

SEMIOTIK = ???

10: Russischer Formalismus

semiotics

semiotica

sémiotique

semasiologie

Σημειωτική

sematologie

sémiologie

‘In the 1920s and 1930s a group of Russian scholars, collectively known as formalists, developed the basic concepts of a theory of literature and art that laid the foundations for modern structuralist and semiotics concepts of art and culture. [...]

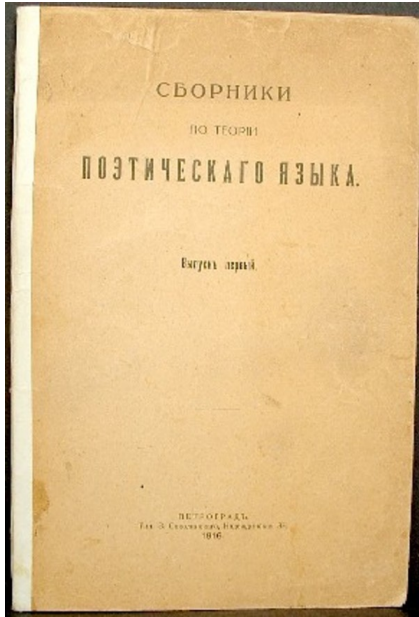
In the formalists’ own view, the notion of “form” was not opposed to “content”, and it was not a correlative term to it; rather, form was treated as an independent notion, as something essential for art. The concrete “material” and the specific techniques of the material’s “formation” were at the center of their interest. Consequently, some formalists refused its very name and preferred to be called “specifiers,” since their primary aim was to specify the properties of literariness (*literaturnost’*) and the techniques by which artificiality is achieved.’

[Grzybek 1998c: 550]

‘Russian Formalism, a movement of literary criticism and interpretation, emerged in Russia during the second decade of the twentieth century and remained active until about 1930. Members of what can be loosely referred to as the Formalist school emphasized first and foremost the autonomous nature of literature and consequently the proper study of literature as neither a reflection of the life of its author nor as byproduct of the historical or cultural milieu in which it was created. In this respect, proponents of a formalist approach to literature attempted not only to isolate and define the “**formal**” **properties of poetic language** (in both poetry and prose) but also to study the way in which certain aesthetically motivated devices (e.g., **de-familiarization** [*ostranenie*]) determined the literariness or artfulness of an object.

From its inception, the Russian Formalist movement consisted of two distinct scholarly groups, both outside the academy – the Moscow Linguistic Circle, which was founded by the linguist Roman Jakobson in 1915 and included Grigorii Vinokur and Petr Bogatyrev, and the Petersburg OPOIaZ, or Society for the Study of Poetic Language, which came into existence a year later and was known for scholars such as Victor Shklovskii, Iurii Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum, Boris Tomashevskii, and Victor Vinogradov. (It should be noted that the term “formalist” was initially applied pejoratively to the Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOIaZ.)’

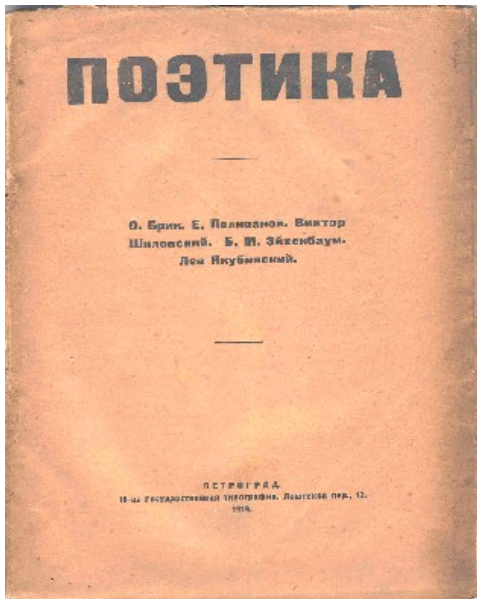
[McCauley 1997; my emphasis]



Society for the Study of Poetic Language
OPOJAZ (Obščestvo po Izučeniju
Poëtičeskogo Jazyka)

‘In 1916 and 1917, OPOJAZ published two volumes called the *Theory of Poetic Language* (*Sborniki po teorii poëtičeskogo jazyka*), followed by a third volume in 1919 (*Poetika: Sborniki po teorii poëtičeskogo jazyka*).’

[Grzybek 1998c: 551]



Russischer Formalismus: *Poetika Kino*

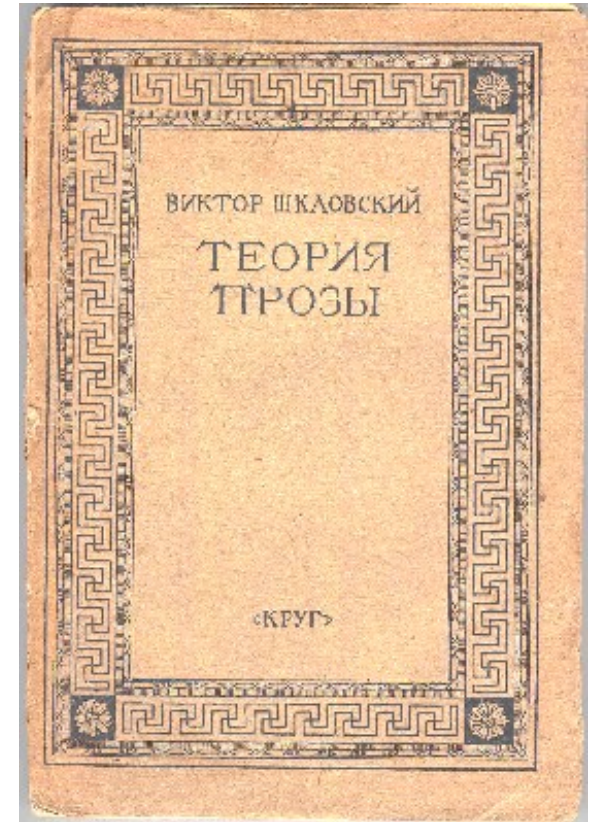
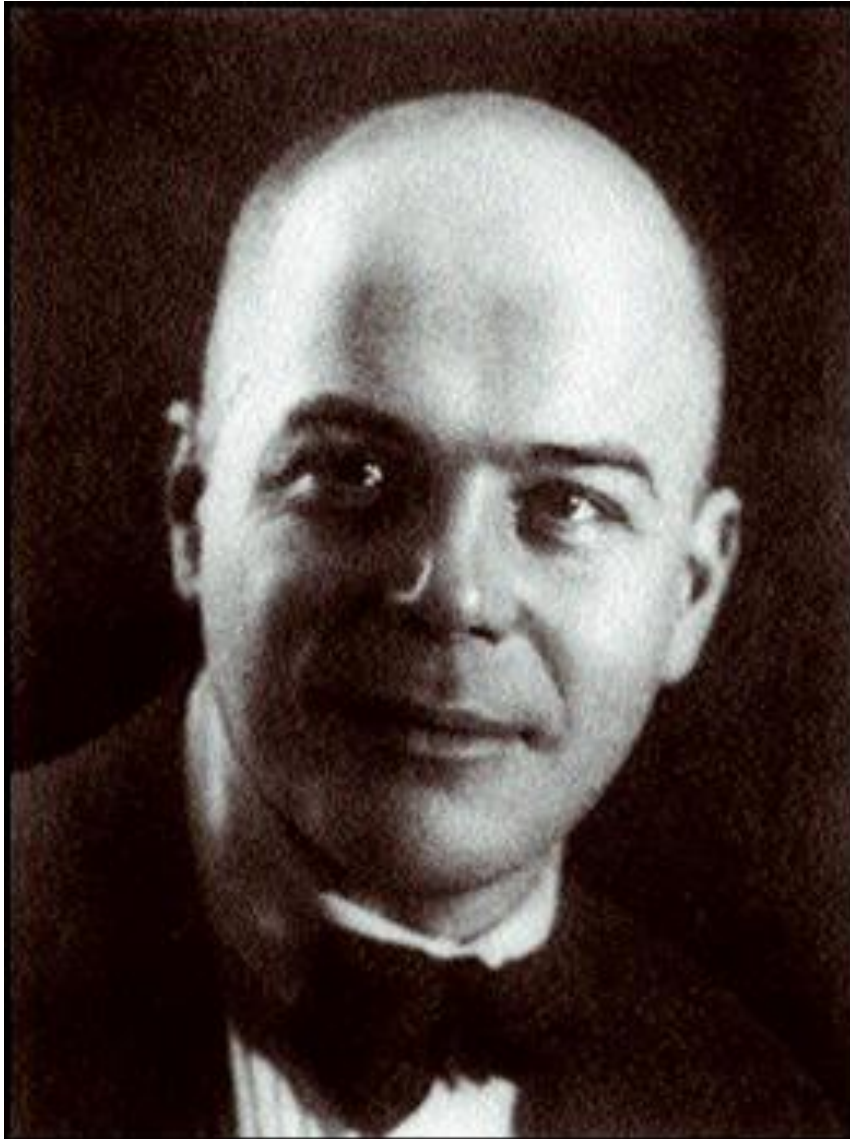


Ėjchenbaum, Boris M.,
Jurij Nikolaevič Tynjanov &
Viktor B. Šklovskij (1927).
Poetika Kino.
Leningrad: Kinopečat'



*Борис Михайлович
Эйхенбаум*

Boris Mihailovič
Ejchenbaum (1886–1959)



Viktor Borisovič
Šklovskij (1893–1984)



**Юрий
Николаевич
Тынянов**

**Jurij Nikolaevič
Tynjanov (1894–1943)**

‘[F]rom a productive perspective, art was characterized by a process of “making strange” (*ostranenie*) in order to render perception more difficult; from a receptive perspective, artistic perception was understood as “seeing anew” (*videnie*) as opposed to “recognizing” (*uznavanie*). Consequently, art is characterized by de-automatization or defamiliarization, a process that is achieved by way of specific literary devices. The reception process itself becomes an end in itself: the process of making strange causes the recipient to detect or to “lay bare” the devices (*obnaženie priëma*), and it thus directs the recipient’s attention toward the literary artifact’s “differential qualities” or its “markedness”.’

[Grzybek 1998c: 552]

‘For the formalists, the various devices creating “estrangement” [...] impart freshness of perception by inhibiting automatization. They are seen as forcing upon the reader a fresh perception as he focuses on the work itself, on how the text “is made”. But for the Prague scholars *fore-grounding* (*aktualizace*) does not rely simply on newness of perception in Šklovskij’s terms, since it must incorporate complex properties that affect the structuration of the entire work. In other words, as the name *foregrounding* implies, elements are moved to the foreground of perception in terms of the entire organization of the text.’ [Winner 1995: 255]

In his famous essay “The Novel as Parody” Šklovskij dealt with Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* mainly to show exactly this textual strategy [= estrangement, self-conscious]:

‘I do not intend [...] to analyze Laurence Sterne’s novel. Rather, I shall use it in order to illustrate the general laws governing plot structure. Sterne was a radical revolutionary as far as form is concerned. It was typical of him to lay bare the device. The aesthetic form is presented without any motivation whatsoever, simply as is.’ [Šklovskij/Shklovskij 1990: 147]

In a handbook entry on “Russian Formalism” (*The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*), laying bare the device is related both to self-consciousness and to self-reflexiveness:

‘Indeed, the process of “laying bare” the poetic device, such as the narrative self-reflexiveness of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and its emphasis on the distinction between story and plot (see *Theory of Prose*), remained for Shklovskii one of the primary signs of artistic self-consciousness.’ [McCauley 1997]

[Withalm, unpubl. paper, 2010]

FABULA, «*histoire*», “*story*”

der narrative Inhalt von «*récit*», “*sužet*”; ‘the raw material or basic outline of the story, prior to its artistic organization’ [Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis 1992: 71];

the “pattern of relationships between characters and the patterns of actions as they unfold in chronologic order” [Šklovsky in Eagle 1981: 17];

“A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. [...] Events, actors, time and location together constitute the material of a *fabula*.” [Bal 1985: 5, 7]

the “familiar” order of occurrences: “each event coming in the order in which it would occur in real life and the events bound to each other in a cause and effect relationship.” [Lemon & Reis 1965: 25]

SUŽET, “*syuzhet*”, «*récit*», “*plot, narrative*”

‘artistic organization (or “deformation”) of the causal-chronological order of events’ [Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis 1992 : 71]; künstlerische Verfahren der Organisation: *in medias res* construction; retardation; parallel lines of action; ellipses; de-familiarization, “disarrangement of the chronological sequence of events, creating gaps, retarding the flow of information or conveying the same information several times over from a variety of different perspectives” [Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis 1992: 71]

“The concept of plot (*syuzhet*) is too often confused with a description of the events in the novel, with what I’d tentatively call the story line (*fabula*).

As a matter of fact, though, the story line is nothing more than material for a plot formation.” (Shklovsky 1990: 170)

In seinem Text “Über die Grundlagen des Films” aus 1927 erläutert Jurij N. Tynjanov die Frage der Fabel und des Sujets im Film.

“Wer die Frage der Fabel und des Sujets lösen will, muß stets das spezifische Material und den spezifischen Stil einer Kunst im Auge behalten. [...]

Vor allem müssen wir uns über die Termini Fabel und Sujet einigen.

Als Fabel bezeichnet man gewöhnlich das statische Bezugs-*Schema* [...].”

[Tynjanov 1979: 164]

Man kann allerdings riskieren,

“Schemata aufzustellen, die nicht auf das Werk passen, oder wir müssen die Fabel als den *gesamten* semantischen (bedeutungsmäßigen) Grundriß der Handlung definieren. Das Sujet des Werks wäre dann zu definieren als seine Dynamik, wie sie aus der Wechselwirkung aller Verknüpfungen des Materials (unter anderem auch der Fabel als der Handlungsverknüpfung) resultiert – der stilistischen Verknüpfung, der Handlungsverknüpfung usw.”

[Tynjanov 1979: 165]

‘This crucial distinction may go back to Aristotle, but it was most fully theorized by the Russian Formalists, and it is indispensable to a theory of narration.

Presented with two narrative events, we look for causal or spatial or temporal links. The imaginary construct we create, progressively and retroactively, was termed by Formalists the *fabula* (sometimes translated as “story”). More specifically, the *fabula* embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field. [...] In *Rear Window* [...] Putting the *fabula* together requires us to construct the story of the ongoing inquiry while at the same time framing and testing hypotheses about past events. [...]

The *fabula* is thus a pattern which perceivers of narratives create through assumptions and inferences. [...] Ideally, the *fabula* can be embodied in a verbal synopsis [...].

The *fabula*, writes Tynianov, “can be guessed at, but it is not a given.” [fn4=Tynianov 1978: 20][...] The *syuzhet* (usually translated as “plot”) is the actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula* in the film. It is not the text in toto. [[fn5]] It is a more abstract construct, the patterning of the story as a blow-by-blow recounting of the film could render it. [...] As Boris Tomashevsky puts it: “The *fabula* is opposed to the *syuzhet*, which is built out of the same events, but the *syuzhet* respects their order in the work and the series of information processes which designate them.” [fn6=Tomashevsky 1965: 66–67]’

‘[C]ontrary to what some writers believe, the *fabula/syuzhet* distinction does not replicate the *histoire/discours* distinction held by enunciation theories.’

(Bordwell 1985: 49–50, 51)

»Die Ergebnisse des ersten Versuchs einer konsequenten Theoriebildung auf literatur- und sprachwissenschaftlichen Basis wurden 1927 in Leningrad unter dem Titel „*Poetika Kino*“ publiziert. Die Verfasser der einzelnen Artikel gehören zur Gruppe der russischen Formalisten; sie waren Schriftsteller, Literaturtheoretiker, verfaßten Filmdrehbücher. Ihre Ansätze sind zwar verschieden, spiegeln aber jene Tendenzen einer Zusammenführung von Theorie und Praxis in der Sowjetunion der 20er Jahre, die Kunst und Wissenschaft nur als verschiedene Diskursformen sehen, „nicht so sehr als verschiedene (und widersprüchliche) Typen des Denkens, sondern als verschiedene sprachliche Formen, als verschiedene Rede- und Ausdruckssysteme“ (Ejchenbaum 1974b: 139).

Neben Arbeiten über Beziehung von Sujet und Fabel im Film (cf. Tynjanov 1974: 56–63), und Versuchen, die Definitionen von Poesie und Prosa für den Film zu finden (cf. Šklovskij 1974: 97–99), also eher literaturtheoretischen Fragestellungen, treten erstmals auch die „bedeutungshaften Zeichen“ (cf. Ejchenbaum 1974a: 29; Tynjanov 1974: 45, 49) des Films in den Mittelpunkt des Interesses. Insbesondere Tynjanov und Ejchenbaum versuchen, Einheiten und Modelle der Sprache im Film wiederzufinden; die Begriffe „*Filmsyntax*“ und „*Filmsemantik*“ werden geprägt (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 26, 29, 36–39). Für Ejchenbaum muß „jede Kunst, deren Wahrnehmung in der Zeit verläuft, eine gewisse Artikulation besitzen, in Abhängigkeit davon in welchem Grad, sie »Sprache« ist“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 29), und „es ist offenkundig, daß für die Frage nach der Artikulation der Filmsprache grundlegende Bedeutung nicht die Fotogramme, sondern die Einstellungen haben“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 30). Die nächsthöhere Ordnung sind jene „bedeutungshaften Einheiten“, die durch die Montage geschaffen werden; „die fundamentale Einheit dieser Verkettung ist der *Filmsatz*“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 30).

Die Filmsemantik betreffend finden Tynjanov und Ejchenbaum im Film Entsprechungen für Metapher und Synekdoche. Auch die Kontextabhängigkeit von Bedeutung bei beiden betont; Ejchenbaum unterscheidet „*eine Semantik des Bildes und eine Semantik der Einstellungen*“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 37) neben der Montage als konstituierendem Element. Angesehen von den speziell filmischen Gestaltungsmitteln bezieht er auch Gestik und Mimik (wir befinden uns noch im Zeitalter des Stummfilms!) in die Filmsprache ein, jene „Ausdrucksfähigkeit, die wir uns im Alltag angeeignet haben“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 36).

Ejchenbaums Theorie bietet aber noch einen interessanteanten Aspekt, außer den bereits erwähnten, die an die Kernprobleme jeder Filmtheorie rühren: er bezieht den Zuschauer und dessen subjektive interpretative Leistung in seine Überlegungen mit ein und spricht vom „*Prozeß der inneren Rede des Zuschauers*“ (Ejchenbaum 1974a: 19); die pragmatische Dimension des Zeichens – ohne explizit als solche bezeichnet zu werden – finden damit Eingang in die Filmtheorie, ein Umstand, der im Zusammenhang mit der neueren rezeptionsorientierten Filmsemiotik von Interesse sein dürfte.«

(Withalm 1983: 365-366)

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