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Viktor Shklovsky and the Device of Ostensible Surrender

One frequently discussed problem in Western approaches to postrevolutionary Russian literature has been the temptation to identify “rebels against the system” and to praise their work out of proportion to its merits. Writers attacked in the Soviet Union for their heretical views have a good chance of being lionized in the West. A strange and notable exception to this pattern is Viktor Shklovsky, one of the earliest and most outspoken defenders of creative freedom in the Soviet Union. Though his books and articles were viciously attacked by the Marxist critics throughout the twenties, Western critics, viewing those same books and articles from the distance imposed by time and place, have seen them as a series of surrenders which hastened or even precipitated the collapse of the Formalist movement.

The first of these surrenders is thought to be *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love* (1923).¹ The second is *Third Factory* (1926).² The third is “A Monument to Scientific Error” (1930).³ After this third and most abject surrender, according to the prevailing view, Shklovsky toed the line, submitting to party pressure for the privilege of publishing works markedly inferior to his early books. This view is not supported by the facts.

Shklovsky's role as a defender of creative freedom began immediately after the February Revolution, when a struggle developed between the Commission on Art Affairs and the Union of Artists.⁴ Gorky had organized the Commission to take charge of preserving the monuments and artifacts of the past from excesses of revolutionary zeal, but it was given, in addition, the power to regulate the construction of new monuments. The Union, organized on March 5, the day after the formation of Gorky's Commission, was composed

1. Viktor B. Shklovsky, *Zoo, ili pis'ma ne o ljubvi* (Berlin, 1923). Censored versions of this edition appeared in the Soviet Union in 1924, 1929, 1964, and 1966, with new letters added and subtracted along the way. For a full account of these changes see the English translation published by Cornell University Press in 1971.

2. Viktor B. Shklovsky, *Tret'ia fabrika* (Moscow, 1926). I have completed an annotated translation of this book, which Ardis Press will publish later this year.

3. Viktor B. Shklovsky, “Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Jan. 27, 1930, p. 1.

4. For a detailed account of the struggle between these two groups see K. D. Muratova, *M. Gor'kii v bor'be za sovetskuiu literaturu* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1958), pp. 23–42.

of people like Zdanevich, Sologub, Brik, Mayakovsky, and Shklovsky, who feared that Gorky's conservatism might prejudice the cause of avant-garde art. In April this group appointed a delegation to meet with the Soviet of Ministers and the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, which were persuaded to curtail the power of Gorky's Commission. Throughout March, April, and May, Shklovsky made a series of speeches accusing Gorky of prejudice against the Futurists and of seeking to impose his ideas on the avant-garde.

In May the Provisional Government appointed Shklovsky commissar attached to the Russian army. He served in this capacity during the ill-fated Kerensky offensive that summer and, at his request, was transferred to the Russian army of occupation in Persia in September. When he returned to Petrograd in January 1918 after the withdrawal of the army from Persia, he joined the Union for the Rebirth of Russia, an underground organization plotting to restore the Constituent Assembly. When that group was broken up, he fled to the Ukraine in the fall of 1918. Only in January 1919, with help from Gorky, was he pardoned for these activities and allowed to return to Petrograd.⁵

During his absence the conflict between Gorky's Commission and the Union had been decided in a manner that spelled defeat for both sides. After the October Revolution, Anatolii Lunacharsky, the new commissar of education, persuaded some members of the Union—including Tatlin, Khlebnikov, Brik, and Mayakovsky—to resign and join the Governing Board of the newly created State Soviet for Art Affairs. This is one of the ways in which the new regime expressed its displeasure with Gorky, who had not endeared himself to Lenin with his powerful campaign against the Bolsheviks during the months preceding the October Revolution.⁶ The Futurists thus achieved the power that enabled them to celebrate the first anniversary of the Revolution by decorating the streets and squares of Petrograd with geometric designs. The Union, objecting strongly to cooperation with the government, protested the defection of some of its leading members. At a protest meeting held on April 7, 1918, the Union joined forces with the infuriated Gorky, who was elected their presiding officer, but nothing could be done. By the end of the year the Union had dissolved.

In December 1918, under the aegis of Lunacharsky's Narkompros, there

5. These events are described by Shklovsky in his book *Sentimental'noe puteshestvie: Vospominaniia, 1917–1922* (Berlin, 1923). Censored versions were published in the Soviet Union in 1924 and 1929. See the English translation published by Cornell University Press in 1970.

6. See Maxim Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts*, trans. and ed. Herman Ermolaev (New York, 1968). These articles, omitted from Soviet collections of Gorky's work, were published in Gorky's journal *Novaia zhizn'*, which Lenin suppressed in July 1918.

appeared a weekly newspaper called *Iskusstvo kommuny* (*Art of the Commune*), published by Osip Brik. This newspaper became the stronghold for the so-called left-wing Futurists and the literary organ through which Mayakovsky disseminated his views. In particular he and Brik, anticipating the platform of LEF, proclaimed the poet's obligation to his society and the need to discard not only the art of the past but perhaps all art⁷—a position to which Shklovsky objected strenuously.

Shklovsky, then, returned from eighteen months of battle on various fronts to find the Union—of which he had been a leader—defunct. Worse yet, his Futurist comrades, who had argued before the Revolution that the artist had no civic responsibility, were now comfortably ensconced in positions of power under the new Bolshevik government and were imposing their artistic predilections upon their fellow artists—a practice which the Union had furiously protested when Gorky had tried it. Shklovsky bitterly opposed the dangerous notion propounded by Mayakovsky and Brik that art must reflect the new class ideology. In this connection, he made his famous statement: “Art has always been free of life; its flag has never reflected the color of the flag flying over the city fortress.”⁸ This statement, which sounds as though it were aimed at the Bolsheviks, was actually addressed to those Futurists like Mayakovsky and Brik who had meekly accepted positions in the civil service of the new regime. Shklovsky saw in this act the end of Futurism, “one of the highest attainments of man's genius.” And he added, all too prophetically: “The mistakes now being made are so clear to me and will be so painful to art that it is impossible to keep quiet about them. . . . Comrades, this is certainly the surrender of all positions! This is Belinsky-Vengerov and *The History of the Russian Intelligentsia*. . . . That rustling tail of newspaper editorials being prepared for it [art] offends the eye.”⁹

7. See, for example, Brik's provocative statement in the issue dated December 29, 1918: “Many gods have been overthrown by the proletariat, many idols have been overturned. But one god has been spared. The conquering proletariat is afraid to enter one temple. This god is beauty, this temple—art.”

8. Viktor B. Shklovsky, “Ullia, Ullia, Marsiane!” *Khod konia* (Berlin, 1923), p. 39. This article first appeared in *Iskusstvo kommuny* (Mar. 30, 1919). The title is a reminder to Khlebnikov of the independent position he espoused before the October Revolution. In a strident manifesto called “The Trumpet of the Martians” he had contemptuously denounced the philistines and declared that he would withdraw the Futurists from their society and declare them Martians, with H. G. Wells and Marinetti invited to their Duma as consultants. The agenda would include the subject “Ullia, Ullia, Marsiane.” This manifesto has been reprinted in N. Brodsky and V. L'vov-Rogachevsky, *Literaturnye manifesty* (Moscow, 1929), pp. 83–86.

9. Shklovsky, *Khod konia*, pp. 37–41. Professor Barooshian, in his otherwise excellent account of this period, should not have included Shklovsky in the list of artists and critics who aligned themselves with Narkompros. See Vahan D. Barooshian, “The Avant-Garde and the Russian Revolution,” *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 4 (Fall 1972): 349.

This is strong language. Shklovsky's book *Khod konia (Knight's Move)* contains many such complaints and admonitions. At the beginning of the book he tells about the millipede who functioned marvelously well until the day a turtle asked how it managed to coordinate the motion of all those legs. Then the millipede began thinking about where each leg was:

It [the millipede] introduced centralization, chancellorization, bureaucratism and could no longer budge even one leg.

Then it said, "Viktor Shklovsky was right when he said, 'The greatest misfortune of our time is that we regulate art without knowing what it is. The greatest misfortune of Russian art is that we scorn it like a husk of rice. And yet art is anything but a vehicle for propaganda, just as vitalin, which food must contain in addition to proteins and fats, is neither protein nor fat, and yet the life of the organism is impossible without it.'"

The greatest misfortune of Russian art is that it is not allowed to move organically the way the heart moves in a man's chest: it is being regulated like the movement of trains.

"Citizens and comrades," said the millipede, "look at me and you will see the folly of overregulation! Comrades in revolution, comrades in war, leave art at liberty, not in its own name, but in the name of the fact that it is impossible to regulate the unknown!"¹⁰

From 1919 through 1921 Shklovsky worked feverishly with Zamiatin to propagate the idea of art as pure form—as having no obligations to the real world. He developed his ideas at the meetings of Opoiaz and the Serapion Brothers, whose members were greatly influenced by them. Then in the spring of 1922 the charges based on his anti-Bolshevik activity of 1918 were revived and he fled to Finland to escape arrest. In the summer of 1922 he joined the Russian colony in Berlin, where he published the first of his trilogy of surrenders, *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love*.

Zoo has been described by one Western critic, Victor Erlich, as a book in which "Shklovsky had symbolically 'surrendered' to the powers that be."¹¹

In *Sentimental Journey* Shklovsky refers to Belinsky as the "killer of Russian literature," and he expresses the wish to trample him with the legs of his writing desk (see the English translation of *Sentimental Journey*, pp. 233–34).

10. Shklovsky, *Khod konia*, pp. 12–17.

11. See Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History—Doctrines*, 3rd ed. (The Hague and Paris, 1969 [1st ed., 1955]), p. 136. This book also downgrades Shklovsky's role as the founder of the movement and leaves the impression that the Moscow Linguistic Circle actually preceded Opoiaz—a misconception recently corrected in Ewa Thompson's *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism* (The Hague and Paris, 1971). This misconception results mainly from the fact that Professor Erlich never mentions in his text even the title of Shklovsky's booklet *Resurrection of the Word* (St. Petersburg, 1914). The title is simply listed in the bibliography, though nearly every treatment of Formalism

The main evidence for this position is the last letter in the book, a petition to the Central Committee wherein Shklovsky, lamenting his loss of youth and self-assurance, specifically raises his hands in surrender. Another Western critic, D. G. B. Piper, speaking of the elegy to Khlebnikov in the fourth letter, mentions that Shklovsky was the first to compare Khlebnikov's fate with that of Christ and says that Shklovsky, "considering it inevitable that the state should neglect and reject the heretical visionary, absolved it of blame for his death, writing that even those who crucified Christ were 'no more guilty than the nails.'"¹²

Both of these opinions overlook the context in which Shklovsky's remarks are made. It is true that the first half of the concluding letter is an appeal for amnesty, but the subservience of the appeal is countered by the last half of the letter, in which Shklovsky tells that the Turkish soldiers who surrendered to the Russians at the battle of Erzerum were massacred on the spot. He insinuates that this may very well be the fate that he can expect from the Bolsheviks if he returns. It is interesting that the censors removed this portion of the letter from the 1964 edition of *Zoo*, leaving the surrender to stand alone, without the anecdote that contradicts it. As for the notion that the elegy is a piece that absolves the state of blame for the death of Khlebnikov, nothing could be further from the truth. Mark Antony did not really believe that Brutus was an honorable man, nor does Shklovsky believe that the state

has recognized that booklet as the cornerstone of the movement (Eikhenbaum, Medvedev, Lo Gatto, Markov, Ivan Vinogradov). Professor Erlich does mention *Resurrection of the Word* in his doctoral thesis, where he disagrees with those who consider it fundamental: "This seems to be something of an overstatement. While Shklovsky's critical debut undoubtedly anticipates some aspects of Formalist theory, especially the author's subsequent notion of 'making strange' the object, it was, on the whole, too much of a hodgepodge to be construed as a coherent statement of a new school of criticism" (Columbia University diss., 1952, p. 133). *Resurrection of the Word* may or may not be a hodgepodge, but it nonetheless stimulated the formation of Opoiaz in 1914 and outlined, in inchoate form, the concerns to be pursued by the group during its initial period. Shklovsky stressed the sound component of poetic language as pre-eminent over meaning, and he raised the question of what makes form perceptible. Even before its publication, the booklet was read to an assemblage at the Stray Dog Cabaret in December 1913, and it made a powerful impression on the Futurists present (Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglaznyi strelets*, Leningrad, 1933, pp. 200–201). After its publication, Shklovsky presented a copy to Baudouin de Courtenay, who introduced Shklovsky to his most brilliant students, Lev Iakubinsky and Evgenii Polivanov. They were intrigued by the notion of applying linguistic analysis to poetic language. A few months later Brik, who shared Shklovsky's interest in Futurist poetry, became part of the group. Consequently, in its earliest formation the nucleus of the movement consisted of "Futurists" like Shklovsky and Brik united with the linguistics students of Baudouin de Courtenay. Eikhenbaum and Tynianov joined the group much later; neither of them contributed to the first collections published by Opoiaz in 1916 and 1917.

12. D. G. B. Piper, *V. A. Kaverin: A Soviet Writer's Response to the Problem of Commitment* (Pittsburgh, 1970), p. 1.

is guiltless in the death of Khlebnikov. Professor Piper has failed to recognize the bitter irony of that passage. Once again, it is interesting to note that the very passage in which Shklovsky comments that the state is not responsible for the death of human beings was cut by the censors from the 1964 edition. Its ironic import was evident to them.

What has been overlooked in these interpretations, and elsewhere, is simply that the hallmark of Shklovsky's style is contradiction. He explains in *Hamburg Account* that he assembled his books in such a way that adjacent pieces are in a contradictory relationship.¹³ One can find a plethora of surrenders in his books if one removes seemingly conciliatory statements from their context, where they are usually contradicted. In *A Sentimental Journey*, for example, one finds the following sequence, which is a useful paradigm of his method: "But if we had been asked then, 'Who are you for—Kaledin, Kornilov, or the Bolsheviks?,' Task and I would have chosen the Bolsheviks." That statement sounds quite conciliatory. But in the next sentence Shklovsky says, "However, in a certain comedy, the harlequin was asked, 'Do you prefer to be hanged or quartered?' He answered, 'I prefer soup.'" ¹⁴

Contradiction is found throughout *A Sentimental Journey* and is even more deeply embedded in *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love*. The counterpoint of obedience and defiance found in the surrender letter runs throughout the book, which is only ostensibly not about love. In fact, every perfunctory attempt to discuss another subject fails and is repudiated by the reappearance of the forbidden theme.

What about *Third Factory*, the second of Shklovsky's ostensible surrenders? Professor Erlich mentions only the conciliatory statements without referring to the defiant statements that serve as retractions, and he speaks of the "malaise" that pervades *Third Factory*.¹⁵ Professor Piper describes this book as an extraordinary volte-face and speaks of how Shklovsky, despite the "lack of freedom in the Soviet Union," decided to remain and to surrender himself to the times. "*Tret'ya fabrika*," says Professor Piper unequivocally, "destroyed formalism."¹⁶

"Malaise" connotes a spiritual crisis whose cause is vague or unknown. Shklovsky had his reasons for what might more accurately be described as anguish. As a right-wing Socialist Revolutionary he had fought on two fronts in the service of the Provisional Government. After the overthrow of that government by the Bolsheviks he had joined an underground movement to

13. Viktor B. Shklovsky, *Gamburgskii schet* (Leningrad, 1928), p. 107. See also his remarks in *Kak my pishem* (Leningrad, 1930), pp. 211–16.

14. See the English translation of *Sentimental Journey*, p. 117.

15. See Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, p. 131.

16. See Piper, *V. A. Kaverin*, pp. 50–52.

overthrow the Bolsheviks. Forced into emigration by these activities, he had lived for more than a year in Berlin and had discovered that he was incapable of living abroad permanently. He had returned home in the fall of 1923 and, despite his "bad record" and shaky position, had resumed his connections with the much-maligned Serapion Brothers¹⁷ and had joined LEF, the coalition of Futurists and members of Opoiiaz founded by Mayakovsky in 1923. Shklovsky quickly became one of the most important members of LEF. Its collapse early in 1925 contributed to the anguish that underlies *Third Factory*. The central cause of his anguish, however, was clearly the resolution of the Central Committee, "On Party Policy in the Field of Imaginative Literature," promulgated on June 18, 1925.¹⁸ 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 working class as a whole, with all its material and ideological resources." This kind of language, overlooked by those writers who viewed the resolution as a defeat for the proletarian faction, paved the way for the concerted attacks on the "fellow travelers" in 1929 and for the party's imposition of complete control over literature at that time.¹⁹ But a number of writers understood the dangerous implications of the resolution: Sobol, Novikov, Veresaev, and Pasternak, to name a few. Pasternak commented that the Soviet Union was undergoing not a cultural revolution but a cultural reaction,²⁰ an opinion echoed by Shklovsky in *Third Factory*. The Party Resolution of June 1925 more than anything else shaped the despairing mood that runs through *Third Factory*, for it showed Shklovsky once and for all that Opoiiaz, the movement which he had founded and nurtured, was doomed.

The pressures generated by these developments were extreme. Shklovsky apparently tried to write a conciliatory book, but that was not the book which emerged. In that respect, *Third Factory* illustrates a principle discussed often, here and elsewhere, by Shklovsky and many others: a writer often begins his

17. See my article, "Šklovskij, Gor'kij, and the Serapion Brothers," *Slavic and East European Journal*, 12, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 8–9.

18. See Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–1932* (New York, 1953), pp. 235–40, for an English translation of this resolution.

19. For an excellent discussion of these developments see Herman Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories, 1917–1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (Berkeley, 1963), pp. 44–54. Professor Struve, who interpreted this party resolution as a Magna Carta in the 1950 edition of his book, recognizes in the new edition that Ermolaev's interpretation is compelling. See Gleb Struve, *Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 1917–1953* (Norman, 1971), p. 91. Professor Ermolaev did not use *Third Factory* in his analysis, but it supports his thesis.

20. See Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories*, p. 214.

book with a certain idea in mind, but at some critical point in the writing process the characters and situations acquire a momentum of their own that dictates the remainder of the book and causes it to swerve. At the end, the writer is left with a manuscript that deviates sharply from his initial idea of what he wanted to do. Shklovsky ruefully described the phenomenon as follows:

After *Zoo*, I wrote *Third Factory*, a book completely incomprehensible to me. In that book I wanted to capitulate to the time—not only capitulate, but take my troops over to the other side. I wanted to come to terms with the present. As it turned out, however, I had no say in the matter. Both the material on the village and the material on my own disordered state in life, included in the book, got out of hand and acquired a shape contrary to my original plan, so the book was resented. On the whole, however, books are not written to please; in fact, sometimes books are not written: they emerge, they happen. I write this not to vindicate myself but to present a fact.²¹

In *Third Factory* the contradictions are even more abundant than in *Zoo*, but the rhythm is essentially the same. Every perfunctory attempt to acquiesce in the literary policies of the regime is immediately undermined and canceled by a defiant statement defending the tenets of Opoiaz and the need for creative freedom. The conciliatory statements, like the declarations in *Zoo* about avoiding the love theme, are always felt as perfunctory and forced. The net effect, then, as Shklovsky's opponents correctly discerned at the time, was a book riddled with defiance. It is anything but the book that "destroyed Formalism." In its total effect, *Third Factory* is a passionate defense of Formalism.

The nature of Shklovsky's defiance can be seen in his treatment of the cherished Marxist slogan, "Bytie opredeliaet soznanie." The title of the third chapter of *Third Factory* begins "I Write About How Objective Reality Determines Consciousness . . ." (obviously the right kind of topic for a repentant formalist), but the first part of the title is undermined by the last part: "While the Conscience Remains in Disarray." Shklovsky mocks this slogan again in his "Letter to Boris Eikhenbaum":

As far as objective reality goes, it certainly does determine consciousness.

But in art, it often runs counter to consciousness. My brain is busy with the daily grind. The high point of the day is morning tea.

21. Shklovsky, *Ganburgskii schet*, p. 109. *Hamburg Account* also contains Shklovsky's vehement protests against censorship in the film industry. He proclaims the importance of "artistic integrity" and says, *inter alia*, "It must be understood that in art there are no orders, that a too literal carrying out of orders has always been a form of sabotage" (p. 158).

And that is too bad: some artists shed blood and sperm. Others urinate.

Net weight is all that matters to the buyer. (p. 103)

Once again, the first sentence is a concession, but the next sentence immediately retracts the concession. And the letter concludes with Shklovsky's bitter reaction to the fact that the new society places no value on the work of Opoiaz.

The nominal theme of acquiescence in *Third Factory* centers on the word "time." Shklovsky states repeatedly that he wants to understand his time and to respond to it in his writing. He comments that in the old days (the second factory), he viewed art as an autonomous system and concerned himself with freedom, whereas now he is making a study of unfreedom. Yet these statements are contradicted everywhere in the book and are finally overpowered. In the previously mentioned chapter on objective reality and the conscience, for example, he says that he wants to speak with his time and understand its voice. Then he observes:

But chance is crucial to art. The dimensions of a book have always been dictated to an author.

The marketplace gave a writer his voice.

A work of literature lives on material. *Don Quixote* and *The Minor* owe their existence to unfreedom.

It is impossible to exclude certain material: necessity creates works of literature. I need the freedom to work from my own plans; freedom is needed if the material is to be bared. I don't want to be told that I have to make bentwood chairs out of rocks. (pp. 16–17)

He concludes by saying that the members of Opoiaz are not cowards—they love the wind of revolution. And he insists that he be allowed to cultivate his own garden, since it is wrong for everyone to sow wheat. He is unable to squeak like the toy elephant; besides, it is wrong to coddle art.

From this passage it becomes evident that in talking about unfreedom or necessity Shklovsky is not talking about the civic responsibility of the writer in Soviet society. The statement, in its abstract form, sounds acceptable to the demands of the Marxist critics, but Shklovsky has obliquely defined the term "freedom" in terms of pressure of the material (the same pressures that led to the creation of *Don Quixote*). In this way, then, he concludes that the writer in fact needs freedom to respond to the material of his time as he perceives it—the writer must not be made to write according to formulas dictated by the government.

This approach is also seen, with particular clarity, in the chapter "On the Freedom of Art," in which Shklovsky says that he wants freedom and that a writer requires the illusion of choice. An artist, he says, cannot be ordered to praise phenomena, as the peasants are now being made to do. Still, he says

in apparent contradiction, “that doesn’t mean that we need freedom of art. Lev Tolstoy would not have written *War and Peace* had he not been a gunner.” The illustration, once again, supplies a special definition that deprives the abstract statement of its conciliatory import. An artist is bound to respond to his experience in writing his books. The artist, however, must be free to respond to that experience as he perceives it. Tolstoy, says Shklovsky, “like many others” (!), tried to espouse a utilitarian theory of art, but “the works that resulted were completely different. Art processes the ethics and world view of a writer and liberates itself from his original intention. Things change when they land in a book.” Here Shklovsky has widened his original definition in a way that makes his idea of unfreedom even more heretical: the artist is unfree in the sense that he must respond to his own experience and perceptions, *and* he is also unfree in the sense that he must respond to the dictates of form, a variant of Shklovsky’s old idea that form determines content.

Finally, Shklovsky offers what at first seems to be a recognition of the hard realities, but this acquiescence is then converted into a refusal to recognize those realities. The passage ends with notes of open protest about the treatment of unorthodox artists:

At the moment, there are two alternatives. To retreat, dig in, earn a living outside literature and write at home for oneself.

The other alternative is to have a go at describing life, to seek out conscientiously the new society and the correct world view.

There is no third alternative. Yet that is precisely the one that must be chosen. An artist should avoid beaten paths.

The third alternative is to work in newspapers and journals every day, to be unsparing of yourself and caring about the work, to change, to crossbreed with the material, change some more, crossbreed with the material, process it some more—and then there will be literature.

In the life of Pushkin, the one clearly unnecessary thing was D’Anthes’s bullet.

But terror and oppression are necessary.

A strange business. The poor flax.

It so happens that artists don’t organize happiness in their work: they organize a work of art. (pp. 84–85)

This last sentence tersely reasserts a position that Shklovsky is supposedly abandoning in *Third Factory*: art is primarily form, not content. This point is made at greater length in the “Letter to Tynianov,” in which Shklovsky insists on a wide range of options for the writer that few Marxists would endorse:

Literature stays alive by expanding into nonliterature. But artistic form carries out its own unique rape of the Sabine women. The material ceases to recognize its former lord and master. It is processed by the law

of art and can now be perceived apart from its place of origin. If that makes no sense, try this explanation. With regard to real life, art possesses several freedoms: (1) the freedom of nonrecognition, (2) the freedom of choice, (3) the freedom of absorption (a fact long gone in life may be preserved in art). Art uses the quality of the merchandise to create perceptible form. (p. 99)

Shklovsky concludes this letter with another theoretical discussion that sounds as though he will now demonstrate the sincerity of his repudiation of Formalism. He admits in the proper fashion that both he and Eikhenbaum have failed to give proper consideration to nonaesthetic norms. He then implicitly reverses himself by condemning Eikhenbaum for attempting to follow that very course: the exploration of nonaesthetic norms in his book *The Young Tolstoy* (1923):

It is a serious mistake to use diaries to explain the way a work of literature comes into being. There is a hidden lie here—as though a writer creates and writes all by himself and not in conjunction with his genre and all of literature, with its conflicting tendencies. Writing a monograph on a writer is an impossible task. 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 also nonfunctional. With regard to the writer, art has three freedoms: (1) the freedom to ignore his personality, (2) the freedom to choose from his personality, (3) the freedom to choose from any other material whatsoever. One must study not the problematical connection, but the facts. One must write not about Tolstoy, but about *War and Peace*. (p. 100)

Surely no one would argue that these passages demonstrate Shklovsky's conversion to the Marxist view of literature. Surely it is a serious error to maintain that *Third Factory* "destroyed Formalism."

In the last chapter of the book Shklovsky speaks about his work in the film industry, referring to the room where unsuccessful films are stored as a kind of cemetery. He says that in a time of film famine, the dead buried in that cemetery will be resurrected. Then the range of reference widens with the chilling reproach, "But never will the dead buried in our cemeteries be resurrected." The chapter concludes with a citation from Virgil: "And the southern wind, with a quiet creaking of the masts, calls us to the open sea." This line is found in the *Aeneid* at that point where the survivors of shattered Troy, leaving the dead and dying of the city behind them, have set forth with the hope of preserving their culture in another land. They have considered founding their city on a plain tilled by the Thracians. But as Aeneas cuts saplings to prepare an altar, blood oozes from the broken roots and the tormented

spirit of Polydorus, a Trojan treacherously slain by the Thracian king, urges him to leave this tainted soil. The Trojans heed his advice and set sail for unknown and perilous shores. The parallels between fallen Troy and fallen Petersburg, also used by Shklovsky in *Zoo*, need no comment. They are sustained even by the desperate hope that Shklovsky expresses in this chapter and elsewhere in the book: "We must not die: kindred spirits will be found."

The heresies embedded in every nook and cranny of *Third Factory* did not escape the attention of Shklovsky's detractors, who were numerous and eager for blood. Gorky—from his faraway place on Capri, of course—complained about the unhealthy mood of the book.²² The critic Abram Lezhnev spoke scornfully of Shklovsky as "that posturing Hamlet of Opoiaz, ready at a moment's notice to change into a self-abnegating Don Quixote." He observed that despite verbal camouflage Shklovsky remained partisan to his old and most serious heresy—the dichotomy of art and life. Lezhnev concluded, "Despite some moments that approached Marxism, Shklovsky basically remains true to his old positions."²³ That is an accurate assessment of the book.

Most serious of all, though, was the campaign mounted in March 1927 by the influential proletarian critic Osip Beskin, who was director of the literary division of Gosizdat. The main point made by Beskin in his attacks on the book was that Shklovsky was the most reactionary figure on the Soviet literary scene—an extremely dangerous influence whose true purposes had been discerned, though he, like a fox, tried to cover his tracks with his tail. Beskin also describes him as a "refined literary gentleman mocking his 'uncouth reader.'" Particularly offensive to him are those places in the book where Shklovsky reveals open hostility to Marxism. Here Beskin feels that Shklovsky shows his true colors—as a passively hostile element whose views are corrupting the literary theory and art of the new era.²⁴ The main points of this attack had been made earlier in the month by Beskin at a symposium held to evaluate the role of a reorganized LEF in Soviet society.

Shklovsky's book provided welcome ammunition for the proletarian writers in their attempts to discredit LEF, and it seems clear that Shklovsky would have been in serious trouble if Mayakovsky had not come to his defense. When Beskin insisted on the archreactionary and dangerous nature of Shklovsky's views, Mayakovsky admitted that there were many unfortunate things

22. Gorky to A. K. Voronsky, Nov. 20, 1926, in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva A. M. Gor'kogo*, ed. B. V. Mikhailovsky, L. I. Ponomarev, and V. R. Shcherbina, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1958–60), 3:486.

23. A. Lezhnev, *Sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1927), pp. 133–38. This article first appeared under the title "Tri knigi" in *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1926, no. 8, pp. 80–86.

24. O. M. Beskin, "Kustarnaia masterskaia literaturnoi reaktsii," *Na literaturnom postu*, 1927, no. 7, pp. 18–20.

in the book, but insisted that Shklovsky's energies and talents were needed by Soviet society and that LEF was attempting to rehabilitate Shklovsky. He remarked that, had LEF been responsible for the publication of the book, its members would have persuaded Shklovsky to make changes. Mayakovsky mentions that the book was published with the approval of Voronsky, who was one of the supervisors of the "Krug" publishing house. The implication is that Voronsky, who was generally hostile to Shklovsky, let the book be published in its unexpurgated form in order to expose Shklovsky to calumny.²⁵

It is true, as Beskin observed, that Shklovsky sometimes takes issue with the Marxists openly, but the most telling criticism of the regime is lodged in the cryptic imagery of *Third Factory*. In no other book has Shklovsky relied so heavily on figurative language. The following extended image is an oblique way of complaining about the regimentation of literature:

An oyster draws the valves of its shell together with a supreme effort. Having drawn them shut, it stops functioning. Its muscles no longer radiate heat, but they do hold the valves shut.

Prose and poetry are being held in such a death grip. Muscles warm and living could never exert the necessary force.

Thirty-three-year-old shell, I am sick today. I know how heavy is the force that holds the valves together. That should not be. (p. 40)

Central to the meaning of the book are three images which recur and interlock: a toy elephant, a Tolstoyan anecdote about a butcher sharpening his knife on cobblestones, and flax, all subjected to constant modulation. All three images are used to demonstrate Shklovsky's resistance to the official line and his ultimate refusal to acquiesce in the liquidation of Opoiaz. The opposition expressed in the figurative language of these images substantially reinforces the open expressions of dissent already mentioned. Together, they overwhelm and cancel out Shklovsky's nominal attempt to accede to the demands of his time.

The elephant image leans heavily on the word "voice." Shklovsky begins the book by saying that he speaks in a voice hoarse from silence and *feuilletons*. Then he evokes his infant son, playing with a toy elephant that squeaks when pressed. "We are cranked out in various shapes," says Shklovsky in an oblique reference to government pressure, "but we speak in one voice when pressure is applied." The image, once established, is used as a reference point throughout the early part of the book. After expressing doubts about his current situation, Shklovsky says, "That is not the elephant speaking—that is my voice." Then

25. See V. V. Mayakovsky, "Vystuplenie na dispute 'LEF ili blef?'" held on March 23, 1927, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1955–61), 12:345–50.

he gives a mock apology for his individualistic views—for the fact that he does not know how to speak in an elephant squeak.

In Tolstoy's anecdote, an observer notices a young man from the meat counter who seems to be doing something to the stones in the sidewalk. Upon closer inspection he finds that the man is doing nothing at all to the stones: he is doing something to a knife—sharpening it on the stones. Shklovsky adapts this anecdote in the following way. He says that in art, what matters is the sharpening of the knife. The stones are secondary. In this oblique way, he expresses the view that he has supposedly abandoned: aesthetic norms (the knife) are independent of extra-aesthetic norms (the stones). What matters in art is the process, as Shklovsky says explicitly in his letter to Eikhenbaum.

In the letter to Brik, criticizing him for not finishing his book on verse structure, Shklovsky emphasizes his point with figurative language drawn from the anecdote. "Brik," he says, "feels no urge to cut, so he refuses to sharpen the knife." The anecdote is also used in the chapter "On the Second Factory," in which Shklovsky praises Eikhenbaum's article on Gogol's "Overcoat": "The meat was well cut—that means we sharpened the knife properly. Don't tell us who we are. We are the stones on which truth is sharpened" (p. 70). Here the image is modulated. The stones are equated not with extra-aesthetic norms, but with artists.

Interwoven with the elephant and the knife images, and similar in import, is the flax image, which becomes the metaphoric axis of the book. Shklovsky worked at a flax center after his return to the Soviet Union and became sufficiently expert in flax cultivation to criticize Gorky's novel *The Artamonovs' Business* for its many inaccuracies in this regard.²⁶

Shklovsky establishes this dominant metaphor at the beginning of the chapter called "Voice of a Semiperishable Commodity." He says, "We are flax in the field." By "we" he means those artists and critics resistant to the demands for conformity—in particular, he means the members of Opoiiaz. This becomes abundantly clear when he says, "And let me cultivate my own garden. It's wrong for everyone to sow wheat. I am unable to squeak like the elephant." Subsequently, he refers to Mayakovsky as top-grade flax and describes the rude treatment he is receiving in the press by using the special verbs that describe how flax is processed. Elsewhere Shklovsky wonders despairingly whether the members of Opoiiaz were sown for fiber or for seed.

One of the most interesting and extended uses of this metaphor appears in the chapter called "On the Freedom of Art." There, in speaking about the

26. Viktor B. Shklovsky, *Udachi i porazheniia Maksima Gor'kogo* (Tiflis, 1927), p. 62.

processing of flax, Shklovsky clearly has in mind the inevitable fate of unorthodox elements:

FLAX. This is no advertisement. I'm not employed at the Flax Center these days. At the moment, I'm more interested in pitch. In tapping trees to death. That is how turpentine is obtained.

From the tree's point of view, it is ritual murder.

The same with flax.

Flax, if it had a voice, would shriek as it's being processed. It is taken by the head and jerked from the ground. By the root. It is sown thickly—oppressed, so that it will not be vigorous but puny.

Flax requires oppression. It is jerked out of the ground, spread out on the fields (in some places) or retted in pits and streams.

The streams where the flax is washed are doomed—the fish disappear. Then the flax is braked and scutched.

I want freedom. (pp. 81–82)

One of the recurrent images in *Third Factory* is vegetable soup. Concealed in this image is a polemic with the previously mentioned Lunacharsky. In an article printed in 1924 Lunacharsky had said, "Before October, formalism was simply a vegetable in season. Now it is a living relic of the past—a palladium where those elements of the intelligentsia oriented toward bourgeois Europe are making their last stand."²⁷

This image is introduced in the chapter on Doctor Kulbin, where Shklovsky says, "Now that the volcanoes have stopped erupting, the soup has come to a boil and is being poured into various bowls." He continues this motif in the chapters on Osip Brik:

The earthquake is over. The lid has been lifted, the soup has come to a boil, the spoons have been distributed. "Help yourself," they say.

We have the right to refuse the spoons.

We are, after all, the "ideological superstructure."

27. See A. V. Lunacharsky, "Formalizm v nauke ob iskusstve," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1924, no. 5, p. 26. Shklovsky conducted a similar running debate with Trotsky during the twenties. In *Khod konia* Shklovsky had presented five propositions demonstrating the falsity of the Marxist conception of art. In his book *Literature and Revolution* Trotsky refuted these propositions point by point and then concluded: "The Formalists show a fast-ripening religiosity. They are followers of St. John. They believe that 'In the beginning was the Word.' But we believe that in the beginning was the deed. The word followed, as its phonetic shadow." See Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 183.

In his introduction to *Theory of Prose* Shklovsky had the last word: "It is perfectly clear that language is influenced by social relations. . . . All the same, the word is not a shadow. The word is a thing." See Viktor B. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1925), p. 5. (An English translation of *Theory of Prose*, prepared by Richard Sherwood and me, will be published by Gregg International Press later this year.)

The connection between us and the soup is complicated and nonfunctional. (p. 63)

The identity of the cooks is obvious. And one would hardly describe Shklovsky's reaction to the dinner invitation as abject surrender. The spoons are refused. A favorite Marxist cliché is mocked. And the existence of a relationship between art and society is denied. This image is further developed several lines later, where the confrontation becomes more direct:

Vegetables, for example, are sometimes cooked in soup and then discarded.

It is essential, though, to understand what happens in that process. Otherwise, you can get the story wrong and mistake noise for work.

Noise is work for an orchestra, but not for the Putilov plant.

On the whole, we probably were vegetables.

But not according to the reading from our meridian.

And I—gazing at the samplers from Turkestan, stuffing the pillows behind the couch, smudging the upholstery with my leather pants, devouring everything on the table—I was cooked along with the others at the Briks.

On the table were these memorable items: (1) figs, (2) a big chunk of cheese, (3) liver paté. (p. 64)

Now the terms of the image have shifted. The reluctant guests at the feast have become the ingredients—used for flavoring and then discarded. Shklovsky has ridiculed Lunacharsky's statement by the technique of the realized metaphor—by treating the vegetable reference literally and then dilating the image until it explodes. Included in the passage just cited is a good example of the accommodation/retraction pattern: "On the whole, we probably were vegetables. But not according to the reading from our meridian."

The final occurrence of this particular image is also the most famous—the most defiant. In the chapter called "A Case Ineptly Pleaded By Me," Shklovsky says, "We are not Marxists, but if that utensil should prove useful in our household, we will not eat with our hands out of spite."

This statement still rankled in certain circles three years later. The Marxist critic Isaak Nusinov, gloating over the beleaguered Shklovsky, wrote a scathing review of Shklovsky's book *Material and Style in Lev Tolstoy's Novel "War and Peace."* The review was entitled, "Belated Discoveries, or How V. Shklovsky Got Tired of Eating with His Bare Formalist Hands and So Supplied Himself with a Homemade Marxist Spoon."²⁸

28. I. M. Nusinov, "Zapozdalye otkrytiia, ili kak V. Shklovskomu nadoelo est' golymi formalistskimi rukami i obzavelsia samodel'noi marksistkoi lozhkoi," *Literatura i Marksizm*, 1929, no. 5, pp. 3–52. Nusinov was arrested during the purge of Jewish intellectuals in the late 1940s and died in 1950.



Shklovsky's witticism cropped up again in an interesting dispute between Kornelii Zelinsky, leader of the Constructivist movement, and Ivan Grossman-Roshchin, a leader of the proletarian writers. Complaining about conditions in the Soviet Union, Zelinsky said that the emphasis on rationality made life dull, sober, and joyless. He also objected to the idea of sacrificing the present on the altar of a glorious future: "Man should not be fertilizer for the future. I do not want a life in the antechamber of some future palace. My life is here and now." Accordingly, he advocated the establishment of a Bank of Public Confidence, where people could cash checks giving them the right to a "full-blooded, joyous, merry, devil-may-care existence."

Grossman-Roshchin, refusing Zelinsky the glamour of a comparison to the Underground Man, called him a capitalist, a spiritual émigré, and a rebel with the sniffles. He continued by saying that Zelinsky did not want to cook the soup of the future—he wanted to eat it right away. "As we know," said Grossman-Roshchin, "the Shklovskys of this world recommend that people not pick up the October spoons, because the interrelation between them and the October soup is an extremely complicated one!"²⁹

The images which have been discussed, for all their variety, point to underlying assumptions highly critical of the government's attitudes toward unorthodox elements. If Marx spoke about how bourgeois society treated the worker as a commodity, Shklovsky seems to be saying that the new society is treating men of his persuasion as commodities—semiperishable, or even expendable, commodities: a toy elephant to be squeezed, vegetables to be cooked, flax to be oppressed, pulled up by the roots, soaked, and crushed—a crop not wanted in a society where everyone must plant wheat. He speaks of himself and friends as merchandise to be picked over and probably discarded by the dominant proletarian class. The section devoted to village life suggests that the peasants, too, are being treated as commodities—a suggestion most explicit in the chapter called "Inexpensive Motors," which is a metaphor for peasant girls.

Throughout the first half of 1927 Shklovsky was subjected to critical abuse for the heresies of *Third Factory*. The climate in which he lived made him recall wistfully the days of the Revolution and the possibilities for freedom of expression that had since been limited: "Then there was no need for the grief of structuring life and restoring it. Only the carbohydrates and proteins were lacking to strengthen the kingdom of intellectual freedom under the cannons of the Aurora."³⁰

29. See I. Grossman-Roshchin, "Bank obshchestvennogo doveriia ili bogadel'nia deklassirovannykh," in *S kem i pochemu my boremsia*, ed. L. L. Averbakh (Moscow, 1930), pp. 166–74. This article first appeared in *Oktiabr'*, 1929, no. 6.

30. Shklovsky, *Gamburgskii schet*, p. 52.

In 1928 Shklovsky received a hard blow from an unexpected quarter. Veniamin Kaverin began publishing a satirical novel in which he mercilessly exposed the peccadilloes of his former mentor. In this novel, entitled *The Troublemaker, or Evenings on Vasily Island*,³¹ Kaverin depicted Shklovsky in the transparent guise of Professor Nekrylov, a disoriented egoist clinging desperately to the remnants of his former eminence.

The imposition of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928 quickly brought an end to the movements with which Shklovsky had been identified. The Serapion Brothers ceased to be a viable entity. The vicious campaign against the leaders of the “fellow travelers,” Evgenii Zamiatın and Boris Pilniak, in 1929 made clear that the time of tolerating elements not actively supportive of the party had passed. RAPP, the new organization of the Proletarian writers, was now delegated the power over literary affairs that it had been denied in 1925.

During the same year the New LEF, deprived of Mayakovsky’s support, dissolved—an event that Shklovsky has sadly described as the “passing of the last literary salon in Russia.”³² The desperate attempts of the Formalists to find a compromise satisfactory to the Marxist critics remained unsuccessful. Shklovsky’s attempts to create a synthesis of the sociological method and the Formal Method were greeted with derision. As the criticisms of Shklovsky intensified, Eikhenbaum published an article defending his friend.³³ He suggested that one reason for the prevalent fashion of attacking Shklovsky might be sought in his all-pervasive influence.

In early January 1930 another hard blow fell. The critic Grigorii Gukovsky published a devastating review of Shklovsky’s most recent attempt at a methodological compromise, *Matvei Komarov: Inhabitant of the City of Moscow*.³⁴ This article was not the vicious personal attack to which Shklovsky had become accustomed but a rigorous dissection of his study, point by point. A few weeks later Shklovsky published “A Monument to Scientific Error,” the “third surrender” of the trilogy and the work which is uniformly viewed as Shklovsky’s total capitulation to the regime. According to this view there were two alternatives for the Formalists by 1930: to become silent, or to acknowledge their errors. Shklovsky, the most aggressive and “presumably the most intransigent” of the group, was the first to recant the doctrines of Opoiaz

31. Kaverin’s book *Skandalist, ili vechera na Vasil’evskom ostrove* first appeared serially in the journal *Zvezda*, 1928, nos. 2–7. It appeared in book form in 1929 and has been published several times since. All quotations are taken from the 1931 edition.

32. See Viktor B. Shklovsky, *O Maiakovskom* (Moscow, 1940), pp. 208–14.

33. Boris Eikhenbaum, “O Viktore Shklovskom,” *Moi vremennik* (Leningrad, 1929), pp. 131–32. This issue, the first of what Eikhenbaum planned as a series of journals, proved to be the only issue.

34. G. Gukovsky, “Shklovskii kak istorik literatury,” *Zvezda*, 1930, no. 1, pp. 191–216.

publicly. According to Professor Erlich this was not too surprising, since “the *enfant terrible* of Formalism had started losing his nerve rather early,” as seen in *Zoo*, his first recantation: “Gone were the days when Shklovsky referred airily to Marxism as a gadget which might someday come in handy, when he wrote that ‘dialectical materialism is a very fine thing for a sociologist, but no substitute for a knowledge of mathematics and astronomy.’ Now he was quite ready to swear by the name of the master and to recognize Marxist dialectics as the alpha and omega of literary scholarship. ‘Sociological dilettantism,’ he wrote in the concluding passage, ‘simply will not do. It is necessary to undertake a thorough study of the Marxist method in its entirety.’”³⁵

A close look at “Monument,” however, reveals that silence or open recantation were not the only two alternatives available in 1930. To adapt Shklovsky’s heretical remark in *Third Factory*, there was no third alternative, but that was precisely the one that he chose. The third choice was the device of ostensible surrender, the device canonized in *Third Factory*—outward obedience undermined by defiance. The title of the article refers to a novel by Jules Romains called *Donogoo Tonka*.³⁶ In that book, a famous geographer faces the possibility that he will be denied membership in the Academy of Sciences because his most noted work contains a map of South America showing a city named Donogoo Tonka that does not exist. Through a series of hilarious and improbable events the error is rectified by the hasty construction of a city with that name, and the geographer is elected to the Academy. The book ends with the official promulgation in Donogoo Tonka of a cult of scientific error, to which the city owes its existence, and an appropriate statue is erected.

Shklovsky says in his article that he has no desire to stand as a monument to his own error. He admits that anyone ignoring the effect of the class struggle on literature is thereby neutralizing certain sectors of the front, and he also admits that his approach to literature in the early twenties had been too narrow. But he insists that the Formalists have long since modified those early positions. He mentions that Eikhenbaum had performed a useful service by urging the substitution of the term “morphological method” for “formal method.” In particular, he mentions the contribution of Tynianov, whose article on the literary fact, published in 1924 and dedicated to Shklovsky, criticized the view of literature as a static sum of devices and offered the proposition that a work of literature is a network of devices with complicated and dynamic interrelationships that change with the passage of time—a view

35. Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, p. 137.

36. Jules Romains, *Donogoo Tonka, ou Les miracles de la science: Conte cinématographique* (Paris, 1920).

whose value Shklovsky had recognized immediately, as his letter to Tynianov in *Third Factory* proves. He also mentions his study of *War and Peace* and his book on Matvei Komarov, both of which demonstrate new approaches to literature. He complains specifically that people have continued to charge the Formalists with the defects of their initial period and have refused to take into account the fact that they have long since abandoned those positions of their own accord.

Shklovsky's article, then, was not a betrayal of the Formalists, but a defense of their position as it had evolved during the twenties. Here, as in *Third Factory*, one can gain a false impression of the article when only the conciliatory passages are quoted without the subsequent remarks that undermine them. Without those remarks, his article sounds like a complete denunciation of Formalism accompanied by a meek acceptance of the Marxist point of view. However, it is instructive to look at the concluding portion of the article in its entirety:

People still think of the formal method in terms of its initial stage, when the elementary propositions were being defined, the material was being selected, and the terminology was becoming established.

As far as I am concerned, Formalism is a road already traversed—traversed and left several stages behind. The most important stage was the shift to consideration of the function of literary form. The only thing left of the Formal Method is the terminology, now being used by everyone, and a series of observations of a technological nature.

But for studying literary evolution on the social plane, the crude sociological approach is absolutely worthless.

It is essential to turn to the study of the Marxist method in its entirety.

It goes without saying that I am not declaring myself a Marxist, because one does not adhere to scientific methods. One masters them and one creates them.³⁷

This final paragraph is reminiscent of the statement made by Shklovsky in his "Letter to Lev Iakubinsky" in *Third Factory*, in which he tells his friend that he is "not about to become a hard-and-fast Marxist" and advises him to follow his example. Shklovsky is not repudiating Formalism in "Monument," and he is certainly not adhering to Marxism. His strategy is to redefine the word "Formalism" so that it applies exclusively to the initial period of the movement—say, from 1914 to 1923. He freely admits the limitations of the approach taken then, but strongly defends the positions evolved by the movement since 1923. As the quotation shows, he is not enthusiastic about the

37. Shklovsky, "Pamiatnik," p. 1.

sociological approach, and his attitude toward the Marxist method is made equivocal by the puzzling qualification “in its entirety.” Equivocation becomes subtle repudiation at the end of the article, where he refuses to declare himself a Marxist. The grounds for his refusal? Humility—a trait most people had previously overlooked in his personality. He will need time to master the scientific methods perfected by the Marxists. But this is Shklovsky speaking—the founder of an approach to literature that sought above all else to be scientific. In *Third Factory* (“Evenings at the Briks”) he outlined the essence of the formal method as a systematic approach to art, the refusal to view it as a reflection. He said, “We located the distinctive features of the genus. We began defining the basic tendencies of form. We understood that, in fact, you can distill from works of literature the homogeneous laws that determine their shape. In short, science is possible.” In the context of the statements supporting the formal approach and attacking the Marxist approach that Shklovsky made throughout the twenties, the reason given for his refusal to declare himself a Marxist in 1930 can be viewed only as irony, if not sarcasm.

After a close examination of Shklovsky’s article, it is difficult to endorse the following statement: “With the fiery champion of Opoiaz declaring Formalism to be a thing of the past, the remaining Formalist spokesmen had no other choice but to acquiesce in their own extinction. Whatever their reaction to Shklovsky’s statement, they were in no position to disassociate themselves publicly from it.”³⁸

Yet Shklovsky’s article did not strike all the critics as an epitaph to Formalism and a subservient acceptance of Marxist dialectics. M. Gelfand, in an article called “The Declaration of Tsar Midas, or What Has Happened to Viktor Shklovsky,”³⁹ accused Shklovsky of attempting a vicious maneuver designed to salvage the Formal Method, which required complete extinction. He accused him of attempting to deceive the Soviet public, taking particular umbrage at Shklovsky’s phrase “neutralization of certain sectors of the front,” which he identified as a “euphemism for vicious ideological sabotage, conducted at the behest of the bourgeoisie.” He went on to suggest ominously the “absolute neutralization of the neutralizers by an ideological firing squad.” Gelfand answered his own question repeatedly: nothing has happened to Viktor Shklovsky; he remains committed to his previous views. Shklovsky defended himself in an article entitled “Fish Out of Water, or Equation with an Unknown Quantity,” which he published at the end of March. He scoffed at Gelfand’s charges and announced his intention to continue pursuing his

38. Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, p. 139.

39. M. Gel'fand, “Deklaratsiia tsaria Midasa, ili chto sluchilos' s Viktorom Shklovskim,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Mar. 3, 1930, p. 2. This article was also printed in *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1930, no. 2, pp. 8–15.

work: "What do I do? I swim in the sea and behold new stars, understanding the laws of their movement anew. The fish out of water will not catch me."⁴⁰

The unconditional surrender sought by Shklovsky's enemies, in fact, never came, despite the savage campaign against him provoked by "Monument." Where this campaign would have ended is difficult to say. It was eclipsed two weeks later by the suicide of Mayakovsky, which shook the literary world of the Soviet Union profoundly and which was an intensely felt personal tragedy for Shklovsky, whom Mayakovsky had rescued from difficult situations many times.

Those who treat "Monument" as Shklovsky's final capitulation create the impression that thereafter he submitted meekly to the party line in order to survive and publish.⁴¹ This is not the place to embark on a study of Shklovsky's career after 1930, but even a cursory examination of that period reveals a completely different sort of pattern. Far from "playing it safe," Shklovsky continued throughout the thirties and forties to salvage what he could of the legacy left by Opoiaz. During the breathing space between the creation of the Writers' Union in 1932 and the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, he produced extremely interesting articles on such controversial figures as Olesha, Mandelstam, Tynianov, and Eisenstein. The *Literaturnaia gazeta* was charged with irresponsibility for allowing such "formalistically oriented" work to appear on its pages, and the first edition of the *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, referring to the articles of this period, described them as "based on the false concepts of Formalism."⁴²

In 1933 Shklovsky was attacked for his article "Southwest," which, among other things, overemphasized the influence of the West of the Odessa school of writers.⁴³ During the massive campaign against experimental art and "Formalism" in 1936 and 1937 he was called to task once again for the continuing pernicious effect of his ideas.⁴⁴

40. Viktor B. Shklovsky, "Sukhoplavtsy, ili uravnenie s odnim neizvestnym," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Mar. 31, 1930, p. 2. On the same page Gelfand replied in a short article entitled "Otvét neponiatnomu."

41. It should be pointed out that there has been a tendency to accept Professor Erlich's interpretation of "Monument" without examining the original document. See, for example, the introduction to *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. Lee Lemon and Marion Reis (Lincoln, 1965), pp. ix–xvii. See also Thompson, *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism*, p. 33.

42. See "Usilit' bor'bu s formalizmom," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Apr. 11, 1933, p. 1. See the entry on Formalism in *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1926–47), 62:441.

43. Viktor B. Shklovsky, "Iugo-zapad," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Jan. 5, 1933. Shklovsky was forced to print a retraction, which appeared as a letter to the editor in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Apr. 29, 1933.

44. See "O formalizme i naturalizme v literature," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Mar. 15, 1936, p. 3.

In 1940 Shklovsky published his book on Mayakovsky, the product of his preoccupation throughout the thirties with the fate of the poet. This book was denounced by the Marxist critics for its emphasis on the influence of Futurism and its attempt to rehabilitate the discredited Formalist theories.⁴⁵ The hostile reaction to *Mayakovsky* set the stage for a long, difficult period that Shklovsky was lucky to survive. After 1946 it became exceedingly dangerous to stress the role of the West in the development of Russian culture—an idea which had always been foremost in his writing. This campaign against the “cosmopolites” included extremely repressive measures against the Jews. Shklovsky was vulnerable on both counts. It would have been advisable for him to be inconspicuous during this period, but he exacerbated his position by writing a long defense of Veselovsky,⁴⁶ who was being attacked as a primary source of contamination from the West.

Between 1948 and 1953 almost nothing written by Shklovsky appeared in print. He reached the nadir of his existence as critic and writer in 1953 with the book *Remarks on the Prose of the Russian Classics*,⁴⁷ a dismal product of this difficult period. But in his writing since the death of Stalin he has returned at least partially to his earlier positions and has produced work of high quality.

Even this cursory account suggests how wrong it is to view “Monument” as the capitulation of a once-bold critic and to assume that he adhered to the party line after 1930. The testimony of Nadezhda Mandelstam alone has shown the falsity of that conception of his career. During the most dangerous years of the thirties—even in 1937, a year Russians remember with special dread—such pariahs as the Mandelstams were given shelter by Shklovsky, whose past made such generosity extremely dangerous. As Nadezhda Mandelstam says, “In Moscow there was only one house to which an outcast could always go.”⁴⁸ That was the house of Viktor and Vasilisa Shklovsky.

45. *O Maiakovskom*, first published in 1940, was included, with minor revisions, in Shklovsky's recent book of memoirs, *Zhili-byli* (Moscow, 1964; 2nd ed., Moscow, 1966). An English translation by Lily Feiler, entitled *Mayakovsky and His Circle*, was published in 1972. The reaction to the book may be seen in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, especially the issues of Nov. 12, 1940; Nov. 24, 1940; and Dec. 15, 1940.

46. Viktor B. Shklovsky, “Aleksandr Veselovskii—istorik i kritik,” *Oktiabr'*, 1947, no. 12, pp. 174–82.

47. Viktor B. Shklovsky, *Zametki o proze russkikh klassikov* (Moscow, 1953; 2nd ed., Moscow, 1955).

48. Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope: A Memoir*, trans. Max Hayward (New York, 1970), p. 346.