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Russian Formalism as Journalistic Scholarship; or, When Criticism Recognized Itself as a Genre[1]

Original study

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Abstract: This article argues that Viktor Shklovsky and his allies' theory cannot be duly appreciated and understood without accounting for their engagement in journalism. The latter was both practiced and theorized by Shklovsky's group of the Russian Formalists, which stood out as a then rare combination of rigorous theory and extreme performativity. Accordingly, there was disagreement among the Formalists of Shklovsky's group. On one hand, they did not want the kind of criticism that is published in periodicals and holds sway over contemporary writers to be naïve banter—the Formalists would rather criticism recognize the literariness of literature and hew to the patterns and laws they discovered. On the other hand, the Formalists applied these literary patterns to their own writing, creative or not, which is why Shklovsky wrote that he was both a fish zoologist and a fish. Hence the Formalists' desire to make their scholarship and criticism performative. The conflict between rigor and performativity could be resolved only in a periodical, and while the Formalists, as this article explains, had a problem with issuing one fully of their own, Shklovsky's literary magazine *Petersburg* was a short-lived exception. This magazine is as little studied as it is largely important—for both the history and theory of Russian Formalism, as well as journalism per se, which in 1920s Russia was recognized as a new modus vivendi of literature in the Formalists' theory of factography (*literatura fakta*). The leading genre of factography was the feuilleton, and it is from this genre's standpoint that the article analyzes Shklovsky's Petersburg, and, in the second part, compares it with another literary magazine—the famous *The Library for Reading*, run by Osip Senkovsky, one of the prominent feuilletonists of the nineteenth century. The comparison of Shklovsky with Senkovsky as editors of these magazines makes it possible to appreciate both not as vivid exceptions but the very rule—a particular canon with its unique approach to culture that became relevant with the advent of fragmentation in our civilization and remains so to this day.

Keywords: Shklovsky, Senkovsky, journalism, factography, Russian Formalism.

As the Russian saying has it, an ichthyologist need not be a fish. One may hear this from musicologists who neither play nor compose music or from literary scholars who have never invoked the muses. In this regard, the famous trio of Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, and Boris Eikhenbaum is unique, since these Russian Formalists combined cutting-edge literary scholarship with creative and journalistic writing, so that Shklovsky's (1970, 239) credo applies to them all: "People say that one doesn't have to be a fish to become an ichthyologist. / As for

1 The first part of this article is partly based on my article published in Russian (2014).

me, I am a fish: a writer who analyzes literature as art."[2] A good example is Shklovsky's concern about the lack of plot-driven works in Russian literature. As a scholar, he addressed this problem in his *Theory of Prose*, analyzing Cervantes's and Conan Doyle's stories, thereby showing how lively plots can be constructed. As a magazine critic, Shklovsky promoted the Serapion Brothers—a new group of writers who created dynamic adventure stories (Shklovsky 1990, "Serapionovy brat'ia"].[3] Lastly, together with a Serapion, Vsevolod Ivanov, Shklovsky authored *Yperite*, an adventure novel with a highly intricate plot (Lvoff 2016).

Engaged in literary scholarship, Shklovsky, Tynianov, and Eikhenbaum were unusually self-aware writers. At the same time, their creative experience compelled them to be equally aware of *ars poetica* in both their work as scholars and critics. This awareness and their rejection of academic pedantry made the Formalists embrace "journalistic scholarship," or "the scholarship of magazines" (*zhurnal'naia nauka*), as Eikhenbaum (1987, 378) called it.[4] In fact, the Formalists paid as much attention and respect to critical articles and periodicals as they did to works of fiction.

The most popular journalistic genre at the time was the feuilleton. Similar to today's "talk-of-the-town" yet far more technically inventive, the feuilleton has a rich history, and the 1920s saw a boom of the feuilleton in Soviet Russia. Russian feuilletons of that time were characterized by a rather familiar and frivolous intonation; an artful juggling of several themes (the leading one initially hidden from the reader); and riveting, puzzling titles.

The Formalists contributed to the genre of the feuilleton in two ways. They were the first to study it, as evidenced in a 1927 collection of essays entitled *Feuilleton*, with a preface by Tynianov and Boris Kazansky. Secondly, Shklovsky, Tynianov, and Eikhenbaum created their own feuilletons. This genre allowed them to write about literature and contemporary culture in an unconventional and non-academic manner, as exemplified by Shklovsky's book *Knight's Move* (*Khod konia*), comprised of feuilletons. With time, Shklovsky and his colleagues from *The New LEF* literary journal developed the theory of factography (*literatura fakta*), reconsidering documentary and journalistic genres, particularly the feuilleton, as a new kind of literature.

On one hand, the Formalists brought scholarship, criticism, and creative writing together. On the other, they did not want these three to merge completely, lest the unique value of each should drop. There was disagreement concerning the matter among the Formalists. Eikhenbaum argued for a more scholarly criticism in the article "Criticism Is Needed" (1924, *Nuzhna kritika*). This was a reaction to impressionistic criticism prominent in the early twentieth century, when instead of inferring the meaning of a work from its organization, the critic would talk the work away for the sake of his personal impressions and thoughts. As a fellow Formalist, Tynianov (1977, 148) shared Eikhenbaum's aversion to impressionistic criticism, yet he maintained that "criticism must recognize itself as a literary genre," i.e., not only worry about what it says but also how it says it, and sound not like scholarship but find its own voice. Tynianov was guided in this by the Formalist principle of celebrating the medium's specificity, even if the medium at issue, criticism, was devoted to analyzing other media.

Eikhenbaum and Tynianov's debate concerned not only forms of criticism but also their mode of existence: the periodical. The Formalists craved a periodical of their own. Thus, Shklovsky (1990, 302) wrote to Tynianov: "What I dream of. A magazine with two thousand subscribers in which [we] would write and think everything through for ourselves." This dream did not come true for a number of reasons, including the Formalists' political unreliability and defiant aloofness from state ideology: that was enough for a periodical to be closed, as demonstrated by only four issues of the journal *Russkii sovremennik*, supported by Maxim Gorky himself, the three Formalists among its authors (Primochkina 1997). And yet a short-lived exception to everything that has just been said was Shklovsky's magazine *Petersburg*, significant if only because of its contributors: Akhmatova and Khodasevich, Tynianov and Lev Yakubinsky, Serapion Brothers Lev Lunts and Ilya Gruzdev, and others.

The following section of this article demonstrates that Shklovsky's magazine anticipated his theoretical take on factography. Furthermore, his magazine also anticipated a possible solution to Eikhenbaum and Tynianov's debate by fulfilling, on the level of an entire periodical, Tynianov's maxim of criticism as a literary genre. This was possible since Shklovsky's magazine stood on the verge of journalism and literature by outgrowing its informative function and acquiring an aesthetically valuable awareness of the unity of its own composition. The subsequent parts of this article will place Shklovsky's magazine in historical context, arguing that it continued the tradition of prominent nineteenth-century writer and journalist Osip Senkovsky.

MAGAZINE AS A FEUILLETON

Shklovsky published *Petersburg* only twice, in December 1921 and January 1922. This partially explains why

2 Whenever Russian Formalism is mentioned in this article, its Petrograd wing represented by the *Opoyaz* (The Society for the Study of the Theory of Poetic Language) is at issue. For a comparative study of Russian Formalist groups, see (Glanc 2015).

3 For a description of the Formalists and the Serapions' close ties, see Erlich (1981, Part I, chapter VIII, section 3).

4 All translations from Russian or English, unless noted otherwise, are mine.

Petersburg, albeit known to scholars, has long remained understudied.[5] Shklovsky must have wanted the magazine to carry on as evidenced by Eikhenbaum's feuilleton "Crocodile in Literature" prepared for the forthcoming issue, which did not take place (Timenchik 2017). However, in March of 1922 Shklovsky fled Russia, escaping arrest as a former member of the right wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (persecuted by the Bolsheviks), costing *Petersburg* its editor and publisher. Nevertheless, the two issues of this magazine will suffice to demonstrate the beginnings of Shklovsky's pronouncedly Formalist approach to journalism.

The periodical introduced itself as an "illustrated biweekly literature and popular science magazine." Its regular sections included: "Poems, short stories, and long stories (*povesti*). Articles on the problems of art. Articles on the problems of science and technology. Foreign news (*inostrannaia khronika*). Reviews (*bibliografiia*). Theater, Cinema, and Sports. Russian and foreign inventions. Fashion." The list of subjects demonstrates the diverse nature of the magazine. The first edition of *Petersburg* consisted of the poems of Anna Akhmatova and Vladislav Khodasevich; the stories of Marietta Shaginyan and Mikhail Slonimsky; the feuilletons of Tynianov and Mikh. Mikhailov;[6] reviews[7] and international news; a series of entertaining articles, including those under the rubric "Aviation, traveling, and sports"; a pinch of popular science, as in the article "Reproduction without Insemination"; and, finally, an illustrated section on fashion. While Akhmatova's poem at the beginning set a "high style" ("It is a lie, you don't have any rivals!" (*Nepravda, u tebia sopernits net!*)), the feuilletons in the center of the magazine set a "chitchat" tone, and the articles in the section about inventions and discoveries even read as yellow press at times. As a result, *Petersburg* had many voices; the inclusion of materials as far afield as literature and popular science marked its stylistic extremes.

Petersburg's diversity triggered an attack by poet and critic Sergey Bobrov. In a review signed "E. Bik," Bobrov attempted to explain away (the Formalists would say "motivate") *Petersburg's* thematic and stylistic diversity by claiming that the publisher only wanted to sell more copies—an aspiration hardly respectful in Soviet Russia, even in the days of the New Economic Policy. Bobrov (1922, 385) ranked Shklovsky among the "new merchantry."[8]

Petersburg was indeed intended to be financially successful. It could hardly be otherwise given the fact that it appeared in late 1921 when the Bolsheviks had just lifted the ban on private periodicals. There is little wonder why at the beginning and end of both issues *Petersburg* contained popular articles as well as paid announcements.[9] Upon closer inspection, though, it appears that turning profit was not the only reason for the eclecticism Bobrov imputed to Shklovsky's magazine. Bobrov was also irritated by *Petersburg*'s pretense to sophistication. Hence Bobrov's (1922, 385) caustic description:

> A lovely little magazine *Petersburg* that has "everything" in it—fashion (but not without judgments on matters of non-textile origin, lofty matters, and not without a quotation from Gogol); lyric poetry of Akhmatova, Khodasevich, and Pavlovich, sealed with the editor's assurances that "the beautiful poetry of Akhmatova is beautiful" and shame on those heads that dare doubt this Petersburg axiom;[10] and Shaginyan's sugary words about the brand-new genius of St. Pete Khodasevich; […] rouged little stories, not without a touch of [Alexander] Grin or written à la Leskov.

As it often happens, the opponent clearly saw the distinctive features of that which he criticized, but where he put a "minus," another could put a "plus." Bobrov was right: in Shklovsky's magazine, "lofty matters" were purposely mixed with lowly ones. Bobrov picked an apropos example, mentioning the section on fashion in which Gogol was cited. An extensive quotation ("*Peterburg*" 1921, 46) from the fashion column is in order:

5 Alexander Galushkin wrote about it in a one-paragraph comment to Shklovsky's work; in this short comment, however, he pointed out some key features of the magazine—cf. (Shklovsky 1990, 526–27). This article is deeply indebted to Galushkin's brief but pithy comment.

6 Mikh. Mikhailov, according to Masanov (1956), was the pseudonym of Mikhail Fedoseevich [Fedorovich] Doronovich. Masanov's entry is scanty and may contain errors. For detailed information about Doronovich, see (Krizhanovsky et al. 2018).

7 Shklovsky's reviews of contemporary literature published in *Petersburg* are not analyzed here: included in an authoritative edition (1990), they are well-known on their own and go beyond this article's argument.

8 The circulation of the magazine was ten thousand copies and its price, fifteen thousand rubles. To compare, a kilogram of rye flour in 1921 cost more than eight and a half thousand, a streetcar ticket five hundred, and an issue of *Pravda* two and a half thousand rubles (Belousov, Biryukov 2012). Since 1913 and by December of 1920, the inflation had increased thirty times. To read more about the literary everyday during the New Economic Policy, see (Clark 1996), "NEP and the 'Art of Capitulation'" (Kornienko 2011).

9 The price of an announcement before the text on the last page was twenty-five thousand rubles and fifteen thousand rubles if placed after the text.

10 Bobrov implies Shklovsky's review of Akhmatova's *Anno Domini*, in which Shklovsky ("*Peterburg*" 1922, 18) wrote: "Akhmatova's beautiful book is beautiful."

> In its modern shape, the cape resembles a kerchief that is gracefully thrown over the shoulder, in the manner of Spanish toreros. But it is necessary for it to have a style, elegance, and to drive an automobile instead of taking streetcars.
>
> "Fate gives splendid horses to one man and he drives in his carriage without noticing their beauty, while another who is consumed by a passion for horses has to go on foot, and all the satisfaction he gets is clicking with his tongue when trotting horses are led past him. […] What strange pranks Fate plays with us!" (N. V. Gogol. *Nevsky Prospekt* (1985 , 237–38))
>
> I think that Gogol, while writing these lines, was not very fashionably dressed even though at that time fashion plates were published in all thick magazines.[11]

What this juxtaposition seems to suggest is that the one who wishes to be fashionable will succeed, even if this person does not own an automobile or pedigree horses. More importantly, this excerpt testifies to the abovementioned mixture of styles in *Petersburg*: a respectable subject (Gogol) is suddenly mentioned in the fashion section (philistine by Soviet standards), and frivolously at that. This excerpt also shows how literature plays cameos in the non-literary sections of *Petersburg*.

The second issue of *Petersburg* proves that this was not a coincidence. The column on fashion opens with an observation: albeit cut off from European *haute couture* during the World War and the Civil War, Russian fashion displayed similar tendencies, so the columnist ("*Peterburg"* 1922, 33) concludes: "Our tastes developed and changed according to the same laws despite the assertions made by the haters of fashion who believe that women's fashion is random." The significance of this passage in *Petersburg* can be seen if one compares it with Shklovsky's feuilleton "The Islanders' Pining" (*Toska ostrovitian*) in the same issue.

Shklovsky sets out by discussing fashion, saying that ordinary women in 1912 used to wear narrow ankle-length robes even though this prevented them from getting on streetcars. He also writes about the producers of automobiles who had to remold their car bodies to prevent women from breaking the then-fashionable head-plumes on their hats. This brings Shklovsky ("*Peterburg"* 1922, 15) to the following conclusion: "Fashion may not comply with the technological conditions of the time; it may be uncomfortable but take hold nonetheless, adapting life to itself instead of adapting to life"; "The history of art is the history of arbitrariness." This last statement comes directly from Russian Formalist theory, which, to simplify it, insists that art's evolution is determined by its own immanent laws and not by social circumstances. Thus, hats and robes only shrouded Formalist literary theory, while the feuilleton written by *Petersburg's* editor-in-chief and the feuilleton-like fashion column stood as a witty paraphrase of Formalist tenets.[12] Shklovsky (1990, 361) himself noted that the feuilleton was ideal for such maneuvers as a genre that "consists usually of two or three themes."

Other feuilletons published in *Petersburg* show how the genre transformed the magazine's format. The most vivid examples are a feuilleton by Mikh. Mikhailov and a feuilleton by Tynianov (published under pen name "G. Montelius"). Mikh. Mikhailov's feuilleton is entitled "'Hold It'" (*Obozhdi*). At the beginning, he writes ("*Peterburg"* 1921, 18): "The man of today knows firmly […] what is really going on." This statement is then supported by multiple arguments (ibid.) including: "Waters were divided from the land, and the firmament or the visible heavens rounded the horizon. It is possible to cross the Atlantic Ocean on an airplane." At last, the feuilleton's title is explained (ibid.): "Life is taking shape and wants to be as clear and distinct as the letters on a shop window: 'Hold it! Worn shoe soles repaired here!'" After this, the main theme is introduced: writers. It happens unexpectedly, however, which is typical for this genre. Mikh. Mikhailov (ibid.) writes: "People repair worn shoe soles while the Volga River flows into the Caspian Sea: the writer writes." The rest of the feuilleton for the most part is devoted to various writers, primarily Andrei Bely and Shklovsky.

If read not separately but together, both "'Hold It'" and the magazine appear in a different light: the entire first issue of *Petersburg* seems as though it is one gigantic feuilleton. Reading *Petersburg*, one may learn about someone who crossed the Atlantic Ocean in an airplane (section on "Aviation, traveling, and sports"); then, reading the news section, one will "know[] firmly […] what is really going on"; then one will read about various writers, ending up with paid announcements, not so different from those that advertise mending worn shoe soles. Thus, Mikh. Mikhailov's feuilleton amalgamates the voices of *Petersburg*, allowing them to resonate with each other. Placed at the center of the issue, this feuilleton unifies the magazine much more than an editorial would, and it should be noted that there are none in *Petersburg*.

Another example from the same issue that shows how the texts of *Petersburg* echo each other is Tynianov's feuilleton "About a Baby Elephant" (*O slonenke*),

11 The articles on fashion in both issues are published without any signature; the article in no. 1 is clearly written on behalf of a woman.

The same word is used in Russian for magazines and journals (the latter, in the sense of a periodical): *zhurnal*. Instead, there is a distinction made between the thick and the thin *zhurnal*. As a reminder of the journalistic, rather than academic, nature of *zhurnal* as seen by the Formalists, the word "magazine" is used in this article.

12 Bobrov (1922, 385) noticed it, adding that it damaged the magazine's marketability: "Indeed, 'opoyazian' playing smart did harm to our entrepreneurs."

signed "G. Montelius." Tynianov's feuilleton ("*Peterburg*" 1921, 20) also starts off by astounding the reader with strange generalizations: "Before the war, we did not think about the West, we did not know the West"; "Then [followed] the war; a dot on the map got littered with little flags," but "again neither the West nor we needed each other"; "And now just give it a try, poke your finger at the map, and it will turn out to be… Bielefeld or… Civitavecchia. / They are necessary. […] Everything became essential, most dear; all people are dear; Europe is dear"; "But two Europes appeared: one we have made up for ourselves […] while the other is real, for all that." At this point, Tynianov (ibid.) changes the theme: "The West has endured much. […] But only not the North. / And here is a caution: if you are speaking about the West, don't think the West includes the North. […] No, the North is busy with something else. What are people now busy with in Copenhagen? / A baby elephant. / I will tell about a baby elephant." We then read about a baby elephant that everyone adored until one day it suddenly "ran amok and began to attack people" (ibid.). Eventually, scientists diagnosed the elephant with a rare disease and decided to kill it in order to examine the body before the disease cleared up; in the meantime, a portion of society protested. "What happened next," Tynianov (ibid.) writes, resorting to Gogol's trademark device, "is unknown to me, but my inner voice is telling me that… that the baby elephant is alive. The tussle between the factions is far from over. The baby elephant is alive." In addition to this, Tynianov (ibid.) mentions the two Swedes who "hooked the same fish" and would not share it, so there was "new paperwork to fill out—[concerning] whom the fish belongs to"; in the end, while people were arguing over the ownership of the fish, and even getting Professors N and Z to participate in the debate, "the fish had become rotten." Right after this, Tynianov (ibid.) suddenly repeats: "But… the baby elephant is alive." Finally, in the last section of the feuilleton the author (ibid., 21) asks that "Copenhagen and Stockholm, and the baby elephant, as well as the two Swedes, and even all the Swedes in general, and also the Danes" forgive him for "laying it on thick in this true story"—after which he reiterates: "But if you ask me: / Well, but what about the North? / I will answer with the same certainty: / The baby elephant is still alive."

Tynianov's feuilleton is a riddle. This makes it "incorrect," or rather written contrary to the norms of the feuilleton of the time, i.e., without a clue that would satisfy the curiosity of the intrigued reader. But, just as the feuilleton of Mikh. Mikhailov, Tynianov's is clearer if read in the context of the whole magazine. This may sound like an exaggeration, but after reading the entire issue of *Petersburg*, including Tynianov's feuilleton, one may ask: how different is the story about the baby elephant, the two Swedes, and some godforsaken Professors N and Z, etc. from the story of equally unknown Western professors who tried rejuvenating old men by implanting sex glands into them (the article "On Rejuvenation")? Or is it somehow more exotic than the story of tadpoles being born from a frog's egg pricked with a sterile needle (as the author of "Reproduction without Insemination" claims)?

If all of this reads as madness, the madness is then generic, having to do with the genre of miscellany—short, entertaining, and often shocking multi-authored materials usually found at the end of a periodical, and not much different from the mixture of geopolitics and ufological nonsense found in modern tabloids, so that an avid reader of this sort of literature could repeat after Gogol's (n.d., 110–111) madman Poprishchin: "[W]hen I considered the matter well, I ceased to be astonished. In fact, such things have already happened in the world. It is said that in England a fish put its head out of water and said a word or two in such an extraordinary language that learned men have been puzzling over them for three years, and have not succeeded in interpreting them yet." Why, not long ago, in 2014, at a place none other than Copenhagen Zoo giraffe named Marius was killed and fed to lions where children could see it.

Lineage—miscellany in journalism and Gogol in literature—does not exhaust Tynianov's feuilleton of course, and much remains in the subtext. Thus, one may assume that the elephant is an allegory of Tynianov's contemporaries who survived the Russian Revolution and the Civil War. This resonates with the public letter in which Shklovsky (1990, 146) called on Roman Jakobson to return to post-revolutionary Russia: "The animals are leaving their arks: the unclean ones open cafés. / The remaining pairs of the clean ones publish books. / Come back. / Without you, there is a good, merry animal lacking in our zoo (*zverinets*)."[13] The elephant may also be an allegory of Russia, but it seems that there is yet another important message in the text.

The story is not so much about the elephant as it is about Russia's inability to tear her eyes away from the West. Tynianov is being ironic when he implies that all he and his contemporaries know about the West is limited to an awareness of the existence of places such as Bielefeld and Civitavecchia. At the same time, as if to mock the spurious knowledgeability of Russian armchair experts (Ilf and Petrov later ridiculed these in *The*

13 For a country with a centuries-long tradition of censorship, Aesopian language is as common as Aesopian characters. The Formalists were fond of animalistic metaphors. A vivid example is Shklovsky's novel *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, which has as its epigraph Velimir Khlebnikov's poem "Menagerie," full of animalistic comparisons with the realities of this world. In *Zoo,* Shklovsky also writes about the menagerie of Russian littérateurs in emigration and compares himself with a caged ape. As for the metaphor of an elephant, Shklovsky employed it in his book *The Third Factory*, in the chapter "O krasnom slonike," devoted to lack of freedom. See also Shklovsky's article "Siuzhet i obraz" (Shklovsky 1990): in it, Shklovsky discusses a scene from Valentin Kataev's novel *Time, Forward!*, in which a circus elephant breaks loose during the storm.

Golden Calf as piqué vests), Tynianov asserts that the West should by no means be confused with the North.

Finally, there is one more layer in the feuilleton: the half-fabulous stories Tynianov, or rather G. Montelius, tells resemble those brought from abroad by mariners during the Age of Discovery.[14] Tynianov develops the theme of Russia's great curiosity about what is taking place overseas in his article entitled "Notes about Western Literature" (*Zapiski o zapadnoi literature*), published around the same time as "About a Baby Elephant" in *The Book Corner* (*Knizhnyi ugol*) magazine, also under a pseudonym, this time that of Yu. Van-Vezen. In his introduction, Tynianov (1977, 124) writes: "My notes about the West will be very similar to the letters of one blind man to another about colors—blue, yellow, and red." Then, the article deals with Spengler, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and, lastly, the "*ambassadeurs*" (*ambassadery*) (writers such as H. G. Welles, Gorky, Romain Rolland, and others, who gladly embraced their role of public figures).

Instead of speaking in his own voice, Tynianov creates a stylized author with a stylized voice—the device the Formalists recognized as *skaz*. The same technique is found in the feuilleton about the elephant as the fragments cited above demonstrate. There is yet another similarity between Tynianov's two texts: in the same way as the feuilleton about the elephant, "Notes" is written as a "cock and bull" story. However, unlike the reader of the feuilleton about the elephant, the reader of "Notes" is given a motivation of such peculiarities. Tynianov states in his introduction that he fruitlessly sought for an apt style in which to write about the West until he chanced upon a work that became his model: *A Journal of Travels in Germany, Holland, and Italy in the Years 1697–1699*. As in that journal, Tynianov's notes are enumerative; the small details are listed together with the large ones, because travelers who find themselves in perfectly uncustomary surroundings cannot systematize what they see, which is why they describe everything they encounter without exception, lest they lose sight of something important. This kind of listing is very close in its narrative manner to the feuilleton about the elephant. Yet while Tynianov's "Western" feuilleton stands out compared to other articles in *The Book Corner*, his feuilleton "About a Baby Elephant" reads as an epitome of *Petersburg*, whose thematic and stylistic structure is equally distinguished by *concordia discors*. Again, the magazine itself turns into a feuilleton.

It is hard to say whether the all-pervasive unity of *Petersburg* was entirely the effect of Shklovsky's careful editorship or also serendipity (in such cases, the Formalists would judge the outcome rather than guess whether it was supposed to be such), but there is no doubt that he kept this experience in mind when writing his 1924 article on the theory of journalism, "The Magazine as a Literary Form" (*Zhurnal kak literaturnaia forma*). A magazine, Shklovsky (1990, 386) claimed, "must hold together not only through the interest in its independent parts but also by the interest in their relationship. The easiest way to achieve this is with an illustrated magazine born on the editor's workbench. A picture and a caption add up here to something new, something connected. Unfortunately, we have very few masters in the art of 'small' magazines."

In writing this, Shklovsky referred to the famous Soviet magazine *The Crocodile* (appearing in 1922) as a perfect example in its use of pictorial materials. Of course, *Petersburg* does not compare with *The Crocodile* as an illustrated magazine, but *Petersburg* still defined itself as a pictorial and contained some illustrations.[15] What matters most, however, is not the extent to which *Petersburg* was illustrated but rather its compositional unity. It could even be said that the popular articles played the role of pictures in *Petersburg* while the feuilletons served as captions, as well as a link between such "pictures" and the text of the "serious" sections of the magazine: poems, prose, and reviews. As editor, Shklovsky took advantage of the feuilleton's ability to bring together heterogeneous materials.

Aage A. Hansen-Löve (2001, 522) elaborates on the Formalists' theories of journalism, saying that for them the magazine was a "'supermontage' in which the texts that are autonomous as such assume specific positional significance whose immanent structure is unlocked with a context-based 'key.'"[16] The feuilleton is such a key to *Petersburg*. The magazine reads differently after the riddles of the feuilletons written by Tynianov, Shklovsky, and Mikh. Mikhailov have been solved.

This means that the merit and the attribute of a magazine (or a newspaper), when seen from the Formalist perspective, lie not in its individual articles, however original, but in the principle of their linkage. The definition that Shklovsky (1929-B, 226) gave to a work of literature fully applies to the periodical: "A literary work is […] a relationship of materials."

Petersburg attests to Shklovsky's talent and ingenuity not only as a critic but also as a journalist who sensed the formal features of the medium of any criticism: the periodical. However, to give Shklovsky his due as a journalist, it is necessary also to consider the tendencies that *Petersburg* developed in the history of Russian literary journalism.

WHEN HISTORY RHYMES

Literature's evolution was the cornerstone of Formalist theory; the logic behind the Formalists' micro- and macroanalysis of literature was the same: the function of a device, as well as a device's novelty or obsolescence, can only be figured out within the context of the work;

14 The Age of Discovery is a recurrent theme in Shklovsky's writing, including his book on Marco Polo (Dwyer 2016).

15 Shklovsky writes about his method for sorting out illustrations in "Podpisi k kartinkam" (1928, 128).

16 To read more about the principle of montage in Formalist theory, see Oushakine (2016).

likewise, the significance of a work can only be recognized in the context of literary history. Meanwhile, the Formalists objected to the understanding of a national literature's history as a progressive development of the same tradition handed down from one author to another. They argued that instead of a single national tradition, there is an ongoing family feud of many artistic canons, constituting the history of a national literature; and that literature does not develop linearly but—much like an empire—is a conglomerate of multifarious processes, asynchronical, heterogenous, and of varying influence, all of them, nonetheless, governed by certain laws or patterns inherent in the system of literature. As importantly, the Formalists ascribed the same evolutionary dynamic they found in literature to literary scholarship and journalism. It is only natural that early on the Formalists questioned their own place in history. As critics and literary journalists, they were inclined to see their evolutionary predecessors among Russian literati of the first third of the nineteenth century—the Golden Age of Russian literature.

The Formalists drew parallels between themselves and nineteenth-century critics as if in jest. Thus, Tynianov (Jakobson 1979, 567) wrote in his half-humorous epistle to Pushkin: "You had your / Arzamas, / We had our / Opoyaz, / Literature included (*Byl u vas / Arzamas, / Byl u nas / Opoyaz / I literature*)."[17] Despite the playful intonation, the comparison itself, as Efim Kurganov (1998, 568) writes, was rather serious:

> The comparison of the OPOYAZ with the Arzamas was not random.
>
> It was rooted in the general attitude of the entire trio of Tynianov–Shklovsky–Eikhenbaum.
>
> By defining the role of Viktor Shklovsky in the OPOYAZ, Boris Eikhenbaum actually […] spoke about the mission of this society, […] once again revealing its vocation through the Arzamas: "There was a time when Shklovsky threatened the old generation of the Russian intelligentsia with the OPOYAZ—precisely as one hundred years ago, when the future Russian 'classics' threatened the academicians and the Shishkovians with their Arzamas."[18]

According to Kurganov (ibid.), these two literary societies played the same role as a platform for quick-witted critics who would attack the academic scholarship of their day with irreverent gaiety.[19] Kurganov (ibid., p. 572) shows that "the ambience of the OPOYAZ was just permeated with [the spirit of] Pushkin's time" and that every of the three leading Formalists was assigned his role in this masquerade:

> Among OPOYAZ members, there was a distinct feeling of an overlap of Tynianov and Shklovsky with Pushkin and Vyazemsky—an overlap in personalities but above all else in terms of their cultural orientation. For the OPOYAZ, Shklovsky was Vyazemsky in the sense of being a kind of a troublemaker, a sophisticated artist of literary carnage, a ringleader, a forward.

However, while this may be true of the place that Shklovsky occupied in the literary struggle of the 1920s as an independent critic, the things Shklovsky did as *Petersburg's* editor-in-chief are reminiscent of a rather different individual: Osip Senkovsky, editor-in-chief and publisher of the famous *The Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*). This literary magazine would be attacked by many eminent intellectuals of the day including Vissarion Belinsky (it will be seen why from its description), yet *The Library* became one of the great milestones in the history of journalism as Russia's first mass magazine.

Before more is said about Shklovsky and Senkovsky, it is important to stress: Shklovsky is not compared here with Senkovsky *as such*—just as he was never compared with Vyazemsky *as such*. Each time such parallels are drawn, they should be based solely on the specific aspects of what Shklovsky and his historical prototypes (or *figurae*, as Auerbach would say) did at a certain moment in their lives and epochs. According to Formalist

17 The famous Arzamas comprised Alexander Pushkin, Vasily Zhukovsky, Peter Vyazemsky, and other eminent littérateurs of the day.

18 In the quoted excerpt, Eikhenbaum compares the literary struggle of the first decades of the nineteenth century with that of the first decades of the twentieth. For a more extended comparison of the two periods, see Tynianov (1929).

19 The notion of gaiety [*veselost'*] was crucial to how Shklovsky, Tynianov, and Eikhenbaum understood their role as littérateurs (Lvoff 2017). Marietta Chudakova (Tynianov 1977, 462) writes in her commentary to Tynianov's works that "for Tynianov and his companions it was a matter of principle to define their scholarly and critical activity as 'merry.'" Chudakova (ibid.) notes that this "semantics might date back to a very influential speech of A[lexander] Blok 'On the Poet's Calling,' in which the word 'merry' [*veselyi*] is used to characterize Pushkin and his literary cause." Chudakova also mentions Nietzsche's *Gay Science* with regard to Blok. Indeed, the Formalists approached literary scholarship as unconventionally and with as much frivolity as Nietzsche approached philology and philosophy. The typological connection with Nietzsche will become apparent should one apply to the Formalists the criticism Wilamowitz-Möllendorff leveled at Nietzsche in "Future Philology!," reproaching him for the lack of academism. Aage A. Hansen-Löve also draws on Nietzsche when writing about the gaiety of Formalist scholarship; he interprets it as a manifestation of what Mikhail Bakhtin defined as the Carnivalesque (Hansen-Löve 2001, 440–46; Kujundžić 1997).

theory, the evolutionary role an author plays in literature is not tantamount to his or her biographical persona and individual inclinations. This evolutionary role is determined by the literary effects of the author's method. Unbeknown to the author, these effects may often run counter to his or her inspirations. In addition, the same author may perform not just one but many evolutionary functions, especially when highly gifted. Shklovsky and Senkovsky are, therefore, compared as editors—editors of two particular periodicals. Meanwhile, if Shklovsky's theory of factography were discussed, then a comparison with Pushkin would be necessary; in fact, Shklovsky (1927) drew it himself when writing about Pushkin's magazine *The Contemporary* in an eponymous article. To sum up in Shakespeare's (1994, 622) words, Formalist wisdom was that "one man in his time plays many parts."[20] The Formalists' theory of literary evolution can certainly be debated, but in this article it is taken as an axiom upon which the Formalists acted, thereby turning their doctrine into a self-fulfilling prophecy, which gave their ideas "cash value," to use William James's term.

When Senkovsky's and Shklovsky's magazines are compared, it becomes apparent that the dominant principle of both is that of the feuilleton: miscellaneous materials are promiscuously put together, deprived of their autonomy and arbitrarily cast by the magazine in its own mold. This said, the magazines were inclusive in different ways. *The Library*'s inclusiveness was encyclopedic. Veniamin Kaverin (1966, 86), a Serapion Brother and author of a dissertation and book on Senkovsky, wrote that "the encyclopedic nature of *The Library for Reading* was noted by every contemporary who had written about it." By contrast, the contents of Shklovsky's *Petersburg* were more kaleidoscopic than encyclopedic. Still, the observation Shklovsky (1966, 265) once made about a colleague of his applies to both *Petersburg* and *The Library*, which indeed can be called magazines of "strange and unexpected facts" (*strannykh i neozhidannykh znanii*). It should be kept in mind of course that *The Library for Reading* was a thick magazine while *Petersburg*, a thin one, although perhaps *Petersburg* should be defined as "thick-thin" (as Shklovsky called the journal *LEF*), i.e., relatively small and without the veneer of academism, yet with intellectually challenging articles for advanced readers and its own strategy for the literary field (Shklovsky 1990, 387). At any rate, Bobrov was not rash at all when he accused *Petersburg* of being a hodgepodge.

However, neither *The Library*, despite its encyclopedic nature, nor *Petersburg*, with its patchiness, felt disjointed. These were real magazines, not merely collections of texts, because each had its own unifying principle, its tenor, which has already been illustrated in the case of *Petersburg*. As for *The Library*, it received its thematic and stylistic integrity as a "result of the energetic activity of the editor" in all sections of the magazine, as Valentin Nedzvetsky and Galina Zykova (2008, 72) observe. It is a well-known fact, for example, that Senkovsky not only edited but would also rewrite the texts published in his magazine. In addition, he took liberties with translated works, as with Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, which Senkovsky shredded numerous times, burdened with edifying and arrogant footnotes, and even furnished with a happy ending. At the same time, Senkovsky paid no less attention to sections on the "Sciences and Arts" and "Industry and Agriculture," profusely contributing to them.

It has to be noted that belles-lettres was not the most important part of the magazine for Senkovsky. Rather, it was essential that a good magazine have it (Shcherbakova 2005). Tynianov, too, wrote about this characteristic of Senkovsky's, whom he made one of the characters in *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar*—a novel about the writer and diplomat Alexander Griboedov. The following excerpt is illustrative. Senkovsky says to Griboedov: "Let us establish a magazine—I would be your contributor. Travels, articles on science. Foreign novels for fools" (Tynianov 1985, 70). The situation with *Petersburg* was different: the science section was weak (it is hard to say whether the editor planned on developing it), but it was not belles-lettres either that made the magazine stand out.

Belles-lettres had to make way for unity. Senkovsky's interference in *The Library* was so great, Kaverin (1966, 124) says, that he "in a way wrote the entire magazine himself—from the first to the last line, from the epigraph to the last phrase, from the title to the footnotes and fashion plates." All this, Kaverin (ibid.) concludes, "gave *The Library for Reading* such profound unity of organization that no other Russian magazine had." Accordingly, Galina Shcherbakova (2005, 229) considers the structure of Senkovsky's magazine "analogous to the composition of a literary work, […] with rising action and peripeteias, […] with a climax," etc. Meanwhile, it has already been shown that the same is true of Shklovsky's *Petersburg*, compositionally analogous to the feuilleton. The great compositional unity of the two magazines was thus the result of their ability to recognize themselves as a genre.

This also affected the quality of literary criticism in *The Library for Reading* and *Petersburg*. Though Senkovsky and Shklovsky had very different approaches to criticism, the articles they both wrote in their magazines were self-valuable.[21] That is to say, these articles were

20 This also serves as a response to Veniamin Kaverin (1988, 63), who first compared Shklovsky with Senkovsky only to write later that he "should not have called Shklovsky 'the Senkovsky of our time'" because "there was no resemblance between them save for biting paradoxes." The lack of personal resemblance does not preclude a functional comparison of Shklovsky and Senkovsky as editors.

21 Unlike the Formalists, Senkovsky favored impressionistic literary criticism and believed that the critic's only criterion should be personal taste. "Criticism in our time has become the image of individual sensations […] Any rules are absolutely out of the question," he (Kaverin 1966, 172) wrote.

written not only to inform the reader but also to be perceived as works of art. The feuilletons from *Petersburg* bear witness to the fact. As for Senkovsky, Nedzvetsky and Zykova (2008, 71) point out that under his pen "literary criticism" in *The Library* was "turning […] into self-valuable humorous prose."

The word "humorous" marks another fundamental feature of the journalism of Senkovsky, or rather Baron Brambeus, his famous alter ego in *The Library*.[22] The feuilletons written for *Petersburg* are also humorous by definition, by virtue of the feuilleton's construction. This does not mean that such feuilletons are necessarily laughable. Yet humor should be understood here in its older sense when, after denoting the four bodily fluids in ancient medicine, the term began to be associated with something whimsical—as when somebody indulges in one of the four humors instead of keeping them in balance. Thus, used as a synecdoche for imbalance, humor assumed a sense of something comical. But imbalance need not be a medical and particularly psychological notion; it may also be geometrical, so to speak. Approached from the Formalist perspective (Shklovsky 1922) humor as imbalance is susceptible of purely structural analysis. What matters then is not laughter or the absence thereof (the psychological aspect), but that humor in the feuilleton is a "whimsical" combination of discordant things, resulting in eccentric intensity. The feuilletons discussed above are humorous as they match the unmatchable and juggle their readers' expectations.[23]

Furthermore, Nedzvetsky and Zykova (2008, 75) insist that "the playful character of [Senkovsky's authorial] behavior is apparently closer to twentieth-century culture than that of the serious nineteenth century." It can be said that Senkovsky and Shklovsky were contemporaries, in the sense that they were children of the "Age of the Feuilleton," as Herman Hesse (1969, 18) put it in his novel *The Glass Bead Game*. But here is how Senkovsky (1989, 36) himself described the "Age of the Feuilleton":

> [Y]ou yourselves are clever people and know that we live in a fragmentary age (*otryvochnyi vek*). Gone are the times when a person lived for eighty years with one life alone, thinking one long thought alone for eighteen volumes. Now our life, mind, and heart consist of tiny, variegated, and disjointed fragments—and that is far better, more diverse, pleasing to the eye, and even cheaper. We think in fragments, exist in fragments, and will crumble into fragments.

Shklovsky could have put his signature below these words.

THE RUSSIAN STERNIANS

Yet Senkovsky, however ingenious in his feuilletons, was not the first one to introduce this kind of wit into Russian literature and journalism. The source of the new constructive solutions was Laurence Sterne's "cock and bull" storytelling, and Senkovsky was not the only Russian author to fall under his spell. Here is how Eikhenbaum (1924, 140) described this tradition:

> With such acute attention to narrative techniques, it is natural to expect the emergence of a peculiar way of playing with [literary] form—laying bare narrative conventions, the comic interference of the reader, and the purposeful retardation of the plotline with various interpolations and digressions—i.e., all that is commonly called 'Sternedom' (*sternianstvo*) and always reoccurs in the periods of abandoning the old, clichéd, forms and of devising new ones. Indeed, we find these kinds of devices in abundance in Russian belles-lettres of the late [18]20s and the early [18]30s.

If so, Shklovsky was no less of a Russian Sternian than Senkovsky. Not only did Shklovsky "resurrect" Laurence Sterne for the Russian reader as a great but in Shklovsky's time poorly read writer, simultaneously reintroducing him to the literary scholarship of his day—Shklovsky (1990, 141) himself belonged to "Russian Sternedom," as he called it. To write in this way was Shklovsky's natural predisposition, but, as Emily Finer (2010) writes, Shklovsky began to emulate the great Englishman while studying him. This may be seen in Shklovsky's essay on Vasily Rozanov, entitled "Literature without a 'Plot'" (*Literatura vne "siuzheta"*). First, Shklovsky (1929-B, 230) mentions Sterne and then, with liberty hardly admissible in a scholarly paper, writes: "In accordance with the

22 It looks as though Senkovsky's pen name Baron Brambeus and Tinianov's pen names G. Montelius and Yu. Van-Vezen have a common predecessor: an adventure novel hero and a fabulous storyteller akin to Baron Münchausen.

23 Thus, one of the authors of the aforementioned *Feuilleton* collection, Evgeniya Zhurbina (1926, 31), explained the structure of the often not-so-witty Soviet feuilletons as the remnant of the play of wit that historically characterized the genre. She wrote: "The orientation towards the 'willful pen' (*igra pera*), towards giving a complex riddle with a witty answer, was replaced by the juxtaposition of facts rich in everyday life detail (*nasyshchenno-bytovoi material*) according to the principle of switching [between themes], essential to the feuilleton." "The willful pen," in turn, stems from the epistolary genre, which gave birth to the feuilleton, as Shklovsky's brother Vladimir argued (Vl. Shklovsky 1926). The validity of this argument will become evident should one compare the feuilletons of Viktor Shklovsky with his letters, many of which became part of his books, such as *The Third Factory* (*Tret'ia fabrika*), *Hackwork* (*Podenshchina*), and others, not to mention *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love* (*Zoo, ili pis'ma ne o liubvi*), an epistolary novel.

canon of the eighteenth-century novel, I would like to permit myself a digression. / Concerning digressions"—and then a digression about digressions follows. This type of "Sternedom" permeates Shklovsky's oeuvre—beginning with his letters and ending with his books. And it is this "Sternedom" that "relates" Shklovsky to Senkovsky, from the standpoint of Formalist theory of literary evolution, which often reads as a Familienroman.[24] The following two quotations, one from Senkovsky and the other from Shklovsky, manifest the same literary gene, being identically constructed. Senkovsky (Kaverin 1966, 159): "Thereafter, spinning the thread of the story on the ball of eloquences, I must cut it with the scissors of silence." Shklovsky (1981, 342): "I will place these words wherever I like in my book—here, for instance." Such compositional liberties saturate the literary and critical work of the two authors.

Moreover, not only did these two treat what they wrote frivolously, but, like Sterne, they gave away the secrets of their craft—"baring the device," as Shklovsky called it in *Theory of Prose*. Classic examples of baring the device are found in the prefaces to Shklovsky's books *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love* and *Knight's Move*. In both books, the compositional principle and intrigue are revealed by the author on the very first pages, thus disarming both the reader and critic, who, as it seems, have no work left to do. Senkovsky's baring of the device is just as defiant. As an illustration, Kaverin cites the following excerpt from Senkovsky's work *Mikeria, the Nile Lily*, in which Senkovsky (Kaverin 1966, 192), or rather Baron Brambeus, unmasks himself as the author of a story he initially passed off as a translation of a recently discovered Egyptian papyrus:

> Now, the matter of fact is how knowledgeable readers will like this fashion of turning into jests the most obscure tasks of ancient cosmogony—the most crucial components of the priests' mysterious science about existences and numbers. In the eyes of some important men who deem boredom scholarship's most precious achievement, this may appear as a terrible crime. But Baron Brambeus has long been accused of being fond of concocting jests; so, obviously, another one should not count.

This excerpt shows, among other things, how the editor of *The Library for Reading* found pleasure in shocking the academic community of his day. This inevitably resulted in public scandals, which is why Kaverin (1966, 190) calls Senkovsky "an inventor, re-arranger, organizer, and troublemaker (*skandalist*)." As for troublemaking, Kaverin tells the following anecdote. One day, Senkovsky pretended to be ill and did not go to a ceremonial meeting of academicians; he asked that his aide read his dissertation *On the Antiquity of the Russian Name*. As the reading progressed, it seemed stranger and stranger, but "when the aide of [Senkovsky's] […] moved on to the part in which the author asserted that all of ancient history is nothing but a chronicle of the Slavic tribe […], it was no longer possible to refrain from laughter" (qtd. in ibid.; the cited fragment is from *The Kaleidoscope of Memories* written by Cyprinus (pen name Józef Przecławski)).

Scandal was also one of the strategies in the literary struggle of the 1920s, and the Formalists, primarily Shklovsky, were true virtuosi of that art. That is why Kaverin entitled his novel about that time *The Troublemaker, or Nights on Vasil'evsky Island* (*Skandalist ili vechera na Vasil'evskom ostrove*), a book in which Shklovsky is portrayed under the name of Viktor Nekrylov. There is a scene in the novel that mirrors the anecdote with Senkovsky; only the details are slightly altered, and the troublemaker in the scene is not Nekrylov but Dragomanov (modeled after Evgeny Polivanov and, to a lesser degree, Tynianov (Chudakova, Toddes 1981)).

Shklovsky (1929-A, n. p.) noted this similarity in his review of Kaverin's book about Senkovsky: "Veniamin Kaverin, a talented belletrist, is also at his best in the belletristic and semi-belletristic parts of this book. Sometimes, you can even recognize Kaverin's old works [of fiction], and in the scene of the farewell lecture Senkovsky's speech seems to be the speech of Dragomanov from *The Troublemaker*."[25]

Such are the resemblances between Senkovsky and Shklovsky as the two littérateurs who upended and upraised Russian journalism. As far as Shklovsky's editorship in *Petersburg* is concerned, he can rightfully be called Senkovsky's nephew, to use Shklovsky's own expression.[26] Their magazines were both structured much like the feuilleton and doubtless inspired by it; in both of them, the form of the feuilleton, discordantly playful and self-valuable, tended to be more important than the contents, and both magazines not only engaged the readers but also provoked them. It should not be surprising after all of this that in 1924 Shklovsky (1990, 385) wrote that *The Library for Reading*, habitually castigated before then, was "a Russian classic not yet described." Shklovsky argued

24 Harold Bloom's theory of literary history based on this Freudian concept overlaps with Formalist theory of canons (Lvov 2012).

25 Shklovsky criticized Kaverin in this review. His main reproach was that Kaverin, as a belletrist, wrote about Senkovsky as if the latter had lost by giving priority to his journalistic and not purely literary work. This shows once again that for Shklovsky the form of the magazine was no less important than a traditionally literary one. Moreover, Shklovsky criticized Kaverin for not paying enough attention in his book to the genre of the feuilleton in Senkovsky's work.

26 Cf. Shklovsky (1929-B, 227): "In the alteration of literary schools, the legacy is handed down not from father to son but from uncle to nephew."

that "Russian journalists such as Senkovsky, with a circulation of 35,000 copies, still remain[ed] incomprehensible because they [were] read without their magazines." Shklovsky was equally incomprehensible and scandalous to his contemporaries. Yet now that Russian Formalism has long been acknowledged, it is time the role of journalism in its theory and practice were duly appreciated.

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