rather conceptualizes the two terms as mutually constitutive of one-another. It is, of course, Hegel's dialectic. Conveniently, Hegel's most renowned formulation of the term is found in his account of objectivity in *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, and, given its location in that open-ended, paradoxical and more radical strain of his thought, succinctly demonstrates the dynamic, ambiguous contradictions that *of necessity* beset all objective knowledge. Furthermore, Hegel's thought is worth including here because, like Kant, his disappointing treatment of aesthetics foreshadows the

reception of Formalist thought in the Soviet 1920s, particularly at the hands of Bakhtin.

According to his above-mentioned definition of objectivity, Hegel argues that Kant provided a new definition that contradicted conventional usage of the term. For Hegel, the popular linguistic usage of objectivity in everyday life denoted 'what is on hand outside of us and reaches us from the outside by means of perception' (Hegel 2010: 84). Kant, so Hegel argues, provided an alternative usage which has since become conventional, and if a proposition was said to be objective, then it was understood as being universally valid and making no recourse to external elements in order to prove its validity, and which therefore does not proceed from 'contingent individual sentiments and emotions of the moment' (Hegel 2010: 84). Kant's transcendental deduction of the validity of synthetic *a priori* cognition argued that, when formulated on the correct critical basis, the properties of the mind and cognition itself can be said to be objective. Whereas previously the workings of the mind could not be said to be objective because they are not 'on hand outside of us', they were subsequently held to be objective because, according to Kant, his act of objective critique constitutes objective propositions that do not require recourse to any external elements in order to prove their validity. Sensory intuition of the material world, that is, that which had previously been held to be objective in popular every-day usage, is thus rendered *subjective* in Kant's thought, because it cannot be said to be objective until it is shown to be universally valid and not contingent upon other external factors. Hegel contends that, significant as Kant's argument was, it is still ultimately subjective 'insofar as thoughts, despite being universal and necessary determinations, are, according to Kant, *merely our* thoughts and distinguished from what the thing is *in itself* by an insurmountable gulf' (Hegel 2010: 85). True objectivity, Hegel believes, lies in recognizing that 'thoughts are not merely our thoughts but at the same time the *in itself* of things and of the object-world

[*gegenständlichen*] in general' (Hegel 2010: 85). Like Kant, Hegel is here insisting that thought is a practical activity, but he goes a step further. Kant is prepared to tolerate a mutually constitutive contradiction, where the material objects of the natural world are *other* to consciousness, both in terms of the *thing-in-itself* being other to the forms of intuition and the categories of the mind, *and* how the material of sensuous intuition is other to the faculties of understanding, reason and the productive imagination. Yet Kant also demands that despite this radical, immanent otherness that exists within the mind, the dynamic activity of consciousness is constituted through being conscious of something, that is, through the mind being conscious of that which it is not. For Hegel, this is ultimately 'subjective', and the material objects of the natural world *are* the concrete reality of thought itself in its historical development.

As already noted, Henrich argues that Kant's project of practical critique is of necessity historical, and objective knowledge is always constituted through coming afterwards. In Hegel, this implicit historical aspect of objective knowledge in Kant's thought receives explicit iteration in his insistence that all objective knowledge is immanently dialectical. Indeed, Hegel's treatment of objectivity is all too obviously an example of his own dialectic at work. Crudely put, Hegel's dialectics involve a moment of sensory immediacy which is disturbed by determinacy's power of negation, where any given proposition is shown to contain that which it is not, which in turn is overcome by the movement to the third, a position which incorporates elements of both the preceding elements and returns sensory to immediacy. In this instance, the 'objectivity' of immediate, sensory experience of the 'at hand' material world is contradicted by the determinate Kantian 'objectivity' of the mind and its universally valid cognitions. Hegel's own concept of objectivity sublates the two preceding moments by insisting on the sensory immediacy – the concrete reality –

of objective thought itself in its dialectical becoming.[28] The argument that consciousness is dialectical is comparable to Kant's insistence that consciousness is a practical activity that is set in motion, as it *moves* from sensory immediacy through the negative moment of difference and contradiction, before the historical moment of sublation and the return to sensory immediacy. Kant's objective *critique* is itself an example where the dynamic motion of the mind is both the object of Kant's study and the practical, methodological process by which Kant undertakes that study. In the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel sees this process, where thought examines itself through the practical activity of thought, as being of necessity dialectical, and a constant movement towards negation and sublation. Hegel makes a particularly bold claim for this objective synthesis between the forms of thought and their practical activity: 'This is the activity of thinking that will soon be considered under the name of *dialectic*, about which a preliminary remark must here suffice, namely that it is to be regarded not as something brought to bear on thought determinations from outside of them, but instead as immanent in them' (Hegel 2010: 84). The dialectical motion of objectivity moving from sensory immediacy, to universal necessity and on to the concrete immediacy of thought itself is, for Hegel, the immanent condition of thought itself. And in the greater *Logic*, Hegel offers the definition of life as the concrete and dialectical becoming of the concept, that is, the site where sensory immediacy is followed by the objective becoming of thought itself as immanent to the material object (Hegel 2010: 676).

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[28] According to the argument being advanced here, it is arguable that Hegel's dialectical account of objectivity does itself disturb the precarious balance of Kant's thought, in that it fails to recognize the concrete, *practical* consequences of the object being constituted through the given, and therefore fails to appreciate the concrete nature of reason in Kant's thought. Indeed, when advancing the concept of the fact of reason in the second *Critique*, Kant does appear to explicitly differentiate between subjective and objective in the sense that 'subjective' pertains to the mind and objective to the material world. He nevertheless insists that an objective account of the fact of reason is possible, in the sense that it is a universally valid proposition that does not require any supporting additional elements (Kant 1996: 164-66). However, it is more important to emphasize how Hegel's objective dialectic establishes the implicit historical, dynamic and practical attributes of Kantian objectivity in a single epistemological - ontological figure.

Within the confines of the two works which share the title *The Science of Logic,*

Hegel's insistence that objective thought is both object and its praxis has genuinely

radical implications. The dialectical workings of critique must, of necessity,

constitute oppositions and contradictions as the moments that emerge during the

trajectory beyond sensory immediacy. Yet, as John Burbidge correctly points out,

these oppositions are not simply moments of radical difference and otherness that

emerge through negation, but are conditioned by each other, and moments of

opposition and contradiction effectively continue in any subsequent sublation, and

which therefore need not of necessity be deemed to have *overcome* the opposition

in a positive synthesis (Burbidge 2007: 101-5).[29] As a result, Hegel's entire

philosophical system is one where contingency is not overcome in the drive towards

an 'absolute idea', but is immanently (and paradoxically) present within thought

itself, and what is actual or 'real' in Hegel's *Logics* is always a moment in the on-

going dialectical trajectory of objectivity. Accordingly, form and content emerge as

mutually constitutive of one-another in the absolute idea. If thought-praxis is to be

objective in the sense Hegel intends, then it must be contingent if it is to have that

very universal objectivity, just as the universal properties of synthetic *a priori*

cognition require a contingent object to be given to them in Kant. And like Kant, the

dialectical movement of thought is constitutive of drives towards advancing

knowledge and the moral good, and the demand for objectivity in life is ethical:

In other words, the idea in and of itself involves integrating the theoretical drive for
truth with the practical drive to achieve the good. Not only does each complement
the other, but each on its own shows up the limitations of the other… When theory
and practice continually check and reinforce each other we have a way of
integrating concept and actuality that is valid in all respects (Burbidge 2006: 103).

Hegel's insistence on immanent dialectical movement results in the present taking

on an acute significance in his thought. The drives which Burbidge identifies in

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[29] Burdbidge's insight will prove particularly useful with regard to Tynianov's dialectical figuring of
literary functions, especially the relationship between material and constructive function advanced in
'The Literary Fact', as well as Tynianov's argument against authorial intention.

Hegel's dialectical logic are relentlessly focused on accounting for the now, that is,

the practical context of their own present. In the preface to the *Phenomenology of*

Spirit, Hegel demands that this present is always historical, and the practical activity

of the mind always comes after a given state of affairs. The idea of the beginning is,

for Hegel, utterly invalid. 'Religion', 'Love', 'Substance', 'Absolute', 'Subject' and the

other dominant topoi of then contemporary philosophy are pre-established. But they

are, Hegel insists, constantly changing and it is the task of philosophy to adequately

conceptualize the specificity of given proposition in its dialectical evolution (Hegel

1977: 1-4, 10). This results in a paradoxical (and highly productive)

conceptualization of anachronism in Hegel's thought. On the one hand, all human

cognition is anachronistic as it comes after an oppressive morass of pre-determined

content. Yet, on the other hand, Hegel insists that any iteration of content is of

necessity finite, and this predetermined content must never be regarded as fixed or

reified. For Hegel *any* account of reality which does not address finite dialectical

reality in its full complexity is itself an anachronism, as it does not adhere to that

ethical drive to account for truth. If an objective and scientific philosophy is to

conceptualize *adequately* its present reality it must account of this paradoxical

tension between the anachronistic nature of all knowledge, and the anachronistic

nature of reified or 'universal' iterations of 'truth'.[30]

Abounding in such a fertile admixture of contingency, possibility, necessity, truth and

the moral good, the dynamic, dialectical practice of objective thought shares many

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[30] A useful, if challenging, example from Hegel's thought can be found in his treatment of 'pointing' to an object in the present 'now' which he makes during his elaboration of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel proceeds from stating that 'The Now is pointed to, *this* Now. 'Now'; it has already ceased to be in the act of pointing to it. The Now that *is*, is another Now than the one pointed to...'. The 'Now' accordingly takes on an acute historical significance, where a given now must contain within itself the 'plurality of Nows all taken together'. By the same logic Hegel argues that: 'The *Here pointed out*, to which I hold fast, is similarly a *this* Here which, in fact, is *not* the Here, but a Before and Behind, an Above and Below, a Right and Left'. Hegel sums up this argument by stating that: 'It is clear that the dialectic of sense-certainty is nothing else but the simple history of its movement or of its experience, and sense-certainty itself is nothing else but just this history' (Hegel 1977: 63-4). For an accessible critical discussion of Hegel's argument here, see (Houlgate 2013: 33-42).

of the radical properties of Kantian critique before the 'reciprocally expeditious' closure between subject, art and the natural world in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. In both cases, the practical activity of life itself is the dynamic, objective activity of reason and the struggle for the good. However, like Kant, Hegel's treatment of aesthetics is a contradiction that serves to undermine the radical and even emancipatory potential of objective thought:

We must admit, of course, that the work of art has not in itself movement and life. An animated being in nature is within and without an organization appropriately elaborated down to its minutest parts, while the work of art attains the semblance of animation on its surface only, but within is common stone, or wood and canvas, or as in the case of poetry, is idea, uttering itself in speech and letters. But this aspect, viz., its external existence, is not what makes a work into a production of fine art; it is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of the mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind, has received the baptism of the spiritual, and only represents that which has been moulded in harmony with the mind (Hegel 2004: 33).

Žižek contends that the most positive attribute of dialectical critique of all cultural phenomena is that it fails in some way, or, in other words, that it fails to provide absolute answers demanded by worldviews and simplistic identity politics.[31] Yet when Hegel writes, in the above passage, that 'the work of art has not in itself movement and life', and is merely constituted by its material properties of wood, stone or canvas, there is the sense that there is definitely an apparent failure, albeit not quite the variety Žižek evidently has in mind. On the basis of Hegel's dialectical figuring of objectivity, knowledge is shown to be constituted of contradictions, and thereby maintain a trajectory towards what is 'at hand' in the material world and the activity of the mind with a view to the transitory, fallible nature of all determinate propositions as they lie in an endless move towards sublation. Yet Hegel's

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[31] Žižek's argument is again consistent with Adorno's conceptualization of the post-Kantian, 'cracked' ontology: 'It is true that one finds in Hegel a systematic drive to cover everything, to propose an account of all phenomena in the universe in their essential structure; but this drive does not mean that Hegel strives to locate every phenomenon within a harmonious global edifice; on the contrary, the point of dialectical analysis is to demonstrate how every phenomenon, everything that happens, fails in its own way, implies a crack, antagonism, imbalance, in its very heart. Hegel's gaze upon reality is that of a Roentgen apparatus which sees in everything that is alive the traces of its future death' (Žižek 2012: 8).

contradiction of such objective dialectics is a contradiction of a different order, in that it is a contradiction of precisely that dialectical knowledge identified by Žižek that will always fail, and hints at a reified or 'monologic' proposition. Dieter Henrich's *Between Kant and Hegel* includes an account of German Idealism where the entire philosophical movement is to no small extent calibrated as a contradiction of Kant's multi-dimensional construction of paradoxes and oppositions, particularly with regard to Kant's injunction against accessing the roots of the tree of knowledge. The contradictions of Kant's system of contradictions made by Fichte, Jacobi, Schiller, Schelling, Reinhold and Hegel are, for Henrich, frequently reductive treatments of Kant's philosophy and struggle to contain the full, radical scope of the 'all crusher's' paradoxical system. Though Henrich does not explicitly address the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* in *Between Kant and Hegel*, Kant's turn to aesthetics is precisely such a reductive move away from his position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and paves the way for subsequent, reductive contradictions of his own thought. Hegel's suggestion that art is now dead and does not have in itself movement and life is a clear contradiction of his own programme for objective dialectical knowledge, in that he commits the same 'subjective' error that he identifies in Kant's thought, insisting that it is art that is not a dynamic, contradictory thing immanently alive with *objective* conceptual contradictions. It is the latter that insists on the failure of all critical propositions, while the former fails precisely because it is an absolute proposition that does not accommodate the fallible, illusory nature of all determinate propositions in their endless trajectory towards negation and sublation.

It is important to emphasize that these striking contradictions in the thought of Kant and Hegel do not undermine their ongoing utility in critical praxis. As noted above, Renfrew discerns a contradiction in the Bakhtin Circle's thought between open, inter-determinate, embodied dialogue and crude materialism, and identifies in this

tension the possibility of a deconstructive synthesis through negation. It is not difficult to discern such a deconstructive synthesis between Kant's and Hegel's writings on aesthetics and their respective treatments of objective knowledge. Kant implicitly argues that the aesthetic is autonomous precisely because it is a substitute for the autonomous moral subject. Hegel argues that the aesthetic is not autonomous and requires the subject's critical activity to give it life beyond its material properties. For Kant and Hegel it is the subject and its conceptual activity that bestow the aesthetic with its 'essential' properties, and the latter becomes a substitute for the former; and in both instances the contradictory figurings of objective knowledge as paradoxical are lost, and, through the aesthetic's substitution it is effectively denied the radical, paradoxical and finite constitution that, in their own ways, Kant and Hegel accord knowledge of self and the material world through the objective praxis of critique.

In Hegel's case this contradiction is all the more surprising, given that it is precisely *art* to which Hegel turns in order to assert the importance of Kant's contribution to the philosophical conceptualization of objectivity: 'Thus, for instance, one demands that the judgment about a work of art be objective and not subjective, and by this is meant that the judgment should not proceed from contingent individual sentiments and emotions of the moment, but instead should take into consideration the universal points of view as they are grounded in the essence of art' (Hegel 2010: 85). It would be disappointing indeed if the 'essence' of art were nothing more than the material stuff of wood and canvas which await human cognition in order for them to be designated artistic. Hegel's demand that objectivity be of necessity the dialectical becoming of concrete thought *has* to require that the aesthetic object, if it is to be judged objectively, be deemed immanently dialectical, and subject to those same antinomic contradictions that constitute the act of critique for both Kant and Hegel. Kant grants the aesthetic autonomy through denying it any specificity as art

qua art, and makes it a substitute for the *a priori* morality of the subject through its purposiveness. Art must therefore remain unknowable due to its capacity to provoke pleasure in the beholding subject, and is correspondingly denied any empirical inquiry into that aspect of its objective properties. Hegel performs the same trick in reverse, by insisting that the artwork is knowable in its material thingly aspect, but any aesthetic qualities are discerned purely by the mind. In neither case does *objective* knowledge of art reside in its being dialectically constituted of contradictions (material and structural, historical and of the present, autonomous and contingent), which, in Žižek's interpretation, Hegel insists is the necessary state of the thing.

Hegel's disinclination to critique art according to his own terms of objective, immanently dialectical knowledge is all the more disappointing, given his insistence that art 'invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is' (Hegel 1975: 11). Kant's turn towards the aesthetic's unificatory promise was to no small extent driven by an anxiety over the reductive properties of determining judgement and anxiety over how to proceed from the general to the particular. Hegel's imperative to know philosophically what art is particularlizes art, but in doing so deprives art of the dialectical richness of philosophy as conceptualized by Hegel in the *Logics*. For Hegel, art 'has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place' (Hegel 1975: 11). Yet all philosophy seems to offer art is the crudely schematic recognition of form and content: 'What is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgement also, since we subject to our intellectual consideration (i) the content of art, and (ii) the work of art's means of presentation, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of both to one another' (Hegel 1975: 11). In his formulation of the absolute idea so valorized by Burbidge,

Hegel acknowledges the mutually constitutive relationship of form and content in concrete intellectual activity. In this banal treatment of art's dependency upon precisely such philosophical thought, all Hegel can provide is a dualistic iteration of form and content and observations as to the appropriateness of their relationship. Hegel insists that the '*philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction', and even suggests that such philosophical activity is undertaken with a view towards 'intellectual consideration', and not promoting further artistic creation (Hegel 1975: 11). Yet with these remarks Hegel risks depriving his philosophy of 'truth and life', and, in effectively proclaiming the death of art, invites the death of a reductive, idealistic philosophy at the hands of the equally crude and schematic Lenin in *Materialism and Empiro-criticism*, who would doubtless, and not without justification, perceive the workings of a haughty abstract idealism in these remarks.

Kant and Hegel clearly failed to live up to their own demands for objectivity when it came to the aesthetic. Over the subsequent pages of this analysis, it will be argued that just such an objective account of verbal art is provided in certain examples of Russian Formalist thought, where a radical materialist poetics constitutes a contradictory, paradoxical literary object-construction. Again, the orientation here is categorically not to assert that the theory of Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum is in any way Kantian or Hegelian. The Formalists were uniformly hostile to metaphysics or any instantiation of 'idealist' structures that insist meaning lies beyond the text's material boundaries. The assertion here is that precisely in differentiating themselves from these crudely schematic 'metaphysics' and 'idealisms' the Formalists facilitated the knight's move of paradoxical objectivity from Königsberg to the post-Revolutionary Soviet Union.

2: Device

I

By way of an opening remark to his ruthlessly incisive demolition of Andrei Bely's anthroposophic prose, Viktor Shklovsky proclaims that 'the particular elements constituting literary form will sooner quarrel with one another than co-habit' (Shklovsky 1929: 205). Elsewhere in his *Theory of Prose* [*O Teorii prozy*], Shklovsky defines art with the analogy of a difficult, crooked road that doubles back on itself, where the walker feels the stones beneath her feet (Shklovsky 1929: 24-5). This contorted road complements his more well-known analogy of art as the knight's move, a strange L-shaped trajectory that differs from the regular horizontals, verticals and diagonals performed by all the other pieces on the chess-board (Shklovsky 1990: 74). Shklovsky's primary objection to Bely's *Kotik Letaev* and the other texts of his anthroposophic *epopee* is that they are tainted by an ideology incompatible with art's inherent tendency towards quarrel, contradiction and confrontation. Bely's anthroposophic ideology is manifest in *Kotik Letaev*, which can be understood as Bely's eccentric attempt to relay the story of his Moscow childhood in accordance with the anthroposophic world view of Rudolf Steiner. This world view is essentially symbolic, and posits a root to all knowledge in the shape of a realm of truth that lies beyond material existence. Prior to birth, the subject pertains to this symbolic realm, and after birth the child retains an affinity with the symbolic realm that gradually diminishes as he grows through adolescence and into adulthood (Bely 1988: 214-389). Bely's narrative is accordingly a highly dubious variety of inverted *Bildungsroman*, where the pre-determinate state of childhood is the most elevated state of existence, as the correspondences between material reality and the symbolic are most apparent.[32] In his critique of the novel, Shklovsky

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[32] For critical discussion of Bely's engagement with anthroposophy, see (Alexandrov 1985: 104-139); Gerald Janachek's introductory essay 'From the Depths of Memory' in (Bely 1999: xi-xxii); (Elsworth 1983: 37-53); and (Hutchings 1997: 141-67). It is something of a cliché in studies of Bely's prose to

discerns a unitary two-tiered structure between the world of reality and a symbolic realm of truth that lies beyond, the correspondences between the 'real' and the symbolic falsely proclaiming the validity of the anthroposophic world view, and art's capacity to manifest a truth beyond itself. In both the ornamental prose essay and other writings on Bely, Shklovsky concedes that such a two-tiered literary structure is not without interest, in all likelihood because a double-layered structure has the potential to immanently contradict itself and, in the case of Bely's work, serve to negate and undermine the author's original intention. But it is the fact that Bely insists on a complementary relationship between the unified fields of reality and truth that he is undone by the contradictory properties of art itself. Shklovsky ruminates that any notion of a work of literature being a unity is 'more likely than not a myth' (Shklovsky 1929: 215).

As an alternative to ideology, unity and meaning 'beyond' the material limits of literary art, Shklovsky proposes that art *is* device. The devices Shklovsky discusses in his *Theory of Prose* include the pun [*kalambur*], the stepped structure [*stupenchatoe stroenie*], parody, retardation [*zaderzhanie*], laying bare the device [*obnazhenie priema*], defamiliarization [*ostranenie*] and non-recognition [*ne-uznavanie*]. These devices are, Shklovsky believes, pervasive in world literature and, if indeed it needs repeating, objective proof that so-called 'ethnographic' accounts of literature are totally invalid. By ethnographic, Shklovsky understands any of the then popular critical activity which claims that the material world of life determines art's content. Shklovsky argues that it is impossible to account for similarities in verbal art between indigenous cultures in the new world and that of European culture in positive terms of influence and social exchange. Accordingly, the objective, scientific study of literary art must insist that its object is autonomous

cite Shklovsky's observation in the 'Ornamental Prose' essay that Bely was then the most influential of all Russian writers. Few, however, acknowledge the derisive tone and withering criticisms Shklovsky makes of Bely's anthroposophic prose in the same essay.

from life. In addition, there must be universal laws which govern the form and construction of verbal art that, of necessity, must be conceptualized as immanent to literary art and which are categorically not the result of social forces determining literary form (Shklovsky 1929: 25-27). The 'materialism' of the ethnographic school, and Bely's anthroposophic 'beyond' are accordingly two sides of the same coin, in that both demand that the truth content of art is elsewhere, beyond its material boundaries. Shklovsky's project in the *Theory of Prose* is therefore twofold and paradoxical: first, he is interested in objectively determining the laws that govern literary structures; and second, he believes that these laws facilitate clashes and contradictions within literary form, and that these contradictions are immanent to literary art and require no recourse to external elements to guarantee their objective validity. The concept of the device is Shklovsky's solution to what, in light of the discussion in the previous chapter, is all too obviously a paradox reminiscent of Kant's account of human consciousness, where the structures of the mind must be located in contradiction to one another in order to account for consciousness's conditions of possibility, *and* simultaneously deny any access to the roots of the tree of knowledge that would, like either Bely or the ethnographic school, provide a total unitary theory of meaning that explains all and, as a result, limits human freedom.

Shklovsky's critique of Bely's failed autobiographical project, purportedly written in the comfortable environment of exile in Dresden, is consistent with his already noted opposition to Ukrainian philosopher Oleksandr Potebnia's concept of thinking in images, an opposition which is immediately proclaimed in Russian Formalism's programmatic text 'Art as Device' [*Iskusstvo kak priem*], and more extensively elaborated in Shklovsky's essay 'Potebnia'. As already noted, Shklovsky is staunchly opposed to Potebnia's formulation that art provides almost instantaneous access to a unitary understanding of a wide variety of phenomena, or explicates a complicated phenomenon beyond the image in simple terms. In other words, art's

images provide access to a realm of truth content beyond the material properties of the work of art itself. For Shklovsky, this paradigm is inadmissible, and is a variety of transcendental hogwash that has no role to play in any objectively codified poetics of literary art, which, if it is to have any validity, must not locate meaning beyond the material limits of the work of art itself (Shklovsky 1929: 7-10). Shklovsky's argument against the ethnographic school is based on the same demand that a truly objective study of literature cannot locate meaning beyond the limits of the text and, as with Tynianov and Eikhenbaum, any attempt to establish a unitary, deterministic correspondence between art and life is metaphysics. For these Russian Formalists, any differentiation between the 'content' of Potebnia's invocation of a transcendental ideal and the ethnographist's recourse to material reality does not merit serious consideration. In both instances the underlying structural relationship is the same, with art explained by a deterministic correspondence with a posited 'beyond' that lies outside its boundaries. As will become apparent, the Russian Formalists' primary interest is in contradictory constructions and the laws and relationships that provide the conditions of possibility of these constructions. In their work in the post-Revolutionary decade, Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov are first and foremost inclined to interpret (and dismiss) critical arguments on the basis of structural elements and relationships between their component terms. The positive 'content' of a particular proposition, be it 'transcendental' or 'materialist', is of secondary importance and, in the case of Bely's anthroposophic prose, liable to be contradicted and undermined by the formal, constructive principles of literary form.

II

The alternative of the device that Shklovsky offers to such 'Kantian' metaphysics is appropriately Kantian, and by criticising metaphysics he, along with Eikhenbaum and Tynianov, ironically ends up playing the role of the nephew who paradoxically

and indirectly inherits many of the qualities and ethical demands from his German

uncle in Königsberg. This device that contradicts other devices requires another

component in order for it to be objectively valid: somatic sensation. The entire critical

projects of Kant and Hegel begin with a moment of sensory immediacy and, in

Kant's case, proceeds to provide the conditions of possibility for this sensory

immediacy and the empirical perception for which it provides sensory material. For

Shklovsky, the primary manner through which we engage with art is sensory

immediacy, feeling that crooked road beneath our feet, and our somatic reaction to

certain works of literary art is, for Shklovsky, evidence that the art work is a

construction of devices, with different layers and elements that oppose and

contradict one another. Crucially, Shklovsky notes in a lengthy citation from Broder

Christiansen's *Philosophy of Art* that this somatic reaction to the defamiliarizing work

of art is beyond empirical perception and cannot be proven scientifically (Shklovsky

1929: 31-32).[33] This construction is almost identical with the Kantian metaphysical

paradigm which he regards himself as contradicting, particularly with regard to

Kant's differentiation between sensation and feeling, with the only significant

difference being the dynamic object in which this contradiction is located. In Kant's

case, it is *thought* that is the site of contradictory structures, paradox and inter-

relationships, and a practical activity of dynamic motion that is beyond the reach of

the empirical perception. Shklovsky, in contrast, insists that it is the work of art itself

which is the site of dynamic contradiction, but both approaches require a given

object and a sensuous subject if they are to function, and both, as a necessary

criterion of their objectivity, locate the somatic reaction to art outside the reaches of

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[33] Richard Sheldon translates the citation thus: 'Whenever we experience anything as *deviation* from the ordinary, from the normal, from a certain guiding canon, we feel within us an emotion of a special nature, which is not distinguished in its kind from the emotions aroused in us by sensuous forms, with the single difference being that its 'referent' may be said to be a sensation of a discrepancy [*oshchushchenie* (*sic) neskhodstvo*]. What I mean is that its referent stands for something inaccessible to empirical perception [*chuvstvennoe vospriatie*]. This is a field of inexhaustible richness because these differential perceptions are qualitatively distinguished from each other by their point of departure, by their forcefulness and by their line of divergence…' (Shklovsky 1998: 20-1, translation amended).

scientific, empirical knowledge. If Kant sees himself as identifying the conditions of possibility for synthetic *a priori* cognition, Shklovsky and his colleagues can therefore productively be regarded as determining literature's conditions of possibility, or, in other words, describing how literature must be in order for it to provoke a somatic response in the reader, albeit a response that objectively lies beyond the limits of scientific knowledge.

Shklovsky's dismissal of the closure of Potebnia's image and Bely's ideology begs the question as to what are the properties of Shklovsky's literary device that can be said to provide an alternative to such unitary schemas *and* account for the empirically undeterminable somatic response which designates an object as aesthetic. In 'Art as Device' Shklovsky proffers a tentative definition of art as the opportunity 'to experience the making of a thing' [*iskusstvo est´ sposob perezhit´ delan´e veshchi*] (Shklovsky 1929: 13). One of the primary means of facilitating the sensation of creating things is, of course, the device of defamiliarization or 'enstrangement' of the familiar. This device, by far Shklovsky's best known contribution to literary theory, is essentially a trajectory towards innovation, negation and difference. For the device of defamiliarization to be present, a particular object or cultural phenomenon is present in literary art in a manner which is new and departs from its previous conventionalised and common-place presence. The results of such defamiliarizations are the accompanying sensation of creativity, and the heightened sensation (or vision) of whatever element happens to be defamiliarized (Shklovsky gives various examples from Tolstoy, which include corporal punishment and a horse's thoughts on private property). The reader is thereby returned to what 'makes the stone stoney' through heightened somatic response, which contrasts with mere conventionalized recognition of the stone that, for Shklovsky, is tantamount to sleep-walking through life. This return to sensation is not, it is important to emphasize, Shklovsky inadvertently endorsing a

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representational paradigm of aesthetic activity, where the viewer is returned to a sensation of the stone through its representation in art. As Shklovsky insists, the referent is unimportant. The created thing experienced by the reader is art itself, and its contradictory juxtapositions of devices (Shklovsky 1929: 13).

There is certainly no shortage of critical discussion of Shklovsky's famous concept,[34] but it is genuinely surprising how little effort has been directed towards exploring the implications of defamiliarization in terms of what it implies about literary art's structural and constructive properties, and defamiliarization's shared attributes with those other devices of puns, stepped-structures, digressions and non-recognitions, which Shklovsky insists are exemplary of literature's tendency towards constructive quarrels and contradictions.   The fundamental paradox of defamiliarization's heightened somatic perception of the conventionalized 'thing' is its insistence on negation or, in other words, it has to involve some additional element that is *different* or *other* to its conventionalized presence in literary art if it is to break with hackneyed and conventionalized instantiations. The defamiliarized individual actions of corporal punishment and the horse's thoughts on private property are, as necessary criteria of their innovativeness, moments of otherness and difference that correspond obliquely with conventionalized forms. A similar structural relationship between elements is to be found in how Shklovsky conceptualizes literary narrative. Shklovsky prefers the description of events strung into a literary construction as a stepped form. Consistent with the implicit treatment of negation in defamiliarization, Shklovsky says of stepped forms that they manifest how the literary thing divides 'into two or three segments that reflect or confront one-another' (Shklovsky 1929: 80). This moment of division immanent to the literary construction itself

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[34] Two recent issues of *Poetics Today* were devoted to defamiliarization. See *Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005) and *Poetics Today* 27:1 (Spring 2006). Annie van den Oever has edited an anthology of essays devoted to the topic (Oever 2010), and Igorˊ Smirnov has conducted an interesting lecture devoted to defamiliarization (Smirnov 2013). Ilˊia Kalinin has written about the affinities between Shklovsky's most famous concept and Kant (Kalinin 2009), however he notes the convergences between Kant's concept of the sublime as elaborate in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

demonstrates a moment of difference *within* the literary work, where one element is negated by that which follows it in the narrative thread, and, recalling the Formalists' preference for construction over positive or nominal 'content', is entirely consistent with the movement towards negation implicit in defamiliarization.

There may, albeit initially, appear to be some inconsistency between these two instances of negation in Shklovsky's theory of literary construction. Defamiliarization, by definition, requires that a hackneyed element of literary art is rendered anew, and it is the moment of innovation that negates the common-place form. Stepped narrative forms are, on the basis of the examples provided by Shklovsky, a common feature of an enormous breadth of literary art, and do not require a moment of innovation in order to provide an immanent moment of negation and difference. Yet Shklovsky's essays on plot and narrative formation in the *Theory of Prose* foreground oppositions and contradictions in stepped and parallel structures, noting that it is often juxtapositional [*protivopostavlenie*] or antithetical relationships between the various elements that motivate a given narrative (Shklovsky 1929: 82). In addition, Shklovsky's preference for such devices as puns and moments of non-recognition are also exemplary of negation and difference. A pun, for Shklovsky, is one variety of non-recognition in literary art. A particular referent (it is usually sexual in Shklovsky's examples), is displaced through an alternative object which serves as its substitute. Non-recognition can take a variety of forms beyond puns. It can have a narrative function, causing a moment of retardation and necessitating a further scene. The eponymous hero of *King Lear* fails to recognize the character of Kent in order to retard and prolong the narrative. The figure of Don Quixote offers countless examples of mis-recognition as, suffering the effects of madness due to reading too many books, he fails to recognize common-place objects and accords them a status which is other to them. All of these devices are exemplary of Shklovsky's tendency to identify negation in

literary art, and such moments of negation serve to heighten somatic perception of literary art and prolong and make difficult the desire of storytelling 'for the sake of story-telling itself' [*…s motivirovkoi rasskazyvaniia radi rasskazyvaniia*] (Shklovsky 1929: 84). As such, any initial tension between the innovatory moment of defamiliarization and the conventionalized moments of step-structures and non-recognitions is dispelled once their shared properties of immanent negation are ascertained. Such devices manifest 'laws' of plot construction that account for art's non-unitary and contradictory qualities; or, in other words, they can be termed art's conditions of possibility, which account for the reader's somatic response.

III

In the essay 'The Structure of Fiction' [*Stroenie rasskaza i romana*], a brief discussion of Chekhov's *Notebooks* encapsulates many of the elements of Shklovsky's poetics under discussion, and foregrounds how moments of contradiction, difference and somatic response confer a material quality upon art. Shklovsky notes how a figure walks past a shop-sign and, due to his non-recognition of the 'true' meaning of words written on the sign, is perplexed as to why a shop should offer such a commodity. When the shop-sign is taken down and placed by the shop at street level, the character appreciates that he has been mistaken (he believed the sign was offering a large choice of white fish [*sig*]), when in fact it offers a large choice of cigars [*sigar*]). As Shklovsky notes:

The poet removes all signs [*vyveski*] from their places, the artist always instigates the uprising of things. Things rebel in poet's hands, casting off their old names and adopting new names and new faces. A poet employs images – tropes, comparisons… He wrests the concept from the semantic cluster in which it is embedded and reassigns it with the help of the word (trope) to another semantic cluster. We, the readers, sense the presence of something new, the presence of an object in a new cluster. The new word envelops its object, as new clothes envelop a man. The sign has been taken down. This is one of the ways in which an object can be transformed into something sensuous, into something that can become material for artistic creation. Another way is represented by a progressive, stepped

form. The object divides into two or three segments that reflect or confront each other…' (Shklovsky 1929: 80; 1998: 62, translation amended).[35]

Shklovsky's use of the key term 'material' leads to a further paradox here. Shklovsky is unequivocal in his insistence that art is autonomous from life, and clearly disdains any unitary or 'metaphysical' relationship between art and the material world of life. Yet, it would appear that any object in the field of life can serve as material for an artistic construction, as if the same paradigm of negation and difference that functions *within* the literary work of art can be applied to the relationship between an object and its artistic instantiation, with the latter providing the dynamic moment of otherness and negation that provokes a heightened sensation of the original material. Purely on this basis, art is merely a relationship between different materials figured through their determinate negation, and any artistic device is merely a particular instance of this process of clash and contradiction in motion.   This relationship may be autonomous from life, but the actual materials that are deployed in opposition to one another by a given artist are the stuff of life itself.

This paradoxical figuring of the (non-)relationship between art and life, where art is and is not 'material' to artistic constructions, is further compounded by the contradictory iterations of the 'material' status of that same artistic construction in Shklovsky's literary theory. In the above passage, Shklovsky notes how the poet-artist has the capacity to shake up conventionalized associations with innovative and contradictory semantic associations. Shklovsky ostensibly insists that a work of

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[35] It is, I think, important to note the difference between the Russian *vyveska* and *znak*, both of which are rendered in English as 'sign'. *Vyveska* can be roughly translated as a street or shop sign, whereas *znak* is the term used to denote the semiotic concept of the sign.   After Gerald Burn's introduction to Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose,* Douglas Robinson has argued that this passage manifests Shklovsky's desire to make the sign concrete, but this is problematic (Robinson 2008: 127-8). Whilst I agree with regard to Shklovsky's move to concretize verbal art, it is important to emphasize that Shklovsky's drive to materialize is consistently paradoxical and dialectical in how it conceptualizes the constituent elements juxtaposed in an individual sign. It is therefore unlikely that he can be said to share the dualistic Saussurean schema of the reified material signifier and signified. For a discussion of the first translation of Saussure's *Cours* into Russian, see 'Pervyi russkii perevod 'Kursa obshchei lingvistiki' F. de Sossiura i deiatel´nost´ Moskovskogo lingvisticheskogo kruzhka' (Toddes and Chudakova 1978: 229-49).

art is a relationship between materials, but his terms 'device', 'structure' and 'construction' all confer a degree of materiality upon the work of literary art itself, denoting a semantic cluster – 'ideas, comparisons' – of materiality when, on the basis of Shklovsky's terms in the above example, there is no factual material object.[36]

This problematic obviously pertains to longstanding and unresolvable debates as to what is the Formalist idea of material in terms of literary art (Erlich 1955: 189) (Renfrew 2006: 21-41) (Medvedev 2000: 282-305; 1991: 104-128). In the *Theory of Prose*, Shklovsky appears to offer at least three different definitions of the material in terms of literary art. At times, it is the extra-literary stuff of life which can inspire an author to write a certain story, but, due to the properties and autonomous laws of literary art, has no role whatsoever in shaping a literary narrative. This 'material' has certain similarities with the Kantian *thing-in-itself*, which must be given to consciousness through the forms of intuition, but remains ultimately unknowable to the categories and laws of the understanding. Elsewhere, Shklovsky directly contradicts this reading of literary material and appears to insist that it is the contradictory structure of the literary object which is material, a position which Tynianov asserts in *The Problem of Verse Language* [*Problema stikhotvornogo iazyka*] (Tynianov 1963: 1981). In 'Art as Device', Shklovsky hints that the work of literary art may only be the material sounds, words and devices which function in opposition to one another within the immanent whole of the work (Shklovsky 1929: 10). In the fragment 'Sherwood' from the *Third Factory* [*Tret´iaia fabrika*], Shklovsky details what he learned through studying sculpture with Sherwood during a brief apprenticeship. Shklovsky recounts how his master taught him that it is wrong to shape and sculpt a material into a representation of an emotion. The material of

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[36] As will become apparent, the Formalist drive towards the material properties of literary art has far more positive qualities than it does for Hegel's account of inert canvas and stone noted in the previous chapter.

stone is formed into a given shape and projects that emotion itself. Verbal art,

Shklovsky argues, is no different. Any given emotional state does not lie beyond the

work of art awaiting its representation: the material work of art itself *is* that emotion,

and any truth cannot lie beyond its material boundaries (Shklovsky 2002: 350-1;

2002: 27). Yet in an essay that praises Rozanov's work for its startling innovations,

Shklovsky insists that the work of art is not material, but a relationship between

materials. If this relationship is to provoke a heightened somatic response in the

reader and return sensation of a thing, then it must be one of contradiction, non-

correspondence and, by implication, negation. Shklovsky praises how both 'yes'

and 'no' exist simultaneously on the same page in Rozanov's prose (Shklovsky

1929: 234), and, by implication, it is only art that is capable of immanently facilitating

such a contradiction without the ideological closure of the ethnographic school,

Bely's anthroposophic dogma or Potebnia's out-dated concept of thinking-in-images.

The Rozanov essay demonstrates how the stone is made stoney through its being

contradicted by something else, and it is only in this disharmonious relationship

between materials within literary form that the somatic can arise.

IV

Previous generations of scholars would no doubt dismiss these contradictory

iterations of materiality as yet another of Russian Formalism's adolescent 'mistakes'

or deliberately cultivated clumsiness.[37] Given Shklovsky's interest in the marvellous

ambiguities of Rozanov's prose, Shklovsky's contradictory treatments of material

can productively be regarded as his own moment of 'yes' and 'no' appearing on the

same page simultaneously. Literature's conditions of possibility, it would seem,

encompass a scenario where the device is at once material and immaterial inter-

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[37] In the introductory remarks to his translation of Eikhenbaum's 'How Gogol´'s *Overcoat* is Made',
Robert Maguire provides a particularly interesting appraisal of Formalism, stating that: 'There are
many difficulties involved in translating Eikhenbaum, indeed most of the Formalists. Few of them
were stylists; in fact they often seem to be deliberately cultivating clumsiness, perhaps in the interest
of a less 'aesthetic' and more 'scientific' tone' (Maguire 1974: 267).

relationship; the literary construction is a tactile structure and a relationship between elements that is, by virtue of its provoking a somatic response, completely inaccessible to empirical perception. Once more it is productive (and indeed appropriately paradoxical) to note how the Russian nephew proves himself indirect heir to his avuncular progenitor in Königsberg. It has already been noted that there is an uneasy tension in Kant regarding empirical knowledge. Kant's desire to provide the conditions of possibility for synthetic *a priori* truth is to no small extent an attempt to justify the natural sciences and the empirical paradigm of engaging with the phenomena of the natural world, as well as provide an account of the subject's *a priori* moral freedom. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant is more reticent regarding the empirical episteme, cautious over its destructive capacity to isolate, destroy or instrumentally manipulate the natural world to its own ends. To counter this force, Kant proposes a productive theory of the self that is disinterested, through analogy with the feeling of pleasure produced upon the subject's perceiving an artwork of beauty.

Shklovsky is clearly under no illusions that an artwork has to be beautiful in order to provoke a somatic reaction, and, in the first three essays in the *Theory of Prose*, appears to regard the transgressive, taboo attributes of sexual topoi as analogous to defamiliarization (Shklovsky 1929: 7-23; 24-67 and 68-90). Nevertheless, his insistence that art is an (im-)material terrain where 'yes' and 'no' exist simultaneously hints at a similar unease over empirical perception, which does, after all, lead to conventionalised perceptions of reified forms. Accordingly, Shklovsky should in no way be regarded as providing reified definitions of the elements that constitute literary structures, such as plot, device, pun, parody, narrative, repetition and metaphor. All these elements are, to borrow Tynianov's phrase, examples of the dialectical play of devices (Tynianov 1977: 226), where art is the constructive relationship between elements that affirms sensory immediacy. Shklovsky's interest

in laws of plot formation runs contrary to the 'morphology' or proto-semiotics of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* or the kind of semiotic utterance which proclaims, with regard to the spatial media of cinema and theatre, that 'good' always comes in from the right and 'evil' from the left. In contrast to these reified paradigms, Shklovsky's consideration of the laws of plot unearths a Kantian structure of immanent contradictions, a stepped form that divides and contradicts itself at all levels, be it in terms of moving from sentence to sentence, narrative episode to narrative episode. Shklovsky does formulate mathematical formulae to demonstrate narrative progression (Shklovsky 1929: 42, 62), but he does so with a view to demonstrating the discontinuity of narrative structures at the immanent level, where, to return to the essay on Rozanov, it is the arithmetical terms of the denominator which are of most interest in art, and not the isolated elements of the construction in and of themselves (Shklovsky 1929: 226-7).[38]

In addition to Kant's ambivalence towards empiricism, Shklovsky shares the tendency to regard method as constitutive of its object. Kant's trajectory towards a practical moral autonomy is replicated in the contradictory motions and structures of consciousness, with both the practical realm of experience and the motion of the mind co-constitutive and co-dependent upon each other. Implicit in Shklovsky's theorizing the 'yes' and 'no' existing simultaneously in Rozanov, and, for that matter, his own treatment of art as simultaneously material and immaterial construction, is the conclusion that in order to understand and practise art's contradictory properties, it is necessary to objectively theorize art in a manner which is not entirely predicated upon the reified, empirical determinations made by Propp in his classic text devoted to the folktale and its morphology (Propp 2003). As with Kant's theory of the mind, Shklovsky's objective theory of art insists that somatic reaction must remain beyond

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[38] It is apparent that, also like Kant, Shklovsky's interest in constructive laws is undertaken with a view to facilitating a *finite* account of freedom, as once the author understands the paradoxical laws of literary creation she will be able to write. This key affinity between the Formalists and Kant will be developed in both the third and seventh chapters.

the grasp of empirical knowledge. Accordingly, if one is to theorize the work of art in its material complexity, then one must theorize (and thereby perceive) the literary object artistically, and therefore the sensation which lies beyond the reach of empirical knowledge becomes a significant element of the mutually constitutive praxes of writing art and writing theory.

There has been no shortage of critical accounts of Shklovsky's Formalism that explore the consistency between the properties Shklovsky identifies in literature and his own 'method' of literary critique (Paramonov 1996: 35-52) (Khanzen-Leve 2001). Yet Shklovsky's insistence on non-recognition [*ne-uznavanie*] has been neglected in this regard, both in terms of the role it plays in his discussion of literary poetics and as a methodological principle with which to undertake a critique of literary form. As mentioned above, Shklovsky identifies different instantiations of non-recognition in literary art, ranging from puns to characters not recognizing other characters or objects. Appropriately, non-recognition can be said to function in different ways in Shklovsky's theorization of literary art. The figure of Bely, whose anthroposophic ideological closure is mocked so ruthlessly by Shklovsky, is himself something of a Quixote figure in *The Theory of Prose,* a figure who does not recognize the contradictory 'reality' of literary form and creates a ludicrous two-tiered structure of anthroposophic truth and the real world, a gesture that provides Shklovsky with a perfect interplay of devices, with the essay on ornamental prose amounting to material for a withering parody of Bely's work. Of greater significance, however, is Shklovsky's non-recognition of art *qua* art, that is, not recognising art in a manner that would provide a non-contradictory, reified account of art and its structural properties. The term 'recognition' has important associations beyond the realm of 'life' to which Shklovsky argues it pertains (and art overcomes). In Aristotle's *Poetics,* a moment of recognition [*uznavanie*] is potentially the crowning moment of tragic art, when the tragic hero realizes the full import of his past actions.

Shklovsky's Formalism may share Aristotle's demand to speak of art on its own terms without recourse to other fields of knowledge, but Aristotle's poetics demand a harmonious order which is all too obviously anathema to Shklovsky.[39] Aristotle believes digression to be a mark of inferior art and, in the case of tragedy, has very strict requirements regarding what a tragedy requires in order for it to be recognized as such (Aristotle 2000: 1-11).[40] Shklovsky clearly believes that it is impossible to create and theorize art along such terms, and valorizes all those elements that Aristotle rejects, welcoming the retarding force of digressions and the sensuous moment of *non*-recognition. Shklovsky's figures of art such as a knight's move (the nod towards Quixote is clear) or a rocky road that doubles back on itself should be conceptualized as mis-recognitions of art that serve to impede and defamiliarize the reified, conventionalized clarity with which Aristotle accords it.[41]

A further paradox of Shklovsky's poetics of non-recognition is his rejection of another key tenet of Aristotelean poetics: representation. Aristotle insists that tragedy has to involve the imitation of an action (Aristotle 2000: 10). Shklovsky's insistence that art is autonomous from life and his concomitant rejection of the determinist ethnographic school are consistent with his contradictory treatment of material, in that all deny that art can be recognized as mere representation. Art's contradictory material properties serve to impede and make difficult perception, and deny such a hermeneutic enclosure that facilitates a simplistic and immediate 'truth.' In terms of the 'Sherwood' conceptualization of material, the material artwork *is* its own emotional content through its own formal contradictions, and it is in no way a

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[39] For an alternative account which notes Formalism's direct similarities with Aristotlean poetics, see (Epstein 2011: 159-170)

[40] 'Every Tragedy must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song' (Aristotle 2000: 11).

[41] There are obvious parallels between Shklovsky's critical impetus towards non-recognition of its object and Kant's programme of critique in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where the in-itself (be it of the 'thing' or of 'consciousness') must remain unknowable if we are to grasp the paradoxical, contradictory workings of consciousness and human autonomy. Kant's project requires that the laws of reason, understanding, the imagination, sensible intuition and the thing-in-itself are all oppositionally located to one-another, and it is only in the immanent motion of these contradictory entities that autonomous human reason and synthetic *a priori* cognition are possible.

representation of an emotional state exterior to the work of art. In the alternative

paradigm of life providing material for the constructive relationship immanent to art,

it is the contradictory and paradoxical laws which govern any somatic response to

the artwork, and without any contradictory inter-relationship of materials, there can

be no affective reaction. That is not to say, however, that Shklovsky's poetics of

non-recognition do not accord anthroposophic ideology, thinking in images or

representation any role in art. Shklovsky's formulation that art is merely the

contradictory relationship of disparate materials is ambiguous, and does not specify

whether those materials are the concrete forms of verbal art or the material stuff of

life itself. Indeed the very qualities of the device, that dynamic element in a

trajectory towards its own negation, do not prohibit either eventuality. Therefore

anthroposophic ideology, Potebnia's image, or even the knowledge that an explicit

representation is occurring in a *roman-à-clef* can all be devices, if deployed in

artistic form with a view towards their negation. Yet they cannot ever confer on art

the closure of an absolute or incontestable truth.

V

The device's capacity to re-orientate such elements within literary form is analogous

to Hegel's figure of mediated sublation in the discussion of objectivity in the previous

chapter. Boris Paramonov and Douglas Robinson have both argued that Shklovsky

is a Hegelian theoretician of art, with Paramonov even going so far as stating that

Shklovsky is the Hegel of Russian Formalism (Paramonov 1996: 35-52) (Robinson

2009: 135-65).[42] Yet the dialectical tensions between innovation and deformation,

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[42] Paramonov's account of Shklovsky's Hegelianism is problematic in that he glosses over the glaring contradictions in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, where Hegel at times appears to endorse the opposition between form and content in aesthetics, and at other times unconvincingly argue for their sublation in a manner which lacks the persuasive elaboration of the absolute idea in *The Science of Logic*. Paramonov problematically argues that Shklovsky is *the* Hegelian example of literature's coming to self-consciousness, when, on the basis of the present discussion, Shklovsky and the other Formalists argue precisely against the substitution of the self-conscious self for the work of art. The Formalists' treatment of material asserts the radical concrete *otherness* of verbal art, or, in other words, that art is very much a *thing* and not a self-conscious *self*. As will become apparent in due

construction and deconstruction, advancing a narrative and its retardation belie the

difficulty of equating Shklovsky's poetics of non-recognition with the variety of the

Hegelian dialectic already discussed. In terms of Hegel's discussion of objectivity,

the dialectic proceeds from sensory immediacy to the negative moment of

opposition and then the moment of sublation before a cyclical return to sensory

immediacy. All these elements are certainly present in Shklovsky's dialectical

formulation of *not* recognizing literary art, but careful consideration reveals the

elements are orchestrated towards different ends and with differing evaluations as to

the value of each stage of the process. In Hegel, the sensory immediacy that is so

vital for Shklovsky is but an initial stage that precedes the more worthy activity of

reason as it goes about its self-regarding gymnastics of sublation. For Shklovsky

heightened sensory immediacy arises at the point of dialectical contradiction and

negation and serves to remove the subject from a state of sleep walking through life,

where she merely recognizes material phenomena without appreciating the full

vitality possible through their heightened somatic intuition. Shklovsky and Hegel

both share the preference for mediation, where the moment of negation and

difference is incorporated into an immanent whole, but for Shklovsky this moment is

the height of sensory immediacy, whereas Hegel locates it between the conceptual

activity of the mind and the newly determined properties of the thing before a return

to somatic intuition (sense-certainty) of the material world. Thus in Hegel's

framework the accent is not placed on the subject's mis-recognition of the world as a

constant: Hegel's Absolute Idea entails the historically contingent, mediated

synthesis between thing and object, and is clearly alien to Shklovsky's inclination not

to recognize the object in its abstract purity in order to ascertain a heightened

sensory awareness of its properties.

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course, it is potentially Tynianov who is closest to Hegel's objective dialectics. Shklovsky, as will be
argued in the discussion of *The Third Factory*, is an altogether more arch and ironic dialectician than
either Tynianov or Hegel. Indeed, Shklovsky could even be said to offer a dialectics of non-
recognition.

Despite these differences between Shklovsky and Hegel, it is nonetheless important to note that Hegel's preference for a dialectics of mediation between two opposing terms is *structurally* analogous to Shklovsky's devices of defamiliarization, retardation, non-recognition and puns. These features of Shklovsky's poetics should under no circumstances be construed as a refusal to engage with the reified, thingly aesthetic object or equally reified abstract formulations as to its properties. Of necessity such elements are part of Shklovsky's project: defamiliarization, retardation and puns all require knowledge of whichever object is displaced through negation. If such elements were absent in Shklovsky's thought, there would be no resulting dialectical tension between the referent and its negation, just as a stepped plot construction requires additional material beyond an individual element if it is to advance the narrative further. Were it not for the existence of conventionalized forms, the whole desire for innovation and transgression through contradiction would be impossible.[43] Shklovsky's restlessness sees him demand that any resulting synthesis brought about, in the case of defamiliarization, by the reader's heightened sensory perception of a particular object will soon become conventionalized and routine, and require further innovation or defamiliarization if it is to remain a vital element of artistic practice. Shklovsky's poetics of non-recognition implicitly requires an object in its recognizable, conventionalized form, and it is only the dialectical tension between the two which provides the sensation of creativity.

Despite Shklovsky's preference for a dialectics of mediation it is, I think, somewhat misleading to insist that Shklovsky is a card-carrying Hegelian. In order to support his assertion that Shklovsky is the Hegel of Russian Formalism, Paramonov offers an analogy. If for Hegel Absolute Spirit is consciousness of itself as a philosopher, then in Shklovsky's thought we approach literature's self-consciousness (Paramonov 1996: 51). Hegel's Absolute Spirit, like his Absolute Idea in the greater

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[43] The above citation from Christiansen's *Philosophy of Art* notes the importance of the conventionalized form.

Logic, entails a mediated synthesis between mental abstraction and concrete object, or, in more Hegelian terms, the historical self-mediating process of Spirit and sense-certainty (Hegel 1977: 492-3). It would be easy to blithely assert that Shklovsky's contradictory structures manifest the Hegelian argument in the 'Doctrine of Being' from the greater *Science of Logic*, where all phenomena contain immediacy *and* mediation (Hegel 2010: 45-82). The heightened sensation of life that accompanies defamiliarization is, undeniably, the result of the mediating tension between old and new. But Shklovsky's heightened awareness is, if nothing else, *sensuous*. In contrast, Hegel disapproves of an overbearing emphasis on sensuality. In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, he applauds the ferment of enthusiasm that drives the desire to know and tears people away from 'ordinary, private affairs', but this ferment is not sensuous. Philosophy can restore the *feeling* of what Hegel terms 'essential being', but this feeling is differentiated from men's 'preoccupation with the sensuous' (Hegel 1977: 5). Shklovsky's dialectic of non-recognition and recognition exults in the mediated tension between these two elements but, unlike Hegel, the 'goal' of this process is a heightened somatic pleasure. Hegel's historical Absolute Knowing maintains the same paradoxical structure, but with very different constituent elements.

Kant, like Hegel, does not endorse sensuous excess. Shklovsky's thought is nevertheless comparable to that of Kant, in that his conflicting iterations of material implicitly advocate at least one element of literature that is, of necessity, other to itself, and, just as in Kant, the closing moment of self-consciousness that provides the knowledge of an object in-itself is impossible. If art is to remain art then it has to be aloof and remain unknowable. Accordingly, it is impossible to formulate a poetics of literary creation in intentional terms or, in other words, any writer must accept the necessary condition not of self-consciousness, but of stupidity, of a Quixotian brainlessness. The contradictory, othering properties of literary form and its

contradiction are a condition of an author being free to create that art so valorized by Shklovsky, and this is the wisdom he proffers in *Theory of Prose* and his other works. Kant's denial of knowledge of self-consciousness and the thing-in-itself constitute an analogous insistence on human finitude, where knowledge is drastically limited as a necessary price for autonomous freedom.

Yet Kant was prepared to make art a surrogate for human subjectivity in order to guarantee moral freedom. Shklovsky, as will become apparent in due course, is not prepared to undertake such a 'reciprocally expeditious' gesture and, with his unknowable (im-)material literary art, formulates an alternative, resolutely *objective* relationship between art, the human subject and the problematic encounter with 'life'. Formalism is, particularly in its Bakhtinian reception, often regarded as distancing itself from ethical and philosophical matters as a price for art's autonomy and the thingly properties of material art. Rather than insist on a restoration of the rights of mankind, Formalism, so Bakhtin appears to argue, tramples on those rights through its insistence that art is a positivistic *thing*. Yet, in the following discussion on Eikhenbaum's Gogol´ essay, the distinction is not as clear as it may seem.

3: A Grotesque Science

I

Critical literature on Russian Formalism has occasionally provided some odd analogies in its discussions of the movement's key dramatis personae.   As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boris Paramonov has referred to Shklovsky as the Hegel of Russian Formalism. Shklovsky is the subject of an even more far-fetched comparison in the introductory essay to a collection of his autobiographical prose, where Aleksandr Galushkin likens him to none other than Indiana Jones (Galushkin, in Shklovsky 2002: 6). It is easy to imagine that Shklovsky would approve of the richness of the extreme semantic gap between the opposing terms here, but it would likely be unwise to read too much into these moments of non-recognition beyond the fact that Shklovsky enjoys a reputation for being unconventional, challenging and as going about a disciplinary activity associated with systematic and stuffy conservatism with cavalier recklessness. Boris Eikhenbaum has, to my knowledge, not been the subject of such extraordinary analogies. In a chapter entitled 'Guarding the Work Centred Poetics', Carol Any provides the sober comparison of Eikhenbaum with a guard dog (Any 1994: 46-7). Any sees Eikhenbaum as guarding the core object of Russian Formalism: the autonomy of the literary work from life, a task that, Any argues, involved protecting Formalism from attacks coming from without, and the wayward activities of its own members. With regard to his defence against the latter, Any notes how Eikhenbaum's review of the first *Poetika* collection reveals his wariness of Yakubinsky's work as 'it implied a psychological source of poetic creation, relating poetry to the subconscious impressions that produce dreams'; and Eikhenbaum was equally sceptical of Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*, which according to Any's reductive reading (which she shares with Pavel Medvedev), is merely another instantiation of the Aristotelean mimetic paradigm (Any 1994: 47-8, 57-8).

Eikhenbaum therefore only uses defamiliarization in terms of the relationship between literary devices, and not between an object and its material referent in life. This use of defamiliarization is exemplary of the guard dog's most significant contribution to Russian Formalism: conceptualizing the work of art as a system that has no contingency upon the world of life.[44]

There is clearly something defensive in Any's guard dog analogy, both in terms of how it formulates Formalism's relationship with its disciplinary rivals, and with regard to Eikhenbaum's contribution. Any resents the fact that Eikhenbaum's contribution to Russian Formalism has been neglected at the expense of the innovations of Shklovsky, Tynianov and Jakobson. The dutiful guard dog, according to Any, made an equally important contribution with his concept of literature as a system and his 'applied criticism anticipated, corrected, and validated Formalist theory; and it was at least as important in the first two functions as in the last' (Any 1994: 46). Such critical interventions, which seek to particularize Russian Formalism's achievements (or, for that matter, its 'mistakes') to individual authors is, in terms of the present study, highly problematic. Shklovsky's parodic treatment of Andrei Bely's venture into anthroposophy is typical of the Formalist strategy of regarding authorial intention as a 'catalyst', where the author is contingent upon the laws and materials with which she goes about writing. To speak of Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov in terms of their individual authorial innovations with substantiating evidence provided from their personal correspondence is certainly not without interest,[45] but it runs the risk of confining Formalist theory to just one other manifestation of poetics, literary theory or early Soviet intellectual culture, all of

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[44] Any also insists that it was Eikhenbaum who first advanced the concept of literary art as a system in her article 'Testing the Limits of the Work Centred Poetics' (Any 1990: 409-26). Her disappointment that Eikhenbaum has been neglected in previous studies of Formalism is primarily directed at Fredric Jameson's *The Prison House of Language* and George Steiner's *Formalism: a Metapoetics*.

[45] For a sustained, and highly interesting, effort at a biographical account of Russian Formalism, see 'Neudavshiisia dialog (Iz istorii vzaimootnoshenii formal'noi shkoly i vlasti) (Galushkin 1992: 210) and '"I tak, stavshi na kostiakh, budem trubit´ sbor": K istorii ne sostoiavshegosia vozrozhdeniia Opoiaza v 1928-1930 gg.' (Galushkin 2000: 136-58).

which is accounted for in a positivist, biographical discursive formation that denies Formalism (or any other theoretical discourse) the potential to constitute simultaneously its object and the praxis of its critique.   The paradoxes, laws and materials determined by Formalists, and which no less constitute their own critical praxis, cannot satisfactorily be reduced to individual members' contributions. Their belief that a literary work is a construction whose elements conflict and struggle with one another is replicated in a desire to argue and contradict each other, often to the point of construing elements that now seem complementary as radical difference. Accordingly, the Formalists serve as suitable catalysts for the critique of 'positive influence' made in the first chapter, and this study therefore sees little merit in particularizing the contributions of Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky or Tynianov at the expense of each other. They emerge as authors only in each other's presence; the totality of their thought only when perceived collectively.

Eikhenbaum, the supposed 'guard dog' of the work-centred poetics himself was at times capable of figuring an ambiguous relationship between literary text and the 'elsewhere' of life that lies beyond its boundaries, and even not above recourse to such biographical sources as personal correspondence. The 'guard dog' may lack the paradoxical and unconventional mode of exposition found in Shklovsky's work, but his use of the conventional materials of literary scholarship could be no less creative and indeed paradoxical, serving to limit and problematize authorial intention rather than affirm it. As shall be argued here, his use of these and other materials suggest an author far less conventional than the analogy of a guard dog who 'corrects and validates' implies, and Eikhenbaum's capacity for irony and his startling treatment of the contradictory, paradoxical literary system and its conditions of possibility are no less radical than the thought of Shklovsky or Tynianov.

II

Eikhenbaum's radical and paradoxical figuring of the literary system and the

problems of plot, conflicting compositional layers, realism and authorship are

apparent in his first contribution to Formalist poetics, the essay 'How Gogol´'s

Overcoat is Made' [*Kak sdelana 'Shinel´' Gogolia*].   The title manages to go a step

further than Shklovsky's similarly titled essay on Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and

provides a punning moment of non-recognition afforded by the title of Gogol's

famous short story and the Formalist interest in material literary construction.

Gogol´'s text *The Overcoat* [*Shinel´*] is juxtaposed with the material item of an

overcoat. The verb to make [*sdelat´*] provides a semantic shift away from the

conventionalized recognition of *The Overcoat* as the canonical text of morally and

socially committed realism valorized since Vissarion Belinsky. Instead of

recognizing the reality of the world depicted in this classic realist text, Eikhenbaum

performs the Formalist gesture of materializing the literary work, insisting not upon

the accuracy of the text's morally committed mimesis, but the reality of its material

elements, implying that it is a material construction that can be assembled in the

same manner as a tailor *making* a garment (note the convergence with Shklovsky's

non-recognition 'thread' [*nitka*]).[46] The reality of the text is its material elements and

their orchestration into a systemic literary construction; the 'reality' of the text's

realism is exposed as an illusion.

This tension between a realistic description of material manufacture and a

supposedly illusory mimetic realism is brilliantly dissected by Eikhenbaum in the

essay.   The central focus of his systemic critique of Gogol´'s *The Overcoat* is not,

pace Bakhtin*,* the oral form of narration, but compositional construction; and

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[46] In 'The Structure of Fiction' [*Stroenie rasskaza i romana*], Shklovsky's brief remarks on Le Sage's *Gil Blas* are consistent with Eikhenbaum's critique of Gogol´. Shklovsky insists that the character Gil Blas is not a human being and *in no way* reveals the author's goal of depicting the man in the street [*srednyi chelovek*]. Gil Blas is, for Shklovsky, categorically not a human being, but a thread with which the novel is sewn together [*eta nitka, shivaiushchaia episody romana*] (Shklovsky 1929: 85).

Eikhenbaum's analysis proceeds by identifying and classifying those devices which coalesce into the layers of this total systemic construction and, in turn, how this particular story conforms with and departs from literature's more general categories. Eikhenbaum insists that *The Overcoat* should be differentiated from the category of the novel because it is a particularly interesting example of the *skaz* form. Eikhenbaum argues that comic *skaz* is a distinct category of literary praxis in its own right, of which he states that there are two types. Storytelling or narrating [*povestvuiushchii*] *skaz* contains a measured speech intonation and jokes and puns on the nominal, 'logical' meaning of words. In opposition to this story-telling variety, Eikhenbaum identifies a more performative variety which involves the reiteration of a narrative after its occurrence. Eikhenbaum terms this variant *vosproizvodiashchii* skaz, and it includes such devices as mimicking speech patterns, the conscious articulation of sound puns, and experimental play with syntactical structures that exist purely for their own sake and not in order to convey a narrative of events. With the second variant, it is as if an actor is concealed in words [*kak by skryvaetsia akter*], performing the text. As a result, the composition of performative *skaz* appears to be determined by play-acting and lively improvisation with sound forms and gestures (Eikhenbaum 1927: 149-50). *The Overcoat* provides an abundance of interesting material for the objective analysis of the literary system advocated by Eikhenbaum and his fellow Formalists, as it not only offers both these varieties of comic *skaz* simultaneously, but its material construction also manifests a second layer that conflicts with and contradicts these typical *skaz* features (Eikhenbaum 1927: 157-8). This additional layer is the renowned 'human' or sentimental narrative of a put upon clerk struggling with government bureaucracy, that is, the qualities of the text seized upon by those critics who established its canonical status as a work of morally engaged realism depicting society's ills and injustices.

It is worth recalling here Shklovsky's remarks that the elements of a literary work are more likely to contradict and quarrel with one another, rather than peacefully cohabit; and it is important to emphasize how Shklovsky makes this observation in the context of Andrei Bely's failed orchestration of a 'two-tiered' literary construction in *Kotik Letaev*. Shklovsky was dismissive of Bely's anthroposophic motivation, arguing that it was undone by the contradictory properties of literary art, but he nonetheless emphasised the importance of such two-tiered structures and clearly thought them a worthwhile object for Formalist literary science. In Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*, Eikhenbaum identifies an equally contradictory structure, albeit with an altogether more positive evaluation than Shklovsky's caustic critique of Bely. *Kotik Letaev* and the other epopee texts make the error of a 'metaphysical' closure, positing a unitary relationship between the planes of reality and a symbolic realm of anthroposophic truth, an error structurally analogous to the Belinkskian 'error' of socially committed realism, which requires the illusory closure of mimetic correspondence between text and the world beyond, and, no less importantly, a morally committed author intentionally authoring her literary creation. According to Eikhenbaum, *The Overcoat* does not provide grounds for such a unitary closure, and the simultaneous existence of the two contradictory varieties of *skaz* alongside realistic pathos present an opportunity to argue that literature is not a unitary system, but a system of contradictions, the extent of which is readily apparent in Eikhenbaum's discussion of plot.

The twofold taxonomy of *skaz* and its simultaneous manifestation with a realistic narrative results in an ambiguous classification of plot [*siuzhet*] similar to that found in Shklovsky's essays in *The Theory of Prose*. Eikhenbaum's juxtaposition of opposing compositional layers restages Shklovsky's interest in plot as a both a threading together of events into a sequence that manifests a coherent motivation, and a stepped structure that divides and contradicts itself, serving to prolong the

pleasure of storytelling for its own sake and retard the eventual narrative resolution with the negating introduction of new materials (Shklovsky 1929: 24-67 & 68-90). A threaded plot with a coherent motivation is found in *The Overcoat's* depiction of a suffering clerk; yet *vosproizvodiashchii skaz*, with its emphasis on repetition, experimentation and improvisation for their own sake, typically *lacks* such a 'threaded' plot.[47]   Like Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum is faced with the tension between denoting plot as a sequence of events threated into a narrative sequence, and the lingering need to account for how works such as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Rozanov's *Solitaria* and *The Overcoat* can be conceptualized as systemic literary constructions. In such texts, materials and devices are clearly strung together, yet they lack the ostensible motivation of a clearly threaded plot. If *The Overcoat* is an example of a realist narrative and performative *skaz*, how, like the account of motion in Kantian critique, can it have a plot and not have a plot at the same time?

It is perhaps this rich ambiguity over the status of plot which sees Eikhenbaum make a transition from the particular example of *The Overcoat* to the more general literary categories of melodrama and the grotesque. Whilst *The Overcoat* does contain some melodramatic elements, it is, Eikhenbaum argues, an example of the grotesque. Eikhenbaum's use of the term grotesque is absolutely crucial to the problematic, defamiliarizing opposition of mimetic realism and the objective reality of literature's material construction in the essay's title. Eikhenbaum shares Shklovsky's enthusiasm for particular elements, and argues that for the grotesque to function it must isolate an individual element from reality in order to play with reality, breaking up its parts and freely displacing them. This act of play must not be made,

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[47] Eikhenbaum states that 'Many of Gogol''s stories, or individual sections of them, offer interesting material for an analysis of this kind of *skaz*. Composition, in Gogol´, is not determined by plot; his plots are always scanty. Rather, there is no plot at all [*skoree – net nikakogo siuzheta*], but only some comic situation… serving, as it were, merely as an impetus or pretext for the elaboration of comic devices' (Eikhenbaum 1927: 150; 1974: 270 translation amended). Yet later in the essay Eikhenbaum notes how, in the particular case of *The Overcoat*, the simultaneous manifestation of the tale involving the poor government clerk and the comic elements and devices of *skaz* make 'the original compositional layer much more complex' (Eikhenbaum 1927:159-60; 1974: 284, translation amended).

so Eikhenbaum argues, with any didactic or satirical intent; for if it is to be grotesque, then it must exhibit a spontaneous destruction of normal, logical correlations and associations in the creation of a new literary construction. The manifest similarities with Shklovsky's valourization of defamiliarizing art and negation are clear when Eikhenbaum argues that grotesque art joins together what cannot be joined [*soediniat´ nesoedinimoe*]: playful, mocking *skaz* and sentimental pathos; narrative realism and, at the end of *The Overcoat*, the fantastic; punning, sonorous sound gestures and the logical meaning of positive terms which accumulate into the 'realistic' narrative. As Eikhenbaum notes, '[t]his contradiction or disparity acts upon the words themselves in such a way that they become strange, enigmatic, unfamiliar-sounding, striking to the ear, as if they had been dismembered or invented by Gogol´ for the first time' (Eikhenbaum 1927: 159-63; 1974: 282-9).

It is apparent that Eikhenbaum's use of the term grotesque is, in terms of its implicit *structural* relationships, consistent with the Shklovskian concept of defamiliarization and Tynianov's definition of parody as the dialectical relationship of devices noted in the previous chapter.[48] All three terms insist that the material literary construction is beset by contradictory and opposing relationships between particular elements, and pertain to questions of construction and system as a site of dynamic inter-relationship and dialectical contradiction, *not* reified or positive definitions that seek to classify and determine the properties of literary poetics in a manner akin to Aristotle's account of tragedy. This state of affairs is, as has been argued above, grounds for arguing the counter-intuitive similarity between Kant's conditions of possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition, and the Formalists' conceptualization of the literary work's constructive properties and relationships. In terms of how Kant presents the conditions of possibility of sensuous intuition, synthetic *a priori* cognition, moral freedom and inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself and consciousness-

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[48] For a very brief discussion of the convergences between Eikhenbaum's concept of the grotesque and the Formalist 'method' of defamiliarization, see (Khanzen-Leve 2001: 197-8).

in-itself, Žižek argues that Kant's contribution manages to radicalize and problematize binary oppositions simultaneously (Žižek 2012: 8), and as a result posits a metaphysical discourse where antinomic structures and propositions are the *de facto* human condition. It has become something of cliché to note how Kant insists on the reality of illusions in his ontological framework, but it has gone almost unnoticed that Eikhenbaum's objective discussion of Gogol´'s material construction insists that both sentimental realism *and* the conflicting properties of comic *skaz* are both illusions that arise through the juxtaposition of individual material elements.[49] Accordingly, Eikhenbaum's material aesthetics, like Shklovsky's essay on Rozanov, allows for the antinomic freedom of 'yes' and 'no' to appear on the same page, and for those elements which cannot be related to one another to be located in ambiguous tension.

III

There is admittedly something perverse, grotesque even, in arguing that Eikhenbaum's critique of *The Overcoat* is analogous to Kant's conditions of possibility.[50] Kant's engagement with the aesthetic in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* concerns such serene questions as the beautiful and the sublime, and does not stoop to address the sinister devices and peculiarities that Eikhenbaum identifies in Gogol´. Kant tries to guarantee the human subject's moral freedom through a purported harmony between the productive sensation of pleasure felt by all perceiving the beautiful or the sublime work of art. As noted in the first chapter, Andrew Bowie and Dieter Henrich have emphasized the fundamental importance of Kant's suggestion of the mutual reciprocity between the moral human subject and the work of art, hinting at a possible reconciliation of the alienation of the human subject from the thing-in-itself. Through Fichte's treatment of the imagination and

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[49] Eikhenbaum makes the observation that compositional elements combine to create the illusion of *skaz* in the first sentence of the essay (Eikhenbaum 1927: 149; 1974: 269).
[50] For an alternative account which states Kant's emphatic opposition to the grotesque, see 'Van Gogh's Ear': Toward a Theory of Disgust' (Chaouli 2003: 47-62).

German Romanticism, art effectively becomes the autonomous site of *a priori* moral content that guarantees and dramatizes the moral human subject.[51] Accordingly, materialist Formalism cannot be said to share this post-Kantian belief in the *a priori* morality of the work of art and, in the figure of the genius, the artist herself. It has long been noted how the Belinskian reading of *The Overcoat* is inflected by precisely those same post-Kantian discourses that argue art is the *a priori* surrogate of moral human autonomy, and, to return to Kant's phrase, Belinsky's project of socially committed realism clearly mirrors the Kantian project for the restoration of the rights of mankind, with both dutiful art and no less dutiful artist exemplary of the human subject's *a priori* moral freedom.[52]

Eikhenbaum's discussion of authorship in the Gogol´ essay reveals the extent to which Russian Formalism departs from these post-Kantian paradigms of the morally committed artist. According to the Bakhtin / Medvedev interpretation[53] of Eikhenbaum's essay and the broader aims and objectives of Russian Formalism, a morally committed authorial subjectivity is either limited in its capacity for free choice by the 'objective' laws of literary construction identified by the Formalists, or, in extreme interpretations, is denied altogether in such formulations as Osip Brik's well-known remark that, given the incontrovertible nature of the objective laws of literary construction, *Evegenii Onegin* would have been written even if Pushkin had never been born (Brik 1923: 213-5). A careful reading of Eikhenbaum's essay on *The Overcoat* would suggest that the treatment of authorship is more nuanced than Bakhtin's and Medvedev's reductive account of Formalism allows, and is indeed consistent with an autonomous free subjectivity, that is, a subjectivity that asserts

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[51] Whilst he is wary of attributing the entire Romantic movement to Fichte's philosophy, Henrich consistently argues that Fichte's account of the imagination in *The Science of Knowledge* is highly significant in terms the development of aesthetics and the unitary promise of human reconciliation with the natural world provided by aesthetic autonomy (Henrich 2003: 222-30). For Andrew Bowie's account of the evolution of aesthetics after Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, see (Bowie 2003: 49-68).

[52] On Belinsky's and his successors' reception of post-Kantian aesthetic discourses, see (Terras 1974).

[53] Bakhtin's and Medvedev's objections to Russian Formalism are discussed at length in chapter 8.

itself in the free play of literary praxis and its interaction with literature's material properties and paradoxical relationships of contradiction and negation. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, as noted in the first chapter, does not grant the 'reciprocally expeditious' analogy between artwork and its prompting of the dis-interested production of pleasure in the human subject, and there is no gesture towards bridging the subject's alienation from both thing- and consciousness-in-themselves. The subject remains alienated from the natural world in a manner replicated in consciousness's antinomic structures which are set in motion through empirical intuition. The first *Critique* maintains a contradictory, paradoxical relationship between both the immanent workings of consciousness *and* the subject's relationship with the material natural world in order to guarantee freedom. At this stage of Kant's project, alienation can therefore be said to be present at many different levels of his system and its dynamic, multi-dimensional structure. Kant's account of the genius artist in the third *Critique* is clearly incompatible with the ontological platform of the earlier work's 'conditions of possibility', because it insists on a unitary relationship between the genius-talent, a harmoniously ordered natural world and the universally valid and disinterested sensation of pleasure felt by all upon perceiving the genius's beautiful artwork (Kant 2000: 186-97). Russian Formalism's material aesthetics and its concomitant, objectively formulated account of authorship can be understood as analogous to Kant's account of subjectivity in the first *Critique*, in that in order to guarantee authorial freedom, the author must contend with the alienating objective properties of literary art that inhere in the praxis of writing.

Accordingly, Eikhenbaum's subsequent remarks can be understood as convergent with Kant's insistence upon the human subject's finitude, both in terms of coming to know itself and the material world around it:

Proceeding from the basic proposition that in a work of art *not a single* sentence can, in and of itself, be a mere 'reflection' of the author's personal feelings, but rather is always a construct and a performance, we *cannot and have no right* to see anything other than an explicit artistic device… The customary procedure of identifying some given statement with the contents of the writer's 'psychology' is false scholarship. In this sense, the mind of the artist as a man who *experiences* various moods always remains and must remain outside the bounds of what he creates. The work of art is always something that is made, fashioned, contrived; it is not only artful but artificial, in the best sense of the word. Therefore, *there neither is nor can there be* any place in it for the reflection of the empirical reality of the inner self (Eikhenbaum 1927: 161; 1974: 287).

Eikhenbaum's insistence that there is only a material set of devices in a literary text and not even a trace of an author's personal feelings or his inner self could no doubt be understood as complementing Brik's contentious assertion regarding *Evgenii Onegin*. Yet insisting on the objective qualities of literary material should in no way be understood as the Formalists denying that the inner self or even authorial commitment do not exist. Indeed, Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky and Tynianov all insist on the author's necessary *alienation* from the objectively determined properties of literary material. Michael Holquist and Ilya Kliger have argued that Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* is an attempt to perpetuate a Kantian variety of alienation from the thing-in-itself. The loss of vitality brought about by unquestioning recognition of a thing 'as it is' is shattered by the defamiliarizing moment of alienation, where, as argued previously, the heightened sensation of the thing is facilitated through its negative juxtaposition with that which it is not.[54] The Formalists' accounts of authorship also insist on an author's alienation from the material literary work itself, where working with materials and laws that are radically *other* to the authorial self is a requirement for the author to be free in her

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[54] Whilst it is possible to agree with Holquist and Kliger on this point, their subsequent argument is problematic. They argue that Shklovsky effectively sees heightened sensation as an opportunity to overcome alienation, and thereby provide a return to the *thing-in-itself*. Holquist and Kliger suggest that this move is analogous to Kleist's remark that only by eating more fruit from the tree of knowledge will a return to innocence be possible (Holquist & Kliger 2005: 629). *Pace* Holquist and Kliger, Shklovsky is not seeking a return to essences, but rather denying the possibility of ever arriving at absolute truth, be it through ideology or representation. In the terms of the previous chapter, Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* requires an ontological crack that is accompanied by antinomies that can *never* be bridged.

engagement with art's many paradoxical contradictions. Likewise, the same paradigm applies in reverse for the literary critic who objectively attempts to ascertain and codify the contradictory and paradoxical conditions of literature's possibility, and refuses to be drawn into the 'metaphysical' trap of closure provided by the unitary, intentional relationship between author and text that amounts to access to the roots of knowledge, the very possibility of which Kant refuted as it is incompatible with finite human autonomy, synthetic *a priori* cognition and empirical perception of the natural world.

As a result, Eikhenbaum's startling treatment of the grotesque in the Gogol´ essay *is* consistent with Kant's conditions of possibility and the finite human subject that they engender, both in terms of the conflicting relationship between the text's morally committed realism and comic *skaz, and* the human author and her material literary creation.   The grotesque, for Eikhenbaum, exhibits a tension between reality and that which is isolated from the real in a problematic relationship of negation and performative spontaneity that can mock, limit and undermine the real. The grotesque, therefore, both radicalizes and problematizes the relationship between the real, the material work of art and the illusions to which it gives rise. Given Eikhenbaum's definitions of the grotesque, Carol Any's 'guard dog' is not opposed to the work-centred poetics' isolation from the 'elsewhere' of life beyond the text, but Any is none the less correct when she notes that, if the grotesque is to have its full affective force, *The Overcoat's* morally engaged social realism must have some emotive substance, for if it did not then the mocking and parodic laughter of performative comic *skaz* could not give rise to the grotesque (Any 1994: 53-4). It is precisely because moral commitment to human suffering, logic and realism are being derisively mocked that Gogol´'s tale has its grotesque power. Simon Critchley has argued that parodic art, which serves to mock the human, is the aesthetic discourse which accords the most with Kantian finitude, in that it serves to limit and

mock unitary or 'authentic' accounts of the human (Critchley 2012: 77-82).

Eikhenbaum's grotesque may lack any hint of the sublime and the beautiful, but is

nevertheless Kantian in this regard, in that it affirms finite, illusory and moral

engagement through its parodic, mocking negation.

IV

This same 'grotesque' tension between the real and mocking laughter that limits

unitary human agency is replicated in Eikhenbaum's conceptualization of authorship

and its role in the objective literary system.   It is clear that this contradiction

between the 'real' author and his material literary creation implicitly replicates the

grotesque relationship between realist pathos and the mocking laughter of

performative *skaz*.   This ambiguous treatment of authorship is present from the

very first sentence of Eikhenbaum's essay, when he proclaims that an author's

personal tone [*lichnyi ton*] plays a significant role in a literary compositional structure

(Eikhenbaum 1927: 149; 1974: 269). Elsewhere in the essay, Eikhenbaum even

goes as far as to say that all the characters in Gogol´'s *The Government Inspector*

[*Revizor*] are 'only petrified poses. The mirthful and ever-playful spirit of the artist

himself reigns over them, as stage-director and real hero [*nastoiashchii*

geroi]'(Eikhenbaum 1927: 153;1974: 275). As has already been mentioned,

Eikhenbaum's remarks which are consistent with Shklovsky's *ostranenie* concept

specifically link the defamiliarizing properties of words to Gogol´, noting how it is *as*

if Gogol´ had invented a new word. Yet in contrast Eikhenbaum argues that is totally

wrong to see the narrator [*rasskazchik*] as a discernible presence in the story, as the

narrator is hidden away behind the anecdotes and puns which exemplify comic *skaz*

and its many digressions. The conclusion, at once logical and paradoxical, to be

drawn from such contradictory statements is made clear when Eikhenbaum notes

how the personal authorial tone that plays such a vital constructive role is, in the

case of *The Overcoat*, a grotesque leer or grimace [*grotesknaia uzhimka ili grimasa*]

(Eikhenbaum 1927: 160; 1974: 284). With this move Eikhenbaum implies that authorship, in the variety of manifestations discussed here, is in fact a compositional device akin to plot that serves to thread a literary work together, and is just as illusory as morally committed realistic pathos and comic *skaz*. A narrator's personal tone at once affirms an author as a device and the alienation of the historical author from the material literary work. If Gogol´'s presence in *The Government Inspector* is akin to a real hero, it is a hero whose material reality is its being a device that serves to string a narrative together into a contradictory systemic construction, and is engaged in a trajectory towards its negation; and not a living, breathing or 'embodied' presence. 'Gogol´' is accordingly just one thread that serves to weave *The Overcoat* into a systemic construction, and is alienated from the living, biographical personality to whom the story is attributed, and who therefore remains unknowable within the material limits of the literary work. The author is correspondingly *alienated* from a text which serves to mock and deride genuine authorial commitment, just as, from Shklovsky's perspective, *Kotik Letaev* serves to mock and deride Andrei Bely's commitment to anthroposophic ideology.

Eikhenbaum's use of the traditional materials of biographical literary criticism is entirely consistent with his treatment of the grotesque and the author's alienation from her literary labour. Eikhenbaum notes how Gogol´ complained to Pushkin that his own works lack plot, and asks Pushkin to do be so kind as to send him a plot of some kind [*sdelaite milost´, daite kakoi-nibud´ siuzhet*], which Gogol´ claims he would then transform into something akin to his own humorous compositions (Eikhenbaum 1927: 150; 1974: 270). This example demonstrates Gogol´'s alienation from his own work, and his inability to control the act of writing in a deliberate, volitional manner. Eikhenbaum also notes how the story evolved across various draft versions, insisting that only when an author re-reads what she's written can she objectively appreciate what changes the story needs in order to enhance its

objective qualities. And when Eikhenbaum argues for the importance of performative *skaz* in the text's composition, it is to the writings of those historical individuals who witnessed Gogol´ perform his works that Eikhenbaum turns, but he does so in order to foreground the importance of sound gestures as a compositional motivation, and emphatically not to attribute these qualities to the text's author (Eikhenbaum 1927: 151; 1974: 271). In refuting such a strategy, Eikhenbaum provides a suitably grotesque image that affirms the author's alienation from the material literary work: even marionettes can perform these words of narration, as they stand 'outside of time, outside the moment, immobile and eternal' (Eikhenbaum 1927: 158; 1974: 283).

As a result, it is no longer tenable to dismiss the Formalists' objective laws of literary praxis as repressing, or even denying the possibility of an autonomous human subject. Entirely consistent with Shklovsky's thought, the objectified structures of literature are precisely what reveal an autonomous authorial subjectivity; and, for Kant, the objectified categories of human apperception are the very conditions of possibility for an autonomous, finite human subject. Just as Kant desired the establishment of a coherent, *objective* science of metaphysics along these lines, so Russian Formalism can be understood as accounting for the possibility of a free, autonomous authorial *praxis* of literary construction. The fact that the author that emerges is the product of an unresolved tension between differing realities is the necessary condition for that author to be free, and for him or her to be intuited as such. Much of Eikhenbaum's scholarly output was devoted to studies of individual authors, such as Tolstoy, Akhmatova, and Leskov as well as a discussion of the mutually-constitutive categories of 'literature' and 'writer', and Eikhenbaum's own variety of an objective science of literature never makes the demand that the category of author be abandoned as a productive ground for literary scholarship's sound, objective principles. The Kantian account of consciousness required that

consciousness is constituted by that which it is not – it has to be conscious of

something in order to engage in the practical activity of thought. The Formalist

position is comparable, for in order for there to be an author, the author, as a

subject, is constituted by that part of herself which is other to herself: her objective

literary creations. For Kant, the identity of practical consciousness emerges

historically, after a sequence of acts that come to constitute identity after the fact;

and, for the Formalists, an author emerges historically, be it in terms of the

accumulation of devices which constitute an oeuvre, and in relation to other factors

such as genre and other authors. [55]

V

For many readers of texts such as Eikhenbaum's, as well as those of Shklovsky and

Tynianov, the suggestion that an author can, even in part, be the *result* of the

accumulation of literary devices in his or her oeuvre provokes ethical objections, as

the capacity of an autonomous subjectivity to not only create the work of literary art,

but also be held accountable – or 'answerable' – for it is threatened or undermined.

With regard to Eikhenbaum's essay on Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*, the most well-known

objection is that of Bakhtin, who strongly criticized Eikhenbaum for his categorization

of *skaz*. For Bakhtin, Eikhenbaum's emphasis on the verbal performativity of

Gogol´'s texts and their self-motivated, contradictory play with sound and logical

meaning, is perceived simply as 'an *orientation toward the oral form of narration*, an

orientation toward oral speech and its corresponding language characteristics (oral

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[55] Accordingly, there is an important distinction to be made between Brik's remark about *Evgenii Onegin* and Eikhenbaum's suggestion that the narration in *The Overcoat* is objective material that can be spoken by puppets. Brik's argument that *Evgenii Onegin* would have been written had Pushkin not been born is supported with the accompanying declaration that America existed before Columbus discovered it. On this basis, Brik appears to be maintaining an extreme variety of proto-semiotics or even Chomskian universal grammar, whereby the reified laws of storytelling always already exist in all cultures. The 'creative' role of any author in the process of storytelling is therefore completely insignificant. In contrast, both Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum *do* insist on the role of the author in the praxis of storytelling, but, as with the Kantian finite subject, the author is alienated from her objective literary creation. The grotesque and defamiliarization require a human element to break reified compositional laws, juxtaposing what cannot be juxtaposed, and allowing 'yes' and 'no' to exist on the same page. The resulting alienation wrought by paradoxical literary material means that these paradoxes cannot be attributed entirely to the will of the creative author.

intonation, the syntactic construction of oral speech, the corresponding lexicon, etc.)'
(Bakhtin 1984: 191). Eikhenbaum, so Bakhtin argues, fails to realize that *skaz* is
fundamentally an orientation towards the speech of an another, and only as a
consequence of this orientation does *skaz* foreground oral speech and its verbal
characteristics. Bakhtin's insistence on *skaz* being an orientation towards alterity is
consistent with his broader interest in discourse, understood as language in its
social totality, and the corresponding term double-voiced discourse which arises
from genuinely dialogic relationships between the embodied beings of author and
hero.

These criticisms of Eikhenbaum's conceptualization of *skaz* are entirely consistent
with Bakhtin's (and Medvedev's) objections to many of the central tenets of Russian
Formalism, objections which largely pertain to its conceptualization of just what the
nascent discipline of scientific literary studies should be. Bakhtin's and Medvedev's
objections to Russian Formalism and its methodology, and whether Bakhtin's
'metalinguistic' privileging of the categories of 'dialogic relationships' and 'embodied
beings' amounts to a credible alternative to Formalist poetics, will be addressed at
greater length in due course. For the present, it is sufficient to address one aspect
of Bakhtin's position which is typical of a great many rejections of the literary critique
offered by the Formalists. Bakhtin states that it is his 'metalinguistic' methodology
that facilitates an understanding of *skaz* as a historico-literary problem. In order
words, if we are to understand *skaz* it must be conceptualized as a historically
situated phenomenon, and, more precisely, one that it is strictly located in the matrix
of dialogic utterances particular to the historical context in which they are uttered:

…stylistics must be based not only, and even *not as much*, on linguistics as on
metalinguistics, which studies the word not in a system of language and not in a
'text' excised from dialogic interaction, but precisely within the sphere of dialogic
interaction itself, that is, in that sphere where discourse lives an authentic life. For
the word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle
medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or

a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of these concrete contexts into which it has entered.

When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of others, uninhabited by others' voices. No, he receives the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice. The word enters this context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thought finds the word already inhabited. Therefore the orientation of a word among words, the varying perception of another's word and the various means for reacting to it, are perhaps the most fundamental problems for the metalinguistic study of any kind of discourse, including the artistic. Every social trend in every epoch has its own special sense of discourse, including the artistic. Every social trend in every epoch has its own special sense of discourse and its own range of discursive possibilities. By no means all historical situations permit the ultimate semantic authority of the creator to be expressed without mediation in direct, unrefracted, unconditional authorial discourse. When there is no access to one's own personal 'ultimate' word, then every thought, feeling, experience must be refracted through the medium of someone else's discourse, someone else's style, someone else's manner, with which it cannot immediately be merged without reservation, without distance, without refraction (Bakhtin 1984: 202).

This insistence on the 'life' of the word, the very medium of dialogic inter-relation which fluidly moves from one social collective to another throughout history, bearing with it the concrete historical contexts of its utterance, is Bakhtin's own contribution to the Belinskian 'realist' school of Russian literary criticism, where there is a strong ethical demand that literature address the contextual social reality of its composition from a moral standpoint.[56] Bakhtin's repeated emphasis on a mediated, refracted discourse that lacks any authoritative control or absolute closure is entirely predicated on beings that are embodied, actual and historically situated, which, in other words, assumes that the voices of authors and their *living* embodied heroes really do say what they are saying, and in doing so are strictly situated in the historical epoch of the text's composition. It is only when two given living voices are

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[56] In emphasizing both Bakhtin's ethical engagement *with* and demands *of* the embodied social context, the 'Bakhtin' that figures in this analysis is broadly consistent with that advanced in Ken Hirschkop's *Mikhail Bakhtin: an Aesthetic for Democracy* (Hirschkop 1999), Craig Brandist's *The Bakhtin Circle: Philosophy, Culture and Politics* (Brandist: 2002) and, as already noted, Alastair Renfrew's *Towards a New Material Aesthetics: Bakhtin, Genre and the Fates of Literary Theory* (Renfrew 2006).

engaged in dialogue with one another that the processes of reflection and mediation are set in motion.   The distinctly Belinskian undertone in Bakhtin's thought rings through loudest when the following comment is contextualized against the ethical content of Bakhtin's early thought that resurfaces periodically in his later work. In clarifying his remarks about just who this 'other' is to which *skaz* narratives are directed, Bakhtin says of the narrator that: '[w]hat is introduced here, in fact, is a storyteller, and a storyteller, after all, is not a literary person; he belongs in most cases to the lower social strata, to the common people (precisely this is important to the author)—and he brings with him oral speech' (Bakhtin 1984: 202). The sentiment here, articulated as a general comment about *skaz* with the specific purpose of highlighting Eikhenbaum's failure to fully appreciate its orientation towards alterity, is clearly that of the educated literary classes benevolently addressing the situation of the lower classes, a Belinskian notion which is particularly in keeping with Bakhtin's strong ethical demands of authors and their heroes (Brandist 2002: 40-50). The 'intonation' of Bakhtin's remarks is clear: in his interest in objectively determined literary structures, Eikhenbaum does not recognize the foundational ethical orientation of literature initiated by Belinsky, that is, he does not perceive the living dialogic relationship between Gogol´, Akakii Akakievich and the narrator of *The Overcoat*; nor does he appreciate the living ethical bonds that underlie their interaction and, crucially, how the disciplinary praxis of literary studies should classify and evaluate such phenomena. In contrast to Bakhtin's 'metalinguistics', Eikhenbaum's objective science can only ever provide an account of an inert, lifeless object, as if providing a purely positivist account of the material stuff of canvas and stone that Hegel argued art has become.

Bakhtin's subtle hint that Eikhenbaum is rejecting the Belinskian paradigm of realism, where a benevolent author creates a literary work that represents some variety of social injustice, is certainly justified. In his distinction between the two

compositional layers of *skaz* and realist pathos, Eikhenbaum identifies the latter as

the layer of the novel's composition which preoccupies Belinsky, that is, a 'pathetic

declamation' or 'sentimental', 'melodramatic' narrative which chronicles the trials

and tribulations of a poor government clerk, and which occasionally interrupts the

dominant second layer of verbal play with sound and puns. To underline his point

regarding the dominance of the second compositional layer over the former,

Eikhenbaum notes that the description of Akakii Akakevich which includes the

resonant declaration of the brotherhood of Russian man 'Leave me alone! Why are

you bothering me?' [*Ostav´te menia! Zachem vy menia obizhaete?*'], does not

appear in Gogol´'s early drafts of the tale, and is therefore most likely an after-

thought, and is probably present because it enhances the *second* layer of the tale's

composition, underlining the sense of verbal play and mimicry (Eikhenbaum 1927:

156; 1974: 282). One of the grand declarations of humanist discourse in 19th

century Russian literature is rendered as a mere after-thought, and, in accordance

with Eikhenbaum's treatment of the category of the grotesque, is ironic, and

reinforces the dynamic tension between laughter and suffering that pervades all

levels of the novel's compositional structure.[57]

Having effectively plunged his analytical scalpel into the heart of Russian humanism,

Eikhenbaum is unable to resist a turn of the knife. In addition to denying that the

motivation for this depiction of Akakii Akakievich is a profoundly moral concern with

social ills, Eikhenbaum implies that such moral concern became just one more

device [*pobochnyi priem*] available to the Russian author, and that the many 'moral'

works of nineteenth-century Russian literature and its critics are autonomous

objective structures that in and of themselves are not subject to the variety of moral

imperative toward society demanded by Belinsky; and by Bakhtin in his

understanding of the 'living' dialogic relationship between embodied author and

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[57] Indeed, it is possible to conceptualize Eikhenbaum's essay (and, for that matter) Shklovsky's
parody of Bely's anthroposophic pose, as similar 'grotesque' mocking laughter.

hero. That Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky are driven by a contrasting ethical demand for an objective science of literature does not, however, require that their thought be regarded in any way as less 'moral' than the thought of Belinsky or Bakhtin, or, for that matter, that their relationship to reality is any less ethical. What unites the positions of Bakhtin, Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky in their conceptualizations of literary science is the ethical demands towards objectivity which, following Hegel's dialectical exposition of the term discussed in the first chapter, is an ethical demand to account for the real. For Bakhtin it is the concrete, historically situated embodied beings of author and hero; for Shklovsky it is the concrete material structure of literary art, which of necessity must be so in order for us to sense it as such; in Eikhenbaum's essay on Gogol´ it is the illusory performance of verbal material that fully engages its audience, and which presupposes the objective structures of literary compositions which, if they are to fully engage their audience, must be riven with contradictions and discontinuities. The conceptualization of science in both positions is certainly different, with Bakhtin believing that any objective scientific classification of a literary object, whilst nonetheless important, never articulates that object in its living concrete totality unless it is attributed to a human voice. The 'objectivizing', grotesque science of literary study in Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky is, like the Kantian programme for metaphysics, a system that resists the reification Bakhtin identifies with scientific study. The contradictions and discontinuities so valorized in the literary object by Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky are, for Bakhtin, only ever possible if contradictions can be attributed to two embodied voices engaged in dialogue.

4: The Literary Fact

I

Yury Tynianov's literary theory provides an intriguing stepped progression from that of Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum. In his essay on Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*, Eikhenbaum concluded that accounts that seek to locate the meaning of the text in Gogol´'s soul are totally invalid, and that the author-device of Gogol´'s short story is something akin to an actor or a marionette, an illusion arising in the text's relentless succession of puns and mimicry. Gogol´ was also the object of Tynianov's interest, but it is Pushkin who preoccupied him most extensively, be it in terms of Tynianov's literary theory or his own forays into novel writing. A potential venture into acting would see Tynianov provide an intriguing twist to Eikhenbaum's likening of authorship and its narration to an actor's performance, when Tynianov himself unsuccessfully screen-tested for the role of Pushkin in the film *Poet i tsar´* (Gardin: 1927). There is an appropriate contiguity between the Formalists' insistence upon authorship as an accumulative construction of devices alienated from the 'real' historical individual, and the Formalist critic effectively acting out that alienation in an artistic construction temporally distant from the biographical events of Pushkin's life, which, in light of the discussion in the previous two chapters, could be said to constitute the film's material.

Eikhenbaum's broadly constructive treatment of authorship was accompanied by a refutation of *The Overcoat's* status as a founding text in the Russian canon of socially committed realism, and the critical tradition of establishing illusory, closed correspondences between text, author, reality, and a moral-philosophical discourse upon the innate rights of man and the demand for their restoration. Tynianov's theoretical writings on Pushkin maintain this Formalist demand that unitary relationships of correspondence between text and matters beyond its material boundaries are false, and attack what is arguably the most generalized example of

this tendency in Russian critical discourse, where, following Apollon Grigor´ev's then conventionalized reception of Pushkin, the great poet is held to be 'our everything' [*Pushkin – eto nashe vse*].   In the essay 'The Imaginary Pushkin' [*Mnimyi Pushkin*], Tynianov dismisses the mythologization of Pushkin that has followed Grigor´ev's famous remarks, arguing that this mythic Pushkin has been deployed for ideological and political ends entirely alien to Pushkin's work (Smith 2008: 87). The best alternative to these imaginary Pushkins is a (no less imaginary) Pushkin that emerges through the Formalist ethics of objective, scientific principles. The study of Pushkin's oeuvre must be undertaken, so Tynianov argues, under the general rubric of literary science, and should not labour under the misguided principle that Pushkin and his work are unique and therefore not contingent upon general literary conventions (Tynianov 1977: 98) (Smith 2008: 88). Accordingly, Tynianov can be seen as reiterating the tension that informed Eikhenbaum's essay on *The Overcoat*, where the material reality of literary constructions is valorized over illusory 'realities' to which author and text, life and ideology are falsely believed to correspond.

It can only speculated as to how Tynianov's literary theory might have informed his performance of Pushkin on screen, and whether his thoughts on the 'literary personality' [*literaturnaia lichnost´*], made in the 'Literary Fact' essay (and developed in the later 'Literary Evolution'), would have affected his practical portrayal of the poet. Tynianov's concept of the literary personality is consistent with his attack in 'The Imaginary Pushkin' on ideological and political uses of Pushkin that do not conform to the objective principles of literary science.[58] Tynianov insists that Pushkin the historical figure is totally distinct from the Pushkin seized upon by, among others, the Russian Symbolist generation. The literary personality of a given author is therefore dynamic, and changes from epoch to epoch. It is, so Tynianov argues, as if the epoch impersonally selects its relevant materials, and those

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[58] For further discussion of Tynianov's concept of the literary personality, see (Boym 1991: 22-3) and (Khanzen-Leve 2001: 401-3).

aspects of the historical individual and his literary work which correspond to the epoch's demands are used, while others are abandoned. Such use of materials conveys, Tynianov insists, nothing about the historical figure and everything about the epoch in which the literary personality undergoes change. The literary personality shifts endlessly both with and within the advancing literary epoch, and cannot be defined and confined in closed terms, but is instead a broken line that is bent and directed by the literary epoch (Tynianov 1977: 259; 2000: 35).

After the essay's publication in 1924, both Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky would single out Tynianov's 'Literary Fact' as a highly significant development for the 'Formalist' school of objective literary science. To return once again to Shklovsky's concept of the stepped structure that divides and contradicts itself, the introduction of epoch and literary personality into its field of vision can be said to constitute the negative moment when new material is brought into both a literary construction and the objective discipline of literary theory. With the concepts of the literary personality, constructive function and, as will become apparent presently, a ground-breaking treatment of genre, Tynianov incorporates the problems of history and art's epochal relationship with life into the Formalist demand for an objective study of literary art. In terms of the present discussion of authorship, Tynianov's position in 'The Literary Fact' and the subsequent 'On Literary Evolution' is entirely consistent with Eikhenbaum's analysis of Gogol´, in that Tynianov totally rejects any intentional account of literature, where the author wilfully manipulates and controls her materials in accordance with her creative vision. Eikhenbaum's Gogol´ despaired at the lack of plot in his works. Similarly, Tynianov's Pushkin shows frustration at how a chapter of *Evegenii Onegin* lacked the satirical elements which the great poet intended (Tynianov 1977: 278; 2002: 72-3). However, Tynianov nimbly interweaves this demand for a finite conceptualization of authorship with questions of history and art's relationship with life. Such interweaving is accomplished by taking the same

contradictory (and paradoxical) *constructive* relationship between the material elements of literary form which informs Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum's theories of narrative, plot formation and the grotesque, and replicates this relationship in art's contradictory and indeed paradoxical imbrication with the epochal life-world beyond the material borders of the text.

II

At the heart of Tynianov's strategy to account objectively for art in its historical and social contexts is his deft ability to affect the dialectical semantic shifts and re-orientations of meaning that Shklovsky regards as crucial to defamiliarization and Eikhenbaum crucial to the grotesque. Tynianov does this most brilliantly in the 'Literary Fact's' discussion of literary materials and their dialectical relationship with what he terms the 'constructive function', which denotes the interrelationship of elements immanent to literary form.[59] In addition, he also maintains a more overtly Hegelian dialectic of objectivity in his problematization of intentional accounts of authorship in 'On Literary Evolution'. Tynianov begins his remarks by noting the popular, conventionalized understanding of authorial orientation: 'We use the term "orientation". It denotes approximately the "creative intention of the author" [*U nas est´ slovo «ustanovka». Ona oznachaet primerno «tvorcheskoe namerenie avtora»*]. Such 'orientations' or 'intentions' are, Tynianov insists, contingent upon the objective, constructive relationship between the elements of literary materials that are *other* to the creative artist: 'The "author's intention" is nothing more than a catalyst which initiates the constructive function. "Creative freedom" [*Tvorcheskaia svoboda*] thus becomes an optimistic slogan which does not correspond to reality, but yields instead to "creative necessity" [*tvorcheskaia neobkhodimost´*]' (Tynianov

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[59] Kunjundžić has argued that Tynianov's constructive function is exemplary of Derridean *de*construction, and should accordingly be designated a deconstructive principle (Kunjundžić 1997: 100). Kunjundžić is, unlike Renfrew, using the term deconstruction in the Derridean sense of the term. For an alternative definition of the constructive function which focusses on the *result* of the combination of different elements in verse and not their dynamic, dialectical tension, see (Khanzen-Leve 2001: 298-300, 366).

1977: 278; 2002: 74 translation amended).   On this basis, Tynianov is able to re-define objectively the conventionalized term 'orientation' with which he began this discussion, just as Hegel incorporates the initial moment of sensory immediacy into his account of objectivity as the concrete activity of consciousness itself. The reality of orientation is that it is deprived of any intentional meaning, that is, any 'teleological, goal orientated nuance', and the author's illusory engagement with the work emerges instead as a manifestation of the work's orientation towards concrete *byt*. Tynianov specifies this orientation as the text's *verbal* function [*rechevaia funktsiia*], and this 'orientation' towards *byt* is accordingly located in a functional relationship which recalls the constructive relationship immanent to literary art and its materials made in the 'The Literary Fact'. Crucially, Tynianov regards the literary personality as exemplary of literary art's verbal function, and, like Grigor´ev's all-encompassing remark about Pushkin, exemplary of how literary art enters *byt* in a manner that is totally removed from any historical individual.   Thus, when conceptualized dialectically, authorial orientation in the concrete social world is not the conventional understanding of a biographical being's intentional act of creation. It is really the manifestation of the impersonal social forces that, in combination with the work of literary art, give rise to the author's literary personality.

Tynianov is adamant that art's many levels of functionality should not be construed in determinist, causal terms.[60]   As Tynianov notes: '[t]he direct study of the author's psychology and the establishment of a causal bridge from the author's environment, *byt*, and class to his works is particularly hopeless' (Tynianov 1977: 280; 2002: 75 translation amended). The Formalist alternative to such closure, including its ethical demand for an objective, open method of scientifically accounting for literature, thus accords the literary a privileged status. In order to study literary art's relationship

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[60] The editors of the collection *Poetika, istoria ileratury, kino* note that the term 'function' does not have a specific meaning in Tynianov's theory. It is rather indicative of Tynianov's orientation to conceptualize literature in non-teleological terms (Tynianov 1977: 521 & 528).

with its surrounding *byt*, it is imperative that objective critique *must* begin with the work of literature itself. In 'On Literary Evolution', Tynianov concludes the essay by emphatically stating that such critique should start at the immanent level and account for the constructive function whereby individual elements and devices are located in inter-relationship. Only then can the critic proceed to address more global questions of literature's relationship with *byt* and its complex inter-relationship with literature's evolution: 'The study of evolution must move from the literary order [*riad*] to the nearest correlated orders, not the distant, even though major systems. In this way the prime significance of major social factors is not at all discarded. Rather, it must be elucidated to its full extent through the problem of the evolution of literature' (Tynianov 1977: 281; 2002: 77).

In many ways, it is an entirely appropriate irony that Tynianov's argument here offers both a productive and still under recognized theoretical paradigm for the (now) purportedly extinct discipline of literary theory in general; and the particular problem of accounting for the evolution of the Formal method against such major social factors as the shifting ideological parameters of cultural *byt* in early Soviet intellectual culture and beyond. Tynianov's stepped progression towards addressing the problems of life and history has been contextualized against the increasingly hostile attacks against Formalism from its 'Marxist' enemies (Renfrew: 2006, 26), and the accompanying graduated restriction and censorship of artworks and scholarship that were deemed incompatible with the then establishing norms of intellectual and cultural behaviour.[61] Indeed, the Formalists themselves can no doubt be productively conceptualized as literary personalities actively engaged in early Soviet cultural *byt* and, more tellingly, the epochal demands of scholarship in

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[61] For an intriguing record of the Formalists' turbulent debate with 'Marxist' opponents in March 1927, see 'Materialy disputa "Marksizm i formal´nyi metod' (Ustinov 2001: 247-78). According to Ustinov, the year 1927 marks the turning point from a degree of intellectual freedom to ever increasing pressure for ideological conformity with statist demands. For an insightful discussion of these materials, see (Tihanov 2002: 69-77).

subsequent accounts of Formalism, accounts that, following Tynianov's argument,

select the materials that are ideologically and politically necessary for their

purposes, but the selection of which 'says' far more about the given epoch in

question than the objective historical referent. Thus Formalism has been variously

understood as presaging the intellectual movements of structuralism and linguistics,

deconstruction, Bakhtinian heteroglossia and dialogue, intellectual resistance to the

Soviet Union, Russian orthodox religious faith, or even, in the context of this present

study, a paradoxical echo and reconfiguration of post-Kantian thought.[62] Rightly or

wrongly, this study's interest in post-Kantian modernity, where the ethical demand

for objectivity requires a paradoxical, antinomic and finite relationship to given

materials, replicates Tynianov's insistence that any objective critical trajectory

towards the external or elements of 'otherness' can only ever be accomplished

through an objective consideration of immanent properties. Accordingly, the

principle focus will, for the present, remain Tynianov's treatment of the constructive

function and how it corresponds to the theories of Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky

discussed in the previous chapters, and also constitutes an evolution of OPOIAZ

thought. Only then will the discussion proceed to address the broader questions of

art in its historical aspect and in its relationship with that which it is not, and how

Tynianov's calibration of immanent relationships is replicated in these broader

problems.

III

The term constructive function, as already noted, denotes a relationship *between*

elements, and determining the role of these elements in Tynianov's theory

necessitates a return to the problem of material.   As already noted, in *The Problem*

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[62] For Bakhtin's relationship with Formalism, see (Clark and Holquist 1984: 186-196), (Holquist 1985: 82-95), (Tihanov 2000: 130-6, 151-2), (Renfrew 2006: 21-67), (Brandist 2002: 68-74, 88-9) and (Shaitanov 1997: 233-53); for Formalism's shared attributes with linguistics see (Matejka 2002); Linda S. Kauffmann has made ambitious claims that Formalism and, particularly Shklovsky's theory and fiction, anticipate Bakhtinian heteroglossia, structuralism *and* Derridean deconstruction (Kauffmann 1992: 1-44); Sarah Pratt argues that Shklovsky's early essay 'The Resurrection of the Word' amounts to Shklovsky's profession of faith (Pratt 1996: 181).

of Verse Language Tynianov maintains a conceptualization of material akin to Eikhenbaum's use of the term in the Gogol´ essay and Shklovsky's in 'Art as Device', where the ethical drive to objectively account for literary art and its unique properties is consistent with the drive to materialize the object of analysis, rendering it a determinate thing. By the time he comes to write 'The Literary Fact' Tynianov's position has shifted somewhat. The essay's title economically conveys how the ethical drive to materialize the object of *objective* analysis is still very much in evidence, but Tynianov's treatment of the constructive principle provides a contrasting iteration of material more akin to Shklovsky's position in the Rozanov essay in *The Theory of Prose*, where literary art is specifically a contradictory and paradoxical relationship of negation between verbal materials, which can be anything – literary or extra-literary – as long as they are held in dialectical tension with the constructive function.   Tynianov, as with Eikhenbaum's concept of the *dominanta*, insists that the contradictory relationship between constructive function and material is one of dialectical struggle.[63] Material is, Tynianov argues, always in a subordinate role to the dominant power of constructive function, and any literary construction is therefore a complex site of dynamic tension. By way of example, Tynianov offers the contrasting examples of poetry and prose. In the former, the constructive factor can be rhythm, and its material the semantic clusters which coalesce into a plot. In the latter, plot serves as the constructive function, and the rhythmic elements of the word its material (Tynianov 1977: 261; 2000: 37). The constructive function can thus be conceptualized as providing a solution to the problem resulting from Eikhenbaum's and Shklovsky's treatments of plot as a sequence of elements with a coherent motivation. According to this schema, it is impossible to account for such works as *The Overcoat* and Rozanov's *Solitaria* where a 'threaded' plot is notable by its absence, or can even be said to be both

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[63] David Duff foregrounds the role of tension and struggle in Tynianov's theory, particularly with regard to his conceptualization of genre. See 'Maximal Tensions and Minimal Conditions: Tynianov as a Genre Theorist' (Duff 2003: 553-563).

present and absent simultaneously. According to Tynianov's more general

formulation of a relationship between elements, plot is not necessarily the *sine qua*

non of literary prose, as Shklovsky complains in *The Third Factory* (Shklovsky 2002:

367-77; 2002: 62-3). With regard to Eikhenbaum's essay on Gogol´, the grotesque

can be said to perform the role of constructive function, and plot and its absence

part of the materials which are in conflict with its constructive motion. In the 'Literary

Fact' Tynianov is adamant that absences can indeed serve as material in literary art,

noting how gaps and pauses in poetry are necessary elements that conflict with a

poem's broader constructive function (Tynianov 1977: 262; 2000: 38).

Consistent with the relationships which inform Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*,

stepped progressions and Eikhenbaum's grotesque, the relationship between

material and constructive principle is an immanent, mutually constitutive

contradiction that cannot be reduced to a unitary point of closure. Appropriately,

Tynianov uses the Potebnian schema of thinking in images in order to differentiate

his constructive programme from such closed constructs (Tynianov 1977: 261;

2000: 37). Any attempt to place elements beyond the parameters of the literary text

is typical of the Potebnian belief that an artistic image strives towards an idea

beyond its boundaries. There may be an infinite variety of images striving towards

the realm of truth beyond the confines of the text, but the closed structural

relationship in which they are engaged with 'truth' is identical. By locating a text's

material *beyond* the constructive function, the resulting structure would be exactly

the same as this closed Potebnian paradigm. Accordingly, a text's material,

whatever it can be said to be, cannot be located outside of the constructive function

with which it is engaged in dialectical tension.   And, as a result, Tynianov insists

that literary art's material is already formed in some way [*«material» vovse ne*

protivopolozhen «forme», on tozhe «formalen»], and not some variety of primordial

referent which, in a direct causal framework, undergoes representation in art

(Tynianov 1977: 261; 2000: 31). Yet again Tynianov's argument is evocative of

Hegel's dialectic. As noted in the first chapter, the oppositions in Hegel's dialectic of

objectivity are not simply moments of radical difference and otherness that emerge

through negation, but are conditioned by each other. The materials and constructive

function therefore condition, 'form' and constitute each other, albeit with the added

element of the constructive function performing the role of master, and material the

slave.

In addition to these convergences with Hegel, Tynianov's treatment of material and

the constructive factor offers striking parallels with Kant and his account of

consciousness's conditions of possibility. In accordance with Tynianov's injunction

against a causal account of literary art, it is apparent that literary art's materials are

only ever apparent after the fact. Kant's account of consciousness, as already

noted, is historical, both in terms of the metaphysical discipline which it critiques in

order to advance conventionalized knowledge and of the spontaneous activity of

consciousness and its advances of knowledge. It is impossible to causally

determine the individual elements of knowledge before the fact, and it is only

possible through the retrospective practice of critique. Analogously, the author,

denied any iteration of an intentional account of literary praxis, can, as Eikhenbaum

notes with regard to Gogol´, only ever be confronted with the material reality of

literary creation and its impersonal constructive relationship of elements *after the act

of writing the text*. Equally, the critic can only ever ascertain a text's materials and

their conflicting relationship in the text's constructive principle afterwards, and

cannot viably construct a causal relationship of meaning in literary art. As a result,

Vladimir Novikov's claim that Tynianov's concept of material encompasses 'all the

pre-creative reality of the work of art' [*vsia dotvoritel´naia real´nost´

khodozhestvennogo proizvedeniia*] (Novikov in Tynianov 2002: 475) needs to be

treated with caution. Tynianov's insistence that there are no materials outside of the

constructive factor requires that there be no pre-creative reality as far as the literary work of art is concerned. In a crude temporal schema, any one material element of the literary construction may indeed be located prior to the act of artistic creation but, in order to serve as formed material within the immanent constructive function, that material element cannot be held to precede the reality of text. Pre-creative material that exists prior to the composition of the text is impossible, as it is only the temporally fixed text which occupies a moment of creative reality. Accordingly, Tynianov's constructive function is a practical synthesis analogous to the Kantian consciousness that is dynamic, and always comes afterwards. There is further parallel between Tynianov and Kant in how they deploy antinomic relationships of difference between disparate elements. As already noted, Kant insists that consciousness is always consciousness of a material something which is other to the mind. Consciousness is therefore a practical activity between autonomous elements. The literary object is, for Tynianov, disparate elements held together by dynamic constructive function. Literature is, like Kantian consciousness, not a unitary field, but an antinomic terrain, where its conditions of possibility are literature's inner divisions and its being other to itself, at once diverse material and immaterial constructive relationship, but both objectively constituted by the other in evolving, restless tension. This tension is none the less immanent and cannot be closed in any variety of 'metaphysical', 'ideological' unity or causal determinism. It is worth recalling Tynianov's discussion of epochal demands and the literary personality, where, in both instances, Tynianov insists that it is the epochal context in which materials are orchestrated into a given verbal orientation that takes precedence over the historical period in which the referent of these formulations is situated.

There is a further, yet more counter-intuitive convergence between Kant's historical account of consciousness and Tynianov's historical account of literature. Henrich

and Žižek have both noted how, in Kant's philosophical framework, identity only

arises through consciousness's successive acts of synthesis, and there is no

symbolic or mystical access to identity in essentialized terms. Tynianov, albeit

implicitly, hints that the various functions of literature, and, by extension, the

objective critique of literary art, can play an important role in constituting a national

identity.[64] As already noted, he is profoundly sceptical of criticism that mythologizes

Pushkin for ideological and political ends that run contrary to art's contradictory

properties. This reticence towards the ideological and political does not stop

Tynianov observing, in 'The Literary Fact', that, at the time of writing, the post-

Revolutionary Russian adventure novel has not yet manifested a constructive

principle adequate to the demands of the post-Revolutionary epoch (Tynianov 1977:

263-4; 2000: 39). With this move, Tynianov provides a more positive treatment of

literary art's *verbal* function beyond his negative evaluation of the literary personality

and the mythologization of Pushkin, and implies that the historical shifts from epoch

to epoch have, in the then post-Revolutionary context, a potentially positive

relationship with literary art, whereby the latter's immanent properties of conflict and

paradox can offer a potentially dynamic and complex inter-relationship with historical

epoch and post-revolutionary *byt*.

IV

It is particularly interesting that Tynianov raises the problematic status of the

Russian *novel* in the post-Revolutionary context, as it specifically links the problem

of genre and its formulation in literary criticism with questions of Russian national

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[64] Tihanov has a number of perceptive comments regarding this point. He argues that the Russian Formalists displayed a neo-Romantic pride in belonging to vanguard attempts at forming the post-Revolutionary state and its new cultural identity. For Tihanov, the Formalists' interest in the language of a key political figure (Lenin) is clear evidence of this, as is their association with Maiakovsky and the journals *LEF* and *Novyi lef*, and the radical RAPPist *Na literaturnom postu*. The Formalists' engagement with constructivism, the Literature of Fact and other manifestations of Leftist art are, so Tihanov argues, far more than displays of loyalty and attempts to advance their cause (Tihanov 2004: 66-7). Whilst I agree with Tihanov's argument it is, as already stated, important not to forget the rejection of individual intention and their treatment of material objectivity in their theory, and we therefore need to maintain a degree of caution when attempting to map their engagement with cultural construction in purely intentional (and individualized) terms.

identity. Genre, for Tynianov, is a vital intermediate stage in the conflicting

relationships between a historically dynamic, immanent critique of literary

construction and its broader inter-relationship with the surrounding *byt*. In

demonstrating the infinitely broad relationship between a constructive function and

its diverse materials, Tynianov's discussion of genre is similarly oppositional and

explicitly differentiates between the broad, opposing literary categories of poetry and

prose. In 'The Literary Fact' [*Literaturnyi fakt*], Tynianov classifies genre as a big

form [*bol´shaia forma*], and insists that such forms are not reified categories that can

be accounted for in statistical terms. Tynianov even offers confirmation that the

Formalist objective study of literature is a science of non-recognition, stating that we

do not recognize genre in positive terms [*zhanr ne uznavaem*], and this non-

recognition is the result of genre's immanent and active struggle of negation, where

in any given genre there is always a dialectical struggle with that which it is not.

Tynianov gives the example of the evolution in the long-poem genre felt by readers

of Pushkin's *Gypsys* [*Tsygany*], where readers were confounded by Pushkin's

departure from previous generic conventions. Nevertheless, this sensation of

evolution was not enough to conclude that the long-poem had somehow ceased to

exist. Accordingly, it is never possible to recognize genre, because any given big

form contains sufficient elements for it to be a genre and not a genre at the same

time, or, in the case of Pushkin's *Gypsys*, there was something sufficient for this

non-poem to be a poem [*nechto dostatochnoe dlia togo, chtoby i eta «ne-poema»*

byla poemoi]. Genre can only exist as such through its being riven with tension

between the gravitational pull of 'big' elements against the negative force of

additional, 'small' forms (Tynianov 1977: 256-7; 2000: 36-7).

The similarities of Tynianov's figuring of genre and Shklovsky's equally constructive

concepts of *ostranenie* and stepped forms are therefore not difficult to discern.

Shklovsky noted how plot requires the addition of new elements to prolong and

retard a narrative structure, or provide an equally retarding moment of non-recognition. Defamiliarization demands the problematizing of conventionalized forms with a radical juxtaposition with the innovative and unexpected. Tynianov even expands upon his demand of *not* recognizing genre by arguing that the primary awareness of genre is somatic, and that genre and the constructive principle are intuited by sensation [*oshushchenie*] (Tynianov 1977: 257; 2000: 37). There are further similarities with Eikhenbaum's treatment of the grotesque discussed in the preceding chapter, albeit Tynianov inverts the emphasis Eikhenbaum gives to the categories of grotesque or melodrama at the expense of the novel or short story form to which *The Overcoat* belongs. To adapt Eikhenbaum's argument to Tynianov's constructive principle, it is the tension between the secondary elements of the grotesque with the large generic form of the short story that can be said to constitute part of these systemic tensions, or, to use Tynianov's own term, constitute the text's *literary* function. The literary function is structurally analogous to the constructive function (which pertains to orchestration of elements and devices) and the verbal function (which pertains to literature's relationship with *byt*), in that it stages a conflict between the material elements of different generic systems. The necessarily historical aspect of genres is manifested in Tynianov's brief illustration of how the dynamic function at work in the 'big' and 'small' forms of the novel genre change over time: 'The novel, which seems to be an integral genre that has developed in and of itself over the centuries, turns out to be not an integral whole but a variable'. At the time of writing, Tynianov states that the novel is determined by plot development and a purely quantitative judgement concerning the total number of pages which denotes the differentiation of a novel from a novella, short story or fragment.[65] In previous epochs, the novel was designated by differing elements at

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[65] Shklovsky makes a similar observation concerning the anecdote in the preface to *The Third Factory* (Shklovsky 2002: 337-8; 2002: 3-4).

work in historical constructive factors, such as pathetic romance or the epistolary form (Tynianov 1977: 274-3; 2001: 70).

It is precisely the variable quality of generic forms that, for Tynianov, decisively demonstrates the limitations of an analysis of merely the constructive aspect of literary art in what would later termed its synchronic aspect. In 'On Literary Evolution', Tynianov berates followers of immanent textual analysis of devices, arguing that they confuse the immanently historical character of the literary phenomenon with historicism. They refuse to address the problem of history and pursue what might be termed a universal grammar approach to literary art that does not engage with literature's complex historical evolution and its inter-relationship with the extra-literary series (Tynianov 1977: 273-74; 2002: 68-9). Immanent analysis does provide an understanding of literary art, but the critic, armed with an awareness of the paradoxical and contradictory qualities of literary art, must go beyond the immanent, and turn to the problematic areas of epochal life in all its historical complexity in order to account for literary evolution. But, in going beyond literary art's immanent properties, the contradictory relationship between constructive function and material is replicated in the literary functions of genre, and the verbal function of art with *byt*. Tynianov acknowledges the ongoing relevance of immanent textual criticism, but, with Tynianov's series of functions (constructive, literary and verbal), the Formalist method evolves into a variety of objective critique that realises it must account for literature's difficult relationship with elements that lie beyond its boundaries, and that the changing nature of those boundaries necessitates that the literary must be addressed on an objective, *historical* basis. Immanent textual criticism will, Tynianov believes, never be able to account for the incorporation of materials into the literary set that were previously *extra*-literary. By way of example, Tynianov demonstrates how the epistolary form was gradually incorporated into the novel form. Previously, letter-writing pertained purely to *byt*,

but, due to the changing qualities and demands of the epoch in the time of

Karamzin, the letter, with all the varieties of materials it offers, was elevated to the

very centre of literature, displacing elements which had previously played a central

role (Tynianov 1977: 265-7; 2000: 41-3).

V

At this stage, taking into account Tynianov's evolution of the ethical demand to

account objectively for literature's conditions of possibility in all their immanent,

historical and contingent complexity, it is possible to address the broader epochal

problems particular to the mid to late 1920s in the Soviet Union or, in Tynianov's

own terms, address his evolution of Formalism's ethical demands in terms of their

verbal function.   Whilst it is certainly the most prosaic of platitudes, it is nonetheless

important to emphasize that Tynianov's contribution to the formal method and its

demand for an objective science is itself an evolution of Russian Formalism and its

method, and not a radical rupture that amounts to abandoning the work centred

poetics. As has been argued here, the structural and constructive relationships

active in Shklovsky's account of defamiliarization, plot formation and Eikhenbaum's

critique of Gogol´ are very much alive in Tynianov's work. Some have argued that

Tynianov's critique of genre amounts to Formalism's 'final break with the era of the

device' (Renfrew 2006: 31).[66] Such a conclusion is not without justification given

Tynianov's criticisms of purely immanent textual criticism in 'The Literary Fact' and

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[66] In suggesting that there is a clear continuity in how the Formalists' conceptualize art from the early *Poetics* collections to their writings up to the end of the 1920s, and in my use of theoretical concepts to account objectively for the history of the movement which formulated them, my argument owes a debt of inspiration to Aage A. Hansen-Löve's *Russkii formalizm: Metodologicheskaia rekonstruktsiia razvitiia na osnove printsipa ostraneniia* (Khanzen-Leve 2001). However, I do not accept his at times rigidly schematic exposition of Formalism's fundamental concepts (Khanzen-Leve 2001: 200-207), and his accompanying division of the history of Russian Formalism into three distinct stages. Of these three distinct stages, Hansen-Löve argues that the first 'paradigmatic' stage focused on material, parody, device and orientation; and the second 'syntagmatic' is differentiated by an interest in narrative and plot. The third 'pragmatic' stage encompasses the turn to literary art's relationship with life. To my mind, the publication of 'The Literary Fact' in 1924 and the publication of Eikhenbaum's Gogol´ essay (first included in the third *Poetics* collection in 1919 *and* republished in the second edition of Eikhenbaum's *Teoriia Kritika Polemika* in 1927), render this schematic account of Russian Formalism problematic, as it fails to account for Formalism's *dialectical* evolution in the Soviet 1920s.

'On Literary Evolution.' However, the suggestion that Formalism has two distinct eras of 'device' and 'genre' risks understanding the Formalist school in positive terms at the expense of their interest in constructive relationships and paradoxical relationships of negation, non-recognition and knight's moves. The point may seem pedantic, but it is nonetheless significant when assessing the verbal function of Tynianov's work towards the end of the Soviet 1920s. The turn to questions of art's relationship with life and its historically grounded evolution are clearly indicative of a shifting ideological climate that increasingly demands these problems be addressed in 'objective' or 'scientific' accounts of literary art; just as Tynianov's refutation of determinist accounts of an author's social class suggests that the idea has some currency in the historical context of Tynianov's refutation. Yet the persistence of a degree of Formalist pedigree in Tynianov's treatment of these problematics requires that an element of discursive openness and tolerance in that epochal context be acknowledged, and even that these discursive formations of ideology, class and history cannot be satisfactorily articulated in closed, intentional or determinist accounts of early Soviet ideology and a coercive pressure to conform.

It is a measure of the inability to provide such closed correlations between a coercive ideological environment and Formalist critique that it is never clear whether Tynianov can be said to accord with such pressures, or indeed be regarded as providing a particularly subtle parody of the broader ideological climate.[67] This tension is most apparent in 'On Literary Evolution', where Tynianov echoes Lenin and Plekhanov when he states that the authorial intention school of literary criticism amounts to a history of war in terms of the actions of individual generals. Such an approach obviously addresses the socio-economic structural problems which lead to the advent of war in the first place. Tynianov even goes so far as stating that the discipline of literary scholarship is, given its emphasis on unscientific authorial

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[67] As will be argued in the seventh chapter, Shklovsky exploits this ambiguity to dramatic effect in *The Third Factory*.

modes of criticism, analogous to a colonial territory, with the implication being that objective Formalist specifications offer the potential revolutionary overthrow of the discipline's oppressors, and the discipline will rise to the challenge of constructing a new discipline in the new Soviet state (Tynianov 1977: 270; 2002: 66). Such analogous moments of non-recognition of their referent are rich in their ambiguity. Perhaps it is Tynianov making a conciliatory gesture in the face of the Cultural Revolution's coercive pressure to conform, or perhaps such overwrought examples parody the extent to which revolutionary discourses were being forcibly injected into all aspects of the epochal *byt* in which Tynianov was writing.[68]

It is far less ambiguous, with regard to 'The Literary Fact', that Tynianov's 'orientation' is towards promoting the advent of the Russian adventure novel which he suggests is absent in the post-Revolutionary context. As noted in the first chapter, Kant's insistence that the project of critique be orientated towards its praxis in public debate is fraught with difficulties. Tynianov's insistence that literary art's verbal function encompass art's dialectical engagement with the public world of life is equally problematic, albeit in a manner that now appears more aware of those difficulties and ambiguities than Kant. Kant's critique objectively accounts for consciousness's conditions of possibility, the natural sciences and *a priori* moral freedom with a view to their practical activity in social life. Formalism's objective critique of art accounts for its conditions of possibility (immanent, historical and contingent with extra-literary orders) with a view to a critique of finite, non-recognition and, crucially, the practical activity of writing literature itself and, to return to Kant's words in 'What is Enlightenment?', taking responsibility for the arts and sciences. The Formalists' non-intentional accounts of authorship and, particularly, Tynianov's suggestion that the literary personality is exemplary of literature's *verbal* function complicates this latter element, by insisting that a text's (or author's)

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[68] Tynianov's orientation towards parody, even when engaged in nominally 'scholarly' genres, is exemplified by his planned, yet unrealized, history of poetry (Tynianov 1977: 537).

relationship with the concrete world of life is mediated by objective, impersonal

forces that are beyond intentional formulation. Thus, Tynianov's 'orientation' to

promote and facilitate the act of writing in the Soviet 1920s is an impersonal, illusory

formation that arises through his theory's dialectical inter-relationship with the

broader epochal context.

VI

Yet epoch and constructive principle are, in Tynianov's discussion of genre,

inextricably linked. A new epochal constructive principle, so Tynianov argues,

requires new materials, and it is apparent that by foregrounding the possibility that

newspapers and journals are potential material for the as yet undefined post-

Revolutionary Russian adventure novel, Tynianov may well be advancing the

'Literary Fact' essay and its theoretical proclamations as potential material (it is

worth noting that the essay appeared in the journal *LEF*) for an inchoate

constructive function. The glaring contradiction between Tynianov's own demand

that material cannot exist outside of the constructive function in the same essay is

all too apparent here, and demonstrates the difficulty with which the Formalist

school can be engaged with what, retrospectively, is widely termed the Russian

Avant-garde. This discontinuous and plural cultural phenomenon offers a great

variety of artistic praxes and thematic preoccupations, of which the post-Russian

Symbolist propensity towards life-creation [*zhiznetvorchestvo*] has been much

discussed.[69] With the exception of Tynianov's remarks on the post-Revolutionary

novel, it is well-nigh impossible to equate the Formalists with this tendency in post-

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[69] For a discussion of 'life-creation' in Russian culture prior to its voguish application to the 'avant-garde', see *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History: Essays by Iurii M. Lotman, Lidiia Ia. Ginsburg, Boris A. Uspenskii* (Lotman in Nakhimovsky & Nakhimovsky 1985: 67-8, 75 & 94) and (Boym 1991: 5-6). The first chapter of Boris Groys's *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond* (Groys 2011: 1-32) argues, problematically it must be said, for the preponderance of a Nietzschean will to power in the avant-garde intention towards life-creation. Irina Gutkin has analysed the perpetuation of Russian Symbolist discourses of life-creation in the avant-garde and beyond in 'The Legacy of the Symbolist Aesthetic Utopia: From Futurism to Socialist Realism' in (Paperno and Delaney-Grossman 1994: 167-97). The introduction to *Laboratory of Dreams* provides an insightful discussion of the term with regard to the avant-garde (Bowlt & Matich 1996: 4, 8-9).

Revolutionary culture, specifically because of their propensity to problematize the relationship between art and life, and their insistence that the relationship between art and artist can never adequately be formulated in intentional terms. In a highly problematic essay which has been the subject of much critical attention, Ekaterina Degot´ provides a deeply flawed account of Soviet citizens' relationships with objects, and elaborates on Aleksandr Rodchenko's desire to create object-comrades that differ from their capitalist commodity counterparts (Degot´ 2000: 201-210).[70] Anke Hennig has spoken about an analogous effort by Lilia Brik to create a kino-object that does not conform to the oppressive gaze of the masculine kino-eye.[71] The Formalists are adamant that such intentional accounts of artistic creation are

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[70] Of the many problematic arguments advanced in the essay, it is particularly concerning that Degot´ does not differentiate between Marx's concept of commodity fetishism and Freud's subsequent treatment of fetishism. Degot´ confuses the former with the latter extensively in this article. Marx's brilliant argument critiques the 'witchcraft' through which the abstract value of the exchanged commodity comes to have profound structural implications in the concrete social environment of social exchange (Marx 2000: 452-487). As Michael Heinrich persuasively argues, it is entirely incorrect to equate Freud's thesis of fetishistic attachment to objects with Marx's altogether more ethically committed critique of exchange in *Capital* (Heinrich 2008: 70-9, 179-98). Seemingly unaware of this distinction, Degot´'s account of the Soviet citizen's relationship to commodities seems ultimately orientated towards a paradoxical account of Soviet capitalism. It is interesting to note that Marx's critique of political economy shares many structural relationships with Tynianov's own critique. However, as will become apparent in due course, Eikhenbaum correctly problematizes any direct relationship of correlation between literary meaning and the financial world of alienation, exchange and commodification.

A key concern of 'Literary Fact' and 'Imaginary Pushkin' is anachronism. Tynianov seemingly concedes that anachronism is unavoidable in any act of reading or cultural criticism, as an epoch will always select the materials which suit its contemporary needs. By extension, the very term 'Avant-garde' and, for that matter 'modernism', can therefore be designated examples of an anachronistic constructive function from subsequent epochs, particularly when applied to cultural phenomena which do not explicitly identify themselves as either 'avant-garde' or 'modernist'. Regarding the latter term, it is very interesting that Jean-Michel Rabaté should begin his study *1913 Cradle of Modernism* with the question: 'Could the Year 1913 have brought bad luck?' (Rabaté 2007: 1). To my mind, this unintentionally associates modernism with superstition, and begs the question: is it not exemplary of superstition to assume that 'modernism' can encompass the attributes of so much cultural phenomena over such an extended period of time? It was Marx who invoked the superstitious practice of witchcraft in his explanation of value and commodity fetishism, and it is certainly tempting to pursue the analogy, and argue that 'Avant-garde' and 'Modernism' are themselves agents of commodification of cultural phenomena, in that they establish a common value-denominator of equivalence between such a wide variety of phenomena in all cultural walks of life. On this basis, it is Deget who participates in the commodification of the Avant-garde and its objects, and, potentially, is even complicit in the capitalist relationships to objects which she purports to critique.

[71] I am referring here to an interesting paper, 'From Commodities to Comrades: On Gender Relations in the Russian Avant-garde', given at Durham University as part of its Literary Theory History research group in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures.

impossible, and demand that the dynamic literary object is other to the artist and her attempts to fashion it according to her will.[72]

Despite the contradiction in his remarks on the Russian adventure novel, Tynianov is adamant that it is impossible to engineer a constructive principle before the fact. As already mentioned, there is, in effect, no pre-creative reality for a work of art. It is only a completed work of art which manifests its material through its contradictory struggle with the constructive principle, and writer and critic can only ever ascertain this relationship after the act of writing. Whilst it is clear that Tynianov is specifically engaged with the problem of genre, and how an apparent absence in Russian literature might be addressed, his remarks on a specifically Russian problem hint at an alternative way of formulating a national identity in non-essentialized and even non-mythological terms. According to Tynianov, the problem for the Russian adventure novel lies in the ambiguous dialectical contradiction between two constructive principles: the plotted novel, and the plot-less novel (Tynianov 1977: 263; 2000: 38-9). Whilst this state of affairs affords Eikhenbaum his brilliant analysis of Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*, it is more problematic with regard to the Russian adventure novel. Eikhenbaum was also profoundly sceptical regarding the Russian adventure novel in the contemporary essay 'In Search of Genre' [*V poiskakh zhanra*] (Eikhenbaum 1927: 291-95). Eikhenbaum is highly critical of attempts to intentionally create a Russian adventure novel, noting its failed attempts to incorporate voyages to Mars, the construction of enormous laboratories, and great voyages across time and space. Eikhenbaum hints that these attempts to forcibly engineer a Russian adventure novel are the result of statist demands for a new literary culture, noting that the fate of Russian literature concerns not only literary

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[72] In the chapter 'The Avant-garde and the Retrospectivists', Katerina Clark has argued that the Formalists are exemplary of the avant-garde because they attempted 'to create a new system of norms by redistributing the authority of chance and necessity'. The problematic term here is *create*, as the Formalists consistently demand that the objective laws of literary material have always been as such, and there is no 'chance' in their implementation or discernment (Clark1994: 259-277).

circles and editors, but also the organs of state power (Eikhenbaum 1927: 291).

Attempts to force a Russian adventure novel arise from an influx of foreign works in

translation, but such foreign material does not necessarily correspond with the

epochal demands of post-Revolutionary Russia. Tynianov's critique of the Russian

adventure novel is entirely consistent with Eikhenbaum, and argues that the

dialectical interaction of plot and plotless style is set in motion in certain conditions.

Whilst these conditions may exist in other national literary cultures, in Russia the

material for this constructive tension is, at the time of writing, not yet existent. As

such the Russian adventure novel can be said, with regard to its verbal function, to

convey a sense of crisis in post-Revolutionary literary culture, where any attempt to

intentionally found a given literary movement or genre will remain only an attempt.

With these criticisms in mind, any 'attempt' to align the Russian Formalists with

intentional efforts to establish new national or political identities needs to be treated

with a degree of caution. Tynianov and Eikhenbaum do indeed express a concern

with the fate of a particular variety of the novel genre, and hint at its potential for

promoting a variety of national identity. But that identity can only arise through a

correspondence between the materials active in the various levels of functions

(constructive, literary and verbal) outlined by Tynianov. It would be a mistake to

read Tynianov's insistence on the contradictory, dialectical relationship between

specifically Russian material and literary construction as opposed to any kind

material 'other' to the Russian cultural experience. Tynianov in no way precludes

that possibility, he merely resists intentional attempts to establish a literary genre in

Russian culture when there is no material basis (be it literary or in *byt*) for its forced

introduction. The negative moments, where new material is present in a genre's

dialectical evolution, stepped formations or defamiliarization are all very much

dependent on that element being negated. Russian identity, by implication, will be a

variable, and thrive only with the advent of new materials and constructive

principles, but their introduction will only ever be possible if they are appropriate or consistent with what is or what has already been a generic Russian identity, that is, what is an already extant literary fact. Accordingly, the *Russian* Formalists may indeed be linked to the process whereby a new state and political identity arose, but they cannot be conceptualized as engaging in this process in purely intentional terms, and, recalling Tynianov's criticism of ideological and political deployments of Pushkin as 'our everything' and, potentially, his parodying the overt politicization of apolitical activity, their objective critical praxis was consistently accomplished with a degree of irony that militates against absolute or essentialized uses of national identity.

5: A Difficult (K-)not

I

In the previous chapter, Tynianov's 'The Literary Fact' emerged as an attempt to conceptualize the relationship between literary genres and literature's broader relationship with life dialectically, and thereby replicate the paradoxical, mutually constitutive relationships of negation between devices, material and constructive function within the broader objective contexts of genre and social life. Tynianov, it is important to note, does not formulate these dialectical relationships in intentional terms, and noted how efforts to forcibly programme an adventure novel into the post-Revolutionary context was doomed to failure. Eikhenbaum, as demonstrated in his essay on Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*, is profoundly sceptical of intentional accounts of authorial praxis, and maintains this scepticism towards intentional cultural construction in 'The Literary *Byt*', an essay that deals with the relationship between art and life along similar lines to Tynianov in the earlier essay. Of the two texts, Eikhenbaum's is by far the better known in the English-language speaking West. In the essay's anthologized reception, it has been regarded as an evolution of the Formal method, through attempting to address matters beyond the limited boundaries within which Formalism had militantly confined itself, all the while simultaneously defending the core principles of the new literary science and its objective determinations of its text-object (Shepherd 1992: 22). The essay's renown rests, to no small extent, on Eikhenbaum's formulation of three questions that pertain to a shift in the dilemmas facing Soviet writers. The initial technical questions of 'how to write in general' and 'what to write next' had, at the time of writing, given way to the more existential problem of 'how to be a writer' (Eikhenbaum 1987: 428-9; 2002: 57-8).

Shepherd argues that Eikhenbaum's diagnosis is of much greater significance than its ostensible evolution of Russian Formalism suggests: 'This formulation provides a

succinct characterization not only of a proposed new dimension for Formalist literary analysis, but also, perhaps primarily, of the current in the literary practice of the later 1920s and early 1930s' (Shepherd 1992: 22). This particular epochal current, whereby the status of the literary profession (or 'the business' of literature itself) has assumed primary importance, is significant for Shepherd because it proved highly propitious for self-conscious fiction or 'metafiction'. Following Patricia Waugh, Shepherd denotes metafiction as 'a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality' (Waugh 1984: 2). In some respects, Waugh's definition is wonderfully appropriate to the argument being advanced here. With regard to the Formalists, the suggestion that a work of literary art is an artefact is analogous to the Formalist insistence that a literary work of art is either material or a relationship between materials. Waugh's suggestion that metafictional works 'pose questions' about the relationship between art and life is no less appropriate to the Formalists, as, in both Eikhenbaum's essay and Tynianov's 'Literary Fact', the relationship between art and life is resolutely not articulated in the terminology of causal determinism, and has the ambiguity and openness of a question, rather than an emphatic determinate response. With regard to the broader context of late twenties literary culture in the Soviet Union, such questioning of the relationship between art and life is given an added twist. Drawing on two contemporary essays by Aleksei Selivanovskii, Shepherd provides a long list of metafictional works that thematize the problem of how to be a writer in the late twenties and early thirties, of which many of the texts are examples of *roman-à-clef*. Indeed, some of this doctoral labour's dramatis personae underwent fictional projection in a few of the novels listed by Shepherd: Shklovsky (and possibly Tynianov) in Veniamin Kaverin's *The Troublemaker* [*Skandalist, ili vechera na Vasil´evskom ostrove*]; Bakhtin in Konstantin Vaginov's *The Goat Song* [*Kozlinnaia pesn´*]; and Medvedev in both *The Goat Song* and *The Works and Days*

of Svistonov [*Trudy i dni Svistonova*]. As if to cement the validity of Eikhenbaum's epochal pronouncement on the centrality of 'how to be a writer' as the then thematic preoccupation *du jour,* the metafictional irony is completed by both Vaginov and Kaverin undertaking fictional projections of themselves in their respective novels.[73]

That literary theorists themselves should become an objective literary fact raises a variety of interesting debates as to the objective role of Formalist theory and its own concept of the epochal constructive function. Shepherd appears to imply that the immanentism of Formalism was somehow blind to the reality of events going on around it, and only when it came under increasing attack from 1925 onwards did it out of necessity turn to more pressing social concerns. As a result, Eikhenbaum's encapsulation of the epochal dilemma is, for Shepherd, a broadly descriptive statement of what was already apparent in the then contemporary literary culture, and not an evolution of the Formalists' poetics of non-recognition and dialectical literary constructions. Yet the fact, indeed, the *literary* fact that these theorists all served as material for fictional projection in these novels potentially implies a constitutive role for objective literary theory, that at once provides a theoretical framework for conceptualizing literary praxis and was, potentially, the material *and* epochal constructive function that dialectically organized its materials.[74] In addition, Eikhenbaum's account of current literary themes and problematics is undertaken on the basis of the essay's emphatically positive response to Tynianov's essay and its concept of the constructive function, published some five years prior to

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[73] Shepherd refers to Selivanovskii's 'Mezhdu prosvetitel´stvom i marksizmom' from *Oktiabr*, 8 (1929) and 'Ostrovitiane iskusstva' from *V Literaturnykh boiakh: sbornik statei* (1930). For a discussion of the prototypes of Kaverin's *Skandalist* see 'Prototipy odnogo romana' (Chudakova & Toddes 1981). Bakhtin himself discusses the prototypes of *Kozlinaia pesn´* (Bakhtin and Duviakin 1994: 182-4) and, in his discussion of Vaginov's metafictional novels, Shepherd provides an extensive list of those scholars who have engaged in what he derisively terms 'prototype spotting' (Shepherd 1992: 91).
[74] This statement should not be interpreted as writers *representing* the ideas of literary theory in their respective fictions. There have been some misguided attempts to take the biographical link between Bakhtin and Vaginov as conclusive proof that Bakhtin's theory is replicated in Vaginov's novels (Anemone 1998: 57-70). Given the current interest in non-linearity and indirect influence, it is fitting that it is Vaginov's novels that exhibit a sustained thematization of Formalist poetics, and Kaverin's, former student of Tynianov's, whose works seem much closer to Bakhtin's concept of real embodied authors.

Eikhenbaum's 'epochal' pronouncement (Eikhenbaum 1987: 342; 2002: 61).

Indeed, rather than proceeding from an observation of contemporary literary

dilemmas, Eikhenbaum's essay effectively begins from where Tynianov's remarks

about the Russian adventure novel left off. Tynianov's anti-intentional account of

literary art argued that the Russian adventure novel could not be forced into being,

as there was then no adequate material in the post-Revolutionary context to sustain

a suitably dynamic relationship of negation with an epochal constructive function.

Tynianov refused to proffer any intentional solution to this problem, only hinting that,

as art searches for new materials, its deforming and defamiliarizing encounter with

life could do worse than consult Formalist theory in literary journals. Eikhenbaum's

next step from this unresolved ending is to acknowledge the difficulties the writer

faces and, through an objective analysis of literature and its inter-relationship with its

epochal context, help the writer go about writing. The literary functions of this

epochal context have, according to Eikhenbaum, become entangled in a difficult

knot [*slozhnyi uzel*] (Eikhenbaum 1987: 436; 2002: 64-5). However, in the hands of

a writer-critic armed with the insights of Formalism's poetics of non-recognition, this

knot ultimately proves to be Gordian, and Shepherd's description of the essay's

epochal formulations ultimately prove to be wide of the mark, be it in terms of the

essay's attempt to provide 'a new dimension' to the Formal method, or in terms of

Eikhenbaum's diagnosis of the 'metafictional' malaise in late-twenties literary

culture. As with both his and Tynianov's earlier rejection of the post-Revolutionary

adventure novel, Eikhenbaum is by no means enthusiastic as to the trajectory of

literary culture towards the end of the 1920s, and, paradoxically, the ostensible

'Formalism' apparent in literary culture is not something of which Eikhenbaum

implicitly approves.

II

According to Eikhenbaum, the writer's difficulty in untying the difficult knot of 'function' is compounded by the very status of the profession, which, in an attempt to align himself with Tynianov's essay, he suggests is part of the literary *byt* that writers thematize in their work. As already noted, Tynianov formulates the term *byt* in broadly positive terms, praising it as fertile space, teeming with rudimentary sciences. Eikhenbaum is much less positive, and formulates *byt* in manner comparable to the numerous contemporary treatments of the term as all that is mundane, relentlessly over-bearing and banal; an ultimately determinist discourse of miserablist materialism that will inevitably overcome any attempt at progressive or positive movement.[75] Eikhenbaum does not go as far as to lament the wreck of the love-boat on the rocks of *byt*, but he does formulate *byt* as a broadly negative contingency that limits authorial activity (Eikhenbaum: 1987, 430; 2002, 58-9). In the '*byt*' of Eikhenbaum's essay, writers lack professional independence and cannot simply create whatever literature they wish. They must undertake what amounts to hack work in order to support themselves, and are therefore included within the broader economic market of production and exchange and demands that authors and their writing conform to external ideological demands. In this socio-economic context, it really is the *job* of the writer to discern just what the function of literature can be, and to figure out just how to 'be' a writer.

Eikhenbaum's turn to the problems of profession and economic market goes some way to explaining Shklovsky's blinkered dismissal of the essay as 'the most vulgar Marxism' [*vul´garneishii marksizm*] (Shklovsky quoted in Galushkin 2000: 140), and might equally be understood as an epochal moment of rupture with the tenets of 'early' Formalist theory, where the 'device' period of immanent textual analysis is abandoned once and for all, and the problem of the extra-literary finally becomes

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[75] For an excellent survey of such '*byt*', see *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life* (Boym 1994: 29-120).

equally significant, that is to say, an *epochal* socio-economic problem. Yet as even Shepherd notes, the essay manifests an orientation towards defending Formalism's core principles of the work-centred poetics. Contrary to many scholarly accounts of Russian Formalism, it appears that mapping the co-ordinates of Russian Formalism along a crudely linear line of breaks and abandoned ideas is, on the basis of Eikhenbaum's essay, problematic. In 'Literary *Byt*', Formalism's conservative 'guard dog' of the work-centred poetics is very much in evidence, and the demand for an autonomous discipline of literary science is as penetrating and persistent as it was in publications from the decade prior to Eikhenbaum's article. Eikhenbaum insists that a coherent, autonomous theoretical schema is vital to the achievement of this aim, and an objective science of literary art must account for historical problems. The incorporation of the problems of literary history is only ever possible by a unitary theoretical system under which the various data of the literary past can be assimilated and organized into literary history (Eikhenbaum 1987: 428-31; 2002: 56-9). It is only upon this historical basis that the guard-dog theoretician can also serve as a guide-dog for the would-be author, providing an objective explication of the historically constituted problems of how to write and what to write next. However, when encountering the contemporary problem of how to be a writer in the socio-economic contexts of production, exchange, commodification and supply and (at times ideological) demand, the guard-dog once again bares his teeth and insists upon a return to the work-centred poetics.

For Eikhenbaum, an objective literary science cannot facilitate the undertaking of literary praxis upon such socio-economic 'bases'. Eikhenbaum's essay implies that the core principles of Formalist poetics can help the fledgling writer feel out the potentialities of her profession in the late 1920s, but he is typically strict when it comes to formulating the methodological principles under which the struggles of the present can be configured. Tynianov was interested in how a given phenomenon

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can be extra-literary in a particular historical period, but then be incorporated into the

literary series in another. It is as if Eikhenbaum develops this objective criterion to

the point where he insists against an historical anachronism, and warns against

applying the evaluative criteria of one epoch's literary facts to interrogate those of a

preceding era.[76] Perhaps controversially given the timing of the article's publication

in 1929, Eikhenbaum specifically identifies this error in schools of literary analysis

that seek to identify the 'class' and 'ideology' of a given author as dominant sources

of meaning in a literary work (Eikhenbaum 1987: 432-5; 2002: 60-4).   They are

rejected precisely because they constitute an elsewhere beyond the literary object,

which must always be analysed at the level of the immanent before any relationship

with external elements can be configured. Any such interest in 'class' and 'ideology'

are, for Eikhenbaum, analogous to metaphysics and do not acknowledge the

immanent material reality of the literary thing.   Like Tynianov and Shklovsky,

Eikhenbaum rejects any treatment of the relationship between the literary and the

extra-literary as causal, and is consistently evocative of Kant's conditions of

possibility in how he formulates the constructive relationship active at immanent and

external levels: 'The relationships between the facts of the literary order and facts

extrinsic to it cannot simply be causal relationships but can only be relations of

correspondence, interaction, dependency, or conditionality'. Accordingly, there is no

'why', no 'root of knowledge' for Eikhenbaum's objective literary science, only 'what

does it mean?' As such it is totally inadmissible to formulate a causal chain between

a given author's social class and her novels. Deftly anticipating a potentially hostile

response from what then passed for Marxists, Eikhenbaum produces a quotation

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[76] Eikhenbaum's warning against 'class' criticism is indicative of the paradoxical manner in which anachronism figures in both Hegel's thought (see Chapter 1) and Russian Formalism. Eikhenbaum *does* formulate an anachronistic theory as to literature's conditions of possibility, whereby the properties of literary art can be evaluated both terms of their historically situated particularity *and* their general capacity to change and evolve over time. The latter general tendency *must* be calibrated in order to account for the particular. The causal determinism which Eikhenbaum identifies in contemporary 'Marxist' criticism is inadmissible on both counts. Indeed, from the Hegelian perspective, this 'Marxist' approach is an anachronism.

from Engels pleading for a genuinely dialectical conceptualization of socio-economic phenomena, where Engels expresses frustration with the determinist materialist paradigm frequently used by Marx's inferior successors (Eikhenbaum 1987: 432-3; 2002: 61).[77]

Eikhenbaum's essay does not argue that the concepts of social class and the literary are mutually exclusive, but rather that 'class' can only ever be addressed in literary analysis once it has become an objective literary fact. For Eikhenbaum, at any given historical moment social and political demands do not necessarily correspond with literary demands in causal terms, and, correspondingly, the class struggle and the literary struggle do not necessarily coincide (Eikhenbaum 1987: 436; 2002: 64). On this basis, he makes the strikingly bold assertion that class, in the sense that it is understood in socio-economic sciences, has never been a literary fact in Russian literature. According to Tynianov's dialectical formulation of the constructive principle, and the concomitant dynamic definition of the literary fact, socio-economic class cannot be said to have performed any kind of constructive function during both the mid and late nineteenth century. To put it in more Shklovskian terms, class has served as neither motivation, nor material for Russian literature. The mid nineteenth century struggles between Nekrasov and Fet, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were not class struggles in the socio-economic understanding of 'class' or 'ideology'. They were struggles over 'class-nature' [*klassovost*] between the new profession of writers dependent on their readers for income and writers of independent means. The former wrote in the evolving generic forms that came into being around this time, and which in turn must be regarded as dialectically inter-dependent and co-constitutive of these struggles. These are, for Eikhenbaum, the perennial co-constitutive problems of literature and literary *byt,* where the struggle

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[77] As Samuel D. Eisen notes, Eikhenbaum was particularly effective at demonstrating the failure of 'Marxist' literary critics to adhere to anything which resembled a Marxist methodology in their work (Eisen 1996: 68).

between the new profession of writers and those writers pertaining to the hereditary nobility are constituted by the devices and genre-constructions active in their work, or, in the specific examples he mentions, the genres used by those writers who needed the support of their readers, and those used by the landed nobility (Eikhenbaum 1987: 431-5; 2002: 62-4). Eikhenbaum's argument is clearly reminiscent of Tynianov's concept of literary art's verbal function, where literature dialectically relates with the social environment. Eikhenbaum's discussion of class-nature is analogous to Tynianov's treatment of the literary personality that is emphatically not the 'real', historically situated socio-economic authorial being, but rather the changing discursive manifestation of that material in different literary epochs. For the literary scientist to maintain a focus on 'class' in the history of Russian literature is, therefore, an invalid anachronism that organizes the data of Russian literary history under the prevailing methodological formulations of the present. Socio-economic class, Eikhenbaum argues, can only ever be significant in terms of its literary function in the (then contemporary) present. Eikhenbaum seemingly baits his Marxist-Leninist readers, arguing that any deterministic understanding of class s in a given author's work is invalid, noting how Tolstoy's work from this period thematizes concerns which are antithetical to the class interests of the hereditary nobility into which he was born.

Tynianov's critique of ideological uses of Pushkin's literary personality pertains both to historical examples of such 'uses' since Apollon Grigor´ev's sweeping generalization, *and* to the present of the essay's composition. Tynianov concludes that only adhering to the principles of an objective literary science will prevent the grossest distortions of Pushkin's life and oeuvre being perpetuated. There is a paradox here, in that Tynianov effectively implies that a writer does not exist as a verbal function *a priori*, and it is only through authoring a text that an iteration of the author objectively manifests itself as part of the text's dialectical, mutually

constitutive relationship with changing epochs. On the basis of Eikhenbaum's

essay, it can be suggested that Eikhenbaum also denies that an author can exist as

a verbal function before the literary fact, and the current discursive pressure over

'how to be a writer' is potentially just such a tendency towards literature's verbal

function before the constructive literary fact. From Eikhenbaum's essay it is clear

that a materialist interest in authors' social class and the problem of how to be a

writer are related. Yet Eikhenbaum staunchly resists this tendency to 'class'-ify the

author before the fact, arguing that there has never been a preceding literary fact by

which writers can orientate themselves as a 'class'. Indeed, Eikhenbaum argues

that writers have always been and continue to be a class*less* profession, even in the

literary *byt* of the new Soviet state (Eikhenbaum 1987: 435; 2002: 63). The only

socio-economic relationship of exchange into which the writer enters is with the

purchasers of his or her books, a commodification which pertains purely to fetishistic

financial value, and which cannot have any effect on the text's constructive function

or even 'meaning' beyond the generic matters already identified, despite the then

current demand that an author exist as a socio-economic literary personality prior to

the act of writing (Eikhenbaum 1987: 430; 2002; 58).

III

Eikhenbaum therefore sees the solution to untying the difficult knot of discerning the

literary function in the present is to cease thinking of the author as a socio-economic

phenomenon, that is, to *end* the current pre-occupation with how to be a writer and

return to the objective historical basis of authors who write books, after which the

verbal function of authorial class can arise. And, by implication, the objective literary

scientist can advise writers on how to write those books, and even what books might

be written next. To emphasize the importance of writers as a class risks a situation

where literary *byt* begins to take precedence over literature itself, when the two can

only ever be inter-related and co-constitutive of one another and, moreover, the text

and its immanent constitutive principles remain the point of departure for both writer-author and writer-critic.   Once again, it is important to emphasize that Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum consistently reject authorial intention as a reliable basis for objective literary analysis *and* for the writer to understand how to go about the task of writing itself. Their Pushkin, Gogol´ and Bely are all to a greater or lesser extent undone by the objective properties of literary form. Eikhenbaum burdens the writer with discerning the literary function of the then present age, but this is, in all likelihood, an ironic burden that hints at the author's potential emancipation from matters that are entirely alien to literature, be it in its present or historical aspect. The preceding problems of how to write and what to write next are also, potentially, ironic formulations that, in keeping with Formalism's poetics of non-recognition, are *negative* orientations. The finite authorial self objectively determined by the Formalists *never* knows how to write and has no idea what she will write next, as the objective properties of literary form will as likely as not undermine authorial intention. Discerning the qualities of literary art, its historical situation and its implications with the impersonal constructive function are all only possible once a text has been written. That Eikhenbaum describes the writer as a class*less* profession implies that the writer emerges, on a certain level, as a negative objectification of the writer, *not* as unified embodied being in the Bakhtinian sense, but as a dynamic, contradictory accumulation of devices in the literary thing and the verbal function beyond. The Gordian knot of how to be a writer and discern epochal literary functionality is ultimately undone through the alternative problem of the 'not', as the brainless writer does not 'know' how to be a writer, and does not ever know how to write or even what to write next. All these problems are constituted by her negation in the literary text, and the concomitant negation of ever knowing how to write.

Given Eikhenbaum's negative conceptualization of authors and literature, it is unsurprising that he dismisses many activities prevalent in literary *byt*. Whereas

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Tynianov praised the potential encounter with *byt*'s rudimentary sciences, Eikhenbaum feels the situation has gone too far and the social aspects of artistic creation have taken precedence over the objective praxis of writing itself. Again foregrounding the role of the critic in facilitating this process, Eikhenbaum demands that his contemporary literary specialists stop 'fabricating artificial alignments of writers, running 'ideologies' to the ground, and foisting on literature publicistic imperatives' (Eikhenbaum 1987: 436; 2002: 65). Whilst the then contemporary literary *byt* may involve undertaking 'hack work' [*khaltura*] in order to make a living, Eikhenbaum infers that such 'work' is not necessarily the business of literature proper, and encourages authors to negotiate a degree of professional independence that will grant them the opportunity to engage in a literary praxis more in accordance with its objective historical basis (Eikhenbaum 1987: 435; 2002: 64). Eikhenbaum's closing remarks that it is time to stop talking about class, ideology and collective activities and instead start talking about literature is, therefore, not 'the most vulgar Marxism' as Shklovsky dismissed it; on the contrary, they are, if anything, the 'pure' *dialectical* Formalism of Shklovsky and Tynianov; a Formalism with a view towards an ethics of the historically contingent literary object, and, concomitantly, a genuinely dialectical relationship between literary object and epoch.[78]

Eikhenbaum's dismissal of the existential topos of how to be a writer implies his dissatisfaction with the various contemporary *romans-à-clef* which treat this epochal malaise. Eikhenbaum suggests that objective theory will help the writer ignore precisely those thematic preoccupations that were being pursued by contemporary writers. As Eikhenbaum notes at the end of his article, the burden of discerning an epoch's constructive function falls not to the writer, but the critic, who is tasked with objectively analysing the literary work. The Formalists' rejection of both the post-

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[78] Eikhenbaum's suggestion that such an approach will help the writer feel out the possibilities of the literary profession (Eikhenbaum 1987: 435; 2002: 64) echoes Tynianov's comments on the impersonal constructive principle in the 'Literary Fact', where the constructive principle of a new artistic current is felt dialectically (Tynianov 1977: 265).

Revolutionary adventure novel and the avant-garde *roman-à-clef* manifests an

ethical commitment to a positive post-Revolutionary culture, where the triumph of

the Revolution is accompanied by the literary art that it deserves.[79] There is,

however, an unacknowledged consequence to Eikhenbaum's and Tynianov's

criticisms here. If the epochal constructive principle arises impersonally and

unintentionally through dialectical determinacy with contemporary literary art, there

is the risk that an epoch will always get the art it deserves. By criticizing literary art's

inadequacy to its post-Revolutionary material, the Formalists risk implicitly criticizing

that post-Revolutionary epoch precisely through its dialectical determinacy with

inferior art. As will become apparent in the subsequent two chapters, Shklovsky's

criticism and his autobiographical novels address this problematic head on, and

confront a difficult knot of an altogether more complex variety than the Gordian

platitude of how to be a writer, and explore the dynamic that has run through much

of the discussion thus far: what is to be done when a poetics of non-recognition itself

becomes the constructive function that organizes its material, and what are the

accompanying implications for non-recognitions of the post-Revolutionary epoch?[80]

Shklovsky's dismissal of Vaginov's and Kaverin's memoir novels appears, in light of

this problematic, appropriately double-edged. Writing under the rubric of the

Literatura fakta, Shklovsky proclaims these novels are failures, because they make

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[79] With regard to this point, Galin Tihanov has suggested: 'It is essential to realize that both Russian Formalism… [was] inherently linked to the process of constructing a new state with a new political identity; and there was a neo-Romantic pride in belonging to the vanguard of these transformations' (Tihanov 2004b: 66). Whilst we should be wary of ascribing the Formalists a unified political credo or indeed 'ideological' position, Tihanov's remarks clearly problematize the reception of Formalism which perceives it as a variety of proto-structuralist immanent analysis. Yet Tihanov himself also notes that '[b]y concentrating on the literary "device," especially in the early phase of their work, the Formalists were leaving literature to its own devices, uncontrolled by, and irreducible to, ethics, religion, or politics' (Tihanov 2004b: 62). Both contrasting aspects of Formalist critique are present in the 1924 edition of *Lef* devoted to Lenin's language, and which contains essays by Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum. Tynianov's concept of the verbal function is once again useful in grappling with this contradiction, where the verbal function of Formalist criticism sees precisely its imbrication with the political, ethical and issues of cultural construction, whereas, at the more immanent level, Formalism is nominally distant from such matters.

[80] This problem has been formulated, albeit with a different agenda to the argument advanced here, by Alyson Tapp, who has argued that Eikhenbaum's hybridization of theoretical works with more autobiographical works is precisely a response to the epochal 'crisis' in the literary professions that leads Eikhenbaum to formulate his sceptical treatment of 'how to be a writer' (Tapp 2009: 33).

the grave error of sketching chicken legs onto a horse. It is possible, Shklovsky

notes, to sketch chicken legs onto a dragon, but only because a dragon does not

exist (Shklovsky 1972: 124). Whilst it is no doubt possible to understand these

remarks as a bald declaration of factography, where the writer's task is merely to

write reality as it is in all its reified facticity,[81] Shklovsky, in all likelihood, is being

ironic here. Vaginov and, particularly, Kaverin *have* sketched chicken legs onto a

dragon, because the literary personalities which serve as the materials of their

novels do indeed not exist. The Shklovsky who was 'sketched' by Kaverin in

Skandalist does not exist, and does not correspond to the more complex (if equally

non-existent) reality of Shklovsky's Formalist critique, which would, in his

autobiographical prose, breath fire upon its epoch and its inferior art.[82]

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[81] For the declaration of the factographists' intent, see 'Lef: ob etoi knige i o nas. (Predislovie)' and Nikolai Chuzak's 'Pisatel´skaia pamiatka' in (Chuzak 1972: 5-8 & 9-28).

[82] It is interesting to note here that in the issue of *LEF* devoted to Lenin's language, Shklovsky foregrounds Lenin's capacity for irony as an effective rhetorical device to deal with his opponents. Shklovsky argues that Lenin had a tendency for semantic play with words whose sense has changed or evolved from a once conventionalized meaning, perhaps hinting that Lenin himself shared the Formalist interest in innovation and defamiliarization (Shklovsky 1924: 55).

6: Life as Device

I

Shklovsky's *Zoo… or Letters not About Love* is an epistolary novel that recounts the artistic *byt* of Russian exiles living in post-Revolutionary Berlin. Life in this Berlin *byt* is frustrating. The letters are those of an unidentified narrator (supposedly Shklovsky himself) and his would-be lover Alya (supposedly the novelist Elsa Triolet), who does not respond positively to his amorous intentions. Made deeply unhappy by constant declarations of love, Alya prohibits the narrator from mentioning the word 'love' in his letters.   In response to this prohibition, the narrator describes the difficult lives of various members of the artistic Russian diaspora who reside in Berlin. In order to earn a living, figures such as the Cubist-Suprematist Ivan Puni have had to compromise their aesthetic ideals and produce popular trash. These epistolary accounts of artistic *byt* are threaded together with digressions detailing the paradoxical principles of Formalist theory to the would-be lover, as if the narrator is attempting to teach her how to write. This exchange of letters sits uneasily at the periphery between art and life, simultaneously the non-literary personal correspondence between two 'real' individuals *and* the material with which the narrator intends to write a new form that goes beyond the novel's conventional framework. The novel's renowned nineteenth letter is purportedly by Alya, and recounts her fond memories of her nurse Stesha, whose unwavering integrity contrasts with the rhetorical games and self-aggrandizing poetics of the narrator. The narrator acknowledges the letter's power and proclaims it the best letter in the novel, only to put a cross through it and instruct the reader not to read it. At the end of the novel, the narrator's final letter is addressed to All-Russian Central Executive Committee. He protests that he cannot live in Berlin and asks permission to return. Alya, the narrator declares, does not exist and was merely a metaphor for his desire to return to Russia. A lesson in the problems of negation, art's shifting boundaries

with life and failed authorial intentions, this 'novel' is appropriately difficult to describe. Of the very few scholars to discuss the novel at length, Linda S. Kauffmann describes *Zoo* as the strangest epistolary novel ever written (Kaufmann 1992: 3), and Sergei Zenkin sees it as unique among its contemporary literature, and as a work that lacks precedent in Russian culture (Zenkin 2003: 170-1).

The opening two questions of Tynianov's 'The Literary Fact' are highly pertinent to Zenkin's remarks: What is literature? What is genre? (Tynianov 1977: 255; 2000: 29). In arguing that the novel is unique among its contemporary literature, Zenkin clearly does not recognize the many consistencies between the novel and the Formalist theory of Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov. Zenkin makes an absolute distinction between literature and theory, whereby literature is emphatically *not* theory. The 'novel' and 'theory' are accordingly *in no way different genres* of the broader term literature.   Yet in 'The Literary Fact', Tynianov emphatically argues against such a static, reified understanding of the literary series, and instead insists that the latter is constituted by the dialectical, contradictory and even defamiliarizing relationship of intersecting genres in their historical evolution. Genre's evolution is signified by negation or, more specifically, the incorporation of material which is other to a given genre, and there is always an element of what a genre is not within that given genre.   Tynianov implies that the budding writer would do well to assimilate the Formalist conceptualization of genre in order to avoid making the mistakes which characterise the contemporary Russian adventure novel.   It is ambiguous whether Tynianov is, like Eikhenbaum in the 'Literary *Byt*' essay, merely offering the Formal programme of critique as a primer in how not to write for the budding writer, or, as noted in chapter 4, Tynianov is in fact writing a theoretical treatise that manifests precisely those same paradoxes, contradictions and dialectical oppositions that he identifies in Pushkin's poetry, and is effectively

demanding that the genre of theory needs to be incorporated into other genres, as it has been in the past.

In an essay critiquing the 'quiet war' between the various literary factions in post-Revolutionary culture, there is no ambiguity as to theory's capacity to enrich the novel genre. From the past, Tynianov points to Heinrich Heine's *Reisebilder*, *Paris Letters* and *The History of Philosophy and Literature in Germany*; and, from contemporary Soviet literature, Tynianov looks to *Zoo* as a particularly interesting example. Tynianov argues that Heine and Shklovsky mix the genres of newspaper correspondence, personal portraits and penetrating polemics and theoretical insights.[83] Accordingly, Tynianov argues that theory is not merely an abstraction, but a genre that conflicts with other genres within the literary series. In *Zoo,* Tynianov perceives a striking mix of the pathos of a sentimental novel, feuilletons and, crucially, objective literary theory. For Tynianov the novel is a thing located at a border line [«*Zoo*» *Shklovskogo – veshch´ tozhe «na granitse»*] (Tynianov 1977: 166). The review addresses its contemporary readers, arguing that they are not used to reading a novel that is also a work of theory, just as they are not used to reading objective theory in both love letters and letters not about love, for '[o]ur culture is based on the prim and proper differentiation between science and art' [[*n]asha kul´tura postroena na chopornom differentsirovanii nauki i iskusstva*]. In contrast, Tynianov implies that post-Revolutionary culture should strive for literary forms that, like *Zoo,* exist on contested boundaries.   Tynianov insists that literature travels along many paths simultaneously, and simultaneously ties together many knots. Literature is, for Tynianov, not a train that travels to a destination where 'meaning' is easily discerned, and the critic is emphatically not the station controller at this imaginary point of 'meaning'. The 'early' Formalist poetics of non-recognition

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[83] For an example of Tynianov's own polemical writing, see his 'Sokrashchenie shtatov' (Tynianov 1924: 21-2), signed with pseudonym Iu. Van-Vezen. For further examples of Tynianov's treatment of Heine, see *Blok i Geine, Ob Aleksandre Bloke. Sbornik statei* (Tynianov 1921); 'Tiutchev i Geine' (Tynianov 1922: 13-16); and the extended 'Tiutchev i Geine' (Tynianov 1977: 350-94).

is clearly alive and well in Tynianov's preference for the jarring, simultaneous analogies of paths and knots over linear trains and station controllers; and, appropriately, *Zoo*'s precarious status at the peripheries of intersecting genres is largely attributed to its unconventional use of disparate materials (Tynianov 1977: 150-166).

If 'theory' is accordingly conceptualized as one genre within the broader category of 'literature', then claims for *Zoo*'s uniqueness amongst its contemporary literature collapse, for the novel is saturated with precisely the same Formalist critique of literature's conditions of possibility that has been outlined thus far, where it is the paradoxical relationships *between* elements that is held to be no less constitutive of literature than the nominal or determinate properties of those elements. Indeed, for those schematic accounts of Russian Formalism which seek to categorize and divide the movement into distinct periods, it would no doubt have been better if Shklovsky had written *Zoo* after 'Literary Fact' and 'Literary *Byt*' essays. 'Literary Fact's' impressive conceptualization of the contradictory evolution of the relationship between art and life provides the example of the personal letter as an extra-literary form that became a literary fact. In 'Literary *Byt*', Eikhenbaum cautions against an overbearing emphasis on artistic collectives, but insists that the social predicament of the writer (albeit not her social class) is closely imbricated with the evolution of generic forms, and, in certain instances, can result in writers stooping to *khaltura* in order to support them-selves. In 'Literary *Byt*', Eikhenbaum implies that objective Formalist science can help the writer understand literary history and get down to the business of writing, and, in 'Literary Fact', Tynianov encourages his readers to render the tumultuous world around them in an experimental, formalist poetics, and write a novel of this material. A *Zoo* written after these two essays would serve as a nice dialectical synthesis between their respective thematic concerns, where theory bequeathed the authorial practice of personal correspondence, thematic treatments

of the relationship between life and art, and the related problem of how to be a writer. A *Zoo* written before these essays could be said to anticipate these later developments of Russian Formalism, yet such a reading threatens crude periodizations of Formalist activity and reductive accounts of Formalism's 'pragmatic' capitulations to the social demands of the Cultural Revolution, that is, the ever strengthening 'no' in Soviet culture post 1927.

Viktor Erlich's solution to this problem is to argue that *Zoo's* thematic preoccupations simply mark Shklovsky's departure from Russian Formalism and its strict focus on the immanent laws of verbal art (Erlich 1955: 135-6). Zenkin goes a step further, and argues that Shklovsky's autobiographical prose from the 1920s amounts to his effective abandonment of literary theory. Following the ancient Greek definition of the term, Zenkin argues that the immanent, work-centred theory of OPOIAZ's *Poetika* collections is abstract contemplation [*sozertsanie*], and as such requires distance from its object.[84] In his autobiographical prose, Shklovsky the theoretician is denied such distance and thrust into the hostile and pessimistic environment of *byt*. Zenkin even makes the bold claim that it was none other than Shklovsky himself who introduced the term *byt* into post-Revolutionary culture, and thereby set the tone for all subsequent iterations of *byt* as a 'deadly force' that frustrates and limits all human activity, depriving the noble theoretician of the peaceful distance she requires in order to contemplate her literary object (Zenkin 2003: 173). Yet in the preceding paradoxes, has not the objective critique of Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov shown itself to be diametrically opposed to such a reified schema? The 'early' concepts of defamiliarization, device, material and the grotesque are constituted by a dialectical relationship of negation with life. The conventional, everyday understanding of art was that it was a representation of the content found

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[84] Zenkin's suggestion that *Zoo…* departs from Formalist theory is unusual. The novel was recognized as drawing heavily on Formalist doctrine at the time of its publication. See (Ginzburg 2002: 65) and (Levchenko 2013a: 181). Levchenko's article is of particular interest here as it explores how Shklovsky uses the type of the *perepischik* to perpetuate and contradict Formalist method simultaneously in the Soviet 1920s and beyond.

in the material world of life. The Formalists proposed that art was autonomous from life, and its devices were determined by the contradictory and paradoxical laws of aesthetic creation. The suggestion that art is itself a material artefact of devices in *Theory of Prose* and 'How Gogol´'s *Overcoat* was Made' are the temporary synthesis in this Hegelian dialectic of objectivity, for the 'life' or 'reality' of art is its status as a material thing. The paradoxical relationships of non-recognition and stepped structures that pervade literary art are therefore rendered objective, immediate and even 'real'. The 'later' Formalist concepts of genre and the three-fold functionality active within and without of the literary series further augment what amount to literature's dialectical conditions of possibility, where 'yes' and 'no' can exist on the same page, and a genre is *not* recognized in reified terms precisely in order to grasp that element of what it is not that makes it what it is. Accordingly, this critique of non-recognition is entirely immanent to the turbulent world of life in all its inter-determinate complexity, and the Formalists' struggle to take responsibility for the arts in the new Soviet state is precisely the praxis of that critique in the early Soviet cultural field of life.

II

Zoo is a highly significant intervention in Formalist critical praxis. Its significance can be felt most acutely around the topos of authorial intention, and the novel's paradoxical thematization of intentionality is apparent from its beginning. *Zoo* commences with a preface that could, if read in anthologized isolation, be conceived as a concise summation of Formalism's immanent poetics. The preface outlines how a Formalist conceptualization of literary material aided and inspired the writing of the novel, describing how, in a manner comparable to Eikhenbaum's account of Gogol´'s creative frustrations, authorial intention was thwarted by its contingencies upon literary material. Shklovsky states his original intention was to compose a series of essays on Russian Berlin. The essays needed to be connected into a

coherent whole, which in turn generated the problem of theme. The image of the zoo, whereby all the exotic phenomena of Russian artists are held in captivity and alienated from their natural habitat, failed to connect the pieces together sufficiently: hence the idea of writing an epistolary novel. The phenomena populating Russian Berlin can, following one of Shklovsky's own definitions of the term, be said to constitute the novel's material, in that certain events in life inspire the autonomous construction of a literary work. Consistent with Tynianov's argument in the 'Literary Fact', it is only the composition of the novel which grants them the status of material immanent to the novel itself. This material, Shklovsky explains, requires motivation. In the case of the epistolary novel, the motivation is provided by the question as to why two characters should write to one another: one Russian ex-patriot in Berlin has no motivation to write to another Russian ex-patriot describing the life of Russian Berlin. In order to motivate the descriptions, Shklovsky deems it correct that the character receiving them be from a culture alien to that of the character describing Russian Berlin. Shklovsky's knowledge of the epistolary genre then leads him to state that characters write to one another in epistolary novels because they are in love, only their love is impeded because they are parted from each other. Consistent with his writing on narrative and the erotic, Shklovsky enlarges this obstacle to desire by making the male character's love unrequited. As the novel's Berlin material had nothing to do with love, Shklovsky decides to introduce a negation: the prohibition on speaking of love, at which point the subtitle 'Or Letters Not About Love' emerges. In a remark that neatly encapsulates the tensions between the Formalist ethics of literary praxis and its critique of the impersonal literary object, Shklovsky declares that it was at this point that the book began to write itself [*Tut knizhka nachala pisat´ sebia sama*]. This synthesis of objective critique and compositional fluency is made possible through an act of submission: Shklovsky submits himself to fate and the material [*Pokornyi vole sud'by i materiala…*], and, to incorporate Tynianov's concept discussed earlier, the

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impersonal and objective constructive function of the love-lyrical theme is dialectically engaged with all Shklovsky's material. All the descriptions of life in Russian Berlin and the arguments in favour of Formalist literary science emerge as moments of non-recognition or, in other words, metaphors for love (Shklovsky 2002: 271; 2001: 3-4).

For those familiar with Shklovsky's literary theory, *Zoo*'*s* preface appears remarkably direct. It could even be said that it is exemplary of what an author's prefatory remarks are expected to perform.   Compositional decisions are justified and accounted for, the natural ease of writing the novel recounted for the reader. There is, in this paradigmatic statement of 'work-centred' Formalist poetics, none of the irony, contradiction and parody which typify Shklovsky's writing. Despite Shklovsky's protestations to the contrary, the preface reads like a justification of Formalist poetics, accounting for the novel's form after the fact of writing and demonstrates how an author's task was aided by the literary theory that, in his brief review of the novel, Tynianov demands be incorporated into the literary series. This in turn necessitates a return to the problem of advocating a poetics of non-recognition and *not* knowing how to write that are present in Tynianov's and Eikhenbaum's essays. Is not Shklovsky's submission to the impersonal forces of material and constructive function an intentional act? Indeed, Shklovsky appears to let his guard down in the preface as, in his brief remarks on the novel's plot, he concedes that he might have embedded a plot in the novel, and provided descriptions of the hero's fate. He claims to dislike conventionalized narratives, likening his attitude towards plot as that of a dentist towards teeth, and therefore *intentionally* did not include a plot in the novel (Shklovsky 2002: 271; 2001: 4).

As noted earlier, Tynianov's dialectical treatment of authorial orientation argues that it exemplifies two phenomena. First, the author's intention is merely a catalyst that sets the constructive function in motion and, second, 'intention' is typical of a text's

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verbal function and manifests the phenomenon of the literary personality and its

dialectical relationship with *byt*. Or, in other words, authorial intention is an

intersecting 'knot' which ties together the human author, the generic constructive

function of disparate materials, and the impersonal cultural construction of the

literary personality and its verbal function. In 'The Literary Fact' and 'On Literary

Evolution', Tynianov is at best ambiguous as to how authorial intention relates to

verbal function. He implies that it is the dynamic constructive function set in motion

by intention that performs the dominant role in literary art; and it is the misguided

'metaphysical' understanding of literary art which results in the verbal function and

'intention' becoming interchangeable terms, as it ceases to have anything to do with

an author's engaging with literary creation and has everything to do with ideological

demands made of the work of art in the cultural world of *byt*. By taking the complex

and paradoxical relationships active *within* the work of literary art as his starting

point, Tynianov effectively argues that human intention and verbal function can be

reappraised, and thereby conceptualized as being pervaded by the same dialectical

confrontations active in the literary work. As a result, the programme for post-

Revolutionary cultural construction becomes a generic site of collision active in the

Formalist praxis of critique. Accordingly, authorial intention is indeed a vital part of

this process, but it is an entirely *brainless* intention that must be allowed free reign to

interrogate the paradoxical and defamiliarize the conventional. As Tynianov

concludes his positive review of *Zoo*, fulfilled orders [*zakazy*] have no business in

literature. Tynianov wryly notes that the official order to discover a route to India

resulted in the discovery of America (Tynianov 1977: 166). Soviet culture must be

granted the same free reign to make such productive, *unintentional* mistakes and,

pace Zenkin, theory must be engaged in the world of literary *byt*.

In line with Tynianov's position, Shklovsky's preface to *Zoo* can be productively

conceptualized as such an intentional Formalist mistake. Shklovsky's submission to

the constructive function and the deliberate absence of plot can be figured as varieties of intentional pronouncements, but it is important to recall how, in his critique of *Tristram Shandy*, Shklovsky explicitly addresses how the preface is itself a device of literary fiction (Shklovsky 1929: 177-204; 1991: 147-170). It is possible to expand on Shklovsky's discussion of Sterne's novel and refer to *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels*, *Clarissa* (perhaps the ultimate epistolary novel), *Frankenstein*, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, *Vanity Fair*, and a *Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*] as examples of how the preface functions as a device. By extension, even intentional prefatory pronouncements to novels such as *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *Tom Jones* are, despite their ostensible lack of irony, no less devices that equally pertain to the text and its verbal function, asserting the author's will as unifying force that holds the text together and grant the subsequent status a degree of veracity. Neither the ironic preface of *Robinson Crusoe* nor Fielding's intentional pronouncement in *Tom Jones* are any more conventional than each other, only the ironic preface of the former serves to lay bare the device of the preface.

Shklovsky's preface to *Zoo* is particularly curious, in that it appears to be exemplary of both varieties of preface simultaneously, at once asserting the veracity of authorial commitment and the 'true' status of art as material devices.   Over the course of the novel, it becomes apparent that the author's plan is rapidly unwinding, and the submission to the will of the material has all manner of implications regarding Shklovsky's 'real' correspondence with Elsa Triolet and the novel's 'real' status as material devices. Accordingly, the preface can be said to exemplify Formalism's paradoxical and dialectical conceptualization of material. The so-called intentional preface affirms a veracity where a living author intentionally creates a work of art according to her particular agenda. Her intention serves to unite the work and provide a basis upon which to account for meaning. The second, laid-bare

preface also establishes the veracity of art, but its veracity resides in its being a real material device that is governed by impersonal objective laws. In both cases, the boundary between art and life is crucial. In the former, the preface is a non-fictional pronouncement from the field of life where the author reflects on her literary creation and justifies compositional decisions. In the latter, the work of art is a material presence in life, but its composition maintains no deterministic relationship with the extra-literary series.   The sublation active in this dialectic is provided in conceptualizing authorial intention and its concomitant life / art boundary as themselves potential devices set in motion by a dialectical constructive force. If a cultural act is to take place at the boundaries of genres, then it has to incorporate elements of that which it is not, and authorial intention therefore requires *of necessity* a finite element of brainlessness in all literary creation. But, it is crucial to note, without *either* component of this opposition, the dialectic ceases to function. Veracity, the 'truth' of a work of art, must require the dialectical presence of the falsehood that it is not. Accordingly, Formal method itself requires its own negation if it is to function in the post-Revolutionary cultural field and, with a programme of non-recognitions and non-commands, facilitate its construction.

Zoo exploits the ambiguity of this dialectic of literary material, and develops the Formalist poetics of impersonal authorial creation beyond Tynianov's acknowledgement of the 'catalyst' that sets the more significant constructive function in motion. The Formal method invoked in the preface to *Zoo* is exemplary of how method is itself *device*, or, to return to the definition used in the second chapter of this analysis, a trajectory towards its negation. As noted in the first chapter, at times both Kant and Hegel seem to contradict a structure of oppositions with a unitary schema of 'reciprocally expeditious' correspondences: Kant's paradoxical conditions of possibility were contradicted by such correspondences between art and the human subject; Hegel's dialectical concept of the absolute idea with his

crudely schematic division between form and content at the beginning of his lectures on aesthetics. In *Zoo*, the contradictions of the Formalist method are altogether more sophisticated than a retreat to mere unitary closure. At the simplest of levels, Formalism's need for negation is served by the now customary dismissal of any of the 'metaphysical' understandings of art, whereby art affords access to a truth beyond its material limits. In the twenty-second letter, Shklovsky asserts that there are two ways of looking at art. The first, broadly analogous to the Potebnian schema of thinking in images, is that art is a window onto truth. Artists express what lies beyond words and communicate what lies beyond the window. Artists of this kind, whatever the content of their 'symbolist' or 'realist' beyond, are, according to Shklovsky, 'translators' [*perevodchiki*]. The more authentic artist strives to create new things out of the knowledge of how words, image and devices are inter-connected and in conflict with one another. Irony and divergence are the stuff of real material art, so Shklovsky argues. The window onto truth is, in reality, nothing but a sketched window, a device for the creation of art according to a particular methodology (Shklovsky 2002: 315-317; 2001: 80-1).

In Shklovsky's critique of method in *Zoo*, it is apparent that Bely's anthroposophic paradigm is in fact just another textual object of devices strung in sequential arrangement towards their negation. By way of an example, Shklovsky again turns to the anthroposophic paradigm under which Andrei Bely wrote *Kotik Letaev*, *The Baptized Chinaman*, and the other examples of the infamous *epopee* project. In *The Theory of Prose* and *Hamburg Account*, Shklovsky the brainless knight gleefully rides a coach and horses through these works, mocking Bely's claim to be able to remember his early childhood and the mythical state prior to his birth. In *Zoo*, Shklovsky is more measured in his criticism. He expresses an interest in the two opposing compositional layers in *Kotik Letaev*, where, within the world of the novel, reality exists on two planes: that of the real, and that of transcendent anthroposophic

truth beyond. Of this second layer, Shklovsky insists that: 'There is no reality of soul

in the one or in the others: there is only method, a means of deploying things in

rows' [*real´nosti dushi net, ni v toi, ni v drugikh, est metod, sposob raspologat´*

veshchi riadami]. This method of placing things in rows and the resulting

contradictions, oppositions and irony – the very knowledge of how Don Quixote is

made – are entirely impersonal in their material functionality. In remarks that are

strongly reminiscent of Tynianov's treatment of intention and constructive function,

Shklovsky says of method that it is the product of human activity, but it has now

taken on a life of its own (Shklovsky 2002: 292; 2001: 36).

Zoo proffers another opposition to the Formalists' method beyond their frequent

dismissal of 'metaphysical' aesthetics; an opposition that was hinted at in

Eikhenbaum's implied convergences between the grotesque and the fledgling

science of literary theory. Tynianov's observation that *Zoo* is perched at the

periphery between the genres of sentimental novel and literary theory does not

contain any specific examples from the novel. Given the Formalists' frequent

bullishness in asserting the validity of their method over other varieties of literary

study, it is perhaps surprising that the discussion of method in *Zoo* provides just

such a collision between theory and the sentimental. According to the narrator,

method may be manmade and total, but it has only resulted in ever-increasing

problems and doubt. The old certainties of previous eras have collapsed in the face

of its relentless impersonal power: 'Once there was a top and a bottom, there was

time, there was matter. Now nothing is certain. Method reigns supreme'. The

previous certainties of time and matter have been replaced by impersonal *things*,

which are complex and ambiguous, constituted by method. Science, 'the most

complex' of all things, is now over-running the earth (Shklovsky 2002: 291; 2001:

34). By extension, knowing how the brainless knight Quixote is made is, for the

writer, a programme of *not* knowing how to write and powerlessly witnessing the

constructive function spiral out of any intentional control. Accordingly, the material contingency of the complex literary thing requires a finite author who must recognize the futility of writing in accordance with a unitary ideology that regards art as a window on to the alienated realm of truth.

Zoo consistently implies that this acknowledgement of human finitude is not necessarily a source of positive empowerment, and suggests that the loss of previous certainties – whatever their conceptual shortcomings – has proved traumatic, almost as if the vitalizing sensation of defamiliarization has shifted into a somatics of pain. Ivan Puni's muscles ache from the effort of creating *khaltura*, Alya expresses her sickening estrangement from the everyday things that populate her apartment, and the narrator painfully acknowledges that the Formalist poetics elaborated in the preface demand that his creative and amorous intentions are doomed to mis-recognition and failure (Shklovsky 2002: 303-5, 306, 321-23; 2001: 57-8, 59-60, 129). And in addition to this determinate thematization of pain, Formalist poetics requires the accompanying non-recognition of such pain and suffering as impersonal devices, where the 'truth' of human suffering is asserted through its material negation in art. Whilst *Zoo* may lack any Gogolian *skaz*, mocking laughter and a fantastic resolution, the novel exhibits the same tension between a sentimental, moral discourse of human suffering and its negation in literary form that, so to say, 'haunts' Eikhenbaum's essay on Gogol´'s *The Overcoat*. In contrast to the post-Belinskian reception of the novel which had focused on the moral-humanist compositional layer of Gogol´'s short story, Eikhenbaum argues that the structure of *The Overcoat* was in fact more complicated and immanently contradictory. Upon identifying two contradictory layers in the text's composition (pathetic-realist and ironic *skaz*), Eikhenbaum insists these two layers are in tension with one another. Eikhenbaum terms the tension between these two compositional layers grotesque, and emphasizes how the performative layer of the structure has a

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tendency to mock and parody the first, pathetic-realist layer. Yet, as already noted, those pathetic realist elements must have a force equivalent to the mocking laughter of the performative, otherwise the grotesque would lack its affective power.

The implications of Eikhenbaum's essay are potentially disquieting. That such moral content as the suffering little man can be mocked with derisive laughter raises problems for still on-going debates over art's essential morality and concomitant commitment to progressive social change. Potentially more disturbing still is the implication that, if humanism and a moral commitment to suffering are present in art, they can only be so as devices in objective structures, that is, in an alienated form. As already noted in the third chapter, Eikhenbaum's calibration of the grotesque tension between *skaz* and sentimental, morally engaged realism parallels his critique of Gogolʹ's authorship, with the author effectively serving as an illusionary device that unites the text and, with regard to the act of writing, a human subject who is alienated from the resulting work of art, his intentions thwarted and frustrated by the objective properties of literary art. *Zoo* provides a further Formalist treatment of this problematic, where the objective critique of literary art is accompanied by the traumatic intuition that previous moral certainties have been lost. Correspondingly, the Formalists' iteration of dialectical materialism, whereby authorial intention emerges as both brainless and ideologically compromised, is in no way a resolution of the moral debates that pervade the boundary between art and life, literary material and creative intention. Indeed, as Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov all imply, the relationship between art and life that pervades this dialectic is multivalent. Despite the somatics of pain resulting from alienation from objective literary art, that very alienation facilitates a critique of certain aspects of life beyond method. Accordingly, the narrator of *Zoo* is able to cast himself as the suffering little man-theoretician, whose impersonal conceptualization of art provides both the knowledge of how Don Quixote is made *and* oppresses himself with a concrete affirmation of

his finite limitations. This ethical dialectic is in no way opposed to moral commitment and social change. On the basis of Tynianov's work, embracing literature's paradoxical conditions of possibility is perhaps the key to facilitating a vibrant social culture, where there is a relentless ethical drive towards collision and conflict in literary art. However, in both the narrator's suffering at the loss of previous certainties and Tynianov's ethical demand for an authentically revolutionary culture there is a further negation of Formalist method where the boundary between life and art looms large: the oppressive demands of the Soviet state.

III

The narrator's intention to go beyond the novel's conventional frame and realize something new resides at the very heart of *Zoo*'s thematization of the contentious boundary between life and art. The narrator informs Alya that their personal correspondence is to comprise a novel titled *Zoo…Or Letters Not About Love*. This remark is, in the context of the current discussion, richly ambiguous, and exemplifies the tension between the autonomous Formalist text of concrete devices and that text's more complicated engagement with life. It is exemplary of the Formalist credo of evolving the literary series through deforming and defamiliarizing devices which have become automated, and engaging disparate genres in complex interaction.   Yet, as Tynianov notes in 'Literary Fact', innovation in literary art is driven through the literary's encounter with the extra-literary series, and therefore going beyond the framework of the novel entails going beyond conventional generic frameworks, and dialectically engaging life with literary art.

As already noted, Shklovsky offers his most ambiguous conceptualization of material in literary art in his essay on Rozanov and plot-less literature. Like Tynianov in 'Literary Fact', Shklovsky states that art's materials are potentially endless. Whether they are aesthetic or non-aesthetic has no innate significance. It is the immanent constructive relationship between materials that drives literary art,

and which must be freed from any ideological demands. Prior to the writing of *Zoo*,

Shklovsky himself had already expressed an interest in the possibilities of non-

aesthetic materials in the fragment 'In a Loud Voice' [*O gromkom golose*] written for

the journal *Life and Art*, and included in *Knight's Move*. This fragment is a highly

negative review of 'Towards an International Commune' [*K mirovoi kommune*], a

massive spectacle of some 4000 performers held in honour of the second

Kommintern Congress in 1920. As part of a parade, the vast quantity of participants

performed an enslaved and rebellious people, and the physical backdrop of

Petersburg was incorporated into the performance. Regarding this parade,

Shklovsky praises its interesting duality [*interesnaia dvoistvennost'*], which arises

through the juxtaposition of the production's aesthetic elements with the extra-

aesthetic. For Shklovsky, the incorporation of a performance of enslaved and

rebellious peoples in the parade was a mistake, as their organized movement is

equated with the essentially utilitarian aims of troop movements, their enslavement

and rebellion accordingly rendered prosaic: ''Artistically', that is, according to the

laws of aesthetics, the structured movement of the masses, performing the enslaved

and rebellious people are equated with the 'prosaic,' that is, according to the laws of

usefulness by the structured movements of the troops' (Shklovsky 1990: 91-2; 2005:

51-3, translation amended).

For Shklovsky, this parade is an excellent example of how extra-aesthetic material

functions in a work of art, and he praises the talent of the un-named individual who

thought up the idea. The irony of Shklovsky's remarks is not difficult to discern, and

it is highly unlikely that Shklovsky is praising an artist who has created a

performance that endorses the Formalist insistence on strict differences between

ideological demand and the aesthetic. The 'In a Loud Voice' fragment is entirely

consistent with *Knight's Move*'s most frequently cited moment of non-recognition:

the flag of art can never reflect the colour of that flown above the city fortress

(Shklovsky 1990: 79; 2005: 22). This statement is all too frequently deployed as an example of art's total autonomy from life. However, this typical moment of non-recognition is far more ambiguous than its conventionalized reception allows, and is far more likely a differentiation between the statist ideological unity conveyed by the image of the flag flying above the martial fortress, and the resolutely non-unitary and paradoxical properties of art. Shklovsky's famous pronouncement is suggestive not of one relationship between art and life, but relationships. On one level, there is the usual 'metaphysical' demand that art should reflect or represent a state of affairs other to itself. Yet, there is also the relationship of autonomy from life in the immanent and contradictory laws which govern literary form. These laws come to determine life's relationship with art, and, in this particular instance, it is through dialectical inter-determination with art that life emerges as martial and teleological, and art the domain of autonomy. With regard to 'Towards an International Commune', Shklovsky's implicit argument is that the juxtaposition between extra-aesthetic material and the aesthetic has totally undermined the *intention* of the performance. Instead of glorifying a triumphant parade of the rebellious masses celebrating the overthrow of their oppressors, the effect is one of mundane utility. Shklovsky sarcastically praises the talent who has unintentionally exposed this unfortunate juxtaposition and totally failed to glorify a grand expression of revolutionary power. These utilitarian troops are all too obviously stationed in that same city fortress above which Shklovsky demands the flag of art must never fly. Shklovsky might even be understood as warning those who wish to deploy the aesthetic for ideological ends that the ambiguous properties of the aesthetic will only serve to undermine their teleological agenda. It is not insignificant that Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum do not differentiate between Bely's mystical anthroposophic ideology, the ideology of an author's social class and that of the social demand. These iterations of the ideological image are inadmissible precisely because they are inadequate to literature's conditions of possibility and both, in their

own way, imply a reified relationship between art and life that is clearly inadequate to these very conditions.

This insistence on strict limits between the aesthetic and ideologically inflected instrumentality does not, however, undermine Shklovsky's desire to go beyond traditional frameworks in literary art. 'In a Loud Voice''s critique of the incorporation of material into art notes that there are more interesting possibilities available than the mere juxtaposition (intentional or otherwise) of the aesthetic with the extra-aesthetic. Art can be created in this manner, but 'it would have been much more daring to use juxtaposition, to find the aesthetic relation not between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic object, but between two non-aesthetic objects, directly between things of the real world' (Shklovsky 1990: 92; 2005: 53).

Whilst *Knight's Move* shares the dialectical relationship between art and life, it lacks the conflict between the impersonal method of Formalist science and the moral, emotionally bruised human subject who has been left behind by modernity. In *Knight's Move*, understanding the Formal method and how Don Quixote is made are ultimately empowering, and grant the narrator the right to ruthlessly criticize (and occasionally praise) other works of art, as well as instruct others in how to write correctly. At the beginning of the 'In a Loud Voice' fragment, Shklovsky insists that speaking In a Loud Voice is only possible when groups and collectives are formed with a view to formulating the coherent principles of literary science. Only then is it possible to speak In a Loud Voice and expose the limitations of contemporary art. With a typically ironic lack of modesty, Shklovsky provides an ambivalent non-recognition of himself, who he likens to Tom Canty in Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. Having declared himself king, Tom proceeds to crack nuts with the royal seal (Shklovsky 1990: 91; 2005: 51). The nuts which Shklovsky implies he is cracking are the inferior works of art created by lesser artists, with Formalist method the authority that grants him the ability to do so. In dialectical terms, the Formalist

method overcomes its ideological negation through the sublation of ideology as device. With *Zoo*, as already suggested, the Formal method encounters a more rigorous negative force, be it that of ideology or the sensation of pain and suffering to which modernity and method give rise. Shklovsky has fled the fortress of life in the Soviet Union, and himself has become a nut that is cracked by the Formal method and the forces of state power beyond his control in post-Revolutionary Russia. Intentionally or not, he himself has become material to the impersonal forces of method beyond his authorial control and the martial forces of the fortress.

The novel is not entirely without Eikhenbaum's nostalgia for a degree of writerly autonomy in the 'Literary *byt*' essay, where Eikhenbaum encourages the writer to disband publicistic activities and cease all involvement in artistic groups and circles. As has already been discussed, Eikhenbaum draws attention to the classless writer's professional difficulties in Soviet literary *byt*, and appears nostalgic for a degree of Romantic autonomy that will allow the writer to get down to the business of writing literature. *Zoo* thematizes a similar Romantic anxiety over the contingent status of the artist in early Soviet modernity. Shklovsky says of the artist that his *de facto* status is that of a nomad. This image of the nomad is ambivalent. At one level it evokes the authentic artist's sensibility towards the creation of new things, and her constant drive to innovate and realise the new through defamiliarizing the automatized artistic forms of the past and engaging with the present through a heightened sensory experience. Shklovsky demands of the artist that 'our business is the creation of new things', and describes his own intention to go outside the ordinary frame of the novel with *Zoo* itself (Shklovsky 2002: 289-90; 2001: 23). Yet on another level, there is the implication that this nomadic Russian diaspora in peripheral Berlin have not become nomads by choice, and there is a variety of 'real' human hardship and moral un-freedom that has caused them to flee beyond the frame of their homeland for Berlin. Going outside the ordinary frame of the novel, as

already noted, is potentially to stage an encounter between life and art at the periphery where personal correspondence and the epistolary novel meet. The literary and artistic personalities which populate the novel have had to go outside the conventional framework of Russia's geo-political and cultural boundaries and are thrust into an encounter with another, alien national culture. The engagement of this parallel structure affords the possibility of inter-determining the life world of the Russian diaspora with the conventions of literary genres. The engagement of these parallel structures affords the possibility of inter-determining the life world of the Russian diaspora with the conventions of literary genres. To return once more to Tynianov's concept of the verbal function, this dialectical encounter between art and life has an apparent orientation – albeit a necessarily impersonal one – of opposition towards whatever statist demands or oppression have led to artistic nomads being thrust into exile.

The possibilities initiated by going outside the ordinary frame of the novel are apparent immediately after the 'intentional' preface. This strangest of epistolary novels does not proceed from its preface to the first letter, and instead provides an early moment of collision between two genres. Between the preface and the first letters lies a long poem, Velemir Khlebnikov's *Menagerie* [*Zverinets*] from the Futurist collection *A Trap of Judges* [*Sadok sudei*]. The depiction of an exotic menagerie of rare animals evokes the zoo of Shklovsky's own title and, by association, implies the phenomena depicted in Khlebnikov's poem and those of the novel are what Shklovsky terms a parallel structure. Towards the beginning of the poem, Germans are shown selling their beer in the menagerie, where 'the iron is like a father reminding brothers to be brothers and stopping their bloody grapple… Where the eagles sit, like an eternity finished with this day that still lacks evening' [*Где железо подобно отцу, напоминающему братьям, что они братья, и останавливающему кровопролитную схватку…Где орлы сидят, подобны*

вечности, оконченной сегодняшним, еще лишенным вечера днем]. Towards the end of the poem, the lines are increasingly populated with specifically Russian imagery and themes, asserting a uniquely Russian inverted destiny of failed potential and restricted actions, culminating in simile where the animals in captivity are likened to *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* being imprisoned in a monastery text: 'Where the animals lose their marvellous potentialities, like the *Lay of Igor's Campaign* embedded in a Book of Hours' [*Где в зверях погибают какие-то прекрасные возможности, как вписанное в Часослов Слово Полку Игореви*] (Khlebnikov in Shklovsky 2002: 273-75; 2001: 5-8).

The implications of *Menagerie* being embedded in *Zoo* are wide-reaching, particularly with regard to the text's treatment of genre, the Russian diaspora in Berlin and statist oppression. Within the context of *Zoo*, Khlebnikov's long poem can be read as a call to liberate a repressed, restricted and conventionalized Russian national identity from its limited, automatized forms and realize its collective humanist potential, where brothers cease grappling with each other and realize their own marvellous potentialities. In other words, *Menagerie* already sets in motion the novel's thematization of a sentimental-moral discourse that conflicts with the impersonal forces of method and state, the latter of which is implicated in Khlebnikov's death in the novel's fourth letter. After *Menagerie* has established Khlebnikov as a moral device calling for national unity and cultural achievement, the fourth letter recounts Khlebnikov's death from disease after living in abject poverty in Soviet Russia; his suffering and death are explicitly likened to the suffering and death of Christ. *Menagerie* has already established Khlebnikov's humanity, with its call to end all wars and for humans to love and embrace one another. These words of compassion are compounded by the sense of prophecy that the poem's 'stringing together' within the narrative of *Zoo* evokes, where Khlebnikov's poem appears to have anticipated the Russian diaspora's mingling amongst Germans, drinking their

beer and blooming in health. Letter four recounts examples of Khlebnikov's

compassion, recalling how he imagined a utopia for the journal *Took* where every

individual has the right to a glass room in any city. The epigraph on Khlebnikov's

gravestone, 'President of the globe' is recounted in parallel with the epigraph on

Christ's own cross: 'Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.' The letter continues: 'It is

doubtful, Velemir, that you would want to be resurrected to walk the earth again.'

Shklovsky even asks Khlebnikov for forgiveness for fleeing Russia to enjoy the

warmth of fires in foreign countries, whilst Khlebnikov himself perished in abject

poverty (Shklovsky 2002: 278-82; 2001: 16-20).

The tone of the letter is not entirely confessional, and is equally accusatory towards

the Soviet state that the artistic diaspora of Berlin have fled: 'Foxes have their holes,

the prisoner is given a cot, the knife sleeps in its scabbard, but you [Khlebnikov] had

nowhere to lay your head'.[85] Shklovsky's words are bitterly ironic on this theme in

Zoo: 'The state is not responsible for the death of human beings. During the time of

Christ, it did not understand the Aramaic language and it invariably fails to

understand the language of humanity. The Roman soldiers who pierced the hands

of Christ are no more guilty than the nails. All the same, those being crucified feel

much pain' (Shklovsky 2002: 279; 2001:17). The accusation here is that the

autonomous, profoundly Romantic figure of the artist-genius who spoke the

authentic moral idiom of humanity, who envisaged a utopian future world where

everyone is entitled to lodgings, and who called for all who are held captive to be set

free, has been crushed by the material reality of the modern state which, and *Zoo* is

emphatic here, does not understand the language of humanity.

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[85] Veniamin Kaverin's *Unknown Artist* [*Khudozhnik neizvesten*] features the character Arkhimedov, for which Khlebnikov is accepted as serving as the prototype. Kaverin's Khlebnikov is entirely consistent with that of Shklovsky's in *Zoo*, albeit without the sophisticated interrogation of the multiple boundaries between art and life and literary genres. Arkhimedov is engaged in struggle with Shpektorov (the name itself a comment on the illusory properties of statist dialectical materialism?), a crass materialist with whom the artist engages in struggle over symbolic control of a woman and her child. Arkhimedov is emphatically defeated, his ambitions for a radical revolutionary culture crushed (Kaverin 1964).

In *Zoo*'s criticisms of the Soviet state, there is clearly something genealogical in how it invokes the devices of Christ, the Romantic artist, an exile's guilt and moral-sentiment provoked by human suffering. *Menagerie* itself follows a genealogical narrative, proceeding back through history from a confused present of cultural incarceration to a foundational text of Russian cultural identity (*The Lay of Igor's Campaign*) being imprisoned in a copy-book. After Foucault, it could be said that there is an apparent historical ontology between Christ, artist-genius, imprisoned cultural potential and an author's guilt that serves to naturalize opposition towards the Soviet state and its early tendencies towards oppression. Yet it is important to emphasize that Shklovsky does not exempt the Formalist method of objective literary science from that modernity which gave birth to an oppressive state that does not understand the language of humanity. The devices of Christ, Romantic artist, guilty author and sentimental pathos are just *devices*. Whilst it is true that, in *Zoo*'s collision of genres, the negation of these devices is effectively served by the incorporation of the device of the oppressive state, the reality of these devices is that they are threaded together in rows, impersonally strung together into a complex literary thing. It is once again doubtful that the Formalists' ethics of knowing how Don Quixote is made and the concomitant valorization of going beyond the conventional confines of literary tradition amount to understanding, let alone speaking, this moral language of humanity. As Shklovsky notes dryly in *Knight's Move*, 'I don't believe in miracles. That's why I'm not an artist' [*Ia ne veriu v chudo, ottogo ia i ne khudozhnik*] (Shklovsky 1990: 100; 2005: 68).

IV

It would likely be wrong to conclude, however, that *Zoo* is effectively establishing a correspondence between Formalist literary theory and the inhuman attributes of the early Soviet state. As will become apparent presently, Shklovsky's *Third Factory* [*Tret´iaia fabrika*] appears to differentiate between statist commands and literary art

that incorporates the Formal method. *Menagerie* itself is not entirely without certain tenets of Formalist critique. The loss of marvellous potentialities brought about through an artistic work such as *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* being embedded in the automated forms and repetitions of a copy-book has obvious similarities with Shklovsky's desire for the defamiliarization of the habitual through *ostranenie* and laying bare the device. It could even be said that the humanity of *Menagerie* depends upon the opposition it stages between captivity and the human drive of cultural liberation and fraternal peace. The Formal method, in its insistence upon an impersonal negation of the human, affirms and even requires the human in order to function. The state, by implication, does not grant that element of the human immanent to itself. It merely does not understand the language of humanity.

To return once again to Tynianov's critique of the novel's collision between the genres of sentimental novel, feuilletons and literary theory, there is one aspect of the sentimental that has not yet been addressed which demonstrates Formalism's immanent negation by the human: the prohibition of naming love. In the account of Khlebnikov's life, the narrator includes a sad sketch of Khlebnikov's unrequited love for a woman, hinting that it was this love that compounded the poet's suffering and eventual death. The emotional pain and Christ-like suffering endured by Khlebnikov are therefore 'real' material suffering *and*, in the context of the narrator's attempts to woo Alya, the banal, melodramatic gestures of a clumsy suitor, ineptly pleading for his love to be requited and using his letters as a vehicle for self-aggrandizement. The narrator's self-aggrandizing motivation, both in terms of his desirability as a lover and for promoting his own version of literary theory, is clearly discerned by Alya. In letter twenty-eight, she notes that for all his boasting about knowing how Don Quixote is made, the narrator does not know how to write a love letter. All Shklovsky's self-aggrandizing displacements and non-recognitions are not the letters of someone who is truly in love. Alya tersely observes that 'One doesn't write

letters for one's own satisfaction, since no real lover thinks of himself when he's in love' (Shklovsky 2002: 327-8; 2001: 102). Whereas Shklovsky accuses the state of not knowing the language of humanity, and neglecting the suffering Khlebnikov, Alya retorts that the Formalist has neglected the human at the expense of method and fulfilling his own desires. The dialectical tension between Khlebnikov's moral-humanist programme for art and Formalism's impersonal ethics is replicated in the contrast between Alya's straightforward expression of personal suffering and alienation and Shklovsky's letters, with their complex allusions and contradictory Formalist poetics. In the moving nineteenth letter, Alya recounts her childhood experiences and fondly recollects her wet-nurse Stesha. A rock of integrity, Stesha would visit Alya even in adulthood, delighting Alya with her informal conversation, her emotional warmth and her cheerful disposition. Perhaps in retort to the narrator's moving depiction of Khlebnikov, she recalls Stesha's piety and moral probity. Implicated in the robbery of a household where she was serving as a maid, Stesha refused to confirm to the police that she had an alibi (at the time she was visiting a nun at the *Novodevichii monastyr´* and feared she would implicate her in the plot), and remained in prison until the police captured the real thieves. After the Revolution, she refused to vote in elections as that would require returning to a police station. Alya claims her love for Stesha is so great that she cannot sleep, and serves as a device of 'genuine' or 'authentic' pathos that counters the narrator's tendency to self-aggrandize and indulge in rhetorical games (Shklovsky 2002: 312-4; 2001: 71-74).

Beyond the manifest similarities between Khlebnikov's resentment at the loss of marvellous potentialities and defamiliarization active in going beyond conventional frames, the narrator is potentially (and pathetically) attempting to establish himself as the alienated and oppressed Romantic artist, who suffers a terrible and lonely death because the object of his affection does not return his love. The 'humanism'

of the Formal method lies in the complex thematization of Khlebnikov's literary personality, whereby the device of Khlebnikov serves *simultaneously* as an affirmation of the pain endured under an inhuman state and impersonal modernity hostile to moral ideals; *and* an affirmation of risible *khaltura*, where a banal suitor attempts to win the affections of his beloved with clichés and literary theory, using the suffering of a Romantic poet as a device to elicit pity and admiration. This astonishing juxtaposition – saturated with Formalism's dialectical treatment of literary material – may be evocative of a traumatic modernity deprived of previous certainties, but is not this contradiction exemplary of literary art's marvellous potentialities, whereby 'yes' and 'no' are affirmed on the same page, and the expression of the human triumphant through its negation? On this basis, it is not difficult to ascertain why Tynianov should discern so much in the novel that was both adequate to and exemplary of the then on-going 'quiet war' in post-Revolutionary literary culture, and, by extension, a novel far more adequate to the post-Revolutionary epoch than the flawed and unsuccessful Russian adventure novel which was undergoing forced introduction into a material reality with which it was largely incompatible.

Tynianov ends his critique of then contemporary literature in a manner reminiscent of the questions with which the 'Literary Fact' essay begins: 'And what on earth is next? Where is literature headed? [*A shto zhe dal´she? Kuda poidet literatura?*]. Tynianov's now familiar rhetorical strategy is to argue that the 'what on earth' and 'literature' are far more complex phenomena than the conventional, popular understanding of these terms can apprehend (Tynianov 1977: 166). As already noted, Tynianov insists that it is incorrect to make demands of literature, as such demands will (and indeed *must*) only ever result in further paradoxes and mistakes. Nevertheless, given that these questions were uttered in 1924, the impersonal 'stringing together' in the course of history has burdened them with a complex

resonance that, in a way, replicates the three genres which collide in *Zoo*. That Tynianov's demands were not acknowledged is undeniably grounds for emotional pathos, and the marvellous potentialities of a literary culture of brainless mistakes and non-recognition were to be repressed in Stalinist Soviet culture and beyond. There is also a polemical element of confrontation and a lingering theoretical problematic that, retrospectively, reads as a challenge not only to demands for a statist literature and a monologic method, but also to how the English language reception of those statist demands has accordingly perpetuated its own monologic readings of both statist art and its corresponding dissident culture. However, before the advent of Stalinism, Shklovsky authored a work that would push generic collisions, resistance to statist demands and the encounter between art and life to yet further extremes, effectively pushing beyond complex epochal resonances into fraught dialectical dissonance.

7: Dialectical Materialism

'Writing books is hard… It's hard to know how to write—or what…' (Shklovsky 2002: 268; 2001: 31)

I

As noted in chapter six, it is difficult to summarize Shklovsky's *Zoo* succinctly. Looking back from afar at *Third Factory* from the Stalinist 1930s, Shklovsky himself pronounced the third volume of his autobiographical prose completely incomprehensible (Shklovsky 1990: 32). *Third Factory* is, to some extent, no less autobiographical than the memoirs Shklovsky would write some thirty to forty years after the novel's composition, recounting, or at least purporting to recount, significant stages in Shklovsky's life that informed his then current conceptualizations of life, art, history and their complex inter-determination. The novel is divided into the three stages (or 'factories') of Shklovsky's life up to the age of 33, each of which appears to have been beset by material hardship and failure. The first two stages of Shklovsky's life form an odd and profoundly pessimistic anti-*Bildungsroman*, as if they are two sides of the most negative of dialectics. The first chronicles an early childhood in a family beset by ill health and a descent into material hardship, poor academic performance and cheating at school; the second, his fledgling interest in the scientific study of literature and the foundation of OPOIAZ in Petersburg. The third 'synthesis' stage of this autobiography deals with his then present situation in Soviet Russia, working for the Third Kino Factory in Moscow and piecing together the fragments of film into coherent narratives.[86] For various reasons the films produced in the Third Kino Factory often fail, in the sense that the individual fragments of close-ups, long shots and scenes cannot be assembled into a coherent

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[86] For the English collection of some of Shklovsky's writing on film, see his *Literature and Cinematography* (Shklovsky 2008), a translation of *Literatura i kinematograf* (Shklovsky 1923). I agree with Alastair Renfrew that Shklovsky's writing on film is not consistent with his literary theory, and do not pursue the relationship between these two currents in his thought here. See (Renfrew: 2007: 157-8). For further discussion of Shklovsky's role in Soviet cinema with particular reference to how he theorizes genre, see (Levchenko 2013b: 407-31); and, for a discussion of Tynianov's role, see (Levchenko 2013c: 270-77).

narrative sequence. Such failures are placed on the shelf and are not released to the public. Like *Zoo*, this 'novel' mixes sentimental pathos, 'real-life' correspondence between individuals and literary theory; but the pathos has shifted away from the tropes of exile and unrequited love towards the sense of failure felt by an individual who is isolated from the dominant currents of epochal life, and whose theoretical programme has been proved an irrelevant failure. It is as if the Goskino 'third' factory is a totally inadequate synthesis for its preceding two terms of childhood and OPOIAZ, and, like the films Shklovsky describes, this oddest of autobiographies is itself a failed moment of assemblage that should not see the light of day.

In comparison to *Third Factory*, Shklovsky's later memoirs are the sober, mature reflection upon a radical youth full of experimentation, struggle and literary theory. Located in opposition to the more conventional prose of *Zhili byli*, *Third Factory* is certainly challenging. If Shklovsky's memoirs can be said to frame his earlier life within the comfortable confines of a cinematic establishing shot and measured chronological progression, *Third Factory* is a chaotic montage of close-ups shot on inconsistent film stocks, disjointed elements which resist any attempt to string them into a coherent, unitary structure. Simultaneously a chronological narrative from early life to the then present, and a fractured, discontinuous structure of conflicting words, sentences and episodic fragments of personal correspondence, autobiography, literary theory and fictional allegories of Russian Revolution, *Third Factory* is another novel of contradictory structural planes. Indeed, the novel can be said to maintain *Zoo's* poetics of contradiction and negation and develop them to extremes. *Third Factory* begins with a small fragment entitled 'I continue' [*prodolzhaiu*] and ends with the author abandoning himself to impersonal material forces of the epoch, refusing to make any gestures towards recognition or reconciliation.

Third Factory has been variously labelled as a betrayal of Russian Formalism and a passionate defence of the movement. In both instances, the 'betrayal' of Formalism and its defence depend upon a misguided understanding of how the Formalists conceptualize the relationship between 'form' and 'content'. For Viktor Erlich, *Zoo* and *Third Factory* mark Shklovsky's abandonment of the Formalist insistence that art is pure formal convention, and that it does not manifest any relationship to the 'content' of the life world, only immanent formal relationships (Erlich 1955: 135-6).[87] For Richard Sheldon, *Third Factory* manifests a passionate defence Formalism precisely because it insists upon the importance of form in artistic creation at the expense of content. Accordingly, Sheldon insists that the contradictions which pervade Shklovsky's work are examples of such 'formalism' at work. When Shklovsky asserts that 'existence determines consciousness', that life determines art, and that to be human is to be material for impersonal productive forces, he is merely providing a series of artistic devices with which to contradict his insistence upon aesthetic immanence, and thereby assert the validity of his overbearing emphasis on pure 'form' in literary art. What is more, Sheldon insists that such 'formalism' is typical of Shklovsky's resistance to any 'civic' demands made of art, and his accompanying insistence that art must remain free from ideology (Sheldon in Shklovsky 2002: ix-xxxvii). At this stage of this analysis, it is hopefully apparent that this dualistic understanding of the relationship between 'form' and 'content' is entirely inadequate to the thought of Eikhenbaum, Tynianov and Shklovsky. 'Life' and 'art' cannot in any way be opposed to one another in accordance with such a dualistic paradigm. These Formalists' treatments of a truly radical and dialectical

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[87] Erlich says of *Third Factory* that: 'On the methodological plane *Third Factory* was clearly an attempt to reach beyond 'pure' Formalism towards a position more inclusive and more congruent with the 'social demands' of the time'. Erlich is particularly scathing in his appraisal of the novel, noting its 'slipshod phrasing' and suggests that it conveys a degree of cynicism on Shklovsky's part: '[*Third Factory*] was designed to perform a double function. On the one hand, it provided an excuse for recourse to certain 'non-literary' criteria in critical analysis. On the other, like most of Shklovsky's critical generalizations, the new formula was to serve as a rationale for the trends in current literary practice with which Shklovsky chose to associate himself' (Erlich 1965: 120).

materialism in literary art are entirely dependent upon the inter-relationship and inter-determinacy of the two terms in a given generic-epochal context. Formalism is a poetics of non-recognition, and does not know dualistic binaries. Art is at once material and immaterial, 'yes' and 'no', epochal and universal, *khaltura*, sentimental pathos and literary theory.

However, for all its incongruous juxtapositions, there is no denying that out of all the texts critiqued here, it is *Third Factory* that risks the Kantian retreat from a paradoxical system of contradictions to a unity of 'mutually expeditious' correspondences. The text's tendency towards closure is to be found in that element which prompts Erlich to cry betrayal, and Sheldon to rally to Shklovsky's defence: the thematization of the relationship of art and life. In an unusually direct statement, Shklovsky declares that if Tolstoy had not fought as a gunner in the Russian army, he would never have written *War and Peace* [*Voina i mir*] (Shklovsky 2002: 369; 2002: 51). With this and many other remarks, Shklovsky proceeds to 'contradict' the central tenet of OPOIAZ Formalism: that art is independent of life and there are in no way causal relationships between art and life, particularly with regard to art's 'content'. Shklovsky then proceeds to argue that an epoch must live up to the demands of art, or, in other words, that an epoch must meet art's demand for material: 'What art needs now is material' [*Segodnia iskusstvo nuzhdaetsia v material*]. Hence, on the most simplistic of levels, the everyday *byt* of Shklovsky's work at Goskino is entirely inadequate to his demand that life must furnish him with a destiny and grief as heavy as red corals (Shklovsky 2002: 349; 2001: 25). Instead, in an oft-noted remark, Shklovsky complains that the greatest excitement life furnishes him with at present is his cup of morning tea (Shklovsky 2002: 377; 2001: 63). Shklovsky insists that the artist must now surrender herself to her age, and recognize her own status as material for processing in the production of art and epoch. Taken in isolation, is not this act of surrender Shklovsky's tacit acceptance

that the artist is now, like Bely, merely a translator, providing a window onto the truth of epochal reality? Be it under the aegis of symbolism or anthroposophy, Bely's literary art requires harmonious correspondences between a symbolic order of aesthetic norms and life itself.   And in obliterating the boundary between art and life through the demand that life provide material adequate to the aesthetic, is not Shklovsky demanding the avant-garde act of life-creation, where life and artistic lives are constructed in accordance with aesthetic norms, thereby overcoming the mundane reality of *byt*?

Were this actually the case, Shklovsky would certainly have been a poor reader of Tynianov's 'Literary Fact', which Shklovsky (to whom the essay is dedicated) singles out for high praise in the novel. Shklovsky approves of Tynianov's observation that literature is dynamic, and is forever expanding outwards into the extra-literary series: literature thrives on borders and edges, and the understanding of just what literature is constantly changes. As has been repeatedly stated, Tynianov's central example of literature's expansion into the extra-literary set is the letter. In the first half of the eighteenth century, so Tynianov argues, the letter pertained to personal correspondence. At that time, the great-form of the poetic ode reigned, only to be displaced by lesser genres closely linked with life, at each turn a new constructive principle dialectically intuited, eventually culminating in the letter becoming a literary fact. Tynianov says of the letter that:

Letters turned out to be the handiest, the easiest, the most needed phenomena, and here the new principles of construction were displayed with unusual emphasis: leaving things unsaid, being fragmentary, hinting, the 'domestic' small form of the letter motivated the introduction of trifles and stylistic devices quite the opposite of the 'grandiose' devices of the eighteenth century. This much-needed material lay outside literature in everyday life. And the letter was lifted out of everyday life where it had functioned as a document into the very centre of literature (Tynianov 1977: 265; 2000: 41).

In light of this brief critique of the epistolary form, an immediate response to *Third Factory*'s appraisal of the essay could be to assert Tynianov's influence upon

Shklovsky, who has clearly accepted the essay's dialectical evolution of the Formalist school and its method. Art was held to be autonomous from life, only for Tynianov to argue that this is not the case. Shklovsky absorbs the remarks about the letter's close proximity with life, and peppers his critique of Tynianov with hints and trivial domestic matters. The likely unviability of Formalist critique in the aftermath of the Party Resolution on policy in the Field of Imaginative Literature of June 1925[88] is hinted at when Shklovsky remarks that 'The situation is very serious' and underlines the importance of maintaining a clear theoretical approach, despite the external pressure [*Polozhenie ochen´ ser´eznoe, nuzhno dumat´ — khot' na khodu, a vse ravno dumat'*] (Shklovsky 2002: 375; 2001: 61). Seemingly banal and trivial details such as putting on weight, Boris Eikhenbaum's violin playing and melting ice cream are also included. Shklovsky's critique of Tynianov is even made in a letter to Tynianov, and constitutes one of the many fragments that fail to coalesce into a coherent whole. Accordingly, Formalism has decisively evolved and the movement's 'earlier' claims to aesthetic autonomy that refuted the 'metaphysical' understanding of 'representation' or 'content' in literary art have comprehensively failed.

Yet this immediate response is problematized in other parts of the letter. Shklovsky insists that art is still very much its own master, complete with its own immanent laws. Like Eikhenbaum's earlier essay on *The Overcoat* and Tynianov's later 'On Literary Evolution', there is another Formalist attack on any unmediated understanding of authorial intention. Shklovsky is insistent that the proponent of literary science has no business reading an author's diaries, for this can only ever lead to the laboratory of the creative genius. Instead, Shklovsky demands that the

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[88] Richard Sheldon argues that 'This resolution grew out of the attempts of the proletarian writers, through their organization Oktiabr´, to be recognized by the Party as the sole legitimate voice of Soviet literature. The party rejected their appeal not as incorrect but merely as premature, indicating in the resolution that 'leadership in the field of literature belongs to the the [*sic*] working class as a whole, with all its material and ideological resources' (Sheldon in Shklovsky 2001: xiv).

literary scientist focus on the work of art as material thing: 'Moreover, diaries lead us into the psychology of the creative process and the question of the laboratory of the genius, when what we need is the thing. The relation between the thing and its creator is non-functional' (Shklovsky 2002: 375-6; 2001: 60-1).

Sheldon might argue that the seemingly irreconcilable nature of this contradiction between two varieties of materialism (life-content as material opposed to autonomous art as material thing) is only possible in aesthetic 'form', and therefore this letter to Tynianov amounts to a passionate defence of Formalism and its preference for 'form' over 'content'. Yet this is clearly not the case. Shklovsky is advancing his own deeply ironic twist on the dialectical materialism manifest in his theory as well as that of Tynianov and Eikhenbaum, and implicitly engages with the problem of how to unintentionally construct a culture adequate to the post-Revolutionary context. The central move towards this end in *Third Factory* is the dialectical sublation of contradictory positions. In the case of this letter to Tynianov, the irreconcilability of these two materialisms rests upon the problem of evolution in the so called Formal method, where 'early' immanentism has been replaced with a historical approach mindful of literature's expansion in life. The English translation of Shklovsky's appraisal of Tynianov's essay ('The study is very important—it may be a turning point') risks exaggerating the suggestion that a dramatic evolution has occurred in Formalist science. A more accurate translation of Shklovsky's words might be 'The essay is very important—it may be of decisive significance' [*Stat´ia ochen´ vazhnaia, mozhet byt´, reshaiushchaia po znacheniiu*]. This remark is followed up with: 'I'm no good at paraphrasing other people's thoughts. You'll write me yourself about the implications of your study, while I write you about my art of not making ends meet' [*a ia napishu tebe o svoem iskusstvo ne svodit´ kontsy s kontsami*] (Shklovsky 2002: 374-5; 2001: 60).

Shklovsky's concluding pun hints that the decisive significance that Tynianov's article *may* provide is more ambivalent than a turning point. In yet another instance of non-recognition, Shklovsky puns on the everyday expression of financial and material want, implying that he is adept at not making ends meet. Yet, in Shklovsky's resolutely paradoxical art of contradictions the material ends of devices and plots literally do not meet. The pun therefore makes the relationship between art and life far more problematic and non-functional than the direct causal chain of Tolstoy writing *War and Peace* because he was a gunner, or the autonomous sanctity of art free from outside ideology or any 'ethnographic' contingency. Like the letters in *Zoo*, this pun operates in conflicting generic planes simultaneously, where the letter at once pertains to material art and the 'real-life' correspondence between two beleaguered friends. In *Zoo* the dialectical sublation of these two conflicting terms is the implication that life itself is device. In *Third Factory* life is once again device, only the sublation is deployed in its historical aspect, whereby Formalism's evolution from immanent autonomy towards engagement with life is figured in a similar sublation, where (material)-ism's ends resolutely do not meet in happy unity.

Shklovsky asserts that, like art itself, Formalist science must contradict itself if it is to remain vital. Tynianov's contradiction of this method, whereby extra-literary material is incorporated into the purview of objective literary science, is therefore the prototypical Formalist gesture adequate to the demands of objective art and its many paradoxes. As noted previously, Tynianov's 'Literary Fact' replicates the same dialectical relationships between materials that, for Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky, constitute literary art. This variety of objective Formalist science effectively maintains Tynianov's insistence that negation is always active in a given genre, and that a genre always incorporates an element of that which it is not in order for it to exist. Similarly, Formalist science is dynamic, defamiliarizing itself and incorporating elements and materials which it is not in order to remain a dynamic

force active in the struggle for post-Revolutionary culture. In 'Art as Device', art is

explicitly linked with the drive towards innovation and the accompanying intuition of

creativity provided by not recognizing phenomena as they are in and of themselves.

Accordingly, if art is to remain vital the stasis implied by aesthetic autonomy requires

its negation. Shklovsky identifies these relationships in Tynianov's knight's move

towards life, which is no less exemplary of a poetics of non-recognition than

Shklovsky's 'early' Formalist theory:

We demonstrated that a work of literature is a unified edifice. Everything in it is
subjected to the organization of the material. But the concept of literature changes
all the time. Literature extends its boundaries, annexing non-aesthetic material.
This material, and the changes which it undergoes through contact with material
already aesthetically processed, must be taken into account (Shklovsky 2002: 375;
2001: 60).

The potentially 'decisive significance' of Tynianov's article, so *Third Factory* implies,

is how it formulates a non-recognition of literary evolution as 'yes' and 'no'

simultaneously, and demonstrates art's many contradictions and paradoxes in their

dynamic historical aspect. Tynianov's knight's move towards life and history has, if

anything, enhanced the scope of paradox in Formalist thought, and provided a

conceptual means with which to apprehend the constructive relationships that

constitute literary art. Entirely appropriately, the letter to Tynianov concludes with

the plea: 'Answer my letter, Yurii, just don't lure me into the history of literature.

Let's stick to art. Keeping in mind that all its magnitudes are magnitudes of a

historical nature' (Shklovsky 2002: 376; 2001: 61).

II

Like Tynianov, Shklovsky's suggestion that art's magnitudes are historical is

resolutely anti-genealogical: 'Art fears successors. It craves destruction' (Shklovsky

2002: 367; 2001: 49). In 'Literary Fact', Tynianov argues that the history of literary

genres is a broken line, and in no way a sequence of peaceful successions.

Tynianov implies that these defamiliarizing moments of rupture that pervade the

boundary between art and life are how we intuit historical change in the present. There is, therefore, a constitutive moment between the relentless drive for innovation and contradiction in epochal culture. Shklovsky notes how *Anna Karenina* is no longer regarded as being decadent, whereas at the epochal moment of its first publication Tolstoy's novel became something of a scandal. The Formal method cannot allow itself to calcify into a unitary approach to art and deprive itself of controversy and struggle. Objective method, Shklovsky implies, must strive to contradict itself and actively demand its negation: 'The inertia of art—that which makes it autonomous—is not needed today' (Shklovsky 2002: 367; 2001: 49). In the 'Literary Fact', Tynianov also invokes the topos of need in his description of how the letter came to be a literary fact: 'Letters turned out to be the handiest, the easiest, *the most needed phenomena*, and here the new principles of construction were displayed with unusual emphasis' (Tynianov 1977: 265; 2000: 41). This need that comes to be constitutive of epochal shifts is nowhere explained in the literary theory of Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky and Tynianov. Like Kant refusing access to the roots of the Tree of Knowledge, the Formalists refute any 'metaphysical' explication of 'why' literature is as it is. Like Kant, they merely observe and elaborate literature's conditions of possibility in their dynamic, paradoxical richness.

As noted previously, both 'Literary Fact' and Eikhenbaum's essay 'In Search of Genre' imply that this ambiguous, indeterminate drive for innovation is being frustrated in the post-Revolutionary cultural field, and that, at the time of their writing, a contradictory and paradoxical novel worthy of post-Revolutionary material had not yet been written. In 'The Literary Today', Tynianov suggests that the inadequacy of post-Revolutionary culture can be attributed to statist teleological demands upon literature that hamstring the creative act by predetermining its outcome. Shklovsky's demand in *Third Factory* that life provide him with material for art is an ironic inversion of Tynianov's and Eikhenbaum's concerns. Once again, an immediate

reaction to the nominal terms of both positions would be that Shklovsky is directly contradicting Eikhenbaum and Tynianov. *Pace* Tynianov, Shklovsky appears to be making a teleological demand, albeit of life and not art. Shklovsky insists that life must provide him with material events worthy of art, whereas his colleagues insist that art is currently inadequate, and has not as yet furnished the post-Revolutionary world with a culture worthy of its name. However, like Tynianov's 'evolution' of the Formal method in 'Literary Fact', Shklovsky's purported switch from aesthetic autonomy to an extreme iteration of contingency is merely a further expansion of the contradictions and paradoxes that Formalism regards as constitutive of the aesthetic object. On this basis, the demand that art provide material adequate to the aesthetic is not one of harmonious correspondences between art and life, but one of dialectical conflict where the sublation of art and life *should be* a violent post-Revolutionary culture of struggle and suffering. In *Third Factory*, Shklovsky provides a further non-recognition of art as the sharpening of the knife: 'It doesn't matter whether we lie in the field, whether we suffer or rejoice. What matters is the sharpening of the knife, i.e. art' (Shklovsky 2002: 349; 2001: 25). In the original Russian, this last sentence is: '*delo v ostrenii nozha v iskusstve*'. '*Ostrenii nozha*' is, potentially, phonetically evocative of both *ostranenie* and *obnazhenie priem*, the defamiliarization and laying bare the device that Shklovsky argues are literary art's core devices. 'Art as Device' argues that automatization eats away at 'our fear of war', Tynianovian genres facilitate the intuition of epochal struggles in the past and the then present 'quiet war' in contemporary literature. The sharpening of the knife at once affirms the need for this struggle for new material against epochal life, and the no less important need of not recognizing that struggle in reified times.

It would be incorrect, however, to assert that such proclamations amount to the Formalists' joyous acceptance of their increasingly tense struggles with those 'Marxists' who unwittingly replicated Formalist critique while purporting to criticize it

as anathema to the objectives of statist literature in the Soviet Union. Shklovsky's

dialectical materialism, like that of Tynianov, argues that the simultaneous collision

of genres is analogous to the simultaneous collision of art and life manifest in the

letters in both *Zoo* and *Third Factory*. This contradictory construction is of an

entirely different order to the 'Marxists'' contradiction of Formalist literary theory as

idealist and bourgeois. These teleological programmes burden literary art with

ideological, representational or even 'metaphysical' baggage that it is incapable of

bearing. They are accordingly forces of reification and automatization that art must

overcome. In *Third Factory*, such stasis is very much the force of *byt*, and by

demanding that life provide him with material worthy of art, Shklovsky subtly asks for

a life that is capable of adequately contradicting and conflicting with art's invasion of

the extra-literary series. The then current situation is one where it is *byt* that is on

the offensive, and, with the aesthetic on the back foot, *Third Factory* demands that

art sharpen its knives and resist the city fortress and its demands for a statist

culture.

III

In another moment of generic ambivalence in *Third Factory*, Shklovsky dryly

observes that when you engage in argument, the very act of contradiction partakes

of your opponent's argument. On one level, this is merely Shklovsky engaging in a

polemic with his 'Marxist' opponents who, so Shklovsky believes, criticize the tenets

of the Formal method whilst using many of Formalism's scientific terms in their own

'Marxist' literary polemics. Yet, on another level, it is apparent that Shklovsky is

contradicting his own 'early' literary theory and, like Tynianov's 'Literary Fact', this

contradiction expands the scope of objective Formalist paradox through its

conceptualization of the relationship between art and life in non-functional, non-

causal terms. Whilst some may argue that this constitutes Shklovsky's

abandonment of his supposed insistence on aesthetic autonomy and a shift away

from 'form' to 'content', the move is one of sublation, whereby life, through its dialectical opposition with art, ceases to possess the power of functional or determinist relationships with art. In Shklovsky's letter to Tynianov, the incidental details evocative of the genre of personal correspondence take on a profound ambivalence. Is Shklovsky merely asserting that he has put on weight, or is there another subtle pun at work? The Russian for 'I've put on weight' ('*potolstel ia*') hints at Shklovsky's long-enduring interest in Tolstoy, perhaps comparable to Eikhenbaum's monograph on *The Young Tolstoy*, which critiques Tolstoy's use of biographical material in his fiction. Towards the end of the letter, Shklovsky paradoxically asserts that writing monographs on single authors is impossible and, perhaps, implies that a focus on a single author is analogous to the physical decline of becoming overweight (Shklovsky 2002: 374-5; 2001: 60-1).

Shklovsky's non-recognition of epochal malaise through the punning on 'become over-weight' is fittingly physical and material in its connotations. The unease over life's inability to furnish him with the material necessary for great art is pervaded by what might be termed a dialectic of absence. Shklovsky's body manifests a corpulent excess of material, yet the longed for excitement and material worthy of the aesthetic is absent, his corpulent materiality only serving to emphasise the absence of vital material worthy of art and its many objective paradoxes. In 'Literary Fact', Tynianov emphasizes the shear scope of material and the constructive function in literary art with the example of blank spaces [*belye mesta*] in verse:

Pushkin, for instance, has recourse to *blank spaces* in poems with a particular stanza structure. (These are not 'omissions', because the lines are omitted in this case for constructional reasons, and in some instances the blank spaces are completely without a text, as, for instance, in *Eugene Onegin*…)

These are not pauses, but actually verse without speech material; the semantics are what you will, 'anything'; as a result the constructive factor, the metre, is laid bare and its role emphasised.

The construction is here worked out on zero speech material. The frontiers of the material in verbal art are so broad; such deep cleavages and ruptures are admissible – the constructive factor welds them together. The leaps over the material, this zero-material, only emphasise the tenacity of the constructive factor (Tynianov 1977: 262; 2000: 38).

Tynianov's suggestion that such blank spaces are 'verse without speech material' could, potentially, be understood as yet another example of the Formalists' rejection of content and their valourization of Futurist *zaum*. The semantics of these absences are, Tynianov insists, insignificant, as the blank spaces only serve to lay bare the constructive role of metre. Yet it is important to note how Tynianov's critique of genre insists that the breaks and ruptures in constructive function are incontestably constitutive of epoch, for an epoch selects all needed materials, and the use of these materials characterizes only the epoch itself (Tynianov 1977: 259; 2000: 36). In *Third Factory*, Shklovsky is all too aware of the potentially damning implications art can have for how epochal culture is understood. His ostensible surrender to the processing forces of epochal construction and, concomitantly, the demand that life provide material worthy of art, allows that same allusive, constantly changing constructive function that orchestrates Pushkin's poetry to make of post-Revolutionary *byt* what it will. Accordingly, the mundane reality of putting on weight, banal private life and its morning cups of tea are, potentially, material for art, but a material absence that manifests the inadequacy of post-Revolutionary culture and its teleological demands for literary art. The genius of Shklovsky's dialectical materialism resides in his ability to simultaneously assert the oppressive materiality of everyday life *and* how such material is, in effect, a zero where the banality of epochal life only serves to emphasise the tenacity of the aesthetic constructive factor, complete with its many paradoxes and failure to make material ends meet.

IV

If indeed it was ever in doubt, *Third Factory* confirms the practical status of Formalist critique, and a strongly held civic commitment to take responsibility for the arts, and thereby facilitate a dynamic post-Revolutionary culture. The poetics of non-recognition, the resolutely dialectical treatment of material in literary art and history, and the suggestion that the attributes of post-Revolutionary literature are suggestive of deficiencies, inadequacies and absences are implicitly and explicitly exemplary of what Tynianov termed the verbal function, and a willingness to engage in this struggle. There is no distance between abstract theory and the praxis of everyday life and writing that life. Any worthwhile work of literature is, in this post-Revolutionary world, constitutive of the boundary between life and art and has the power to determine and inter-determine both fields. In a remark addressed to Lev Yakubinsky, Shklovsky acknowledges that Formalist critique makes the act of writing hard, and the writer often does not know what to write. Yet the novel is suggestive of an urgent motivation to impart the wisdom of brainless writing and brainless objective method, even though this very brainlessness is denied the very directness of exposition that facilitates unambiguous explication of writing and method.   In the letter to Yakubinsky, Shklovsky warns his colleague against becoming a committed Marxist:

Friend, I am not about to become a committed Marxist [*posledovatel´nyi marksist*] and I advise you likewise. In our field, it's much better not to follow, but to research [*V nashem dele luchshe ne posledovat´, chem issledovat´*]. A pun, needless to say. And what is a pun? The intersection of two semantic planes at one verbal sign. (Shklovsky 2002: 378; 2001: 64)

In this particularly dense example of Shklovsky's punning, objective method is fraught with practical expectations. These words of advice are followed up by trenchant criticism of Yakubinsky's adherence to Marrist linguistics, and what Shklovsky implies is its untenable reified schemas. Marr's crass duplication of the base-superstructure 'dialectic', that most reductive and un-Marxist element of

Marxist thought, whereby all languages relate back to an originary 'proto-language'; and the concomitant 'dialectical' banality that a doublet gives rise to a new concept are subject to Shklovsky's witheringly ironic critique.[89] This latter point concerning the doublet is incisively demolished in the letter's opening remarks on puns. In the Russian, '*posledovatel´nyi*' [committed follower], '*posledovat˝*' [to follow] and '*issledovat˝*' [research] all contain the common 'root' element of '*sledovat˝*'. It is apparent that the Formal method of non-recognition both constitutes this opposition, and pertains to the autonomous activity of research, and not the un-thinking following of a 'Marxism' that had little, if anything, to do with the fundamental tenets of Karl Marx's philosophy. Yet this 'root' '*sledovat˝*' is itself more ambiguous, and, in addition to denoting 'following' is also suggestive of the 'ought' and the 'should', that is, of *duty*. Yet how should one figure such an 'ought' in the Soviet 1920s? Richard Sheldon's translation of Shklovsky's opening pun on '*posledovat˝*' and '*issledovat˝*' is rendered in English with the bold: 'the firing line is preferable to the Party line'. In Sheldon's problematic departure from the Russian, the implicit and coercive 'should', where the Party serves to oppress and establish conformity (Yakubinsky was a member of the Communist Party at the time of writing), is made explicit in the English, and the accompanying, more Kantian, 'ought' is the moral and ethical demand for autonomy from such oppressive forces constituted by Formalist critique and its punning non-recognitions.

Like Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky then proceeds to demonstrate how the 'social' terrain of 'content' thought to be rejected by the Formalists is in fact totally mis-construed by the committed Marxists, and is far more productively conceptualized by the Formalists themselves. Accordingly, the Formalists emerge as more Marxist than their 'Marxist' opponents:

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[89] For critical discussion of Marr's contribution to Soviet linguistics, see (Apatov 1991), (Slezkine 1996, 826-62) and (Brandist 2002, 109-11). Brandist acknowledges the manifest limitations of proto language and 'linguistic paleontology', but nevertheless provides a much more positive reception of Marr's contribution to Soviet linguistics than that offered by Shklovsky.

What am I driving at? I'll tell you. We need to study not protolanguage or even language in general, but language in connection with its production—above all, in those places where the phenomena in question survive [*po preimushchestvu tam, gde iavleniia eshche zhivy*]. That is a rather brash statement for a non-linguist. You are studying protolanguage, but are you certain that the attitudes toward the word, the aural conditions, the substance of the laws of the word are not themselves changing? It is not just words that change: so do the attitudes toward them. I am certain, for example, that a word, in the course of its life, passes through a stage when the orientation is toward form and cases; likewise, the loss of cases was in its time a game resembling the phenomenon of humorous slang (Shklovsky 2002: 378; 2001: 64-5).

This passage, with its insistence on the living, social situation of the word, and its

constant evolution through history, could almost be the work of the Bakhtin Circle.

Threaded together with his explanation of literary puns, the implication is that the

supposed Marxism of Marrist linguistics is in fact guilty of the very same abstraction

of which Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov were often falsely accused, and it is

the oppressive conformism that is serving to repress creative and autonomous

research into literature's objective properties. The letter to Yakubinsky replicates

the same parody of crass dialectics discernible in the novel's tripartite structure,

where the banal reality of the novel's third factory is simultaneously an inadequate

synthesis of the preceding two terms (factories one and two), and an oppressive,

coercive synthesis of Shklovsky's life enforced upon him by the banal power

structures then active in intellectual life.   Shklovsky inverts the 'dialectical' logic of

Marr's doublet which gives rise to a synthesis. In this instance, the concept arising

from Shklovsky's complex punning is that the conformist 'Marxism' then active in

intellectual life is entirely without intellectual basis, and a betrayal of the

Revolutionary ideology from which it 'stems'.

V

This hostility to the mundane 'proto' episteme of institutionalized Marxism is entirely

consistent with the Formalists' hostility to 'metaphysics', ideology and genealogy. In

Third Factory, Shklovsky addresses the difficulty the Formalist alternative

encounters when faced with the need to institutionalize itself.   Throughout the

novel there is a manifest anxiety over the institutional status of literary science. In the First Factory's closing remarks, Shklovsky asks his friends to hang his portrait on the walls of the university building. This is not, however, the sad resignation of the one-time radical who wishes to relent and become a graduated flunkey in the tedious habitus of *homo academicus.* Shklovsky implores his friends to: '[h]ang my portrait in the university corridor, friends. Tear down the vice-rector's study, establish a window on the Neva and sail past me on your bicycles' (Shklovsky 2002: 347; 2001: 19). Consistent with his wish to vandalize the rector's study, Shklovsky is also witheringly critical of the norms of established scholarship and profoundly hostile to the conventionalized norms, regulations and rituals of the academy. In a letter to Roman Jakobson, Shklovsky expresses exasperation at the idea of becoming an academic. For Shklovsky, academics are dull, conservative and, like the Romanov's celebrating the 300th anniversary of their existence in 1913, preserve automatized regularity at the expense of disruption and upheaval. (Shklovsky 2002: 361-2; 2001: 41). This peaceful genealogy is anathema to Shklovsky, obviously lacking the dynamism and excitement of Formalist critique, worthy art and the life material with which these elements are engaged. To authentically engage with modernity is to create something, and therefore be fragile, finite and to risk being brainless and broken. For Shklovsky, the mundane scholarship of the academy merely processes data which perpetuates its own existence, and it does not create any material structures worthy of critical attention through risk and adventure. The Formalist preference for method is, for Shklovsky, infinitely preferable to the reifications of academia and is better conceptualized as a desire for objective knowledge independent of the restrictions of university discipline. The first of the three factories recounts a narrative of Shklovsky's academic failure, where he is forced to move from institution to institution and learns nothing of interest throughout this anti-*Bildungsroman,* and he is only able to pass an examination by cheating. The teacher, who allows Shklovsky to correct his own

spelling mistakes once the exam has finished, asks in return that Shklovsky

dedicate his future master's thesis to him; a promise which the anti-institutional

Shklovsky never fulfils (Shklovsky 2002: 346; 2001: 16-17).

It is intriguing that Shklovsky singles out, albeit briefly, erstwhile Moscow Linguistic

Circle member Grigorii Vinokur as a representative of humdrum academe.[90] In a

letter already mentioned, Shklovsky complains that Roman Jakobson is so

interesting and useful, capable of useful contributions to the evolving science of

literature, yet he is absent, working abroad. The Third Factory of Shklovsky's life

can only offer Vinokur: 'We have to make do with Vinokur, celebrating his 300th

anniversary'. Vinokur, in his contemporary *Biography and Culture* [*Biografiia i

kul´tura*], provides an early intervention on the topos of biographical life as life

creation in the Russian and Soviet context: '…we gain the right to speak of personal

life as creation. The personal here is like an artist who models and mints his life in

the form of experience from the material of surrounding reality. To experience

something means to make a corresponding phenomenon an event in one's own

personal life' (Vinokur cited in Dobrenko 2008: 148). Such scholarly interest in

biographical life creation has yet to celebrate its 300th anniversary, but it currently

shows no signs of abating. One recent intervention which has taken inspiration from

Vinokur is Evgenii Dobrenko's *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History*.

Dobrenko describes Vinokur's approach to biography as 'Formalist' and endorses

Vinokur's argument that there is an unavoidable tension in the closely related

genres of autobiography, hagiography and biography. All contain, so Dobrenko

argues, an element of representation and depiction (a *graphia*); yet the genres are

equally predicated upon an element of objective experience, where a subject

experiences an event in reality, material that is then subsequently processed into a

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[90] Viktor Erlich observes how Vinokur had criticized the OPOIAZ members for their obsessive emphasis upon the break between themselves and previous schools of literary criticism, to the point where the intellectual credentials of OPOIAZ were damaged by their ignoring accepted norms of academic writing. See (Erlich 1965: 253) and Vinokur's 'Poeziia i nauka' (Vinokur 1925: 21-31).

given *graphia*, and thereby elevating the objective into potentially mythical dimensions. It is only by becoming an object of experience that historical fact gains biographical meaning. The prime example of such generic biographical writing is, so Dobrenko argues, Gorky's autobiographical trilogy *Childhood* [*Detstvo*], *My Apprenticeship* [*V liudiakh*] and *My Universities* [*Moi universitety*]. This approach to biography and biographical writing is, for Dobrenko, a valuable insight into life-writing and an alternative that contrasts with the ideological production of both history and biographical life in Stalinist culture (Dobrenko 2008: 70 & 148).

On this basis, Vinokur's theory of life creation is at once entirely consistent and entirely inconsistent with *Third Factory*, and its demand that life provide Shklovsky with the material he needs for great art. The suggestion that a material event is experienced in reality and then processed according to the laws of a given *graphia* is akin to Shklovsky's occasional definition of 'material' as an event or idea that is processed into an aesthetic narrative, the laws of which are entirely independent of the extra-literary material. Yet, following Dobrenko's summary, is not Shklovsky's Formalism resolutely anti-mythological, and does it not deny any such 'mythological' correspondences between artwork and objective experience, and that art itself can ever possess any mythological properties? In addition, Vinokur formulates the practice of life creation in decidedly intentional terms, with the author selecting relevant events in her personal life which are formed and minted into her literary biography. In *Third Factory*, Shklovsky insists that the author has no such intentional control over events. In the novel's most famous remark, Shklovsky claims that 'We are all flax in the field' awaiting processing, and it is the impersonal constructive forces of art and epoch which process the material events of biographical life into one structure or another. Crucially, the many letters, puns and dialectical paradoxes of *Zoo* and *Third Factory* insist that the encounter between objective experience and *graphia* is a far more problematic and conflicted encounter

than Vinokur implies, and, like Tynianovian genres, a place where conflicting planes

of materiality exist simultaneously, and which cannot be reduced to any mythological

moment of closure.

It is not without interest that Dobrenko discerns the absence of Vinokur's schema of

literary biography (best exemplified by Gorky's trilogy) in Socialist Realism. In *Third

Factory*, Shklovsky's highly fraught and ambivalent conceptualization of the

relationship between art and life, and his astute parodies of institutionalized

'dialectics', imply that there is *already* a narrowly determined and conformist *graphia*

that limits both the paradoxes of the aesthetic and life itself. Rather than granting

full reign to the paradoxes and struggles which Revolutionary culture is, in

Shklovsky's eyes, so deserving, the mundane, abstract and reified culture of

mythological correspondences between 'proto-' and language, ideology and art, and

life and art all serve to limit both art and biographical experience. A consistent

refrain throughout the novel is the nature of freedom in literary art. Freedom, for

Shklovsky, is a largely Kantian freedom, in that the writer-subject is only ever free

within the limits of objectively determined laws that must exist, and can assert that

freedom through breaking those laws and advancing both experience and

knowledge. And this freedom is, in the face of oppressive forces, a duty that entails

creating art in accordance with the tenets of objective critique, and it is indeed the

practice of that freedom through the struggle to take civic responsibility for the arts.[91]

The brainless knight's freedom is accordingly provided for by the laws of aesthetic

material and the breaking of those laws; and that freedom is therefore, of necessity,

a non-recognition of itself and the objective phenomena around it. This paradoxical

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[91] Svetlana Boym does not address the Kantian nature of freedom in Shklovsky's thought, but her remarks are broadly parallel to my argument here: 'One of the central parallelisms that Shklovsky explores in *Third Factory* is the unfreedom of the writer caught in the play of literary convention and the unfreedom of the writer working under the dictate of the state, specifically an authoritarian power. The two deaths of the author—one a playful self-constraint and the other the acceptance of the state *telos*—are not the same. Inner freedom and the writer's space of creative exploration are shrinking in the context of public unfreedom' (Boym 2009: 107).

freedom contrasts with what Shklovsky terms a 'negative unfreedom' in *Third Factory*. This unfreedom is the official 'dialectical' materialism that contrasts with Shklovsky's and Tynianov's *radically* dialectical materialism in literary art; an unfreedom where the outcome of dialectical synthesis is either predetermined in advance, or the preceding terms of thesis and antithesis are determined *post factum* by the desired synthesis.

This drive towards teleological closure is revealed in the novel's afterword:

Take me, third factory of life!

But don't put me in the wrong guild.

Whatever happens, though, I have some insurance: good health. So far, my heart has borne even the things I haven't described.

It has not broken: it has not enlarged (Shklovsky 2002: 394; 2001, 86).

In these closing remarks, Shklovsky once more returns to the device of absence: certain events of his life – events worthy of suffering and pain – have *not* been included in the narrative. The negative unfreedom of statist 'dialectical' materialism requires that these events cannot be included in the narrative of a life. The anti-*Bildungsroman* which constitutes the first of the novel's two factories is, purely in terms of the events and the life it describes, a highly banal sequence of events. Childhood poverty, mediocrity and cheating at school and in creating art are hardly worthy of such a tumultuous epoch as that lived in by Shklovsky. *A Sentimental Journey* and *Zoo* both recount grand themes of war, Revolution and exile, yet these potentially formative events are entirely absent from *Third Factory* because, implicitly, the increasingly oppressive 'dialectical' materialism of statist culture requires their absence. As ever, it is with emotive affect that Shklovsky makes his final stand. The heart which bears the injuries of both art and epoch remains defiant: it has succumbed neither to objective non-recognition nor to a medical condition.

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8: A Philosopher in the Soviet 1920s

I

In the seventeenth letter of Shklovsky's *Zoo*, the narrator describes the sensation of propulsion felt by steamship passengers and motorcar drivers. Passengers aboard a steamship do not sense movement *per se*, but rather forward propulsion and its potential. The motorcar driver experiences the same sensation: she depresses the throttle and feels the pleasant sensation of force pushing against her back. Every internal combustion engine has its own propulsive character, and the very best create an effect comparable to a singer's voice as it rises in a crescendo. The emotional life of the automobile driver is never static and always plural: the driver feels calm *and* a sense of propulsion; the driver feels anxious *and* a sense of propulsion. The narrator claims never to have travelled on a steamship, but he nevertheless proclaims that he loves and understands them. He imagines dancing on a moving vessel, exchanging kisses with a partner; his thoughts lagging slightly behind the ship's propulsive force. After declaring his love and empathy for the steamship, the narrator recounts a meeting with Boris Pasternak. After recalling Pasternak's observation that contemporary life is lived as if all are aboard a steamship, the narrator laments the Revolution's propulsive force which caused so many non-conformists to flee (Shklovsky: 2002, 306-8; 2001, 61-3).

This brief discourse on steamships and the sensation of propulsion touches upon many of this analysis's recurrent topoi: anachronism, objective method, ethical commitment and dialectical planes of movement and meaning. The steamship is likely an allusion to the manifesto 'A Slap in the Face of Public Taste' [*Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu*], where the Russian Futurists famously called for Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy to be thrown overboard from the steamship of modernity (Vorob´ev: 2008, 99-100). Whilst it is true that *Zoo's* seventeenth letter shares some of that manifesto's excitement at the dynamic movement and

innovation which characterise modernity, the use of the steamship metaphor is more ambiguous in Shklovsky's epistolary novel. If contemporary life was being lived as if on board a steamship, then one accordingly risked being designated an anachronism and thrown overboard. Khlebnikov proved to be an anachronism in post-Revolutionary Russia and died alone and unwanted by the new state.   It would be wrong to argue that Shklovsky is merely criticizing the political aftermath of the Russian Revolution, and lamenting the fate of those non-conformist refugees who were propelled into exile as the Revolution's emancipatory momentum failed to fulfil so many of its promises.   As already noted, Shklovsky's ethics of commitment to writerly freedom are accompanied by a deeply ambiguous reaction to modernity's many impersonal attributes, particularly where objective method prevails and meaning is necessarily plural, and emotional life riven with violent tensions in a world deprived of its previous certainties. Kant objectively calibrated consciousness as finite, contradictory and necessarily anachronistic, with knowledge only coming after the sensory intuition of the world and the praxis of critiquing both intuition and conventional understanding.   This practical activity of knowledge is itself in constant *motion*, and sustains its paradoxical trajectory upon the opposing force of elements both immanent and other to itself. Shklovsky's objective conceptualizations of device and plot, Eikhenbaum's discussion of the grotesque and Tynianov's elaboration of genre and literature's various functional relationships have all been shown to be trajectories of negation, where a paradoxical relationship exists between any given materials, their negation and the accompanying sensory impacts felt by the human body. These tensions have been shown to be not merely sequential or historical trajectories towards negation, but simultaneous struggles between conflicting planes of meaning. Tynianov said of *Zoo* that theory, journalism, personal correspondence and popular trash all co-exist and struggle with one another in a single text. The steamship of modernity in Shklovsky's *Zoo* is at once a dynamic example of technological progress, dynamic propulsive force and a

tired anachronism which exemplifies much that is cruel and impersonal, overthrowing the very Futurists who sang its praises just a few years previously.

In Vaginov's novel *The Goat Song* there are no steamships. Nevertheless, Vaginov's narrator uses an alternative mode of transportation as a metaphor for modernity. Some of the novel's characters are aboard a steam train. They are travelling back to the newly renamed Leningrad after a brief stay in the countryside where they gathered together at 'the tower', a dacha rented for the summer by the group's leader Teptelkin. Teptelkin's 'tower' could, in our present terms, be regarded as one of the novel's many moments of non-recognition. For Teptelkin, the tower is a gathering point for an elite group of like-minded intellectuals; a symbolic refuge from the world around them where they have failed to find institutional and professional security. In this place of retreat they will valiantly preserve classical high-culture from the onslaught of modernity before its eventual rebirth in the epoch of the Third Renaissance. Vaginov's novel is largely consistent with Shklovsky's withering critique of Bely's *Kotik Letaev*, and provides a ruthless parody of a group of pseudo-intellectuals who interpret the world around them on the basis of an outdated, totalizing world view. This group of pseudo-intellectuals, would-be-poets share a symbolic worldview that mixes Spengler, Nietzsche and antiquarian myth; and interprets the mundane and quotidian as harbingers of immanent cultural collapse and eventual rebirth.[92] On the train journey back to Leningrad, two of the characters (Kostia Rotikov and the Unknown Poet) pledge to continue their struggle to uphold high cultural values. Ekaterina Ivanovna sits at one end of the train, blowing the seeds off a dandelion. She is playing the childish game of 'loves me – loves me not' with each breath, even though she has no idea who might love her. At the opposite end of the train sits a philosopher (his name is never

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[92] For critical discussion of this world-view and its thematization in the novel, see: (Chukovskii: 1989, 92, 97-114); (Anemone 1985) and (Anemone 1998: 631-6); (Shepherd 1992: 108-110); (Gerasimova 1990: 141) and (Anemone and Martynov 1989: 92).

given in the novel), and he repetitively ponders the philosophical problem that 'the world is posited, not given; reality is posited, not given' over and over, as if in time with the childish game played by Ekaterina Ivanovna (Vaginov: 2002, 71-2).

Like Teptelkin's tower, the train itself is a moment of non-recognition. On one rather obvious level, it is metaphorical of modernity's destructive capacity for progress. As Kostia Rotikov and the Unknown Poet pledge to struggle on, the train is symptomatic of the advance of modernity that has rendered this band of intellectuals an anachronism. They are effectively helpless as the train's momentum sweeps them along towards the re-named city. As with so many Russian intellectuals, Petersburg held particular significance as the capital of Russian culture, and its renaming as Leningrad affirms the supremacy of a rival cultural ideology that has rendered their values obsolete. The inevitability of the train's journey to the city has, if only on this level, a significance of tragic proportions. As with Shklovsky's discourse on the steamship, this dissident interpretation of the novel's cultural orientation in the face of Bolshevik cultural hegemony fails to account adequately for the novel's ambiguity. Claims that the novel's depiction of a group of intellectuals is essentially tragic are problematized by its very title, which plays on the ancient Greek for tragedy. The 'goat song' is a banal rendering of the ancient Greek semantics of a chorus of satyrs (Shepherd 1992: 110).

As noted in the discussion of *Third Factory*, Shklovsky wrote to Yakubinskii extolling the virtue of puns, whilst at the same time warning his erstwhile Formalist colleague not to become a committed Marxist and follow the then contemporary vogue of Marrist linguistics. Shklovsky's punning barbs against Marrist proto-linguistics deftly critiques its flaws, exposing them as inadequate in the face of the vital struggles that beset contemporary social life. Indeed, it could even be said that in doing so Shklovsky exposes Marrist linguistics as an anachronism, just as he had previously critiqued Potebnianism, ethnography and Andrei Bely as inadequate to the task of

conceptualizing literary art in all its paradoxical, objective complexity. The title of *The Goat Song* and its parodic depiction of a group of intellectuals convinced of their own tragic existence in the post-Revolutionary world imply that such a totalizing, tragic ontology is inadequate to the complexities of art and the post-Revolutionary life-world around them. Their high minded tragedy is in fact mundane, and indeed highly anachronistic when figured against the background of that life-world. As pledges are made to struggle on, dandelion seeds scattered and ontological propositions repeated the steam train makes a rhythmical sound: 'chivo, chivo… chivo, chivo' (Vaginov 2002: 72) . This noise is far more than an onomatopoeic 'chuff, chuff', and enunciates the informal Russian for 'what?' [*chego*]. On this level, the train responds to the characters with the question 'what?', and is therefore symptomatic of a modernity which rejects the totalizing tragic ontology proffered by the novel's characters and maintains the uncertainty of a question in the face of high-minded seriousness. The train is, like the steamship in *Zoo*, the absolute symbol of modernity's destructive and tragic powers of progress and that same modernity's capacity to render finite, uncertain and paradoxical.

These similar treatments of modernity in *Zoo* and *The Goat Song* thematize two problems which have pervaded this thesis, and both of which pertain to the status of the anachronism in early Soviet modernity and beyond. Firstly, and most paradoxically, some elements of Kant, Hegel, Russian Formalist theory and Vaginov's novel can be said to assert the topicality of being an anachronism. Across this thesis, it has been argued that all knowledge and its objective formulation is of necessity anachronistic, and requires its subsequent moment of negation in the praxis of critique. In *Zoo* and *Third Factory*, Russian Formalism and Russian Futurism have encountered that moment of negation with an oppressive and deeply conservative force in post-Revolutionary intellectual culture. In *The Goat Song*, the profound conservativism of a reductive world-view and culture's future

trajectory has been laid bare by modernity's resistance towards absolute claims to meaning. In both instances, the state of being rendered an anachronism is where modernity's trajectory is manifested, laying bare the predicament of those who have been excluded or left behind.   However, given the dynamic and finite nature of knowledge in modernity, this sense of being left behind is not absolute and counterposed with an alternative deployment of anachronism. In Hegel's dialectical conceptualization of objective knowledge, any incorrect interpretation of phenomena is anachronism. It is only with the dialectical conceptualization of reality at a given point in history that reality emerges in its fullest iteration. In Shklovsky's theoretical novels, these two iterations of anachronism are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, the suggestion of being abandoned by one's age is used to underline the validity of how Shklovsky conceptualizes that age itself. Thus in *Third Factory* and *Zoo* Shklovsky is capable of designating himself and Russian Formalism an anachronism cast aside by modernity, whilst simultaneously denigrating crude, statist dialectical materialism and Marrist linguistics as theoretical anachronisms that are inadequate to complexities of contemporary cultural life . It can therefore be said that there is clearly a higher order of anachronism in Russian Formalist thought, with the concept directed both at the movement itself and its inadequate theoretical rivals with a view to assert the validity of Formalist critique.   The designation of anachronism is accordingly a historical ontology of power, and inherently genealogical.

It is with this problematic conceptualization of anachronism that I wish to turn to Mikhail Bakhtin, the Bakhtin Circle and their reception of Russian Formalist thought in the Soviet 1920s and beyond.   As noted, Bakhtin and some members of the Bakhtin circle served as the prototypes for characters in *The Goat Song*, with Bakhtin himself understood as the inspiration for the Philosopher. It must be stated that, despite his personal preference for the title of 'philosopher', Bakhtin is *not* the

Philosopher in Vaginov's novel and, given the previous discussion of material and the relationship between art and life, I do not wish to assert a unitary correspondence between literary character and its 'real' historical referent.[93] Craig Brandist has argued that, whatever the fundamental accuracy of the novel's depiction of the Bakhtin Circle, it is true that the novel's characters share some of the values and beliefs held by the group at the time (Brandist 2002: 31). Brandist also argues that, at the time of Bakhtin's early philosophy, the Circle can be understood as perpetuating the post-Kantian understanding of the subject's unitary relationship with the natural world guaranteed by art.[94] It shall be argued here that Bakhtin's understanding of the aesthetic's unifying authority is to no small extent articulated through his many criticisms of Russian Formalism, and that Bakhtin's aesthetic philosophy and Formalism's literary theory effectively restage the tension in Kant's work, whereby Kant retreats from the liberating – albeit alienating – conditions of possibility that constitute the praxis of critique in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*. In opposition to this alienation, Kant proffered a unitary discourse, whereby objective scientific inquiry (no matter how paradoxical) was abandoned in favour of indeterminate and disinterested aesthetic judgements that, as a condition of their very indeterminacy, programme a unitary relationship of reciprocally expeditious correspondences. According to this reductive schema, the natural world cannot be reduced to the status of an objective thing that can be dominated and exploited by mankind.

It is one of the enduring paradoxes of Kant's thought that it is precisely the necessarily anachronistic quality of objective knowledge which drives the actual, historically grounded aspects of Kant's entire ontological programme in the first two

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[93] Whatever the similarities and differences between prototype and fictional character, it is important to note that Bakhtin's early philosophy is critical of some aspects of Oswald's Spengler's thought. See *K filosofii postupki* (Bakhtin 2000: 51).
[94] Brandist productively argues that the work of the Bakhtin Circle during this period is exemplary of what Eagleton terms 'the ideology of the aesthetic', whereby art provides a unitary relationship of the emergent European bourgeoisie and the natural and social world around them (Brandist 2002: 29).

Critiques. Our finite knowledge of reality must always come after the act of critique, which must itself contradict the accepted status quo through the speculative activity of the imagination, and which must in turn be contradicted by further sensory intuitions and further fights of speculative fancy. Yet with Kant's suggestion of the unitary, 'reciprocally expeditious' correspondences he effectively programmes an always-already into historical reality, and the aesthetic becomes an anachronistic site of permanent value that cannot be critiqued by the objective activity of the subject. In other words, it becomes a *given* that the aesthetic is always-already moral, and the historically grounded practice of contradictory critique can do nothing to alter these fundamental attributes. As will be demonstrated here, this problematic is fundamental to the contrasting conceptualizations of literary art advanced by the Formalists and Bakhtin in the Soviet 1920s, where Bakhtin argues that Formalism's emphasis on material structures and laws of plot formation are anachronistic and profoundly ahistorical, yet nevertheless exempts the aesthetic and its values from questions of historical contingency.

It is, however, by no means a given that the Bakhtin Circle should be regarded as providing an inadequate conceptualization of historical reality in the Soviet 1920s, and that their work can be regarded as profoundly anachronistic, be it in terms of their being left behind by the dominant trends active in early Soviet intellectual life, or their inability to formulate a programme for the adequate conceptualization of modernity and the literary art in which that modernity is revealed. It could no doubt be argued that by establishing the Bakhtin Circle through the unflattering comparison with Vaginov's depiction I am effectively convicting them before any act of trial by critique. This is not the case. It is particularly interesting that the problem of voice is present in both the examples from *Zoo* and *The Goat Song* mentioned above. Shklovsky likens the excitement of the motor's propulsion to a singer's voice; and Vaginov gives the steam train a voice, whereby it responds with the

endless questioning: 'what, what; what, what'. I therefore conclude this encounter between Bakhtin and Russian Formalism with a brief discussion of Bakhtin's conceptualization of voice in his genre theory from the 1930s and beyond, and consider whether Bakhtin's later philosophy reveals many similarities with the Formalists whom he had criticised in the 1920s, and therefore provides a more appropriately anachronistic conceptualization of literary art and its surrounding epochal reality.

II

In the Soviet 1920s, Bakhtin's aesthetic theory manifests a dislike of thingly objects. In contrast to the Formalists' tendency to speak of the work of art as a thing, Bakhtin proposes that art should be termed an 'aesthetic object'. This aesthetic object is held to be indeterminate, and transcends its objective existence as a thing through aesthetic embodiment. Bakhtin's dislike for the material thing in literary art is articulated in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art' [*Problema formy, soderzhaniia i materiala v slovesnom khudhozhestvennom tvorchestve*]. In this extended essay, Bakhtin's disappointment with Russian Formalism is clear, a disappointment which to no small extent depends upon their treatment of literary art as a material thing, which Bakhtin apophatically uses to advance his alternative concept of the aesthetic object. Renfrew, in an extended discussion of Bakhtin's criticisms of the Russian Formalists, has perceptively noted that Bakhtin does not address the different iterations of the term 'material' in Formalist thought (Renfrew 2006: 21-31). Bakhtin concentrates on the Tynianovian position in *The Problem of Verse Language* that the literary work of art is itself an objective accumulation of verbal material. Bakhtin shares the Formalists' demand that literary studies be undertaken on an objective, universally valid basis, but he is apprehensive that such objectivity be misconstrued as scientism. There is a clear risk, according to Bakhtin, that literary studies will become another manifestation of positivist science, and

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facilitate an analysis of the division, isolation and classification of empirical literary phenomena: 'In its effort to form a scientific judgment about art independently of general philosophical aesthetics, art study has found material to be the firmest basis for scientific consideration. After all, an orientation toward the material creates a seductive closeness to positive empirical science' (Bakhtin 2003: 270; 1990: 261). [95]

As a consequence of his focus on this one iteration of the Formalists' treatment of material, Bakhtin is unable to fully account for the Formalists' incorporation of the somatic into their poetics, and, as a result, his treatment of Formalism's drive to empirical science is glaringly inadequate, and torn between designating the Formalist 'thing' as a material object in the physical world and dismissing this scientifically constituted object as a theoretical abstraction removed from social reality. Bakhtin suggests that the Formalists' interest in the somatic reveals their empirical goal of rendering the literary work a tactile, material thing of the real world. Bakhtin argues that feeling *deprives* a literary work of meaning, and reduces it to a mere factual state that is isolated from its broader cultural surroundings. Bakhtin seems to argue that pure somatic pleasure is an inauthentic mode of being, typical of the most crude materialism, where material stimuli exist in order to provoke an instrumental response in the human body: 'A work of art, understood as *organized material*, as a thing, can have significance only as a physical stimulus of physiological and psychological states or it must assume some utilitarian, practical function' (Bakhtin 2003: 276; 1990: 269). On this basis, judgements concerning the aesthetic can indeed be properly scientific and, to Bakhtin's dismay, be

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[95] For a summary of contemporary discussion of Formalism's proximity to natural science's positivistic episteme, see the editors' 'Kommentarii' (Bakhtin 2003: 768-770). On the basis of the my current analysis, it is difficult to agree with the editors' view that the Formalists were blind to how the conceptual devices of mathematics and the natural sciences methodologically pre-determine the content of their object. For Tynianov's explicit refutation of 'statistical' approaches to literary science, see 'Literary Fact (Tynianov 1977: 255-6); and Eikhenbaum explicitly acknowledges how method determines its object in 'Literary Environment' (Eikhenbaum 1987: 428-436; 1971: 54-65); and Shklovsky, with typical irony, had already acknowledged the problem in *Zoo….*

demonstrable mathematically, but the fundamental properties of the aesthetic object are lost.[96]

The inadequacy of this account of the Formalists' conceptualization of material is revealed in Bakhtin's contradictory assertion that their desire for a science of literary art leads them away from reality and into theoretical abstraction. Bakhtin is, at times, sympathetic to the Formalist drive to specify the attributes of literary constructions, and gives cautious endorsement of the study of technique [*tekhnika*] in art, which entails a consideration of the novel's and poetry's compositional forms, and what he regards as the complementary linguistic emphasis on nominal determinacy. Bakhtin says of technique that: 'To avoid misunderstanding, we shall provide here an exact definition of technique in art: by the technical moment in art, we mean everything that is absolutely necessary for the creation of a work of art in its natural-scientific or linguistic determinateness (this includes the entire makeup of a finished work of art as a thing [*kak veshch*])' (Bakhtin 2003: 303; 1990: 295). In outlining the technical, material properties of the work of art, Bakhtin appears to be arguing that all these elements are external theoretical abstractions, and do not pertain to the reality of the aesthetic object as it exists in embodied inter-personal, social reality. As Brandist notes, Bakhtin sees such a material thing as 'another manifestation of 'theoretism': the meaning of the work of art as a composed whole is split off from the moment of intentional engagement with the 'already cognised' aspects of reality in life in which the aesthetic object is 'achieved'' (Brandist 2002: 43). On this basis, Bakhtin not only contradicts his suggestion that the Formalist material object is a physical thing instrumentally deployed to trigger the somatic, but also appears dangerously close to confusing these determinate material things as yet another manifestation of the Kantian thing-in-itself, as it is only this one

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[96] Bakhtin does not, however, address the apparent similarities between Formalism's insistence on the somatic, and Kant's use of the term 'feeling', which denotes the self's awareness of its own mental activity, and the self's productive activity when it perceives a work of art and produces a sensation entirely separate from its material referent.

component of Kant's thought that remains at an equivalent level of abstraction. It is

significant that Kant's thing-in-itself remains totally beyond the knowledge of human

consciousness, and as such should not be confused with the literary work of art's

determinate, material properties that are accessible to human cognition.

Regardless of these apparent inconsistencies in Bakhtin's reception of Russian

Formalism, it is important to note that Bakhtin's concept of the aesthetic object

shares a great deal with Kant.[97] It has often been noted how this aesthetic object is

exemplary of Bakhtin's drive to ground Kantian morality and ethics in the objective,

inter-personal reality of social life (Brandist 2002: 27-52) (Renfrew 2006: 54)

(Hitchcock 2000: 7).[98] For Bakhtin, the aesthetic object cannot be expressed in the

positive terms of the natural sciences or linguistics; its factual validity resides in its

inability to be articulated with any specific determinacy. Accordingly, the material

attributes of the work of art, that is, all that makes it a thing, are intentionally

overcome in artistic creation, and attain a state of indeterminacy (Bakhtin 2003: 302;

1990: 294). It is worth recalling that Bakhtin designates the abstract, determinate

attributes of the artwork-as-thing as 'absolutely necessary', but also totally

insignificant in terms of the full meaning of the aesthetic object.   Bakhtin's Formalist

faux-science apophatically facilitates an understanding of the aesthetic object

through its complete inability to articulate the latter's fundamental attributes.

Accordingly, the aesthetic object offers an incredibly condensed re-iteration of

Kantian thought as it moves through the three *Critiques.* In *The Critique of Pure*

Reason, Kant's agenda is twofold: to provide a justification for empirical perception

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[97] For an alternative account that argues for Bakhtin's hostility to Kant's 'canonical formulation of European rationalism', see Wlad Godzich's 'Correcting Kant: Bakhtin and Intercultural Interactions' (Godzich 1991: 5-17). Galin Tihanov has argued that Bakhtin's dislike of Formalism's tendency towards positivism is a further iteration of Kant's founding division between culture and civilization (Tihanov 2000: 22-4). For further discussion of Bakhtin's reception of Kantian thought, see: (Holquist and Clark 1984: 299-314); and (Scholz 1998:141-72).
[98] It should be noted that Brandist, Renfrew and Hitchcock all see Kant as formulating the ethical and the moral purely at the level of transcendental abstraction, and paint Bakhtin as grounding such abstractions in the social world of everyday life.   Accordingly, they ignore the extent to which moral, ethical reason is *already* a practical activity in Kant.

and the natural sciences *and* account for the human subject's *a priori* moral autonomy. With regard to autonomy, Kant insists that it cannot be explained in any determinate formulation, otherwise we would cease to be free and it is, according to the second *Critique*, a *fact* of reason's practical activity. By the third *Critique,* Kant's retreat from the natural sciences and their destructive capacity for domination is accompanied by the 'reciprocally expeditious' relationship between moral reason, beautiful art and the natural world. Through this 'reciprocally expeditious' activity and the figure of the genius artist, Kant implies that the harmony of the natural world is in accordance with the properties of consciousness itself, and thereby hints at a possible alternative to the limiting, paradoxical alienation of the subject from the thing-in-itself. In the succinct words of Terry Eagleton, Kant argues that 'the aesthetic holds out a promise of reconciliation between nature and humanity' (Eagleton 1990: 11). With the exception of his narrow treatment of the somatic, Bakhtin's aesthetic object replicates these fundamental attributes of Kantian thought. The aesthetic object, like the Kantian fact of reason, cannot be articulated in positive terms, but Bakhtin nonetheless demands that it is the fullest reality of the work of art. Bakhtin's insistence that art's thingly qualities are simultaneously 'absolutely necessary' – yet totally inadmissible – recalls Kant's desire to provide an objective account of empirical knowledge, yet also deny that knowledge its destructive capacity to determine and isolate all empirical phenomena. And like Kant, Bakhtin desires that it is art that affects the reconciliation between humanity and the natural world, and thereby limits the destructive, reifying power of empirical knowledge.

Whilst the Formalists were denied the possibility of refuting Bakhtin's misguided criticisms, their response would likely have discerned a whiff of Potebnian 'metaphysics' in this attempt to locate meaning beyond the text's material

parameters[99], and scoffed at Bakhtin's attempt to ground art in a philosophical

discourse of *a priori* morality. Bakhtin's reconciliation with art and the natural world

exemplifies the tradition in post-Kantian metaphysics where art's harmony with the

cognitive activity of the mind is accompanied by the presumption that art's content

be *a priori* moral. That Bakhtin's aesthetic object provides a reconciliation with the

natural world is evidenced by his insistence that the problem of content be

conceptualized as the site of consummation between the domains of art and life. As

has already been noted, Tynianov's concepts of the literary personality and verbal

function provide a tantalizing glimpse of an open, contradictory relationship between

life and literary art. Initially, Bakhtin hints at a similarly rich relationship, arguing that:

'It must be remembered once and for all that no reality in itself, no neutral reality,

can be placed in opposition to art: by the very fact that we speak of it and oppose it

to something, we determine it and evaluate it in some way. One must simply come

to see oneself clearly and understand the actual direction of one's evaluation'.

However, Bakhtin chooses to sum up this position with the following succinct

formulation: 'reality can be contraposed to art only as something good or something

true in opposition to beauty' (Bakhtin 2003: 284; 1990: 276).

It is apparent that Bakhtin's suggestion that there is no neutral reality is definitely not

made in the spirit of Tynianov's conceptualization of the literary personality, and its

awareness of ideologically and politically motivated uses of an author that constitute

art's verbal function. Bakhtin, in contrast, makes the post-Kantian move of insisting

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[99] Tihanov perceptively argues that 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form' is pervaded by a stark dualism in how it conceptualizes the material thing and its aesthetic embodiment (Tihanov 2000: 67). In contrast, Renfrew's discussion of this extended essay finds early traces of Bakhtin's (and Medvedev's) subsequent tendency to argue that the intrinsic and the extrinsic are held to be immanent in Bakhtinian thought (Renfrew 2006: 21-40). I am of the view that Bakhtin's opposition between the material thing and its aesthetic embodiment is indeed dualistic; and, prior to his later work on the novel, Bakhtin is clearly what Shklovsky terms a 'translator', whereby the supposedly transcendent art-object manifests that universal, always-already truth to which reality is held to conform.

that all reality is *a priori* ethical and good.[100] Similarly, the relationship between life

and art is nothing like the paradoxical contradictions that inform Shklovsky's and

Tynianov's accounts of literary constructions, and Kant's account of consciousness

in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. After acknowledging the 'opposition' between

beauty and the good or truthful thing, Bakhtin almost immediately goes on to argue

that:

> The basic feature of the aesthetic that sharply distinguishes it from cognition and
> performed action [*postupka*] is its receptive, positively accepting character, which
> enters into the work (or, to be exact, into the aesthetic object) and there becomes an
> indispensable constitutive moment. In this sense, we can say that in actuality life is
> found not only outside art but in it, within it, in all the fullness of its value-bearing
> weightiness—social, political, cognitive, and so on (Bakhtin 2003: 286; 1990: 278).

Bakhtin's 'opposition' between art and life, where life is shown to be both outside art

and within it, is all too obviously analogous to the Potebnian opposition between two

planes of meaning that is overcome through their harmonious, unitary

correspondence:

The characteristic of the aesthetic noted above—its positive acceptance and

concrete unification of nature and social humanity—also explains the distinctive

relationship of the aesthetic to philosophy. We observe in the history of philosophy

a constantly recurring tendency toward a substitution of the yet-to-be-achieved unity

of cognition and action by the concrete intuitive, and as it were *given*, present-on-

hand *unity* of aesthetic vision… The reality of cognition and ethical action that enters

(as an already identified and evaluated reality) into the aesthetic object is subjected

there to concrete, intuitive unification, individuation, concretization, isolation, and

consummation i.e., to a process of comprehensive artistic forming by means of a

particular material—*this reality we call* (in complete agreement with traditional word

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[100] See Ken Hirschkop's *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (Hirschkop 1999: 146-57; 163-8
& 197-225).

usage) *the content of a work of art* (or to be exact—*of the aesthetic object*) (Bakhtin 2003: 288-9; 1990: 280-1).

What Bakhtin terms the 'already identified and evaluated reality' within the work of art is a moral discourse that he demands be present as the necessary condition of social life, and which is welcomed into the indeterminate aesthetic object where it undergoes artistic consummation. To return to Brandist's words mentioned earlier, the 'already cognised' aspects of reality in life are *a priori* ethical, and the aesthetic object provides the guarantee of a harmonious relationship between life's already cognised, determinate ethical content and art's capacity for unitary transcendence. Accordingly, Bakhtin offers the following examples of artistic content: Ivan Karamazov's thoughts on the suffering of children in *Brothers Karamazov* [*Brat´ia Karamazovy*]; Prince Andrei Bolkonsky's ruminations on the absurdity of war and the historical role of the individual in *War and Peace* [*Voina i mir*]; and Pushkin's treatment of memory, recollection and remorse in the poem *Remembrance* [*Vospominaniia*]. Bakhtin's insistence that such ethical content cannot be articulated in positive terms is manifested in his discussion of the Pushkin poem:

The ethical event [*eticheskoe sobytie*] of recollection and remorse has been aesthetically formed and consummated [*esteticheskoe oformlenie i zavershenie*] in this work (artistic forming includes the constituent of isolation and fiction, i.e., of incomplete reality), but not words, not phonemes, not sentences, and not semantic series. All these lie outside the content of aesthetic perception, that is, outside the artistic object, and they may be needed only for the secondary, scientific judgment of aesthetics, insofar as the question arises as to how and by which constituents of the extra aesthetic structure of the external work the given content of artistic perception is conditioned (Bakhtin 2003: 304; 1990: 296, translation amended).

With these remarks, Bakhtin makes clear the extent to which he is prepared to embrace Formalism and its 'scientific', abstract configuration of the literary thing that resides outside the aesthetic object. Such a science can account for individual elements as words and semantics, but any evaluation of the artwork on these terms is of secondary importance and, as Bakhtin notes elsewhere in the essay, risks

enfeebling the indeterminate ethical content as it manifests itself in the aesthetic object. Renfrew has suggested that Bakhtin's response to Formalist science, and his figuring of content as the overcoming of the relationship between art and life, demonstrates a counter-intuitive convergence between Bakhtin and Tynianov's conceptualization of material in 'The Literary Fact' (Renfrew 2006: 26-31), but Tynianov does not insist that art's materials be always already ethical, and maintains a constructive, dialectical relationship of negation and struggle with those materials. For Bakhtin cognition, ethics and positivistic science are all predicated upon linguistic determinacy, and therefore must be regarded as simultaneously within and without the aesthetic object. As such, it is important to differentiate between the two varieties of ethical demands which Bakhtin makes in the essay. First, he adheres to Hegel's ethical demand that art be *objectively* analysed in accordance with its universal properties, but what Bakhtin identifies as these universal properties requires a further demand that art is unitary, and must not be explicated in positive terms. This second demand constitutes a kind of transcendent ethics that are only possible in the consummated aesthetic event, where the linguistic determinacy of objective phenomena is overcome in an *in*determinate aesthetic event. In contrast, the Formalists' response to the Hegelian demand for objectivity does not require the automatic designation of art as *a priori* moral and unitary. For the Formalists, the ethical resides in the demand to objectively account for art and its materials, thereby asserting the finitude of the authorial subject, to which the material work is radically other. For Bakhtin, such alienation from the aesthetic object is inadmissible, and this ethical demand for objectivity and human finitude is mis-construed as brutal, self-interested empiricism.[101]

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[101] For example, see Bakhtin's remarks that: 'We shall be able to understand how form is, on the one hand, really material, and how it is realized entirely in a given material and is bound to it; and, on the other hand, we shall understand how form takes us axiologically beyond the bounds of the work as organized material, as thing' (Bakhtin 2003: 281-2; 1990: 273-4). In contrast to my own argument here, Tihanov has argued that Bakhtin's treatment of form in his early aesthetic philosophy is one

Whilst the essay 'The Problem of Material, Content and Form' displays manifest

similarities with Kant's gesture towards unitary closure between world and the

subject in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, it is apparent that Bakhtin's

historically grounded 'dialogue' with Kant is with an altogether different Kant to that

outlined in the first chapter of this analysis. The Kant Bakhtin presents in his early

philosophy is consistently more akin to that 'idealist' Kant identified by Lenin in

Materialism and Empirio-criticism, that is, it is an entirely 'subjective', dualistic Kant

who is denied all knowledge of the thing-in-itself and, more significantly for Bakhtin,

cut off from the historically grounded world of ethical deeds. Thus, for example,

Bakhtin argues in 'Towards a Philosophy of the Act' [*K filosofii postupka*], that no

one could possibly argue that Kant's variety of transcendental reasoning in any way

carries the ethical weight of a practical act for which the subject is held responsible.

Kant's philosophy limits the world and human reason to the mind, whereas Bakhtin

requires not merely such conceptual activity, but an actual, real embodied person in

historical life (Bakhtin 2003: 10-1). As already noted, however, Bakhtin has a clear

hierarchy regarding what such embodied activity in life is to be. In a lecture given

in 1924, Bakhtin addresses the 'dead' forms of culture which can result from Kantian

reason. Proceeding from an astonishingly literal and reductive understanding of

Kant's elaboration of time and space in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Bakhtin

ponders the quandary of how to evaluate systemic philosophy by going outside that

philosophy. Bakhtin expresses concern that, despite its immanent division, unitary

'subjectivity' is, for Kant, only ever a technical means for the intuition of the world of

objective culture. The principle danger philosophy poses is forgetting that any

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element of his demand that art must be conceptualized in terms of its ethical value and its 'impact on the formation of social judgement' (Tihanov 2000: 32-3). However, I find it difficult not to agree with Brandist, who has argued that the Bakhtin Circle are exemplary of what Terry Eagleton terms the 'ideology of the aesthetic' (Brandist 2002: 29). Indeed, it could be argued that Bakhtin's reaction to the Formalists' treatment of material is exemplary of a key element of modern European aesthetics since its Kantian inception: 'With the birth of the aesthetic, then, the sphere of art itself begins to suffer something of the abstraction and formalization characteristic of modern theory in general; *yet* the aesthetic is thought nevertheless to retain a charge of irreducible particularity, providing us with a kind of paradigm of what non-alienated cognition might look like' (Eagleton 1990: 2).

projections of unitary knowledge are merely images of objective culture (Bakhtin 2003: 330-2). Accordingly, Bakhtin can be regarded as insisting that the ethical demands for objectivity made by Kant, Hegel and even the Formalists always result in reification, and do not facilitate the vitalizing paradoxes of contradiction and historical change.

Whatever the manifest limitations of Bakhtin's early aesthetic philosophy it would be wrong, I think, to dismiss both it and indeed the profession of this category of philosopher as anachronisms in the Soviet 1920s.   As stated above, the topos of anachronism is tightly interwoven with conceptualizations of modernity, the validity of critical methodologies and accompanying genealogical ontologies. Eikhenbaum criticised a then contemporary interest in authors' social class as an anachronism in literary history, as social class had never been a literary fact in Russian culture. It would be invalid, I think, to make the same mistake in reverse here and accuse Bakhtin of being an anachronism who was steadfastly holding on to an outdated philosophy in a present where such values had all to clearly been thrown off the Soviet steamship. It has been shown that Bakhtin's hostility towards thingifying literary art and 'dead forms' is, to some extent, symptomatic of a broad trend in early 20th century intellectual life where the *Lebensphilosophie* of, *inter alia*, Georg Simmel manifests a profound disquiet over the supremacy of civilization over culture (Tihanov 2000: 1-4).[102] According to this view civilization and its material interests are understood as destroying the values of high culture. Whilst I have no interest whatsoever in any positivist accounts of intellectual influence, it is important to acknowledge that such attitudes were indeed contemporary to early Soviet

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[102] Galin Tihanov provides a thoughtful discussion of Bakhtin's reception of Simmel's thought (Tihanov 2000: 93-4). Following Tihanov, Craig Brandist argues that Bakhtin's dislike of objective culture is shared with Simmel, whose 'life-philosophy' argued that the dead, 'objective' formations of culture were disconnected from life, and could be counter-posed with the vitalizing properties of art (Brandist 2002: 41-4).

intellectual culture and not merely the last drops of antiquated Kantian wine in a new bottle.

Yet it is absolutely imperative that Soviet intellectual culture be conceptualized not as a unitary phenomenon, but rather as plural phenomena. Whatever Bakhtin's (and his fictional projection's) pretensions toward the profession of philosophy, the *Kultur* of Simmelian *Lebensphilosophie* is exemplary of how 'culture' was the preserve of an educated elite. In the quietly polemical introduction to his critique of Bakhtin's thought Renfrew depicts Bakhtin's actions around the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, when Bakhtin would stay at home and read, and occasionally go to the library when the heating was turned on. For Renfrew, the Revolution signalled the start of a process whereby the Bolsheviks set about creating a revolutionary culture, which in turn had important implications for culture and how it was understood: 'The ambit, if not the apparatus, of culture was not only transformed from its former status as the exclusive preserve of a relatively small educated elite and, increasingly, an aspirant bourgeoisie, its forms and functions were subjected in the process to a thoroughgoing redefinition. Culture, in more senses than one, was everywhere, not just in the library' (Renfrew 2006: 1). It is in this profoundly genealogical sense that Bakhtin's thought can indeed be regarded as a highly topical anachronism in the Soviet 1920s, and it is imperative that this aesthetic philosophy be conceptualized in broader terms than elitist philosophy 'proper'. Renfrew's insistence on the plurality of 'culture' in the Soviet 1920s foregrounds how the Bakhtin Circle's thought can be regarded as simultaneously contemporary yet, for some, grossly outdated. Vaginov's parodic depiction of some of the Bakhtin Circle in *The Goat Song* (and indeed the novel's hostile reception in the pro-Bolshevik press),[103] where its elitist characters' unitary discourse serves to explain all cultural phenomena in their trajectory of collapse, is particularly pertinent

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[103] For a discussion of *The Goat Song's* hostile reception, see (Shepherd 1992: 110-11).

here. The novel thematizes a historical moment when a cultural elite are gradually becoming aware of the anachronistic status of their unitary world view; a moment when no one unitary schema can claim authority in cultural life, and which in turn engenders a modernity of parodic and paradoxical finitude. This tension is indeed no less pertinent to any subsequent period which seeks to critique early Soviet intellectual history and its key participants. Eikhenbaum's anxiety over the anachronistic use of class criticism in literary studies is once again worth considering here as, given the intricacies and plurality of the early Soviet cultural field, it is no less anachronistic to focus on 'philosophy', 'positivism', 'politics', 'intellectuals' and 'scholars' as limited by the determinate focus of their intellectual labour, or the determinate 'class' to which they are held to belong. Vaginov's novel attests that these problematics were, in more senses than one, a *fact* of early Soviet intellectual culture.

At this stage of this analysis, it will come as no surprise that I prefer the Formalist critique offered by Shklovsky and Tynianov, where such *facts* of literary and intellectual culture are conceptualized in their paradoxical and objective conditions of possibility, and where no one discourse can lay claim to an authoritative programme for culture and its significations. It is well known that Bakhtin's work on the novel genre in the 1930s and beyond can be understood as a turn away from the aesthetic philosophy of the previous decade. However, before addressing Bakhtin's apparent similarities with some Formalist doctrine, it is necessary to turn once more to the question of authorship in Bakhtin's aesthetic theory and then Pavel Medvedev's reception of Formalist thought in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*.

III

In many respects the author is the crux of Bakhtin's whole programme of transcendent ethical aesthetics, as it is the term 'embodiment' that encompasses the overcoming of objective ethical content into that *trans*-ethical moment of the aesthetic object (Bakhtin 2003: 289-90; 1990: 281-2). As noted in the previous analysis of Eikhenbaum's Gogol´ essay, Bakhtin's embodied author is resolutely historical and an intentional, individual subiectum whose will forms the aesthetic object. The author, so Bakhtin argues, must struggle with the determinate properties of language, reality and cognition as if he or she is the first author, and therefore is deprived of the recourse to literary history, genre or narrative. Just as 'life' and 'content' are *a priori* ethical for Bakhtin, so is the individual author, and the struggle to form the aesthetic object must be her own responsibility. This process of formation, which Bakhtin describes with the ambiguous metaphor of the author entering into the aesthetic object [*vkhodiashchaia v esteticheskii obekt*], is one of struggle as the author fights with the objectifying properties of language, and forces determinacy to overcome itself. It is through this embodying activity of the author, and the embodied activity of the hero of the literary work that the aesthetic object ascertains its freedom from determinacy, with the author effectively creating his life, that of the hero and the harmonious, unitary moment of aesthetic being. As Bakhtin serenely asserts:

The individual *subiectum* experiences himself as a creator only in art. A positively subjective creative personality is a constitutive moment in artistic form; here its subjectiveness finds a distinctive objectification and becomes a culturally valid, creative subjectivity. And it is here as well that the distinctive unity of the organic—corporeal and inner man, his soul and his spirit—is realized, but a unity that is experienced from within. The author, as a constitutive moment of form, is the organized activity, issuing from within, of the integral whole human being, who realizes his task completely, without presupposing anything external to himself for the consummation. It is an activity of the entire human being, from head to foot: he is needed in his entirety, as one who breathes (rhythm), moves, sees, hears, remembers, loves, and understands (Bakhtin 2003: 323; 1990: 316).

The task of this embodied author is, to some extent, made easier by the choice of

which 'form' he or she chooses to create. Bakhtin's tendency to differentiate

between the objective form of a phenomenon and its aesthetically embodied *trans*-

form is present in his own terms of immanent analysis of compositional forms. In

keeping with his Belinskian programme of ethically engaged realism, the novel is

described by Bakhtin in his early aesthetic philosophy as the artistic consummation

of either a historical or social event, where the reality of the present receives its epic

consummation.[104]   Consistent with this preference for classical forms when

differentiating the *trans*-forms of composition from mere compositional forms,

Bakhtin argues that tragedy is just such a *trans*-form, or, in Bakhtin's own terms, an

architectonic form. The architectonic forms aid the author's choice of compositional

forms, but only in the sense that the tragedy of a social event or of a particular

character cannot be known to negative cognition, just as the 'good', 'ethical' and the

'beautiful' cannot be known to cognition, they are subsumed into cognition, only for

the embodying and embodied activity of author and hero to realize architectonic

form in its concrete social reality. It must be noted that this 'value' of the aesthetic

object 'does not admit of any object-related differentiation and any limitation by a

determinate, stable concept'. The *a priori* moral activity of the author, and the

resulting aesthetic object are actualized, but in a manner which is indeterminate,

and cannot 'be expressed and cognized in an adequate concept' (Bakhtin 2003:

274; 1990: 266).[105]

Such an author is radically different to the Formalist figures of Pushkin and Gogol´,

frustrated with their own inability to create a work of art that conforms to their own

intentions. Bakhtin clearly believes that the volitional subject can overcome what

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[104] Bakhtin provides an alternative discussion of the epic in his well-known essay 'Epic and the Novel'
[*Epos i roman*], where modernity (best exemplified in the genre of the novel) is explicitly differentiated
from the closed forms of the epic (Bakhtin 1975: 447-483; 2004: 3-40).
[105] Vaginov's *The Goat Song* can, I think, be used to refute Bakhtin's argument that tragedy is an
indeterminate form that transcends objective, thingly existence.

the Formalists identify as impersonal laws that govern literary construction. In the fourth chapter of this analysis, it was apparent how Tynianov's problematization of authorial intention make it impossible to align Formalism with the avant-garde telos of life-creation. There are no such problems with Bakhtin's authorial figure, who appears to be a Nietzschean figure – albeit a moral one – engaged in a heroic struggle to create existence on purely aesthetic terms (Nietzsche 1990: 8-9). Bakhtin argues that the reality to which art is juxtaposed is already aestheticized, but this Nietzschean under-current in Bakhtin's thought raises awkward questions as to the nature of the already aestheticized reality that is, in part, created through the aesthetic object and its author's embodying and embodied activity. The problem is particularly pressing in the context of the early Soviet 1920s, where 'pre-loaded' figurations of the historical life context risk distorting the more open formulations of authorship and epoch afforded by Tynianov's verbal function and the literary personality. In a highly perceptive and under-appreciated work, David Shepherd has questioned the validity of the understanding of authorship maintained by the Soviet authorities across the life span of the Soviet Union and scholarly voices in Western academia, particularly in the disciplinary field of Russian studies. In both instances, the author is held to be accountable for the ideological content of her work, albeit the Soviet apparatus demanded conformity to its statist ideological norms, whilst its opponents in the West demanded its mirror opposite: a dissident author who conforms to high standards of artistic integrity and individual resistance to the Communist regime. In both cases, the author is held to account for moral commitment, with which art is held to be synonymous (Shepherd 1992: 1-27, 191-203). Deft as Shepherd's discussion is, his problematization of these discursive regimes is undertaken on the basis of Bakhtinian polyphony, where Bakhtin is regarded as providing a historically grounded concept of *inter*-determinate dialogue, where neither side can make an *a priori* claim to the truth and moral probity. Yet with regard to his early aesthetic writings, Bakhtin clearly cannot be said to provide

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such methodological framework. If life is always already aestheticized, and the author presumed to be *a priori* moral and create content that is equally *a priori* moral, Bakhtin risks pre-determining the moral duty of the author-creator in a pre-determined epochal reality in the Soviet 1920s.   As a result, it is Bakhtin who risks formulating the proto-dissident paradigm of authorship, and pre-loading the epochal reality of the Soviet 1920s with ethical 'content' that awaits its aesthetic consummation.

In 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', some of Bakhtin's remarks appear to counter such a restricted or even 'monologic' reading of his own words. Bakhtin's famous utterances that '[h]istory knows no isolated series' and particularly '[o]ne must cease to be just oneself, in order to enter into history' (Bakhtin 2003: 280; 1990: 272) do, albeit in isolation, appear to resist any suggestion of the 'always already' in historical life, where history by definition is a succession of differences. The idea of one needing to cease to be just oneself in order to enter into history is even reminiscent of the Formalist account of an author when faced with her objectified literary creation that is of necessity other to herself. Yet the context of their 'utterance' is, as the editors of Bakhtin's *Collected Works* note, a specific attack on Formalism's tendency towards synchrony.[106] Shklovsky's remarks on ethnography implicitly affirm that the laws governing plot formation are universal and not particular to any one given historical context (Shklovsky 1929: 25-7). When Bakhtin notes that history knows no isolated series, it is this tendency to isolate the literary work from history and the national context of its utterance that he is problematizing:

…an isolated series as such is static, and a change in the elements within such a series can only be a systematic articulation or simply a mechanical disposition of series, but certainly not a historical process… By isolating within culture not only art but the separate arts, and by considering the work not in its artistic life but as a thing, as organized material, material aesthetics is able at best to found only a

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[106] See the editorial commentary in (Bakhtin 2003: 791 n.47).

chronological table of changes in the technical device utilized by a given art, because isolated art can have no history at all (Bakhtin 2003: 280; 1990: 272). When Bakhtin writes that one must cease to be oneself, the implicit demand appears to be that 'one' requires aesthetic embodiment if 'one' is to authentically enter into history. Yet when such aesthetic events are shot through with a unitary genealogy of post-Kantian moral-aesthetic discourses, there are clearly limits on the extent to which the self stops being itself. It can be argued that Bakhtin's authorial subject never really enters into history, and that Bakhtin's unitary understanding of the aesthetic is merely his own version of philosophical synchrony.

IV

The subtitle of Medvedev's highly critical study of Russian Formalism signals a potential move away from post-Kantian aesthetic philosophy, and a more productive engagement with epochal reality: *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*: *A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Despite this determinate orientation towards the social, Medvedev totally fails to advance the Bakhtin Circle's conceptualization of literary art beyond a unitary discourse of harmony with art, subject and epochal reality. Indeed, suspicions that a unitary *a priori* moral discourse underpins the Bakhtin School's understanding of history are largely confirmed in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship.* Like Tynianov, Medvedev negotiates the problem of theorizing literary history through the topos of genre. For Tynianov, a dynamic, evolving conceptualization of genre is absolutely fundamental to grasping the struggles and contradictions which, through the relationship of constructive principle and material, come to constitute the broader struggles and oppositions of epochal reality. Medvedev's discussion of genre is nothing if not ambitious. Having proclaimed genre the central problem of literary studies, he then proceeds to argue that it pertains to questions of composition, the relationship between art and life, philosophy, epochal change and even the activity of human

cognition.[107] Medvedev's 'two-fold' [*dvoiakaia orientatsiia*] formulation effectively reiterates the Bakhtinian aesthetic object, and incorporates the work of art's linguistically determinate formal properties and the inter-subjective ideological horizon of a given historical epoch.[108] Genre itself is therefore the site of aesthetic consummation between all those elements which Medvedev addresses in his study (Medvedev 2000: 306-318; 1991: 129-141).

As with Bakhtin's treatment of the aesthetic object, Medvedev does hint at some genuinely radical proposals for literary study, particularly regarding the relationship of art and life and its adequate conceptualization. For example, Medvedev echoes Tynianov's constructive and verbal functions when he suggests that every literary work is simultaneously determined from without and from within. Medvedev argues that immanent determinations arise from literary norms and conventions, and external determinations arise from life's social richness; and that any immanent determination is therefore an external determination and vice versa. (Medvedev 2000: 211; 1991: 29). In order to avoid any dualistic or dogmatic understanding of this relationship between the social and the immanent, Medvedev insists that determination is of necessity dialectical. Dialectics, so Medvedev argues, provide dynamic definitions of genres such as the novel in its historically evolving aspect, potentially providing yet further basis for a favourable comparison with Tynianov's

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[107] Tihanov provides a useful summary here. He argues that Medvedev, along with other members of Bakhtin Circle, focussed attention on genre because 'they saw in it the essential mechanism which activates language and renders it far more concrete and socially oriented. Genre is thought of as the vehicle which transforms language into *utterance*. Literary genres, being specific and, in this sense only, also concrete knowledge about the world, and utterances, being concretizations of language, prove to be inherently connected and dependent on each other…' (Tihanov 2000: 60). However, I will argue here that there are some fundamental problems in Medvedev's argument which belie his claims that generic utterances amount to social concretizations of language.

[108] For an alternative (and broadly positive) critique of Medvedev's turn to genre, see (Renfrew 2006: 76-89). Along with Voloshinov's material treatment of discourse in *Discourse in Life, Discourse in Poetry*, Renfrew argues that Medvedev's conceptualization of genre is a highly significant development in the Bakhtin Circle's thought: 'The turn to genre is every bit as significant as the 'turn to language' and, its promise not only of a reconciliation of the general and the particular that does not undermine the uniqueness of the latter, but also of a conceptualization of particularity in its historical becoming, is the most methodologically significant proposition we have encountered since Voloshinov's discussion of the material nature of language' (Renfrew 2006: 87).

conceptualization of verbal, literary and constructive functions (Medvedev 2000: 213; 1991: 31). Sadly the promise of these introductory remarks is not fulfilled in Medvedev's elaboration of genre and its properties, and his 'sociological' poetics are strongly reminiscent of Bakhtin's architectonic forms. As the unitary site of aesthetic consummation, the artist must learn to see reality through the eyes of genre (Medvedev 2000: 310-2; 1991:133-5), but only certain genres will lend themselves to a certain aesthetic embodiment in the literary work. With regard to the novel, Medvedev says that:

In order to create a novel it is necessary to learn to see life in terms of the novelistic story [*fabula*], necessary to learn to see the wider and deeper relationship of life on a large scale. There is an abyss of difference between the ability to grasp isolated unity of a chance situation and the ability to understand the unity and inner logic of a whole epoch. There is, therefore, an abyss between the anecdote and the novel.[109] But the mastery of any aspect of the epoch—family life, social or psychological life, etc.—is inseparable from the means of representation, i.e., from the basic possibilities of genre construction… the reality of the genre and the reality accessible to the genre are organically related. But we have seen that the reality of genre is the social reality of its realization in the process of artistic intercourse. Therefore, genre is the aggregate of the means of collective orientation in reality, with the orientation toward finalization (Medvedev 2000: 311-2; 1991: 134-5).

As much as Medvedev seeks to distance himself from ideological closure, the consistent emphasis on unity, harmony and consummation in both his and Bakhtin's thought has a distinctly post-Kantian aesthetic genealogy, where the persistence of universal order, harmony and consummation in the *ethical* literary tradition is unchanging. In Foucaultian terms, this manifestation of unitary aesthetics amounts to those same historical ontologies of truth and ethics that underpin much of the Bakhtin School's poetics of aesthetic embodiment. Discussing *Don Quixote*, Medvedev implies that it is up to a given epoch to live up to the constant standards of unity and harmony of certain generic forms. By way of a strikingly clumsy attack on Shklovsky's critique of Cervantes's novel, Medvedev dismisses (and completely misconstrues) Shklovsky's interest in 'stringing together' due to what Medvedev

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[109] It is worth recalling that Tynianov's conceptualization of the novel genre in *Literary Fact* is far more dynamic than what Medvedev offers here, and Tynianov suggests that the novel is *not* an absolute form that is separated by great distances from other generic forms such as the anecdote.

perceives as its inability to account for the stylistic juxtapositions and contradictions in the novel's narrative. All significant genres, so Medvedev argues, are complex systems of means and methods for the conscious control and consummation of reality. The juxtaposition and contradictions identified by Shklovsky are inadmissible with regard to consummation, as the latter is only ever possible through unification. Consequently, the contradictions of *Don Quixote* are, for Medvedev, 'external flaws' which result from an epochal shift, where the perception of reality changes and can no longer 'fit' inside a novella. Accordingly, the unifying form of the novel is required, and it therefore emerges into existence, consummating the epochal ideological horizon which comes into being through the conflicting dialogues between the embodied heroes, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. As a result of this new inner unity, the external flaws are 'forgotten' by the reader. This example implies that, whatever Medvedev's protestations to the contrary, history is the continuous return of classical unity and harmony, granting an endless dialogue between authors and concrete heroic embodiments (Medvedev 2000: 312-4; 1991: 125-7).

It is important to emphasize that Tynianov's treatment of material and constructive function in 'The Literary Fact' does not require the kind of unitary relationship which Medvedev seems to desire here, where Medvedev understands genre as a conservative and normalizing force that imposes harmony and unity on both epoch and its works of literary art. Tynianov argues that the evolution of literary genres comes to dialectically determine epochal reality after the fact. Medvedev, in contrast, is providing yet another unitary account of life creation, where the artist intentionally consummates the historical reality around her through looking at the world through a variety of genre-tinted spectacles. Medvedev's 'dialectical' account of dynamic interchangeability of immanent and sociological evaluations of literature, and genre's being an aggregate of collective orientations is, as with Bakhtin, a mask

for a unitary aestheticization of reality that guarantees pre-determined moral content as a given. Medvedev argues that literature is not finizable, never imposes its thesis on the reader (Medvedev 2000: 200, 207; 1991: 20, 25), stating that it is a generation of a statement and not a statement in and of itself. Yet his insistence on a harmonious accord between literature's two-fold synthesis of immanent forms and historical reality reflects an all too obvious Kantian reciprocity between the human and the aesthetic.

Despite these manifest similarities with post-Kantian aesthetics, Medvedev is adamant that art's unfinizability means it cannot be considered as philosophy (Medvedev 2000: 202; 1991: 20). Historically grounded philosophical ideas can be present in art if they undergo finalization in the appropriate generic form, but art's non-finizable properties prevent that idea from receiving positive endorsement in the aesthetic form. For all Medvedev's interest in ideology and his contempt for the Formalists' attempts to remove the ideological from the artistic series, he himself also appears intent on banishing the ideological from the aesthetic. It is as if ideology can be present in the literary work of art, but it is present in a contained manifestation and does not receive positive articulation in the literary work of art itself. The unitary wholeness of the aesthetic work is therefore entirely free of ideology, even if a given ideology is said to constitute some of its epochal content. Medvedev seems to suggest that philosophers come to realize the autonomy of the aesthetic from philosophical varieties of discourse, noting that some philosophers such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were able to express their philosophy semi-aesthetically through a synthesis between aesthetic form and philosophical content.[110] Medvedev desires a generic differentiation between the genres of

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[110] 'Outside of art any cognitive problem can be interpreted in reference to its possible finalization in the plane of the work of art. This is quite common in philosophy. The philosophical formulations of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, etc., are semi-artistic in nature. For these philosophers problem becomes theme and functions compositionally in the plane of their actual literary works. This is the source of their great artistic perfection' (Medvedev 2000: 316-7; 1991: 139-40). Medvedev's remarks are, given

philosophy and art, where art cannot be ideological precisely because ideology is, for Medvedev, a determinate formulation. The entire ideological horizon of a given epoch is therefore a broad range of determinate ideological formulations; and the aesthetic is an entirely extra-ideological and indeterminate site of meaning, even if it is only through the aesthetic that the epoch's ideological horizon receives its consummation. Yet isn't the act of banishing ideology from a particular generic set the most ideological suspect act, in that it demands that a particular discourse is placed beyond the plane of contention?

Medevedev's 'generic' understanding of ideology is entirely consistent with his broader demand for a sociological poetics.   According to Medvedev's introduction, this projected sociological poetics is entirely consistent with Marxism's base / superstructure paradigm. For Medvedev, the study of ideologies amounts to discerning the relationship of a particular ideological superstructure to the socio-economic base. Art, science, philosophy, ethics and religion all have their own languages, each with 'its own forms and devices for that language, and its own specific laws for the ideological refraction of a common reality. It is absolutely not the way of Marxism to level these differences or to ignore the essential plurality of the languages of ideologies' (Medvedev 2000: 186-7; 1991: 31). As with his suggestion that an immanent determination is also an external determination, Medvedev's insistence on the plurality of all languages and their capacity for ideological refraction hints at the workings of a dialectical conceptualization of art and how it should be related to the social world of life. Indeed, Medvedev declares that:

The dialectical method provides it with an indispensable instrument for the formulation of dynamic definitions, i.e., definitions adequate to the generating system of the development of a given genre, form, etc. Only dialectics can avoid both the normativisim and dogmatism in definitions and their positivistic atomization

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their proximity to Medvedev's attack on Shklovsky's conceptualization of the novel, potentially a criticism of Tynianov's review of *Zoo*.

into a multiplicity of disconnected facts only conditionally connected (Medvedev 2000: 186-7; 1991: 31).

However, as already noted, Medvedev's supposedly dialectical treatments of genre and art's refraction of ideology are indeed normative in how they seek to determine and preserve a unitary, harmonious understanding of the aesthetic that is not tainted by ideology. Medvedev's use of the visual metaphor 'refraction' to describe art's relationship with ideology is crucial here. In a certain limited sense it implies that an ideological ray passes through the work of art, changing direction as a result of the material through which it is refracted. On this basis, the immanent is indeed extrinsic and vice versa. Yet, on another level, this ideological ray is held to originate at a determinate point *beyond* the work of art, and therefore remains fundamentally extrinsic to the work of art and allows Medvedev to perpetuate the post-Kantian norm whereby the aesthetic is ultimately exempted from any inter-determinate or co-constitutive relationship with ideology.   Again, it is important to stress that Medvedev's whole project for a sociological poetics is underwritten by an adherence to the 'Marxist' base / superstructure dualism, where it is the base that determines the superstructure.[111] Medvedev's above quoted remarks regarding how ethics, art and religion each have their own language, and how Marxism is aware of the essential plurality of languages and ideologies are followed with the subsequent caveat: '[t]he specificity of art, science, ethics, or religion naturally should not obscure their ideological unity as superstructures of a common base, or the fact that they follow the same sociological laws of development. But this specificity should not be effaced by the general formulas of those laws' (Medvedev 2000: 186-7; 1991: 3). Accordingly, there are obviously clear limitations regarding

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[111] For a discussion of Medvedev's treatment of Marxism and his attempts to combine it with Neo-Kantianism, see (Brandist 2002: 67-8). Unlike some supporters of *The Formal Method*, Brandist perceives the extent to which this combination is not realized in an entirely satisfactory manner. It is definitely a Neo-Kantian iteration of culture which predominates, and which allows the very content of that Neo-Kantianism to go unquestioned: 'It is significant that by 'ideology' Medvedev repeatedly refers to the 'ethical', cognitive and other contents of literature', that is, to the 'good', the 'true', the 'beautiful' and so on that constituted 'universal validity' as defined by the neo-Kantians. Ideology becomes simply the content of culture, and literature draws from this in the process of its creation in 'life' (Brandist 2002: 73).

how Medvedev is prepared to accept a dialectical conceptualization of the extrinsic and intrinsic, that is, the economic base and the immanent specificities of the aesthetic.[112] Medvedev wants to preserve the uniqueness of the aesthetic 'language' whilst simultaneously insisting that such this language is, in reality, a re-iteration of a determining 'master' language that governs all phenomena. Neither Medvedev's insistence that, as a language, the aesthetic is social nor his strong emphasis on the historical development of this language are sufficient to overcome the manifest limitations of his crude base superstructure binary or his naive exemption of the aesthetic from any ideology. In the theory of Tynianov, Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum dialectical contradictions exist on the immanent level of any discursive art. For Medvedev, as with Bakhtin, the contradictions only arise through the juxtaposition of two distinct determinate genres, and the ontologies of positivist causal determinism and post-Kantian aesthetic unity co-exist alongside one another in unrecognised and decidedly unresolved tension.

Such a view, whilst undeniably topical in the Soviet 1920s, is entirely consistent with Shklovsky's contempt for 'translators' such as Bely, who hold that art is merely a window onto a posited metaphysical truth that lies beyond its material boundaries. Medvedev's own use of the term translation belies his conformity to the pattern of artistic creation derided by Shklovsky, and which Medvedev likely sees himself as overcoming. Medvedev's remarks on the task of literary criticism are particularly

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[112] I disagree with Shevtsova's assessment that *The Formal Method* provides an alternative to simplistic treatments of ideology and its use in cultural studies. 'An interpretation of Bakhtin/Medvedev that gives due weight to their explanation of form with respect to social evaluation, on the one hand, and to their separation of social evaluation from ideology on the other (any thought system is, in their view, an ideology), allows us to avoid the oversimplifications, at once conceptual and methodological, brought about by the idea of ideology in favour today' (Shevtsova 1990: 69). Shevtsova criticises then contemporary Marxists for their separation of ideology from the literary text, an error which merely replicates the form / content dualism. The alternative, for Shevtsova, is to celebrate *The Formal Method's* insistence that *all* determinations are socially situated. However, this argument does not address the text's endorsement of the base / structure dualism and its restaging of the aforementioned dualism. From the perspective of this analysis and its preoccupation with objective critique, Žižek's evolution of Marxist, Althusserian and Lacanian theories of ideology remains the most persuasive account of ideology, particularly with regard to its insistence that ideology amounts to a moment of mis-recognition. See (Žižek 2012: 1-30 and 296-330).

telling, and he makes the Belinskian demand that literary criticism informed by sociological poetics must serve as a guide for an author:

Competent and serious literary criticism must give the artist his 'social assignment' in his own language, as a poetic assignment. In an artistically developed culture, society itself, the reading public, will naturally and easily *translate* its social demands and needs into the immanent language of poetic craftsmanship. It is true that this is only possible under the comparatively rare conditions of complete class uniformity and harmony between the poet and his readers. But criticism, in any case, must be a competent *translating* medium between them (Medvedev 2000: 189-90; 1991: 36. Emphasis added).

By preserving the art work's extra-ideological, post-Kantian purity *and* that art work's unique ability to embody the epochal moment in a unitary aesthetic work, Medvedev is all too clearly maintaining the Bakhtinian line, whereby the aesthetic unites the human and the social with the material world of life and, like Bakhtin, brings a great deal of unacknowledged ideological baggage within his determinations of both life and art. It is particularly telling that Medvedev boldly declares his praise of dialectics because they resist normative and dogmatic definitions, yet he is clearly expounding a normative agenda here, be it for the literary critic or the writer, who must be finely attuned to the social demands of a given epoch. Medvedev does concede that there are epochs in history when the ruling class and artists have not understood each other. In such epochs, the authority is therefore unable to translate its social order into the language of art, effectively demanding a non-art of art. In response, so Medvedev argues, the artist does not understand life's social assignments and 'tries to fill them with formalistic experimentation or school exercises. But this happens only in epochs of sharp and deep social disintegration' (Medvedev 2000: 191-2; 1991: 36). As with Medvedev's crass appraisal of *Don Quixote*, there is the latent expectation that order and harmony are the pre-requisite of historical epochs and their historically grounded artworks. Accordingly, it is Medvedev, and *not* the Russian Formalists, who provides a profoundly anachronistic theory of literary art that lives outside of history. The modernity that Shklovsky and Vaginov proffer in *Zoo* and *The Goat Song* is a far more paradoxical trajectory than

the timeless sequence of restored moments of aesthetic harmony envisaged by Medvedev, who is bent on overcoming difference and alienation in the name of a harmonious correspondence between the aesthetic and its epochal enunciation. On the basis of his own 'sociological' poetics, Medvedev would likely argue that Shklovsky's and Vaginov's novels are exemplary of two artists who do not understand the social demand placed upon them, and therefore resort to 'formalistic experimentation' and 'school exercises' caused by deep social disintegration. Vaginov and Shklovsky, it would appear, are far more attuned to a modernity where such absolute statements on an epoch and its social culture are impossible.

V

In the 1930s and beyond, Bakhtin himself would turn and return to the question of genre and socially situated languages. Perhaps not unlike Medvedev, Bakhtin's treatment of genre maintains an inconsistent attitude to Formalism. In *Discourse and the Novel* [*Slovo v romane*], Bakhtin makes a qualified acknowledgement of Eikhenbaum's and Shklovsky's work on *skaz* and plot, which he broadly terms 'stylistics'.[113] Perhaps unsurprisingly, Bakhtin swiftly denigrates their work as being entirely inadequate to the genre of the novel, as it isolates particular elements from the novel as a whole (Bakhtin 2012: 19; 2004: 266). If indeed it needs repeating, Bakhtin understands the novel as a sight of interaction between discursive voices or, in other words, between different others.[114] Bakhtin demands a reappraisal of how

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[113] As already noted above, Renfrew has argued that Bakhtin's thought provides some unacknowledged convergences with the thought of Tynianov. Tihanov has also argued that Bakhtin's work exhibits some converges with Tynianov's and Shklovsky's thought, particularly Bakhtin's conceptualization genre and the concomitant relationship between art and life in *Discourse in the Novel*. Tihanov makes the bold claim that: 'The discovery of the spoken word and of everyday life in their relation to literature is of invaluable significance for the entire scene of literary and cultural theory in inter-war Russia, not least for Bakhtin's theoretical project. In the realm of literary theory, it can be matched only by the Formalists' path-breaking invention of the idea of immanent literariness' (Tihanov 2000: 132-6). As will be argued presently, Bakhtin's formulation of genre is indeed comparable to some aspects of Formalist theory, but the extent to which both share a similar understanding of the spoken word or 'voices' in literary art is by no means as direct as Tihanov appears to imply.
[114] As Brandist notes, Bakhtin understands the novel as being 'made up of a variety of social discourses or 'heteroglossia' [*raznorechie*], and sometimes it includes a variety of languages

poetic discourse is conceptualized, and attempts what he regards as a much needed reappraisal of poetic discourse that will no longer adhere to strict stylistic or rhetorical categories. For Bakhtin '[t]he novel is an artistic genre. Novelistic discourse is poetic discourse, but one that does not fit within the frame provided by the concept of poetic discourse as it now exists' (Bakhtin 2012: 23; 2004: 269). In contrast to novelistic discourse, Bakhtin implies that the Formalists' poetics is exemplary of a tendency in European culture to centralize and unify all verbal phenomena under the fold of a single language:

Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the poetics of the medieval church, of 'the one language of truth,' the Cartesian poetics of neoclassicism, the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz (the idea of a 'universal grammar'), Humboldt's insistence on the concrete—all these, whatever their differences in nuance, give expression to the same centripetal forces in sociolinguistic and ideological life; they serve one and the same project of centralizing and unifying the European languages. The victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement… all thus determined the content and power of the category of 'unitary language' in linguistic and stylistic thought, and determined its creative, style-shaping role in the majority of the poetic genres that coalesced in the channel formed by those same centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life (Bakhtin 2012: 24-5; 2004: 271).

In elaborating the properties of oppressive unitary languages, Bakhtin's argument provides a contrasting echo of the Philosopher sat on the train in Vaginov's novel: 'A unitary language is not something given [*dan*] but is always in essence posited [*zadan*]—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia' (Bakhtin 2012: 24; 2004: 270). For Bakhtin, the novel is the site where a conflict takes place between different world-views, different languages, and where the centralizing forces of unitary language are counteracted by dialogized heteroglossia. The novel is therefore an utterance's 'authentic environment' [*podlinnaia sreda*], where it 'lives and takes shape' [*v kotoroe zhivet i formiruetsia*] (Bakhtin 2012: 26; 2004: 272).   It would be wholly incorrect to claim that Bakhtin

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[*raznoiazychie*] and of individual voices [*raznogolositsa*]; all of these are organized artistically' (Brandist 2002: 115). It is the living stratification of these discourses which renders traditional stylistics (which of course, for Bakhtin, includes Formalism) totally unable to account for the novel in all its living social complexity.

has progressed from the world-view of the Philosopher in *The Goat Song*, where it is

the *world* that is posited and not given, to his position here where it is a unitary

language that is always posited, and never a given. Nevertheless, the difference

between these two utterances is instructive, in that it demonstrates how Bakhtin can

be seen as moving away from the unitary philosophical aesthetics articulated in 'The

Problem of Form, Material and Content' and Medvedev's *The Formal Method in*

Literary Scholarship, and would certainly appear to be exploring a far more nuanced

conceptualization of literary art and epoch than the crude base / superstructure

determinism advocated by Medvedev. After all, is not the base / superstructure

paradigm exemplary of a one universal truth in all socio-historical experience?

As Tihanov has noted, Bakhtin's choice of the novel genre as the best example of

an utterance's 'authentic environment' is arbitrary, and Bakhtin is effectively

elaborating an ethically informed conceptualization of modernity.   For Tihanov,

Bakhtin's exploration of the extra- and intra-generic, and the various relationships

between contrasting voices which exist in opposition to 'master' discourses, amount

to a programme for 'a rightful and unconditional reality' (Tihanov 2000: 147).[115] In

the above examples from the theory of Shklovsky, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum

critiqued across the pages of this analysis, it is apparent that these Russian

Formalists share a tendency with Bakhtin that allows their particular theoretical

constructs to permeate beyond the boundaries of art, granting it a constitutive role in

modernity itself. Whether it be the image of a steamship, the paradoxical properties

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[115] For another, if less satisfying, treatment of modernity through Bakhtin's concept of 'great time', see (Pechey 1993: 61-85). Brandist, in contrast, sees Bakhtin's adherence to moral and ethical ideals as a hindrance that prevented Bakhtin from engaging with modern institutions and their role in shaping modern culture: 'In the 1930s, when, in his central writings on the novel and popular culture, Bakhtin tried to deal with questions of historical change and to explore the politics of culture, he was continually hampered by the autonomous ethical philosophy that he was unable to jettison. Instead of turning his attention to the institutional context of culture, such phenomena as the development of an official language were transformed from political questions into inflated ethical concerns which transcend questions of social structure' (Brandist 1999: 237). However, it has been argued here that questions of institutional or social life cannot be separated from the particular methodological orientations of Kant, Hegel, the Formalists and Bakhtin. Bakhtin's failure to engage with institutional discourse in a *determinate* sense does not require that his early thought or his writing on the novel in the 1930s be seen as lacking in this regard.

of literary genres and the various functions they engender, or a programme for the authorial praxis in terms of cultural construction or dissident critique, the Formalist theory discussed here shares Kant's and Hegel's tendency to allow paradox, contradiction and emancipatory discourses of freedom to become constitutive of modernity itself. For the Formalists, it is the radical problem of objective *material* otherness which generates the problem of historicism and the concomitant problem of anachronism. One is an anachronism if one places oneself outside the dominant discourse of one's epoch, even if that very same insight renders a prevailing master discourse as a redundant anachronism that is incapable of adequately conceptualizing the very reality in which it is grounded. It is precisely by conceptualizing the aesthetic as ultimately other to itself that it retains the right to be a guarantor of freedom, *not* by a post-Kantian unity between the aesthetic and the natural world, but by asserting paradox and finitude as necessary conditions in order for freedom to be asserted. Yet, in order for literary art to be exemplary of modernity, it requires some determinate specificity as a particular element of the whole. Indeed, without this crucial and deeply paradoxical tension between literature and modernity, their whole project would fail.

Yet, despite these similarities between the Russian Formalists and Bakhtin in terms of their iterations of modernity, there remains a crucial and irresolvable difference between these two critical schools.[116] Whether it is termed stylistics, rhetoric or composition, the Formalists' interest in such questions as plot, narrative or device is, for Bakhtin, totally insufficient and will never facilitate an understanding of what he

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[116] Given the primary focus of this analysis is a reappraisal of Russian Formalism, a full exploration of Bakhtin's and the Formalists' treatment of similar theoretical ideas is beyond the scope of the present study. Even within the confines of *Discourse and the Novel*, Bakhtin hints at an alternative conceptualization of Tolstoy's engagement with his readers and the word's 'internal dialogism' that runs counter to Shklovsky's discussion of defamiliarization and Tolstoy in 'Art as Device' (Bakhtin 2012: 36; 2004: 283). Towards the end of the essay, Bakhtin's discussion of the lines of development in the European novel explicitly raises the question of defamiliarization with regard to conventional pathos, and touches upon *Don Quixote* and Sterne in a manner that recalls Shklovsky's early Formalist essays, and, as noted in the preface to this analysis, he also raises the depiction of stupidity and non-recognition in the passages devoted to the clown (Bakhtin 2012: 157-60; 2004: 402-5).

terms 'actual meaning' [*aktual´nyi smysl*]. In one of the more engaging paradoxes of

Bakhtin's thought, the 'actual meaning' of a word can only be conceptualized in

terms of its relationship to other words: 'The word lives, as it were, on the boundary

between its own context and another, alien context' (Bakhtin 2012: 37; 2004:

284).[117] Bakhtin insists that, for this word and the other 'alien' context to be actual,

they must be located in a living environment. The word must literally *live* in dynamic

interaction with other speakers. It is not sufficient to say that a given word or

discourse is directed or orientated towards a particular object, for '[t]he word is born

in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction

with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own

object in a dialogic way' (Bakhtin 2012: 33; 2004: 279).[118] The Formalist interest in

structure, plot, genre and device is held to be an interest in 'neutral significance',

that is, in a classification of literature and literary style that is not direct towards a

speaker. Bakhtin is adamant that '[w]ho speaks and under what conditions he

speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning. All direct meanings and

direct expressions are false, and this is especially true of emotional meanings and

expressions' (Bakhtin 2012: 156; 2004: 401).

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[117] It is particularly telling that Bakhtin's use of the term orientation [*ustanovka*] is sharply distinct from
its use by Tynianov. Bakhtin sees the term as designating the word's orientation towards a speaker
and that speaker's answer in everyday dialogue (Bakhtin 2012: 34; 2004: 280). As noted above,
Tynianov's dialectical conceptualization of the term moves from an everyday understanding of the
term towards a reconceptualization of an author's creative freedom as creative necessity. Necessity
for Tynianov is conceptualized as the objectifying properties of literary material that arise through
literature's impersonal and *functional* relationship with life; for Bakhtin, it is the necessary presence of
a living other with which any speaker's word can be engaged in dialogue.
[118] Brandist remarks that: '[t]erms such as 'monologue' and 'dialogue', for example, may seem
innocuous enough, but the sociological and philosophical loads that Bakhtin forces the concepts to
bear is [*sic*] quite unusual'. Accordingly, just what meaning Bakhtin intends by the term 'dialogue' is
appropriately unfinizable. Recent scholarship has tended to focus on Bakhtin's intellectual influences
to the extent that the meaning of a term such as 'dialogue' is seen as changing throughout Bakhtin's
career (Tihanov 2000: 197-202 and 213-4) (Poole 2001: 109-35). There is, I think, a consistent
tendency that runs from Bakhtin's first study of Dostoevsky through his work on the novel in the 1930s
and his later revisions of the *Dostoevsky* book, where dialogue denotes a historically grounded
speaker engaged in dialogue with another historically grounded speaker. It is in this sense that I
understand the term dialogue here.

This last quote, where it is an individual embodied speaker who grants the possibility of dialogic 'actual meaning', demonstrates an impasse between Bakhtin and Russian Formalism, for it is clear that Formalism's objective treatment of Gogolʹ's and Pushkin's *alienation* from their work, and, for that matter, Tynianov's concept of the literary personality, are clearly incompatible with Bakhtin's demand for an individual, historically grounded speaker in life itself. It is particularly striking that Bakhtin insists that it is the existence of a historically grounded individual and her words that is the necessary condition of the paradoxical properties of novelistic discourse and its emancipatory potential in modernity. As noted, Formalism does not deny the necessity of an individual author, but that author must be alienated from his work if their particular conceptualization of modernity and its many paradoxes is to function. It is important, however, not to lose sight of the fact that Bakhtin and the Formalists are arguing towards the same end here. Taken in isolation, Bakhtin's argument that direct meanings and direct expressions are false (particularly with regard to emotional feelings and expressions) could be taken from Shklovsky's warning against the laboratory of the creative personality, or Eikhenbaum's insistence on the device over authorial psychology in his essay on Gogolʹ's *The Overcoat*. Yet Bakhtin's much vaunted dialogism requires precisely the variety of engaged, responsible author which the Formalists reject outright as inadmissible in objective literary science.

In elaborating his concept of dialogue, Bakhtin is particularly insistent that it is *not* a compositional form that structures speech (Renfrew 2006: 143-5). Instead Bakhtin argues that the word itself, when located as a social utterance, is marked by an internal dialogism. This quality of the word permeates all elements of the word, be it semantics or the evaluation of expression. Any 'neutral' interest in the word divorced from its actual meaning completely ignores the element of internal dialogism that saturates the word. It cannot, Bakhtin argues, be isolated as a

structural feature, neither as a uniquely individual utterance, nor from its orientation

towards its concept. In contrast to what he sees as Formalism's (and the many

other branches of stylistics or 'poetics' he names) interest in a stylistics that

categorizes the neutral features of the literary work and plots their historical usage,

Bakhtin regards the question of style as a question of the word's dialogic trajectory:

> The word, directed toward its object, dialogically agitated and tension-filled
> environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of
> complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with
> yet a third group: and this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its
> semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic
> profile (Bakhtin 2012: 30; 2004: 276).

It is this internal relationship to the alien word or utterance that the word enters into

the 'positing of a style'. Style, so Bakhtin argues, is not the uniform and reified

requirements of lyric poetry or the classification of literary art, but rather the

intersection of various indices that 'reach outside itself, a correspondence of its own

elements and the elements of an alien context' (Bakhtin 2012: 36-7; 2004: 283-4).

Stylistics is, therefore, *not* the neutral discourse or unitary language that categorises

literary phenomena but is itself, no matter how 'monologic' its pretensions, a set of

living utterances that are riven with the same internal dialogism as the discourse of

the novel.[119] Style therefore manifests an 'internal politics', and the supposedly

immanent analysis of literary art is, in its *actual* meaning, a manifestation of the

literary work's relationship to another, alien discourse.   In its own way, Bakhtin's

radical re-conceptualization of stylistics is comparable to Shklovsky's

problematization of method in *Zoo*. In *Zoo* method spins out of human control and

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[119] I agree with Renfrew that Bakhtin's objections to 'traditional stylistics' are orientated towards
Russian Formalism. However, Renfrew is sees Bakhtin as ultimately unable to fully accept social
embodiment as the foundation of his own literary aesthetics: '[In *Discourse in the Novel*] Bakhtin
remains encumbered… by a broadly Romantic and Neo-Kantian allegiance to the unity of art and, so
to speak, the transferability of 'aesthetic activity''. Renfrew accordingly concludes that *Discourse in
the Novel* is a failure: '[it] postulates so vigorously the possibility of a system of genre that is able to
deal with the full range of literary production *and* the affective relationship between the literary and the
broader social environment, only to emphasize its own failure to flesh out such a system by falling
back into a conventional modal terminology' (Renfrew 2006: 145 and 151). I would contend,
however, that it is Medvedev's *The Formal Method* which is more encumbered by Neo-Kantianism
and that, in 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin offers the more viable critique of literature, its
environment, method and their paradoxical relationship with given historical contexts.

deprives all empirical phenomena of absolute certainty. Bakhtin is also de-absolutizing method here, depriving stylistics of any neutral meaning and insisting that it is one living dialogic discourse orientated towards an infinite number of other discourses. But, again, for Bakhtin it is the necessarily grounded nature of an utterance in a particular historical context and that utterance's unequivocally being uttered by a real living speaker that renders method subject to the internal dialogism. Method, for Bahktin, must be personal and human. For Shklovsky the feeling of propulsion in *Zoo…* is the sensation of the impersonal nature of objective method and its alienation from the human.

Epilogue

I

Kant brings the *Critique of Pure Reason* to a close with a beginning. He declares that the routes offered by scepticism and dogmatism are forever closed, and only the practice of critique provides a path towards the future. Kant encourages his readers to join him on this path in the hope that his path will expand into a highway. The grand objective is 'to bring human reason to full satisfaction in that which has always, but until now vainly, occupied its lust for knowledge' (Kant 1998: 704). Hegel 'ends' the *Phenomenology* by exulting in the dialectical tension active in Absolute Knowing, or, more specifically, the tension between History (the knowledge of all that has been before) and the return to the immediate moment of sense-certainty that requires a new beginning:

The *goal*, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their realm. Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; but regarded from the side of their [philosophically] comprehended organization, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance: the two together, comprehend History, form alike the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute Spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of his throne, without which he would be lifeless and alone (Hegel 1977: 493).

Both Kant's and Hegel's 'ends' make use of the device of the path. Such paths towards the future demand a meaningful engagement with the past. Kant's programme of critique entails critical engagement with what is in the 'now' and what has been; Hegel's Absolute Knowing requires that the philosopher (or rather 'phenomenologist') engage with the sensual immediacy of the present and recollect History's becoming towards the present *in* the present. These paths are exemplary moments of the Formalist preference for non-recognition, where the path exists on two planes of meaning simultaneously. It heads towards the future only as a direct movement towards the past. To revert to the terms of Shklovsky's well-known analogies, the 'path' is a paradoxical knight's move, a rocky road where the walker

struggles as she feels out her footing, and it is a dialectical materialism where 'yes' and 'no' exist simultaneously on the same page.

Over the pages of this analysis, the brainless theory of Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov has emerged as a radically objective aesthetics of literary art. Whether the formalists were preoccupied with devices, narrative, the categories of the grotesque and genre, or literature's problematic relationships with life and modernity, their work has been shown to provide literary studies with a paradoxical theory of contradictions that is adequate to an ethics of emancipatory critique across ever shifting historical contingencies. It is an objective aesthetics where the material world, material art and material modernity emerge in mutually constitutive inter-illumination. It is an objective aesthetics where neither 'art' nor 'life' can lay claim to the (falsely) superior status of causal principle. And it is an aesthetics where art is no longer tasked with the debilitating ideological burden of unifying the human subject's relationship with the natural world. Like Kant's and Hegel's paths toward the future, this Formalist variety of dialectical materialism (of which this current analysis is also an example) does not lend itself to reified conclusions. This epilogue is therefore not a 'summing up', a 'bringing together of strands' or a 'concluding remark'. It is rather undertaken on the basis that is an additional word (epi + logos) that looks back at this analysis and its present with a view towards a possible future. Hopefully, it will precede an infinite number of subsequent additions and (most important of all) contradictions.

II

Russian Formalism continues to provoke very interesting criticism. Some scholars who have published either predominantly or exclusively in Russian have provided very interesting accounts of Formalism and the Formalists in the 1920s and beyond.

Among others, Jan Levchenko, Aleksandr Dmitriev and Ilia Kalinin have provided stimulating studies of Formalism, albeit from a variety of analytical perspectives that do not accord with those of the current analysis.   As already noted, Rabaté argues that the only way out of the 'death' of theory is more theory. If Russian Formalism provides one of many possible determinate origins of literary theory, then the drive to more theory can only be enriched by more studies of Formalism.   The imperialist gesture would be to demand that their works are translated into English, and thereby enrich English language scholarship with these important contributions. I shall instead demand that English language scholars learn Russian and engage with their arguments. Quantitatively and qualitatively, the level of enrichment will be far greater.

However, as already stated the Russian Formalists provide useful words of caution with regard to how we map authors and their relationships with other authors, intellectual influences and historical contexts. An ethically committed dialectical materialism of the kind practiced by the Formalists is by definition engaged with the material reality of any given historical context, but the suggestion that that context had the capacity to determine what a particular author wrote is incompatible with such an ethically engaged critique.   Studies of Russian Formalism, I believe, will be of greater interest if they practice Formalist critique in addition to merely specifying its evolving content. The treatment of anachronism is, I think, of fundamental significance here, particularly if dialectical materialism is to be adequate to an ethics of emancipatory critique across ever shifting historical contingencies. This is neither a manifestation of 'theory' that avoids the grounding of abstract phenomena in a particular historical reality, nor is it a capitulation to the positivist demands of rigid historicism. It is, in the words of Rabaté, a literary theory that remains 'alert to its ethical, political, and historical responsibility' (Rabaté 2002: 141).

III

For Kant and the Formalists critiqued here, the path of historical responsibility has important implications for disciplinary praxis. Kant asked for full autonomy for the philosophy faculty; Shklovsky knowingly asks his younger followers to ransack the rector's study and sail past the window on their bicycles. Despite its limited offer of cathartic release, Shklovsky's ironic suggestion is not a practical solution to present difficulties. The vast majority of the thinkers critiqued here are of the view that scholarship benefits from a lack of restrictions. For Kant and the Formalists, it is in the interest of national and international cultures that a faculty (philosophical or otherwise) be encouraged to criticise, and be allowed free reign to critique what they will. If they are allowed to do so, those same national and international cultures will be allowed to emerge in their full oppositional and paradoxical richness. This will, however, not be accomplished by an overbearing insistence that academia is a 'world leading' domain of high seriousness that must be closed off to clowns and fools, and spared the ruthlessly parodying gaze of non-recognition. According to this Formalist (and potentially Bakhtinian) iteration of disciplinary labour, the hierarchies of academia must be problematized and constantly challenged. This is not asking that we jettison footnotes, archival research, and fidelity to texts in their historical specificity. The ethical demand here is that scholarly ethics can at least tolerate a clown in its midst and, after Bakhtin, entertain a conditions of possibility where the site of philosophical critique is Hegel's 'high' phenomenological throne and an altogether lower household device (Bakhtin 2010: 121-2, 345; 1984: 109,321).

If, for whatever reason, the contemporary scholar feels limited in any way, Formalist theory provides a productive means of contradiction with which to defamiliarize the automatized norms of the university and the burdens placed on contemporary

scholars.[120] As already stated, Formalism is not in any way dismissive of that which it seeks to negate. On the contrary, the effect of any moment of negation will be that much greater if the writer-critic-scholar has the fullest possible understanding of that which she is contradicting. The magnitude of the contradiction should not, however, be understood as amounting to the revolutionary overthrow of the academic hierarchy. Indeed, Formalism requires a certain iteration of the rector sat in his study if their whole critical praxis is to function. The scholar familiar with a Formalist variety of disciplinary activity is indeed free to contradict an established order whilst at the same time being seen to function within that order. The level of impact will be down to the particular situation in question.

IV

The above pun on Hegel's phenomenological throne is a facetious attempt to converge Hegel, Bakhtin's work on carnival and Formalism into one condensed image.[121] The comparison I have staged here between Kant, Hegel, Formalism and Bakhtin is just one possible path which such an analysis could have taken. It is my hope that in the future it will inspire further comparative analyses of these respective thinkers. The convergences and divergences between these thinkers critiqued across these pages offer an unlimited range of perspectives for future studies, which will hopefully provide an equally unlimited variety of methods and disciplinary practices with which to critique Soviet culture and the present contexts in which they happen to be situated. I hope such studies will be ethically engaged, delight in polemical contradiction, and even tolerate the odd brainless knight or clown.

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[120] On the difficulties and challenges of the British university, see (Fender 2011) and (Fuller 1999: 583-69). Fender laments that: 'Heralded as 'the seat of "academic freedom"' in the nineteenth century, it is now very difficult to see how the modern (that is, contemporary) university constitutes an arena for truly autonomous enquiry when it has become one of the most schematised institutions of our time, permeated increasingly by political, social and economic agendas (Fender 2011).
[121] An adequate account of Bakhtin's engagement with Hegel is beyond the scope of this study. However, for an extensive discussion, see (Tihanov 2000: 271-91).

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