

B M EIKHENBAUM 1918 - 1929: LITERARY THEORY AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Sylvia Trott

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School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies

University of London

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns B M Eikhenbaum (1886 - 1959) and his work on Russian prose as a scholar, theorist and critic over a period from 1918 to 1929, in which he joined the Petrograd Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOIAZ), worked as a Formalist scholar at the State Institute for the History of the Arts (GIII) and Leningrad University, and, in 1927, began to produce work of a different, non-Formalist type. Considerable attention is paid to his books and articles on L N Tolstoi (particularly Molodoi Tolstoi (1922) and Lev Tolstoi (1928)) which demonstrate the different phases of his thought in the 1920s, and to his 1929 book Moi vremennik. The thesis discusses:

- 1 Eikhenbaum's background as a post-Symbolist critic from 1912 to 1917, the circumstances of his entry to OPOIAZ and his relations with his colleagues in it.
- 2 the principles of Formalist poetics demonstrated in works such as Molodoi Tolstoi and articles of 1918 to 1924; skaz and work on contemporary literature.
- 3 Eikhenbaum's polemical work as a member of OPOIAZ, both intra-literary (for example, relations with Zhirmunskii and Chukovskii) and extra-literary (the Marxist-Formalist controversy); his journalistic work on Russkii sovremennik and Zhizn' iskusstva.
- 4 Eikhenbaum's conception of history, the development of his political awareness (with the use of unpublished diary material) and his personal and professional crisis in 1925.
- 5 how contemporary social and political considerations affected Eikhenbaum's literary-historical articles and books from 1927 (the concept of literary byt), and the reactions to this work of his colleagues in OPOIAZ.
- 6 the genesis, character and purpose of Eikhenbaum's post-Formalist work from 1927 to 1929; his use of a 'second level' of discourse and techniques of analogy in literary history; his autobiographical writing in Moi vremennik

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## Notes on the text

I have followed the Library of Congress system of transliteration as used for the Slavonic and East European Review, with the following exceptions for proper names in common usage; R. O. Jakobson, A. I. Herzen (instead of Iakobson and Gertsen). Notes may be found at the end of each chapter.

## Abbreviations used in notes

### Books

Eikhenbaum, B. M.	<u>Molodoi Tolstoi</u> , Pb - Berlin, 1923,	MT
	facsimile reprint, Munich, 1968.	
	<u>Skvoz' literaturu</u> , L, 1924,	Sl
	reprinted 'S-Gravenhage, 1962.	
	<u>Literatura. Teoriia. Kritika. Polemika</u> ,	Lit
	L, 1927, reprinted Chicago, 1969.	
	<u>Lev Tolstoi Kniga pervaiia. Piatidesiatye</u>	LT
	<u>gody</u> , L, 1928, reprinted Munich, 1968.	
	<u>Moi vremennik. Slovesnost'</u> . Nauka.	Mv
	<u>Kritika. Smes'</u> , L, 1929.	
	<u>O literature. Raboty raznykh let</u> ,	O lit
	M, 1987.	
Erlich, V.	<u>Russian Formalism. History - Doctrine</u> ,	RF
	first published 1965, third revised edition,	
	New Haven and London, 1981.	

Ginzburg, L. Ia.	<u>Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom,</u> L, 1989.	Chps
	<u>Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti,</u> L, 1987.	Lpr
Shklovskii, V. B.	<u>Tret'ia fabrika,</u> M, 1926.	Tf
	<u>Gamburgskii schet. Stat'i -</u> <u>Vospominaniia - Esse,</u> M, 1990.	
Tynianov, Iu. N.	<u>Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino,</u> M, 1977.	PILK
Zhirmunskii, V. M.	<u>Izbrannye trudy. Teoriia</u> <u>literatury. Poetika. Stilistika,</u> L, 1977.	TLPS

#### Periodicals

<u>Knizhnyi ugol,</u> Pg	Ku plus date and issue.
<u>Pechat' i revoliutsiia,</u> M.	Pir plus date and issue.
<u>Revue des Etudes Slaves,</u> Paris, 57, 1985, 1.	RES
<u>Russkii sovremennik,</u> Pg.	Rs plus date and issue.
<u>Tynianovskii sbornik. Pervye tynianovskie chteniia,</u> Riga, 1984.	TS1
<u>Tynianovskii sbornik. Vtorye tynianovskie chteniia,</u> Riga, 1986.	TS2
<u>Tynianovskii sbornik. Tret'i tynianovskie chteniia,</u> Riga, 1988.	TS3
<u>Tynianovskii sbornik. Chetvertye tynianovskie</u> <u>chteniia,</u> Riga, 1990.	TS4
<u>Zhizn' iskusstva,</u> Pg.	Zh i plus date and issue.

## Articles

Chudakova, M. O., 'Sotsial'naia praktika,  
filologicheskaia refleksia i literatura v  
nauchnoi biografii  
Eikhenbauma i Tynianova',  
Tynianovskii sbornik. Vtorye tynianovskie  
chteniia, Riga, 1986, pp 103 - 131.

'Sots. praktika..'

Chudakova, M. O. and Toddes, E. A., 'Stranitsy  
nauchnoi biografii B. M. Eikhenbauma',  
Voprosy literatury, 1987, 1, pp 128 - 162.

'Stranitsy..'

'Perepiska B. M. Eikhenbauma i V. M. Zhirmunskogo',  
publ. N. A. Zhirmunskaiia and  
O. B. Eikhenbaum, introductory article by  
E. A. Toddes, notes by N. A. Zhirmunskaiia  
and E. A. Toddes, Tynianovskii sbornik.  
Tret'i tynianovskie chteniia, Riga, 1988,  
pp 256 - 329.

'Perepiska..'

## Other

State Institute for the History of the Arts in Leningrad  
(Gosudarstvennyi Institut Istorii Iskusstv)

GIII

Society for the Study of Poetic Language (Obshchestvo  
izucheniia poeticheskogo iazyka).

OPOIAZ

(Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstv)

in Moscow.

Copies of B. M. Eikhenbaum's diary entries for 23 August 1917 to 25 August 1918, and for 27 March 1923 to 15 July 1928 were kindly supplied by O. B. Eikhenbaum; the diaries for this period are held in TsGALI, fond 1527, op 1, ed khr 245. Quotations from Eikhenbaum's diaries are from these copies unless otherwise stated in the text.

## INTRODUCTION

Over three decades in the Soviet Union, Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum (1886 - 1959) wrote four monographs and many shorter works on Tolstoi, which constitute one of the most significant contributions to scholarship on Tolstoi in the world. His critical work on, among others, Lermontov, Leskov, Akhmatova and the Russian lyric also remain of significant interest more than thirty years after his death. He is, however, equally, or, perhaps, better known as a Formalist scholar, one of three leading members with V B Shklovskii and Iu N Tynianov, of OPOIAZ, the Society for the Study of Poetic Language set up in ~~Petrograd~~ in 1916.

Over a long and extremely productive life as a scholar, which he pursued through the transition to Soviet power, the terrors of the late 1930s and 1940s and two World Wars, Eikhenbaum's activity as a Formalist occupied a period of, at the most, seven years, from 1918 to 1925. In these years he produced some of his most original and challenging work which, with other Formalist writings, had a transforming influence on subsequent literary scholarship. It was initially the encounter with this work, including Molodoi Tolstoi and a collection of articles Skvoz' literaturu, which provoked this study. The questions I have sought to answer here arose at different phases of reading and re-reading Eikhenbaum's work and that of his colleagues in OPOIAZ. The excitement of discovery, the effort to reconstruct 'Formalist theory', and later, the thinking of different Formalists, the need to account for the evident disjunction between Eikhenbaum's work of the early twenties and his articles and books after 1927; all these are part of the impetus for this study. Here the critical texts themselves have been the primary material, and my practice has been to try to 'unpack' this relatively small quantity of material and follow the leads outwards, to arrive at a sense of what literary theory meant to Eikhenbaum at different stages, rather than to assemble and select from a much larger quantity of secondary material on Formalism.

A connected and equally important task has been to place, as far as possible, Eikhenbaum's scholarly texts in the context of the large quantity of self-reflexive writing he produced (diaries,

letters), and to link both his OPOIAZ thinking and his later work with his perception of social and political events. A certain sense of history, of 'the age', was very marked in the conversation and letters of the three leading Formalist colleagues, and informed their published work, and it was particularly strong in the case of Eikhenbaum. The attempt to establish both a social and a personal context for Eikhenbaum's work has been greatly helped by his daughter, Ol'ga Borisovna, who kindly presented the researcher with a copy of his diaries for 1917 to 1918, and 1923 to 1928.

## Chapter I

### CONVERSION

- 1 Before OPOIAZ
- 2 Entry to OPOIAZ: “from mysticism and philosophy to poetics”
- 3 OPOIAZ
  - Poetics: the specifically literary
  - Poetics: the immanence of the literary series
  - Poetics as science
  - ‘Kak sdelana Shinel’ Gogolia’
- 4 Early work on Tolstoi
  - ‘Tvorchestvo L. N. Tolstogo’
  - Tolstoi’s diaries
  - Tolstoi’s later work
  - Articles on Tolstoi 1919 - 1920
  - ‘O L’ve Tolstom’
  - ‘O krizisakh Tolstogo’
  - ‘Labirint tseplenii’



## Chapter I

### CONVERSION

#### 1 Before OPOIAZ

Eikhenbaum dated his entry to OPOIAZ, the Petrograd Society for the Study of Poetic Language, from 1918. For him, joining this small group of researchers in poetics represented a conversion, a fundamental change in the ways he conceived his working life, and indeed his life altogether. In 1921 he described this process in a letter to V M Zhirmunskii, a fellow literary scholar of his own generation, who had not experienced the attraction to literary theory in the same way:

“I myself resisted the OPOIAZ theses for a time, but then I began to feel their organic strength. My article on Gogol’s Shinel’ - that was the moment of crisis (perelom). And only from then do I reckon the beginning of my work with the ‘formal’ method. [...] Then I had to repudiate a great deal, and put an end to a great deal - that was not so easily achieved.”<sup>1</sup>

Eikhenbaum made it clear to his correspondent that his own embrace of a new set of ideas, involving renunciation and crisis, was preferable to Zhirmunskii’s retention of old ideas along with the new, to his “resistance, this desire to preserve your past, your independence”<sup>2</sup> What was the nature of the conversion that demanded such sacrifices? In order to understand Eikhenbaum’s entry to OPOIAZ and the circumstances that accompanied it we shall consider briefly his work before 1918.

Eikhenbaum came to OPOIAZ as a post-symbolist literary critic of some five years experience. He began publishing criticism in 1912, when he was 26, in the journal Zaprosy zhizni, and thereafter wrote prolifically, in Zavety, Severnye zapiski, Russkaia mysl’ and Russkaia molva,

where he was review editor of foreign literature. Eikhenbaum's critical work extended over a wide range of subjects; although he had no marked personal themes and interests, he had a certain intellectual stance which affected his professional work on widely differing aspects of literature.

An important element of this stance was Eikhenbaum's view of his literary generation as one which had succeeded the decadence of late Symbolism, whose task was to assess, summarise and make use of the gains of a movement which had ceased to be an active force. As a post-Symbolist critic Eikhenbaum saw one of the main Symbolist victories as the struggle, often at great personal cost, to legitimate the view-point of the individual, which had been ignored in the rationalist, publicist traditions of the nineteenth century. In a 1914 review of German poetry he wrote:

"The decadents were less prophets than victims, their struggles with antitheses were excruciating, it took them a lot of effort to overcome the rationalist prejudices of the preceding generation. In that overcoming, perhaps, was their chief achievement."<sup>3</sup>

Eikhenbaum saw the task of his literary generation as the creation of a new synthesis; he sought to combine the gains of Symbolism, the often painful legitimization of the individual - lichnost' - with aspects of nineteenth-century public spirit, the intelligent's service to society - obshchestvennost' - in an organic whole. This effort to unite two previously mutually exclusive sets of ideas was a position of principled cultural synthesis and consolidation - the 'will to wholeness' (volia k tsel'nosti)<sup>4</sup>. He wrote to L Ia Gurevich:

"From the period of "public spirit" you have a bitter after-taste (...) the individual was thought of as simply unnecessary, his intimate world as a luxury. (...) And now, I think, human relationships will begin to improve. A terrible thirst for a common flow of strength, for agreement - with respect for individuality and its world."<sup>5</sup>

Eikhenbaum saw the Tsekh poetov, to a meeting of which he was invited in 1914 by Gumilev, Mandel'shtam and G Ivanov, as an example of the new integration, "...public spirit turned from politics to poetry"<sup>6</sup>. In the same way his review of Zhirmunskii's widely read book Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaia mistika welcomed the association of mystical realism with the ethic of duty in Romanticism and the removal of the supposed Romantic split between ideal and

reality.<sup>7</sup> Merezhkovskii's book on Nekrasov and Tiutchev, Dve tainy russkoi poezii, emphasised Nekrasov at the expense of Tiutchev in the interests of the new obshchestvennost', and Eikhenbaum's review of it sharply rejected this use of antitheses, which made a true synthesis impossible<sup>8</sup>. For him the publicist approach alone, whether traditional or in Merezhkovskii's modern use, was not acceptable. The need to construct a new position from the extremes of past conflict was also expressed in a demand for the wholesale re-reading and re-evaluation in a contemporary context of works which had suffered either Symbolist or publicist rejection, or which had been misread, or simply forgotten<sup>9</sup>. Zhukovskii, Derzhavin and Karamzin were among the authors that Eikhenbaum considered in need of re-evaluation.

Another key idea associated with the 'will to wholeness', and which Eikhenbaum also welcomed in Zhirmunskii's book on the German Romantics<sup>10</sup>, was the 'sense of life' (*chuvstvo zhizni*). As early as 1906 Eikhenbaum wrote to his parents:

"I cannot hide from myself that I am distant from contemporary upheavals, as such. Thanks to the natural sciences, I have come so close to an integral way of life, to life in general, that its separate parts, the separate organs of this mysterious entity and their functions are interesting to me as parts, as organs, and not as organisms, and, taken separately, cannot substitute for the whole for me, for life in the full meaning of that word."<sup>11</sup>

The "integral way of life" in this letter, written when Eikhenbaum had not yet begun his literary studies or rediscovered the German Romantics, has strong associations with Goethe. Here 'life' stands as an integrating force in opposition to preoccupation with "its separate parts" and "contemporary upheavals" such as politics; Eikhenbaum was not involved in the 1905 revolution<sup>12</sup>, and was, as we shall see, indifferent to political reforms, though not to social change, in 1917<sup>13</sup>. Eikhenbaum may have come across concepts similar to this 'sense of life' in Wölfflin's art-history and in the work of the biologist Mechnikov; he reviewed Bergson (whose élan vital was comparable) in 1912 and 1913<sup>14</sup>. Eikhenbaum used the 'sense of life' as a term in professional criticism, for example in a 1914 review of work on Pushkin, where he proposed it as a term close to 'world-perception' and in a 1914 essay on Chekhov and Gogol<sup>15</sup>. This was an extension of his original use of the term as part of a personal philosophy, very close

to the “ardent acceptance” of life<sup>16</sup> he applauded in Zhirmunskii’s re-definition of Romanticism. A short quotation from Eikhenbaum’s review of Zhirmunskii’s book will show the basic intellectual position of his criticism at this time, including the call for re-evaluation and synthesis and a version of his concept of the sense of life:

“V Zhirmunskii immediately turns to the work of synthesis and defines the essence of Romanticism in order to link it to recent tendencies in literature, both Russian and Western. The author considers this essence to be a mystical feeling, defined by him as ‘a positive feeling of the presence of the infinite, of the divine in everything finite’. [...] the author arrives at a new definition of Romanticism: ‘..Romanticism is not only a realistic world-perception, but it is crowned at times by an ardent acceptance of life of the kind of which only *mystical* realism is capable.’”<sup>17</sup>

As this short excerpt makes clear, connected with both the ‘will to wholeness’ and the ‘sense of life’ was a strong, unaffiliated religious, or mystical, sensibility, the acknowledgement of an Absolute, of life as miracle. In 1912 Eikhenbaum wrote to his parents:

“For me the whole of life, *from the very beginning*, is a miracle, not because I do not understand its phenomena, but because I know that they cannot be understood. Our worst habit is being accustomed to the *world*, which dulls our *cosmic emotion* and our religious feeling, ie the sense of miracle. (...) Recently religious questions in general have begun to preoccupy and interest me strongly.”<sup>18</sup>

Eikhenbaum sought a way of making the transition from a general religious sense to specific religious (church) practice and affiliation; in 1913 he wrote to Gurevich of Jammes and Claudel, whose mystery plays he had reviewed<sup>19</sup>:

“I feel in them some kind of new religious sense - the combination of mysticism with feeling for the church (*tserkovnost'*). After all, our future is in that combination.”<sup>20</sup>

The overall philosophical and religious conception which Eikhenbaum hoped would evolve to facilitate this transition would allow political as well as religious action. Three years later he wrote to the same correspondent:

“I need some further stimuli to go from the Absolute to relative politics and historical religion - the church. In this is the whole difficulty of my present state. The war has very much pushed me towards this, but still did not quite get me to that point, although it

has revealed a great deal, both in religion and in politics. [...] But not everything in my life is yet complete enough to loosen my tongue for political discussions. I think my work on Karamzin, Zhukovskii, Tiutchev, Gogol' will very much help me. After all it's exactly like that with them - religion is directly embodied in politics."<sup>21</sup>

This sense of the Absolute and the 'will to wholeness' played a part in Eikhenbaum's reception of the revolutionary events a year later.

Eikhenbaum's correspondent in the letters above and closest literary associate in the older generation in these years was Liubov' Iakovlevna Gurevich, friend of Tolstoi and Leskov, at this time literary editor of Russkaia mysl' and theatre editor of Russkaia molva, and Eikhenbaum's mentor and friend from 1913. Of his contemporaries in the literary world, V M Zhirmunskii, who was becoming established as an academic and author, occupied a somewhat similar position<sup>22</sup>, and the two men kept up a frequent professional and personal correspondence after leaving Petersburg University. With Iu A Nikol'skii<sup>23</sup>, a younger literary scholar, Eikhenbaum carried on his search for a new approach to the study of literature, for new methodological principles which would supersede academic clichés. These would be based on philosophical exploration of the nature of artistic knowledge, which would result in "an epistemologically based aesthetics"<sup>24</sup> allowing the study of style and poetics. This question of the nature of artistic knowledge as a basis for literary study became central for Eikhenbaum in 1915 -1916. He found support for his thinking in the work of Frank, Losskii and Viacheslav Ivanov<sup>25</sup>, and several articles reflect his philosophical research.<sup>26</sup>

Some time before this, in 1914, Eikhenbaum had come into contact for the first time with Futurists. At this stage, he had found nothing of interest and much to deplore in Futurism, had denied the importance of Acmeism<sup>27</sup>, and, not long before, declared Tiutchev and Blok to be his idols<sup>28</sup>. On 8 February 1914 he had attended an evening 'on the new word', where, among others, V Shklovskii, "a small thick-set student with a large black head, a big mouth and a rough voice"<sup>29</sup>, spoke. For Eikhenbaum, "It was the speech of a mad-man."<sup>30</sup> He left precipitately before the end of the evening, and wrote a long and outraged account of it to Gurevich; in his view Russian Futurists were "rationalists, mechanics,(...) true atheists and cold-blooded experimenters (...) [and] the imitators and degenerates of Symbolism"<sup>31</sup>.

However, by 1916, Acmeism, particularly Akhmatova<sup>32</sup>, had become important to Eikhenbaum, and Futurism was of interest. When the first OPOIAZ Sbornik po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka appeared in that year, Shklovskii's article on zaum' attracted Eikhenbaum's serious consideration, and he reviewed the collection sympathetically, although with caveats and disagreements<sup>33</sup>. Iakubinskii's concept of poetic and practical language re-appeared in Eikhenbaum's article 'Karamzin' of that year, with a reference to Iakubinski's and Shklovskii's articles in the Sbornik<sup>34</sup>, and his long article on Derzhavin revealed a concern with poetics, material and style, "the special study of artistry"<sup>35</sup>, though, as in 'Karamzin', they were still considered under the rubric of a metaphysical whole:

"The system of images, the rhythm and phonetics of the verse itself are defined by the 'intuition of integrated existence' which lies at the basis of artistic creativity."<sup>36</sup>

These were the last published articles of Eikhenbaum's long and prolific pre-OPOIAZ phase of literary criticism. A process of change had begun which continued over two years, until Eikhenbaum thought of himself as finally and primarily part of OPOIAZ.

## 2 Entry to OPOIAZ: "from mysticism and philosophy to poetics"

In the summer of 1917 Eikhenbaum began meeting O M Brik to discuss verse (there is no diary record of the first meeting with Shklovskii; the first entry mentioning a conversation with him is in July 1918). By 26 August 1917 Eikhenbaum was sufficiently one of Brik's kruzhok - unnamed in the diary, but thought to be OPOIAZ - to discuss how meetings and publications should be organised. In the same entry Eikhenbaum recorded discussions about 'the events' with L Ia Gurevich and his recently returned anarchist brother Vsevolod<sup>37</sup>, telling them both his plans to read lectures on literature to workers and noting their approval. It is noticeable, however, that it was only in the part of the entry devoted to his evening with Brik that Eikhenbaum used the word 'we' in a way which concerned both the literary kruzhok and wider social and political issues:

“...I spent the evening at O M Brik’s. We discussed the question of publication (V M Zhirmunskii’s letter from the Crimea). It’s planned like this: a special editorial commission isn’t necessary, the group will hear work proposed for publication at meetings and decide its value. Entry to the group to be made more difficult - the presentation of a lecture and its approval will be essential. A lot about the moment - the split in the intelligentsia, its indifference to social creativity, malice, ‘drivel’ and so on. About Nikol’skii, Gippius. Here there is something very characteristic. *Those people* [my italics L T] needed only political reforms. But *for us* exactly that is uninteresting and indifferent. What has shaken and drawn me is that I have seen a thirst for a new culture, for a new social order. A lot about poetry. ....”<sup>38</sup>

Brik, the work of the new group, and the perspectives for social change set in train by the February Revolution were closely connected for Eikhenbaum. Already Nikol’skii, whom Eikhenbaum had envisioned as co-founder of a new school of literary study in November 1916<sup>39</sup>, had become one of ‘those people’ as opposed to ‘us’. Their disagreement at this stage seems to have been more political than literary. Nikol’skii saw Eikhenbaum as naively immersed in Bolshevik sympathies<sup>40</sup>, while Eikhenbaum wrote to Zhirmunskii of Nikol’skii:

“...The essence of our disagreement has been defined: he supposes that there is no need to think now, that we need to affirm the elementary truths (the state, nationality) and fight for them. I tried to prove to him that the vocation of the true intelligentsia (as distinct from the “intelligenty”) is always to *think* honourably, and now particularly. Therefore, I think the true intelligentsia cannot and should not be a party intelligentsia.”<sup>41</sup>

Eikhenbaum always remained unaligned politically; he welcomed the possibility of creative change and social justice introduced by the Revolution, but, even at this stage, rejected Marxism in reflections on questions of state power, ethics and history provoked by his brother’s political thought.<sup>42</sup> Zhirmunskii’s political sympathies were closer to Nikol’skii’s than to Eikhenbaum’s, but Eikhenbaum shared his hopes for a new culture with Gurevich. His explanation to her of the plan of his proposed lectures to workers shows how closely literary and social change were intertwined in his thinking and how Futurism had been transformed for him from soulless mechanics to a revolutionary movement with implications for all literature. A certain generous naivety is also evident:

“...”I also spoke to L Ia [Gurevich] about the lectures (today I sketched out the introductory one). Through the idea of social creativity, as not only a new material creativity, but a new spiritual culture - to the idea that the scope [of it] should be both broad and deep. Having justified the theme itself in their eyes in this way - go on to art as the nerve of life. About the literary revolution which preceded the social one (Futurism). Explain in what sense Futurism is a revolutionary movement. The idea of the poetic word, of zaum’ language. Then about how zaum’ language has always been at the basis of verbal art. Show the main elements of this revolution with Futurist examples and, having settled the difference between practical and poetic language (sounds, rhythm, images, syntax) go on to the consideration of separate questions. At the first lecture it will probably only be possible to get to this point. Call the whole cycle - ‘What is Literature?’”<sup>43</sup>

During the process of radical change in his thinking about literature, the old ideas and the new could be seen side by side; here the spiritual and philosophical - art as the nerve of life, part of a spiritual culture - and the specifically literary - the difference between poetic and practical language - appear together and demonstrate Eikhenbaum’s transitional position. At this stage, Futurism operates in both categories, as a defining element in the new spiritual culture, and as a means of access to literary specifics. Eighteen months later, as we shall see, the categories had become quite distinct; Eikhenbaum made the distinctions polemically clear in his article on Shinel’ (by which he dated his definitive change of stance) and his book on Tolstoi.

A similar coexistence of the old and the new, in this case of Belyi and Maiakovskii, is visible in Eikhenbaum’s letter to Zhirmunskii of 10 August 1917. He announced his work on Maiakovskii, with few details, and wrote of Belyi’s article ‘Zhezl Aarona’ on the ‘sound-image’ (zvukoobraz) in the first issue of Skify:

“..it is very interesting, although madly chaotic. He has it in for aesthetes and Symbolists, and a little for Futurists. Belyi is positively becoming a great man of our day and the epoch of V Ivanov has receded to eternity.”<sup>44</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s interest in versification, his original point of contact with Brik, the kruzhok and Futurism, had found another influential stimulus in Belyi’s literary work and public



appearances, after he returned from abroad in 1916. Earlier Eikhenbaum had been greatly impressed by Belyi's 1910 book Simvolizm, "almost the first real book on the theory of the word in Russian [...] [which] will make the epoch [...] criticism of form, of *how* a thing is made."<sup>45</sup> In October 1917 Eikhenbaum's admiration for Belyi continued alongside his newer enthusiasms, although he disagreed with Belyi's theory of the coincidence of sound and sense in verse, and aspects of his versification.<sup>46</sup> Echoes of Belyi's sense of the crisis of culture and the split between the dry, formal life of consciousness and the live word appear in Eikhenbaum's article 'Rech' o kritike' of April 1918, though Futurist motifs predominate. In the far-reaching process of re-orientation which entry to OPOIAZ implied for him, Eikhenbaum came to see Belyi's essentially Symbolist study of form as fundamentally incompatible with the Formal method and attacked the work that had interested him in 1917 polemically in 'O zvukakh v stikhe' in 1920.<sup>47</sup> As we shall see, the incompatibility was inherent in OPOIAZ principle; the assessment was repeated in Eikhenbaum's later overall summary of OPOIAZ activity, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda'(1925).<sup>48</sup>

During the transitional period between August 1917 and late 1918 Eikhenbaum wrote a small group of articles in which OPOIAZ literary concepts and enthusiasm for the huge, transforming changes in cultural life are combined with a Futurist-inspired concern with the spoken, live word as opposed to the dead, abstract word of written language and with the perception of the 'barbarian' or 'wild man' (dikar')<sup>49</sup>, as opposed to 'civilised' man. In this multiple focus they differ from the work written from late 1918 onwards, which is exclusively, if polemically, concerned with literature, and where echoes of the 'live' word survive in an interest in articulation and diction.

'O khudozhestvennom slove', written in April 1918 and not published at the time, was Eikhenbaum's first largely OPOIAZ-inspired article. Eikhenbaum explored at some length the concept of poetic and practical language, and ideas derived from Shklovskii recur, for example, poetic speech characterised as 'made difficult'<sup>50</sup> and art opposed to automatised perception<sup>51</sup>. But the transition was still in process; Eikhenbaum suggested Belyi's Simvolizm as well as OPOIAZ Sborniki as further reading, and though, in line with OPOIAZ thinking, he rejected

Potebnia's definition of poetry as "thinking in images"<sup>52</sup>, he substituted his own concept of "speech experience", of a "heightened, subtle sense of the word (*chuvstvo slova*)"<sup>53</sup> for it. Almost in the role of a manifesto he appended to this somewhat pedestrian article a statement of faith in the power of the 'live word', which, though originating with Futurists<sup>54</sup>, had, it seems, taken on for Eikhenbaum the force of the 'sense of life' so important to him a few years earlier:

"Our abstract culture has so accustomed us to the printed word. that we do not hear and do not feel the live word, the sensual word. There is some deep inner link between the character of a culture and the life of the word. Whatever our terrifying days bring us, one thing is certain: life has been roused, the word has stirred, culture has been displaced from some dead point. Let the wild man (*dikar'*) begin to speak - our frozen speech should learn from him the live, the bloody word. .."<sup>55</sup>

Close to the "wild man" of this manifesto, the barbarian (*varvar*) was the leit-motif of a shorter animated article, 'Rech' o kritike', published in May 1918. Celebrating the advent of a new criticism and a new literary history, Eikhenbaum invited critics and historians to admit that they did not understand literature, and had lied and deceived their readers in the search for content, for the 'idea'. As an alternative model of art, in place of the 'idea', he proposed Tolstoi's answer to Strakhov's criticism of Anna Karenina, in which Tolstoi spoke of the work as an "endless labyrinth of connections"<sup>56</sup>, a model Eikhenbaum then continued to use frequently to demonstrate and legitimate the OPOIAZ idea of art as construction. By way of introduction, Eikhenbaum echoed Blok's vision in his Skify earlier that year of the revolution as a vivifying elemental force<sup>57</sup>, and drew this, in part clearly self-referent, picture of radical change:

"The point is that we have all become barbarians to a certain degree (and perhaps even to a large degree). And that is not at all as bad as it seems to many. It's true, we did not particularly suffer from civilization, but we strived for it and envied it. Now we are not up to it. Suddenly there is too much to be done, too many worries - the simplest, vital ones, there is no time to dream. This is the 'tragedy of the Russian intelligentsia', but after all we will agree that precisely *tragedy* and precisely *this kind* of tragedy was what we needed. Not a 'tendency', not a 'movement', but a crisis, a break-up (not a shift!). Life has struck us on the head. Our perceptions have altered. We have become

observant, sharp-eyed, attentive. We think, speak and *live in a different way*.

This last is the most important of all. We were deaf and blind - both in life and in art.”<sup>58</sup>

Metaphors of fracture (*perelom*, *sлом*) recur in Eikhenbaum’s short articles on Tolstoi of 1919/20 in terms of ‘crisis’, again with a degree of self-reference, as we shall see. They apply here both to the Revolution and to the accompanying change in the way Eikhenbaum understood the study of literature. His enthusiasm for revolutionary change, where old habits of thought were (apparently) discarded for new (the essence of conversion), was conditioned by his earlier efforts to unite the individual and the social, and by his earlier search for a transition from the Absolute to concrete political and religious reality. In an article, ‘*Mysli o revoliutsii*’, which Eikhenbaum wrote in February 1918 for his brother’s newspaper *Golos truda*, protesting against the murders of the Kadets Shingarev and Kokoshkin, he spoke of the Revolution as a “mystery of creative struggle”, which called for “the widest and freest thought” and the “boldest and most unrestrained belief”, and was surrounded by “an aureole of an almost religious Absolute”.<sup>59</sup> Eikhenbaum’s comment on this article to Zhirmunskii shows a degree of distance, but also his sincerity:

“You were horrified by Kaledin’s suicide, but I was quite aghast at the murder of Shingarev and Kokoshkin. It was, in my view, an undoubted sign that the Revolution is falling apart and morally dying. I have written a feuilleton on this theme which was published (you will be horrified) in my brother’s newspaper - *Golos truda*. But I wanted exactly that.”<sup>60</sup>

Thus, though Eikhenbaum was, it seems, aware that he was engaging in a certain idiosyncratic revolutionary rhetoric, at which Zhirmunskii “will be horrified”, his personal involvement, the intention to restate threatened ideals, cannot be doubted.

A similar enthusiasm for Maiakovskii<sup>61</sup>, whose verse was: “ a revolution. A different verse, a different poetics, different words - everything anew”<sup>62</sup> - led Eikhenbaum to write his article ‘*Trubnyi glas*’ with a popular conversational approach, producing a dissonance between his analysis of the verse and his opening claims to be a madman writing for madmen. The same kind of clash between the subject of the article, the task of criticism, and the barbarian motif

occurs in 'Rech' o kritike'. In 'Trubnyi glas', written in Spring 1918, Eikhenbaum defended Maiakovskii's work against the charge of being unpoetic; it was the verse of the trumpet, not of the lyre, written to be shouted before huge crowds, with rhythms, lines and rhymes adapted to that purpose. In 'O khudozhestvennom slove', written at about the same time, Eikhenbaum spoke of Maiakovskii's simplicity as a device, in which "the whole lexis, the whole construction of phrases and combination of words are, as it were, born for the first time."<sup>63</sup> In these articles the Futurist colouring tends to obscure the critical element. During his OPOIAZ period Eikhenbaum became a master at writing serious, accessible criticism; at this stage the desire to write accessibly and to bring 'life' and criticism together produced this small group of uneasily combined articles.

During this transitional period from mid-1917 to late 1918 Brik and Eikhenbaum met frequently and Brik was the major source and stimulus for new thinking about literature for Eikhenbaum. He talked with Brik not only about his work on verse - the first version of his Melodika stikha was written in February and March 1918<sup>64</sup> - but about his long preface to Tolstoi's Detstvo.Otrochestvo.Iunost',<sup>65</sup> written in 1918/1919, but not published until 1922, in which Eikhenbaum first expressed many of the ideas he later expanded in Molodoi Tolstoi. Eikhenbaum read and discussed this work on Tolstoi with several people, including Gurevich and Zhirmunskii, but Brik's function was different. This diary entry of 25 August 1918 shows both that he saw Brik as a competent judge of his work in the new mode, and that the process of transition to OPOIAZ concepts had not yet finished; Eikhenbaum found it difficult to extricate himself from extra-literary concerns - in this case psychological interpretations:

"...I read to Brik about Tolstoi. I understand what I have to do, to correct it. It is still somewhat in the draft stage - particularly the chapter with quotations from the diaries. I have to make it better proportioned - put it together more strictly, drily, cross out my psychological (agitated) commentary - like 'maturing passions' and so on. That is saccharine, boring and distracting. I have to keep the chapter about the diaries strictly in a tone of psychic stylisation (the germ of creativity), and talk about that at the beginning, and not at the end, in detail: a psychologist has to establish a real psychic type from the diaries, but for the literary historian they are the material of style."<sup>66</sup>

In late 1918 Brik's role in Eikhenbaum's literary life was assumed by Shklovskii, who became Eikhenbaum's friend, spur and critic, and his fellow conspirator in the work and public appearances of the common enterprise of OPOIAZ. In the winter of 1918 Shklovskii had returned to Petrograd, after relinquishing political resistance against the Bolshevik regime as a right SR, and after Gor'kii had guaranteed his political reliability.<sup>67</sup> Earlier in 1918, Shklovskii had made only infrequent and clandestine appearances in the city; Eikhenbaum recorded two conversations briefly. On 22 July:

"V B Shklovskii dropped in and read the draft of his work on 'plot-construction'. Very interesting and very talented! The main conclusion - neither plots nor motifs travel (Veselovskii), but schemes: plot is a device. It very much stirred me (sil'no rasshevelilo menia) - I started thinking about my own work. Some indefiniteness about it disturbs me. I swing between large questions and theories and concrete empirical work..."<sup>68</sup>

On 28 July, even more briefly, Eikhenbaum wrote:

"...V B Shklovskii and V E Sezeman came to me today. Shklovskii is entirely taken up with his work about plot (that is delightful in him!), with Sezeman I talked about ordinary matters..."<sup>69</sup>

Even at this early stage in their acquaintance (though these are apparently not the first meetings) Shklovskii functioned as a stimulus for Eikhenbaum's thinking about his own work. An index of Shklovskii's rising importance for him later in 1918, from a perspective affected by the subsequent break in Eikhenbaum's personal and professional friendship with Zhirmunskii, is Zhirmunskii's comment to Shklovskii towards the end of his life, in 1970:

"...I remember clearly to this day how Boris Mikhailovich came to me at Saratov [in October 1918], completely worked up and as it were internally shattered by the abundance of new ideas coming from you, which he received at that time literally as a revelation..."<sup>70</sup>

Eikhenbaum's 1921 memory of his visit to Saratov tends to support Zhirmunskii's later memory:

"Remember how you [Zhirmunskii] disagreed with the concept of 'motivation', how harshly you objected to Shklovskii's basic theses. One thing I particularly remember. I came to Saratov with Tristram Shandy, meaning to read it in English. You said then I

had chosen badly - that it was a boring novel, impossible to finish. Compare that with what you thought and said about Sterne after Shklovskii's work."<sup>71</sup>

These "basic theses" resulted in the settled polemical stance and exclusively literary character of Eikhenbaum's work from 1919 - 1921, quite different from the Futurist-oriented articles of the transitional period, which we shall look at in the next section.

In August 1918 Eikhenbaum was certainly inclined to see himself and Zhirmunskii as engaged upon essentially the same path of personal and literary evolution. His record of their meeting on 20 August characterises this transitional period for Eikhenbaum; the old terms - world-perception, mysticism, philosophy - are present, but negated, the new <sup>term</sup> poetics - is connected with the zeitgeist, which became part of Eikhenbaum's concept of history as he later expressed it:

"...Today I heard that Vitia Zhirmunskii had arrived. I went to him straight away and straight away we began endless literary conversations. He told me in detail the content and construction of his new book about Byron. Among other things he talked about how, in his view, one should put the question of literary influence... Very close to what I say about it in the Tolstoi article. Not 'world-perception', not the person, but poetics, and not 'influence', but assimilation - for this reason differences are very important (I advised him to look at Christiansen on 'differential qualities'). I told him about Tolstoi. We talked about our evolution - away from mysticism and philosophy to poetics. The spirit of the generation moves us."<sup>72</sup>

By 1919 Eikhenbaum no longer associated the religious philosophical mode with himself, even negatively. It had become externalised, the object of polemics, as we shall see in the next section. It was also beginning to be clear by then that Eikhenbaum and Zhirmunskii, far from evolving in the same way, were in disagreement about the basic tasks of poetics.

Until now OPOIAZ has appeared in this account as the source of a body of ideas which have been taken for granted. What were the basic tenets of OPOIAZ thinking about literature? What were the ideas current at the end of 1918 and beginning of 1919, when Eikhenbaum saw himself as finally part of OPOIAZ?

Much has been written about OPOIAZ literary theory. A difficulty in conveying basic OPOIAZ ideas at the end of 1918 is the absence of work about theory written at the time. At this stage OPOIAZ demonstrated ~~its~~ principles directly and polemically on concrete literary material. Few principles were stated, most were implied; theory was in the process of development. The reader must deduce the principles involved. Some time later, from 1921, explanatory overviews of theory began to appear. The difficulty here is that later accounts by Formalists often had their own agenda; Eikhenbaum's 1925 review 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', for example, was concerned to present the evolution of Formalist theory as an essentially unified progression. But to some degree the use, along with earlier material, of later overviews by Formalists of different orientations is unavoidable if the basic ideas of Formalism are to be presented. Here we shall first assemble a limited theoretical overview, and then look at Eikhenbaum's articles of late 1918 to 1920.

OPOIAZ, an acronym for Obshchestvo izucheniia poeticheskogo iazyka, the Society for the Study of Poetic Language, first came into existence as a small group in Petrograd in 1916. At this stage the group included L P Iakubinskii, a linguist, O M Brik, who wrote on verse and financed its publications, and V B Shklovskii, the main activator of the group. When Eikhenbaum joined the group in 1917, other members were B A Kushner, Shklovskii's brother, V I B Shklovskii, E D Polivanov; Tynianov became a member only in late 1919 or 1920. OPOIAZ published non-periodical collections of articles, the Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka; one in 1916, two in 1917 and one in 1919, in which Eikhenbaum's article on Gogol's Shinel' appeared. The second 1917 Sbornik contained Shklovskii's 'Iskusstvo kak priem', which became a kind of manifesto for OPOIAZ. The Sborniki were followed by separate

editions of articles under the OPOIAZ imprint.

As we saw in the previous section, Eikhenbaum summarised his orientation to OPOIAZ in his diary entry of 20 August 1918:

“..Not the ‘world-view’, not the person, but poetics, and not ‘influence’ but assimilation (...) [an] evolution away from mysticism and philosophy to poetics.”<sup>73</sup>

Here the negation of established critical categories (the author, the author’s ‘world-view’, and his ‘influence’) is as important as the affirmation of the new; rejection of the long-sanctioned use of literature by scholars and critics of all shades of opinion as a vehicle for socio-political, biographical, psychological and philosophical interpretations was the most important stimulus to OPOIAZ theory. Symbolism, the major literary school immediately preceding the Futurist-Formalist phenomenon, with its inherent metaphysical tendency, was a particular target of Formalist attack on these grounds, though it had pioneered the study of verse form.<sup>74</sup> Eikhenbaum’s rejection of these uses of literature in this entry is clear, though the rejection of ‘the person’ requires comment; critical preoccupation with the personality of the author, identification of the author with the work, or with the fictional character - the traditional biographical and psychological arguments from the work to the author’s life and vice versa - all this is abandoned. But what else do these notes imply?

Poetics: the specifically literary

Opposing the confusion of literature with secondary, essentially foreign areas of study, OPOIAZ proposed the study of the specifically literary and defined the object of study - ‘poetics’ in Eikhenbaum’s phrase above - as, in Jakobson’s later description, “literaturnost”, that is, what makes a given work a literary work ”<sup>75</sup>. Jakobson went on to describe the state of literary studies before OPOIAZ and its analogue, the Moscow Linguistic Circle<sup>76</sup>:

“..Until now historians of literature have on the whole been like policemen, who, intending to arrest a particular person, seized for good measure everybody and everything that was in the flat, and also random passers by on the street. In this way everything was grist to the literary historians’ mill, byt, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of a science of literature, a conglomerate of home-made disciplines was created. It seemed to be forgotten that these articles belong to the corresponding sciences, the



history of philosophy, the history of culture, psychology and so on - and that the latter can naturally use literary works as well, as defective, second-rate documents.”<sup>77</sup>

How then was literariness to be defined? Formalists went on proposing more complex definitions of the literary until the end of Formalist activity. The following early articles will serve as examples of how certain propositions remained active in Formalist theory, while their superfluous elements, or those later perceived as extreme, were dropped. An early article by Iakubinskii defined the difference between poetic (literary) language and practical language in terms of the goal of the speaker. In his view, practical language, whose goal was communication, gave no value to words and sounds as such; in poetic language word and sound were important in themselves, and their semantic value lost importance.<sup>78</sup> This oppositional distinction remained a basic element of OPOIAZ theory, although its Futurist-derived emphasis on sound lapsed.

Shklovskii’s early view (from 1914 to 1919) of the artistic, which included the literary, rested on a distinction between habitual and renewed perception of the world, between automatised recognition (*uznavanie*) and vision (*videnie*). Art was the agent of a renewed vision of the world, it challenged automatised perception with new, perceptible artistic forms:

“..we everywhere encounter the same sign of the artistic: that it is intentionally created for perception released from automatism [...] [this] release is the aim of the creator...”<sup>79</sup>

Shklovskii’s concept of the automatisisation and renewal of artistic forms became a fundamental part of OPOIAZ theory, but the stress on perception and the functional connection of art and life (art exists *in order* to restore perception of the world) lapsed; by 1919 Shklovskii spoke of the automatisisation of literary forms in relation to succeeding literary forms, and not as a defective means of perceiving the world.<sup>80</sup>

Posing the specifically literary as the object of study meant seeing the literary work as an intentional artefact, and investigating how it worked. At this early stage the work was to be understood through analysing its construction. Thus, Eikhenbaum repeatedly used Tolstoi’s phrase “infinite labyrinth of connections”<sup>81</sup> as a model for the constructed intricacies of the

work of art, and called his first OPOIAZ article 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia'. This analysis of construction rested on a redefinition of form. The Formalists rejected the traditional conception of form and content in the literary work, in which form was separable from and exterior to content. They saw the form of a work as coterminous with its content, since what was being expressed in the work existed only in the specific form of the work. A detailed summary of Evgenii Onegin, for example, would not convey what the poem conveyed. *How* the poem was expressed determined *what* was expressed. In order to analyse this 'how', the specificity of a literary work, Formalists used the concept of the 'device', as opposed to the pre-literary 'material' of the work<sup>82</sup>. By means of devices the writer transformed the material - events, characters, emotions - into a work experienced by the reader as literary. This process was the focus of Formalist attention, the material was secondary, its thematic, social or philosophical significance was not discussed.

Another term, 'motivation', described the 'justification' of the plot-construction of a work in terms of its material. Instead of describing, for example, the theme of a story which the writer used certain devices to achieve, Formalists described the complex of devices used by the writer as justified or motivated by elements in the story. Thus Shklovskii described Don Quixote not as a journey in which certain events took place, but as a series of stories, constructed by the device of 'threading together' (nanizyvanie), and motivated by a journey.<sup>83</sup> By 1921, as we shall see in the next chapter, the basic concept of analysis of the work's construction, which was relatively static and ahistorical, acquired a historical dimension; works were considered in relation to their predecessors, and in increasingly complex relation to other contemporary works.

Poetics: the immanence of the literary series

In the OPOIAZ view not only was the literary work to be studied independently for its specifically literary qualities, but literature as a whole was thought to develop and change according to its own inner dynamic, more or less independently of exterior, non-literary factors. The literary series (riad) existed alongside other series - historical, linguistic and others - and, though an ultimate relation between the series was acknowledged, the immediate task was the

elucidation of long-ignored concrete literary facts, without which no more complex relation between literature and other series could be conceived. Thus a kind of mental convention, the immanence of the literary series, in which the literary work was self-valuable and everything not strictly literary was removed from the field of consideration, was established. This convention, analogous to Husserl's concept of phenomenological bracketing<sup>84</sup>, was revolutionary; it allowed critical attention to focus on the text, and thereby created the conditions for the emergence of a new way of reading and changed conceptions of what literature was. We shall return to this in more detail later.

### Poetics as science

If literature was an immanent series of specific phenomena, as OPOIAZ held, and not a reflection of other spheres of human activity, it could be investigated by means of working hypotheses, and its laws could be elucidated. Relatively early<sup>85</sup> the new movement saw its study of literature as a science in embryo, using precise terminology and demonstrating objective, verifiable facts, as opposed to a subjective, impressionistic "causerie"<sup>86</sup>, dependent on the whim of the critic. Nauka, the word used, can mean scholarship as well as science, but the accompanying vocabulary of laws, hypotheses and verifiability indicates the scientific meaning of the word. How did Formalists conceive the scientific status of literature? The notion of a scientific approach did not imply that the phenomena studied were understood; rather the reverse, there was an untouched field of study. Analogies with naturally occurring physical phenomena were frequent. Thus Eikhenbaum used a faux-naïf scientific comparison, advocating an empirical approach to literature, without presuppositions, in early 1918:

"Messrs critics and historians of literature! Let us confess now, when it is no shame to confess anything, let us confess simply and sincerely, that we *do not understand* literature, just as the physicist and chemist do not understand anything in nature, though they understand her 'laws' perfectly."<sup>87</sup>

Eikhenbaum continued to speak of finding the laws of literature, on the basis of making and testing hypotheses for the behaviour of literary phenomena - what Striedter<sup>88</sup>, following Habermas, calls a nomological, as opposed to a hermeneutical science. In 1920 Eikhenbaum introduced a talk on verse and prose as "a modest star-counter...an astrologer...[for whom] there

are no people, only laws.”<sup>89</sup> Tomashevskii, writing the ‘obituary’ of Formalism in 1925, made the comparison of literature with electricity:

“It’s possible to study electricity and not know what it is. Anyway, what does the question mean, ‘What is electricity?’. I would answer, ‘It is the kind of thing that, if you screw in an electric light bulb, it lights up.’ When you study the phenomena you don’t at all need an a priori definition of the essences. The important thing is to distinguish its manifestations and realise their connections. To this kind of study of literature the Formalists devote their works. They conceive of poetics precisely as a science, which studies the phenomena of literature and not its ‘essence’.”<sup>90</sup>

The apparent simplicity of both these analogies belies the philosophical sophistication of their authors. In January 1919 Eikhenbaum was reading Rickert and noting several other philosophers (Windelband, Cassirer, Natorp, Adler) to be read on methodological questions; he noted:

“One can, proceeding from Rickert, conceive that the application of the natural science method is essential in the history of art as well: 1) when it is a question of the social life of art [...], 2) when it is a question of the ‘nature’ of this material from which the work of art is made. In both cases the construction of laws and concepts is conceivable.”<sup>91</sup>

The Formalist position on a scientific approach to literature, and the Husserlian bracketing by which they concentrated their work on the literary fact, were marked by an informed rejection of philosophical concerns rather than by philosophical ignorance. Eikhenbaum’s retrospective view in 1925 characterised the initial OPOIAZ stance as positivism, not Tomashevskii’s phenomenism, but both men stressed the need to start in medias res, putting to one side the epistemological issues. Eikhenbaum wrote:

“... it was important to counter the subjective-aesthetic principles, which inspired the Symbolists in their theoretical works, with the propaganda of an objective-scientific relation to the facts. From there the new spirit of scientific positivism, characteristic of the Formalists; the rejection of philosophical premises, of psychological and aesthetic interpretations and so on. The split with philosophical aesthetics and ideological theories of art was dictated by the situation itself. It was necessary to turn to the facts and

leaving behind general systems and problems, begin from the middle, from that point where the fact of art finds us. Art demanded that we approach it in earnest, and science, that we make it concrete.”<sup>92</sup>

The new poetics with its exclusive emphasis on the literary and its aspirations to scientific status thus challenged accepted approaches to literature, and constituted an entirely new view of it, incompatible with the old. For Eikhenbaum conversion to the new poetics involved the suppression of the old ‘humane’ perception of literature and the loss of philosophical and mystical approaches to it. This was the critical break (*perelom*) he wrote of. Literature’s traditional nineteenth-century function as a locus of social change, however, remained - embodied in OPOIAZ, in communicating, advancing and defending the revolutionary new science of literature. Eikhenbaum’s 1921 letter to Zhirmunskii recalling this time (the last part of which was quoted above) provides an autobiographical commentary to the concepts we have noted above (including his more distanced view of OPOIAZ evolution in 1925). His characterisation of Zhirmunskii reflects the process of loss and repudiation Eikhenbaum had undergone to share the OPOIAZ position, in terms characteristic of conversion to a cause, and not only adherence to a set of ideas:

“About myself I say directly: I understood what the formal method meant only when I began working in OPOIAZ. I think we are speaking about somewhat different things. The *study of form* is one thing, the *formal method* as a principle is another. Of course we have been studying form for a long time, independently of OPOIAZ. Of course there is Veselovskii and even Petrov. The whole Romano-German department, in general, taught us to know how to approach questions of form, not to speak of the huge scholarly literature, which we have studied for a long time. But, *Vitia*, that is quite a different thing! Behind that was always the consciousness that that was *exterior* form, behind which something else stood, and that about that something one had, in the end, to speak. That consciousness hindered the work, undermined it.

When I got close to OPOIAZ I started conceiving the very concept of ‘form’ in a different way. Quite new problems, new concepts arose, and a new relation between them. [...]

I have no doubt that OPOIAZ and, in particular, Shklovskii have played a very great role in your scholarly work. But on the other hand you experienced no break (*perelom*) [...] You accepted, assimilated something, adding that to what you yourself thought and did before. And it is this resistance, this desire to preserve your past, your independence, that frightens me in you, and sometimes excites my irritation. I am a bit of a fanatic, and perhaps I sometimes irritate you in this too. [...]

Viacheslav Ivanov, Belyi, the Gvozdev circle and so on, and so on - that wasn't 'the formal method'. Symbolism could not possibly set it up, that would contradict its whole essence. I myself resisted the OPOIAZ theses for some time, but then I began to feel their organic strength. My article on Gogol's Shinel' - that is the moment of the break (*perelom*). And only from that time do I reckon the beginning of work according to the 'formal' method. [...] Then I had to repudiate a great deal, and put an end to a great deal - that was not so easily achieved."<sup>93</sup>

#### 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia'

This was the first substantial article Eikhenbaum wrote as a scholar within OPOIAZ. The concept of skaz Eikhenbaum proposed in it was completely new, and influential in terms of prose theory; we shall consider it in the following chapter. However, the article was influential not only because it put forward this new concept; its main purpose was polemical. Eikhenbaum's target was the now traditional automatised reading of the story of the poor clerk by "our naive and sentimental historians, hypnotised by Belinskii"<sup>94</sup>, and the concomitant view of Gogol' as a humane realist. His analysis of the structure, tone and language of the story revealed a strong element of the grotesque, created by the alternation of stylised comic narration and stylised pathetic declamation. This second element, pathetic declamation, had been:

"...taken by our critics as the basis, and the whole complex 'labyrinth of connections' (L. Tolstoi's expression) reduced to a certain idea, traditionally repeated until now even in 'research' on Gogol'."<sup>95</sup>

Eikhenbaum replaced this "idea" of the defenceless 'little man' with extensive textual evidence for a reading of the story as grotesque. The famous gumannoe mesto was a device employed to this end:

“It is customary for us to understand this passage literally - an artistic device which turns a comic novella into the grotesque and prepares a ‘fantastic’ ending, is taken as a sincere intervention of the ‘soul’. If such a deception is a ‘triumph of art’, as Karamzin has it, if the viewer’s naivety can be charming, all the same for science such naivety is no triumph at all, because it reveals its helplessness. This interpretation destroys the whole structure of Shinel’, all its artistic design.”<sup>96</sup>

To make his case for Shinel’ Eikhenbaum mounted a concerted attack on literal reading and the identification of the work with the author’s sympathies in what amounted to an OPOIAZ manifesto:

“Proceeding from the basic proposition that not one phrase of an artistic work can be in itself a simple ‘reflection’ of the author’s personal feelings, but is always a construction and a game, we *cannot* and *have no right at all* to see in such a passage anything other than a particular artistic device. The usual way of identifying some particular judgement with the psychological contents of the author’s soul is a false path for science. [...] The artistic work is always something made, formed, conceived - not only skilful, but also artificial in the good sense of that word, and therefore *there is not and cannot be* a place in it for the reflection of the empirics of the soul (*dushevnoi empiriki*).”<sup>97</sup>

As a polemical reading of Gogol’s story, Eikhenbaum’s article was both brilliantly innovative and, naturally, one-sided. Dealing with a whole work, in contrast to Shklovskii’s articles at the time, which sought to prove propositions using parts of as wide a range of a works as possible, Eikhenbaum took the reader through a new version of the story and in the process taught or demonstrated OPOIAZ principles, a method he continued to use. For the layman Eikhenbaum broke up the smooth surface of the work, the supposedly unified act of writing, in which the author addressed the reader directly, without dissimulation. Eikhenbaum showed this line of communication to be complex and indirect. The reader could not rely on a literal reading, once he had perceived the existence of the device; he became aware of what Todorov has called ‘hesitation’, a hallmark of the fantastic, and of the grotesque<sup>98</sup>. The hesitation Eikhenbaum induced in the reader of Shinel’ was not between “our world...[and] an event which cannot be explained in terms of this same familiar world”<sup>99</sup>, and which induces uncertainty about the status of the event, but a hesitation in deciding on the registers of Gogol’s language, which also

produced uncertainty about the nature of the events in the story, though the events are, largely, explicable in terms of the 'familiar world'.

At the same time, it is a peculiarity of Eikhenbaum's early polemical work and of his exegesis of OPOIAZ ideas in general that the reader, while the object of injunction and instruction, and called upon to reverse or abandon long held habits of reading, tends to trust Eikhenbaum's gifted exposition and emerges stimulated but largely unscathed by the polemical battle. What Shklovskii later called Eikhenbaum's "politely-extreme convictions"<sup>100</sup> gave his writing this dual quality of approachability and theoretical singlemindedness.

However, the article lacked any literary-historical context, which would have shown the contemporary mode for fiction about the chinovnik, as Vinogradov pointed out in 1925.<sup>101</sup> It also evaded, in common with OPOIAZ practice generally, the problem of thematics; even if Eikhenbaum had admitted the comparison of contemporary fiction, as he later did, the comparison would have been on grounds of construction and technique, not in terms of a common theme. But the undoubted exclusion of material not at that time germane to OPOIAZ concerns did not alter the article's influence, as Zhirmunskii later conceded:

"...The article about Shinel' remains, its historical role is huge, in spite of the one-sidedness, now evident to all (except certain foreign structuralists). I would even say 'thanks to' instead of 'in spite of'..."<sup>102</sup>

#### 4 Early Work on Tolstoi

The study of Tolstoi that Eikhenbaum began in July 1918 continued at intervals over the next forty years and established him as one of the foremost Tolstoi scholars in the world. A relatively small proportion of this work overall was conceived on Formalist lines, but the articles and particularly the book, Molodoi Tolstoi, which do belong to Eikhenbaum's OPOIAZ period, changed the course of Tolstoi studies and remain influential today. We can say that



Tolstoi functioned in different ways as a touchstone for Eikhenbaum; even within the period we are considering changes took place in his view of Tolstoi's works which are a major theme of this thesis. At the very beginning of his OPOIAZ activity, Eikhenbaum chose Tolstoi's works as his first major field for investigation using OPOIAZ principles. With the choice of Tolstoi, whose literary works were inextricably bound up with extra-literary factors, Eikhenbaum encountered a range of problems difficult to solve in strictly OPOIAZ terms. We shall look at the possible reasons for this choice and how Eikhenbaum dealt with the problems it presented in these two sections on his early Tolstoi work. One long article and three shorter ones preceded his first book Molodoi Tolstoi (1922), which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

'Tvorchestvo L. N. Tolstogo'

In February 1919 Eikhenbaum wrote the last chapter of a long preface to an edition of Detstvo. Otrochestvo. Iunost', which he had begun in mid-summer 1918. This preface, initially called 'Tvorchestvo L. N. Tolstogo'<sup>103</sup>, covers the whole of Tolstoi's career as a writer and belongs properly to the period of Eikhenbaum's transition from post-Symbolism to OPOIAZ which we considered in Section II; OPOIAZ attention to the composition and devices of works is combined with an interest in Tolstoi's life which is partly dictated by the need to dispose of the view, very widely held when Eikhenbaum was writing, and still current today, of Tolstoi's supposed duality as first artist, then preacher. Contrary to OPOIAZ practice, Eikhenbaum also used biographical material to suggest a context for, and sometimes - notably in the case of Anna Karenina - the genesis of works.<sup>104</sup>

The first three chapters of the preface present, in a considerably shortened and less clearly stated form, the main ideas of Molodoi Tolstoi; both discuss the development of the devices of Tolstoi's early fiction from the forms of his diaries, both reject the traditional Tolstoian duality and place his work in a literary evolutionary context. We shall discuss these ideas in the next chapter; here we shall consider the use Eikhenbaum made of Tolstoi's diaries in this preface, and the content of the remaining four chapters, which presented ideas that remained undeveloped during Eikhenbaum's OPOIAZ period.

## Tolstoi's diaries

As we saw in Section 2, Eikhenbaum had difficulty in approaching the diaries from a specifically literary, and not a psychological or biographical view-point. He warned the reader, just as he did in his article on Shinel<sup>105</sup>, against literal reading, in this case against reading diaries and letters directly as evidence of Tolstoi's true state of mind. He proposed instead the term 'psychic style' (*dushevnyi stil'*) as the proper focus of the reader's attention:

"For us what is important is precisely this stylistic casing or *psychic style* of the diaries - not what Tolstoi actually was, but how he thought or imagined himself. From there there is a natural transition to the psychic style of the characters he created."<sup>106</sup>

Where in the parallel passages in Molodoi Tolstoi<sup>107</sup> Eikhenbaum related the *forms* of the diaries to the *devices* Tolstoi developed in his fiction, making a purely literary connection, here the material intervened, and the meaning and status of <sup>psychic</sup> style is unclear. Was Eikhenbaum's emphasis on style, as a literary concept, or on some undefined psychic similarity between Tolstoi and his characters? Later in the article the phrase acquired the sense of 'temperament', and lost any specifically literary relevance; for example, discussing Tolstoi's philosophical reading and the genesis of Anna Karenina Eikhenbaum wrote: "...For Tolstoi's psychic style, the leaning to <sup>epistemological</sup> scepticism was perfectly natural."<sup>108</sup> As a precise term for literary investigation, 'psychic style' was inadequate, and, like his interest in questions of biography and genesis, showed that Eikhenbaum did not yet think wholly in terms of the specifically literary.

Perhaps because of its hybrid combination of biography and the literary, Eikhenbaum reprinted this preface in a collection of his articles which came out in 1927, when he had altered his strictly OPOIAZ views of the first half of the 1920s. His pupil L Ia Ginzburg accurately picked up the logical anomaly of dushevnyi stil' - neither specifically literary nor properly psychological - and its implications for OPOIAZ theory:

"The word 'style' is placed deliberately to prevent people thinking that the point is *psychic* experience (*dushevnoe perezhivanie*) as the source of creative embodiment.

Psychic style is a particular organisation [...] of the inner life [...] But experience given a literary form is itself still a fact of inner biography, not of literature. If it has turned out

to be essential to take into account psychological facts of this order, then why not recognise others as well. So recently the first crack in the theory of immanent development has opened, and already through this crack forbidden problems swarm towards us...”<sup>109</sup>

However, the article which Ginzburg perceived in 1927 as another break in theoretical integrity was for Eikhenbaum in 1918 - 1919 an intermediate stage towards achieving that integrity.

#### Tolstoi's later works

An important part of the preface was Eikhenbaum's outline of the development of Tolstoi's fiction until Khadji Murat; in his view, the embryo of all Tolstoi's later work, including the post-1880 popular and religious stories and the treatise on art, was present in his early work of the 1850s. In part these were thematic connections, in part strictly literary development. In a manner that has now become standard critical practice Eikhenbaum drew a developmental line in terms of device and composition from Detstvo through Semeinoe schast'e to the family strand of Voyna i mir and Anna Karenina. The early war stories with their analysis of exceptional emotional states were developed in the battle scenes of Voyna i mir and in the scenes of Vronskii at the races and Levin at the harvest in Anna Karenina. Eikhenbaum's view of the composition of Voyna i mir and Anna Karenina, with double narrative lines of opposing groups has also become an accepted critical norm. In an equally innovative perception, Eikhenbaum showed how Tolstoi's 1862 article 'Komu u kogo uchit'sia pisat', krestianskim rebiatam u nas ili nam u krestianskikh rebiat', apparently on village teaching, was in fact a kind of manifesto on literature and art, and was developed later in Chto takoe iskusstvo, and in the 1880s transition to popular art. Here, however, he indicated continuities of preoccupation and theme, rather than strictly literary development.

One of Eikhenbaum's main concerns was to explode the traditionally narrow view of what could be defined as art in Tolstoi's work, and to present Tolstoi as motivated consistently, throughout a number of breaks in his writing life, by the need to find and justify artistic expression in widely varying literary contexts. Thus Eikhenbaum saw the major transition to popular and religious art after Anna Karenina as only one of several critical periods of change for Tolstoi. It was also, in his view, a function of literary evolution, as we shall see in the next

chapter. The Romantic background against which Tolstoi had reacted with devices of naturalistic detail and psychological analysis was no longer in force; new forms must be sought, supported by a new rationale - the "metaphysic of the collective"<sup>110</sup>.

#### Articles on Tolstoi 1919 - 1920

'O L've Tolstom' and 'O krizisakh L'va Tolstogo', two of the short articles Eikhenbaum wrote on Tolstoi in 1919 and 1920, again attack the problem of the iconic perception of Tolstoi, first artist, then moralist, a problem which was central for Eikhenbaum. He reverted to the question once more in Molodoi Tolstoi. The zeal and persistence with which Eikhenbaum demonstrated in all these works Tolstoi's consistent identity as an artist and the consequent crises he suffered, suggest a personal connection. Eikhenbaum used the word 'crisis' of Tolstoi in the same way as he had used the word 'break' (*perelom*, *sлом*) of the effect on people of the Revolution in his articles of 1918. Eikhenbaum used both terms of himself in his correspondence of the period. The crises were, in his view, a function not of Tolstoi's personality, but of the position of art at the time. In the same way that the post-Symbolist crisis of literature could be said to have a role in Eikhenbaum's perelom as a scholar, Eikhenbaum argued that "art itself experienced these crises"<sup>111</sup> in the case of Tolstoi. On the one hand, to demonstrate Tolstoi's artistic integrity through change gave Eikhenbaum a model of coherence in his own very recent perelom, on the other hand, his argument, which transferred the emphasis from the writer's personality to the historical position of literature, fell in with OPOIAZ thinking. Eikhenbaum also argued from this same historical view-point, as yet not named as such, that Tolstoi's "duality...[was] an act of supra-personal creative consciousness"<sup>112</sup>, that is, of awareness of literary-historical movement, of a kind of *zeitgeist*. This issue is discussed more fully in Molodoi Tolstoi. Both articles are written decisively from an OPOIAZ point of view, in contrast to the earlier preface.

#### 'O L've Tolstom'

In this short article, published in Zhizn' iskusstva in November 1919, Eikhenbaum used Gor'kii's vivid 'anti-Tolstoian' view of Tolstoi in his Vospominaniia o Tolstom (1919) to support his own argument against the iconic image of the late Tolstoi. To make the case in

specifically literary terms, and support his view of Tolstoi as a creative writer throughout changes in his work, Eikhenbaum cited K N Leont'ev's "forgotten" book, Analiz, stil' i veianie. O romanakh gr L N Tolstogo (1890)<sup>113</sup>. Leont'ev identified the "exterior devices" of Tolstoi's novels, and the changed devices of the religious stories, in a conceptual frame remarkably similar to that of OPOIAZ. Eikhenbaum quoted:

"For me, I repeat, what is important here is not what Count Tolstoi is writing about now, but how he is writing. It is important that the greatest genius of our realists, still in the full strength of his gift, has become bored and disgusted with many accustomed devices of that very school of which he was for so long the chief representative."<sup>114</sup>

It was an OPOIAZ habit to adduce supporting evidence from the contemporaries of writers they were discussing; in this short article, Eikhenbaum brought in Apollon Grigor'ev as well as Gor'kii and Leont'ev, and in Molodoi Tolstoi several other nineteenth-century critics appeared. The remaining part of this article, like its successor, 'O krizisakh Tolstogo', is written in a kind of telegraphic shorthand, which baldly states Eikhenbaum's propositions without the explanatory care characteristic of the article on Shinel' and his later work. The same propositions are expanded, explained and given textual substance in Molodoi Tolstoi. A typical passage in 'O L've Tolstom' runs:

"Art for Tolstoi was not a craft and not an amusement, but an organic concern. *He became a 'moralist' only because he was an artist. Not he, but art itself experienced a crisis.* The same problem confronted Nekrasov, and Dostoevskii. *It was necessary to overcome the Turgenevian element. It was necessary once again to resolve the complex problem of the relation between life and art. It was necessary to create a new form of artistic perception.* Art is not 'aestheticism', but nor is it a 'reflection'."<sup>115</sup>

These assertions can be seen as headings for longer passages in Molodoi Tolstoi about the dualist perception of Tolstoi as artist until Anna Karenina, and moralist thereafter, and about the relation of life and art, but they also read in part as a list of Eikhenbaum's own reasons for becoming a Formalist. He was discussing Tolstoi in the terms he used for his own development. Futurism had provoked the "crisis" in art which led Eikhenbaum to OPOIAZ, rejecting the "aestheticism" of the Symbolists and the publicist view of art as a "reflection" of

life. The question of the “relation between life and art” was as characteristic of Eikhenbaum as it was of Tolstoi. Here, as in the following article, he was, perhaps unconsciously, self-referent at the same time as whole-heartedly Formalist in his approach to Tolstoi.

‘O krizisakh Tolstogo’

This short article, published in Zhizn’ iskusstva a year later, in November 1920, is a similarly condensed and telegraphic sketch of Tolstoi’s work in the context of literary evolution, an area which Eikhenbaum clarified and explored more fully a year later in Molodoi Tolstoi. With minimal explanation of unfamiliar concepts, Eikhenbaum proceeded in this article by slogans: “Tolstoi began as the liquidator of Romantic poetics, as the destroyer of established canons [....] Bypassing the fathers, he returns to the grandfathers, the eighteenth century..”<sup>116</sup> We shall consider these main-stream OPOIAZ ideas in the first section of the next chapter.

In this polemically ‘literary’ article Eikhenbaum introduced another idea not consonant with the concept of literary evolution as treated, for example, by Shklovskii. In Eikhenbaum’s view, art and life were not only linked in some way, but life *justified* art, provided some unspecified basis for it:

“Crises accompany all of Tolstoi’s work. And this is not at all a special aspect of his nature. Art itself was experiencing these crises. The Romantic poetics was exhausted. Art had once more to glance back at life, so as to justify itself once more. [...]

The real basis of all these crises for Tolstoi was the search for new artistic forms and new justification for them.”<sup>117</sup>

Where, in OPOIAZ usage, the ultimate connection of art and life was acknowledged, but, by a tacit convention, lay outside the sphere of specifically literary interest for the time being, the introduction of a moral dimension - art’s justification by life - ran contrary to the whole basis of specifically literary investigation, in which the literary series existed autonomously. This justification, as Eikhenbaum made clear, was not simply a question of Tolstoi’s personality, nor only a means of legitimising Tolstoi as an artist throughout his life, in genres such as Ispoved’, or the ‘simple’ religious story. Eikhenbaum returned to the idea, as we shall see, in Molodoi Tolstoi. It was a brief appearance of an aspect of art quite outside the invariable definition as

“construction and game”<sup>118</sup> which Eikhenbaum pronounced in his article on Shinel’, but an aspect which he retained, at least for a time, in a subsidiary role along with his new thinking. Tolstoi, whom Eikhenbaum characterised when he first began to write on him in August 1918 as “a problem of the life and the work”<sup>119</sup>, provided the ideal motivation for the exploration of both lines of thought.

#### ‘Labirint tseplenii’

‘Labirint tseplenii’, published in December 1919 in Zhizn’ iskusstva, concerned poetics exclusively, and contained no reference to the life/art tension evident in the two articles we have discussed above. This article about the late story Fal’shivyi kupon used the story as a proof-text for the OPOIAZ concept of motivation. Eikhenbaum again made use of his carefully selected Tolstoian model of art, originally used of Anna Karenina: “an infinite labyrinth of connections”.<sup>120</sup> He wrote: “Finding paths in this labyrinth and establishing the laws of connections is the task of analysis.”<sup>121</sup> He pursued this analysis on Fal’shivyi kupon, which was not as highly finished or as complex as most of Tolstoi’s work - nedorabotannyi in Eikhenbaum’s term - the better to show the mechanics of the illusion of the natural in fiction. The connections of the plot sequences were obvious and unmotivated, and thus did not deceive the reader, were not ‘life-like’. The story allowed Eikhenbaum to show “the naked device of threading together (nanizyvanie) ... where the thread sticks out.”<sup>122</sup> Nanizyvanie, as we saw above, was one of the devices Shklovskii identified in plot construction<sup>123</sup>, and in choosing a suitable text to illustrate a theoretical proposition (rather than investigating a text to see what it would yield), Eikhenbaum, exceptionally, used Shklovskii’s tactics. In Fal’shivyi kupon, as in Tristram Shandy, though for different reasons, the writer ‘laid bare’ the device, and the task of the critic who wished to demonstrate that art is construction and convention was simplified. Perhaps because his material was “not yet art”<sup>124</sup>, and did not call on his investigative intelligence, this article is one of the least interesting of Eikhenbaum’s early pieces.

In the next chapter we shall continue the consideration of Eikhenbaum’s work on Tolstoi with his important and influential book, Molodoi Tolstoi.

- 1 BME, letter, 19 October 1921, 'Perepiska B. M. Eikhenbauma i V. M. Zhirmunskogo', TS3, pp 314 - 315.
- 2 op cit, p 314.
- 3 Severnye zapiski, 1914, 3, p 124, quoted in 'Stranitsy..', p 129.
- 4 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 6 December 1913: "In my opinion the sign of our modernity is the will to wholeness." Quoted in O lit, p 8.
- 5 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 14 September 1915, quoted in O lit, p 6.
- 6 BME, letter to parents, 8 January 1914, quoted in O lit, p 6.
- 7 BME, 'V. Zhirmunskii. Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaia mistika. SPb. 1914' (1913), O lit, p 293.
- 8 BME, 'D. S. Merezhkovskii-kritik. (Dve tainy russkoi poezii Nekrasov i Tiutchev. SPb. 1915', Severnye zapiski, 1915, 2, p 132.
- 9 See BME, 'I. N. Rozanov. Russkaia lirika Istoriko-literaturnye ocherki', Zavety, 1914, 1, p 52; 'Sochineniia Fr. M. Vol'tera', Russkaia mysl', 1913, 12, p 457; 'Sofiia (Zhurnal iskusstva i literatury)', Russkaia mysl', 1914, 1, p 22 - 26.
- 10 BME, 'V. Zhirmunskii. Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaia mistika. SPb. 1914' (1913), O Lit, pp 293, 294.
- 11 BME, letter to parents, 30 May 1906, quoted in 'Stranitsy..', p 133.
- 12 BME, 'Po mostam i prospektam (Iz avtobiografii)', Mv, p 23: "...Straight from lectures [...] I got into meetings in the big chemistry lecture theatre, designed as an amphitheatre. Below, at the table, the SDs argued with the SRs. Ideas filled the air and rose to the ceiling in a warm cloud. I found a place high up, so as to be an independent judge. [...] I became timid. At meetings, instead of being a judge, I felt myself a defendant. I was accused of not thinking about the state, of being short-sighted, of being a person of small, provincial horizons. [...]

I became depressed. Petersburg was not a town, but a state. Here one could not live, one had to have a programme, convictions, enemies, illegal literature, one had to make speeches, hear resolutions point by point, vote, and so on. One had, in a word, to have a



different vision, a different brain. But I just want to live....”

- 13 BME, diary entry, 26 August 1917.
- 14 BME, ‘Anri Bergson. Vospriiatie izmenchivosti’, Zaprosy zhizni, 1912, 52, pp 3104 - 3105; ‘Bergson, Anri. Vospriiatie izmenchivosti’, Biulleteni literatury i zhizni, 1913, 2, no 11, pp 265 - 266.
- 15 See BME, ‘Novoe v oblasti “pushkinizma”’ (1914), O lit, p 309, and ‘O Chekhove’ (1914), O lit, pp 314, 315.
- 16 BME, ‘V. Zhirmunskii. Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaia mistika. SPb. 1914’, O lit, p 293. See also letter to Zhirmunskii, 27 October 1913, ‘Perepiska..’, TS3, p 273.
- 17 op cit, O lit, p 293.
- 18 BME, letter to parents, 26 July 1912, quoted in E A Toddes, ‘Vstupitel’naia stat’ia’, ‘Perepiska..’, TS3, p 258.
- 19 BME, ‘O misteriiakh Polia Klodelia’, Severnye zapiski, 1913, 9, pp 121 - 137. See letter to Zhirmunskii, 9 October 1913, ‘Perepiska..’, TS3, p 272.
- 20 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 17 October 1913, quoted in E A Toddes, ‘Vstupitel’naia stat’ia’, TS3, p 258 - 259.
- 21 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 18 November 1916, quoted in ‘Stranitsy..’, pp 143 - 144.
- 22 See BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 9 October 1913, ‘Perepiska..’, TS3, p 272. In 1929 Eikhenbaum wrote of his first meetings with Zhirmunskii: “ Among them was a young man, whose appearance struck me from the first meeting. He was quite boyish, slim, very swarthy, with deep semitic eyes and a childishly sensual, almost swollen mouth. I looked at him as one in love. We became friends, and my journey through Europe acquired a completely Romantic character...” ‘Iz avtobiografii’, Mv, p 37.
- 23 Iu A Nikol’skii (1893 - 1921?), poet, literary scholar, wrote on Tolstoi and Dostoevskii, Polonskii and Fet, and on Blok. He fought for the Whites in the Civil War. Eikhenbaum became friendly with him in 1914, and wrote of him in an obituary in 1922 that his literary interests were marked “by a leaning to metaphysical questions”, Literaturnye zapiski, 1922, 1, p 14.
- 24 BME, Preface, Sl, p 3.
- 25 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 24 June 1916, quoted in ‘Stranitsy..’, p 135.

- 26 See BME, 'O printsipakh izucheniia literatury v srednei shkole' (1915), in Prepodavanie literaturnogo chteniia v estonskoi shkole, Tallin, 1983; 'Derzhavin' (1916), Sl, pp 5 - 36; 'Karamzin' (1916), Sl, pp 37 - 49.
- 27 See BME, 'V. Zhirmunskii. Nemetskii romantizm i sovremennaia mistika. SPb. 1914', O lit, p 292; see also "The new poetry is not and will not be written by acmeists", Russkaia molva, 1913, 15 July, quoted in O lit, p 483.
- 28 BME, letter to parents, 22 May 1912, quoted in 'Stranitsy..', p 135.
- 29 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 9 February 1914, quoted in toto in 'Stranitsy..', pp 136 - 139.
- 30 *ibid.*
- 31 *op cit*, p 138.
- 32 BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 28 July 1916, 'Perepiska..', TS3, pp 285, 286. Eikhenbaum wrote an article on Akhmatova for Severnye zapiski in Summer 1915, which was never published. See O lit, p 499.
- 33 BME, 'K voprosu o zvukakh stikha' (1916), O lit, pp 325 - 328.
- 34 BME, 'Karamzin', Sl, p 47.
- 35 BME, 'Derzhavin', Sl, p 9.
- 36 BME, *op cit*, p 8.
- 37 Vs M Eikhenbaum (Volin), (1882 - 1945), arrested and imprisoned as an SR in St Petersburg in 1905, exiled, escaped to France, where he became an anarchist. Escaped arrest and fled to USA, leaving his wife and four children in France, in 1915. There he was a noted speaker and worked on the editorial board of Golos truda (weekly paper of the Federation of Russian Workers in the USA and Canada), with whom he left for Petrograd in 1917. There he edited Golos Truda as an anarcho-syndicalist daily until the talks at Brest-Litovsk. His family joined him at Bobrov, near Voronezh, where he worked on the journal Nabat and organised the Kursk conference. In 1919 - 1920 he fought for six months in Makhno's 'army of insurrection', was arrested, imprisoned, freed and reimprisoned in the Butyrki and Lefortovo. On hunger strike, he was freed by the intervention of foreign syndicalists, on condition of permanent exile; his family were allowed to leave with him. See Voline, La Révolution Inconnue 1917 - 1921, Paris, 1969, pp 9 - 13.

- 38 BME, diary entry, 26 August 1917.
- 39 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 18 November 1916: “..many begin to feel some new movement in Iura [Nikol’skii] and me, some new school. One must be strict with oneself.” Quoted in ‘Stranitsy..’, p 136.
- 40 Nikol’skii wrote a humorous postcard to Zhirmunskii on 18 July 1917: “Viktor Maksimovich, what is this? How is it you haven’t protected our Boris Mikhailovich? He looks exactly like a Bolshevik...The war is all because of markets, and get him a social revolution tomorrow, practically. Lord, holy saints! No, you didn’t protect him, you certainly didn’t...” See ‘Perepiska..’, TS3, p 326.
- 41 BME, letter to V M Zhirmunskii, 10 August 1917, op cit, pp 291 - 292.
- 42 Eikhenbaum gave serious thought to his brother’s ideas in 1917. A long diary entry on 1 September (of which a short excerpt follows) questioned his notions of the state, the capitalist system and the struggle for social justice, and opposed to them a concept of historical necessity: “...History is a struggle between ethics and culture. Power is, of course, a non-ethical phenomenon, and therefore evil. But power has its laws and therefore cannot simply be despised or thought nonsensical. [...] the organisation of states and of the capitalist system [may be] not only ‘natural’, but also ‘necessary’.
- Even so it’s necessary to struggle with it, because indifference to social justice is impossible in a healthy mind. And one can understand that revolution is always a riddle. Once the power on which this whole entity stood falls, the ethical energy of the aspiration to bring about social justice appears. But the enemy is not the bourgeoisie but history itself. The bourgeoisie is not ‘evil people’, not rulers as such, not slave-owners by instinct, but a phenomenon caused by history, which can disappear only if the conditions which created it change. This is not Marxism. This does not mean the necessary condition is the development of capitalism to the point of absurdity. These conditions, these causes, basic, unknown, undefinable, are in the depths of historical life. That is why struggle is necessary - it is not known when and in what conditions change is possible. Revolution sharpens this struggle, because it is rich in possibilities. In this sense I accept anarchism - and only it. But the tactics must correspond to the understanding. I must think about that....” No other political reflections of comparable length are to be found in Eikhenbaum’s diaries for 1917/18.

- 43 BME, diary entry, 27 August 1917. This entry, like Eikhenbaum's articles of early 1918, 'Trubnyi glas', 'Rech' o kritike' and 'O khudozhestvennom slove', makes it clear that Erlich's unsupported view of Eikhenbaum as always anti-Futurist cannot be substantiated (RF pp 66 - 67). It was Futurism, not 'Acmeism with its cult of craftsmanship, that helped Eikhenbaum to grasp the peculiar nature of poetic language' (p 67).
- 44 BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 10 August 1917, 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 291.
- 45 BME, letter to parents, 4 May 1910, quoted in O lit, p 497.
- 46 See BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 25 October 1917, 'Perepiska..', TS3, pp 292 - 293.
- 47 BME, 'O zvukakh v stikhe' (1920), SI, pp 201 - 208.
- 48 See BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', Lit, pp 123 - 124.
- 49 Dikost', in the sense of uncivilised - 'shocking' subject matter and, sometimes, outrageous public behaviour was a feature of Futurist manifestos and writing. See V Markov, Russian Futurism, London, 1969, pp 46, 114, 124, 133 - 134, 168 - 170, 175, 205. For a reference to 'madness' (in Eikhenbaum's 1918 review of Maiakovskii), see the 1912 Manifesto of the Ego-Futurists, op cit, p 65. A possible link to Nietzsche's idea of the Dionysian side of self- transcendence (in The Birth of Tragedy) may be seen in V Ivanov's Po zvezdam, Pb, 1909, quoted in Nietzsche in Russia, ed B G Rosenthal, Princeton, 1986, p 27, where he spoke of the narod as the "new barbarians" destined to revitalise Russian culture.
- 50 BME, 'O khudozhestvennom slove', O lit, p 336; cf V B Shklovskii 'Iskusstvo kak priem' (1917), Gs, pp 71 - 72.
- 51 BME, op cit, p 333; cf V B Shklovskii, op cit, pp 62 ff.
- 52 BME, op cit p 335; see A Potebnia, Iz zapisok po teorii slovesnosti, Khar'kov, 1905, p 98.
- 53 BME, op cit, p 335 - 336.
- 54 Khlebnikov put forward the live, spoken word as a poetic measure; see 'Sadok sudei 2', SPb 1913, in Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov, Munich, 1967, pp 51 - 53. See also N Burliuk, 'Poeticheskie nachala', Futuristy, M, 1914, 1 -2, in op cit, p 77: '...the poetic word is sensual. It works on all our senses.'
- 55 BME, 'O khudozhestvennom slove', O lit, p 343.

- 56 BME, 'Rech' o kritike', Delo naroda, 1918, 12 May, in O lit, p 329. See L N Tolstoi, letter to N N Strakhov, 26 April 1876, Pis'ma L. N. Tolstogo 1848 - 1910, M, 1910, p 118.
- 57 op cit, p 328. See A A Blok, Sobranie sochinenii v 8 tomakh, M - L, 1960, vol 3, p 362.
- 58 BME, op cit, p 329.
- 59 Quoted in 'Perepiska..', note 80, p 327. Eikhenbaum wrote in the article (to polemicise with his brother, who had written of these murders as an excess): " This is not 'an excess' at all. There is no justification for such a murder - a vile night attack on prisoners. Their blood has stained the Revolution. We ought to say this, if we still preserve human feelings." op cit, p 328.
- 60 BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 17 February 1918, op cit p 299.
- 61 BME met Maiakovskii via Brik on 19 and 25 August 1918, apparently for the first time. In both brief diary entries he underlines Maiakovskii's name - something he did for no one else. On 20 August he wrote: "Yesterday was the fourth meeting of the verse section. [...] With Brik I agreed about a good deal. Then I went to his place and had dinner with his wife Lili Iur'evna and Maiakovskii. Maiakovskii, among other things, criticised Tiutchev - said he had found only two or three not bad poems..." On 25 August Eikhenbaum wrote: "we spent the day at Levashovo at O M Brik's with the children. VI VI Maiakovskii was there - absorbed, silent, but very simple, kind to the children. He went looking for mushrooms with Olia."
- 62 BME, 'Trubnyi glas'(1918), O poezii, L, 1969, p 294.
- 63 BME, 'O khudozhestvennom slove'(1918), O lit, p 339.
- 64 BME, letter to Zhirmunskii, 17 February 1918, 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 297.
- 65 BME, 'Tvorchestvo L. N. Tolstogo', dated by the author 1919, in L N Tolstoi, Detstvo. Otrochestvo. Iunost', Pg, 1922, pp 1 - 43. Eikhenbaum reprinted the article with slight alterations as 'Lev Tolstoi' in Lit, pp 19 - 76.
- 66 BME, diary entry, 25 August 1918.
- 67 Shklovskii returned to Russia from Iran in January 1918 as a right SR. He did not accept the October Revolution and worked for six months equipping armoured trains for use against the Bolsheviks. In July the organisation was discovered and Shklovskii lived

illegally. In October 1918 he had to leave Russia, and went to the Ukraine. At the end of 1918 Shklovskii gave up political resistance. and returned to Russia. An amnesty for SRs was declared on 27 February 1919. See (in part) V B Shklovskii, Sentimental'noe puteshestvie, Pg, 1923, and V B Shklovskii, Gs, pp 504 -505.

- 68 BME, Diary entry, 22 July 1918.
- 69 BME, Diary entry, 28 July 1918.
- 70 V M Zhirmunskii, letter to V B Shklovskii, 6 September 1970, 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 319.
- 71 BME, letter to V M Zhirmunskii, 19 October 1921, 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 314.
- 72 BME, Diary entry, 20 August 1918. In his next entry, for 23 August 1918, Eikhenbaum noted a conversation with L Ia Gurevich "about how you feel the extra-individual power of the generation in you."
- 73 BME, Diary entry, 20 August 1918.
- 74 See L Ia Ginzburg, "I zaodno s pravoporiadkom..."', TS3, p 230: "The OPOIAZ movement in the wide sense (much wider than the members of OPOIAZ and their pupils) was part of the anti-Symbolist reaction (from the Futurists and Acmeists to the Oberiuty) against the culture of the beginning of the century. Like the whole counter-Symbolist reaction Formalism studied and learnt a great deal from the Symbolists." L Ia Ginzburg, 1902 - 1990, respected independent literary scholar, memoirist and writer of fiction came to Petrograd from her native Odessa in 1922 and remained in the city thereafter. She studied at GIII as a pupil of Eikhenbaum, Tynianov and Shklovskii. Although she was the object of official disfavour as close to Formalism over six decades, she published scholarly articles on, among others, Viazemskii, Benediktov and Pushkin, and books on Lermontov, Herzen, lyric poetry and psychological prose.
- 75 R O Jakobson, 'Noveishaia russkaia poeziia. Nabrosok pervyi', Prague, 1921, in his Raboty po poetike, M, 1987, p 275. Jakobson, 1896 - 1982, eminent linguist, semiotician and literary theorist, was a founder member of the Moscow (1915), and later (1926) the Prague, Linguistic Circles. Jakobson left Moscow in 1920 for Prague, where he worked initially as a translator for the Red Cross Mission. He did not return to the Soviet Union during the period of our study, but retained close ties with Shklovskii and Tynianov.

- 76 The Moscow Linguistic Circle was founded by Jakobson in 1915 and included P G Bogatyrev, G O Vinokur and N S Trubetskoi. The Circle had a linguistic bias, as opposed to OPOIAZ' literary bias. After Bogatyrev and Jakobson left for Prague in 1920, the Circle became part of the Gosudarstvennaia Akademiia Khudozhestvennykh Nauk (GAKhN), fell under the influence of Gustav Shpet, a pupil of Husserl (and bête noire of BME) and restored many concepts and methods of traditional criticism.
- 77 R O Jakobson, op cit, p 275.
- 78 L Iakubinskii, 'O zvukakh stikhotvornogo iazyka', Poetika: sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka, Pg, 1919, pp 37 - 38.
- 79 V B Shklovskii, 'Iskusstvo kak priem' (1917), Gs, p 71. See also 'Voskreshenie slova' (1914), op cit, pp 36 - 42.
- 80 V B Shklovskii, 'Ob iskusstve i revoliutsii', Iskusstvo kommuny, 30 March 1919, No 17, in Gs, p 79: "New forms in art appear not in order to express new content, but to change old forms, which have ceased to be artistic." Almost exactly the same form of words appears in 'Sviaz' priemov siuzhetoslozheniia s obshchimi priemami stilii', Poetika: sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka, Pg, 1919, p 120.
- 81 See BME, 'Rech' o kritike' (1918), O lit, p 330; 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia' (1918), Sl, p 177, and 'Labirint tseplenii', Zh i, 10 and 11 December 1919, Nos 314 - 315.
- 82 V B Shklovskii first proposed the concept of device in this context in 'Iskusstvo kak priem', Gs, pp 58 - 72. See p 60: "We will call artistic, in the narrow sense, things which were created by particular devices, whose aim consisted in the intention that these things, as far as possible, should definitely be perceived as artistic." For a discussion of form, as conceived at this stage, see BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925), Lit, p 129, and V M Zhirmunskii, 'Zadachi poetiki' (1919), TLPS, pp 16 - 17.
- 83 V B Shklovskii, Razvertyvanie siuzheta, Pg, 1921, p 24, 56. Eikhenbaum cited Tolstoi's Fal'shivyi kupon as an example of a story with weak motivation (psychological in this case) in which compositional devices were therefore more clearly identifiable; see 'Labirint tseplenii', Zh i, 11 December 1919, No 315, p 1.
- 84 See P Steiner, Russian Formalism, Ithaca and London, 1984, pp 249 - 250, and F Jameson, The Prison-House of Language, Princeton and London, 1972, pp 82 - 83.

- 85 See, for example, Jakobson, above, note 75, and BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, p 189.
- 86 R O Jakobson, 'O khudozhestvennom realizme'(1921), Raboty po poetike, M, 1987, p 387: "Until recently the history of art, and in particular the history of literature was not a science but causerie. It followed all the laws of causerie. It leapt boldly from theme to theme, from lyrical word-pourings about the elegance of form to anecdotes from the artist's life, from psychological truisms to the question of philosophical content in the social milieu. To talk about life, about the epoch, on the basis of literary works, is such a grateful and easy task; to copy from plaster is simpler and easier than to draw the living body. Causerie does not know precise terminology. ..."
- 87 BME, 'Rech' o kritike', O lit, p 330.
- 88 J Striedter, 'The Russian Formalist Theory of Prose', PTL, Vol 2, 1977, No 3, p 432.
- 89 BME, 'Poeziia i proza' (1920), Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Trudy po znakovym sistemam, V, Tartu, 1971, p 477.
- 90 B V Tomashevskii, 'Formal'nyi metod (vmesto nekrologa)'(1925), Khrestomatiia po teoreticheskomu literaturovedeniiu, Tartu, 1976, p 31. Tomashevskii (1890 - 1957) was a Pushkin scholar, specialist in metrics and Franco-Russian literary contacts, and a textologist. Tynianov saw him as one of the "right-wing Formalists", though both he and Eikhenbaum thought his 1923 article on verse rhythm theoretically important; see PILK, pp 139, 141 and 455. Tomashevskii taught at GIII 1921 - 1924, and at Leningrad State University 1924 - 1957.
- 91 BME, Diary entry, 12 January 1919, quoted in PILK, p 455. On 18 January Eikhenbaum also noted Wölfflin's Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe to be read in conjunction with Rickert. Heinrich Rickert, Wilhelm Dilthey and Wilhem Windelband, German philosophers working at the turn of the century, discussed the redefinition of the subject matter of literary studies, if genetic methods were discarded. See K Pomorska, Russian Formalist Theory and its Poetic Ambiance, The Hague and Paris, 1968, p 19.
- 92 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', Lit, p 120.
- 93 BME, letter to V M Zhirmunskii, 19 October 1921, 'Perepiska..', TS3, pp 313 - 315.
- 94 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, pp 191 - 192.



- 95 op cit, p 177.
- 96 op cit, pp 188 - 189.
- 97 op cit, p 189.
- 98 See Tz Todorov, The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, tr R Howard, Cleveland and London, 1973, pp 25 - 33.
- 99 op cit, p<sup>P</sup>25 - 26, quoted in N Cornwell, The Literary Fantastic, London 1990, p 12.
- 100 V B Shklovskii, Tetiva. O neskhostve skhodnogo, M, 1970, p 15.
- 101 V V Vinogradov, 'Gogol' i natural'naia shkola'(1925), Izbrannye trudy. Poetika russkoi literatury, M, 1976, p 197.
- 102 V M Zhirmunskii, letter to V B Shklovskii, 6 September 1970, 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 320.
- 103 BME, 'Tvorchestvo L. N. Tolstogo' in L N Tolstoi, Detstvo. Otrochestvo. Iunost', Pb, 1922, reprinted as 'Lev Tolstoi', Lit, pp 19 - 76.
- 104 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi', Lit, pp 51 - 54. See Eikhenbaum's view of Tolstoi's reading of Schopenhauer: "Thus, Schopenhauer served Tolstoi only as a stimulus - 'infected' him with his spirit and suggested what Tolstoi needed in the shape of a philosophical dogmatic support for the justification of his own opinions and feelings. [...] One can foresee that Tolstoi's next novel ought to give an even more detailed elaboration of mental states and put forward moral problems even more distinctly..." op cit, p 54.
- 105 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, p 189.
- 106 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi', Lit, pp 20 - 21.
- 107 See, for instance, BME, MT, p 12: "Here, precisely in this stylistic casing, in these conventional forms, one can see the seeds of artistic devices, note the traces of a definite literary tradition."
- 108 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi', Lit, p 51.
- 109 L Ia Ginzburg, Lpr, p 182.
- 110 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi', Lit, p 65.
- 111 BME, 'O krizisakh Tolstogo', Sl, p 69; cf 'O L've Tolstom', op cit, p 66: "Not he, but art experienced the crisis."
- 112 BME, 'O L've Tolstom', Sl, p 65.

- 113 BME, op cit, pp 63 - 65. K N Leont'ev, 1831 - 1891, brilliant and original conservative philosopher, critic and writer.
- 114 BME, op cit, pp 64 - 65.
- 115 BME, op cit, p 66.
- 116 BME, 'O krizisakh Tolstogo', Sl, p 67.
- 117 BME, op cit, p 69.
- 118 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, p 189.
- 119 BME, Diary entry, 9 August 1918: "...I have begun to write on Tolstoi. I began writing (as always, with the idea that this was a fair copy) the introductory, general part - about how Tolstoi is a problem of the life and the work. I think I have managed approximately what I wanted to say..."
- 120 BME, 'Rech' o kritike', O lit, p 329.
- 121 BME, 'Labirint tseplenii', Zh i, 10 December 1919, No 314, p 1.
- 122 BME, 'Labirint tseplenii', Zh i, 11 December 1919, No 315, p 1.
- 123 See V B Shklovskii, 'Sviaz' priemov siuzhetoslozheniia s obshchimi priemami stilia', Texte der Russischen Formalisten, I, Munich, 1968, pp 36 - 120.
- 124 BME, 'Labirint tseplenii', Zh i, 11 December 1919, No 315, p 1.

## Chapter II

## PROSE THEORY

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PROSE THEORY

1 Molodoi Tolstoi

Molodoi Tolstoi was Eikhenbaum's first scholarly book on prose. Published in 1922, in the same year as his book on verse melody, Melodika stikha, it was written in the difficult conditions of the Civil War and finished in June 1921, before Blok's death in August of that year. It was a radically innovative book in Tolstoi studies, both in terms of how Eikhenbaum situated Tolstoi's work, the basis on which he studied it and the results he obtained. G O Vinokur, a sympathetic Muscovite scholar, correctly considered it likely "to acquire the significance of a turning point in the study of Tolstoi's literary inheritance."<sup>1</sup> The book provided a unified view of Tolstoi's early years as a writer, until 1855, by means of analysis of the composition and devices not only of his fiction, but of the diaries he kept as a young man. This unified view was based on certain theoretical principles applied to Tolstoi's work, as Eikhenbaum made clear in his preface:

"...I intend to develop a series of systematic themes, proceeding both from particular features of Tolstoi's work and from general theoretical problems. Concrete historical work can have scientific meaning only when it touches on questions of general theory and is built on a basis of definite theoretical premises."<sup>2</sup>

In this section we shall first look at the theoretical basis of the book, before considering Eikhenbaum's view of Tolstoi's poetics.

Molodoi Tolstoi: Literary evolution

Eikhenbaum placed Tolstoi's work in the overall context of literary evolution, which he also called the history of literature and, in an old-fashioned phrase, literary traditions - "that from

which Tolstoi retreated as a cliché, and that to which he aspired as a model”.<sup>3</sup> Tolstoi appears against the background of the Romantic prose of the 1830s, which had ceased, when he began writing, to seem vivid or telling, had lost, in the early OPOIAZ term coined by Shklovskii, perceptibility (*oshchutimost'*).<sup>4</sup> But what did OPOIAZ mean by literary evolution?

Literary evolution in OPOIAZ usage referred to the history of literature in the specific meaning of the term, what Eikhenbaum later called “the inner dynamic of artistic forms and styles”<sup>5</sup>; it was the history of one riad or series of human activity, the literary series, conceived as developing autonomously alongside other series. It was thus a subdivision of history proper, considered in its immanent development. Connections between series were present, but were not, for the moment, the subject of study, as we saw in the previous chapter. In Eikhenbaum’s usage from 1921 ‘history’ by itself referred either to this immanent development of literature or, more usually, to the larger overall concept, affecting all areas of human life.

Both literary evolution and history proper in Eikhenbaum’s understanding were law-observing (*zakonomernye*) processes, large movements made up of many typical observed phenomena, in which non-typical, accidental phenomena were not understood to be ‘historical’, since they did not make up a pattern, were not observably zakonomernye. Historical law could be observed in action. Thus the novel in a given period, for example, was seen as part of an observable literary-historical process and could be studied, but the genesis of a particular novel and its author’s personality were accidental, non-repeatable phenomena and therefore not susceptible to objective literary-historical study. Another feature of the OPOIAZ concept of literary evolution was that traditions did not succeed each other peacefully; change took place as a result of crisis and struggle, and the new school frequently found its models in a junior literary line or in the more remote past, the generation of the ‘grandfathers’ and not that of the ‘fathers’.<sup>6</sup> Eikhenbaum later, in his 1925 essay ‘Teoriia formal’nogo metoda’, called this the ‘dialectical change of forms’.<sup>7</sup> Thus Tolstoi’s early work, as he repeatedly observed, found its literary models in writers two generations before him, Karamzin, Rousseau and Sterne, rather than in his immediate Romantic predecessors.<sup>8</sup>

History in the large sense did not figure explicitly in Molodoi Tolstoi, though it entered Eikhenbaum's texts both earlier and with increasing frequency from 1921 onwards. We shall consider his idiosyncratic understanding of it more fully in the next chapter. Literary evolution, on the other hand, with its own zakonomernost', conditioned the whole discussion of Tolstoi's poetics. In Eikhenbaum's view, Tolstoi began to write in a period when the canonised literary forms had lost authority, were no longer models a writer could follow, and new forms had to be found. It was a time of disintegration and uncertainty in art. This had manifold consequences. Eikhenbaum saw Tolstoi's indifference to genre, for example, as a function of this fact<sup>9</sup>, and, in another area, saw his device of generalisation as a method associated with a particular period in art, a means of combatting the obsolete canon of Romantic poetics, not as theories or teachings to be taken in themselves at face value by the reader.<sup>10</sup> Nearly all Tolstoi's devices, in Eikhenbaum's view, were developed in reaction to the preceding norms. For example, characters as psychological wholes or 'types' were set aside in favour of unstable combinations of many separate traits, Tolstoian sharpness (*rezkost'*) and fluidity (*tekuchest'*) in place of Romantic amalgamation (*slitnost'*).<sup>11</sup>

Eikhenbaum also drew parallels between phenomena far more distant in time on the basis of Tolstoi's literary-evolutionary position. In his view, the affinity between Tolstoi and Rousseau had a common basis in the analogous position of literature when both were writing. It was:

“..the result not simply of accidental psychic kinship, but of the action of definite laws. At the basis is the break-up of canonised forms. Rousseau's work is just as dual as that of Tolstoi, the forms are just as flexible and mixed, the art is just as complicated by elements of reasoning and moral teaching. The leaning they both have to pedagogical and social questions is not a primary but a secondary phenomenon, a consequence of the unsteadiness of art, which had been dislodged from the enclosed area of aesthetic canons, and had to feel its way once more.”<sup>12</sup>

Here, it would seem, Eikhenbaum claimed that it was the transitional condition of art at the time which engendered the choice of material in both writers, and not they who, in their choice of material, affected art. This was a polemical reversal to make a point about the primacy and autonomy of literary development; Eikhenbaum omitted any reference to the writer's function

in the production of literature and so seemed to posit a deterministic view of art. But, as we shall see later in this section, he did address the question of the author.

As we saw above, Eikhenbaum posited the reaction to the Romantic fiction of the early 1830s as the literary-evolutionary context for Tolstoi's early work. The main focus of "The Struggle with Romanticism" (one of his chapter headings) was Tolstoi's treatment of the Caucasus and of battle. Eikhenbaum identified parodies of Lermontov and Marlinskii<sup>13</sup> and showed how Tolstoi used an outsider's view of war to defamiliarise<sup>14</sup> the whole phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> Defamiliarisation of earlier literary accounts was also the key to Eikhenbaum's brilliant 'ne to' summary of Tolstoi's early work, in a discussion of the first Sevastopol'skii rasskaz:

"In this contrasted juxtaposition [Mikhailov's death] a typical Tolstoian paradox is hidden, which defamiliarises the traditional 'literary' representation of death, particularly of heroic death. Tolstoi as it were says what he said of the Caucasus; people die in quite another way than *it is usual to write about it*. Nature is not as it is described - nor is war, nor is the Caucasus, bravery is not expressed like that, people do not love like that, do not live and think like that, do not, finally, die like that - that is the common source of the whole Tolstoian system."<sup>16</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum made it clear that Tolstoi's exposures of 'falseness' were intended to be effective not in relation to 'real' death or bravery, but in relation to preceding literary versions ("people die in quite another way than it is usual to write about it") of the Caucasus, bravery and death, which in their day had also been perceived as vivid and 'true'. Thus realism, in Eikhenbaum's view, was a relative concept:

"'Realism' is only a conventional and constantly recurring watchword with which the new literary school struggles against the obsolete devices of the old school which have become clichés, and therefore too conventional. By itself it means nothing positive because its content is defined not by comparison with life, but with another system of artistic devices."<sup>17</sup>

As well as showing Tolstoi in relation to his immediate predecessors in the scheme of literary evolution, Eikhenbaum also placed his fiction in relation to Russian narrative prose over the

19th and 20th centuries in a short schematic account.<sup>18</sup> He saw Tolstoi's and Dostoevskii's long novels, where narrative as such was not the main constructive principle, as a peak or crisis of narrative prose, which allowed no further development on those lines; after them the development of the Russian novel ceased and it was succeeded by Chekhov's short stories. A junior line, deriving from the popular dialects and skaz of Vel'tman, Dal' and Leskov had returned to prominence in modern prose in the work of Remizov, Kuzmin and Zamiatin.

“Methodological caution”: literal and literary readings

Eikhenbaum began his study of the poetics of Tolstoi's early fiction with an analysis of the diaries Tolstoi wrote as a young man. He showed how the techniques of analysis, simplification and distortion of emotional life Tolstoi used in these diaries was carried over and developed in the devices of his fictional works. They became the basis for the interior monologue - the dialektika dushi noted by 19th-century critics - and the minute physical description, melochnost', which Tolstoi balanced with a mode of generalisation. As he acknowledged, Eikhenbaum was not the first to identify a number of these devices, which Tolstoi's contemporaries had noted<sup>19</sup>; Eikhenbaum's innovation was the theoretical basis for his observations and the kind of reading he demanded of the reader. In order to divert the reader's attention to *how* Tolstoi had written his diaries and away from the subject-matter, Eikhenbaum differentiated clearly between a reading for psychological information and one for literary analysis. The actual material of Tolstoi's emotional life had been, in any event, stylised and distorted by the act of expression in words, and was therefore not to be taken literally, in Eikhenbaum's view:

“Starting from the conviction that verbal expression does not give a real picture of psychic life, we should as it were *not trust* one word of the diary and not succumb to the temptations of a psychological interpretation, to which we have no right.”<sup>20</sup>

Instead the reader, associated with the researcher and his strictly literary interests as “we”, was to pay attention to “the form and devices of self-observation and the formulation of psychic life [which] is directly important material”<sup>21</sup>. As we saw in the previous chapter, a very similar passage in ‘Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia’ also directed the reader to the device:



“Starting from the basic proposition - that not one phrase of a work of art *can* be in itself a simple ‘reflection’ of its author’s personal feelings, but is always a construction and a game, we *cannot* see and *have no right* to see in such a passage anything other than a particular artistic device.”<sup>22</sup>

Here too, Eikhenbaum’s target was mimetic and psychological, or expressive readings, in this case of the famous gumannoe mesto. The polemic emphasis on the device, in both cases, is an index of the difficulty of dislodging these readings, the product of entrenched definitions of literature. Eikhenbaum vigorously undermined both the mimetic, or ‘realist’ view, which held that the work of art is a representation of the world, and the expressive definition, which saw it as an expression of the author’s personality or world-view. It was not a question of rival approaches to literature, all of which might be correct in their way, but of mutually exclusive definitions of what literature was. A “methodological caution”<sup>23</sup> which distinguished between literal and literary readings was essential because:

“confusion of these two points of view leads to serious errors, simplifying the phenomenon and at the same time leading to no fruitful generalisations.”<sup>24</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s tactic was an uncompromising attack on literal readings which identified Tolstoi the writer with his writings, supported by a detailed exposition of the texts to demonstrate his case.

#### The role of the author

Eikhenbaum then made further demands on the reader accustomed to identifying author and text, which both followed and diverged from the usual view of OPOIAZ thinking about the author held today. In order to make this clear we shall look first at one of the OPOIAZ statements usually quoted to substantiate this view, then at Eikhenbaum’s position on the question in Molodoi Tolstoi.

With the break which OPOIAZ made from a view of the text as evidence of the author’s personality or world-view, there was no place in a specifically literary study for the author’s social activities or psychological qualities. The OPOIAZ concept of literary evolution noted above substituted the idea of the complex process of the inception, growth and decline of

literary schools for the nineteenth-century idea, Romantic in origin, of the unpredictable appearance of the unique artist-genius producing works in a literary vacuum, through inspiration. In this OPOIAZ view, the writer was important only as a representative literary craftsman of his period. Brik's social-determinist polemic, written for LEF in 1923 both to provoke and to win over Marxist critics, is one much-quoted source of this view:

“OPOIAZ proposes that there are no poets and littérateurs, - there is poetry and literature. Everything the poet writes is meaningful as part of his work in the common enterprise and completely worthless, as a manifestation of his ‘I’. [...]

Pushkin was not the creator of a school, but only its head. If Pushkin had not lived, Evgenii Onegin would still have been written. America would still have been discovered without Columbus. [...]

The poet is the craftsman of the word, the creator of language, working for his class, his social group. The consumer will tell him what to write about. Poets do not think up themes, they take them from the surrounding milieu. [...]

The great poet does not reveal himself, he only meets the social demand (sotsial'nyi zakaz)...”<sup>25</sup>

Here the writer has no meaningful existence outside his group, his environment and ‘social demand’. Eikhenbaum's sense of this issue was different.

In Molodoi Tolstoi Eikhenbaum gave a view of the writer which was less extreme, and as it were filled in the thought stages which went to form it. For him the writer was important, both as an individual and as part of the “common enterprise”. But he qualified the meaning of ‘individual’. Amplifying his ‘anti-psychological’ stance, he posited an idea of the creative personality based on a distinction between nature and consciousness (soznanie):

“It is a question here [in the diaries] not of Tolstoi's *nature (natura)*, but of the acts of his creative consciousness (soznanie) - not of what was given to him by nature and is in that sense something outside time, spontaneous and unique, but of what he had developed in searches for a new creative principle and which is therefore law-observing (zakonomerno). This consciousness is in its essence not only supra-psychological, but supra-personal as well, though no less, but more, individual because of that. The creative

relation to life which overcomes actual psychic (*dushevnoe*) experience and rises above the simple given state of nature combines in itself the personal and the general and makes the person into an individual. (individual 'nost')"<sup>26</sup>

This was Eikhenbaum's first exploration in his OPOIAZ work of a view of the writer as individual which developed and became central to his work during the mid-twenties, when he again used the term *lichnost'*, which he had used in his thinking as a literary critic before entering OPOIAZ. Here Eikhenbaum was moving towards a conception of the individual in history, which he expressed more fully at the end of 1921. The emotional and the psychological belong here to the unconscious, unrealised 'given' nature; the supra-personal and supra-psychological indicate not that these areas have been dispensed with, but that the individual has become aware that he inhabits, with others, a common, therefore 'supra-personal', historical milieu. An active, historically attuned, creative consciousness is forged from an unconscious given nature. Choice and responsibility take the place of involuntary self-expression. We should note that Eikhenbaum took pains to stress the greater individuality of such a creative consciousness.

History, though Eikhenbaum did not use the word here, is indicated by the terms law-observing (*zakonomerno*) and supra-personal. In his view, history was the context of the writer's work and the creative consciousness could not but be immersed in it, and aware, on some level, of it. In his 1919 preface, Eikhenbaum had already used the same idea of nature and consciousness in the historical context of Tolstoi's artistic generation, but in *Molodoi Tolstoi* the word history, in the particular sense in which he had begun to use it (which we shall consider in the next chapter), did not yet appear:

"The 'duality' of Tolstoi, which it is usual to speak of as his emotional peculiarity, is for us not the passive manifestation of his *nature*, but an act of *consciousness*, worked out in the search for a new creative principle. The complication of creative work with elements of this consciousness and the problem of the relation of art and life that arose once again from it is a peculiarity of the artistic generation which Tolstoi belonged to - it had already alarmed Gogol' and Turgenev, tormented Nekrasov and with new strength, but in different ways, was solved by Tolstoi and Dostoevskii."<sup>27</sup>

It is this fundamental view of the individual creative consciousness in history that underpins later, more apparently determinist historical statements, as we shall see in the next chapter. In this book, however, the “problem of the relation of art and life” took the place of statements explicitly involving history.

### Art and life

One of the main shibboleths Eikhenbaum confronted in his work on Tolstoi was the duality (dvoistvennost') which Merezhkovskii had most recently fixed in the minds of readers as an antithetical opposition between art and religion, between the Tolstoi of the novels, “the seer of the flesh”<sup>28</sup>, and the moralist of the works after the crisis depicted in *Ispoved'* (1882). Eikhenbaum's response to this in his earliest OPOIAZ articles had been to insist that Tolstoi had had not one, but many such crises and had remained an artist throughout. In his view art had imposed crises on Tolstoi; “Art itself experienced these crises.”<sup>29</sup>, “It was not he that underwent a crisis, but art itself.”<sup>30</sup> In *Molodoi Tolstoi* and in his long preface of 1919 Eikhenbaum expanded these programmatic statements and showed how from the beginning of his writing career Tolstoi had combined artistic work with ‘practical’ interests such as Russian government, religion, the history of Europe and teaching. Here, the primary factor for Eikhenbaum is the state of art, not Tolstoi's nature. The primary phenomenon, art, engendered the secondary phenomenon, Tolstoi's flights to ‘practicality’. If Tolstoi had not been an artist (a creative consciousness), he would not have experienced these crises:

“The point here, of course, is not Tolstoi's psychic (dushevnaia) duality - this is not a psychic, not a personal phenomenon. Tolstoi experiences in himself the break (lomku) to which all the art, all the culture of this period is subjected. And the more painfully, the more intimately this process is carried out within Tolstoi, the more serious is its supra-personal meaning.”<sup>31</sup>

This is not merely a facile reversal of the usual formula; Eikhenbaum explains the meaning of this “break” by referring once more to the literary-historical background:

“The metaphysical aesthetic is destroyed - Tolstoi stands on the new ground of a new psychological aesthetic, which does not demand from the work of art any particular inner closed quality, coherence. Instead of fantasy there is psychological analysis, whose aim

is to give an impression of liveliness and 'truth'. Art has once more to find itself a place in life - and in this sense the constant attraction elsewhere, away from literature, is characteristic of Tolstoi. The Romantic opposition of the dream and the 'real' is obsolete - ideas about art as revelation and the artist as priest are no longer viable. The problem of the *justification* of art, which always arises in such critical periods, complicates creative work with the insertion of elements alien to it. Art does not have a constant place acknowledged once and for all along with other so-called social or cultural blessings - it is always more or less a foster-child. New art always has to make a way through piles of ruins."<sup>32</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum's position seems clear; the conceptual props that underlay Romantic art have lost their validity; for new art new sources of support must be found, the function of art must be restated. He explains Tolstoi's crises in terms of the primacy of art; art, and Tolstoi qua artist, not moralist or natura, required exterior justification. But he does so at the cost of a breach in OPOIAZ theory; if art requires "a place in life" its development cannot be entirely autonomous, a connection between art and other series has been made. The art - byt opposition, on which early OPOIAZ thinking is supposed to have been based,<sup>33</sup> is not complete. Indeed, Chudakova and Toddes see this as an early formulation of "the constant dynamic mutual activity and struggle between literature and non-literature"<sup>34</sup>, an idea which was developed by Tynianov from 1925 - 1927, and in the 1930s by Mukarovsky in Prague.

The idea of the 'justification' of art complicates the situation still further. There are two problems; the first is the moral dimension introduced by the term. It suggests that art in critical periods must have demonstrable grounds for existence, that it requires vindication, defence. From this it is not far to the idea that art must have a use in society, an idea which exercised Tolstoi and many other nineteenth-century Russian writers. This utilitarian legacy was part of the complex of ideas that OPOIAZ was engaged in dismantling. To speak of the need to justify art in terms of the demands of Tolstoi's cultural and artistic context was innovative, but to speak of it at all, or indeed of the whole art/life problem in relation to Tolstoi was odd in a book otherwise entirely written "in the light of distinct theoretical propositions"<sup>35</sup> alien to such problems. Shklovskii wrote extensively on Tolstoi, without finding it necessary to take up these problems.

I would argue that precisely this moral dimension attracted Eikhenbaum in his choice of Tolstoi as a subject and his decision to examine the complex related issues of Tolstoi's 'duality', his 'crises' and the justification of art. If we reduce these issues to the salient common factors and draw a parallel, this picture emerges; Eikhenbaum showed how, in spite of the breaks caused by a period of cultural transition, Tolstoi was consistently a creative writer and consistently overcame the sense that his writing was not morally defensible. No better model could be devised for Eikhenbaum, who "had a writer's self-perception all his life (...) [and] a persistent relation to his scholarly prose as to a fact of literature"<sup>36</sup>. Just as "in the crises of Tolstoi Eikhenbaum undoubtedly saw an exalted model and 'justification' of his own sharp turn to Futurist-OPOIAZ philology"<sup>37</sup>, the problem of the justification of art presented by Tolstoi gave Eikhenbaum the opportunity to work on a question of considerable personal relevance. Eikhenbaum had, then, himself and the present day in mind to some degree in writing about the issue of art, life and 'justification' in Molodoi Tolstoi. It is on the whole unlikely that he intended this personal concern to be evident in the text. Did he, as Ginzburg claims, intend at this stage not only to make an evident contemporary parallel, but to extend it from the personal to the general "problem of conduct"?<sup>38</sup> We shall consider this question in the next section on Poetics.

The second problem with the question of life justifying art is that it rested on a dualist premise that art was in some way outside life, not part of it. Again, among the members of OPOIAZ, this premise was peculiar to Eikhenbaum. Paradoxically, in spite of the OPOIAZ art-byt opposition, which was an important working convention, neither Shklovskii nor Tynianov<sup>39</sup> thought of art as separable from life. As in many other instances, in Khod konia Shklovskii used organic analogies, which explicitly avoided function to describe art; for example, art is neither vitamin, protein nor fat, "but without it the life of the organism is impossible...[art]... moves organically, as the heart moves in a person's chest."<sup>40</sup>. In Molodoi Tolstoi, however, Eikhenbaum's dualist premise appeared only briefly in the question of art's 'justification'; in the main art/life discussion, as we have seen, he argued that Tolstoi's art and life were integrated. In his later work on Tolstoi, discussed in Chapter Five, the question of ethics in art returned, and with it what has been called Eikhenbaum's dualist perception of the issues.

## Molodoi Tolstoi: Poetics

Some modern expositions of Formalist theory not only assume the validity of speaking of Formalism as of one author (Shklovskii or Tynianov) but schematise<sup>41</sup> very various work. In these accounts oppositional thinking is held to be the main feature of OPOIAZ theory<sup>42</sup> with the art - byt separation as its basis and the oppositional pair automatisisation - defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) as its main operational function<sup>43</sup>. This opposition requires explanation. Shklovskii, in an early (1917) piece 'Iskusstvo kak priem', proposed art as the agent of a restored, fresh perception of things which had become unseen, unfelt, automatised. There were many means of effecting this:

"The removal of a thing from automatism of perception takes place in many different ways; in this article I want to give one of these ways.." <sup>44</sup>

The device Shklovskii suggested as an example was defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*), the description of things without using their name, as if never seen before. Shklovskii also mentioned other devices used to "remove a thing from the automatism of perception" in that article; in later articles he identified many more. Ostranenie is used by Shklovskii and by Eikhenbaum only as a term for this one device. However, in recent Western European and American literary theoretical usage defamiliarisation has slipped by association with automatisisation to become a generic umbrella term for the functioning of all literary art in Formalist theory, something equivalent to deautomatisation, and attributed to, but not used in this way by the Formalists. In this discussion defamiliarisation has only its narrow and original meaning. It was one of many devices Eikhenbaum referred to in Tolstoi's fiction, which Shklovskii had already used extensively to illustrate what he meant by the term.

Eikhenbaum's investigations in Molodoi Tolstoi were focussed on literaturnost': what precisely made it a literary work. He demonstrated this on the oppositional basis of differentiation from the preceding canons, and in a great variety of other ways. If we take device in a wide sense as the means by which literaturnost' was achieved, and not only as a term describing particular closed writing techniques, we shall be closer to Eikhenbaum's use of the term. Eikhenbaum spoke in Molodoi Tolstoi of poetics as a whole, of the "system of Tolstoi's artistic devices in their gradual development"<sup>45</sup> and of the 'dominanta' of Tolstoi's method<sup>46</sup>, terms which

anticipate the important late concepts of system and function which Tynianov put forward in 1927.<sup>47</sup>

One of the attractions of Molodoi Tolstoi is the sense of discovery communicated to the reader; we feel that Eikhenbaum investigated these texts and found these patterns, devices, not that he approached them with ready prepared theoretical intentions, though this may have been the case in actual fact. The book's freshness for the contemporary reader indicates, too, that to approach Tolstoi from the point of view of poetics is still uncommon; Tolstoi is still commonly read and taught in ways Eikhenbaum wrote his book to oppose. But what was the nature of Eikhenbaum's discovery?

Eikhenbaum's view of Tolstoi's poetics derives directly from a study of Tolstoi's diaries as a young man. He shows how the devices of his fiction proceed from the techniques Tolstoi developed in his diaries; breaking down actions and feelings and naming them, classifying, theorising and simplifying. This whole "methodology of self-observation"<sup>48</sup> in the diaries engenders similar fictional techniques; from the minutely observed and named actions come minutely observed description instead of plot or narrative; carefully described characters, instead of types or a synthesis of features, feelings described in successive, distinct detail. The fictional device of melochnost' (minutely detailed description) is set at one, analytic pole of Tolstoi's diary technique, the fictional device of generalisation at the other, theorising pole. The fictional technique of interior monologue Tolstoi developed and the allied descriptions of dreams and fevers also belong in this vein of feelings broken up and analysed in successive distinct detail, as does the fact that Tolstoi portrayed not fixed, but changeable, constantly analysed, fluid (*tekuchii*) characters. In Eikhenbaum's view, instead of a plot, Tolstoi constructed his stories around time schemes, often focused on the passage of a day. Having dispensed with plot, he did not need a hero around whom to construct one, and used instead an observer figure, to motivate both detailed description and generalisation.

Here the reader who has followed the injunction to read the diaries strictly for their technique and accepted that the major characters of the fiction are not heroes but observers, is required to



see that these observers<sup>49</sup> are not the bearers of values or ideas, but function only to provide a believable 'hook', a motivation for certain devices, for example melochnost' and generalisation. The notion of motivation, first used, as we have seen, by Shklovskii in 1919<sup>50</sup>, bracketed values and ideas along with the other content of a work as material, in order, as Eikhenbaum put it later, "to approach [the work] still closer and observe the details of construction"<sup>51</sup> In 1925 Eikhenbaum argued for motivation as a necessary polemical counter to traditional critical obsession with content, and warned that polemics should not be mistaken for fixed scientific principle.<sup>52</sup> In effect, motivation was one of the tools of Formalist poetics that made its suspension of the traditional content and functions of the work of art in favour of a view of it as artefact<sup>53</sup> quite evident to the reader. Nevertheless, this is not the effect upon the general reader, who, in spite of frequent use of the term, may as it were 'read over' it without fully taking in its implications. Part of the appeal of Eikhenbaum's book lay in the fact that in spite of its strict theoretical basis, it was accessible and could be read for the thrill of its investigation into Tolstoi's poetics, while other, older ideas about Tolstoi, though challenged, could remain intact in the reader's mind. Was there another ambivalence of this kind, or a different deliberate double aim, in the mind of its author?

#### Poetics and conduct

One recent view of Molodoi Tolstoi saw it as "evidence that from the beginning the central problem of Tolstoi for Eikhenbaum was the problem of the historical conduct of the writer and the person."<sup>54</sup> L Ia Ginzburg, an eminent literary scholar and Eikhenbaum's pupil, considered that he "investigated Tolstoi's creative work and conduct in the unity of their methodology."<sup>55</sup> and showed an interest in biography in spite of the ideas of early OPOIAZ. The key words here are conduct and biography. They are major concepts in Eikhenbaum's later work on Tolstoi. In Molodoi Tolstoi, as we saw earlier, history makes no explicit appearance, though a limited historical dimension is present in its literary evolutionary background. We shall see in Chapters Four and Five that conduct in Eikhenbaum's later (1927/8) use of it is the action in history of the self-aware and responsible lichnost'; this is clearly connected to the notion of the creative individual as consciousness as opposed to nature, that Eikhenbaum put forward at the beginning of Molodoi Tolstoi.<sup>56</sup> But in this book historical conduct, unless it is taken to be

Tolstoi's revolt against the Romantic canon (which Eikhenbaum exposes in a purely literary light), is absent.

Biography, and indeed conduct, are most evident in the first section on Tolstoi's early diaries; it is hard not to be aware, in reading the long and frequent quotations from Tolstoi's diary, of a response on some human level other than the purely technical to which Eikhenbaum adjured the reader to restrict himself. But Eikhenbaum further insisted that these diaries bore no relation to Tolstoi's actual behaviour; as records of how Tolstoi learned to live - a 'methodology' of conduct in Ginzburg's phrase - they were not, in his view, valid. Even if we discount Eikhenbaum's expressed opinion, these selected diary entries do not seem credible as a record of conduct in any serious sense. Eikhenbaum interspersed small biographical linking passages at intervals<sup>57</sup> and we may note that, having warned the reader never to take diary or letters literally, he himself used them as a source of trustworthy information about his subject.<sup>58</sup> But these passages, too, scarcely amount to 'an interest in biography', or, if it is present, it is curtailed and limited.

However, as we saw earlier, Ginzburg's case for the writer's ethics, for a 'methodology' of conduct and creative work, can be made in Eikhenbaum's treatment of the 'art and life' problem in Tolstoi. The historical element she identified is also present, in Eikhenbaum's argument that artistic or cultural change brought about Tolstoi's 'crises'. There are two problems here; the first is that Ginzburg conflated concepts of literary evolution with those of history in general in a way that Eikhenbaum did not in this book, though his particular concept of history including literary development appeared soon after. The other problem is that the charged ethical content of conduct in Ginzburg's use of it appears in Molodoi Tolstoi only indirectly in the few references to the justification of art; in the general discussion of issues of 'duality' and crises, Eikhenbaum's expressed concern was precisely to avoid discussion of personal morality, and he transferred attention to art and away from the artist to that end.

The evidence that Ginzburg offered from Eikhenbaum's text omitted his signalling of it as purely literary. She emphasised instead Eikhenbaum's sense of himself as a writer and his

relation to his scholarly work as to works of literature<sup>59</sup>, with all the social significance the words ‘writer’ and ‘literature’ have in a Russian context. Thus the ne to passage quoted earlier, which in context concerns Tolstoi’s *literary* rejection of Romantic cliché, became for Ginzburg Eikhenbaum’s voice speaking directly to the needs of the present day, using Tolstoi’s demystifying function as a writer in his own day - precisely the political use of literature Formalists rejected. Ginzburg presented Eikhenbaum’s text without the preceding passage, which made it clear that he was comparing Tolstoi’s *literary* descriptions of war, bravery, love and so on (that is, how Tolstoi wrote about them) to earlier *literary* descriptions. She wrote:

“In Molodoi Tolstoi an idea that is a corner-stone for Eikhenbaum is boldly and acutely formulated : ‘Nature is not as it is portrayed, nor is war, nor is the Caucasus, bravery is not expressed like that, people do not love like that, do not live and think like that, do not, finally, die like that - this is the common source of the whole Tolstoian system.... denunciatory, destructive forces are hidden in almost every one of his devices.’ In Eikhenbaum’s later works too, Tolstoi’s purpose appears as the pitiless destruction of superficial ideas about things, the tireless examination of their true essence.”<sup>60</sup>

However, even if we read this book with the idea in mind that Eikhenbaum was consciously combining research on the specifically literary with an implicit thesis about Tolstoi’s social-political conduct as relevant to the present day, little real substance can be found for it. Ginzburg, writing after 1986, in a particular Soviet context, apparently in order to correct an overemphasis on the theoretical in recent work on Eikhenbaum, may justifiably have thought it necessary to stress “not only theories but [Eikhenbaum’s] style of conduct.”<sup>61</sup> In Eikhenbaum’s later work on Tolstoi, as we shall see in Chapter Five, the question of conduct was evident, and did occupy an important place; there Eikhenbaum’s thinking was markedly different, and gave good grounds for Ginzburg’s conclusions. In Molodoi Tolstoi the exploration of literaturnost’ predominates over all other concerns and seems not forced, but almost exuberant, or yeselyi in OPOIAZ group terminology.<sup>62</sup>

Eikhenbaum worked on a number of problems in the analysis of prose fiction. Shklovskii had written on plot construction relatively early in the period of OPOIAZ activity<sup>63</sup>; Eikhenbaum considered other problems of narrative form, including the novella, and the function of parody or anomaly in it.<sup>64</sup> One area which he was the first to identify and to work with in the analysis of texts was skaz, narration with a strong link to the voice, to spoken storytelling. Later scholars (Vinogradov, particularly) changed and developed his concept to distinguish between the author and narrator of such texts; a modern definition of skaz is: “that type of fictional text which is structured as the story of a person distinct from the author and therefore possessing a different stylistic manner.”<sup>65</sup> In Eikhenbaum’s usage the concept developed in response to the material he studied and he never supplied an exhaustive scholarly definition. The most interesting work he did using skaz was tied to textual analysis and offered little discussion of the concept.

#### ‘Illiuziia skaza’

Eikhenbaum’s approach to skaz evolved from an interest in the sound, articulation and intonation of language, and in the “live word”, as opposed to the printed word of “abstract culture”<sup>66</sup>, provoked by Futurist-oriented work on poetry. In 1918 Eikhenbaum published a short article ‘Illiuziia skaza’, which reviewed nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian prose from the point of view of the presence in it of elements of skazitel’s tvo - story-telling, most prominent in the work of Gogol’, Leskov and Remizov.<sup>67</sup> The oral story (ustnyi skaz) was, in Eikhenbaum’s view, the origin of prose fiction and its influence was to be found in syntax, choice of words and composition. Even in written literature the writer tried to give his written speech the illusion of a story. In this article the word skaz can still be understood as story or telling.

#### ‘Kak sdelana Shinel’ Gogolia’: sound in skaz

In this article, written in late 1918, Eikhenbaum saw a heightened role for the narrator and skaz as one of the alternative structures for the novella where plot was absent or unimportant, as

often in Gogol'. Here the reader understands skaz as a particular kind of narration. Eikhenbaum defined comic skaz as either narrative or reproductive (vosproizvodiashchii); the former was straightfaced, limited to jokes and puns, the latter was as if performed by an actor<sup>68</sup>.

This reproductive type of skaz featured sound gestures, sound speech and sound semantics, where the acoustic quality of words was significant, apart from their meaning. These terms came from Formalist interest in Futurist zaum', or transrational language, used by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov, among others<sup>69</sup>, which profoundly influenced the Formalist concept of poetic language. Early in OPOIAZ activity, Shklovskii, Iakubinskii, Brik, E D Polivanov and B A Kushner all wrote on the phonic as a defining aspect of poetic language.<sup>70</sup> In zaum' the expressive quality of the sound of words, independently of their strict semantic value or lack of it, in neologisms or nonsense rhyme, for instance, was identified and valued. Attention turned away from the fixed signifier/signified function of the word to the phonic elements in it which produced a shifting, associative, expressive value. At this period Eikhenbaum had a strong interest in the phonic value of the text and in the activity of speaking the text (articulation, intonation). Eikhenbaum borrowed the term sound gesture (zvukovoi zhest) from Polivanov, who had set out to draw an analogy between mimetic physical gestures that are generally understood and sound gestures that use onomatopoeic and repetitive words, and are comprehensible in the same way.<sup>71</sup> Such gestures do, therefore, convey meaning, while bypassing, as it were, formal conceptualisation. Of one example of sound gesture, describing Akakii Akakievich, Eikhenbaum wrote:

“.. it is not so much a description of an appearance, as a mimic- articulatory *reproduction* of it [...] The whole phrase has the appearance of a finished whole - of a kind of system of sound gestures, where the words were selected in order to bring it about. For this reason these words as logical units, as symbols of concepts, are hardly perceptible - they are broken up and assembled anew on the principle of sound speech (zvukorech'). This is one of the remarkable effects of Gogolian language...”<sup>72</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum described not a meaningless process, but one which proceeded *in a different* way towards meaning, via direct aural suggestion, rather than careful conceptual distinction. (In fact, Gogol's text works both ways, both aurally and conceptually, but Eikhenbaum had a

new argument to make, and made it vigorously and exhaustively.) He demonstrated sound semantics (zvukovaia semantika), apparently his own term, brilliantly in his discussion of how Gogol' named his hero.<sup>73</sup> This concept, as its name makes clear, also has to do with meaning, and it would be quite wrong to assume that Eikhenbaum's interest in phonic values diminished his concern for the meaning of the text. To claim, for example, that: "There is no other principle of construction in 'The Overcoat' than the selection and combination of sound"<sup>74</sup> badly distorts Eikhenbaum's thesis. In this article his aim was rather to induce the reader directly to hear the text as Gogol' 'performed' it, with all the considerable consequences that entailed for its understanding.

Another source of Eikhenbaum's interest in sound was the German Ohrenphilologie school of Eduard Sievers (1850 - 1932) and his pupil Franz Saran (1866 - 1931). The physical side of Eikhenbaum's preoccupation with sound (articulation, intonation) can be linked to the work of these scholars. Though they had a positivist scientific orientation in some ways similar to that of early OPOIAZ<sup>75</sup> the basis of Eikhenbaum's interest in them was that they offered the potential of naming and describing the experience of verbal art as direct physical communication, the "live word", as opposed to the indirect, visual interpretation of the written word, which Eikhenbaum compared to an object in a museum.<sup>76</sup> Eikhenbaum began 'Illuziia skaza', written in early 1918, with a distinction between the 'letter' and the 'word':

"..We often forget altogether that the word in itself has nothing in common with the letter - that it is a live, mobile activity, formed by the voice, articulation, intonation, to which gestures and mimicry are added as well. We think - the writer writes. But it is not always so, and in the sphere of the artistic word - more often not so. German philologists (Sievers, Saran and others) began talking some years ago about the necessity of 'aural' philology (Ohrenphilologie') instead of 'visual' (Augenphilologie). This is an extremely fruitful idea. In the area of verse this kind of analysis has already provided interesting results.[...] But this kind of 'aural' analysis is not fruitless in the area of artistic prose either. The principle of oral skaz is fundamental to it [prose], its influence is often revealed in turns of syntax, choice and placing of words, and even in composition itself."<sup>77</sup>

Skaz, as a sort of portmanteau term for orally based narrative, allowed Eikhenbaum to explore the aural dimensions of Gogol's story extensively, to reconstitute it from the page as a verbal performance of a certain kind. This was a major focus of his article. Though he described the devices of Gogol's skaz in detail, the nearest he came to a definition was:

"The basis of the Gogolian text is skaz, his text is made up of live speech representations and speech emotions."<sup>78</sup>

The term, though inadequately defined, allowed Eikhenbaum to bring to the reader's attention and analyse a whole layer of Gogol's text, full of puns and verbal games, that had been virtually ignored, and which in turn altered the sense of the whole. In Eikhenbaum's polemical reading, as we saw in the last chapter, the orally based comic narration contrasted with pathetic and sentimental-melodramatic declamation to render the story grotesque and not realist, and thus to transform its meaning.

'Leskov i sovremennaia proza'

The interest in sound which dominated Eikhenbaum's article on Shinel' was far less evident in his next work dealing with skaz, 'Leskov i sovremennaia proza', which was written in 1925. Before it was published, V V Vinogradov wrote an article<sup>79</sup> on skaz which developed and altered Eikhenbaum's ideas, and attacked them. He ignored the argument for the grotesque in Shinel' and accused Eikhenbaum of sacrificing semantics for an intonational sketch and of failing to provide a definition of skaz. In his view, skaz could not be associated both with live oral speech in narrative prose and with the compositional function of a narrator. Eikhenbaum assessed a version of this article given as a paper at GIII in his diary:

"...V V Vinogradov's paper, 'The Problem of Skaz in Stylistics', is highflown and coquettish, but not new. As always with Vinogradov, 'severe' criticism to start with but nothing particularly substantial by the end. It's strange, but it works out that Sergei Ignat'evich [Bernshtein] is the result of my Melodika and Vinogradov of the Shinel' article."<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps in response to this article, in 'Leskov i sovremennaia proza' Eikhenbaum gave a clear definition of skaz:

“By skaz I understand a form of narrative prose which in its lexis, syntax and choice of intonations reveals a set (ustanovka) towards the oral speech of the narrator. [...] that type of narrative form which deviates from written speech on principle and makes the narrator as such a real character.”<sup>81</sup>

He specifically excluded all forms of authorial narrative which did not aim at the illusion of oral speech and all declamatory forms of narrative (thus correcting Vinogradov’s misreading of Eikhenbaum’s Shinel’ article). As before, in Eikhenbaum’s view skaz forms appear where plot is weak, and represent a vital connection to live, oral language.

Eikhenbaum used these criteria to propose a literary-evolutionary review of Russian prose fiction on the basis of closeness to oral storytelling - a “well-balanced and capacious conception of two types of Russian prose which still retains its explanatory force”<sup>82</sup>, in the opinion of a modern Soviet scholar. It has many parallels with a similar passage in Molodoi Tolstoi<sup>83</sup> which reviews Russian fiction on the basis of narrative. Both regard the syncretic 19th-century novel as a form with no future, both trace the small forms of the present day back to the skaz tradition of Gogol’, Dal’, Leskov, Mel’nikov-Pecherskii and others. In this article Eikhenbaum considered uses of skaz in the work of Remizov, Pil’niak, Vsevolod Ivanov, Nikitin, Fedin and Zoshchenko and gave his opinion of the future development of literature. The marked leaning to skaz in contemporary literature showed dissatisfaction with traditional bookish language and indicated that the novel was unlikely to develop. Of the elements that had made up the syncretic novel, the cinema had taken over plot interest, prose fiction had been left with narrative and the word. Though skaz was no longer important in itself, the remaining set towards the word, the intonation and the voice would be important in the future. These were views Eikhenbaum repeated in articles elsewhere on contemporary literature.

Eikhenbaum, like Tynianov and Shklovskii, combined scholarly work with assessments of the current literary situation, usually in literary journalism, but occasionally, as in this case, in scholarly articles. In their view, literary evolution was at work in contemporary literature as it had been in that of the past, and, if its laws were correctly observed, allowed both clear diagnoses of present literary trends and forecasts of the future. In 1920 Eikhenbaum spoke of



himself in this context as of an astrologer, observing the action of laws through his telescope.<sup>84</sup>

How did Eikhenbaum function as a critic?

### 3 Contemporary literature: criticism

In this short review of Eikhenbaum's activity as a literary critic, we shall look only at his thinking on contemporary literature; his activity as a "devastating polemicist"<sup>85</sup> comes into the next chapter. 1924 was the year of Eikhenbaum's most concentrated work as a journalist; he published eight contributions to an arts newspaper Zhizn' iskusstva over which OPOIAZ and the Serapion Brothers had recently taken effective editorial control<sup>86</sup>, and ten pieces for the new independent literary journal Russkii sovremennik, where he was a member of the (very mixed) editorial board.<sup>87</sup> Russkii sovremennik, which appeared with the names of Gor'kii, Zamiatin, A N Tikhonov and Chukovskii on its frontispiece, was highly respected during its brief year of life<sup>88</sup>; in its first number it published work by Akhmatova, Sologub, Zamiatin and Pil'niak, as well as articles by Tynianov and Eikhenbaum. Another stimulus for critical articles was the formation of the new Committee of Contemporary Literature attached to the Department of Verbal Arts at GIII in January 1924. The clear connection Formalists made between literary theory and contemporary literature is evident in Eikhenbaum's notes after the first meeting:

"Talk about science (Formalists) and criticism. I argued with Zamiatin who was talking about 'impartiality' in science (nauka). I and Tynianov were proving to him that there is no gulf between science and criticism now, and cannot be one. The point is not impartiality (besstrastie), but the differing character of the evaluation. Fedin spoke well about 'due' (dolzhenstvuiushchei) form. It looks as if it will get off the ground."<sup>89</sup>

By 'due' form Eikhenbaum meant the literary forms and genres that could be expected to appear as the next stage of contemporary literary evolution, if it were correctly assessed. Thus, as we saw in the last section, in Eikhenbaum's view the reappearance of skaz in the work of Remizov, Zoshchenko and Pil'niak among others was an expected resurgence of this device in

small forms after the peak and decline of the bookish language and syncretic form of the nineteenth century novel. Eikhenbaum expressed his views on the character of the critic's evaluation in 'Nuzhna kritika', a short article in Zhizn' iskusstva, and in 'V ozhidanii literatury', a much longer, and openly polemical article in the first number of Russkii sovremennik, which we shall discuss in the next chapter. Eikhenbaum's opposition to official, state-sanctioned criticism - the origin and development of which we shall also consider in the next chapter - was evident in both articles. Where in 'V ozhidanii literatury' Eikhenbaum made an extensive and specific attack on Marxist critics, in 'Nuzhna kritika', he did not name the object of these remarks:

"But of course we do not need now the kind of criticism which either abuses or praises. The marks out of five system is not appropriate here. (...) The critic should possess not only 'taste' but a sharp sense of due form. We should feel a particular gift in him, the sense of the times, in order to listen to his words. There are assessments of different kinds: the assessment of a critic is not that of a schoolteacher. Yes, a critic is not a schoolteacher. In that role he is ridiculous, because he has no pupils."<sup>90</sup>

In Eikhenbaum's view, the critic should address himself not primarily to the new, indiscriminate reader, who had replaced the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia as the primary audience of Russian literature, but to the writer, who needed serious evaluation, confidence and help. To be effective the critic must be close to literature, himself a literary professional. This kind of criticism was necessary and 'due' to appear, in Eikhenbaum's opinion, and he evidently relied, as did Tynianov, on the new Russkii sovremennik as a medium in which it could appear. For the moment, there was no criticism worthy of the name. These were opinions also held outside Formalist circles. In 1923, a year before, Zamiatin had commented in a review of contemporary prose:

"...there are writers - and there are no critics. The Formalists are still not risking performing operations on living people and continue to prepare corpses. Living people fall into the hands of amateur critics, and they judge artistic literature with the same angelic simplicity with which an engineer I know judged music: all music for him was divided into two halves: 'God bless the Tsar' was one, the other was everything else; if

people stand up - it must be from the first half, if they don't stand up - it means it's from the second half, from 'not-God-save-the-Tsar'. The writer now hears no other echo: there is no artistic, professional criticism. And so I, a fiction writer, have no choice but to leave the round dance for an hour and look on from outside: who, how, where to..."<sup>91</sup>

The feuilleton: 'O Shatobriane, o chervontsakh i russkoi literature'

Eikhenbaum and Tynianov had similar views on contemporary literature while they were writing for Russkii sovremennik; in a series of feuilletons and articles they wrote during 1924 for the same periodicals they kept up a dialogue, picking up and developing themes with variations. Thus Tynianov responded to 'Nuzhna kritika' with an article, 'Zhurnal, kritik, chitatel' i pisatel', proposing literary criticism as a genre in its own right<sup>92</sup>. Eikhenbaum wrote in 'O Shatobriane, o chervontsakh i russkoi literature' that the flood of translated fiction and foreign material in Russian fiction arose because topical Russian material was too overwhelming, "pours in a torrent from every drainpipe"<sup>93</sup>, and Tynianov agreed with him that the foreign 'exotic' was the line of least resistance for Russian writers and that a search for large forms was in progress.<sup>94</sup> In the same feuilleton Eikhenbaum noted the reader's lack of interest in the colourless Russian-named hero (as opposed to his foreign counterpart); Tynianov responded with the domestic hero's 'biography' and the proposal to make him altogether redundant<sup>95</sup>. Erenburg, with his prolific output of novels using exotic foreign material, was the butt of both men; The publisher, Tynianov wrote: "...publishes Tarzan, son of Tarzan, wife of Tarzan, his ox and his ass - and with Erenburg's help has already half convinced the reader that Tarzan is, properly speaking, Russian literature."<sup>96</sup>

However, the humorous feuilleton was based on perfectly serious views on the evolution of contemporary literature. In 'O Shatobriane..', Eikhenbaum saw the "attraction to the alien (chuzhomu)"<sup>97</sup> in literature as a function of its evolutionary position:

"Russian literature needs a new path. The problem of literary language and narrative forms is before us once again in all its sharpness. A rearrangement of traditions is taking place. The old Russian novel with psychology, with byt, with philosophy and 'a feeling for nature' - all that has gone dead. The sense of language has revived, and the sense of

plot (siuzhet) has revived. Once again the demand for play with form has appeared. And then suddenly it turned out that with Russian material, nothing can be done.’<sup>98</sup>

Some of the same OPOIAZ-derived categories (fabula, siuzhet, a different but connected sense of literary evolution) had appeared in Mandel’shtam’s journalism; in ‘Literaturnaia Moskva’, in 1922, Mandel’shtam saw the way out for Russian prose through folk-lore, as the generator of plot. The exotic in his use here refers not to foreign material, but to the writer’s view of his own material from outside it, as foreign. In Mandel’shtam’s view, neither byt nor psychology were as dead as might be wished:

“Byt - is the dead story (fabula), it is the rotting plot (siuzhet), it is the convict’s barrow, which psychology drags behind it, because after all it must lean on something, if only a dead story, if there is no live one. Byt - is foreignness (inostranshchina), the invariably false exotic, it does not exist for one’s own domestic, housekeeper’s eye.[...]

Byt is night-blindness to things[...] Byt is the death of the plot, folk-lore is the birth of the plot.’<sup>99</sup>

In his lighter journalism Eikhenbaum took the opportunity to write in a freer, less insistently explanatory style, he made his points without repetition or development; this was a style to which he returned for the short pieces of ‘journalism’ in his 1929 compilation Moi vremennik. As independent publication of scholarly articles became more difficult in the course of the 1920s Eikhenbaum also published serious scholarly work in periodicals, for example ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’ in Na literaturnom postu in 1927. But this work was not properly journalism, written intentionally for a wide public. Between the feuilleton and the short review and these long scholarly articles Eikhenbaum wrote an intermediate kind of journalism, more serious than the former and less complex in development than his longer articles. Much of his work for Russkii sovremennik and most of his polemics are of this type, as well as a few articles on contemporary literature. We shall consider one example of this kind of work.

‘V poiskakh zhanra’

In ‘V poiskakh zhanra’<sup>100</sup> Eikhenbaum located the difficulties of contemporary fiction at a deeper level than in the discussions about foreign novels, while not aspiring to a complex

statement of theory. He isolated an awareness of genre - “an important historical concept”<sup>101</sup> - as opposed to style as the missing element in contemporary prose fiction; the article quotes Tynianov’s review of contemporary fiction ‘Literaturnoe segodnia’<sup>102</sup> and is connected with his major theoretical article of 1924, ‘Literaturnyi fakt’<sup>103</sup>. In Eikhenbaum’s view, the feverish proliferation of literary schools over the past ten to fifteen years had focused on questions of style; the problem of genre which underlaid these questions had been ignored. Genre was no longer perceptible; Chekhov’s work in prose, and Nekrasov’s in verse had been the most recent innovations in genre. A new combination of constructive elements was needed, and new material, but most of all a set (ustanovka) towards genre.

Eikhenbaum cited the adventure novel as an example of this problem; various attempts, encouraged by film and foreign fiction, had been made in recent years at this type of novel, mainly in a utopian mode, but the problem of the novel genre had not been solved. New characters and situations had been inserted into an old formula. Where, earlier in the twenties, Eikhenbaum, like other critics, had seen well plotted fiction as necessary and imminent, and been optimistic that the adventure novel might emerge as a new literary genre<sup>104</sup>, by 1924 he recognised that no basic change had taken place, and consigned adventure fiction to what he saw as its proper sphere in the cinema.

In this article Eikhenbaum defined obsolete fictional genres in terms of automatised constituent elements or functions: landscape, love, the hero, the heroine. As indicators of new genre possibilities he cited work where non-fiction and fiction merged, where the author did not imagine (vydumyvat’) his story, but narrated his own or others’ experience, thus introducing fresh material into literature; the stories of Babel’ and Leonov, Gor’kii’s memoirs and autobiographical stories, Shklovskii’s Zoo and Sentimental’noe puteshestvie.

Characteristically, Eikhenbaum defended and found illustrations for his concept of obsolescent genre in statements made by Tolstoi; thus, as he made clear, avoiding the charge that this was merely a problem invented by modern literary theorists.

The larger part of Eikhenbaum's literary journalism was polemical in various ways, whether directed against literary or political opponents, and we shall consider it in the following chapter.

- 1 G O Vinokur, Lef, 1923, 1, p 241. Grigorii Osipovich Vinokur (1896 - 1947), linguist and literary scholar, member of Moscow Literary Circle, and at this time head of the RSFSR Press office at Riga.
- 2 BME, MT, p 7.
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 V B Shklovskii, 'Voskreshenie slova'(1914), reprinted in Gs, pp 36 - 37, 40 .
- 5 BME, 'Put' Pushkina k proze' (1922), Lit, p 8.
- 6 See BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925), *op cit*, pp 143 - 145, V B Shklovskii, Rozanov (1921), in Gs, pp 120 - 121, and Iu N Tynianov, 'Dostoevskii i Gogol''(1921), PILK, pp 198 -226.
- 7 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925), Lit, p 145.
- 8 BME, MT pp 15 -16.
- 9 *op cit*, p 32.
- 10 *op cit*, p 54.
- 11 *op cit*, pp 41 -2, 80 - 81.
- 12 *op cit*, p 36.
- 13 *op cit*, p 92.
- 14 Defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) was a term coined by Viktor Shklovskii. See 'Iskusstvo kak priem', (1917), in Gs, pp 64 ff, and the following section for a discussion of the term.
- 15 BME, MT, p 93.
- 16 *op cit*, p 130.
- 17 *op cit*, p 99.
- 18 *op cit*, p 121.
- 19 See *op cit*, pp 47, 76 and 89.
- 20 *op cit*, p 12. For another similar opinion, see BME, Anna Akhmatova, Pb, 1923, reprinted Paris, 1980, p 131.
- 21 *ibid* ,

- 22 BME, SI, p 189.
- 23 BME, MT p 12.
- 24 ibid .
- 25 O M Brik, 'T. n. formal'nyi metod', Lef, 1923, reprinted in Khrestomatiia po teoreticheskomu literaturovedeniiu, ed I Chernov, Tartu, 1976, pp 37 -39.
- 26 BME, MT, p 13.
- 27 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi' (1919), Lit, p 19.
- 28 D S Merezhkovskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, Petersburg-Moscow, vol 7, 1912, p 155.
- 29 BME, 'O krizisakh L'va Tolstogo' . (1920), SI, p 69.
- 30 BME, 'O L've Tolstom' . (1919), op cit, p 66.
- 31 BME, MT, p 85.
- 32 op cit, pp 54 - 55.
- 33 P Steiner, Russian Formalism, Ithaca and London, 1984, p 48.
- 34 M O Chudakova, E A Toddes, 'Stranitsy..' , p 145.
- 35 A P Chudakov, 'Molodoi Tolstoi', O Lit, p 465.
- 36 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 353.
- 37 M O Chudakova, E A Toddes, 'Stranitsy..' , p 145.
- 38 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 353.
- 39 M O Chudakova, 'Sots. praktika..' , pp 129 - 130: "'Writing' for Tynianov did mean 'being'. Everything else clouded the picture, displaced the centre, destroyed the balance."
- 40 V B Shklovskii, 'Svertok' (1921), Gs, pp 75 - 76.
- 41 See for instance P Steiner, Russian Formalism. A Metapoetics, Ithaca, London, 1984, p 48, though Steiner's work does not oversimplify.
- 42 See A Jefferson, 'Russian Formalism', in Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction, London, 1987, pp 27,29.
- 43 ibid. See also F Jameson, The Prison-House of Language, Princeton, 1972, p 52, and J Striedter, 'The Russian Formalist Theory of Literary Evolution' (1969), in PTL. A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature, 3, 1977, pp 440 - 442.



- 44 V B Shklovskii, Gs, p 64.
- 45 BME, MT, p 81.
- 46 op cit, p 77.
- 47 Iu N Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii', PILK, pp 270 - 281.
- 48 BME, MT, p 29.
- 49 op cit, pp 90, 93, 101.
- 50 V B Shklovskii, 'Sviaz' priemov siuzhetoslozheniia s obshchimi priemami stilii' in Texte der Russischen Formalisten I, Munich, 1969, pp 74 ff.
- 51 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', Lit, p 132.
- 52 ibid.
- 53 See, for instance, F Jameson, The Prison-House of Language, p 82.
- 54 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 354.
- 55 ibid.
- 56 BME, MT, p 13.
- 57 op cit, pp 13, 22, 143, 144.
- 58 op cit, pp 142 -143.
- 59 L Ia Ginzburg, op cit, p 353.
- 60 op cit, p 355.
- 61 op cit, p 353.
- 62 Veselyi translates with difficulty - cheerful, merry; it suggests gaiety, high spirits and in this context the pleasure in work. For the members of OPOIAZ veselost' was an important and recognised quality of their work and was part of the group terminology for which they were reproached by A G Gornfel'd in Literaturnye zapiski, 1922, No 3, p 5. Cf BME, '5 = 100', Ku, 1922, No 8, p 40: "We are sarcastically called 'the cheerful (veselymi) historians of literature'. And what if we are? It isn't so bad. To be 'cheerful' - that alone is a great virtue now. And to work cheerfully - that is simply an achievement. We have had enough gloomy workers - isn't it time to try something different?" Cf V B Shklovskii, Gamburgskii schet, L, 1928, p 152, quoted in PILK, p 462: "At the depths of art, like the heart of the ferment, lies gaiety (veselost'). It is hard to hold onto it, hard to explain to one who is not a specialist."

- 63 V B Shklovskii, 'Sviaz' priemov siuzhetoslozheniia s obshchimi priemami stilia' (1919), in Texte der Russischen Formalisten, I, Munich, 1969, pp 36 - 122, and Razvertyvanie siuzheta, OPOIAZ, Pg, 1921.
- 64 See BME, 'O. Genri i teoriia novelly' (1925), Lit, pp 166 - 209. See also BME, 'Boldinskie pobasenki Pushkina' (1919), O lit, pp 343 - 347.
- 65 A P Chudakov, 'V. V. Vinogradov i teoriia khudozhestvennoi rechi pervoi treti XX veka' in V V Vinogradov, Izbrannye trudy. O iazyke khudozhestvennoi prozy, M, 1980, p 299.
- 66 BME, 'O khudozhestvennom slove' (1918), O lit, p 343.
- 67 BME, 'Illiuziia skaza', Ku, Pg, 1918, 2, reprinted in Sl, pp 152 - 156.
- 68 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, p 172. Tynianov commented: "Skaz makes the word physiologically perceptible - the whole story becomes a monologue, addressed to each reader, and the reader enters into the story, begins to intone, to gesticulate, to smile, he does not read the story, but performs it." 'Literaturnoe segodnia' (1924), in PILK, p 160.
- 69 See P Steiner, Russian Formalism, Ithaca and London, 1984, pp 144 -146.
- 70 V B Shklovskii, 'O poezii i zaumnom iazyke' (1916), Gs, pp 45 - 48; L Iakubinskii, 'O zvukakh stikhotvornogo iazyka', Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka, Pg, 1916; O M Brik, 'Zvukovye povtory: Analiz zvukovoi struktury iazyka', op cit; B A Kushner, 'O zvukovoi storone poeticheskoi rechi', op cit; E D Polivanov, 'Po povodu "zvukovykh zhestov" iaponskogo iazyka', op cit.
- 71 E D Polivanov, op cit, pp 30 - 31.
- 72 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, pp 181 - 182.
- 73 op cit, pp 179 - 180.
- 74 K Pomorska, Russian Formalist Theory and its Poetic Ambiance, The Hague and Paris, 1968, p 33.
- 75 See P Steiner, Russian Formalism, Ithaca and London, 1984, pp 160 - 161.
- 76 BME, 'Illiuziia skaza', Sl, p 156.
- 77 op cit, p 152.
- 78 BME, 'Kak sdelana Shinel' Gogolia', Sl, pp 175 -176.

- 79 V V Vinogradov, 'Problema skaza v stilistike', Izbrannye trudy. O iazyke khudozhestvennoi prozy, M, 1980, pp 42 -54.
- 80 BME, Diary entry, 29 November 1925. S I Bernshtein, 1892 - 1970, linguist, author of works on verse and verse language, member of OPOIAZ from October 1919, studied at Petersburg University with Tynianov and led with him a joint seminar on the lexicology of artistic language at GIII.
- 81 BME, 'Leskov i sovremennaia proza', Lit, p 214.
- 82 M O Chudakova, commentary, in BME, O lit, p 517.
- 83 BME, MT, p 121.
- 84 BME, 'Poeziia i proza', Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Trudy po znakovym sistemam, 5, Tartu, 1971, p 477.
- 85 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 356.
- 86 See Iu N Tynianov, PILK, p 548.
- 87 "The journal seems to me quite dead at the moment. 'Experts' have gathered, fashionable people and some from Vsemirnaia literatura. No nucleus at all, no line, no conspiracy, as it were. One of the chief characters is that same unbearable A N Tikhonov, whom they love at Vsem. Lit. for his stupidity. Stupid people are often necessary and convenient, but not for a journal. Chukovskii, Lerner, Zamiatin, A Smirnov, Punin, N Radlov, E. and Tynianov. What kind of staff is that?" BME, Diary entry, 1 March 1924.
- 88 For an acute émigré view of the fate of Russkii sovremennik - "...the last independent, that is, not headed by Communists, journal in Russia [where] the spirit of the journal was free (vol'nyi)." - see V F Khodasevich, Belyi koridor. Vospominaniia, New York, 1982, pp 251 - 253.
- 89 BME, Diary entry, 6 January 1924.
- 90 BME, 'Nuzhna kritika', Zh i, 1924, 4, p 12. For a similar comparison of the (Marxist) critic to a school-teacher, see O E Mandel'shtam, 'Veer gertsogini' (1929), Sobranie sochinenii, New York, vol 3, 1969, p 52.
- 91 See E I Zamiatin, 'Novaia russkaia proza', Russkoe iskusstvo, 1923, 1, reprinted in E Zamiatin, Litsa, New York, 1967, p 193.
- 92 Iu N Tynianov, 'Zhurnal, kritik, chitatel' i pisatel' (1924), PILK, pp 147 - 149.

- 93 BME, 'O Shatobriane, o chervontsakh i russkoi literature', Zh i, 1924, 1, reprinted in O lit, p 367.
- 94 Iu N Tynianov, '200,000 metrov Il'i Erenburga', Zh i, 1924, 4, p 13, quoted in PILK, p 458.
- 95 Iu N Tynianov, 'Sokrashchenie shtatov', Zh i, 1924, 6, reprinted in PILK, pp 144 - 146.
- 96 Iu N Tynianov, 'Literaturnoe segodnia', PILK, pp 150, and see 153 - 155. See also BME, 'O Shatobriane..', O lit, p 366.
- 97 BME, op cit, p 368.
- 98 op cit, p 367.
- 99 O E Mandel'shtam, 'Literaturnaia Moskva: rozhdenie fabuly', Rossiia, 1922, 3, reprinted in Sobranie sochinenii, New York, vol 2, 1971, pp 335 - 336. Eikhenbaum met Mandel'shtam in Petersburg on 7 January 1914 (see letter to his parents of 8 January, quoted in O lit, p 6) and wrote about him in his book Anna Akhmatova. Opyt analiza, Pb, 1923, pp 8, 24 -25, 26. For a view of the complex question of Mandel'shtam's attitude to OPOIAZ theory (some links are evident in his criticism of the 1920s), see N Ia Mandel'shtam, Vtoraia kniga, Paris, 1972, pp 432 - 343, 366 - 370. Unfortunately, the author's understanding of OPOIAZ thought is flawed. For a contemporary scholarly view, see E A Toddes, 'Mandel'shtam i opoiazovskaia filologiya', TS2, pp 78 - 102.
- 100 BME, 'V poiskakh zhanra', Rs, 1924, 3, reprinted in Lit, pp 291 - 295.
- 101 op cit, p 292.
- 102 Iu N Tynianov, 'Literaturnoe segodnia', Rs, 1924,1, reprinted in PILK, pp 150 - 166. See p 151.
- 103 Iu N Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', Lef, 1924, 2, reprinted in PILK, p<sup>P</sup> 255 - 270. See esp. pp 255 - 258.
- 104 See eg BME, MT, p 9.

## Chapter III

### POLEMICS

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## Chapter III

### POLEMICS

#### 1 Eikhenbaum's conception of history

Awareness of history was an integral part of the character of intellectual life in Leningrad in the 1920s. L. Ia Ginzburg, a participant in that life from 1922, noted in several contexts

“...the atmosphere of the 20s when people not only thought but also felt in the categories of historicism (istorizm). The two hypostases of time were history and the present day, they were inseparable.”<sup>1</sup>

We shall come later in this chapter to Eikhenbaum's sense of history and the present day as two hypostases of time. But what did Ginzburg understand by historicism? There are two broad meanings of the word 1) the idea that phenomena may be adequately understood and evaluated when considered in terms of the place they have and the role they play in a historical process of development, and 2) an extension of this, that examination of this process of historical development - the 'stream of history' - allows the discovery of historical 'laws', which permit one to extrapolate the future. This second sense, a projection of history as an intelligible, impersonal, dynamic force, is found in different versions going back to Herder, Hegel, Comte and Marx. In our day Karl Popper and others have associated this second sense of historicism negatively with Marxist thought and totalitarian political systems. Though neither Eikhenbaum nor Ginzburg were Marxists, they did, in different ways, use history in both the senses described above. We shall try in this chapter to show how Eikhenbaum's idea of history arose and how it differed from a Marxist view.

Ginzburg's Hegel-derived sense of historicism denoted a certain historical consciousness which functioned as a primary intellectual grid through which the present day, too, was perceived, and

which filtered significant, potentially 'historical', contemporary material, that is, material which was typical or characteristic of a wider historical phenomenon. In this respect her thinking resembled Eikhenbaum's, as we shall see later in this chapter. In a recent essay she wrote:

"Historicism is in fact the bringing to consciousness (osoznanie) of common life with its events and movement, in its changing forms (formalisation brings history close to art) - from the widest structures of society's relationships to details of customs, daily life, setting. The crystallisation, the depositing of these material and non-material forms of life as it moves make up culture.

The correlation of private existence with history is always present, but it is variable. It is possible to have an obscure connection, subjectively imperceptible, not objectively manifested. [...] An open but inactive connection is possible [...] and finally an active connection, of the participant in the action and movement..."<sup>2</sup>

As we shall see, Ginzburg's second point about the relation of the individual to history was connected to a similar sense of the role of the individual in Eikhenbaum's concept of history. This sense of involvement in history, the vital connection of the past with the present as history in the making, and the awareness of all phenomena, large or small, as potentially historically significant - these were part of Eikhenbaum's intellectual outlook, as they were for other members of OPOIAZ. But they do not altogether describe his idiosyncratic concept of history.

History did not appear as an important term in Eikhenbaum's OPOIAZ work until 1921, with one interesting exception, which suggests that the cluster of ideas contained in that term evolved considerably earlier. In 1919 Eikhenbaum wrote of Tolstoi's involvement in questions about the functions and ethics of art:

"If one puts the question teleologically, one can assert that history *demande*d of Tolstoi, as an artist of that period, answers to these questions - on any other path there *could not* be salvation, or he had to turn off the historical high road, on which he had always walked..."<sup>3</sup>

The arbitrariness of the statement "history demanded.." is modified here by the use of the conditional ("If one puts the question teleologically...") and further modified by the explicit postulation of history as first cause; later, similar statements appeared frequently without such

modification. This is precisely the kind of apparently determinist usage that makes it necessary to understand what Eikhenbaum meant by history.

#### 'Mig soznaniia'

In Autumn 1921 Eikhenbaum published an article of a type quite unprecedented in the course of his OPOIAZ activity, concerned with neither literary theory nor poetics. 'Mig soznaniia', a kind of stock-taking provoked by the deaths of Blok and Gumilev in August 1921, made public his realisation that it was not possible to be uninvolved in, or exempt from history. He marked the moral responsibility of his generation for the chain of circumstances that had produced the revolution and its aftermath. In 'Mig soznaniia' Eikhenbaum first made explicit the idea of history with which he operated from then on. Each generation, in his view, enjoyed a period of apparent freedom, but for each:

"...suddenly (and always with painful abruptness) comes a moment, when it sees that it has passed exams, fallen in love and created 'not for nothing'...That it is responsible for all of it, that all of it conformed to laws (zakonomerno). That is the point of maturity and horror. It sees that there is already nowhere to run away to, nowhere to hide from unseen and unknowable causes, no one to reproach, and nothing that can be corrected. That it is already in the chains of history, with which it began playing so impertinently and carelessly. A moment of consciousness and retribution. A quiet minute of horror - that terrifying calm in life, that Gogol' wrote of in Starosvetskie pomeschiki."4

Eikhenbaum's generation, who were students in 1905, had recently come to this point of consciousness; now a new generation was "looking carelessly into the face of History", and he was writing for them. For Eikhenbaum and his peers:

"It is the beginning of shocks and horrors. The beginning of pangs of awareness and terrible questions. 'Does anyone need me?' At these moments writers write author's confessions where they repent and shout hysterically, and make angry demands."5

For Eikhenbaum the revolution and its aftermath were in large part his generation's own creation, whether by omission or commission. Blok had spoken indirectly but quite clearly in his speech on Pushkin<sup>6</sup> of his predicament as a poet under the regime he had accepted; of Gumilev, at the opposite political pole, who had been shot not long before, Eikhenbaum wrote:



“Another poet dies...quite a different person - calm, cheerful, convinced...And dies in quite a different way. Harsh accident? ‘They?’ But after all everything is law-observing (zakonomerno)!!! After all, Death, in whatever guise it has appeared, comes where History sends it. And History is us, all of us, we ourselves.”<sup>7</sup>

This last statement: “...History is us, all of us, we ourselves”, with its insistence that the acts of individuals taken together constitute history, represents one of the two central ideas in Eikhenbaum’s sense of history, and distinguishes it from the Marxist concept. If the actions of individuals constitute history, the individual bears great responsibility for his actions; this too, as we shall see, became an important part of Eikhenbaum’s thinking. The other central idea was zakonomernost’. History as Eikhenbaum saw it in ‘Mig soznaniia’ was, just as we saw in the previous chapter in the case of literary history, zakonomerno, a dynamic process operating with laws, into which all actions fed and from which consequences, results came. It was inescapable, the background, whether acknowledged or not, of every life. Individual actions, taken together, accounted for real historical consequences, and individuals were therefore more, not less, responsible for their actions. As we shall see, in Eikhenbaum’s subsequent articles, history formed the parameters for action in every sphere, including the literary. This did not mean that action was simple; in a review of poetry in the same issue of Knizhnyi ugol, Eikhenbaum wrote:

“History’s conformity to law (zakonomernost’) is an abstraction, and the more invariable the law, the more diverse its concrete embodiments. Laws are constant in their algebraic expression, but we live by arithmetic, and have to deal not with abstract symbols, but with real figures and relationships, which change all the time. Here analogy does not help, and young poets have to solve poetic problems anew every time, without the help of historical algebra.”<sup>8</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum used a mathematical metaphor to speak of the problem of literary expression, the problem of finding a concrete literary solution to a situation set by abstract literary-historical law, but the point at issue was the same and held for any sphere of action. The individual who dealt “with real figures and relationships, which change all the time”, who lived as it were “by arithmetic”, was nevertheless also inescapably involved in a complex, abstract, law-observing, historical process, a kind of “historical algebra”. Finding analogies for present

situations in this historical process did not in itself resolve concrete problems of conduct, for the poet or any other individual.

#### 'Sud'ba Bloka'

Eikhenbaum's 1921 memorial speech on Blok is a kind of applied model of the idea of history which informed 'Mig soznaniia'. In 'Sud'ba Bloka' Eikhenbaum spoke of Blok as the protagonist in the tragedy, in the Greek sense, prepared by early Symbolism, which overtook Blok and his generation. He discussed Blok's poetry "on a supra-personal level... a level of historical 'retribution'"<sup>9</sup>, but, as we saw in Molodoi Tolstoi, this did not preclude a sense of the poet as an individual, one in whom consciousness prevailed over the given nature. Blok appeared as an individual in history, as a dominant cultural influence for generations (like Eikhenbaum's own) whose "historical destinies have an inner link with Symbolism as a principle of spiritual (dukhovnoi) culture".<sup>10</sup> Eikhenbaum used texts he characterised as author's confessions, by both Blok and Belyi, to make clear the despair and horror felt by the "prophets of the revolution - [who were] now its gloomy contemplators"<sup>11</sup>, and, in the case of Blok, had been its "orator and sophist"<sup>12</sup>:

"In Blok's death and in the frenzied cries of Andrei Belyi is the fate of an entire generation, the fate of the whole of Symbolism as it becomes obsolete among the horrors of our iron epoch. And this fate is tragic, because it is not accidental, did not descend from outside, but was long since prepared and approached from within."<sup>13</sup>

The creative individual acts, and knows that he acts, in history, and his actions (his conduct, in Eikhenbaum's later key term) have real effects, real historical and political consequences. Eikhenbaum's view of Blok here cannot be read as narrowly literary-historical, within the bounds of immanent literary evolution as OPOIAZ saw it.

In this article Eikhenbaum used the categories of the supra-personal and the historical to justify reading from the text to the life in a way quite alien to OPOIAZ practice until then, not only when he spoke of a whole generation's perception of Blok as a lyric hero as it were on stage before its eyes, but in later works (Katilina and Prizrak Rima i Monte Luka), where the analogy between the text and Blok's life was more direct. He saw much of Blok's work after 1911 as

“applied Symbolism”, a “search for analogies in the past to make sense of his epoch and to justify his fate”<sup>14</sup>, a technique he himself developed in scholarly work from 1927, and used (like other members of OPOIAZ) in letters and conversation during the whole of the 1920s. This article, with a view of the artist’s fate in history which has little in common with the limited, specifically literary, historical dimension of literary evolution, is an early forerunner of categories Eikhenbaum developed fully six years later in 1927.

In Eikhenbaum’s work from 1921 we see two aspects of the historical dynamic, the past and the present, leading into the future; the continuing process to which all contribute, history in the making, which is “us, all of us, we ourselves”, and the given, inherited situation, constructed by earlier generations (or by ourselves), which creates the conditions and the context for present action. The creative individual of whatever period lives and acts at the intersection of these two historical planes. In Eikhenbaum’s view sensitivity to both the given and the continuing aspects of the historical process was a key quality of the artist, who was not manipulated by, but aware of a historical dynamic. This 1922 comment on Nekrasov is typical in that respect:

“Nekrasov was a historically unavoidable and necessary phenomenon. This in no way lessens the significance of individuality (individual’nost’). The freedom of individuality manifests itself not in isolation from historical laws, but in the ability to implement them, in the ability to be of the moment (aktual’nyi), to listen to the voice of history. Individuality and historical law are not contradictory concepts and do not exclude each other. Creativity (and individuality is the concept of the creative personality (tvorcheskaia lichnost’)) in general is the act of becoming conscious of oneself in the flood of history - it is responsible.”<sup>15</sup>

Here, as in all Eikhenbaum’s statements about history, individuality and history are complementary concepts and either appear together, or, if they appear separately, the missing term is understood. In Molodoi Tolstoi, as we saw in the last chapter (in the section on the author), Eikhenbaum had made similar statements about the creative individual with a complementary historical dimension, although he did not there collect these very similar ideas under the name of ‘history’. The notion of the individual writer *conscious* of himself in history

underlaid all Eikhenbaum's shorthand teleological dicta of the type "History [or the epoch, or the present day, (*sovremennost'*) which he used as virtual synonyms] demanded..."<sup>16</sup>. He noted in this article the responsibility attached to such awareness; later this became a central part of the idea of the writer's conduct (*povedenie*) which was, as we shall see, so important to him in the second half of the 1920s.

Because history was a continuous dynamic process, in Eikhenbaum's view the researcher could legitimately think in terms of analogies between the function at a given point in that process of a writer in the past and the role of a modern writer in analogous processes in the present; for him, as Ginzburg wrote:

"The two hypostases of time were history and the present day, they were inseparable.

For Eikhenbaum at one pole of historicism was the conduct of the heroes of his scholarly books [...] At the other pole, the actions of the scholar himself, the *littérateur*, the individual (*lichnost'*)."<sup>17</sup>

In his Lermontov (1924) Eikhenbaum discussed the principles for the study of the literary 'event' in history at some length. This was his concept of history applied to literary evolution at its most abstract and literary-specific. To the traditional view of the writer as a given, fixed personality in a static and arbitrarily limited historical frame Eikhenbaum opposed a view of the writer and his work as *function* in a continuing historical process. In his view, the static approach of projection into, and reconstruction of the past merely transferred the researcher's inadequate contemporary apparatus onto his historical subject. Once again Eikhenbaum stressed the idea of historical aktual'nost', the writer's function in the constant historical dynamic:

"To study an event historically does not at all mean to describe it as unique, with a meaning only in the conditions of its own time. That is naive historicism, which makes science barren. The point is not a simple *projection into the past*, but understanding the historical *topicality* (*aktual'nost'*) of an event, defining its role in the development of historical energy, which is, in its essence, constant..."<sup>18</sup>

In the first, censored preface to his Lermontov (restored in the 1987 edition in O literature),

Eikhenbaum distinguished sharply between the study of Lermontov's work for evidence of obshchestvennost' (which proceeded from the scientifically fruitless confusion of different cultural riady) and the proper concern of the literary scholar to identify the writer's function in the complex literary-historical process. Characteristically, he found contemporary evidence to support his case in the introduction, using a quotation from I S Aksakov. Aksakov discovered a type of "historical necessity"<sup>19</sup> in the appearance of the poets of the 1820s. Why, asked Aksakov, should there have been a sudden preoccupation with poetry at that time?

"...The answer to that, by analogy, is in the history of all the arts. When, in general, the need for some special power to be manifested in the spiritual organism of a people becomes evident, then by inscrutable means people with one common vocation come into the world to satisfy it, but people with the whole variety of human individuality (lichnost'), with the freedom of individuality preserved and all the apparent exterior chance qualities of daily life preserved..."<sup>20</sup>

Eikhenbaum used Aksakov here to reinforce his own somewhat different conception of literary development, in which the creative individual, involved in his milieu and period, sensed the direction and type of work 'needed' with an intuition that was 'supra-individual', ie attuned to the general situation. We shall consider changes in Eikhenbaum's scholarly application of his sense of history from 1927 in the next chapter. In this chapter an understanding of his sense of history as it first appeared in his work from 1921 with the complementary concepts of the creative individual and zakonomernost' (with its apparently determinist corollary) will clarify much in the section which follows on Eikhenbaum's polemics for OPOIAZ.

Steiner's view of the intra-Formalist process as "a polemos, a struggle among contradictory and incompatible views, none of which could become the absolute ground of a new literary science"<sup>21</sup> can also be applied to extra-Formalist relations, the struggle between the far more incompatible views of literature which Formalism provoked. From the beginning of its activity, there was an important polemical dimension in OPOIAZ work; in this chapter we shall look at Eikhenbaum's role in differently oriented phases of this work. Of the members of OPOIAZ, Eikhenbaum was the major champion, apologist and "devastating polemicist"<sup>22</sup>, as a speaker as well as in writing, particularly when Shklovskii was forced into emigration for eighteen months in March 1922.<sup>23</sup>

As we saw in Chapters One and Two, the first phase of this polemic was directed at establishing the new science by differentiating it from other approaches to literary study. In this first phase Eikhenbaum wrote few exclusively polemical articles, but all his work had a polemical orientation. As he noted in 1925, in 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', a brilliant but sober retrospective survey of OPOIAZ work, designed to consolidate gains, gather allies and demonstrate the evolution of OPOIAZ ideas:

"Speaking of the formal method and its evolution, one must always bear in mind that many principles put forward by Formalists in the years of strenuous struggle with opponents were significant not only as scientific principles, but also as slogans, paradoxically sharpened in aid of propaganda and opposition. Not to bear this in mind and to relate to OPOIAZ work of 1916 -1921 as work of academic character is to ignore history."<sup>24</sup>.

The principles of the new poetics had to be forcefully, repeatedly and often one-sidedly restated, in order, first, to be heard, and second, to be understood. Tynianov made this process clear to an opponent, A G Gornfel'd, in 1922 in a markedly less distanced way:

"..in its first militant period [OPOIAZ] struggles against a philistine attitude to scientific questions which removed the air necessary at the start of any living work. [...] A living movement cannot 1) live without polemics and peacefully coexist with hostile ones,

2) be careful and, while taking a step forward, take a step back.”<sup>25</sup>

In this early period from 1918 -1921, Eikhenbaum recalled, polemics were directed against two main targets; one was unprincipled, weak, obsolete work on literature from an academic community which had inherited, but did not develop, the work of Aleksandr Potebnia<sup>26</sup> and Aleksandr Veselovskii<sup>27</sup>. The second, and far more vigorous and influential group were the mainly Symbolist critics and theoreticians writing in the journals. They produced widely read work on poetics, but a poetics involved with metaphysics, with “subjective aesthetics and philosophical theories”.<sup>28</sup> Critics from this large group (V Ivanov, Belyi, Briusov, Merezhkovskii, Chukovskii and others) remained one of the targets of Eikhenbaum’s more specific polemics after 1921.

By 1921 OPOIAZ had achieved a certain recognition. Some of its members occupied academic positions; Eikhenbaum and Tynianov taught in the Verbal Arts Section of the State Institute for the History of the Arts (GIII), and both they and Shklovskii also taught the theory and history of literature at Petrograd State University.<sup>29</sup> The ‘Formal method’ had become fashionable as well as academically respectable, and misconceptions and faulty assumptions accompanied its rising popularity. In a questionnaire in June 1924 Tynianov wrote:

“Much has been said about the Formal method and now everybody is more or less a Formalist. Teaching form is understood by very many people.” [Here Tynianov crossed out: ‘..to the exclusion of function - this leads to the hierarchy mentality and to classification, where ‘Pushkin’s first love’ and ‘Turgenev’s Russian girl’ get on wonderfully side by side, and so on. (But I talk about this in my book on semantics.)’ The sentence finally read: ‘Teaching form is understood by very many people] “.. as teaching a formal approach to the matter. Some are not averse to ‘condemning’ or reconsidering Formalism even on the grounds that Formalists recognise ‘only sounds’ in verse, etc, etc. All this, of course, is incorrect.”<sup>30</sup>

In the survey mentioned above, Eikhenbaum noted that both opponents and followers of Formalism tended to forget that it evolved and changed; “We are surrounded by eclectics and epigones who are turning the formal method into a kind of inert system of ‘Formalism’, which they can use to work out terms, schemes and classifications.”<sup>31</sup>

These misconceptions were inevitable to some degree, given the diversity of Formalist work, which allowed any method, provided the principle of specificity, the study of the specifically literary, was maintained, and given the consequent absence of an overall explanatory scheme. The fundamental importance of the principle of specificity was most frequently misunderstood or ignored; for example OPOIAZ was understood merely to be proposing the study of literary form. Some critics and scholars assumed that this approach could therefore be combined with psychological, philosophical and other types of criticism.

Literary polemics: Chukovskii, Khodasevich, Zhirmunskii

One part of Eikhenbaum's polemics from 1921 was directed at literary scholars, writers and critics, and expressed with considerable force and acidity. Political issues were not a consideration here. His article 'Metody i podkhody', published in the last issue of Viktor Khovin's Knizhnyi ugol in 1922, is a good example of this type of polemic. It examined the crisis of criticism in the wake of the revolution, where culture as a whole was under trial, and the intelligentsia no longer existed in its old form. Eikhenbaum attacked Chukovskii, Khodasevich and Zhirmunskii, whose positions could scarcely be further apart, under the general rubric of eclecticism of different kinds.

The point at issue in the case of Kornei Chukovskii, a writer and critic of Eikhenbaum's generation (four years older than him), was his book Nekrasov kak khudozhnik, written in 1917, but published only in 1922. Nekrasov's verse, traditionally seen as formally weak, presented a good test case for Formalist readings, and Tynianov, Shklovskii and Eikhenbaum all spoke and produced articles on it<sup>32</sup>. Eikhenbaum subjected Chukovskii's book to protracted mockery and Chukovskii to patronising personal attack. His significance for Eikhenbaum was his position as an established "subjective-impressionist" critic, who provided an opportunity for discrediting that approach to criticism. The new literary science, Eikhenbaum claimed, had unnerved and confused Chukovskii, his borrowed attempts at metrics were pitiable, he made frequent attempts to construct the poet's psychology from his technique. Chukovskii's solution to the problem posed by specialist scholars was "a synthesis of scientific research criticism with



subjective impressionist, psychological and any other kind.”<sup>33</sup>. This synthesis, the proposal to absorb the study of the intrinsically literary into the old heterogeneous approaches, recurred as a common reaction to Formalism and was an index of the hold it had acquired on thinking about literary study. Eikhenbaum’s review, over half of which was devoted to Chukovskii, castigated the futility and incomprehension of such syntheses. This polemic, initiated by Eikhenbaum, continued at intervals until 1926, mainly on Chukovskii’s side, but there is no indication that their personal relations suffered seriously. They worked together, for example, on the editorial board of Russkii sovremennik in 1924, and were friendly enough for Chukovskii to visit Eikhenbaum at home in December 1924. Chukovskii’s opinion of him in 1922, before his article came out seems to have stood:

“Then two young Shklovskiites from the House of Arts came to see me - Tynianov and Eikhenbaum. Eikhenbaum is printing a terribly insulting article about me - but all the same I like him for some reason. He proved to me that I fret, that my book on Nekrasov is wrong, but from his words I saw that a lot is based on misunderstandings.”<sup>34</sup>

If Chukovskii was, in Eikhenbaum’s view, a confused eclectic, V F Khodasevich, a firm opponent of Formalist thinking, whom Eikhenbaum acknowledged as a good poet, was, as a critic, an eclectic only apparently of a different camp. In a speech on Pushkin Khodasevich had attacked Formalism for splitting form from content and giving priority to form - the essence of the Pisarev tactic in reverse. Eikhenbaum did not show here how this conception of form and content was mistaken, but attacked Khodasevich in turn for his “incorrect, vulgarised formulation of a theory of which he evidently knows little”<sup>35</sup> and his indifference to problems of literary theory. In Khodasevich’s speech on Annenskii he found even greater evidence of the “primitive state of his thought”<sup>36</sup> and gross psychologism in his comparison of a fictional death - that of Ivan Il’ich - with the death of Annenskii. In Eikhenbaum’s view, Khodasevich differed from Chukovskii (for the purpose of this polemic) only in his greater confidence as an eclectic.

V M Zhirmunskii, the third and by far the most serious opponent in this article, was a respected literary scholar, head of the Verbal Arts Section at GIII, and had been Eikhenbaum’s close associate and friend since 1913. ‘Metody i podkhody’ was Eikhenbaum’s first public statement

in print of his fundamental disagreement with Zhirmunskii on the meaning and function of literary theory. The points at issue had nothing in common with his dismissal of Chukovskii and Khodasevich. If Chukovskii figured as a surviving representative of a naive critical school, Zhirmunskii was an old associate who had adopted certain conclusions of the new poetics without seeing any need for the fundamental questioning of existing literary assumptions.

Eikhenbaum based his attack on Zhirmunskii's article 'O poezii Aleksandra Bloka'; the first half was about Blok's world view, the second about his form. He commented:

"Does that mean - a synthesis? That synthesis for which so many thirst? Does it mean the 'painful subject' of form and content, or, more cunningly, the inner and the outer, has been solved? No, the question is not even put, but carefully hidden, as if it were not there. Such a layer of varnish has been applied that thought slips easily, without noticing contradictions and incompleteness. But if you look closely, it turns out that in the first part we have one method, and in the second, another."<sup>37</sup>

This, Eikhenbaum continued, betrayed indifference to method as a working principle, and led to eclecticism and a loss of feeling for facts, which he demonstrated with Zhirmunskii's scheme of Blok's Neznakomka. The net impression was one of cold academic habit; Eikhenbaum concluded that, when working hypotheses and the most basic problems were still to be stated, schemes and syntheses were premature. Eikhenbaum's objections to Zhirmunskii's work here remained essentially the same in later statements - his unprincipled combination of contradictory methods and the construction of schemes and categories for works whose fundamental character Zhirmunskii assumed without discussion.

Eikhenbaum had already written to Zhirmunskii about these disagreements in a long and affectionate private letter in October 1921<sup>38</sup>, in which he contrasted their relations to poetics. His own adoption of the formal method as a principle (not merely the study of form) had involved an overall critical change (*perelom*) and the decision to abandon literary study based on a philosophical approach. Zhirmunskii, on the other hand, had installed the findings of the new poetics alongside his earlier views, avoiding any critical change, and produced, as a result, blunted, luke-warm work without the energy of conviction. Zhirmunskii's response to this letter was:

“...deeply embittered and insulted. He calls me a sectarian, accuses me of fault-finding over details and speaks idealistic phrases about ‘eternal values’ and so on. How strange! It’s boring to answer - the man doesn’t understand history. I think we shall separate altogether, and perhaps soon. The article in Knizhnyi ugol will come out - a decisive moment for him.”<sup>39</sup>

We may note here Eikhenbaum’s feeling that Zhirmunskii “doesn’t understand history”. It is clear from this, as from other such statements, that he felt the revolutionary changes in literary scholarship pioneered by OPOIAZ to be in step with the movement of history as he understood it, to be a contemporary phenomenon that had historical importance. For Eikhenbaum Zhirmunskii’s “idealistic phrases” belonged to an already irrelevant past. The separation that Eikhenbaum spoke of did in fact take place. Zhirmunskii’s public response to ‘Metody i podkhody’ came in his review of Eikhenbaum’s book Melodika stikha, to which he had substantial objections:

“The so-called ‘Formal method’ in its extreme expression attempts to eliminate in the study of poetic style the question of the artistic-psychological unity which forms the work of art, linking and giving meaning to its separate devices.”<sup>40</sup>

Zhirmunskii insisted on the inclusion of thematics in poetics and on a range of possible approaches to literature besides poetics, including art as device with:

“... art as a product of spiritual activity, art as a social fact and social factor, art as a moral, religious or cognitive fact”.<sup>41</sup>

He admitted the need for a strict methodological framework, but did not specify it. In passing over the problems of constructing such a framework, he greatly devalued the OPOIAZ principle of the specific study of literature, reducing it to dogma, “a Formalist world-view [where] everything in art is only artistic device.”<sup>42</sup> This aligned him with other researchers and academics against OPOIAZ.

One of these was A A Smirnov, a specialist in mediaeval Western literature and the Renaissance, whom Zhirmunskii introduced as a visiting lecturer to GIII in July 1922. Eikhenbaum recorded in his diary a meeting where Smirnov read parts of his lecture:

“...light-minded, provincial philosophy in bad taste, to which one might have listened

with some attention only ten years ago....Terribly out of step with the times in the bad sense of the word. The Gershenzon way of thinking ... The whole thing is undoubted scientific reaction and epigone thinking which must be fought.”<sup>43</sup>

Both Eikhenbaum and Tynianov devoted sections of articles to refuting Smirnov’s lecture, ‘Puti i zadachi nauki o literature’, which was printed as the leading article in Literaturnaia mysl’ II, a 1923 miscellany Tynianov referred to as an “organ of ‘right-wing formalists’ and ‘anti-formalists’ assembled to ‘re-examine’ the formal method”<sup>44</sup>. Eikhenbaum’s dismissal of Smirnov’s article was part of his review of work by academic and other opponents of Formalism, written in September 1923 and later sent to the Marxist journal Pechat’ i revoliutsiia. He ridiculed Smirnov’s “placid-naive” version of Gershenzon’s mudrost’ (aligning his view of literature with Gershenzon’s in Mudrost’ Pushkina (1919)), and his use of poeziia, slovesnost’ and literatura, “the surprising trinity”<sup>45</sup> of old school categories, to define literature.

Next to Smirnov in the Pechat’ i revoliutsiia article (which we shall consider later in the chapter), Eikhenbaum placed his last public statement against Zhirmunskii, who had in the interim made a definitive declaration of his theoretical disagreements with OPOIAZ<sup>46</sup> in a foreword to the Russian edition of a book by a German literary theorist Oskar Walzel, Problema formy v poezii. Eikhenbaum deliberately softened his public comments on this declaration so as to distinguish Zhirmunskii’s position from the ignorance and active hostility of the other targets of his article.<sup>47</sup> While admitting Zhirmunskii’s real interest in poetics, he accused him of failing to clarify the scientific problems he raised and of a lack of theoretical temperament. In this way the breach which opened in 1922 between OPOIAZ and Zhirmunskii, between what Tynianov called the left and right wings of Formalism, became public and fixed. It prevented not only the discussion of problems common to both camps, but also any alliance against common enemies, while circumstances permitted. In the view of E A Toddes, the breach contributed to the series of causes which brought about the group’s extinction<sup>48</sup>.

#### Polemics against Marxist literary criticism

There is little evidence available to show exactly when and how Eikhenbaum moved from enthusiasm for the new perspectives opened up by the revolution to disillusion with the facts of

Bolshevik power. The 1921 article 'Mig soznaniia' is one marker, and we have later diary entries from 1924 which record the changing political climate and Eikhenbaum's deep alienation from it, but the timing and nature of the transition from 1917/18 - 1921 is not yet clear. It does seem clear however that Eikhenbaum made a distinction between revolution and the new political regime, and saw OPOIAZ as a force for revolutionary change in literary studies quite separate from political loyalties. He wrote in his diary, for instance, in 1922, of "our 'revtroika'"<sup>49</sup> (Shklovskii, Tynianov and himself) speaking at a literary debate. The same distinction appears, as we shall see, in his 1922 article '5 = 100'.

One index of Eikhenbaum's social-political position may be found in his editorial work for and contributions to Viktor Khovin's strongly anti-Bolshevik arts journal Knizhnyi ugol from 1918 to 1922. (He also contributed to Zhizn' iskusstva, a more politically compliant publication, over this period, but this was not such a close cooperation.) Khovin saw him as one (with Shklovskii) of "the only people with whom I can work and put out Knizhnyi ugol"<sup>50</sup>, with "the same interests, the same tastes, the same agitations"<sup>51</sup>. Khovin acknowledged lively disagreements with Eikhenbaum, in the assessment of Blok, for instance, but it was a close association on Eikhenbaum's part with a fiercely politically independent figure - a Futurist who had vociferously condemned Maiakovskii for cooperation with the Bolshevik government in 1918<sup>52</sup>, as well as castigating Blok, Belyi and Bal'mont.<sup>53</sup>

For the last issue of Knizhnyi ugol before the journal ceased publication in 1922, Eikhenbaum wrote a light-hearted article celebrating the 'Jubilee' of OPOIAZ, whose age he reckoned, on the principle of general inflation at 25 to 1, <sup>125, or</sup> at one hundred years in round figures. '5 = 100' contained Eikhenbaum's first explicit and public anti-Marxist statement. He connected OPOIAZ development with the Revolution in "one of the strange, but organic contradictions of life and culture"<sup>54</sup> but immediately made it clear that the new poetics and Marxism had nothing in common:

"The Russian intelligentsia, and with it science, were poisoned by the idea of monism. Marx, as a true German, brought the whole of life down to 'economics'. And Russian people liked learning from German science, because they had no scientific world-view of

their own, but only a taste for it. And so the 'monist view' came to lord it over us, and from that view much else came. We found the basic factor, began to build schemes. Art did not fit - we threw that out. Let it exist as a 'reflection'. Sometimes it is useful for enlightenment.

No, we have had enough monism! We are pluralists! Life is diverse - it can't be reduced to one factor. [...] Life moves like a river in an unbroken flow but with an infinite number of currents, each of which is independent (sam po sebe)."<sup>55</sup>

We should note briefly here the implications of Eikhenbaum's use of 'life'. 'Life' here has become an agent; it is diverse, irreducible, it is many self-directing currents. All this suggests an association with neo-vitalist ideas which saw the essence of living phenomena as what the nineteenth century German biologist Driesch called entelekhia, or 'carrying one's own goal within', an idea close to the Bergsonian élan vital. Eikhenbaum, if he had not read Driesch, had certainly read and been attracted to Bergson. The Marxist monist view, he continued, could not engage with the principle on which OPOIAZ was constructing a science - a creative, organic activity. This was not a method and could not be learnt:

"Here the argument is not about methods, but about traditions, about principles. In this guise the argument is not academic, not desk-bound, but immediate and just as stirring as the argument between the Marxists and the anarchists. It is the struggle of different pasts for the future.

And here, very likely, the meaning of the strange contradiction, revolution and philology, is hidden. Life is not made according to Marx - so much the better."<sup>56</sup>

What was "the struggle of different pasts" to which Eikhenbaum referred here? He intentionally put the argument in such a way that the question addressed competing scientific traditions. Both Marxists and Formalists claimed a concrete, scientific basis for their thought, in the case of the Formalists a natural science model for the study of 'concrete' literary phenomena or 'facts'. Without examining for the moment the legitimacy of these scientific bases, for Eikhenbaum's purposes here both camps can be seen as 'materialist' in some sense, and the persistent Marxist term of abuse, 'idealist', is therefore rendered inappropriate.

The difference lies in the nature of the scientific traditions. OPOIAZ' scientific activity was "creative" and "organic" (twice repeated in this article); Eikhenbaum had frequently spoken of

it as the ‘morphological’ method.<sup>57</sup> Just as ‘life’ here contains an unacknowledged Bergsonian allusion, so ‘organic’ and ‘morphological’ have strong associations with Goethean scientific principles. Goethe, a pioneer of morphology, a branch of biology concerned with the form of plants and animals and what governs and affects that form, saw biological forms not as static entities in a fixed relation to each other, but as themselves changing and part of a dynamic process of change. The opposing “static view of organic nature”, as Steiner has shown (following the German neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer, an older contemporary of Eikhenbaum’s), was that of Georges Cuvier<sup>58</sup>.

There is no doubt that Eikhenbaum, a student of biology in 1907, and well-read in philosophy, transferred ‘morphological’ in its primary biological meaning to literary studies as a peculiarly appropriate metaphor; similarly ‘organic’ functioned for him with all its historical freight, and not merely as an index of personal taste. The view of Eikhenbaum that this affords as temperamentally sympathetic to the Romantics is confirmed in a letter from Tynianov to Lev Lunts, one of the Serapion brothers, on 14 January 1924: “...Our Eikhenbaum has become an August Schlegel, is writing a lot, interestingly and elegantly. I am publishing a not very elegant book Problema stikhotvornogo iazyka..”<sup>59</sup> Thus, although Eikhenbaum avoided the by now habitual and fruitless clash between Marxist materialists and Formalist ‘idealists’, in the struggle of traditions as he described it here his own tradition carried strong Romantic overtones which were not made explicit.

The light-heartedness (veselost’) of which Eikhenbaum made a point in this article, and for which the Formalists were frequently reproached in their work, resulted here in a tone of direct challenge; it gave the impression of an open contest, that OPOIAZ could win. This was not the case in 1924, when Eikhenbaum engaged with Marxist literary criticism.

#### The Pechat’ i revoliutsiia controversy

Early in 1924 Eikhenbaum wrote two long articles directed against misunderstanding and reaction in the critical response to OPOIAZ work, and against its imitation, cooption and synthesis with other forms of literary study. Large parts of both articles dealt with Marxist

criticism. These sections were less responses to Marxist criticism than deliberately initiated, preconsidered statements of the incompatibility of the Marxist view of literature with OPOIAZ principles. Eikhenbaum was aware of the attention such statements would attract, and of the risk he took, and awaited the result with interest. Of the second article, 'V ozhidanii literatury', where he had discussed Trotskii's view of OPOIAZ as well as other Marxist criticism, he wrote in his diary :

"It's a very responsible article. When it and the article for Pechat' i revoliutsiia appear - my position will be declared. What will they answer? Trotskii probably."<sup>60</sup>

To cast Eikhenbaum as the defendant in the Pechat' i revoliutsiia controversy, as Erlich and Pike<sup>61</sup> do, is to misrepresent the situation. It is also incorrect to impute blithe political naivety to Eikhenbaum at this stage;

"To Sklovskij and Ejxenbaum of 1924-6, still sanguine about the potentialities of 'pure' Formalism, Marxism was a hypothesis with which one could easily dispense."<sup>62</sup>

It is evident from many diary entries in 1924 that Eikhenbaum saw the political climate changing for the worse, both on a large scale and as it affected him and his circle. Some examples will show not only his perfect awareness of the political situation, but his characteristic persistence in resisting the demands made upon him. On April 22 he noted in his diary:

"The censorship has got round to me - or I to it. The preface to my book on Lermontov (Gosizdat) is being cancelled - by Ionov's [head of Gosizdat] decision. Instead of it they want to put in a 'Marxist' one. In front of me Angert crossed out my foreword with a blue pencil. It turns out to be already impossible to defend the scientific legitimacy of the 'formal method', although it is officially recognised. I shall go back to talk to Angert again tomorrow - I shall ask that it should not be signed with the name of some idiot, but by the 'Editors of Gosizdat'(..) Yesterday I learnt that the article in Russkii sovr is in danger as well..."

Six days later Eikhenbaum wrote:

"I went to Angert - protested against the censorship reprisals, tried to prove that there is nothing unprintable in my preface. Angert said that that wasn't enough, that Gosizdat needed a Communist, Marxist preface: 'Be grateful that we don't make you write a



Communist preface.' I still asked him to have a look at the preface, but that, of course, was hopeless. I demanded that the alien foreword should be signed not by name, but by the editors - he promised."<sup>63</sup>

In May, G I Gorbachev, the Gosizdat editor who had been the first reader for Eikhenbaum's book, had written the new politically acceptable foreword to it, and whose own book Eikhenbaum had ridiculed in one of his articles, replaced the scholar L. Shcherba as President of the Faculty of Language and Literature at the University. In August Eikhenbaum stopped contributing to Zhizn' iskusstva after five years of active work for the newspaper because of political pressure on the editor, partly as a result of his articles. In September he wrote:

"...a struggle is going on between religious dogmatism and scholasticism and science. I am more and more convinced of it. The Middle Ages have surged over us - the idea of socialism and communism has taken the form of a state religion, which acts exactly on the analogy of the mediaeval spiritual authority (vlast'), right down to the inquisition and so forth. There is a struggle against scientific thought as such. A terrifying time, in which it is hard to find a means of secure existence."<sup>64</sup>

As these diary entries and the article '5 = 100' show, it was the monist, dogmatic, universally applied character of Marxist ideology that was foreign to Eikhenbaum. The Marxist system enforced by political power and applied to the regulation of literature and scholarly work - what came to be known as 'official' thinking - was utterly alien to Eikhenbaum and he continued to oppose it.

However, the term 'Marxist' in what follows needs qualification. Not all party members or those close to the party were necessarily hostile to OPOIAZ, or vice versa. The members of Lef, and Brik in particular, a founder member of OPOIAZ, are cases in point. Lef's political position might be described as ultra-left, but it was on the whole sympathetic to OPOIAZ, seeing the revolutionary potential of the new literary theory, in spite of its apolitical character. Eikhenbaum and Tynianov contributed two of six OPOIAZ articles on Lenin's language in 1924, and Brik's humorous surprise at the news that they were planned, and the speed with which they were printed in the first issue show that the anti-Marxist position of leading members of OPOIAZ was known and accepted in Lef, if not shared:

“Comrade OPOIAZovites! Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, Tomashevskii, Iakubinskii!

Lef is shaken (potriasen) by the news that you are preparing four articles on Lenin, and begs you to send them off to us as soon as possible for printing in our fifth number.

An advance has been sent.

Further. We very much want Tynianov’s article on ‘The Literary Fact’ and all other OPOIAZ productions.

I very much want to come to Piter.

O M Brik <sup>65</sup>

Eikhenbaum had in fact been persuaded by Shklovskii that an article on Lenin’s style could be done in such a way that it formed part of his own work.<sup>66</sup> He recorded several OPOIAZ meetings with Lef where mutual relations were discussed; when Maiakovskii came to Leningrad in May 1924, this question came up at a meeting with him at the Evropeiskaia Hotel with Iakubinskii, Tynianov, N S Tikhonov, Punin, Vinokur and Eikhenbaum. Eikhenbaum noted: “We decided to work (sotrudnichat’) with Lef.”<sup>67</sup> But the cooperation was not automatic. An index of the kind of relationship that obtained at this time comes from Eikhenbaum’s record of another meeting with Lef in the changed atmosphere of 1928. Sergei Tret’iakov spoke:

“... calmly, but reproachfully. ‘We thought that here there were, if not brothers, then at least cousins. We have to decide - to work together or be enemies. We cannot think of ourselves as kin, and coexist because of that.’”<sup>68</sup>

Marxist, in Eikhenbaum’s use of the word early in the 1920s, usually denoted either Marxist ideology in its monolithic, dogmatic aspect or party officialdom - bureaucrats and others concerned only to obey orders from above. When, by mid-1924, he perceived the threat these aspects of official party practice posed to the possibility of individual thought and action, his reaction was severe, entailing a crisis which we shall consider in the next chapter. However, individual political orientation in itself seems to have been less important to Eikhenbaum than the integrity of the individual, a personal standard of conduct; Jakobson and Vinokur, for example, were both representatives of the Soviet government abroad (polpredy) in Prague and Riga respectively, and were, in different degrees, friends and associates.

‘Vokrug voprosa o “formalistakh”’

The most well-known of Eikhenbaum’s polemics with Marxists is in ‘Vokrug voprosa o “formalistakh”’, which he wrote as a talk in September 1923 and sent to the Marxist journal Pechat’ i revoliutsiia in January 1924. The journal accepted the article, asked in March for extra material on Trotskii which Eikhenbaum provided, but did not publish the May number in which it was to appear until October 1924. When it did appear Eikhenbaum’s text was followed by hostile, intemperate and often abusive replies from some of the critics he had mentioned. He noted in his diary:

“I received the fifth issue of Pechat’ i revoliutsiia with my article on the formal method and articles in reply from Sakulin, Bobrov, Lunacharskii, Kogan and V Polianskii. The answers certainly are boorish in the extreme (khamkhamskie) as Vitia [Shklovskii] put it. Scolding, malice, abuse, yelling. For my eleven pages twenty-seven in reply! All right. Let them shout.”<sup>69</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s article<sup>70</sup> reviewed the critical reception of Formalist work; he first defined OPOIAZ terms and then commented on articles which had come out in 1922 and 1923. The careful definition of OPOIAZ terms was a characteristic device of Eikhenbaum’s polemics at this stage, necessitated by the misunderstandings rife in the articles he discussed. Definitions here concerned the meaning of form, method and principle. Eikhenbaum dealt with a representative selection of journalistic criticism of Formalist work published in 1922, including articles by A Gornfel’d<sup>71</sup>, P S Kogan<sup>72</sup>, S Bobrov<sup>73</sup> and M Gofman<sup>74</sup>. He noted that the majority, even the poet Bobrov, were very poorly informed about the nature of Formalist ideas and who held them; the Marxist Kogan, for example, was under the impression that Chukovskii was a Formalist pioneer. Here mockery, another device of Eikhenbaum’s polemics, appeared; he quoted passages from works discussed to ridiculous effect, so that their authors were condemned apparently without his participation. Where the writer was better informed, as in the case of Gornfel’d, Eikhenbaum answered his criticism. Two years before Gornfel’d had already been the focus of a controversy about Formalism; in response to a sharply anti-OPOIAZ feuilleton ‘Maksimalizm’ by V Iretskii, Gornfel’d had written in the same 1922 issue of Literaturnye zapiski an article castigating both Iretskii and the Formalists, ‘Formalisty i ikh

protivniki'. Eikhenbaum wrote both an individual and a collective (with Tynianov and Tomashevskii) letter of protest to the journal; Gornfel'd expressly refused to publish either.<sup>75</sup>

Comments on articles by academics published in 1923 were similarly brief and dismissive; Eikhenbaum found in the articles by Beletskii<sup>76</sup>, Pksanov<sup>77</sup>, Sakulin<sup>78</sup>, Smirnov and Zhirmunskii a common aim, to blunt or smooth over scientific issues. Each scholar declared himself basically a Formalist, renamed his old critical principles and habits 'poetics' and contrived to absorb the threat of Formalism.

Eikhenbaum reserved serious consideration for Trotskii's article 'Formal'naia shkola poezii i marksizm', the only article to receive detailed attention without irony. This article from Trotskii's 1923 book Literatura i revoliutsiia was rare among Marxist responses to Formalism in that it recognised some positive aspects in the new literary theory: its objectivity, a necessary concern with metrics, the centrality of form:

"...art can and must be judged from the point of view of its achievements in form, because there can be no art without them."<sup>79</sup>

However, Eikhenbaum insisted that Trotskii's conception of Formalism was still basically erroneous and hostile; Formalism, in Trotskii's view, was totally static, concerned only with synchronicity, never with process in time, superstitious and descended from Kantian idealism. For Trotskii, Formalist arguments against Marxism recalled religious opposition to Darwinism (a curious choice of analogy, since Formalism used Darwinian evolutionary metaphors to describe literary development). Trotskii defined Formalism in this way:

"..this school reduces its task to an analysis (essentially descriptive and semi-statistical) of the etymology and syntax of poems, to the counting of repetitive vowels and consonants, of syllables and epithets."<sup>80</sup>

Eikhenbaum noted this mistaken, but popular notion of Formalism, and the concessions Trotskii made to Formalist ideas. To the charge of opposition to Marxism, he argued that Formalism, as a principle of literary science, and Marxism, as a historical-philosophical teaching, were not comparable entities and therefore could not be said to oppose each other, but that they had in

common the concept of historical evolution as opposed to genetic thinking. It was therefore the stranger that in literary studies Marxists should keep to an exclusively genetic point of view, and focus on the individual and his world-view. In proposing the study of the artist's world-perception, which was not susceptible to objective study, Trotskii risked falling into the idealism of which he accused the Formalists. Trotskii emerged, in Eikhenbaum's view, as an eclectic-revisionist, acting on old, unexamined premises to reconcile incompatible principles. Marxism by itself was no guarantee of a revolutionary position in science. Eikhenbaum claimed the revolutionary high ground for Formalism:

"In the limits of literary science Formalism is a revolutionary movement, since it liberates science from old obsolete traditions, and forces [us] to reexamine once more all the fundamental concepts and schemes."<sup>81</sup>

#### 'V ozhidanii literatury'

Trotskii was useful to Eikhenbaum as an influential Marxist whose position on literature was more sophisticated and more knowledgeable than that of, for example, the 'vulgar Marxists' (and rabid anti-Formalists) of Na literaturnom postu.<sup>82</sup> Two months later, in March 1924, Eikhenbaum wrote again on Trotskii's view of literature for the first issue of the new independent journal Russkii sovremennik. The article, 'V ozhidanii literatury', on Marxist criticism, was to be what the editorial board called "criticism about the 'non-critics'".<sup>83</sup> On Trotskii's writings Eikhenbaum made essentially the same points as in his January article, finding fruitful contradictions in Trotskii's discussion of form and of the development of art, which showed that:

"Marxism does not by itself solve the concrete problems of the history and theory of art, because it is not concerned with the specific factors of the life of art."<sup>84</sup>

Eikhenbaum restated the evolution versus genesis argument using different material, Trotskii's 1908 dialogue about a Turner painting. In this piece about art, he noted, the Trotskii figure took the historical, evolutionary line against the psycho-biological point of view of his interlocutor, although in the argument with the Formalists about literature his position was reversed. Eikhenbaum stressed that the virtue of Trotskii's writings on art in general was that they raised fundamental problems of art as unresolved and did not efface the resultant contradictions.

The other Marxist critics whose attempts to discuss aspects of Formalism and Marxism Eikhenbaum considered in this article appeared in a less respectful light. Summary treatment was accorded to P S Kogan's 1924 book Literatura etikh let and to Noveishaia russkaia literatura, by L'vov-Rogachevskii<sup>85</sup>, published in 1923. Neither, in Eikhenbaum's view, contained any serious or principled criticism. Eikhenbaum used his technique of mockery by quotation, betraying contempt for Kogan, an adversary from pre-OPOIAZ days<sup>86</sup>, and exasperated indulgence for L'vov-Rogachevskii's well-meaning confusion.

Eikhenbaum devoted more attention to Ocherki sovremennoi russkoi literatury (1924) by his reader and editor, G I Gorbachev. In it Gorbachev argued that the formal method was useful, but only in conjunction with ideological criticism, and with a sociological base. Eikhenbaum condemned this as unprincipled eclecticism, mocked Gorbachev's understanding of skaz as a means for writers to conceal their political opinions behind the device, and pointed out his generally cloudy view of theory. Again this view was wittily reinforced by quotation. Eikhenbaum considered Gorbachev's book, like those of A K Voronskii<sup>87</sup>, to be evidence of the difficult position of publicistic criticism.

In Eikhenbaum's view, Voronskii, the founder and editor of the journal Krasnaia nov', had begun as a judge or criminal investigator of contemporary literature and gradually come to be its champion in his struggle with the vulgar Marxists of Na postu. The articles collected in Na styke (1923) and Iskusstvo i zhizn' (1924) showed him to be in a double position, going as far as an almost Formalist defence of the methods and particular features of art, while at the same time demanding a clear revolutionary perspective from the author. The eclecticism evident in these books, Eikhenbaum concluded, was neither a method nor a solution to the problem of combining Formalism and Marxism.

As Eikhenbaum had intended, his position in relation to the whole range of Marxist views on literature was made quite clear by this second article, which appeared in print before his original article 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"'. The immediate response, not, as Eikhenbaum had hoped, from Trotskii, came in two forms; difficulties and obstacles in

publishing and, in October 1924, the appearance of the delayed May issue of Pechat' i revoliutsiia with his original article and five articles in response.

One consequence of 'V ozhidanii literary', and perhaps of the first issue of Russkii sovremennik in general, was an attack in Pravda in late July 1924 on Zhizn' iskusstva, a Leningrad weekly arts newspaper for which Eikhenbaum wrote, mentioning "rightwingers" such as Eikhenbaum, Zamiatin, Shklovskii and Zoshchenko. Adonts, the editor, asked Eikhenbaum why he had spoiled his "good fellow-traveller" reputation by the article. Two weeks later Eikhenbaum decided to stop contributing to the paper for which he had worked since 1919; Adonts had been forced to sack fellow-traveller contributors as a condition of retaining the editorship.<sup>88</sup>

Chukovskii, one of the main editors of Russkii sovremennik, recorded the increasingly serious political and censorship difficulties of the journal in his recently published diary, with entries from April to December 1924.<sup>89</sup> On 12 May he wrote:

"The first number of Sovremennik has evoked displeasure in official circles: 'It reeks of tsarism from three versts! No wonder they have a yellow cover.'

Efros [one of the editors] asked Lunacharskii if the new journal pleased him. 'Yes, yes. Very much!'

'And would you agree to work on it?'

'No, no. I'd be afraid.'

Trotsky said, 'I didn't want to abuse them, but I shall have to. Intelligent people, but they are doing stupid things.'

*Maiakovskii*: 'Well - Sovremennik is a good journal, its contributors are Lev Tolstoi and Dostoevskii.'<sup>90</sup>

Chukovskii also recorded in July personal attacks in connection with the journal by G. Lelevich, a notorious napostovets, and, in September, evidence of specific official displeasure with Tynianov and Eikhenbaum, though, as we saw, this was clear to them by early August. In Pravda on 5 November a certain K Rozental' reviewed the first three issues of the journal in

these terms: “..NEP literature has shown its true face..” He ended the article:

“The NEPman from Il’inka, the candidate for Narym and the bourgeois intelligent longing for the ‘values’ of the bourgeois world and dreaming of their return have found contemporary expression in Russkii sovremennik.”<sup>91</sup>

In the progressive hardening of the political climate which, as we saw, Eikhenbaum too recorded from early Spring 1924, Russkii sovremennik had protracted censorship difficulties, and was shut down after its fourth issue in December 1924.

The articles in response to Eikhenbaum’s ‘Vokrug voprosa o “formalistakh”’ and printed with it in Pechat’ i revoliutsiia more than vindicated his assessment in the journal of the position in the battle over Formalism:

“...at times the struggle acquires not so much a scientific as a moral-social character, misunderstandings accumulated over years facilitate the clouding of basic questions.”<sup>92</sup>

None of the articles addressed the specifically literary issues raised by Eikhenbaum; most were concerned with his world-view and eager to vilify him. Lunacharskii, the most eminent of the respondents, used a definition of art heavily influenced by Tolstoi to attack bourgeois, westernised formal art (as opposed to ideological art) and the Formalist art expertise it produced. To him Eikhenbaum’s world-view was that of the scientific sceptic, he suffered from the ugly disease of “a particular agnostic pluralism”<sup>93</sup>, and he was a perfect type for a social pathologist.

P S Kogan dismissed Formalism as “intemperate, fruitless spets ardour”, its lack of a world-view as “a disease of spets connoisseurship”<sup>94</sup>, and expressed his support for Trotskii’s analysis of Formalism. V Polianskii<sup>95</sup>, better informed than Kogan, also followed Trotskii; Formalism could have a useful secondary function, if it eliminated theory and its claim to scientific status. He dismissed Eikhenbaum’s distinctions between method and principle and genesis and evolution as a deliberate confusion of concepts which any rabfakovets could easily distinguish, designed to hide Eikhenbaum’s anti-Marxism and block Trotskii’s analysis of Formalism. P N Sakulin, an older scholar and recent adherent of the ‘For-sotsy’ (Formalist-sociologists, whose appearance Eikhenbaum deplored<sup>96</sup>), deprecated OPOIAZ claims to novelty. He advocated “a



sociological interpretation of literary facts, which will not threaten the independence, or specificity, of literary science.”<sup>97</sup> At the same time Sakulin saw the category of genesis as causal, and retained it as central. He argued, on the basis of Lermontov, one of his most theoretically rigorous works, that Eikhenbaum was close to a sociological approach to literature.

#### The sociological school of literary criticism

The sociological school to which Sakulin belonged was the main rival to Formalist theory during the 20s, providing the only Marxist-oriented alternative to Formalist work towards a scientific theory and history of literature. Different theories, among them those of V Pereverzev, V Friche, Lunacharskii and V Arvatov, had in common “the primacy of the analysis of the social significance and class content of literature”<sup>98</sup> and “the idea of literature as superstructure, decisively influenced by the base, as a starting point”<sup>99</sup>. In the first issue of Pechat’ i revoliutsiia for 1925 Pereverzev had reviewed Eikhenbaum’s collection of articles Skvoz’ literaturu and his book Lermontov, stressing Eikhenbaum’s “historical helplessness”<sup>100</sup> and attacking his “fetishistic understanding of style”<sup>101</sup> and recourse to metaphysics. But apart from reiterating the Formalist position on genesis - no direct causal link between genetic factors and the literary work - Eikhenbaum made no comment on the work of the sociological school as such at this stage, even in polemical articles. It was not until 1927, when Eikhenbaum proposed his own criteria for the inclusion of extra-literary facts into the history of literature, that any mention of their work appeared either in his journalism or his scholarly publications.

If the work produced by literary sociologists did not provoke polemic nor even produce a basis for discussion among Formalists, the general issue involved, the connection of the literary series with other non-literary series, was acknowledged as important by Eikhenbaum and his close colleagues in the second half of the 1920s, as we shall see in the following chapter. They saw that this area, which they had bracketed in order to construct the bases of a theory and history of literature, was a vacuum, which required rigorous exploratory work, not the inanities that flooded to fill it<sup>102</sup>. Ginzburg noted:

“This is a huge field, which we shall have to travel with difficulties and doubts. But instead of that a smiling lecturer suggests that first year students should provide a

sociological basis for 'Mesiats zerkal'nyi plyvet..' and so forth. Boris Mikhailovich [Eikhenbaum] has planned a book on writers' byt. That is just what he now can and should do."<sup>103</sup>

As early as 1923, Grigorii Vinokur had identified the lack of a real sociology of literature. He wrote in Lef:

"The sociologist must break once and for all with the pretensions and efforts unworthy of the name of science which characterise [...] official literary science. Poetic facts, as facts reflecting the highest achievements of such an important social activity as linguistic activity, should of course have an appropriate sociological explanation. *But the facts must be explained*, not fictitious, fantastic abstractions, stripped of all real content. It is extremely important to the sociologist to know what literature is."<sup>104</sup>

We shall consider Eikhenbaum's work on the relation of literature and byt in Chapter Four. For the purposes of this review of his polemics, we note that the sociological approach to literature found no response in his work until 1927.

#### Bakhtin's 1924 criticism of Formalism

Another reaction to Formalism in the study of literature, altogether more substantial than the sociological 'method', and also untouched in Eikhenbaum's polemics, should be mentioned here. The Bakhtinian critique of Formalism is usually taken from P Medvedev's Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii (1928), which we shall consider in Chapter Four. Whether or not Bakhtin was the author of this book<sup>105</sup>, he did write a much earlier article in 1924, 'Problema soderzhaniia, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve', for Russkii sovremennik, which remained unpublished at the time, following the closure of the journal<sup>106</sup>. The article attacked Formalism for the lack of a basis in systematic aesthetics and of an integral view of art as a whole; for Bakhtin a literary-historical approach was possible only if the interaction and mutual dependence of the literary series with other series were assumed. He categorically denied any link, historical or systematic, of Formalism with Kant's formal aesthetics, and identified it instead as a rather crude and primitive type of material aesthetics descended from the Kunstwissenschaften struggle for independence from systematic

philosophy<sup>107</sup>. Bakhtin began by acknowledging “the serious and fruitful work”<sup>108</sup> done by the Formalists, which had resulted in “a certain flowering of art scholarship in Russia”<sup>109</sup>. He shared the Formalist view of the previous generation’s pretensions to scholarship, “the refuge of any scientifically irresponsible chatter that aspired to profundity”<sup>110</sup>.

However, Bakhtin then demonstrated at length in a series of rigorously argued points how the working hypothesis of material aesthetics, in which material is approached from the point of view of the natural sciences (as a ‘thing’ (veshch’) which is physically ‘perceived’ or ‘made’) was a false general conception, though it might produce specific insights of scholarly value. Artistic form as Bakhtin understood it was not only organised material but also material which “related *to* something, was in an important way directed *to* something”<sup>111</sup> in the mind of both the artist and the reader or person looking. It was this element that material aesthetics did not recognise. Bakhtin called it the ‘content’ of aesthetic activity, or simply the aesthetic object<sup>112</sup>. In his view, if the researcher did not distinguish between this aesthetic object, the material givenness of the work, and the teleological organisation of material ( the Formalists did recognise the last two categories), unclear work would result from the confusion of categories.

In effect, Bakhtin’s was a clearly defined and well argued version of the kinds of objection to Formalist premises put forward incompetently by Smirnov and indifferently by Zhirmunskii. It rested on a pre-Formalist concept of form, strongly influenced by the Symbolists, which Eikhenbaum had characterised to Zhirmunskii in 1921 as “*exterior* form, behind which something else stood...and about this something, in the end, one had to speak”<sup>113</sup>. Bakhtin deliberately reduced the Formalist idea of form essentially to this “exterior” aspect of the work of art, although form, certainly for Eikhenbaum, contained at least in part the category Bakhtin called the aesthetic object, albeit in a undifferentiated and unarticulated way.<sup>114</sup> The article was evidently written to address the controversy around Formalism and discussed the issues at an unprecedentedly serious level, without any reference to Marxism, as in Medvedev’s later book. We have no diary entries or other evidence of Eikhenbaum’s knowledge of it, but since it was written for Russkii sovremennik, it is likely that Eikhenbaum would have known of it, and probably read it in manuscript.

Summary: the Marxist-Formalist controversy

As we have seen, Marxist engagement with Formalist literary scholarship as such scarcely existed; an apparently poor understanding of the principles involved was the rule, even in the case of such luminaries as Trotskii and Lunacharskii. Other Marxist writers either condemned Formalist theory outright or attempted to associate it with or incorporate it into Marxist thinking on literature. In the responses to Eikhenbaum's 1924 articles, the writers' aim is clearly not to advance the study of literature, but to show (by means of abuse) who was in control - the issue was not literary theory, but power. This was clear to Eikhenbaum, as we have seen, from other concrete evidence, politically loyal University appointments, publishing difficulties, and, as early as 1922/3, the closure of left S R literary organisations - the publishing house Alkonost, the journal Zapiski mechtatelei and Vol'fila. In these circumstances, it only confuses the issues to suppose that:

“..the very vigor of the [Marxist] assault and the persistence of the charges of esthetic isolationism had dramatised the need for a re-examination of the initial Opojaz position on the vital issue of ‘literature versus society’”<sup>115</sup>

or that Marxist criticism compelled the Formalists to clarify their methodological position.<sup>116</sup> The clash was not the open literary controversy Erlich invites us to consider, but the beginning of a power-struggle between unequal parties, for quite different ends. The Formalists, whose methodological position was already quite clear, “stubbornly declared”<sup>117</sup> the value of an independent science of literature. The Marxists, who lacked any developed literary theory or methodology<sup>118</sup>, had begun to take, and a few years later decisively enforced, control over literature and literary studies. We shall see more precisely how and why Eikhenbaum came to a new approach in his literary scholarship in the following chapters.

- 1 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 357.
- 2 L Ia Ginzburg, "'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom'", TS3, p 229.
- 3 BME, 'Lev Tolstoi' (1919), Lit, p 64.
- 4 BME, 'Mig soznaniia', Ku, 1921, 7, p 9.
- 5 op cit, p 11.
- 6 A A Blok, 'O naznachenii poeta', Sobranie sochinenii v 8 tomakh, M-L, 1960 - 1963, vol 6, 1962, pp 160 - 168. The deaths of Blok and Gumilev were widely interpreted in a symbolic way; see V. Veidle, O poetakh i poezii, Paris, 1973, pp 10 - 16; 'Poeticheskie otkliki na smert' Gumileva: Akhmatova, Otsup, Odoevtseva, Voloshin', Gumilevskie chteniia, Ezhegodnik, 1980, pp 377 - 430, reprinted in Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 9, Vienna, 1982, pp 403 - 405; A Anemone, 'Konstantin Vaginov and the Death of Nikolai Gumilev', Slavic Review, 48, 1989, pp 631 - 636.
- 7 BME, 'Mig soznaniia', p 12.
- 8 BME, 'V Rozhdestvenskii, Leto. Derevenskie iamby. Stikhi 1918-ogo goda, Pb, 1921; E Polonskaia, Znamen'ia, Pb, 1921', Ku, 1921, 7, p 41.
- 9 BME, 'Sud'ba Bloka' in Ob Aleksandre Bloke, Pb, 1921, reprinted in Lit, p 276. Eikhenbaum's article (like Tynianov's article in the same anthology) was angrily attacked (and misunderstood) by V. Veidle, 'Po povodu dvukh statei o Bloke', Zavtra, I, Berlin, 1923, pp 107 - 113. Mandel'shtam, on the other hand, in an article marking the first anniversary of Blok's death (Rossiia, 1922, 1) thought Eikhenbaum's work a praiseworthy exception to the "marshy fumes of lyrical criticism" devoted to the poet; see PILK, p 439.
- 10 op cit, p 269.
- 11 ibid.
- 12 ibid.
- 13 ibid.
- 14 op cit, p 270.

- 15 BME, 'Nekrasov' (1922), Lit, p 79.
- 16 cf op cit, passim, and BME, Lermontov, L, 1924, p 156.
- 17 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 357.
- 18 BME, Lermontov, L, 1924, pp 8 -9.
- 19 op cit, p 12.
- 20 op cit, p 11.
- 21 P Steiner, Russian Formalism A Metapoetics, Ithaca/London, 1984, p 259.
- 22 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 356.
- 23 V B Shklovskii, Gs, p 504.
- 24 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925), Lit, p 132.
- 25 Iu N Tynianov, letter to A G Gornfel'd, 1922, quoted in PILK, pp 505 - 506.
- 26 A Potebnia, 1835 - 1891, eminent philologist and linguist, professor of Russian Literature at Khar'kov University from 1875. He introduced the distinction between poetic and prosaic language into Russian poetics and was the source of many concepts in poetics adopted by Symbolists and both borrowed and violently opposed by Formalists, particularly Shklovskii. Author of Iz zapisok po teorii slovesnosti (4 vols, 1874 - 1940) and Mysl' i iazyk (1862).
- 27 A N Veselovskii, 1838 - 1906, eminent philologist and literary historian, professor of Petersburg University from 1872. Author of Istoricheskaja poetika, notes and introduction by V M Zhirmunskii, L, 1940.
- 28 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', Lit, p 119.
- 29 See V Kaverin, Sobesednik, M, 1973, pp 12 - 17.
- 30 Quoted in Iu N Tynianov, PILK, commentary to 'Literaturnyi fakt', p 507.
- 31 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', Lit, p 116.
- 32 Iu N Tynianov, 'Stikhovye formy Nekrasova' (1921), PILK, pp 18 - 27. V B Shklovskii, 'Tekhnika Nekrasovskogo stikha', Zh i, 1919, Nos 184 - 185. BME, 'Nekrasov' (1922), Lit, pp 77 - 115. Eikhensbaum wrote in his diary on 2 February 1922: "Our 'revtroika' (Tynianov, Shklovskii and I) speaks at the Institut zhivogo slova on the 9th about Nekrasov, and on the 19th at Vol'fila about Pushkin."
- 33 BME, 'Metody i podkhody', fair copy in manuscript, TsGALI, fond 1527, op 1, ed khr 26.

- 34 K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, pp 185 - 186. Although Eikhenbaum worked successfully with Chukovskii in 1924, he found him difficult at times: "Yesterday with Chukovskii and Tynianov we looked through the bibliography of the first number of Russkii sovr. It's difficult with Chukovskii - he is unsteady, garrulous, hysterical and pitiable. Thrown out, he's like a fish out of water. He rushes about as if he were cheerful, but in fact has no life and no path. How complicated life is!" Diary entry, 7 April 1924.
- 35 BME, 'Metody i podkhody', TsGALI, fond 1527, op 1, ed khr 26. Khodasevich's speech on Pushkin, to which Eikhenbaum refers, seems to have been 'Koleblemyi trenochnik', read at the last of three evenings to honour the anniversary of Pushkin's death, on 26 February 1921, and published in Pushkin. Dostoevskii, Izd. Doma literatorov, Pb 1921. (Eikhenbaum gave his lecture 'Problema poetiki Pushkina' at the second evening, 14 February 1921.) See V F Khodasevich, Nekropol', Paris, 1976, pp 125 -126.
- 36 ibid. A version of Khodasevich's speech, 'Ob Annenskom', dated 1935, appears in V F Khodasevich, Izbrannaia proza, New York, 1982, pp 129 - 141.
- 37 ibid. The article Eikhenbaum discussed was originally published as 'Poetika Aleksandra Bloka' in the anthology Ob Aleksandre Bloke, Pb 1921, reprinted as sections 4 - 8 of V M Zhirmunskii, Poeziia Aleksandra Bloka, Pb, 1922, and in TLPS, pp 205 - 237.
- 38 'Perepiska ..', TS3, pp 313 - 315.
- 39 BME, Diary entry, 8 January 1922.
- 40 V M Zhirmunskii, 'Melodika stikha. Po povodu knigi B. M. Eikhenbauma Melodika stikha Pb, 1922', Mysl', 1922, 3, reprinted in TLPS, p 90. For a view of Zhirmunskii's disagreements with OPOIAZ, see E G Etkind, 'Istorizm V M Zhirmunskogo (1910 - 1920e gody)', Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, Seriia literatury i iazyka, 51, 1992, 2, pp 3 - 17, especially pp 12 - 16.
- 41 'K voprosu o formal'nom metode', TLPS, p 96.
- 42 op cit, p 97.
- 43 BME, Diary entry, 9 July 1922.
- 44 Iu N Tynianov, "'Literaturnaia mysl'" Al'manakh II', PILK, p 139. Other contributors to the almanach were Vinogradov, Zhirmunskii, B A Larin and Tomashevskii.

- 45 BME, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', Pir, 1924, 5, p 7.
- 46 Zhirmunskii attacked Darwinian schemes of literary development, the impossibility of predicting the type or direction of change in such a scheme, the dominance of composition over theme in Formalist poetics, but principally Formalist 'dogma', its claims, as he saw them, to be the only saving (edinospasaiushchaia) scientific theory of literature. See V M Zhirmunskii, 'K voprosu o formal'nom metode' in O Val'tsel', Problema formy v poezii, Pb, 1923. Reprinted in V M Zhirmunskii, TLPS, pp 94 - 105.
- 47 BME, Diary entry, 7 January 1924: "It [the article] has come out very harsh but it seems to me it clarifies the position. About Zhirmunskii I toned it down - I had to, to make it clear that this is not after all the same as Smirnov, Beletskii etc."
- 48 E A Toddes, 'Vstupitel'naia stat'ia', 'Perepiska..', TS3, p 268.
- 49 BME, Diary entry, 2 February 1922.
- 50 V Khovin, 'Bezotvetnye voprosy', Ku, 1922, 8, p 1.
- 51 op cit, p 2.
- 52 V Khovin, 'Bezotvetnye voprosy', Ku, 1918, 5, pp 4 - 5.
- 53 V Khovin, 'Bezotvetnye voprosy', Ku, 1918, 2, pp 24 - 26.
- See also Gleb Struve, 'O Viktore Khovine i ego zhurnalakh', Russian Literature, 4, 1976, 2, pp 109 - 147.
- 54 BME, '5 = 100', Ku, 1922, 8, p 39.
- 55 op cit, pp 39 - 40.
- 56 op cit, p 41.
- 57 BME, MT, p 8.
- 58 P Steiner, Russian Formalism, Ithaca, London, 1984, p 71.
- 59 Iu N Tynianov, PILK, p 502. August Schlegel (1767 - 1845), poet and critic, known for his great clarity of style and skill at formulating and publicising fellow Romantics' ideas. With his younger brother Friedrich had a large part in establishing modern literary techniques, and pioneered Romance philology.
- 60 BME, Diary entry, 7 April 1924. Entries for 7 January, 15 and 18 March 1924 express similar sentiments.



- 61 V Erlich, RF, p 107; C Pike ed, The Futurists, the Formalists and the Marxist Critique, London, 1979, pp 9 - 10, 44. Pike quotes approvingly Lemon and Reis, Russian Formalist Criticism Four Essays, Nebraska 1965, pp 99 - 101, who claim that Eikhenbaum's point in stressing the scientific claims of Formalism in 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' was to stress its compatibility with Marxism.
- 62 V Erlich, op cit, p 109.
- 63 BME, Diary entries, 22 and 28 April 1924.
- 64 BME, Diary entry, 29 September 1924.
- 65 O M Brik, postcard, 13 February 1924, Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 251, Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii 15, Tartu, 1970, p 12. The six articles on Lenin which appeared in Lef, 1924, 1, were by Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, Shklovskii, Iakubinskii, Kazanskii and Tomashevskii.
- 66 BME, Diary entry, 1 February 1924: "Vitia and Vas[ilisa] Georg[ievna] had lunch with us. He was persuading me to write an article on Lenin's style - one must, he says, take on the order (zakaz), but do it in such a way that it forms part of one's work. He spoke so heatedly that I shall, it seems, try."
- 67 BME, Diary entry, 21 May 1924.
- 68 BME, Diary entry, 5 March 1928.
- 69 BME, Diary entry, 17 October 1924.
- 70 BME, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', Pir, 1924, 5, pp 1 - 12.
- 71 A G Gornfel'd, 1867 - 1941, student of Potebnia, literary scholar and critic in Petersburg. He worked in the 1890s on Russkoe bogatstvo, Zhurnal dlia vsekh, Voskhod and was interested in the style and psychology of the writer. Author of Muki slova (1906), which Gor'kii admired, Puti tvorchestvo (1922), Novye slovechki i starye slova (1922).
- 72 P S Kogan, 1872 - 1932, literary historian and publicist critic; he was a Marxist before the Revolution. and wrote against the 'idealist' critics Aikhenval'd, Merezhkovskii, Gershenzon. Eikhenbaum had opposed Kogan's views on Symbolism as early as 1916; see 'Perepiska..', p 289.
- 73 S P Bobrov, 1889 - 1971, Moscow poet, leader of Futurist group Tsentrifuga, translator, critic. A friend of Pasternak, after the Revolution he worked as a consultant for Briusov.

- 74 M L Gofman, 1887 - 1959, literary scholar, specialising in Pushkin; worked at the Pushkinskii Dom from 1920, left for Paris on an official trip in 1923 and never returned to the Soviet Union.
- 75 See PILK, pp 505 - 506.
- 76 A I Beletskii, 1884 - 1961, Russian and Ukrainian literary scholar, professor of Khar'kov University from 1920.
- 77 N K Pksanov, 1878 - 1969, literary scholar, professor of Saratov (1917), Moscow (1921) and Leningrad Universities. Corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, 1931.
- 78 P N Sakulin, 1868 - 1930, literary scholar, proposed a combination of the sociological and psychological methods in Russkaia literatura i sotsializm (1922), and of the sociological method with study of immanent literary series in Sotsiologicheskii metod v literaturovedenii (1925). Member of USSR Academy of Sciences in 1929.
- 79 L Trotskii, Literatura i revoliutsiia, M, 1923, quoted from tr. Literature and Revolution, Michigan, 1960, p 179.
- 80 op cit, p 163.
- 81 BME, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', Pir, 1924, 5, p 11.
- 82 BME, 'V ozhidanii literatury', Rs, 1924, 1, reprinted in Lit, p 283.
- 83 BME, Diary entry, 28 February 1924: "On the 21st there was an editorial meeting for the journal Russkii sovremennik: A M Efros, Chukovskii, Zamiatin, N Punin, N Radlov, Veidle, A Tikhonov, Tynianov and I. The enterprise, it seems, is a real one. I was asked to write an article about the books of Trotskii, Voronskii, Kogan, L'vov-Rogachevskii, Gorbachev and so on - criticism about the non-critics."
- 84 BME, 'V ozhidanii literatury', Lit, p 285.
- 85 V L'vovich Rogachevskii, 1873 - 1930, critic, literary scholar and poet. Menshevik until 1905, left politics after 1917. Worked in 1900s on Russkoe bogatstvo and Sovremennyi mir, where he was head of the poetry section.
- 86 See 'Perepiska..', TS3, pp 287, 288.
- 87 A K Voronskii (1884 - 1937), critic, publicist, writer, joined Social Democratic Party 1904, imprisoned, exiled. Edited first Soviet 'thick' journal, Krasnaia nov', 1921 - 1927, head of Krug publishing house. Expelled from Party in 1928 for Trotskiism, later readmitted. Purged in 1937.

88 BME, Diary entry, 1 August 1924: "...I came in [to the Zhizn' iskusstva offices] and learnt that recently in Pravda they have been attacking it, pointing out, among other things, that such 'right-wingers' as Zamiatins, Shklovskii, Zoshchenkos, Eikhenbaums etc work there. This, then, is the response to my article in Sovr. Adonts asks: 'Comrade Eikhenbaum, why do people think of you as a White Guard?' 'Ask the people who think so', I say. 'Until now I've only been abused as a Formalist.' But recently he said to me that I had very much 'spoilt' myself with the articles in the Sovr. 'They had just started saying about you from the articles in Zhi - here's another good fellow traveller, and then - the article in Sovr.'

Two weeks later, on 15 August, Eikhenbaum noted: "I shall have to stop contributing to Zhizn' isk. I was told that in the next number Adonts is going to disavow all his contributors except Volynskii (behind him, it turns out, stand Lilina, Tsyperovich and the like) and Kugel'. This, so as to keep his editorial job - ie chase ballerinas and actresses. (...) Let them publish without 'fellow-travellers'."

89 K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, pp 271, 274, 287 - 8, 289, 290, 294, 295.

90 op cit, p 274.

91 Quoted in op cit, p 500.

92 BME, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', Pir, 1924, 5, p 12.

93 A V Lunacharskii, 'Formalizm v nauke', op cit, p 31. Lunacharskii (1875 - 1933), *an SD from* 1895, and head of Narkompros in 1924 - he was dismissed in 1929 - had conservative artistic tastes. He favoured Proletkul't, tolerated fellow-travellers and opposed Futurism.

94 P S Kogan, 'O formal'nom metode', op cit, p 35.

95 V Polianskii, 'Po povodu B Eikhenbauma', op cit, pp 35 - 38. P I Lebedev-Polianskii, 1881 - 1948, critic and journalist, *an SD* from 1902, president of All-Russian Proletkul't 1918 - 1920, head of Glavlit 1921 - 1930.

96 BME, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', op cit, p 2.

97 P N Sakulin, 'Iz pervoistochnika', op cit, p 14.

98 M Poliakov, 'V. F. Pereverzev i problemy poetiki' in V F Pereverzev, Gogol'. Dostoevskii. Issledovaniia, M, 1982, p 15.

- 99 op cit, p 18.
- 100 V Pereverzev, 'B. M. Eikhenbaum: Skvoz' literaturu i Lermontov', Pir, 1924, 1, p 270.
- 101 ibid.
- 102 L Ia Ginzburg, Lpr, pp 164 - 165.
- 103 op cit, p 165.
- 104 G O Vinokur, 'Poetika Lingvistika Sotsiologiia (metodologicheskaia spravka)', Lef, 1923, 3, reprinted in his Filologicheskie issledovaniia, M, 1990, p 31.
- 105 See G S Morson and C Emerson, 'Introduction: Rethinking Bakhtin', Rethinking Bakhtin, Evanston, 1989, pp 31 - 38. The argument for Bakhtin's authorship of this text and others was originally made by V V Ivanov, 'Znachenie idei M M Bakhtina o znake, vyskazyvanii i dialoge dlia sovremennoi semiotiki', Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 308, Trudy po znakovym sistemam, 6, Tartu, 1973, 44.
- 106 See K Clark, M Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, Cambridge, Mass, and London, 1984, p 188. 'Problema soderzhaniia, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve', was first published in M M Bakhtin, Voprosy literatury i estetiki, M, 1975, pp 6 - 71.
- 107 M M Bakhtin, Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i, M, 1986, p 26.
- 108 op cit, p 27.
- 109 op cit, p 28.
- 110 op cit, p 35.
- 111 op cit, p 36.
- 112 ibid.
- 113 See Eikhenbaum's letter to Zhirmunskii, 19 October 1921, 'Perepiska...', pp 313 - 314.
- 114 op cit, pp 313 - 315.
- 115 V Erlich, RF, p 117.
- 116 ibid.
- 117 L Ia Ginzburg, "'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom'", TS3, p 218.
- 118 Some were prepared to acknowledge this. See for instance B Arvatov, 'Iazyk poeticheskii i iazyk prakticheskii', Pir, 1923, 7, p 59 and U Fokht, 'Problematika sovremennoi marksistskoi istorii literatury' (final part), Pir, 1927, 2, p 91.

## Chapter IV

## TRANSITION

- 1 1925 - 1927
- Political climate
- Letter to Shklovskii of 25 July 1925
- Herzen
- History
- The individual and the act
- “Necessary” work
- December 1925
- 2 1927 articles
- ‘Gogol’ i “delo literary”
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: Preparation
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: Change of theory
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: OPOIAZ work reviewed
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: Contemporary position of  
literature
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: New theory
- ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: Contemporary function
- Other OPOIAZ work on literature and byt
- ‘Literatura i pisatel’: the writer’s independence
- ‘Literatura i pisatel’: sociology of literature
- Literary byt work as cultural studies
- Contemporary reactions to literary byt
- ‘Pisatel’skii oblik M. Gor’kogo

### TRANSITION

1925 was a year of crisis and transition for Eikhenbaum. He produced several articles which accorded perfectly with OPOIAZ principles: 'O. Genri i teoriia novelly', 'Leskov i sovremennaia proza' and the much quoted 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda', a brilliant review of OPOIAZ work to date, full of confidence in its further development. However, from the beginning of the year a period of profound doubt and questioning about his work began for Eikhenbaum. All three close colleagues in OPOIAZ had analogous experiences, expressed differently, at around this time: Tynianov had begun writing historical novels as well as literary theory (Kiukhliia came out in 1925), and Shklovskii dramatised the problems of his position in Tret'ia fabrika in 1926.

The intelligentsia in general experienced the mid-1920s, when the party turned its attention to "harnessing culture"<sup>1</sup>, as a critical time of severely restricted options with extensive personal and social implications. N Ia Mandel'shtam spoke of 1924 as the "year in which ideology was born", when "the struggle for who would direct literature was on"<sup>2</sup>. The issue involved was what Nadezhda Iakovlevna in one instance called "reconstructing" (or refusing to reconstruct) oneself to meet the demands of Soviet life<sup>3</sup>, a phenomenon which both Chukovskii and Ginzburg called "adaptation" and which Ginzburg later described in more detail and complexity<sup>4</sup>. We shall return to this. In Leningrad the appearance of three romans a clef which focused on the life of two separate intellectual circles in these years indicates the perceived importance of these problems. Kaverin's Skandalist, ili Vechera na Vasil'evskom ostrove (1928), a parody of the GIII milieu, which singled out Shklovskii's literary views and his book Tret'ia fabrika, was begun in May 1924<sup>5</sup>. Vaginov's Kozlinaia pesn' (1928) and his Trudy i dni Svistonova (1929) used the Bakhtin circle, particularly Pumpianskii, as a model<sup>6</sup> close to

caricature, and contemporary critics noted this.<sup>7</sup> The authors of these books were not merely satirising their chosen subjects: Shklovskii called both men's work "pamphlet memoir novels"<sup>8</sup>, that is, tendentious records of the times in novel form. Chudakova and Toddes have noted Kaverin's success in "'historicizing' the apparently narrow circle of specifically professional 'passions' - beyond them conflicts of a wider significance can be perceived."<sup>9</sup>

For Eikhenbaum the crisis extended over two years and gave rise to his work on the problem of literary *byt*, the 1927 articles 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' and 'Literatura i pisatel'. These articles were followed by his monograph on Tolstoi, Lev Tolstoi, in 1928. Eikhenbaum wrote no further purely Formalist work after 1925. What were the reasons for this break? Eikhenbaum's diaries and letters document the process of this critical period fully, allowing a view both of his perception of the literary-political situation and of his sense of how and in what direction his work should evolve. These two elements interacted in a complex way; Eikhenbaum's sense of history, for instance, was part of both. In this chapter we shall first consider the period 1925 - 1927 in the light of these personal records. Then we shall look at the work of 1927 in relation to other OPOIAZ work in the same area and consider contemporary and subsequent views of this work.

## 1 1925 - 1927

### Political Climate

As we saw in the previous chapter, from 1924 Eikhenbaum's diaries recorded a steadily worsening political climate: the imposition of a Marxist preface to his Lermontov, the attack in Pravda after the first issue of Russkii sovremennik with his article against Marxist criticism, and the publication difficulties and ultimate closure of the journal after four issues. In September 1924, as we saw, he summarised the situation for 'us' as a struggle between religious dogmatism and scholasticism on the one hand and scientific thought as such on the other. In early October 1924 Eikhenbaum noted that V P Zubov, who had continued to direct the All-Russian Institute for the Study of the Arts which became the State Institute for the

Study of the Arts (GIII) after the revolution, had:

“..warned [the board] that he will be forced to apply for retirement - they are putting on a lot of pressure (ochen’ nasedaiut). Then, of course, it will be a bad look-out for the institute. Every day there is a new fact that threatens the work (delo).”<sup>10</sup>

The appointment of Party bureaucrats to top administrative posts at GIII in January 1925 was thus not unexpected; Eikhenbaum noted two meetings in January which prompted him to give up both his deanship and his teaching. On 13 January he wrote:

“A joint meeting of the new governing board of the Institute for the Hist. of Art with the board of the [University] courses. The new Rector - F N Shmidt, new members - Zoia Shadurskaia, someone called Leikht, Nazarenko. I sat from 7 to 10.30 without breathing a word. A painful spectacle. Shmidt is dry, clever, on the make (delets), Shadurskaia (sister of Iuren’eva, the actress) is a ridiculous, stupid woman (‘We made the revolution’, ‘We, the communists’). I felt a deep alienation (chuzhdost’) from everything that was said there. I shall refuse the deanship, and in the spring I shall have to give up teaching as well. There is no point.”<sup>11</sup>

Eikhenbaum did not give up teaching, though he did refuse the deanship, but his “deep alienation” from the behaviour of the Communist appointees he encountered in his work remained. On 26 January he recorded a conversation with Shklovskii about his work (in itself evidence of the critical period described above), which recalled another meeting at GIII:

“I went to see Vitia. He is somewhat perplexed - doesn’t quite know what he is to do. He has really grown up - robust, strong, energetic, but there is no real work (delo) for him. Everywhere - officialdom (kazenshchina). A sorry sight. Today I was at a meeting of the teaching staff of the Institute, listened to F. Schmidt’s speech. A dry official, a bureaucrat. ‘The State...Lenin’s legacies...the collective... our duty....’ In a word, all the cliches. A painful impression.”<sup>12</sup>

Entries of this kind recurred over the next two years; Eikhenbaum used kazenshchina as a portmanteau term for work, behaviour and attitudes adapted to official requirements in all the spheres, literary, scholarly and pedagogical, in which he was active. In October 1925 he noted the compromise of certain colleagues at GIII (Kazanskii, in the incident which provoked this entry) with increasingly insistent political demands, which, like religious restrictions in the



Middle Ages, deprived scholars of the freedom of thought necessary for creative work;

“Undoubted Middle Ages, the analogies are endless. We have to understand this and expect nothing, but think out our role historically. We are something like the humanists, our life will be difficult to the end, with deprivations, persecution and so on. [...] Everything is falling into its proper place now - Zhirmunskii and Tomashevskii and the rest. I am with Tynianov and Viktor.”<sup>13</sup>

This entry makes it clear that Eikhenbaum did not see the events he had recorded as isolated incidents; the implications for the whole of society of Communism in the role of a mediaeval state religion, deeply inimical to ‘humanist’ thought and scholarship, and with the apparatus to enforce orthodoxy, were very serious. One of the first diary entries recording the intention to work in a different way, as a result of the need to take the political situation into consideration and “think out our role historically”, came earlier in October. Eikhenbaum intended to begin working on “literary labour and byt” and abandon work on the specifically literary for the moment:

“What I spoke of in the debate in Moscow and wrote in the article is confirmed: the Marxists have returned science to the old individual-psychological studies (individual changeability). I must start the work on literary labour (trud) and byt - and leave the pure and lofty themes in reserve, for myself. I have to show in this work that there is no simple causality, explain the mutual conditioning.”<sup>14</sup>

As we shall see later in more detail, this entry makes clear that one element in the impetus to write this new work was the desire to produce an alternative to Marxist views on the genesis of literary works, to make clear that there was “no simple causality” between economic, social or psychological data and the work of art. Eikhenbaum intended to show a different relation between literature and such non-literary facts (“explain the mutual conditioning”), but he was clear that this enterprise is separate from the theoretical study of literature he had been engaged on (“..leave the pure and lofty themes in reserve”). Before we consider these theoretical intentions further, however, we shall consider Eikhenbaum’s general position at this point more closely.

Letter to Shklovskii of 25 July 1925

Eikhenbaum's desire to combat a Marxist reaction against OPOIAZ work and the generally worsening political climate affecting independent literary activity are only part of the cluster of factors at work in this critical period. All the factors are present in a letter to Shklovskii of July 25 and two diary entries of December 1925. In this letter Eikhenbaum wrote;

"It is very difficult for me to write now [...] History has exhausted me and I do not want to rest, nor do I know how. I yearn for action, for a biography (*u menia toska po postupkam, toska po biografii*). I am reading Herzen's Byloe i dumy at the moment, I am in the state he was in when he wrote the chapter 'Il pianto' (he was 38 then too). Not only does no one need the history or theory of literature now, but no one needs 'modern literature' itself either. Now only the *individual (lichnost')* is needed. The person who could build his own life is needed. If language, then language of terrible irony, like Heine, or terrible rage. Everything else can be of any use only to the Jubilee of the Academy of Sciences - even the publishers know this."<sup>15</sup>

The critical elements in this letter are the Herzen chapter, 'history', Eikhenbaum's longing for a 'biography' and 'action' which are recapitulated in the wider necessity for the 'person'/'individual' who can 'build his own life'. All these elements, as we have seen in the case of history, are more complex than would first appear and central to the understanding of Eikhenbaum's subsequent work: we shall consider them separately.

## Herzen

The passage of Herzen to which Eikhenbaum refers comes from the fifth part of Byloe i dumy, 'Before the Revolution and after it'. Reflections on the French Revolution of 1789 are incorporated into Herzen's experience after the June Days of 1848. It provides a graphic commentary on the post-revolutionary situation as <sup>Eikhenbaum</sup> saw it, adding a more general view to that recorded in his diary. The chapter opens with the words;

"After the June Days I saw that the revolution was defeated, but I still believed in those who had been defeated, the fallen, [...] [then] I began to understand more and more clearly that the revolution was not only defeated but had had to be defeated [...]"

It was not the reaction that defeated the revolution [...] it fell like Agrippina under the

blows of its children, and what is worst of all, without their being aware of it..."<sup>16</sup>

Herzen traces the disillusion engendered by this defeat back to the revolutionary minority of the French Revolution who "represented the highest thought of their time, its highest, but not general, consciousness"<sup>17</sup>. Their only weapon after the loss of power was conviction. "But for conviction rightness (pravota) is not enough, that is the whole error, something else is necessary, mental equality!"<sup>18</sup> While the revolutionary struggle continued this inequality was not noticed but:

"...at last the heavy edifice of feudal monarchy collapsed [...] the brave ran forward, the gates were open - and the crowd poured in, only not the crowd they were expecting. Who were they? From what century? It was not the Spartans or the great populus romanus [...] An irresistible wave of filth poured over everything."<sup>19</sup>

The Jacobins, in spite of the Terror, submitted to:

"...the strength of the rising social stratum. It subdued everything, it overcame the revolution and the reaction, it submerged old forms and filled them with itself, because it constituted the only active and contemporary majority."<sup>20</sup>

The petty bourgeois (meshchane), once liberated,

"...walked over their liberators' bodies and brought in their own order. The minority was either crushed or dissipated into the bourgeoisie.

Several people in each generation remained, in spite of the events, stubborn preservers of the idea. [...] They bear an unjust punishment. [...]

The absurdity, the injustice of this fact anger us, drive us out of our wits. As if someone (apart from ourselves) had promised that everything in the world would be elegant, just and go smoothly. [...]

The awareness of the powerlessness of the idea, the absence of the compulsory power of truth over the real world pains us. A new kind of manichaeism possesses us, we are ready par d  pit to believe in reasoned (that is, intentional) evil, as we believed in reasoned good - this is the last tribute we pay to idealism."<sup>21</sup>

Since Eikhenbaum signalled this chapter to Shklovskii ("I am in the state he [Herzen] was in when he wrote [it]"), it seems reasonable to infer his disillusion at the failure of the Revolution in his conception of it as the source of social justice and new creative perspectives, his

awareness of the misplaced idealism of that conception and his dismay at the advent of an overwhelming new Philistine order. Much of this he had expressed in 1921 in the two articles prompted by the deaths of Blok and Gumilev, 'Mig soznaniia' and 'Sud'ba Bloka', but in a more general, less personally affected way. We should also note Herzen's sense of a remnant in each generation who resist majority pressure and preserve the "idea", a notion Eikhenbaum used later in his new work, and which is echoed in the diary entry above where he compares OPOIAZ to humanists in the dark ages, who must expect deprivation and persecution.

## History

The concept of history with which Eikhenbaum opened his letter to Shklovskii also goes back at least to the two 1921 articles, where it is linked to each generation's sense of itself, its choice of and responsibility for actions contributing to the common life, as we saw in the previous chapter. For Eikhenbaum history established the parameters for action in every sphere, including politics, art and the writer's delo. It was to this degree "an imperative, a perceptible reality"<sup>22</sup> but Eikhenbaum did not take a totally determinist view of history. To him the actions of individuals taken together were not only shaped by history, but also constituted it. Thus, as we have seen, in 'Mig soznaniia' Eikhenbaum saw the deaths of Blok and Gumilev as very different consequences of the revolutionary enthusiasm of his generation.<sup>23</sup> The importance of the choice of and responsibility for individual action as a component of history was already clear in this article. The need to preserve the "secret freedom" (*tainaia svoboda*) of the individual also figured here, and in greater detail in Eikhenbaum's memorial speech for Blok, who borrowed the phrase from Pushkin.<sup>24</sup> This, then, was the background of Eikhenbaum's emphasis, in his letter to Shklovskii, on the individual (*lichnost'*), "who could build his life" as a necessary counterweight to historical pressure.

## The individual and the act

As we saw in Chapter Two, Eikhenbaum was concerned from the beginning of his OPOIAZ work to clarify how the creative individual (*lichnost'*) interacts with the world. To be an individual, he wrote in Molodoi Tolstoi, was not the same as to be a person, simply; in a creative individual, consciousness (*soznanie*) was at work, and prevailed over the given

natura<sup>25</sup>. The question of the creative individual's responsibility for what he wrote also appeared briefly, as we saw, in Molodoi Tolstoi<sup>26</sup>, and a year later, in 'Nekrasov', a poet whose chosen role, Eikhenbaum asserted, "was suggested to him by history and taken on (prinjata) as an *historical act* (postupok)" [my italics]<sup>27</sup>. Here, in 1922, in what Eikhenbaum described as polemical journalism, we have a category which appeared with a renewed personal significance in Eikhenbaum's diaries, and the letter above, in 1924/5. Postupok, as Eikhenbaum used it, is not any action, nor action in the modern Western left-wing sense against a political opponent, but an intentional ethical act by an individual in a particular situation, which involved personal responsibility (for example the article 'V ozhidanii literatury' attacking Marxist criticism, which Eikhenbaum described as "very responsible" (otvetstvenno)<sup>28</sup>). An act in this sense might as properly be carried out in writing or speech or, indeed, in silence (for example, the meeting of the GIII and University boards on 13 January 1925 quoted above) as in physical action. For Eikhenbaum it often arose as a response to the contemporary pole of his historicism, which we noted in Chapter Three, but it was, nevertheless, primarily an ethical and individual act in a certain context, and not per se political, that is, not the product of a general political theory.

It is remarkable to note the extent to which the cluster of terms lichnost', postupok, and otvetstvennost' were understood in very similar ways by Eikhenbaum and by Bakhtin (without the explicit connection to history) in his writings from 1919 - 1924, particularly 'Iskusstvo i otvetstvennost'' (1919) and 'K filosofii postupka'<sup>29</sup>. The two scholars had in common at this time the concern with ethics, seen as the acts of a particular individual in a concrete situation as opposed to abstract generalised rules of behaviour, and a similar conception of the individual and his responsibility or answerability for himself. These terms appeared in Eikhenbaum's writing without extensive discussion, as familiar and important categories, even occasionally, as we saw, in the early twenties, though they did not accord with OPOIAZ thinking, while in Bakhtin's work they were a central part of a developing aesthetic and ethical argument; nevertheless they have a similar resonance in both writers.

An extension of the conceptual cluster lichnost', postupok and otvetstvennost' appears in Eikhenbaum's letter in his sense of the necessity of the individual "who could build his own life" (stroil by svoiu zhizn'). By this Eikhenbaum meant the need for individuals capable of conceiving and carrying out a succession of postupki, independent of the prevailing contemporary tendency of adaptation to official professional requirements. In diary entries at this stage and later in the decade in scholarly work, Eikhenbaum referred to the individual's ability to act in historical situations independently of convention or contemporary norms, but according to an ethical conception, as life-building (zhiznestroenie) or life-conduct (zhiznepovedenie).

A related extension of these concepts is Eikhenbaum's use of biografiia here. Biography in one sense in which the Formalists used it (in the letter to Shklovskii above) meant not a life story, but a life in which significant historical postupki were evident, in which, to use Ginzburg's definition, the individual is active (neither passive nor inert) in relation to history<sup>30</sup>. Ginzburg, indeed, equated this sense of the biographical with the historical when writing of this period and her time as a student with Eikhenbaum:

"In 1926 Eikhenbaum was forty. He experienced this as an event and would speak to us of the necessity of a biographical crisis (perelom). Biographical here is equivalent to historical."<sup>31</sup>

#### "Necessary" work

One problem which Eikhenbaum faced in 1925 was the question of whether and in what way his work was "necessary". The question, posed generally in 'Mig soznaniia' as the question of a generation approaching the end of its period of free action, had returned as a personal question of crucial importance. The history and theory of literature, Eikhenbaum asserted in the letter to Shklovskii quoted above, were no longer necessary to anyone, nor was contemporary literature.

From 1918 to 1922 this question had not arisen in this form for Eikhenbaum and his colleagues; the early work of OPOIAZ fell in with the mood of the times, it was done within a certain

social and political context of cultural renewal which guaranteed the sense of its importance and necessity, even though, and perhaps largely because, it was polemical and innovatory. In 1922 Eikhenbaum had made a polemical distinction between Marxism and the new poetics, but still asserted a paradoxical revolutionary connection. In the article for OPOIAZ' 'Jubilee', '5 = 100', he wrote: "From the revolution Russia will emerge with a new science of the artistic word, that is certain."<sup>32</sup> The sense of the relevance and necessity of OPOIAZ work, which derived from perspectives of cultural change prompted by the revolution, though never politically identified with it, was, by 1925, disappearing, as these perspectives vanished and were replaced by changes of a quite different kind. This was the perception of those inside OPOIAZ. The necessity of OPOIAZ work to those outside it had been in question, as we have seen, since its inception, although its popularity was indubitable. An index of OPOIAZ' position in this respect by 1923 can be seen in a comment from a far-left ally, Lef, which saw OPOIAZ work as "necessary" only if combined with the sociological method;

"Members of OPOIAZ: The formal method is the key to the study of literature. Each flea-rhyme must be registered. But beware of catching fleas in an airless space. Only alongside the sociological study of art will your work be not only interesting, but necessary."<sup>33</sup>

Various versions of the sociological method in the work of, among others, Pereverzev, Friche and Sakulin, had become the major competing Marxist school of literary study by the mid 1920s. As we saw in the previous chapter, compromise attempts to dilute and combine OPOIAZ principles with this and other methods increased; Eikhenbaum noted in September 1924 pressure from an OPOIAZ colleague, Kazanskii, to "meet life half-way" and discuss the sociological method.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, as we have seen, from 1924 the status of Formalist teaching, their academic positions and the possibilities of publishing were under attack. Shklovskii wrote of this situation in Tret'ia fabrika:

"There are debts which must be paid. The history of Russian literature has not been written.

But there is nowhere to publish. People argue with us. But the point is not us, but the material. The cause is being lost in the argument. People argue and take over the terminology. They introduce incorrectly written [formulations] into text-books."<sup>35</sup>

By the mid-twenties the sense of fundamental cultural renewal of which OPOIAZ had felt itself to be a part and, in the area of literary studies, an active agent, had eroded; it had been replaced by the sense of a fixed society with increasingly strongly stated official expectations of literature in which OPOIAZ concepts could have at best a marginal and diluted part.

It was, naturally, not only of the difficulties encountered in pursuing literary theory that Eikhenbaum wrote "History has exhausted me..". He experienced Esenin's death as another sign of the times, in a similar way to the deaths of Blok and Gumilev in 1921. He was of the party that accompanied Esenin's coffin to the train;

"In a dark, dirty goods wagon, the coffin with flower vases standing on it and a huge box nailed to the floor, where the coffin would be placed before the train left. A dim light from two candles. On the platform and in the wagon there were about thirty people. A vulgar speech from Ionov the pompadour, helpless, bloodless words from Sadof'ev, Borisoglebskii ('Esenin's death will prevent others.' - That was supposed to be a 'comfort!'). [...] And then I heard some man behind the railing ask 'Who are they accompanying?' A young woman answered 'Esenin.' 'Who?' 'Esenin.' 'And who was he?' 'A poet.' 'Who?' 'A poet!' 'A poet?' There is no literature and no one needs it. Esenin did what he was bound (dolzhen) to do. And they have even forgotten how to bury people - a painful, disgraceful impression."<sup>36</sup>

For Eikhenbaum, the loss of the old forms and customs of respect for the dead was a sign of society's disintegration quite as marked as ignorance of Esenin and his work.

December 1925

Eikhenbaum recorded his state of mind in more detail in two diary entries of December 1925.

On 2 December he wrote:

"Suddenly the 'space' (promezhutok) I foresaw and feared so much has begun. It has become clear that I have to remake something in my life and in my work - I have to make some kind of transition, some sharp and decisive movement. [...] What I lived by from 1917 - 1922 is finished. Scientific work of the former kind doesn't attract me - it's boring and unnecessary. There is no point in even talking about teaching work - I should



give it up - leaving only a circle of close pupils. In all its sharpness and simplicity the question stands - what else am I to do in life? Where am I to direct my temperament, mind, powers. How am I to find a new life cause (zhiznennoe delo), which would absorb me and where I could see a perspective for myself? It is terrible to live without discharging one's energy. [...] I sometimes think of work in the cinema, but I don't believe in my abilities, I'm afraid I'd come to grief. The situation is clear: either do hack-work (khalturit') and go for a career like Tomashevskii, or get dried up and become a professor like Zhirmunskii, or stop forcing scientific work, stop constraining myself, and go on to something else, like Tynianov. It is a question precisely of life-building (zhiznestroenie), of life-conduct (zhiznepovedenie), and not of the next piece of work. If only I could get myself out of this tormenting state of 'space', where everything has to be decided all over again!"

In this entry the alternatives before Eikhenbaum of adaptation in Chukovskii's and Ginzburg's sense, or life-building (and life-conduct) were clearly stated; adaptation to the demands of an increasingly officially controlled academic career would involve khaltura, expedient work oriented to those demands, or classification and categorization in the spirit of Zhirmunskii - both ethically inadmissible for Eikhenbaum. Zhiznestroenie, principled action independently of prevailing norms, in this context meant the refusal to continue in a discipline in which opportunities for principled work were vanishing, and the decision "to go on to something else". Tynianov, who had turned from literary theory to writing fiction, was the model here. The next entry was written two weeks later, on 15 December:

"I am feeling in better spirits, though not because I have found a solution, rather because there is a total emptiness before my eyes, so that my head spins. I am reading Tynianov's novel Kiukhlia. It's nervy, in places impatient and careless, but it's elegant, intelligent, witty, with good accents. It's a fine solution to our pitiful 'professoriate'. I am coming back somehow to the idea about biographies. Write a book, but not about one person, about many people - not on the psychological or natural-historical level (like Ostwald), but on the historical byt level. Interweave the person's life-building (creative work as act (postupok)) with the epoch, with history. Write something on the lines of: the problem of life for people in the early nineteenth century, in the 1830s and '40s, the 1850s and

'60s, 1870s and '80s, 1890s and 1900s. Take five generations so that Pushkin and Gogol' would be in it, and Turgenev, and Dostoevskii, and so on. A book about people who built culture, and built their own lives (Herzen would be in too, for instance). [...] I feel that such a book, which turns to the person (cheloveku), is historically necessary and essential for me personally - it is at once work and act (postupok). I would be able to come back to literature later - I would have a freer sense of myself. I am fed up with the 'academic' in all its shapes and forms. [...] Yes, yes, the most important thing now is to concentrate on the question of the personal path, of evolution. Take a free step - as I did when I entered OPOIAZ in 1918 and turned my back on Zhirmunskii, Nikol'skii, on all that congealing culture."

These entries make it clear that Eikhenbaum "lived by" his work and could not tolerate work that had lost its meaning. The new poetics, the raison d'être for polemics and pioneering work on texts, had been coopted into academic usage and become the province of epigones<sup>37</sup>, academic work meant either careerist compromise or stasis, "our pitiful professoriate". A new "life concern" (which OPOIAZ had been from 1917 - 1922) had to be found. This was a question of finding a new solution to the problem of conduct life presented, which would be both work and act, in the ethical sense in which Eikhenbaum understood that word.

Eikhenbaum's projected solution, his 'life-building', was a particular kind of biography which stressed the writer's creative action in the face of the problems history set him. His solution to his own historical predicament was to examine the response of nineteenth-century writers to their own historical situations. For Eikhenbaum this kind of book, "which turns to the person, [was] historically necessary", that is, by focusing on the 'life-strategy' of the individual writer it resisted the conformist pressure of the party's intentions for literature in the mid-twenties. The evolution to which Eikhenbaum refers here is the evolution of the writer as lichnost', the different phases of his zhiznestroenie in successive periods or 'generations' of his life as a writer, and not literary evolution in the specific sense OPOIAZ gave it. We should note that Eikhenbaum was quite aware that this kind of book - "turning to the person" - was incompatible with "literature", the immanent study of literature which OPOIAZ had begun, to which he "would be able to come back later". Indeed the project ran directly counter to

OPOIAZ literary-historical practice, which avoided biography as irrelevant to the work of art, and saw literary evolution in supra-personal terms. The book which Eikhenbaum planned here was never written, but its themes were central, as we shall see, in articles of 1927, in Ley Tolstoi (1928) and in Moi vremennik (1929), his 'journal' compilation of work written from 1927 to 1929.

The few diary entries for 1926 - "I am not writing notes, because everything is gloomy."<sup>38</sup> - record the effort to find new ways of working and the sense of not being needed. Eikhenbaum had written a film synopsis with Tynianov in 1924, and he edited a collection of articles on film, Poetika kino, which came out in 1927, and to which he too contributed an article.<sup>39</sup> After an attempt at writing a film scenario failed, Eikhenbaum decided to return to his own work and noted two projects, a monograph on Tolstoi and work on the literary byt material, biographies and journals. In April the idea for a book "about people" recurs: "Something like a new 'history of the Russian intelligentsia', not from the point of view of ideas, but from the point of view of the posing of life problems."<sup>40</sup>

Another recurring note in the diary is the distaste and revulsion Eikhenbaum felt for much of the official work of the University and GII. In January 1927 he recorded:

"..the meeting of the Research Institute at the University with Andre Mazon and P. Sakulin's lecture 'The Morphology of Styles' at the Institute of the History of the Arts. Vulgarly (poshlost'), unseemliness, insolence and idiocy in the first [...] Sakulin's lecture was utterly indecent for its idiocy [...] Zhirmunskii, Smirnov and Nazarenko discussed this nonsense seriously and allied themselves in part with him. In the evening people came to my house - Venedikt Livshits<sup>41</sup>, Kaverin and Bernadskii. I relaxed after this remarkable day. Where can one escape from all this vulgarity? If one could bury oneself in work!"<sup>42</sup>

In the next entry Eikhenbaum reviewed his position in academia, for the first time making its "total moral disintegration" explicit, and surveyed the possibilities for new work, among them a theoretical paper using literary byt material:

"... There can be no real activity for me in the University or in the Institute - that is clear.

There is total disintegration there, in which only people like Zhirmunskii, Vinogradov, Gukovskii<sup>43</sup> and so on can work and feel at home. There is no point in even talking about the University - a 'struggle' with Misha Iakovlev, or Nazarenko, or Derzhavin<sup>44</sup>? Everywhere there is total moral disintegration and there is nothing for me to do here. But I need to find some kind of support, I need to have something like what OPOIAZ was from 1918 - 1922. In any case, I must get properly started on my new work. [...] I should make use of the work on literary byt in different ways. I should write a book on the raznochintsy writers as a lit.- byt phenomenon (Pomialovskii, N. Uspenskii, Levitov, Novgorodskii). I should write a theoretical work - with separate studies from the history of literary byt. I should try and do something else as well with this material - should I not try fiction?"<sup>45</sup>

In March 1927 Eikhenbaum felt stronger and an external stimulus appeared. A debate took place on 6 March at the Tenishevskoe Uchilishche in which the Formalist speakers were Eikhenbaum, Shklovskii, Tynianov and Tomashevskii against Gorbachev, Derzhavin and Iakovlev. According to Eikhenbaum, the debate became "a violent public row" (zhestokaia obshchestvennaia skloka) and "the atmosphere became so heated that fighting looked likely"<sup>46</sup>. The day after, Eikhenbaum's students greeted him with applause. A restrained and unsigned report on the debate in Novyi Lef (at this stage still sympathetic to the Formalists<sup>47</sup>), said that the mood of the auditorium and the methods of argument recalled old Futurist and napostovtsy confrontations, a mode of direct argument which, by 1927, already belonged to the past. For the reviewer (Shklovskii), the debate was news because OPOIAZ' change of stance was made clear. Eikhenbaum said that a Marxist theory of art had yet to be evolved and attacked so-called Marxist criticism for failing to consider the conditions of the writer's work. This was one of the most urgent tasks of qualified scholars of the arts. Gorbachev, opposing Eikhenbaum's remarks about the history of writers' fees "declared that it was probably the fees which made the Formalists change their original point of view"<sup>48</sup>. The debate was seen by many as an open challenge to Marxist literary policies. On 10 March Eikhenbaum noted:

"The excitement from the debate in literary and student circles has not yet subsided. Wherever you show your face there are conversations about it. [...] The general impression, people say, is that we sustained a total moral victory. That is, of course, the

main thing. [...] I met O. Mandel'shtam in the street today, who was very agitated by the debate and wants us to meet - 'a common concern', he says. I am more and more convinced that whatever consequences there might be the dispute was necessary and will do its work. It was without doubt an historic evening, which people will remember."<sup>49</sup>

In these and earlier entries going back to 1924 the notion of principled action, of moral integrity and refusal to compromise contrasts strongly with the "total moral disintegration" Eikhenbaum found in academic life. This moral dimension reappears as an element of Eikhenbaum's 1927 articles, which we will now consider.

## 2 1927 articles

### 'Gogol' i "delo literary"

A short newspaper article of general interest, 'Gogol' i "delo literary" appeared in Krasnaia gazeta on 4 March 1927, and was the first article of Eikhenbaum's new phase of work. Eikhenbaum considered the successive periods of Gogol's life as a writer in order to answer the question of what being a writer meant "as labour, as a cause (delo), as a calling"<sup>50</sup>. Eikhenbaum's interest here was focused not on Gogol's texts, but on his writing as an activity in society. The "delo literary" of his title was itself an index of a concern not with literature in its specific sense, but with literature as a profession, and as the field in which social, aesthetic and ethical issues relevant to the whole of society were discussed. The traditions of this nineteenth-century view of literature had been lost or broken, in Eikhenbaum's view, but he did not discuss this issue (to which we will return) at length in this short article. Here he saw Gogol' as a member of a generation which entered literature "under the sign of the Pushkin epoch"<sup>51</sup>, engaged in journal polemics in the 1830s (in Gogol's case against Senkovskii's Biblioteka dlia chteniia) and found the turning point of the 1840s its downfall, in conflict with a new generation. The questions Gogol' asked at this crisis point (in his Avtorskaia ispoved') "Should I in fact write? [...] Is this a proper time for the writer in general, and is it so for such a writer as myself?"<sup>52</sup> were, in Eikhenbaum's view, both personal questions and questions thrown up by that period (ie 'historical'); they continued to be important, since there could be

no literature unless the problem of 'how to be a writer' was solved. This problem became the chief theme of Eikhenbaum's new phase of work, replacing the 'old' question 'how to write' as "the basic literary problem of our epoch"<sup>53</sup>. The question 'how to be a writer' as Eikhenbaum formulated it in 1927 (and even more strongly in 1928) addressed the concern with 'life-conduct' evident in his 1925 diary entries and embodied the intention stated there to write work which turned "to the person". In this first short article Eikhenbaum said no more about this new question, and as yet he had provided no theoretical discussion to substantiate his change of focus. A few days later he noted his preparations for another, more substantial, theoretical article.

#### 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt': Preparation

In the same March 10 entry recording the continuing sensation caused by the debate Eikhenbaum wrote:

"I am sketching out an article for Zvezda but I do not yet know how it will turn out. I want to write not an article but a book. I don't know how to set out the material in the article, how to plan it. After all, at the basis of my work lies a perfectly scientific, theoretical question, not for a journal - how to introduce literary byt material into the history of literature, that is, in other words, the problem of the relation of the evolutionary series to the genetic series. The article must be written in connection with the present position of the writer (see Shklovskii's article in Novyi Lef<sup>54</sup>), but how to bring in the historical material? For instance, the material for 1855 -1864? Alongside contemporary problems or on its own, as a supplementary look into the past?"<sup>55</sup>

To Shklovskii, Eikhenbaum wrote of the article almost as a manifesto: "I am writing an article - a programmatic one - but I am not hurrying, it is a serious matter."<sup>56</sup> This plan, originally intended for a single article, ultimately produced two; on 6 April Eikhenbaum noted that he had sent an article on literary byt taken from his Jubilee lecture at GIII on 29 March to the journal Na literaturnom postu at their request. On 23 April he wrote:

"The article for Na literaturnom postu ('Literatura i literaturnyi byt') has been accepted - it will go into the next number. Now I am writing for Zvezda. After these two articles I must sit down to the book."<sup>57</sup>

'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' eventually appeared in Na literaturnom postu No 9 in Autumn 1927, while Tynianov's article 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii', which also addressed the relation of the evolutionary series to the genetic series, appeared in the next number of the same hard-line Marxist journal, dedicated to Eikhenbaum. As the diary entry above makes clear, Eikhenbaum intended the article to function in two ways, one, theoretically, to correlate literary-historical and non-literary (in the strict sense) phenomena and two, practically, to address "the position of the writer" and his "contemporary problems". In the end he produced one article with a strong theoretical bias and material on the position of the writer ('Literatura i literaturnyi byt') and a second article ('Literatura i pisatel') which dealt almost entirely with the writer's situation. We shall consider the theoretical article first.

#### 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt': Change of theory

The introduction of 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' concerned the nature of theory, and a justification of a change of theoretical stance. Eikhenbaum began by describing a common scientific process, how an observer makes sense of, or organises the heterogeneous facts available to him by means of theory or hypothesis. In describing this process he deliberately gave no specific context or references; the reader was invited to supply his own historical or literary context. The process could apply as much to the 'sense' of recent social or political facts as to the facts of literary history. Eikhenbaum noted that time and the observer's stance or point of view affect what he sees and how he evaluates the data he collects (a view close to the modern scientific realisation that the observer is a constituent part of, and affects the results of the experiment he sets up).

Eikhenbaum also introduced a new term smyslovoi znak or sign of meaning. By this he meant the organising or interpretative principle which the mind uses to arrange and make sense of heterogeneous material, very much in the same way as the eye (or the mind), faced with unfamiliar surroundings, will select certain items as central and place others in relation to them, and reject others as altogether irrelevant. This operation, frequent but often not conscious, may be done on the same material in different ways, so that different objects are deemed central or of interest, thus indicating that the interpretative principle, the sign of meaning which selects

from and gives coherence to the whole mass of phenomena, and produces an intelligible 'whole' from them, has changed. This, as we shall see, was what Eikhenbaum described. The article began:

"We do not see all facts at the same time, we do not always see one and the same facts and do not always need to disclose the same correlations. Not everything that we know or can know is connected in the way we think by the same sign of meaning (smyslovym znakom) - [not everything] is turned from incidental status into a fact of known significance. The colossal material of the past [...] appears only in part on the pages (and not always the same material), since theory gives [one] the right and the possibility to bring part of it into a system under one or another sign of meaning. Outside theory there is no historical system either, because there is no principle for the selection and interpretation of facts."<sup>58</sup>

Here, and in the rest of the first, introductory page of this article, the collation of what we might assume to be facts of *literary* history is made ambiguous and can operate as a metaphor for collating and making sense of events of the recent past. Eikhenbaum's use of the non-specific 'we' supports this ambiguity. The analytic process described may be ascribed as well to fellow-observers of the events of recent history as to researchers of the history of literature. The word byt, strikingly (for the reader familiar with early Formalist work) present in the title of the article supports such a non-literary, bytovoi reading.

Theories, Eikhenbaum went on. (still maintaining this potential ambiguity), though essential to organise and render intelligible the mass of heterogeneous facts visible at any one time, are only working hypotheses, dictated by the pressure of contemporary problems, and can change:

"The change of problems and signs of meaning leads to the regrouping of traditional material and to the introduction of new facts which had been excluded from the previous system by force of its natural limitedness. The inclusion of a new series of facts (under the sign of one or another correlation) appears as it were as their discovery, in as much as existence outside a system (incidental status) is equivalent from the scientific point of view to non-existence."<sup>59</sup>

To summarise the bytovoi reading of this passage, we may say that a 'theory' or 'hypothesis'



interpreting post-revolutionary reality had earlier presented itself to Eikhenbaum, and to others, under a particular 'sign of meaning' (in his case, of social creativity and a new culture), but that since then new facts invisible from the previous stance and incompatible with that view had demanded a change of 'hypothesis', and of the 'sign of meaning' under which known facts were grouped. In other words, Eikhenbaum was announcing, as clearly as was possible, a radical change of social and political view-point. Here Eikhenbaum turned specifically to literature, abandoning non-specific metaphor for the moment, but we should note two further points in this introductory passage before we go further: his somewhat changed notion of the working hypothesis, and the new, explicit status given to a view of history which had been imperceptible in his earlier scholarly work, though it was part of the way he and other OPOIAZ members thought and spoke.

The notion of theory as working hypothesis, subject to change, was essentially the same as that put forward in 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925)<sup>60</sup>, with one important qualification, the link to contemporary problems. The earlier statement stood as it were outside time, and claimed an ability to change theory which had not yet been fundamentally challenged. In 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' the working hypothesis had acquired a concrete origin in contemporary reality, in preparation for large-scale theoretical change.

Still on the first page of his article, under the deliberately vague heading of deciphering the "colossal material of the past"<sup>61</sup> and the more suggestive one of "contemporary problems", Eikhenbaum identified the main conceptual tool he would be using, history as analogy:

"History is, in essence, a science of complex analogies, a science of double vision: the facts of the past are picked out by us as significant facts. and enter a system, invariably and unavoidably under the sign of contemporary problems. Thus certain problems are replaced by other problems, certain facts obscured by others. History in this sense is a particular method of studying the present with the help of the facts of the past."<sup>62</sup>

No stronger indication could have been given to the reader in an article 'about literature' to understand what followed in terms of concrete present day problems (which, like the history Eikhenbaum referred to, had not been specified as literary). Eikhenbaum went on to make

quite clear what his contemporary concerns were, as we shall see, and which “problems [had been] replaced by other problems”, but the use of historical analogy as a conceptual tool, “a method of studying the present”, was the key to all his work from now on.

‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: OPOIAZ work reviewed

Eikhenbaum now turned to literature proper, and gave a somewhat biased analysis of OPOIAZ activity, designed to reinforce his new position; OPOIAZ had left aside, as scientifically suspect (incidental to the chosen theory system, in his definition above) the history of literature proper, which Eikhenbaum distinguished here from literary evolution. Here Eikhenbaum made an inaccurate assessment of OPOIAZ thinking on the history of literature; in the interests of establishing a specific object of study they had had to reject much of the traditional material of literary history as incidental (for example the question, ‘Did Pushkin smoke?’) or concerned with genesis, and not with evolution. Nevertheless the history of literature was a major OPOIAZ concern, which had grown more important and changed in character since 1921, when Eikhenbaum published Molodoi Tolstoi, as he was perfectly aware. He went on :

“This [rejection of literary history] is understandable, if one bears in mind that the questions of the moment, demanding analysis and generalisation, were ‘how to write in general’ and ‘what to write next’. The technological and theoretical [...] tendency of literary science was suggested by the position of literature itself: it was necessary to sum up the recent upsurge [Symbolism and Futurism] and clarify the questions facing the new literary generation. Investigation of ‘how a literary work is made’ or can be made, was supposed to answer the first question; the establishment of specific, concrete ‘laws’ of literary evolution was supposed to answer the second.”<sup>63</sup>

The direct and reductive relation Eikhenbaum made here between “technological” OPOIAZ work and the literary questions of the time was dictated by the need to justify theoretically his change of stance in 1927. His early analyses of Tolstoi and Gogol’, for example, had scarcely served to explain ‘how to write’; it would be more accurate to claim that they demonstrated ‘how to read’. But the reduction was a necessary preliminary to his new approach:

“...questions of technology have clearly given way to others, in the centre of which stands the problem of the literary profession itself, of the “*enterprise (delo) of literature*”

itself. The question 'how to write' has been replaced, or at least, complicated, by another - '*how to be a writer*'. In other words, the problem of literature, as such, has been obscured by the problem of the writer."<sup>64</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum made his new orientation quite clear; it was the question 'how to be a writer' that had replaced or obscured earlier purely literary questions. This question became the focus of Eikhenbaum's energies for at least the next five years: he linked it to the literary profession and to the function of literature as a whole. In his treatment of it questions of ethics, of the writer's 'life-conduct', appeared in the context of concrete historical situations, as we shall see. Eikhenbaum turned next to an analysis of the literary-political situation as it affected present-day writers.

'Literatura i literaturnyi byt': Contemporary position of literature

What were the conditions which had given rise, in Eikhenbaum's view, to the new question 'how to be a writer'? Hampered by restrictions on what could be said in print, Eikhenbaum's analysis was at once bold, and restrained or indirect; in the words of a Soviet scholar similarly restricted, he was the first to analyse "with great perspicacity" a situation previously "describable only in the language of newspaper abuse".<sup>65</sup> Apart from the situation as he recorded it in his diaries, which we have considered in this and the preceding chapter, we should note the appearance after the Civil War of novice writers in increasingly large numbers; as the same critic, Chudakova, put it, "a new army was being recruited"<sup>66</sup>. These writers, often identifying themselves as 'proletarian', were now represented by the journal Na literaturnom postu (before 1925, Na postu), and had flourished, even after Voronskii's apparent victory for fellow-travellers in the party's resolution on literary policy in June 1925<sup>67</sup>.

In Eikhenbaum's view, all literary institutions and relationships had changed in the "social regrouping and new economic order brought about by the Revolution"<sup>68</sup>; Eikhenbaum noted the absence of the former loyal reader, of different literary schools and polemic, of journals and critics of distinct character. The implication here was that other non-literary, i.e., political criteria determined these phenomena. Literary evolution appeared to have halted. Writers were forced to be more professional, like craftsmen, they worked to order, or to commission (*zakaz*),

a concept which was either unclear or contradicted the writer's ideas of his literary rights and duties. A certain type of writer had appeared who was unconcerned with literary obligations and rights or his own fate as a writer, and responded to a commission with khaltura, hack-work. There was also the problem of the clash of two generations; the younger generation saw the purpose and tasks of the profession differently. Eikhenbaum summed up his description with a reference to the 1860s, thus making its tendentious Otsy i dety political dimension completely plain to the reader:

“Something has occurred which recalls the position of Russian literature and the Russian writer at the beginning of the sixties, but in far more complex and unfamiliar forms.”<sup>69</sup>

Where literary groups existed, Eikhenbaum continued, they were defined by extra-literary - literary byt - criteria. The whole decisive shift in literature's social existence (*sotsial'noe bytovanie*) which he described had “revealed a whole series of facts of the dependence of literature and its evolution on conditions established outside it.”<sup>70</sup> Eikhenbaum's audience would understand this to mean conditions established by the state. However, this bald statement also directly challenged the immanent principle of art OPOIAZ had championed, which maintained the separate development of art as such from extra-artistic phenomena. Eikhenbaum now hoped to demonstrate that OPOIAZ principles and the concerns which the post-revolutionary situation had made urgent could be accommodated within an extended literary theory.

#### ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’: New theory

Eikhenbaum proposed the task of correlating the phenomena that made up the environment in which literary works were written and published (which he called literaturnyi byt) with the concept of literary evolution OPOIAZ had developed. He suggested reinstating the category of genesis, phenomena which OPOIAZ had earlier rejected as random or incidental, conforming to no observable pattern and therefore irrelevant to the evolutionary system of literature. This OPOIAZ category of genesis had included much of what had, before OPOIAZ, been conventionally thought of as literary history. Eikhenbaum denied any retreat from OPOIAZ principle in this proposal, which he summarised as:

“...the inclusion into the theoretical evolutionary system, as it has been developed in

recent years, of facts of genesis - at least those which can and must be considered as historical, linked to facts of *evolution* and *history*.”<sup>71</sup>

This statement, as Chudakova observes,<sup>72</sup> immediately removed the fundamental OPOIAZ distinction between evolution and genesis (between recurrent or ‘law-observing’ phenomena and incidental ones) on which the whole theory of literary evolution was built, and posited a kind of super-genesis, connected to evolution and history in an undefined way.

However, Eikhenbaum did then offer a set of criteria for the connection of extra-literary facts with the literary series which were somewhat more specific and combatted reductionism (Eikhenbaum’s emphasis):

“Literature, like any other specific series of phenomena, is not *generated* by facts of other series, and therefore *cannot be reduced* to them. Relations between facts of the literary series and facts outside it cannot be directly causal, but can be only relations of correspondence, interaction, dependence or conditioning.”<sup>73</sup>

These relations, Eikhenbaum went on, vary in connection with the literary fact itself, sometimes actively defining the historico-literary process - dependence or conditioning - sometimes remaining passive, outside literature - correspondence or interaction. In a second point, Eikhenbaum noted that the selection of literary byt material and the principles of its inclusion into literary evolution must be defined by the character of the links and correlations which dominate literary evolution at a given period.<sup>74</sup>

These specific criteria for relations between literature and byt effectively opposed the crude causal deductions of literary forms from social or economic conditions of Marxist sociological critics, and the reductive analysis of works in terms of the writer’s class ideology. But Eikhenbaum did not propose a theoretical basis for the selection and inclusion of literary byt material into literary evolution. He simply indicated that study of evolution should precede the establishment of a relation between the two, and left unclear *how* links and correlations are to be determined.

Instead of developing his four criteria, Eikhenbaum offered concrete examples from historical material selected for contemporary relevance, letting the purely theoretical argument lapse, and

proceeding by example only. In this he followed his preferred mode (he had noted his efforts to persuade his students to work on the material and not to theorise at every opportunity<sup>75</sup>) which was the opposite of Tynianov's mode of work, where the proportion of theory to material is reversed. As the editors of Poetika Istoriiia literaturny Kino have noted, in approaching common theoretical problems, Eikhenbaum and Tynianov followed "different paths - of the closest concrete research, and of "innovative" theoretical constructions "<sup>76</sup>.

#### 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt': Contemporary function

Another reason for Eikhenbaum's recourse to concrete illustrations of his thesis was the other main purpose he had in mind in writing this article, as we saw above; it had to be written "in connection with the present position of the writer". Thus the historical material had two functions; as well as demonstrating the effect of literary byt on literary evolution, it must offer historical analogies for the problems of the writer in the present day. These analogies offered precedents for contemporary issues and circumstances, and had the curious effect also of demystifying nineteenth-century literary life and the popular perception of classic authors as writing as inspiration dictated, unfettered by the need to make a living or by popular demand. Thus, Eikhenbaum showed how Pushkin's transition to journal prose was conditioned by the professionalisation of literary work in the 1830s, and by the new significance of journals as a literary fact.<sup>77</sup>

Eikhenbaum used the 1860s for examples of the professionalisation of the writer, the costs and consequences of earning one's living from writing, and the related issue of literary independence, using Tolstoi and Fet as examples<sup>78</sup>. He discussed zakaz (commission or demand), khaltura (hack-work) and the author's class position<sup>79</sup>. All were issues of the 1920s. It would not have escaped his readers that the 1860s, like the 1920s, was a period of strongly publicistic writing. Eikhenbaum also traced the literary evolution, the movement of genres, that accompanied professionalisation in the 1860s.<sup>80</sup> Again, in his version (the development of the minor press and of the feuilleton, the lowering of 'high' genres), the resemblance to the 1920s was striking.

Thus, if Eikhenbaum failed to define his terms adequately in the theoretical section of his article, and offered no methodology for the selection and inclusion of literary byt material into the theory system of literary evolution, he did show, schematically, how his literary history, “a science of complex analogies, a science of double vision”<sup>81</sup>, would operate. Of the other members of OPOIAZ it was Tynianov who produced a satisfactory theoretical resolution of the problem of the relation of literature and byt.

Other OPOIAZ work on literature and byt

Tynianov’s article ‘O literaturnoi evoliutsii’, published in the following issue (10) of Na literaturnom postu, did contain a methodology for the connection of the literary and the non-literary series. He proposed three interrelated levels of literary system, the individual work, seen as a system, the genre system and the system of the whole literary series, which was in relation to other non-literary systems. Within each of these systems there were changing constructive functions, which evolved at different paces. The distinctions between areas of study were thus made clear. Where Eikhenbaum posited the term literaturnyi byt, meaning the environment in which literature is produced, the professional relationships and conditions of literary life, Tynianov selected a specific area of byt, that most closely connected to literature; he warned that literature can be studied in relation to the non-literary series (byt) only via its speech function. (*rechevaia ustanovka*), because the closest area of byt to literature was its speech aspect.<sup>82</sup> If literature was studied only in relation to more remote series of byt, its deformation and modification would result.<sup>83</sup>

Thus Tynianov proposed language as the mediating link between literature and other series, while for Eikhenbaum the conditions of literary work were this link. In Tynianov’s terms, Eikhenbaum’s literary byt was both remote and undefined, since it referred to many different and complex possible sets of circumstances. Although Tynianov used the term byt, his use of the term should not be confused with Eikhenbaum’s, except in the most general sense of non-literature. Tynianov specified:

“What is the correlation of literature with neighbouring series?

Further, what are these neighbouring series?

We all have our answer ready: byt.

But, so as to resolve the question of the correlation of the literary series with byt, let us put the question how and in what way byt is correlated to literature. After all byt by its composition is many-sided, many-faceted, and only the function of all its sides is specific in it. Byt is correlated with literature first of all by its speech side."<sup>84</sup>

Tynianov went on to find a basis for new literary genres in the speech forms of byt, which thus become a moment of genesis that has evolutionary significance. This occurred in the time of Karamzin in "the furthest bytovoi series"<sup>85</sup> - the salon. The salon then became a literary fact of that period, because of the new literary function of the speech forms in it. Here Tynianov stated the literary function of an institution, in apparently much the same way as Eikhenbaum ascribed such a function to an institution, journals, in Pushkin's transition to prose. But where Tynianov proceeded from literature to byt via language, in a specific progression, the process of Eikhenbaum's reasoning was not specified, and could not be reproduced, a considerable scientific defect.

'Literatura i pisatel': the writer's independence

Eikhenbaum's second article on literary byt was 'Literatura i pisatel', published in Zvezda, 1927, No 5. It was entirely devoted to a discussion of literary professionalism, intended to illuminate the position of the writer in the present day, by means of analogies from the nineteenth century. Eikhenbaum briefly restated the theoretical question involved as that of his previous article, "the meaning of literary byt facts in the evolution of literature"<sup>86</sup>, but specified his approach as collecting material and putting facts together. The article was thus not primarily a contribution to theory, but a further exploration of the question 'how to be a writer?' Eikhenbaum specified the issues facing the writer, which his analogies were to clarify:

"Should the writer be a professional, and if so, in what sense; how to relate to the various forms of 'commission' ('zakaz') and how to understand the term; in what sense the writer should be 'independent', etc."<sup>87</sup>

The dominant note in the discussion that followed, concentrated around the figure of Pushkin in the 1820s and 1830s and that of Tolstoi in the 1860s, was that of professional independence in various contexts. Eikhenbaum furnished additional material to form a continuous picture of



changing literary circumstances from the 1820s to the 1860s. Professional independence was a central part of Eikhenbaum's analysis here because of the increasing necessity for the writer in the mid-twenties to *adapt* to official demands. In a situation where the writer worked to commission, in order to earn a living, and where the commissioner was directly or indirectly controlled by state censorship and publication processes, the pressure to produce suitably conforming work was very great. If, on the other hand, as Shklovskii as well as Eikhenbaum continued to recommend, the writer earned his living by a 'second profession', and did not depend on literature for his livelihood, he had a potentially greater degree of independence. However, the 'second profession' was only one among several complex historical examples of professional independence that Eikhenbaum illustrated.

Much of the article consisted of substantial quotations from a wide variety of writers, and Eikhenbaum avoided explicit conclusions, proposing the article instead as part of the material for a future book, to demonstrate the complexity and variety of the literary *byt* question in the history of literature. He developed this technique of juxtaposing different, carefully selected quotations and leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions, without specific authorial direction, in Lev Tolstoi, written in the following year. Here, for instance, he focused on the need for the writer's professional independence from different angles, with excerpts from articles by authors as politically distinct as Shevyrev<sup>88</sup>, Tolstoi, Shelgunov<sup>89</sup>, Chernyshevskii and finally Shklovskii<sup>90</sup>. Eikhenbaum's article was thus an attempt to state the complex social issues affecting the writer's integrity in the 1920s by means of pointed, complex and disconcerting historical analogy; it sought to complement the strictly technical instruction of Shklovskii's 'O pisatele' (which Eikhenbaum had mentioned in his diary, in connection with these two articles) by mapping at one remove the ethical minefield of the contemporary literary milieu.

But if Eikhenbaum's stated primary orientation to the writer's professional independence is ignored, and with it the literary-political context in which it arose, the article appears as a general consideration of the writer in relation to the various social factors or institutions which affected what was written or published: journals, publishers, booksellers, salons, patronage,

professional and amateur groups, critics and readers. We shall now consider two such approaches.

#### ‘Literatura i pisatel’’: sociology of literature

On one level this article and ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’ can be seen as essays for a sociology of literature which maintained the indirect relation of social phenomena to literature, rather than the crude causality of the then fashionable sociological method. Eikhenbaum recognised the potential sociological dimension of his work, given a correct theoretical framework. In his attack on “so-called sociologists”<sup>91</sup> in ‘Literatura i literaturnyi byt’ he noted that literary byt material “which should form the basis of contemporary literary sociological works”<sup>92</sup> was quite unused because problems of definition and specification had not been solved.

Eikhenbaum’s work on literary byt, with its emphasis on literary institutions, can more properly be termed literary sociology than the work by Shklovskii, Tynianov and Jakobson which has been classified with Eikhenbaum’s as “a collective project [...pointing] toward a theory of literary institutionalization”<sup>93</sup>, “the Formalists’ sociology”<sup>94</sup>. William Mills Todd’s assessment takes a common area of research, the relation of literature to byt (whose meanings in the work of different Formalists he does not distinguish), conflates the very different work which resulted, and ignores the dissension which Eikhenbaum’s views provoked among his colleagues, and his original motivation for the work. Neither Tynianov’s essays on the literary fact and literary evolution, nor the ‘Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka’ he wrote with Jakobson<sup>95</sup> are concerned with literary institutions. Shklovskii’s ironically titled article ‘V zashchitu sotsiologicheskogo metoda’<sup>96</sup> was an attack on Pereverzev, a leading exponent of the school. Tynianov, Shklovskii and Jakobson were primarily concerned in their works of literary theory with literature in the specific sense, secondarily with the problem of its connection with non-literature, and not - in theoretical work - with the position of the writer, or with literary institutions.

Another difficulty of this view of the “collective and principled project”<sup>97</sup> of Formalist sociology is that it ignores the use of historical analogy and the question of the position of the writer in Eikhenbaum’s work. This allows the assertion that:

“the Formalist sense of history as crisis did not permit them to raise the possibility that certain roles (the truth-seeking reader, the author-prophet) might endure in Russian culture.”<sup>98</sup>

I shall argue that the sub-text and the main purpose of Eikhenbaum’s work on literary byt was indeed a view of the consistent role (delo) of the writer as independent witness and preserver of cultural values through many phases of Russian history. This message is present in implication in the two articles we have been discussing, quite clear in ‘Gogol’ i “delo literaturny” (1927) and becomes marked in subsequent articles and Eikhenbaum’s next book, Lev Tolstoi, as we shall see in the next chapter.

#### Literary byt work as cultural studies

If the idea that Formalists were collectively engaged in producing a theory of literary sociology<sup>99</sup> is difficult to justify, ignoring, as it does, the contemporary context of their work, Professor Hansen-Löve’s far more sophisticated account of Formalist ‘bytologia’<sup>100</sup> equates byt with culture and makes general claims about the theory of ‘Formalist-evolutionists’. In it Eikhenbaum’s work on literary byt is expanded and represented from the point of view of modern literary theory, and suffers some distortion. Literary byt is defined as a “communicative space where concrete artistic-aesthetic processes of expression and reception take place”, described in terms of “the periphery-centre”, the “literary market”, “journal culture”, etc.<sup>101</sup> Professor Hansen-Löve puts great emphasis on the function of reception (vospriatie) in this transaction, a category that did not occur as such in Eikhenbaum’s work. This account assumes that reconstructions or readings of texts were the object of Formalist work on the connection between literature and byt, whereas Eikhenbaum, as we have seen, made a clear distinction between the study of literature as such and the work on literary byt.

For Professor Hansen-Löve, extra-literary institutions (cultural organisations, publishers, circles, salons and so on) were needed in the researcher’s reconstruction of the text, since they operated as catalysts, mediums or transformers of the text’s function<sup>102</sup> and affected the reader’s reception. However, in Eikhenbaum’s work at least, these institutions appear in discussion of the conditions affecting writing and the writer, not those governing reception and the reader,

which he did not discuss. This is a generalised, highly abstract overview of the Formalists' widely varying work on the connections between literature and byt. It collates terminology from sources as marginally connected to OPOIAZ as Vinogradov and Zhirmunskii as well as from Eikhenbaum, Tynianov and others, with neologisms, and ultimately confuses the issues which divided them and blurs their evolution as scholars.

#### Contemporary reactions to literary byt

Contemporaries saw the Formalist attempts to relate the literary and non-literary series as a significant shift or retreat from early 'pure' Formalism. The Marxist critic M Grigor'ev wrote in Pechat' i revoliutsiia that Eikhenbaum's 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' and Tynianov's 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii' "unconditionally demonstrate the crisis of Formalism, the retreat of Formalism from its orthodox positions on some points".<sup>103</sup> He welcomed "the step towards sociology" in Eikhenbaum's article, but insisted that the problem of bytovanie could usefully be considered only when the object of literary historical research had been reassessed, and 'content' restored to it. Grigor'ev failed to perceive the point of Eikhenbaum's historical analogies, which in his view remained within abstract Formalist categories.

If Grigor'ev ignored the theme of the writer and the contemporary literary situation in Eikhenbaum's article in favour of a view of Formalism indebted to Trotskii, P N Medvedev, a writer and critic close to Bakhtin, writing after the publication of Eikhenbaum's book on Tolstoi in 1928, perceptively noted:

"philosophical-ethical and even publicist tones quite alien to Formalism. In these works Eikhenbaum almost returns to the immemorial traditions of Russian literary criticism, to social-ethical teaching."<sup>104</sup>

Medvedev's critical account of Formalism was by far the most serious and extensive Marxist analysis to appear in the 1920s. He placed Russian Formalism in the context of early 20th century German Formalism, which concerned the study of fine art, not literature, although it had little connection to the Russian movement, which evolved as a parallel phenomenon, not a direct descendant. However, postulating the direct connection of Russian Formalism to its German predecessor enabled Medvedev to strengthen one of his main arguments, that the

specificatory (formalist) study of literature was valuable and necessary and need not (as the German variant showed) carry with it loss of ideological vision.<sup>105</sup> Medvedev's arguments continued this dual strategy: he would restate an originally Formalist idea approvingly in terms acceptable to Marxists, and then virulently attack the same idea in Formalist usage. Thus, a literary history of forms and styles, proposed in terms almost identical with the Formalist theory of literary evolution, was essential<sup>106</sup>, but the Formalist theory itself was a nonsensical contradiction in terms<sup>107</sup>; "a flexible and dialectical separation (vydelenie)"<sup>108</sup> of the object of study was important, but Formalists were guilty of reductive "nihilistic deviation"<sup>109</sup>. The object of this exercise was to salvage from Formalism some basic constituent elements of a new, complex and specific Marxist literary science.

Medvedev relied on an artificially narrow view of Formalism to make his case and found it necessary to exclude some important work altogether. In general he confined himself to early, pre-1924 OPOIAZ work, giving the impression that no new theory had emerged. He oversimplified and overstressed the Futurist connection with Formalism, insisting on the "meaninglessness" of the word<sup>110</sup> and on the continuing importance of zaum, seen as semantically void. He derived all Formalist literary history from Shklovskii's (1914) notions of oshchutimost' and avtomatizatsiia, which in his view were "elementary and flagrant psychological bases"<sup>111</sup> for a so-called anti-psychological theory. The most obvious lapse in his book was the failure to consider the work of Tynianov, the most theoretically interesting and consistent scholar in OPOIAZ, particularly the new 'systemic' theory in 'Literaturnyi fakt' (1924) and 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii' (1927). It may have been this narrowness that produced Pasternak's qualified praise of the book to Medvedev. Pasternak seems to have recognised the effects of political constraints in Medvedev's work and his respect for Formalist thought; he himself revealed considerable sympathy for Formalist ideas:

"...in details you are unjust to them. You are probably aware of this yourself, and have allowed it on purpose. I am speaking of the insufficient interpretations of certain concepts, as for instance ostranenie, the interrelation of fabula and siuzhet and so on and so on. It has always seemed to me that these were theoretically very fortunate (shchastli. vye) ideas, and it has always struck me how these concepts, so heuristically far-reaching, allow their authors to be what they are."<sup>112</sup>

Pasternak added that he was surprised that Medvedev was considered to be a loyal Marxist, given the amount of 'methodological' content in his work.<sup>113</sup>

In his consideration of Eikhenbaum's 1927 work, Medvedev discarded his ideas of theory as working hypothesis and historical analogy in 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' as relativist and provisional (as opposed to the "objective sense" of historical materialism). He avoided both discussion of the question 'how to be a writer' and the theoretical problem of evolution and genesis Eikhenbaum raised, condemning at length his introductory passage on history, scientific method and the position of the observer, which, as we saw, could be read as a political, not a literary, metaphor. To Medvedev as a Marxist:

"Such a course of reasoning [...]

... is, of course, fallacious. It is altogether not for us to introduce a 'sign of meaning' into historical reality. On the contrary, our own thoughts and actions become meaningful (osmyslennymi) only when they are subject to the signs of meaning of historical reality itself. [...]

It is historical materialism that has disclosed this objective meaning of the historical process. [...] All definitions and theories of poetics [...] receive their final justification and concretisation in the material of history. To use history as an illustration of a theory is to reinforce mistakes with the help of historical material and to overlay false premises with this material in such a way as to make them hard to uncover."<sup>114</sup>

As a loyal Marxist (though not a member of the party) it was naturally impossible for Medvedev to admit the status of historical materialism as only one among many theories which attempted to collate facts of history under a 'sign of meaning'. Of Eikhenbaum's 1927 work, Medvedev discussed only this first part of his introduction to 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' and the "philosophical-ethical" tone of the major articles and the speech on Gor'kii.

'Pisatel'skii oblik M. Gor'kogo'

This speech, given on 26 December 1927, at one of several meetings held to celebrate thirty-five years of Gor'kii's literary activity and his approaching sixtieth birthday, marked the end of Eikhenbaum's publications<sup>115</sup> in that year. It continued the theme of 'how to be a writer' with

some new terms, which also appeared in Eikhenbaum's work in the following year, when they raised more acutely the question of the place of biography in literary studies. The speech gave little attention to Gor'kii's writings as such, but traced his career as a writer in an apparently simple narrative, in terms of the literary world of the time, and of the demands of history, personalised and seen as imperative.

Eikhenbaum considered Gor'kii in relation to two writers, Tolstoi and Blok, and drew a vivid but selective picture of the literary situation at the time of Gor'kii's first recognition as a writer; with the disintegration of a monolithic literature in the 1880s and 1890s, what it was to be a writer had become unclear, and the intelligentsia had split into the decadent/Symbolist and 'publicist' groups of the capitals. Gor'kii's debut as an independent writer, as a provincial auto-didact who was 'of the people' (described in terms very similar to those which Eikhenbaum used in the following year to describe Tolstoi's debut<sup>116</sup>), was a sensation. In order to have a base for the argument he was making about historical ethics, Eikhenbaum stressed Gor'kii's position as an individual, a writer without a 'group' or a cultured background (since, as we saw, it is the lichnost' who conceives and performs the ethical act). Eikhenbaum equally emphasised the role of history in Gor'kii's life as a writer: "History pushed him into the ranks of Russian writers literally by force, having its own purposes in mind, and taking on the risk itself."<sup>117</sup> Once a part of the literary world, Gor'kii began to think of his future, his fate as a writer (*pisatel'skaia sud'ba*). "He had to reflect on his conduct from now on, because much must depend on conduct (*povedenie*) in such a fate."<sup>118</sup> Tolstoi became his model; only from Tolstoi could he learn to be a writer "with a fate, and with conduct".<sup>119</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum introduced two linked terms, sud'ba and povedenie: sud'ba may be seen as the personal experience of history in Eikhenbaum's sense, while povedenie derives from the life-conduct (*zhiznepovedenie*) of the 1925 letter and diary entries. Fate is the given element in the life, or the situation, perhaps of one's own making, within which one must act (the connection to Eikhenbaum's 1921 article 'Mig soznaniia' is clear here); conduct is the chosen element, the area of ethical choice. Here Eikhenbaum used these terms in a journalistic context; shortly thereafter he began to use them in scholarly works as well. This personal dimension,

both ethical and historical in Eikhenbaum's sense of the word, had a far greater weight and emphasis here than in the discussion of, for instance, Nekrasov's historical role in his previous work on literary history, conceived as literary evolution: "the problem of his self-preservation as a writer alarmed [Gor'kii] [...] days were approaching when everything began to depend on conduct".<sup>120</sup>

Here, as in the earlier articles of 1927, Eikhenbaum wrote and expected to be understood at two levels; as referring to Gor'kii, both before and during the revolution, and at the same time as addressing an analogous set of historical and ethical problems in the present day. At this second level, Gor'kii's actual status as an increasingly feted official figure was irrelevant, Eikhenbaum was concerned to claim him as exemplar of the writer's role, a defender of cultural values, as "replacement for the Russian intelligentsia"<sup>121</sup>. The call implicit in the article for principled action and moral responsibility on the part of the individual in the face of new threats to culture and scholarship was repeated in Eikhenbaum's work in the following year, when he confirmed the new direction of his work and emerged from the critical period of transition.



- 1 M Geller, A Nekrich, Utopiia u vlasti. Istoriia Sovetskogo Soiuza c 1917 goda do nashikh dnei, 1, London, 1982, p 209. See also op cit pp 209 - 210 for interpretation of the 1925 Communist Party Resolution on literature as a delayed defeat, not a victory, for fellow-travellers.
- 2 N Ia Mandel'shtam, Vtoraia kniga, Paris, 1972, pp 228, 229.-
- 3 op cit, p 343.
- 4 L Ia Ginzburg, "'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...'", TS3, pp 218 - 230. See K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, p 430.
- 5 M Chudakova, E Toddes, 'Prototipy odnogo romana', Al'manakh bibliofila, 10, M, 1981, p 178. Veniamin Kaverin was the pseudonym of V A Zilberg (1902 - 1990), a student at GIII. and by 1926 a lecturer there, one of the Serapion brothers and Tynianov's brother-in-law. Successful writer of fiction and, from the late 1960s, of a series of memoirs.
- 6 op cit, p 175. See also K Clark, M Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1984, pp 115 - 119, esp p 116.
- 7 M Chudakova, E Toddes, 'Prototipy odnogo romana', p 175.
- 8 ibid.
- 9 op cit, p 177.
- 10 BME, Diary entry, 2 October 1924. For V P Zubov in GIII, see V Kaverin, Sobesednik, M, 1973, pp 10 - 13.
- 11 BME, Diary entry, 13 January 1925.
- 12 BME, Diary entry, 26 January 1925.
- 13 BME, Diary entry, 24 October 1925. Eikhenbaum noted Tomashevskii's tendency to adapt himself silently to the prevailing climate in the University and GIII on several occasions. On 14 October 1925 he wrote of him as a "crafty courtier (tsaredvoret's)". On the position of scholars as humanists, Chukovskii noted Gor'kii's words in March 1919, which Eikhenbaum's opinion here echoes: "...we shall be as if on an island, the people of science will be besieged [...] humanists have to become martyrs, become Christ-like, and this will happen, it will..." K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, p 106.

- 14 BME, Diary entry, 4 October 1925.
- 15 Quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 106.
- 16 A I Herzen, Sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh, M, 1954 - 1965, vol 10, 1956, p 116.
- 17 op cit, p 119.
- 18 ibid.
- 19 ibid.
- 20 ibid.
- 21 op cit, p 120.
- 22 P N Berkov, obituary for Eikhenbaum in Uchenye zapiski LGU, 295, Seriia filologicheskikh nauk, vypusk 58, 1960, p 204.
- 23 BME, 'Mig soznaniia', Ku, 1921, 7, p 12.
- 24 A A Blok, 'O naznachenii poeta', Sobranie sochinenii v 8 tomakh, M - L, 1960 - 1963, vol 6, 1962, p 166. Blok was quoting Pushkin's 1818 poem 'K N Ia Pliuskovoi'.
- 25 BME, MT, p 13.
- 26 op cit, pp 27, 55.
- 27 BME, 'Nekrasov', Lit, pp 96 - 97.
- 28 BME, Diary entry, 7 April 1924.
- 29 M M Bakhtin, 'Iskusstvo i otvetstvennost', in his Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i, M, 1986, pp 3 - 4; 'K filosofii postupka', in Filosofiia i sotsiologiia nauki i tekhniki. Ezhegodnik 1984 - 85, M, 1986, pp 80 - 160.
- 30 L Ia Ginzburg, "'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...'", TS3, p 229.
- 31 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 357.
- 32 BME, '5 = 100', Ku, 1922, 8, p 39.
- 33 'Kogo predosteregaet Lef?', Lef, 1923, 1, p 11, signed by Aseev, Arvatov, Brik, Kushner, Maiakovskii, Tret'iakov and Chuzhak, with a disclaimer (anti-fellow travellers) from Chuzhak.
- 34 BME, Diary entry, 26 September 1924.
- 35 V B Shklovskii, Tf, p 88.
- 36 BME, Diary entry, 29 December 1925. I I Ionov (Bernshtein), 1887 - 1942, poet and head of the Petrograd section of Gosizdat from 1919, with whom Eikhenbaum had had

indirect dealings over his Lermontov (see Chapter 3, Section 2, and Eikhenbaum's diary entry for 22 April 1924). Ionov was passed over for the post of national head of Gosizdat in favour of G I Broido, in the reorganisation of late 1924. I I Sadof'ev, 1889 - 1965, was a poet, like Esenin, from a peasant family. Sadof'ev was strongly pro-revolutionary from 1905 onwards. Briusov wrote of him in 1922 as "a poet of strong enthusiastic (vostorzhennykh) feelings, of great revolutionary fervour - for which he has found a corresponding expression.". M V Borisoglebskii, 1896 - 1942, writer and artist, died in the camps. Eikhenbaum gave a memorial speech for Esenin in January 1926 "which very much displeased the nachal'stvo" and awaited unpleasant consequences. See K Chukovskii, op cit, p 371.

- 37 See BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (1925), Lit, p 116: "We are surrounded by eclectics and epigones who turn the formal method into some kind of immovable system of 'Formalism', which serves them for the development of terms, schemes and classifications."
- 38 BME, Diary entry, 11 February 1926.
- 39 Poetika kino, L, 1927. See Iu N Tynianov, PILK, pp 552, 553. For the synopsis see Eikhenbaum's diary entry for 30 October 1924: "Today Iurii and I delivered a film plan to Sevsapkin (to Artashevskii (?)). I was not expecting there the same stupidity, the same outrageous idiocy. He looked at our plan and said that the picture was controversial because it was a distant period (the 1820s) and there were no clear, socially useful emotions. The Lenin events, 1905, that is what we need. We left the plan, but success is doubtful. And we spent about a month on that."
- 40 BME, Diary entry, 5 April 1926.
- 41 V K Livshits, 1886 - 1939, poet and translator, early Futurist, friend of the Burliuk family and Maiakovskii, author of a 1933 memoir, Polutoraglaznyi strelets. Purged, died in prison. Eikhenbaum wrote of him: "he is one of those people with whom I do not feel natural - he is too decorative, finished, like Guber, though in a different style." (Diary entry, 21 January 1927)
- 42 BME, Diary entry, 20 January 1927.

- 43 G A Gukovskii, 1902 - 1950, a brilliant pupil of Eikhenbaum and Tynianov at GIII of the same generation as L Ia Ginzburg; he became a specialist in 18th-century verse, head of the group at the Pushkinskii Dom dealing with it, and later professor of Saratov and Leningrad Universities. Purged in 1949, died in prison. See L Ia Ginzburg, "I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...", TS3, pp 227 - 228.
- 44 N S Derzhavin, 1877 - 1953, literary scholar, administrator, Academician (1931), Rector of Leningrad University 1922 - 1925, head of Dept of Slavonic Philology 1925 -1953, member of Communist Party 1945.
- 45 BME, Diary entry, 21 January 1927.
- 46 BME, Diary entry, 7 March 1927.
- 47 In 1928 BME noted the beginning of a breakdown between Lef and the Formalists. S. Tret'iakov spoke at a meeting of the GIII Literature Section "calmly, but with reproaches. 'We thought that here there were if not brothers, at least cousins. We must decide either to work together or to be enemies. We cannot think of ourselves as related and live together because of that.'" Diary entry, 5 March 1928.
- 48 'Disput o formal'nom metode', Novyi Lef, 1927, 4, p 46.
- 49 BME, Diary entry, 10 March 1927.
- 50 BME, 'Gogol' i "delo literatury"', reprinted in Mv, p 89.
- 51 op cit, p 90.
- 52 op cit, p 92.
- 53 op cit, p 89.
- 54 The article Eikhenbaum refers to is V B Shklovskii, 'O pisatele', Novyi Lef, 1927, pp 29 - 33, reprinted as part of Tekhnika pisatel'skogo remesla, M, 1927.
- 55 BME, Diary entry, 10 March 1927.
- 56 Quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 113.
- 57 BME, Diary entry, 23 April 1927.
- 58 BME, 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt', Na literaturnom postu, 1927, 9, reprinted as 'Literaturnyi byt' in Mv, p 49.
- 59 ibid.

- 60 BME, 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' in Lit, p 117: "In our scientific work we value theory only as a working hypothesis, with the help of which facts are revealed and interpreted, that is, are acknowledged as law-observing and become material for research. [...] We set up concrete principles and hold them to the degree that they are justified in the material. If the material requires complication or change, we complicate or change the principles.."
- 61 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 49.
- 62 ibid.
- 63 op cit, p 50.
- 64 op cit, p 51.
- 65 'Sots. praktika..', p 110.
- 66 ibid.
- 67 See G Struve, Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin, Norman, Oklahoma, 1971, pp 89 - 91, p 130.
- 68 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 51.
- 69 op cit, p 52.
- 70 op cit, p 51.
- 71 op cit, p 53.
- 72 'Sots. praktika ..', p 110.
- 73 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 55.
- 74 ibid.
- 75 BME, Diary entry, 1 March 1924.
- 76 PILK, p 521.
- 77 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 56.
- 78 op cit, p 57.
- 79 ibid.
- 80 ibid.
- 81 op cit, p 49.
- 82 Iu N Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii', PILK, p 278.
- 83 op cit, p 279.

- 84 op cit, p 278.
- 85 op cit, p 279.
- 86 BME, 'Literatura i pisatel'', Mv, p 61.
- 87 op cit, p 60.
- 88 S P Shevyrev, 1806 - 1864, literary scholar and critic, professor of Moscow University from 1837, organised and published Moskovskii vestnik, was the leading critic of Moskovskii nabliudatel' from 1835 - 1837, with M P Pogodin in 1841 edited Moskvitianin. He was an opponent of Belinskii, the natural school and literary realism in general.
- 89 N V Shelgunov, 1824 - 1891, publicist, pro-'realist' literary critic (and opponent of art for art's sake), democratic revolutionary; a friend of M L Mikhailov, he travelled with him to London. and met Herzen and Ogarev; on his return he was close to Chernyshevskii and his circle and worked on Sovremennik, Russkoe slovo, and Vek. Arrested in 1863 for revolutionary activity, he was in exile from 1864 - 1877; arrested again in 1884 for links with emigres, he was exiled to Smolensk for five years. From 1886 to 1891 wrote 'Ocherki russkoi zhizni' for Russkaia mysl'.
- 90 BME, 'Literatura i pisatel'', Mv, pp 78 - 81.
- 91 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 54.
- 92 op cit, p 53.
- 93 W M Todd III, 'Literature as an Institution: Fragments of a Formalist Theory', Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance, New Haven, 1985, pp 16 - 17.
- 94 op cit, p 23.
- 95 See PILK, pp 255 - 285 for all three articles.
- 96 V B Shklovskii, 'V zashchitu sotsiologicheskogo metoda', Novyi Lef, 1927, 3, p 21.
- 97 W M Todd III, op cit, p 23.
- 98 op cit, p 24.
- 99 See also L Greenfeld, 'Russian Formalist Sociology of Literature: A Sociologist's Perspective', Slavic Review, 46, 1987, pp 38 - 54.
- 100 A Hansen-Löve, "'Bytologiia", mezhdu faktami i funktsiiami', RES, pp 91 - 103.
- 101 op cit, p 92.

- 102 op cit, pp 93 - 94.
- 103 M Grigor'ev, 'Krizis formalizma', Pir, 1927, 8, p 84.
- 104 See M M Bakhtin, Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii, New York, 1982, p 98. Opinion is now divided on whether the author of this book was Bakhtin or P N Medvedev, who appeared as its author at its first publication in 1928. For a recent recapitulation of this argument see G S Morson and C Emerson eds, Rethinking Bakhtin, Evanston, Illinois, 1989, pp 31 - 49. For the purposes of this work I accept the authorship of Medvedev as given in the original publication.
- 105 op cit, p 55, pp 69 - 70.
- 106 op cit, p 71.
- 107 op cit, pp 220 - 221.
- 108 op cit, pp 107 - 108.
- 109 op cit, p 87.
- 110 op cit, p 110.
- 111 op cit, p<sup>P</sup>203, 225.
- 112 See Pasternak's long correspondence with Medvedev in Iz istorii sovetskoi literatury 1920-kh i 1930-kh godov, Literaturnoe nasledstvo, 93, M, 1983, p 709, and the earlier separate publication of this letter of 20 August 1929 by G Superfin in Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 284, Trudy po znakovym sistemam (Semiotike), V, Tartu, 1971, pp 528 - 531.
- 113 Iz istorii sovetskoi literatury 1920-kh i 1930-kh godov, op cit, p 709..
- 114 M M Bakhtin, Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii, New York, 1982, p 230.
- 115 BME, 'Pisatel'skii oblik M Gor'kogo', Krasnaia gazeta, evening edition, 351, 30 December 1927, reprinted in Mv, pp 115 - 120.
- 116 BME, 'Literaturnaia kar'era L'va Tolstogo', Mv, p 110.
- 117 BME, 'Pisatel'skii oblik M Gor'kogo', Mv, p 118.
- 118 ibid.
- 119 ibid.
- 120 op cit, p 119.
- 121 ibid.

## Chapter V

### RESOLUTION

- 1 Articles of 1928: preparation for Lev Tolstoi  
‘Literaturnaia kar’era L. Tolstogo’
- 2 Lev Tolstoi. Piatidesiatye gody. Kniga pervaiia  
Preface  
Analogy: ‘Lev Tolstoi v Sovremennike’  
The struggle between the generations  
Metaphor  
Semi-fictional mode and juxtaposition  
Literary context  
Intellectual context  
Use of fiction as evidence for Tolstoi’s views  
Form and construction in the works  
Genesis and influence  
Biography
- 3 Reaction to Lev Tolstoi  
‘Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka’  
Conflicts with Eikhenbaum in the ‘Problemy..’



## RESOLUTION

The years 1928 and 1929, critical ones for the whole of the Soviet Union, as an unprecedented phase of State regulation, “the blocking of social and cultural diversity, a process of socio-cultural homogenisation”<sup>1</sup> became inescapably evident, confirmed Eikhenbaum in the literary-political approach he had begun to develop during the period of transition he went through from 1925 to 1927. He published two important books and several articles, in all of which the “mutation”<sup>2</sup> of his previous stance is unmistakably evident. They were marked by a retreat from the previous literary theory; basic conventions of OPOIAZ critical practice are ignored, overruled or flouted without comment, while the relation between history in the particular sense Eikhenbaum gave it (with its virtual synonyms, the time, the epoch, sovremennost') and the individual occupied an increasingly important place. In this and the next chapter we shall look at the works of 1928, their background and their reception, in order to resolve the question of how and why Eikhenbaum abandoned his theoretical aspirations, and what he put in their place.

### 1 Articles of 1928: preparation for Lev Tolstoi

The major work of this year was Lev Tolstoi, the first of three substantial monographs, which dealt with Tolstoi's life and work in the 1850s and caused dissension and even polemic between Eikhenbaum and his colleagues. It was written quickly, from January to July 1928, and for some time Eikhenbaum was unsure precisely what the book's theme or form should be. In February 1928, in several diary entries, he proposed as “the basic theme, the problem of Tolstoi's movement through different generations”<sup>3</sup>, either alone or with sketches on literary byt

themes.<sup>4</sup> This was the idea of the different characters of and potential conflicts between generations, which he had first expressed in the 1921 article, 'Mig soznaniia'<sup>5</sup>, and used the previous year in his newspaper article about Gogol'<sup>6</sup>. Eikhenbaum now introduced this notion into a scholarly work, a preface to a collection of P V Annenkov's writings, along with the undefined paired terms sud'ba and biografiia which he had used in his article on Gor'kii in the previous year<sup>7</sup>. The preface, entitled 'Pavel Vasil'evich Annenkov 1813 - 1887', opened:

"The Russians of the twenties were people with not only a fate, but a biography as well, which developed quickly and exhausted itself towards the end of the thirties; the Russians of the forties were people with a fate, but with no biography: their life falls out like a novel without a plot - in episodes, and essays, without a particular construction."<sup>8</sup>

Here, in what by OPOIAZ standards is unprecedentedly loose language, Eikhenbaum made large generalisations, using the terms sud'ba and biografiia in the particular sense which we noted in the last chapter, without defining these terms, then or later in the preface. Both fate and biography, as one must expect with Eikhenbaum, were understood historically. Thus, as he saw it, the writers of the 1820s were working in a particular limiting set of historical circumstances - their fate - against which they nevertheless distinguished themselves as individuals with significant postupki - their biographies - while the succeeding generation of the 1840s was unable to do so. Eikhenbaum also gave considerable attention in the article to biographies in the more traditional sense. In short, his current ideas, at this early stage in February 1928, for the basis for his book on Tolstoi (where the generational theme ultimately had less importance) emerged in the Annenkov preface:

"Everything, whatever I do, comes out terribly accountable, even such a trifling article. I just cannot write general phrases and not what I'm thinking about at the given moment. The article on A. came out on the theme of generations and was hard to write, because they are new thoughts for me."<sup>9</sup>

This preface was not published until November 1928, just before Lev Tolstoi, and, like the book, provoked the principled disapproval of Eikhenbaum's colleagues, as we shall see.

Writing the book presented different problems. On 1 March Eikhenbaum wrote:

"I'm still worrying over the question of how to write the book on Tolstoi so that it has a

meaning for me. I cannot simply write a review, articles on separate themes, there is no time. The only thing is to construct the whole book on one problem, which I work out on Tolstoi. And that problem I feel is the question about evolution, generations, the historical Tolstoi (with lit. byt and so on)."<sup>10</sup>

Evolution in this entry, as in the diary entry of 15 December 1925 which we considered in the last chapter, referred not to specifically literary evolution, but to the different phases of Tolstoi's zhiznepovedenie through the changing historical periods (generations) of his life as a writer. In the next entry (6 March) Eikhenbaum wrote:

"I'm beginning to think that something will come of the book, that is, it will not be simply accidental, or a review, but principled and on a theme."<sup>11</sup>

These two entries expressing hesitant intentions hold the key to the finished work which did have a meaning for Eikhenbaum, was constructed on one problem worked out on the "historical Tolstoi", and was principled, and on a theme, as we shall see. On 20 March he read the first two largely biographical chapters to an audience at GIII, and was put out by Tynianov's reaction:

"The audience, it seems, was amazed by the new manner - particularly the first chapter. That is how it should be. Iurii upset me very much and made me think about him and our relationship recently. He listened with a gloomy, motionless (assumed), dry expression, scribbling something in a notebook, not looking at me. Then he spoke, dryly, harshly, picking on trifles, in a hostile way, like a stranger."<sup>12</sup>

In the list which followed of possible reasons which Eikhenbaum conceived for this behaviour he did not see literary-theoretical differences as a likely cause. Tynianov commented to Shklovskii:

"Boria read his 'Tolstoi'. He has stayed the same as he was when 'young'. However, that is just the beginning. There is flirting with biography, and not knowing what to do with it. Not knowing is natural, the flirting is superfluous."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, in Tynianov's view, not only had Eikhenbaum remained at the theoretical level of Molodoi Tolstoi, but he had used biography in a scholarly work, without first preparing a theoretical basis for it. None of the OPOIAZ members had worked out how biography could be connected to the literary series; a year later Tynianov wrote to Shklovskii of his intention to do so, with a sketch of a possible method.<sup>14</sup> Tynianov's principled disapproval of the direction

Eikhenbaum's work was taking continued, but did not prevent him including him in planned work together on new projects. Eikhenbaum recorded a meeting on 15 May "about our future history of literature" and plans for the rebirth of OPOIAZ in the autumn.<sup>15</sup>

Eikhenbaum's relations with Jakobson were also still cordial; in response to Jakobson's offer of cooperation in the new journal Slavische Rundschau in May, Eikhenbaum sent him a chapter of the new book on Tolstoi's krepostnichestvo<sup>16</sup>. On 10 July he finished the book and five days later noted in his diary that Shklovskii and he:

"Talked a lot about our books. He suffers very amusingly from not having known about Proudhon's book. He is anxious about my 'biographism' in the book, aren't the 'concessions' too great. I have a different sense of all that."<sup>17</sup>

Shklovskii, like Tynianov, had misgivings about the theoretical bases of Eikhenbaum's use of biography, but he shared with Eikhenbaum the impulse towards new work, in his case Material i stil' v romane L'va Tolstogo Voina i mir, which came out later in 1928. Eikhenbaum had read the book in manuscript while turning over in his mind how he would write his own, and his assessment also reveals his own interests:

"It's right (Pravil'no). A great deal of material - the main accent is transferred from the previous questions (on which there is not much and reluctantly written) to the explanation of Voina i mir as gentry propaganda (dvorianskaia agitka), a great deal more boldly and correctly than our bureaucrat-Marxists could have done. The main thing is, it has none of the vulgar aestheticism with which they are so remarkably infected, and therefore so timid. In places a very raw book, but that's inevitable."<sup>18</sup>

Eikhenbaum, too, had transferred his attention from problems of form and construction ("previous questions") to areas that had been the province of their opponents, although in quite a different way from Shklovskii. His next article, 'Literaturnaia kar'era L Tolstogo', made this clear.

#### 'Literaturnaia kar'era L. Tolstogo'

This article marked a further step away from OPOIAZ theory; Eikhenbaum constructed the whole article on a dominant metaphor, Tolstoi as strategist (compared with Napoleon) battling

against the contemporary situation (*sovremennost'*), in Eikhenbaum's usage by now a synonym for history. The metaphor gives the key to the article; Tolstoi is presented as a model of principled resistance to *sovremennost'*. History is personalised as a single force, the opponent, against which Eikhenbaum places conduct (the *povedenie* of the 1925 diaries and the 1927 Gor'kii article). For Tolstoi, writing fiction was "a particular mode of struggle with the present day", the 1860s work on teaching "a complex tactical manoeuvre (*khod*) with the help of which Tolstoi "deceived" the present day."<sup>19</sup> Literary *byt* in the sense of dominant institutions and groupings is scarcely mentioned; it has given place to ruling ideas, the 'convictions' of the 1860s *raznochintsy* to which Tolstoi opposed his 'instinct', the nihilism of the left as opposed to Tolstoi's archaist nihilism.

The article was, in effect, a compressed résumé of Eikhenbaum's book and later material from the 1860s and 1870s, though the quantities of documents used in the book were absent, and the metaphorical mode was more prominent. The dominant metaphor signalled Eikhenbaum's use of Tolstoi as a model of conduct, and by extension a model for resistance in the present day, but also produced large, unproved, general statements. This lack of specificity provoked Shklovskii's critical response to the article in a letter to Tynianov:

"Boria's article about Tolstoi's career is written with Turgenevian ease. None of us knows how to write so well, but in this article *the traces of the instrument are not visible, it cannot be checked*, there is no resistance to the material in it, it means what it means without allowing thought to turn over. Boria should write a novel about Tolstoi. All that would be necessary for that would be to take out the inverted commas from his articles. Boria is thinking in puns at the moment. Tolstoi as strategist, Napoleon's failure, Tolstoi's success, the struggle for power. Splendid. In general Boria should shave his head and his beard, make himself as young as his body, and start a second circle."<sup>20</sup>

Shklovskii's criticism was cogent; Eikhenbaum did not show how he arrived at his argument, nor what it was based on. Shklovskii's objection was not to the argument of the article, but to its status as representing the group's scientific (*nauchnyi*) work; the lack of evidence and of clear theoretical process, and the metaphorical mode ("puns") with its contemporary subtext would be perfectly appropriate in a novel. Turning research into fiction in response to political

pressure, “disputing Pushkin’s fate, and solving our own arguments in that dispute”<sup>21</sup>, as Shklovskii put it elsewhere, was legitimate, confusing the two genres of fiction and scholarly work was not. Tynianov’s response made no mention of Shklovskii’s criticism, which he probably took as read, but took up his Turgenev comparison enthusiastically:

“Boria’s article is certainly super-Boria. Very good that “if Napoleon had grown old as a victor he would infallibly have invented non-resistance”. That is not said for nothing. And, of course, Turgenev. The books are T.’s novels, the articles are the stories. But, after all, the T. story is the Russian story of the 19th century and remarkable. In general, to tell the truth, I’m happy that I live among you.”<sup>22</sup>

In imputing “non-resistance” to Eikhenbaum here, Tynianov had in mind his retreat from literary theory, which he saw as a concession to external pressure on OPOIAZ. If he ignored the contemporary subtext of the article, which focused on resistance, it was not that he (or Shklovskii) did not ‘read’ it, but that thinking in analogies with 19th-century literature was habitual in the conversation and correspondence of all three men. The historical, literary *byt* material, which Eikhenbaum had begun to use in his professional work, Tynianov employed in his novels, with an analogous ‘second level’ function. Smert’ Vazir-Mukhtara, his novel about Griboedov, which had been published in Zvezda earlier that year, made a complex and subtle use of documents as both sources and subtexts.<sup>23</sup> But Tynianov kept his theoretical work quite separate from his fiction, and did not tolerate what he saw as compromise in theoretical principles.

With the entry for 10 July 1928, Eikhenbaum’s diary entries ceased, and were not renewed for several years. Correspondence is therefore the main source of evidence for the reception of Lev Tolstoi and the polemic that followed. Before we look at these in more detail, we shall consider Eikhenbaum’s new monograph.

## Preface

In his preface, written after he had finished the book, Eikhenbaum presented it as a departure from Molodoi Tolstoi: “they differ in problems and material”; he was writing now in “another genre, and on different themes”<sup>24</sup>. Eikhenbaum foresaw criticism that he had abandoned the formal method; where he denied this in 1927<sup>25</sup>, here he spoke instead of change, the evolution of literary scholarship, and of the fallacy of thinking that science is predictable in its results. Thus he considered his new approach as ‘science’, but as having evolved from previous (OPOIAZ) positions.

At the same time, Eikhenbaum asserted that his book was not “methodological”<sup>26</sup>. In the absence of methodology, he proposed instead “the material and its juxtaposition, done consciously and on principle” as of “fundamental significance”<sup>27</sup> in the book. Methodology could, it seems, be dispensed with; a similar logical disjunction appeared in the next sentence; “We have had many conversations about methodology, but little real work on material.” Not only methodology but theory appears to have become incompatible with “real work”; while Molodoi Tolstoi was “fundamentally theoretical”, “this book is written without theoretical digressions, as an historical book.”<sup>28</sup>. Eikhenbaum wrote as if theory and method were abstract separable entities, as if both were not inevitably present in the process of writing a scholarly book.

But it would be incorrect to assume that Eikhenbaum had merely become indifferent to his own terminology; he had something else in view and used these terms for definition as one pole of an opposition he set up. The absence of theory and methodology was the negative pole. The positive pole was indicated in the juxtaposition of material “done consciously and on purpose” and in the use of a “so-called biographical deviation, done not only consciously, but on principle”<sup>29</sup>. The principles involved were not specified in either case, except to restrict the study of biographical material to facts affecting “historical fate, historical conduct”. The repetition and lack of definition were deliberate; they signalled an implicit direction to the reader to seek a ‘key’ or purpose to the book outside the terms of literary theory.

Eikhenbaum clarified this by restating the motivation for his 1927 articles on literary byt; the position of contemporary literature and literary science, the question of 'how to be a writer', and the use of history as a "scientific means of studying the present with the help of the past"<sup>30</sup>. Biography studied as "historical fate, historical conduct" was a relatively new factor. The reader was thus directed to an analysis of the problems of present-day literature by means of history, specifically to the position of literature and the writer, seen historically and ethically ("conduct"). He was assured that the biographical and historical material had been assembled with an end in view ("done consciously and on principle"), but at the same time left to draw his own conclusions, aided only by the juxtaposition of material.

What was the nature of the unstated thesis or key to Lev Tolstoi which Eikhenbaum hinted at in his preface? How did it affect his treatment of the problems of biography, genesis and influence as they had been posed earlier in his own works, and the works of other members of OPOIAZ?

Analogy: 'Lev Tolstoi v Sovremennike'

The answer to the first of these questions lies largely in Eikhenbaum's use of analogy on historical material, a technique he had already pioneered in his 1927 articles on literary byt. He spoke there of history as a science of complex analogies, of double vision, developed in order to understand the present, a view repeated, as we saw, in his preface. An analysis of Part II, Chapter 3 (which appeared in Zvezda 1928, No 8, as 'Lev Tolstoi v Sovremennike' before publication of the book) will show how Eikhenbaum expressed this 'double vision' by writing on two levels, of which one was not made explicit.

Eikhenbaum described Tolstoi's entry to the Sovremennik editorial office, which was already (in 1855) the scene of a civil war in miniature, with the liberal gentry opposed to both radical raznochintsy and conservatives. Class consciousness grew, civic themes entered arguments. Here Eikhenbaum signalled the need to read analogically, alerting the reader by introducing a contemporary term;

"..questions of 'reality', philosophical dogmas give way to 'convictions'. This word,



from the end of the forties (Belinskii) becomes a characteristic term for the intelligent's vocabulary in the same way that the word 'ideology' has become a characteristic term in our time (replacing the recent 'world-view' or 'world-perception')"<sup>31</sup>.

Eikhenbaum thus established an equivalence, 1850s "convictions" and 1920s "ideology", of which either term and either date would serve as a signal of analogy from now on, and continued in the present tense (another signal of contemporary relevance):

"As always happens in such a social and ideological shift, what had previously been called 'culture' begins to decline - topicality, the interests of the struggle, 'temporary' tasks come to the fore. in other words certain elements of culture give way to others, the epoch changes traditions and removes old mottos, replacing them with new slogans. The 1840s were an idyll in the life of the Russian intelligentsia which had just re-formed, by comparison with what happened to it towards the middle of the fifties."<sup>32</sup>

If we follow the equivalence of the 1850s and 1920s set up earlier, here Eikhenbaum was pointing to a major decline in cultural values in the mid-twenties (the hardening of the socio-political climate recorded in his diaries) after the post-Revolutionary regrouping of the intelligentsia. He went on to describe the problem of *conduct* in the new climate, and, in a new departure, noted that the "struggle" is not restricted to literature:

"Among writers used to a different position, and who have seen their concern (*delo*) as a high service not long ago there is panic. Some urgently create new 'parties', groups and journals [just as a coalition created Russkii sovremennik in 1924], others leave literature and strengthen their positions in life by relying on 'class' and some sort of second profession, since they understand that the struggle is taking on a serious character and goes far beyond the limit of what was called 'literature' [...] The writer has to solve once more the problem of his 'independence', if he wants the occupation of literature to preserve its meaning as a commitment (*delo*)".<sup>33</sup>

Delo had already taken on a particular significance for Eikhenbaum in the literary context, where he had used it in his 1927 article on Gogol' to stand for literature as an undertaking or commitment, connoting deep respect and principled integrity on the part of the writer working in it. Delo literary stood for literature as a whole, with its function as a locus of social, ethical and political discussion, as distinct from the OPOIAZ specific sense of literature, conditioned

by literaturnost'. Khaltura, expedient hack-work, was the antithesis of this commitment to literature.<sup>34</sup> But what was the "struggle" to which Eikhenbaum referred? He clarified this in quotations that follow, extending his field of analogy from his own text to historical material, and using his method of juxtaposition, without explicit commentary. In his text long quotations from, among others, Annenkov, appear: Annenkov wrote of the mid-1850s:

"A period of denunciation began ... It was necessary to learn to live without creativity, inventiveness, poetry [...] It is well known that soon after the first gleams of revived literary activity an epoch of *regulation* of convictions, opinions and tendencies set in [...]. To all the old banners and slogans under which people were used to gathering different and new ones were opposed, but during this it constantly turned out that art least of all lent itself to *regulation*, having always been by its very nature the least obedient student of theory..."<sup>35</sup>

The emphases here are Eikhenbaum's, and leave no doubt that "regulation" - in the case of the twenties, state regulation - was one aspect of the struggle he refers to, on the second level of his text.

As a model for this struggle Eikhenbaum used a polemic in the Sovremennik, which he signalled to the reader as having "a particular sense"<sup>36</sup>; Pushkin versus Gogol', or 'pure' art versus didactic art. Druzhinin was 'for' Pushkin and 'against' Gogol', Nekrasov 'against' Pushkin, and 'for' Chernyshevskii and the younger generation of didacticists. Turgenev and Botkin took up intermediate positions. By analogy here we have a transparent parallel between the "didacticists" and Marxist writers and critics of the 1920s, and between the supporters of "pure" art and OPOIAZ, among others; a recent example of such a polemic was the debate on the Formal Method at the Tenishevskoe Uchilishche on 7 March 1927, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, Eikhenbaum saw in precisely these terms. Indeed he used the same word, skloka, or row, to describe the events in both cases.<sup>37</sup>

The Gogol' - Pushkin polemic in the Sovremennik as a model for contemporary issues was an important instrument for Eikhenbaum's purposes - for the second level of his book - and he made full use of it, giving up five pages of this chapter and seven of the following one to it, although Tolstoi's position could not be expressed in the terms of either camp.

## The struggle between generations

Another model Eikhenbaum used to make his contemporary meaning clear was that of the struggle between generations, a theme he had earlier considered as the subject of a book, and used as the basis of his article on Annenkov in February 1928. It was given a minor place in Lev Tolstoi, although there is diary evidence that in early drafts it had greater importance.<sup>38</sup> After Eikhenbaum's visit to Shklovskii in April 1928, Tynianov wrote to Shklovskii, "Thank God, you knocked the German book about generations and ages out of him. Those are things for the home table and even then they are a bore"<sup>39</sup>. This generational model, like the polemic model, and the general 1850s - 1920s analogy was also signalled to the reader, and the need to read on two levels indicated. When Eikhenbaum quoted a letter from Druzhinin which refers to Chernyshevskii as "the one who smells of bed-bugs", he signalled the contemporary importance of the generational tension, this time using the word 'code' (shifr):

"The struggle with didacticism was a code - its real sense was in the struggle with Chernyshevskii and the 'young generation'..."<sup>40</sup>

Chernyshevskii figures in Eikhenbaum's account as the instigator of the younger generation's 'war' against the elder; one of his reviews is read as a satirical parody of their works<sup>41</sup>. Eikhenbaum reproduced the review at length and juxtaposes a letter in reaction from Turgenev, Druzhinin's lampoon on Chernyshevskii, also quoted at length, over three pages, and letters from Chernyshevskii showing his dual public and private literary personae<sup>42</sup>. Eikhenbaum offered little commentary, but a general summary:

"From a 'friendly' literary circle, united by high aspirations, the editorial board of the Sovremennik becomes a collection of people who hate each other, as if they were 'relations' splitting up the inheritance. Gossip, cunning, deception, craftiness, betrayal, flattery develop."<sup>43</sup>

Eikhenbaum noted that the sense and history of these relationships were complex and require special research, and claimed that he was describing "only those moments. which will help to clarify Tolstoi's conduct in the Sovremennik"<sup>44</sup>. This is scarcely credible as Eikhenbaum's only purpose in assembling such long and carefully chosen quotations, in which Tolstoi has no place. If Tolstoi's conduct were the only issue, a summary of the quarrels would have served the purpose. Contemporary relevance and parallels, in this case, with the conduct of individuals in

twentieth-century literary circles, is the only plausible further reason for Eikhenbaum's careful mosaic of tendencies and characters.

To summarise, this chapter, the first concentrated exposition of literary byt (as opposed to literary evolution) themes in the book, demonstrates Eikhenbaum's use of analogy and juxtaposition of material for contemporary relevance, and alerts the attentive reader to his "manoeuvre" (khod, a word he uses of Tolstoi's literary "tactics") by:

- 1 establishing a parallel between the 1850s and the 1920s,
- 2 the use of signalled equivalents: eg, "convictions" = "ideology", Gogolian/"didactic" = Marxist .
- 3 the use of certain words to signal contemporary relevance; eg "topical", "polemical", "code".

However, the temptation to establish a consistent table of equivalents, or to apply the analogies to particular groupings as matching, point-for-point parallels does not always work out in practice. The 'civil war' at the Sovremennik might be read as a model of discord at GIII in the light of <sup>Eikhenbaum's</sup> diaries, for example, but consistent identifications are hard to justify, and do not always match, since the same figure may appear in different lights. Eikhenbaum's analogies were models, not patterns, and do not support a reading of his monograph as a kind of roman à clef on the lines of Kaverin's novel Skandalist, published in the same year. Eikhenbaum used Chernyshevskii, for example, in two ways, as died-in-the-wool didacticist of the younger generation, in which guise one might pair him with Averbakh, the editor of Na literaturnom postu, and as secret aesthete (perhaps Voronskii of Krasnaia Nov). Eikhenbaum even, confusingly, used Chernyshevskii's work to signal his own method:

"Chernyshevskii's work is not academic, but topical, entirely built on analogies and hints. Running through the history of Russian journalism and polemic, Chernyshevskii learns the methods of struggle and gives his attack a definite sense of not only literary but social struggle."<sup>45</sup>

As he had before in 'Literatura i pisatel', where he quoted him in support of the writer's professional independence, Eikhenbaum adopted Chernyshevskii as a convenient and suprising stalking horse. The quotation indicated in what sense Eikhenbaum's "analogies and hints"

should be read; for a start the work was “not academic, but topical”, that is, it was oriented not to strict scholarly research, but to the present day and the “struggle” in it, where “the attack” was part of “not only literary but social struggle”. Here, and in many other such references, it is clear that Eikhenbaum was perfectly conscious of his departure from OPOIAZ literary theory.

### Metaphor

As well as the use of analogy and juxtaposition, illustrated above, Eikhenbaum found in this book a further means of conveying the message of struggle and resistance in metaphor, mainly military. This unexplained use of metaphor naturally removed the book even further from the character of a scholarly work (at least of the OPOIAZ type), but was important for Eikhenbaum’s purposes, to show not merely analogous situations, but a model of deliberate resistance. The article ‘Literaturnaia kar’era L. Tolstogo’, published earlier in 1928, was entirely constructed on a military metaphor: Tolstoi as strategist and tactician in his battle against sovremennost’ in successive epochs. Here the metaphor is less widely used but still frequent, for example in the characterisation of Tolstoi as a “militant archaist” (passim) and in this typical passage:

“Grumbling at the present day (sovremennost’) and struggling with it, Tolstoi for exactly this reason follows it constantly, attacking from the most unexpected quarters. Retreating in one position, he carries out a violent assault in another.”<sup>46</sup>

### Semi-fictional mode and juxtaposition

The semi-fictional narrative mode used in some parts of the book was a further departure from his previous scholarly practice. Eikhenbaum noted in his diary: “I’m writing strangely, not at all as I used to earlier: in a semi-fictional or memoir style. That is how it should be.”<sup>47</sup> In the first two chapters Eikhenbaum narrated Tolstoi’s childhood and background and his life as a young man in this way, as we shall see later in discussing his use of biography. In a slightly different way, he recounted Tolstoi’s exploits at the Sovremennik including his quarrels with Turgenev using letters. The effect is vivid and novelistic.

Here Eikhenbaum was using again his method of juxtaposition, with minimal authorial comment, remaining as it were absent, apparently uninvolved, and relying on the reader to read

as he read, and to draw his own conclusions. Eikhenbaum's mode of juxtaposition, like film montage, assumed this reading process on the part of the 'reader' of book or film, a process which he called 'internal speech' in a 1927 essay 'Problemy kino-stilistiki'.<sup>48</sup> It originated in his lectures in the mid-twenties, where, as Ginzburg relates, Eikhenbaum read long passages; "He interpreted and commented on the material by his intonation, [...] with his voice, faultlessly signalling the most complex historico-literary series..."<sup>49</sup>

However, this method of juxtaposition was combined with another mode, of arbitrary comment and extrapolation from material, without demonstrated supporting evidence. Eikhenbaum used this mode for the main lines of his argument, and the reader tends to accept it, as a path through the huge masses of assembled material. Thus Eikhenbaum commented on an 1857 letter to Botkin:

"Tolstoi needs to set his work in particular conditions unlike 'the conditions of a writer' in order to achieve the mission set him by history. He has to tear himself away from the literary circle and create for himself independent activity outside literature, precisely in order to become a writer in the sense he understood the word. Literary professionalism is impossible and unacceptable for him."<sup>50</sup>

Tolstoi's letter by itself as quoted did not clearly support these statements, though the quantities of other material Eikhenbaum used in conjunction with it might have been shown to; the intervening steps have been omitted. This type of statement recurred at intervals, and typically did not show how Eikhenbaum arrived at his conclusion. Shklovskii's comment on his Annenkov article could be applied (and was probably meant to apply) with equal justice to his book:

"That method of semi-fictional narrative which you use, given your talent, your ability to find words, produces eloquent and incorrigible mistakes. One must either write a novel or leave traces of the instrument in the work."<sup>51</sup>

In this type of statement Eikhenbaum had avoided "leaving traces of the instrument", avoided demonstrating and documenting his theoretical or analytical process, in order to protect the second analogical level of his work, merely stating enough to ensure that it would be read as he wished, by readers able to do so. Analogy, juxtaposition and the semi-fictional mode were the

main features of Eikhenbaum's second-level thesis in Lev Tolstoi. In it he proposed Tolstoi as a model of 'life-conduct', of resistance and struggle in the literary-political situation of the 1850s, which he described in a way that made clear analogies with that of the 1920s. We shall now consider other features of the book, which continue this major concern, in their relation to OPOIAZ theory.

#### Literary context

As well as the analogically loaded treatment of literary byt, Eikhenbaum included more specifically literary history in his book, giving an account of general literary concerns at the beginning of the 1850s. Here his principal aim was to show that Tolstoi's early works fitted into the existing patterns of literature, that they were not exceptions to, but part of historical literary development. Tolstoi's plan to write an autobiographical novel in four parts "coincides with one of the chief demands of the time, the demand for autobiography and memoir"<sup>52</sup>. Thus, with Detstvo, Tolstoi acts "not as a revolutionary", but as a "follower".<sup>53</sup>

A similar treatment of Tolstoi's war and Caucasus stories followed. Eikhenbaum showed that the impulse both to write them and to do so in a way radically different from the 1820s fiction on the same theme was typical, part of a new wave of writing. Similarly, Tolstoi's transition to the position of a war correspondent was "in its way a typical phenomenon for Russian literature of those years."<sup>54</sup> The "struggle with Romanticism" which in Molodoi Tolstoi had appeared as Tolstoi's one-man battle against formal cliché appeared in Lev Tolstoi as part of a general "turn away from old traditions of Caucasian fiction"<sup>55</sup>, a historical trend, of which Tolstoi was part, and in which his status as an exceptional writer in literary terms was not discussed.

Where Eikhenbaum, in a somewhat altered sense of literary evolution, concerned more with theme and genre than device, showed Tolstoi's early works as historically conditioned and "typical" in the *literary* sense of occupying a place among other similar works in the literary world of the time, he saw his later work of the decade as similarly historically conditioned in theme, but also *politically* conditioned, as Tolstoi taking principled stances against contemporary reality as he and others saw it. To elucidate the background to these works, and

to activity, like his work on popular education, that he considered linked to literature, Eikhenbaum took another radical step away from OPOIAZ practice and engaged in a kind of limited history of ideas, mainly on social and political issues.

Intellectual context.

Commenting on a letter by Tolstoi on the recently promulgated emancipation of the serfs, Eikhenbaum noted:

“to understand this letter of Tolstoi (and this is essential for the understanding of much else) it is necessary to develop a certain special historical commentary.”<sup>56</sup>

The analysis of the varied political and economic interests of the dvorianstvo on this issue is typical of Eikhenbaum’s contextual method in general: two opposing groups were identified, in this case the feudal and the bourgeois, to both of which Tolstoi was counterposed, and generous use was made of contemporary documents, first to show a general picture, and then to specify Tolstoi’s position. The “whole excursus on the peasant question” occupies fourteen pages, and Eikhenbaum disclaimed any attempt at an exhaustive analysis of “the knot of many complex, unclear and at the same time very important problems for the understanding of the historical Tolstoi.”<sup>57</sup> His aim was “to investigate only the part of these problems which can help explain the general sense of Tolstoi’s position in these years, and then only to the degree essential for the clarification of his literary career.”<sup>58</sup>

A similar, but shorter digression on the “woman question”, which was “the question of the epoch”<sup>59</sup>, supplies the background of ideas to Semeinoe schast’e. Eikhenbaum used mainly French sources, although, as he said, the controversy in France took different forms from that in Russia, because he was concerned to show, as we shall see later, the close relation between Michelet’s books L’Amour and La Femme, Proudhon’s book De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l’Eglise and Tolstoi’s povest’. George Sand occupied the opposing pole to Michelet and Proudhon in this analysis. The establishment of a historical context of ideas was complicated in this case with speculation about literary influence, but Eikhenbaum’s major concern was to show the topical and polemical nature of Tolstoi’s work, and his choice of sources was made accordingly. The limitations Eikhenbaum acknowledged in his investigation of the background



to the emancipation of the serfs operated here too, so that the intellectual context narrowed and functioned only as the basis for his argument about Tolstoi as militant archaist.

The same process, a view of the issues of the day adapted to throw Tolstoi's position into relief, usually in contrast to two opposing camps, occurred in the discussion of Tolstoi's interest in peasant education, where Eikhenbaum's summary showed the argument which his contextual studies were designed to support (and which is often restated in similar terms):

“Tolstoi needed to invent a concern which, as always with him, would be in the spirit of the times, and at the same time go against ‘contemporary life’ (“sovremennost”), negating by its very existence the theses and principles of the publicists.”<sup>60</sup>

The intellectual and literary contexts Eikhenbaum presented in this book thus function not as an ‘objective’ general review of the spectrum of opinion on any given question, but selectively, to reinforce his primary argument about Tolstoi, with its ‘second level’ contemporary corollary, although the sheer amount of material used tends to obscure this. However, selective though it may have been, such a cultural context was an innovation in Russian literary studies, and Eikhenbaum's pioneering work in what has now become common practice must be recognised.<sup>61</sup>

#### Use of fiction as evidence for Tolstoi's socio-political position

Eikhenbaum found further evidence for Tolstoi's archaist position on the peasant question not only in an examination of the ideas of his eighteenth-century French predecessors<sup>62</sup>, but in Anna Karenina, arguing from the novel to the life in the time-honoured manner of nineteenth-century critics, which Eikhenbaum himself had earlier ridiculed as illegitimate. Levin's speech to Oblonskii after the sale of his land to Riabinin is taken as “characteristic” of Tolstoi's attitude, his perplexity at Sviiashskii as evidence of Tolstoi's status as an autodidact. These were, naturally, conclusions quite foreign to OPOIAZ theory and practice. Eikhenbaum here conceded that “it is impossible to prove anything with quotations from a novel (...) or even to comment without checks and reservations”<sup>63</sup> because author and character could not be identified, but argued that Tolstoi's care in self-examination and habit of using this to draw his characters gave him a right to “illustrate certain basic propositions” with quotations.<sup>64</sup> The use

of fictional material as “illustration”, though not as “proof” of the author’s ideological position has thus become legitimate, though no theoretical basis for the change has been given. “Characteristic” was the word Eikhenbaum used most often in this context.

Another form of this practice in reverse, from ‘life’ to fiction, was Eikhenbaum’s reading of Dva gusara: “The story is written with a topical tendency and conceals responses to the violent polemic”<sup>65</sup>, (the pure art - didactic art debate - Pushkin versus Gogol’ - being conducted in the Sovremennik). Eikhenbaum read the irony in the second half of Dva gusara as Tolstoi’s “lampoon of the new generation”, and asserted that “the theme of the story - the confrontation of two generations - was *born* in that atmosphere of quarrels and struggle”.<sup>66</sup> In this way he ascribed the genesis of the story to Tolstoi’s experience at the Sovremennik, and read the younger hero as modelled on a member of the didacticist tendency in the polemic.

Here Eikhenbaum ignored the theoretical danger of making what Tynianov called “a causal bridge from the *author’s* milieu, byt, class, to his works”<sup>67</sup> in the interests of establishing topicality and, by extension, analogy. We shall consider separately Eikhenbaum’s use of genesis in this book, which, unlike his illustration of aspects of Tolstoi the individual with fictional material, was not accompanied by a disclaimer. Discussion of Dva gusara occupies ten pages (where Metel, less susceptible to ‘topical’ analysis, takes only two), and strictly literary considerations do not figure in it. The story was important to Eikhenbaum because it offered an extension to fiction of his use of analogy; it enabled him to show both how Tolstoi wrote about the present while apparently writing about the past, and, by implication, how he himself was doing the same thing.

In general Eikhenbaum’s interest in Tolstoi’s fiction in this book favoured works that can be shown to be topical and polemical, as well as Semeinoe schast’e and Dva gusara, Al’bert and Liutsem. Both were seen as statements about art; Liutsem was read as a correction to Al’bert and as “a programmatic speech, a manifesto” of the priority of “instinct” over “convictions”<sup>68</sup>, which summarised Tolstoi’s experience of Petersburg polemics.

## Form and construction in the works

Eikhenbaum devoted little attention to problems of form and construction in this book. In the first half of the book, however, the earliest works were discussed from this point of view, but in far less detail than in Molodoi Tolstoi. Where Eikhenbaum mentioned form, the question was dealt with briefly, as an aside, and not developed. For example, he wrote of Tolstoi's conception of form in the early 1850s: "It covered, apparently, the concepts of 'tone' and construction together; it corresponded to the concept of 'genre'."<sup>69</sup> Nothing further was said, and no definitions of 'tone' or 'genre' were offered. In general, discussions of form were brief and appeared almost incidental to the main treatment of the works, which concentrated on the circumstances and history of their writing, subjects considered irrelevant in early OPOIAZ, and on their themes, a subject OPOIAZ entirely ignored.

Eikhenbaum did not allude in this book to Tolstoi's use of such compositional devices as dialektika dushi, generalizatsiia and melochnost', as he did in Molodoi Tolstoi. In the earlier book Tolstoi's fiction had appeared without either a contemporary literary or a historical context, with the exception of the apparently purely literary "Romantic background"; here each work was carefully embedded in a literary and literary byt context. Specifically literary treatment of the works themselves was relegated to a minor place. Eikhenbaum realised early in his work on the book that, with the "historical" Tolstoi as a priority, "it's difficult with this kind of book to talk about the works themselves, as I did earlier, because that would need far more material and space. Now it's very important to talk about sources and so on, to talk in an abstract way about construction and so on is quite impossible and unnecessary"<sup>70</sup>.

## Genesis and Influence

"Talk about sources and so on" marked another step on Eikhenbaum's part over the theoretical difficulties about genesis and literary influences which OPOIAZ had identified in the years of struggle to establish the proper object of a science of literature. In 1927 Tynianov restated the OPOIAZ view, identifying the question of influence as "one of the most complex evolutionary questions of literature."<sup>71</sup> Tynianov pointed to cases where influence might be expected, but did not occur, or had no *literary* reflection. Convergence and coincidence of theme were not to

be taken for influence. Even deep personal and psychological influences did not necessarily result in literary influence, which could take place only under certain literary conditions.

We have seen how Eikhenbaum considered the theme of Dva gusara to have been “*born* [my emphasis LT] in the atmosphere of quarrels and struggle” in the Sovremennik. By writing ‘the theme’ and not ‘the work’, Eikhenbaum narrowly avoided the theoretical pitfall of ascribing the genesis of a work of art to an experience in the author’s life directly, without specifying the intermediate stages. But the difference is merely technical; he treated the story as a topical statement generated by the Sovremennik polemic. Similar linguistic evasions characterised other statements in this theoretically undeveloped area; Eikhenbaum found Thackeray’s novels a “stimulus” (tolchok) to the introduction of Dva gusara<sup>72</sup>, and asserted that Tolstoi “came to this introduction *through* Gogol’ and Thackeray”<sup>73</sup>. It was as if by avoiding the contentious word influence, and substituting periphrases of various kinds, Eikhenbaum would avoid the theoretical difficulties involved in claiming literary influence on scanty evidence. In the same way Proudhon’s book De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l’Eglise was posed as a ‘stimulus’ for Semeinoe schast’e, and Michelet’s L’Amour “must have been of use directly as material, and even helped construct the story (fabula)”<sup>74</sup>. These works are not fiction: Eikhenbaum showed their broad coincidence with Tolstoi’s views, but not how they became material for his povest’. He showed, in other words, convergence of ideas, but no specifically literary connection, not even the literary convergence Tynianov spoke of.

A further, less cautiously stated ascription of influence occurred in Eikhenbaum’s discussion of the prehistory of Voyna i mir. Proudhon’s book La Guerre et la Paix and Tolstoi’s visit to him in 1861 acquire cardinal importance. Eikhenbaum pointed out:

“the fact itself: not only the title but the decision to write not simply an historical novel but a *war* novel with digressions in the direction of the philosophy of history and of war *arose* [my emphasis LT] in Tolstoi, evidently, not without a connection to this meeting in Brussels and Proudhon’s book”.<sup>75</sup>

A cautious note intervened at the end of this bold proposition, but it stands as a statement about the novel’s genesis, as before, without other evidence than the coincidence of ideas.

Eikhenbaum developed these coincidences at length, writing as if thematic parallels constituted literary kinship; Proudhon's non-fiction works:

“...a book on women, a book on war, a book against literary property,[...] a book on art, a book on the gospels are all Tolstoi's own themes, developed, moreover, in a direction very close to Tolstoi's.”<sup>76</sup>

In this way, Eikhenbaum considered, and in the “moral fervour” they share, Tolstoi and Proudhon “are brought together” (sblizhaiutsia).<sup>77</sup>

This departure so far from literary theory, and even from literature, specifically understood, provoked Shklovskii to “beg” Eikhenbaum “by all antelopes and forest fallow deer”<sup>78</sup> to study the influence of Paul de Kok (a novelist) on Tolstoi, and not Proudhon's. He insisted:

“a philosophical work cannot be the source of a novel. Your proofs for Proudhon are for the time being extremely weak. It does not even convince me that Dragomirov did not mention Proudhon. This proof is full of a purely Eikhenbaumian elegance, but operates only on the page of the book.”<sup>79</sup>

Shklovskii's comments contained the essence of theoretical objections to Eikhenbaum's new method: a philosophical work, which was not literary, could not directly become part of the evolutionary system of literature. In the OPOIAZ view, which used literaturnost' as the criterion for discussing literature, the only source for literary works was other literary works. Even if one could establish the connection of non-literary material to a literary work in terms of its theme, this would not constitute a statement of its *literary* genesis, or make the closely traced *literary* connections needed to place it in the literary-evolutionary system.

## Biography

Essentially the same objection held in Shklovskii's view for Eikhenbaum's “method of unsurmounted biography”<sup>80</sup> - ‘raw’ biographical facts, which, like his genetic ‘facts’, had no theoretical basis, whose function in the literary- evolutionary system was not demonstrated. In the letter quoted above Shklovskii continued:

“Perhaps it was necessary to show what (element) from the biography was not included in the work, why a biography similar to others was included, or one that differed in a similar way.”<sup>81</sup>

It was in the nature of Eikhenbaum's book that Shklovskii's legitimate and modest demands for the principles in his approach to biography to be made explicit could not be satisfied. To do so would have required not only the statement of his view of Tolstoi as acting in, and acted on by, history, but the exposure of his second analogical level, the model of conduct he offered. While he protected this second level, Eikhenbaum was quite explicit about the first; his criterion for biography, as we saw in the preface, was "historical fate, historical conduct" as opposed to the traditional category of the life and works of the unique individual, seen in a static historical projection. Eikhenbaum had already used the notion of fate (*sud'ba*) contrasted to *biografiia* in his Annenkov article earlier in 1928, using it as the given element of a life, while *biografiia*, or, here, conduct, was seen as the willed, or intentional, element. In this book *sud'ba* had the further connotation of the historical twist that may affect the outcome of willed action; what a person does may turn out in the light of history to be less action, than having been acted upon. Eikhenbaum noted twice Tolstoi's use of Goethe: "Glaubst du schieben, und wirst geschoben"<sup>82</sup> (You thought you were pushing, and you were being pushed.).

In the early chapters, one of Eikhenbaum's primary concerns was to show Tolstoi as historically conditioned, as typical of his class and time, and not from the traditional, 'unique individual' point of view. He used a feuilleton by a close contemporary of Tolstoi, which described the life of a young man in Moscow, and Tolstoi's letters and diaries to show that "Tolstoi's mental (*dushevnaia*) life [...] was, really, a typical phenomenon."<sup>83</sup> He saw Tolstoi's cynicism in his youthful diaries:

"not as an individual trait (or still less a 'failing') of Tolstoi's personality, but as a social phenomenon, deeply historical, developing and strengthening in Tolstoi as a *historical* figure."<sup>84</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum avoided the danger, from the point of view of OPOIAZ theory, of individual psychologising (which he had often condemned<sup>85</sup>) by using psychological facts as 'typical' and 'historical' phenomena. But this type of statement also demonstrates an apparent tension in his work of this period between history and the individual, weighted here on the historical side. Eikhenbaum saw Tolstoi as a young man acting in a typical and 'historical' way, though probably unaware of it for a time, as one affected by the prevailing *zeitgeist*. This corresponded

to the unwitting participation of the young generation in the real 'historical' world, which Eikhenbaum had vividly described in 'Mig soznaniia' in 1921. However, the distinction Eikhenbaum made here is not that between individual as such and history, since for him the individual invariably acted in a historical context, whether or not he was aware of it. Eikhenbaum's distinction was between two views of the individual and his actions; the traditional, a-historical view and the historical view, in Eikhenbaum's sense of the word. In the a-historical view the creative individual was seen as what he called natura in Molodoi Tolstoi, a bundle of personal attributes at work in a historical vacuum; in the historical view the mature creative individual, lichnost', in whom soznanie directed natura, became aware of his place in history and responsible for his actions in the light of history. Thus personality in the quotation above corresponded to Eikhenbaum's sense of natura and Tolstoi's youthful cynicism, developed and brought to historical awareness, became part of what he saw as lichnost'. We shall return to the concept of lichnost', as a central element of Eikhenbaum's thought in the late 1920s, in the final chapter.

If much of Eikhenbaum's use of biography in Lev Tolstoi was directed to establishing Tolstoi as historically conditioned, in a certain sense typical of his time, there was also biographical writing in the book, with neither historical nor literary functions in evidence, which can properly be described as semi-fictional, for example : "In his thoughts and dreams of this time [1852] Tolstoi lives in at least four personae at once, as if combining in himself four characters of some novel..."<sup>86</sup> Impressionistic biographical material of this kind, which Eikhenbaum's OPOIAZ colleagues deplored in a work of scholarship, occurred early in the first part of the book and infrequently; the emphasis was on literary byt and intellectual context in the later parts.

In another departure from OPOIAZ practice, Eikhenbaum used Tolstoi's letters and diaries extensively for evidence of his state of mind, often with little commentary. Just as he had condemned, as we saw earlier, the practice of reading from the work of art back to the author's life, but then insisted on his right to do so, here he condemned the literal reading of letters and diaries as "'documents' of absolute reliability"<sup>87</sup> in the same way as he did in Molodoi Tolstoi<sup>88</sup>

but himself made use of them as direct evidence. He also looked for “characteristic” material in the diaries:

“Hints and nuances are more important than detailed though-out passages, and these are important by now not as factual material, but only as ‘characteristic’ material, in method or style. Much is altogether absent and the biographer must guess, adducing material from elsewhere, and constructing hypotheses.”<sup>89</sup>

In his use of the theoretically vexed areas of biography, genesis and influence Eikhenbaum was motivated by the concern, as he put it in his diary, that his book “should have a meaning for me”<sup>90</sup>. As we have seen, his selection and treatment of material in all areas of the book was dominated by this concern, which led him to present urgent issues of the present day, the preservation of the independence of literature and writers, as vividly as possible in terms of the literary politics of the 1850s. This was what we have called the second level of Eikhenbaum’s book. This “work as action”, envisaged in his diary entries of 1925, included the portrayal of the official regulation of thought in the 1920s and the effect of a new politically-oriented generation of writers indifferent to previous literary standards, all by means of the literary history of the 1850s. Because of this concern, which pervaded the book but could not be made explicit, the book obscured, and to some extent cancelled, earlier questions of theory and method in literary study, as Eikhenbaum indicated in his preface.

Two quotations will serve as a final illustration of this second level of Eikhenbaum’s book, remarkable (though not exceptional) for their similarities with passages from his correspondence and diaries. The first, part of an article of 1864 by G. Eliseev, comes after several quotations witnessing the crisis in literature in the late 1850s, and described the resulting change in the position of writers, in language that recalls the chapter of *Byloe i dumy* Eikhenbaum quoted to Shklovskii in a critical letter of 1925:

“As if a dam had burst, - and flooding through it a violent current not only took away with it the shadow of the remaining former high position and authority (of former literary activists) in literature and science; but ruined all the ideas they had established about literary activity, which they thought immutable and sacred. Under the name of men of



letters and writers appeared people not only without academic degrees, without diplomas, without references, who had never written a single word, but even people from professions with nothing in common either with literature or science, speculators, clerks, bookkeepers, bureaucrats [...] What were literary activists of an earlier time to do with this crowd of the unrecognised? Ignore it? But that was impossible. To ignore such a crowd meant renouncing any further significance for oneself. Deny its ability for literary work? [...] Make oneself the leader of the crowd, stand at its head? There was no point in even thinking of it.....”<sup>91</sup>

This quotation functioned as a résumé of the literary situation in the late 1920s as Eikhenbaum saw it, with a list of the options available to the “former literary activists” to which he drew attention by repeating them in his comment on the passage. “Literary activists” should be read here not as a parallel for OPOIAZ specifically, but for the whole humane tradition of literature including OPOIAZ - the “high service” to which Eikhenbaum first referred in 1927. He juxtaposed a prediction by Druzhinin, made nine years previously, and therefore, perhaps, not strictly applicable as a comment on the situation in 1864, to reinforce the parallel with the 1920s:

“These youths [didacticists]... will do stupid things, cause harm to literature, and while trying to instruct society will unleash persecution on us and cause us to be deprived of that little corner in the sun which we gained with sweat and blood.”<sup>92</sup>

This echoed Eikhenbaum’s diary entry of 24 October 1925, which made an analogy with the middle ages; “We are something like the humanists, our life will be difficult to the end, with deprivations, persecution and so on.”

The second illustration of the second level of Eikhenbaum’s book, which is his own text, described Tolstoi’s position after the failure of Al’bert, Kazaki and Semeinoe schast’e at the hands of the critics in terms which again echoed diary entries in 1925 (given in the previous chapter), and also Shklovskii’s Tret’ia fabrika:

“He felt himself to be in a kind of empty gap (promezhutok): literature, of which he used to think ‘terribly highly and purely’, is of no use to anyone and proud solitude [...] is impossible. A difficult and complex problem arises of historical conduct, of the

construction of his fate in the conditions of his 'time', which is guilty, but it is not possible to be offended with it, or to judge it, because it is stronger, it is history. If it is an enemy, that means one must work out a strategic plan, not count only on one's strength and bravery, not take it head on, as has happened until now."<sup>93</sup>

This was markedly personal and contemporary writing. Provezhutok, Tynianov's term in his 1924 article of that name for the apparent absence of new vision in poetry, had already been used by Eikhenbaum in his diaries for his own crisis in 1925, as we saw in Chapter IV. Here he applied the word to Tolstoi's personal position and the general literary crisis of the 1850s. The use of vremia was another such contemporary marker. In 1926, in Tret'ia fabrika, Shklovskii had written, "Time cannot make mistakes, time cannot be guilty before me."<sup>94</sup> His metaphors for his and OPOIAZ' situation in the 'third factory' were essentially passive; "We are flax on the threshing floor",<sup>95</sup> flax torn from the earth by the roots, trees cut to death for turpentine.<sup>96</sup> For Eikhenbaum in 1928, the "time", on the contrary, *was* guilty, but, as history, must be reckoned with, and if necessary fought. His adoption of Tolstoi's military metaphor marked active, but concealed ("strategic") resistance, after the failure of outright ("head on") opposition in the mid-20s.

There is clear lexical evidence here and in many other such passages that Eikhenbaum used his discussion of Tolstoi not only as a vehicle for a general description of the literary-political situation of the 1920s, and for a model of resistance and struggle in that situation, but in a more personal way. He transferred the vocabulary of his own experience to Tolstoi, and he used his descriptions of Tolstoi's tactics in contemporary battles to signal his own manoeuvre in his book. In this context we may note his comment that V V Gippius did not approve of his literary byt articles, "but doesn't see the real gambit (khod)."<sup>97</sup> While, as we have seen, Eikhenbaum clearly was aware of the theoretically dubious methods he adopted in this book, and as the preface shows, had adopted them intentionally, did his use of this personal vocabulary for Tolstoi argue an unconscious blurring of personal concerns with the object of study and a loss of scholarly distance, as some scholars have maintained, or was it a deliberate consequence of his change of focus in the preceding years? We shall consider this question together with all the issues involved in Eikhenbaum's cessation of OPOIAZ-inspired work in the final chapter, turning now to the reception of Lev Tolstoi, and the subsequent polemic.

Lev Tolstoi was published in November 1928. The first reaction to it from OPOIAZ members came in a letter Shklovskii wrote to Tynianov, who had gone to Berlin for medical treatment earlier in the autumn, and who had the opportunity to read the book only on his return early in 1929:

“Boria has published his book, in places very interesting. It definitely does not come off with Proudhon, and the whole arrangement of the book is by the sun, ie, the change of chapters is motivated by “and when the next day came”. This book is essentially *a pre-book* (*predknizh'e*), that is, *materials for a book*, which could have been a work of the type of Molodoi Tolstoi ...”<sup>98</sup>

It is not clear here what Shklovskii meant by the comment on the chapter changes, which work as he describes in Molodoi Tolstoi, but not in this book. But the comment on genesis (Eikhenbaum’s use of Proudhon), and the characterisation of the book as a “pre-book” (Eikhenbaum himself had called the book “rather a draft” (*neskol’ko chernovaia*) in his diary) were accurate. To Eikhenbaum he wrote more tactfully, in a letter we have quoted partially above:

“I have read your book ... with great attention, it is a good book, the most interesting thing in it is not about Tolstoi, but around him. The book’s success is that this ‘around’ transfers itself into Tolstoi without a shock, that he is correctly shown as the crossing point of lines of force. In its general construction the book is very interesting, the blood of the times is shown. The objection I have is the method of writing the book, that is, unsurmounted biography. Perhaps it was necessary to show what (element) from the biography was not included in the work, why a biography similar to others was included, or one that differed in a similar way.”<sup>99</sup>

In emphasising that he had read Eikhenbaum’s book “with great attention” Shklovskii made it clear to him that he understood what we have called its contemporary ‘second level’ function, and what Eikhenbaum called his khod, or manoeuvre. Shklovskii underlined this by stressing the aspects of the book with dual application to the 1850s and the 1920s; it was “not about Tolstoi”, ie not about the texts, or strictly literary, but “around him”, it showed “the blood of the times” and Tolstoi as “the crossing point of lines of force” (not quite Eikhenbaum’s view).

However, though Shklovskii was perfectly aware of Eikhenbaum's khod, for him at this time the important thing was to ensure the continued public life of literary theory, and his objection to Eikhenbaum's "method [...] of unsurmounted biography" and his other deviations from OPOIAZ principles was of primary importance, since, in his view, as he had written of the Annenkov preface, these deviations obscured areas of potential theoretical growth with "eloquent and incorrigible mistakes."<sup>100</sup> On the same day he wrote to Tynianov:

I have looked through Boria's book .... It is not a bad book, but undercooked (nedozharennaiia), eloquent (krasnorechivaia), and if I start writing to him about it in detail, I shall end up eating him."<sup>101</sup>

Plans in the same letter for publishing a "journal of maximum theoreticity" conspicuously omitted Eikhenbaum as a possible contributor, but in the next letter to Tynianov, about the resurrection of OPOIAZ, Shklovskii included him, with reservations.<sup>102</sup> Eikhenbaum remained a part of all plans for the new OPOIAZ during the winter of 1928/9, but the rift was serious; Shklovskii wrote to Jakobson about these plans in February 1929:

"Think - the two of us [Tynianov and Shklovskii] are not enough. Boris Mikhailovich has disintegrated to the point of eclecticism in his last works. His lit. byt is the most vulgar Marxism. Besides he has become jealous, is afraid of his pupils and in general things are miserable. [...] Conclusion: OPOIAZ can be re-established only if you come, as OPOIAZ is always three together."<sup>103</sup>

Jakobson had already acted upon his own assessment of the crisis in OPOIAZ in December 1928. On 14 November he had written to Shklovskii alluding to his metaphor for OPOIAZ in Tret'ia fabrika:

"I understand what flax on the threshing floor is, but it seems they have over-milled the flax. The Formalists' real work should just have been beginning, and beginning not in the sense of detailing and hundreds of examples, nor in the sense of a time for summarising text-books, but simply - earlier we were groping in our work, for all of us they were years of training, but now, when the problems have become nakedly clear, - suddenly, dispersal. Fear of the problem, and an absurd desire to explain one series by another, [...] Historically all this is understandable. But tiresome. [...] Worst of all is the dispersal. After all the strength of our science was precisely in this Futurist clod of a

word WE. And dispersal is truly fatal. [Dispersal] of all kinds, differences of principle, personal and territorial differences. And departures, which do not at all signify a crisis of the method, for that there are no symptoms at all, on the contrary the points in common with the methods of innovators of all areas of science today [...] show that the path was correct, and fully responded to the spirit of all contemporary sciences. Departures from Formalism signify not the crisis of Formalism but the crises of Formalists. Crises (which are) typically Podkolesin ones.”<sup>104</sup>

While Jakobson, living in Prague, understood the nature of the political processes to which OPOIAZ was subject, he, like Shklovskii and Tynianov, saw no reason therefore to change the scientific approach to the study of literature which OPOIAZ had built up. In a mocking reference to the hero of Gogol's *Zhenitba*, he ascribed departures from OPOIAZ theory such as Eikhenbaum's work since 1927 to individual crises, and not to any defect of the method as such.

#### 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka'

Jakobson's response to the situation he had analysed was a short article in the form of nine theses, 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka'<sup>105</sup>. These theses, which Jakobson and Tynianov wrote together in Prague in mid-December 1928, were published in the December issue of *Novyi Lef* which came out in January 1929. They were intended to set off a new era of OPOIAZ activity and to establish clear principles on which future work on literature and language should be based. Tynianov wrote to Shklovskii from Prague:

“Roman and I are sitting in the cafe Derby, talking a lot about you and making various plans. We have worked out principled theses (OPOIAZisy), we'll send them to you to add to and confirm. We shall have to send them out for discussion, and everyone should write and not just talk, as a result we shall have a book which we can publish as the first number in a series with the Federation of Writers. Here OPOIAZ influence is very strong, people quote us, refer to us and respect us in all the Czech dissertations ( and even in German ones). [...] Roman and I have got on well with no substantial differences of opinion. It seems we must rebuild OPOIAZ. We have to persuade Boria to make it up with Tomashevskii. In general we have to clear yesterday from the table and work.”<sup>106</sup>

Tynianov made it clear that he saw Eikhenbaum as part of the new OPOIAZ, as did Jakobson in a note attached to the letter where he listed proposed members, including him.<sup>106</sup> However, these plans did not alter the theoretical differences between Eikhenbaum and the authors of the theses. Although neither Tynianov nor Jakobson had yet read his recently published book on Tolstoi, his articles over the last years were evidence in their eyes of theoretical confusion and inadequacy, and their theses contain points of direct but unidentified polemic with Eikhenbaum's new work.

#### Conflicts with Eikhenbaum in 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka'

Two specific areas of conflict with Eikhenbaum can be identified in 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka': the relation of the literary series to non-literary series and the concepts of genesis and evolution.

The first area of conflict was the relation of the literary series to non-literary series. In the second thesis the history of literature, like the history of other series, was characterised by "an intricate complex of specific-structural laws"<sup>108</sup>, which must be elucidated before attempting to relate literary history to other historical series. As we have seen, in this and the previous chapter, Eikhenbaum had deliberately ignored the specifically literary in his recent work on literary history, and postulated the extra-literary conditioning of literature without any explanation of the literary-historical system. In Jakobson's and Tynianov's eighth thesis the necessity of explaining the literary system in full before making any further non-literary connections was reinforced. It asserted the necessity of correlating the literary series with other historical series - a point Eikhenbaum and the authors agreed on - and continued with an emphatic warning of the dangers of ignoring the specific structural laws of each series as Eikhenbaum had done:

"The consideration of the correlation of systems without consideration of the immanent laws of each system is methodologically fatal."<sup>109</sup>

Another area of conflict with Eikhenbaum in the 'Problemy...' was that of evolution and genesis, OPOIAZ concepts which he had modified in his 1927 articles, as we saw in the

previous chapter. In Lev Tolstoi Eikhenbaum's use of genesis further contradicted and obscured OPOIAZ principles. The third thesis restated Tynianov's 1924 and 1927 distinctions between evolution and genesis; literary and non-literary material could be admissible in scientific research only when considered from a functional point of view. Otherwise:

“...the problem of literary evolution is obscured by questions of episodic, extra-systemic genesis, both literary (so-called literary influences) and extra-literary.”<sup>110</sup>

This precisely described the effect of Eikhenbaum's recent work: in taking a different standpoint and interpreting what he saw under a different 'sign of meaning' he had found, as he had warned in 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt', that “certain problems are replaced by other problems, and certain facts are *obscured* by other facts”.<sup>111</sup> For Eikhenbaum the problem of literary evolution was obscured (a word Jakobson and Tynianov took up in the third thesis quoted above) by that of a literary history in which questions of ethics and history (in his sense of the word) were not only admissible, but primary, and even urgent. Literary evolution and the recent functional and systemic analyses proposed by Tynianov which, as Eikhenbaum was aware, laid the bases of new and potentially productive literary theory, had receded before the primacy of work on the writer's position and conduct in relation to the historical forces of the epoch. This, for Eikhenbaum, outweighed, or 'obscured', considerations of method. In this context the fifth thesis warned against “the concept of a naively conceived chronological epoch”<sup>112</sup> and Eikhenbaum's recent work was probably one target (along with Zhirmunskii and other recent opponents) of the first general thesis which proposed:

“clarity in the methodological platform and a decisive disassociation from ever more frequent mechanical joinings of the new methodology with old worn-out methods, from the contraband presentation of naive psychologism and other methodological old rags wrapped up in new terminology.”<sup>113</sup>

We do not know Eikhenbaum's reaction to the theses; his letters to Shklovskii as so far published do not mention them, although the disagreement over Proudhon as an influence, or source, for Voina i mir and other debates continue into 1929. Discussion of the Prague theses and of the proposed book by other potential contributors went on during the first four months of 1929<sup>114</sup>, but the book was never written. No further theoretical work on the lines laid down in the theses appeared, although Tynianov wrote an unpublished article in 1929. 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka' thus stands as the last statement of OPOIAZ principles.

We shall now consider Eikhenbaum's main new work of 1929 before returning finally to the question of his intentions in adopting new methods of literary scholarship and his awareness of their implications. The major new work of 1929, Moi vremennik, once again differed in many respects from his previous work on literature, and we shall therefore look at it in a somewhat different way. In it Eikhenbaum combined new elements with some of his 1928 work, evoking this response twenty years later from the Pushkin authority Iulian Oksman:

“...You should have lived at the time of Pushkin, or of the Moscow salons in the period of Chaadaev, Herzen and Belinskii. Then you would already long have been a forerunner of the revolutionary democrats, and not the pope of OPOIAZ. However, history will decide, which is better and which worse!”<sup>115</sup>



- 1 L Gudkov, 'Poniatie i metafory istorii u Tynianova i opoiazovtsev', TS3, p 97.
- 2 A A Hansen-Löve, "'Bytologiiia" mezhdru faktami i funktsiiami', RES, p 98.
- 3 BME, diary entry, 15 February 1928.
- 4 BME, diary entry, 24 February 1928.
- 5 See above, Chapter 3, and 'Sots. praktika...', p 104.
- 6 'Gogol' i "delo literatury'", Krasnaia gazeta, evening edition, 4.3.27, reprinted in Mv, pp 89-92.
- 7 'Pisatel'skii oblik M. Gorkogo', Krasnaia gazeta, evening edition, 30.12.27, reprinted in Mv, pp 115-120.
- 8 BME, 'Pavel Vasil'evich Annenkov 1813 - 1887', in P V Annenkov, Literaturnye vospominaniia, L, 1929.
- 9 BME, diary entry, 28 February 1928.
- 10 op cit, 1 March 1928.
- 11 op cit, 6 March 1928.
- 12 op cit, 20 March 1920.
- 13 Letter of late March 1928, quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 115.
- 14 Iu N Tynianov, letter of 5 March 1929, PILK, p 513.
- 15 BME, Diary entry, 15 May 1928.
- 16 op cit, 23 May and 11 June 1928.
- 17 op cit, 15 July 1928.
- 18 op cit, 22 February 1928.
- 19 BME, 'Literaturnaia kar'era L. Tolstogo', Krasnaia gazeta, evening edition, 10.9.28, reprinted in Mv, p 113.
- 20 Quoted in 'Sots. praktika...', p 118. Since Shklovskii's correspondence has been the subject of a commission for publication, no access has been given to TsGALI fond 562 and the researcher must rely on fragmentary published material.
- 21 V B Shklovskii, 'Kitovye meli i farvatery', Novyi Lef, 1928, 9, p 30, reprinted in Gs, p 407.

- 22 Quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 118.
- 23 G A Levinton, 'Istochniki i podteksty romana Smert' Vazir- Mukhtara', TS3, pp 6-14.
- 24 BME, LT, p 5.
- 25 "Addressing literary byt material in no way signifies a departure from the literary fact or from problems of literary evolution.", BME, 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt', 1927, reprinted as 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 53.
- 26 BME,LT, p 7.
- 27 ibid.
- 28 op cit, p 5.
- 29 ibid.
- 30 op cit, p 6. See 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 49; "History in this sense is a particular method of studying the present with the help of facts of the past.'
- 31 BME, LT, p 186.
- 32 ibid.
- 33 op cit, p 189.
- 34 See V B Shklovskii on khaltura, of which he distinguishes two types, Greek and Tartar, in 'Zagotovki II' (1928), Gs, pp 351 - 352. See also Chapter 7.
- 35 BME, LT, p 191 - 2.
- 36 op cit. p 189.
- 37 op cit, p 205, and diary entry, March 7, 1927; see previous chapter.
- 38 BME, diary entries, 15 and 24 February 1928.
- 39 Quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 116.
- 40 BME, op cit, p 194.
- 41 BME, op cit, p 197.
- 42 BME, op cit, pp 197 - 206.
- 43 BME, op cit, pp 204 - 5.
- 44 BME, op cit, p 201.
- 45 BME, op cit, p 227.
- 46 BME, op cit, p 371.
- 47 BME, diary entry, 7 March 1928.

- 48 BME, 'Problemy kino-stilistiki', Poetika kino, M - L, 1927, p 24.
- 49 L Ia Ginzburg, Chps, p 65.
- 50 BME, LT p 314.
- 51 Letter of 27.11.1928, quoted in. BME, 'Iz pisem k V. B. Shklovskomu', Neva, 1987, 6, p 159.
- 52 BME, LT, p 83.
- 53 op cit, p 84.
- 54 op cit, p 163.
- 55 ibid.
- 56 op cit, p 265.
- 57 op cit, p 277.
- 58 ibid.
- 59 op cit, p 345.
- 60 op cit, p 369.
- 61 See R O Jakobson, 'Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum (4 oktiabria 1886 - 24 noiabria 1959)', International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics, 1963, 6, p 164: "It is necessary to say that in this newly invented documentary approach as well Eikhenbaum revealed incomparably greater penetration than inveterate source scholars. The freshness of his juxtapositions, the unflagging hatred for the official phrase, for literature about the classics 'frozen at an iconographical point of view', deep knowledge and consistent awareness of inner continuity and the international background, and in particular, as Berkov justly noted, 'a living historical feeling', all this lent a high historico-cultural value to Eikhenbaum's late excurses..."
- 62 op cit, <sup>P</sup><sub>L</sub> 281, 288.
- 63 op cit, p 283.
- 64 ibid.
- 65 op cit, p 250.
- 66 ibid, pp 250 - 251, my italics.
- 67 Iu N Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii', PILK, p 280.
- 68 BME, LT, p 310.

- 69 op cit, p 141.
- 70 BME, diary entry, 6,3.28.
- 71 Iu N Tynianov, op cit, PILK, p 280.
- 72 BME, LT, p 247.
- 73 ibid, my italics.
- 74 op cit, p 354.
- 75 op cit, p 385.
- 76 op cit, p 389.
- 77 op cit, p<sup>P</sup><sub>L</sub>388, 389.
- 78 Shklovskii, letter of 11.12.28, in BME, 'Iz pisem k V. B. Shklovskomu', Neva, 1987, 6, p 157.
- 79 ibid.
- 80 Letter of 27 November 1928, op cit, p 156.
- 81 ibid.
- 82 BME, op cit, p<sup>P</sup><sub>L</sub>334, 335.
- 83 BME, op cit, p 29.
- 84 BME, op cit, p 36.
- 85 See, eg, BME, 'Nekrasov', (1922), Lit , p 94.
- 86 BME, LT, p 104.
- 87 BME, op cit, p 117.
- 88 BME, 'Molodoi Tolstoi', in O lit, p 36.
- 89 BME, LT, p<sup>P</sup><sub>L</sub>118.
- 90 BME, diary entry, 1 March 1928.
- 91 BME, LT, pp 339 - 340.
- 92 op cit, p 341.
- 93 BME, LT, pp 363 - 364.
- 94 V B Shklovskii, Tf, p 16.
- 95 op cit, p 39.
- 96 op cit, p 81.
- 97 BME, diary entry, 28 February 1928.

- 98 Letter of 7.11.28, quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 119.
- 99 Letter of 27.11.29, quoted in op cit, pp 119 - 120.
- 100 Letter of 27.11.28, quoted in op cit, p 119.
- 101 letter of 27.11.28, quoted in op cit, p 120.
- 102 ibid; see also Iu N Tynianov, PILK, pp 531 - 532.
- 103 Letter of 16.2.29, quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 120.
- 104 Letter of 14.11.28, quoted in V B Shklovskii, Gs, p 519.
- 105 Novyi Lef, 1928, 12, pp 35 - 37; reprinted in PILK, pp 282 -283.
- 106 Letter quoted in PILK, p 533.
- 107 ibid.
- 108 op cit, p 282.
- 109 op cit, p 283.
- 110 op cit, p 282.
- 111 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 49.
- 112 PILK, p 283.
- 113 op cit, p 282.
- 114 op cit, pp 533 - 534.
- 115 Iu. G Oksman, letter to BME, 7 February 1949, 'Stranitsy..', pp 160 - 161.

## Chapter VI

### THE JOURNAL

- 1        Moi vremennik: Literature
  - Autobiography: 'Gakrab'
  - Autobiography: 'Flight'
  - Autobiography: 'Magical Anatomy'
  - Autobiography: 'Romantic Failures'
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- 2        Moi vremennik: Science, Criticism, Miscellany
  - 'Literaturnaia domashnost''
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THE JOURNAL

1 Moi vremennik: Literature

Eikhenbaum began to work on the second volume of his Tolstoi monograph soon after publication of the first volume in 1928.<sup>1</sup> Lev Tolstoi. Shestidesiatye gody was written on the same lines as the first volume, but was not published until 1931. However, Eikhenbaum consolidated his new approach with another book, Moi vremennik<sup>2</sup>, which came out in July 1929, before decisive confirmation of his worst fears for literature came in the state-inspired campaign against Zamiatin and Pil'niak, which began in August. The closure of the OPOIAZ non-periodical series Poetika and the rout of the 'Formalist school' followed in December. But evidence of "a purge in all areas of cultural life"<sup>3</sup> accumulated from the beginning of 1929 with the arrest of the director of the Pushkin House in Leningrad in January and the campaign against 'apoliticism' in the Academy of Sciences in the spring. Moi vremennik should be considered against this background of increasing state pressure on cultural life. A compilation of autobiographical writing and articles, both published and unpublished, written over the previous two years, it presented once more, in concentrated form, all the issues involved in Eikhenbaum's question 'how to be a writer', and added a new personal literary element.

In terms of genre, the book was a new departure for Eikhenbaum, since it was conceived in the form of a journal with different sections: Literature, Science, Criticism and Miscellany. A journal (which traditionally had its own editorial 'line'). was, as Eikhenbaum pointed out in a prefatory note 'To the reader', the opposite of a miscellany or an anthology (of work by authors of various opinions); it was also a genre "with which contemporary editorial boards have so little success".<sup>4</sup> To *imagine* this genre, Eikhenbaum noted pointedly, had been interesting, if

perhaps only a jeu d'esprit, "a game for the *imagination* [my italics]"<sup>5</sup>. In this way, he announced to the alert reader that his 'journal' sought to be independent in a literary-political setting in which independent thought might live in the individual imagination but could scarcely find direct public expression in print. The note also served as a signal to the reader to read with care, and be aware of Aesopian language.

Ginzburg noted on several occasions Eikhenbaum's perception of himself as a writer (pisatel'skoe samooshchushchenie<sup>6</sup>). It pervaded all his work as a literary scholar and critic, but resulted in only one work of fiction, an "historical caricature or historical farce"<sup>7</sup>, Marshrut v bessmertie. Zhizn' i podvigi chukhlomskogo dvorianina i mezhdunarodnogo leksikografa Nikolaia Petrovicha Makarova, which attracted little attention when it was published in 1935. Other scholars have seen Eikhenbaum's self-perception as a writer differently, as an ambition responsible for his departure from literary theory; this argument depends on how the word 'writer' is understood and we shall consider it in the following chapter. However, a short summary of the argument will help in assessing Moi vremennik. The evidence for Eikhenbaum's literary ambitions during the 1920s is based on the early biographical chapters of Lev Tolstoi and on short and infrequent (four or five in all) diary entries over two years at the end of the twenties. Of these the most substantial entry occurred in March 1928, when Eikhenbaum was writing the beginning of his monograph:

"I am writing strangely, not at all as I did before: in the style of semi-fiction or memoir. That is how it should be. In fact I am still going to write something 'fictional' ('belletricheskoe') some time - not a novel of course. It seems to me that Vitia was right and that now Venia's [Kaverin's] or Iurii's fiction is an easier path, a path to success, to the public. Vitia remains a revolutionary, all the same."<sup>8</sup>

If we recall that Kaverin's Skandalist (1928) and Tynianov's 1929 novel about Griboedov, Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara, both successful novels, had, in different ways, strong contemporary sub-texts, it seems that Eikhenbaum saw in fiction an "easier path, a path to success" to the same difficult goal he was pursuing in Lev Tolstoi, that of communicating to "the public" a paradigm of contemporary ethics in a work of scholarship. While the early chapters of Lev Tolstoi might be said, by OPOIAZ criteria, to have been 'fictionalised' to some degree, as one



part of Eikhenbaum's overall change of method and purpose in the book, the literary section of Moi vremennik was a direct attempt at writing "something 'fictional', [...] not a novel [...]".

Following Shklovskii in Tret'ia fabrika, Eikhenbaum used his own life as material for literature and gave one answer to the question 'how to be a writer' by writing about himself. But his autobiographical narrative is less concerned with 'how to be a writer' than with how he became involved in literature. The sections of narrative trace the path towards his emergence as a literator in OPOIAZ, and contain the omissions and glosses typical of literary autobiography. Although Eikhenbaum's entry to OPOIAZ and the events of the revolutionary period are merely named at the end of the narrative as the point to which his apprenticeship had led, and not described in detail, they remain, to use his term from 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt', the historical 'sign of meaning' under which the whole is organised, or interpreted. For example, in the autobiography the five years of Eikhenbaum's professional literary journalism as a post-Symbolist critic from 1912 to 1917 have receded into the background (become 'incidental' (sluchainye) in his term) and are mentioned only as "several articles in journals and newspapers"<sup>9</sup> by a "literator of undefined party"<sup>10</sup>. In contrast to this, the advent of OPOIAZ stands out in high relief. We shall come back later to this question of selection and emphasis, but we can say that Eikhenbaum imposed a certain retrospective pattern on this narrative of his life up to 1918, even when, as in the first part of his autobiography, 'Fragments from a Genealogy', this is not immediately apparent.

#### Autobiography: 'Gakrab'

The first section, 'Gakrab' (Heb., hakrab - battle), subtitled 'Fragments from a Genealogy', is exceptional, since it is the only work in the book not wholly written by Eikhenbaum. It is a memoir of his grandfather, a poet, chess-player, cantor and Talmudic scholar, taken from an 1860 edition of Rassvet, a pro-Enlightenment (secular) periodical for Russian Jews, published in Odessa. This, however, is not made clear to the reader until the end of the piece. Initially we are told only that it concerns the author of a poem about chess, 'Gakrab', written in Hebrew, familiar to Eikhenbaum from childhood. What is the function of this apparently anomalous piece of writing in relation to the rest of the autobiography and to the book as a whole?

On a literary level the use of this memoir from Rassvet was probably motivated by the current popularity of memoir as a genre, by the undoubted charm of its narrative style and the exotic quality, for a twentieth-century Russian reader, of the details of Jewish religious life in nineteenth-century shtetls. Eikhenbaum's introduction focused on these aspects. Initially any connection with Eikhenbaum himself is apparently absent; the subject of the memoir is one Iakov Moiseevich Gel'ber. But with Gel'ber's change of name to Eikhenbaum, the link becomes clear and the story begins to function in other ways as well, in part as an exploration of literary and ethnic background.

For the purposes of Eikhenbaum's autobiography Iakov Eikhenbaum's activity as a poet was important as evidence of the workings of heredity, of an inherited inclination to literary pursuits which emerged in spite of an upbringing almost entirely deprived of literature<sup>11</sup>:

“The law of heredity, of which, for some reason, my parents did not think (Lesgaft categorically denied it), led me [...] to the historico-philological faculty of Petersburg University.”<sup>12</sup>

We might note here that Eikhenbaum did not apparently consider that the generations of Biblical and Talmudic study described in the memoir might in themselves, without his grandfather's activity as a poet, have provided a strong predisposition to the study of literature, if heredity is taken to function as he described it. But this was not the point at issue for him. He was concerned to place himself in another way. Heredity here functions as Eikhenbaum's idea, in opposition to the ideas of Lesgaft and, by association, of his parents, who were both doctors. In other sections of the autobiography we learn that Lesgaft was a biologist of the generation of the 1860s, the founder of the Vol'naia vysshaia shkola where Eikhenbaum studied anatomy for a year, and also taught his mother.

Eikhenbaum laid a pattern of allusions which gave a picture of him as a believer in the (asocial, anti-progressive) notion of heredity before modern genetics, as opposed to the (progressive, utilitarian) ideas of “a scientific world-view”<sup>13</sup>, which he encountered in his exhaustive exploration of the human body, but which, however, could not answer his question, “*what* [the person is made] *for*”<sup>14</sup>. Literature, for Eikhenbaum, was the gift of heredity. In later sections

the pursuit of literature appears again, grouped as it is here, in association with Eikhenbaum's paternal grandfather and his many vocations, which allowed, as it were, space for the irrational and for metaphysical questions, and for Eikhenbaum's own searches for a vocation. All this is sharply dissociated from his childhood and his parents, particularly his mother, who is associated with rationality, principled austerity, a scientific world-view, Lesgaft and, by extension, as we shall see, with materialism.

Another question posed by Eikhenbaum's use of the memoir of his grandfather is the importance he attached to declaring himself Jewish, at least by paternal descent, although in a later section of the autobiography he made it clear that his mother was Russian.<sup>15</sup> In introducing the article as "leading deep into the Jewish eighteenth-century exotic"<sup>16</sup> he implicitly distanced himself from the 'exotic' life it described. Nevertheless a specifically and strongly Jewish memoir occupied the first pages of Eikhenbaum's book, and his positive connection to it was made clear. The following section of the autobiography, 'Flight', continued the Jewish motif implicitly in an account of his childhood in Voronezh dominated by his sense of difference from other (Russian) boys and families, which is expressed in part in the contrast of a Gogolian list of Voronezh surnames with Eikhenbaum's patently Jewish name<sup>17</sup>.

Why did Eikhenbaum place this stress on the Jewish part of his family background? Did it have a wider, not exclusively personal or literary function? One might suppose that with the rise of "a new wave of anti-Semitism, which reached its peak in 1928 and 1929"<sup>18</sup> Eikhenbaum saw such a celebration of Jewish creativity as an extension of his "work as act", in this case the countering of anti-Semitism by affirmation. But we have no supporting evidence for this. It is more likely that Eikhenbaum gave the Jewish family theme a prominent position in his autobiography for personal reasons, to establish and find antecedents for part of his own identity. This willingness to identify himself affectionately with the paternal, Jewish side of his family was in itself striking; many, and perhaps most of the Jewish intelligentsia of the capitals, were highly assimilated, to a greater or lesser degree alienated from themselves as Jews and certainly from Judaism. Shklovskii's ironic claim, in a public 'letter' to Roman Jakobson of 1922 full of Biblical references, about "the fat book, which my father read from right to left,

my mother read from left to right, and I do not read at all”<sup>19</sup>, may have been a canard, but it also expressed the distance of many Soviet Jewish intellectuals from Judaism, while, unusually, identifying its author as Jewish. Eikhenbaum and his brother, as he made clear later in the section called ‘Journey through Europe’, were not taught Hebrew and had no contact with their paternal grandfather; indeed technically they were not Jewish, either in terms of religion or nationality, since their mother was Russian.

If no more, Eikhenbaum’s inclusion of this memoir argues at least a desire to find connections with his father’s Jewish family and to struggle against the erasure of these connections; he had “searched out (razyskal)”<sup>20</sup> the memoir (probably on his way back from a visit to Odessa in 1927<sup>21</sup>), and hoped to find more details about his grandfather in Zhitomir, where he had lived from 1850. But this pre-revolutionary centre of Jewish life had become a tabula rasa, rebuilt after the Civil War:

“Two years ago I returned from Odessa to Leningrad through Zhitomir. A clean, quiet, recently rebuilt station. I stood for a while on the platform, bought fruit from a woman and set off again.

There was no one to ask about the ‘ancient poem’ and its author,”<sup>22</sup>

In the same understated way, Eikhenbaum drew a parallel between this incident and the 1924 Soviet edition of his grandfather’s poem ‘Gakrab’, which was anonymous, while the Russian edition of 1897 had not only his name, but his portrait and a preface. “The author”, Eikhenbaum remarked mildly, “has turned into a scholarly problem. Is it not in this way that many scholarly problems arise? Does not scholarship develop on a basis of oblivion?”<sup>23</sup>

In literary terms, as we noted above, the motivation of Eikhenbaum’s use of the memoir seems clear; its inclusion reflected the OPOIAZ view of the important genres of the day (biography, memoir, diaries) and provided a stylistic contrast to Eikhenbaum’s own writing. Thematically, as the succeeding parts of the autobiography show, its function was to complement and extend into the past the pattern that Eikhenbaum found in his life: a passion for literature, seen as his grandfather’s legacy to him, allowed Eikhenbaum to recognise in literary studies a final haven after several years of wandering in other disciplines.

Autobiography: 'Flight', 'Magical Anatomy', 'Romantic Failures', 'Journey through Europe', 'Poetry and the Elemental'.

The remaining parts of the autobiography are arranged, apparently chronologically, by different phases of Eikhenbaum's life, first in Voronezh and later in St.Petersburg. They are written to be read as a whole, but each section is written in a somewhat different style, and this slight dislocation makes the reader aware of the narrative as a construction, and not an apparently seamless 'reproduction' of the past. In 'Flight', the section on his childhood which immediately follows the memoir of his grandfather, Eikhenbaum signalled this intention to construct (and therefore to select and modify) his narrative to the reader. Having given Voronezh (in contrast to Zhitomir) a saturated literary background from Voina i mir, he remarked:

"Voronezh was necessary to me not for a fabula, but for childhood. If now it seems like a fabula (fabuliarnym) to me, then only because every past has the character of plot (siuzhetnoe) in itself. The dust of time makes the most ordinary objects like those in museums."<sup>24</sup>

The important phrase here is "every past has the character of plot in itself" (vsiakoe proshloe samo po sebe siuzhetno). Eikhenbaum spoke of the past as the material of siuzhet, plot or deliberately constructed narrative, in contrast to the past as fabula, the simple consecutive order of events, using Shklovskii's terms from the early days of OPOIAZ. This was not simply an indication of literary technique. To see one's past as siuzhetnoe, and therefore to see in it a shape or pattern and a direction, is to give it a meaning which the succession of events by themselves may not offer. Eikhenbaum was asserting the potential existence of meaning in every past. His reference to objects in museums, in spite of a misleading association with a dead, static past, complements this. Again the clue is OPOIAZ language. Veshch', a tangible object, was the OPOIAZ word for an artistic work, whether writing, painting or sculpture, a thing made by the artist, above all, a thing made to be felt (oshchutimaia). 'Museum' here denotes a quality of attention, a place where concentrated attention was paid to the things of art, made to be felt. In the last section of his autobiography Eikhenbaum used the word 'exhibition' in a similar way, in the context of writing verse:

“To make a word into a thing (veshch’) (and in that is the whole business of literature), one must place it in the same way as things (veshchi) are placed in an exhibition.”<sup>25</sup>

In the same way he placed his autobiography as a veshch’, a work selectively constructed from the fabula of his past with a siuzhet, a shape, direction and pattern of meaning.

### ‘Flight’

The title which Eikhenbaum gave to this section about his childhood referred specifically to a traumatic attempt to run away from home, and more widely to flight from the life and customs of Voronezh, to which he felt irremediably alien, but principally to escape from his mother’s unhappy authority and the values associated with her:

“Not only our name, but our life is strange: no flowers at the windows, no cats, no bottles of fruit liqueur, no evenings around the samovar, no visitors, no gossip - nothing that is customary in Voronezh and creates comfort. In the house mother is in charge, constantly busy and nervous. Father lives on the line as a railway doctor. In the rooms it is too strict and clean. Mother’s office with medical instruments; the drawing room where lady patients sit. No superfluous objects of any kind, not even an oleograph with a sunset and a boat on the walls. In everything a kind of emotional turbulence, a kind of failure, which has come out as pride. Mother demands that both I and my brother should be top of the class. [...]

We do not live in the Voronezh way, and our name is not a Voronezh name, and my childhood is not a Voronezh childhood.

I dream of other towns. ‘Petersburg’ sounds magical to me. In Voronezh my life will not go well.”<sup>26</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s first attempt at escape from this harshly ordered household ended in punishment by silence and the sense of himself as a degenerate (vyrodok). His second, successful flight did take him to St Petersburg, initially to the Voenno-meditsinskaia Akademiia, and then to study anatomy with Petr Frantsevich Lesgaft, where he remained, as we saw above, within his mother’s rationalist, natural-scientific value system. From this, too, he succeeded in freeing himself in time.

### ‘Magical Anatomy’

In this section, which dealt with his first period in the capital, Eikhenbaum introduced a new motif, the state, which was connected in part with these essentially materialist associations. He arrived in St Petersburg in 1905, on the eve of the revolution. Straight from lectures he would attend student political meetings in the hope of arriving at an independent judgement. He found, instead, that others judged him for his inadequate provincial vision, because he did “not think of the state, [was] near-sighted”<sup>27</sup>:

“I was attacked by melancholy. Petersburg is not a town, but a state. Here one cannot live, but must have a programme, convictions, enemies, illegal literature, one must make speeches, listen to resolutions point by point, vote and so on. One must, in a word, have a different vision, a different brain.

But I want simply to live. I do not want either to tremble or to shake my fist and cry: ‘Uzho, stroitel’ chudotvornyi!’”<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the state had two faces. Eikhenbaum associated the Petersburg-state with revolutionary politics and at the same time with Mednyi vsadnik and the Falconnet statue of Peter I which “stuck out on its crag, a quotation from Pushkin”<sup>29</sup>, and survived the flood of 1905; “For a second time the poem came to nothing”<sup>30</sup>. He repeated this association of state/autocrat, familiar in nineteenth-century literature, in a slightly different context in ‘Journey through Europe’, which described his literary studies at the University. In an introductory vignette, intended to be read analogically, Eikhenbaum drew a silent parallel between Peter, unnamed but referred to as ‘Otets Otechestviiia’ and ‘Stroitel’”, and the autocrat of his own day. The state in this instance was Peter’s rectilinear, geometrical project of twelve colleges, analogous to Stalin’s project of bringing the universities into line. As he had in earlier sections, Eikhenbaum also signalled an oppositional cluster, in this case, the anarchic energy of “life”, and the work of “German academics and Russian poets”:

“Yes, I am in old Petersburg, in the centre of the Petersburg state. Here the ‘Father of the Fatherland’ made a stir and gave his orders. The University did not come into his system - he required a building for twelve colleges. It was built as simply, quickly and as rectilinearly as the whole state. And like the whole state, it came out not quite as required [...] Life, where and how it could, resisted. Bureaucrats with clean shaven

chins cried 'Vivat' to the emperor during the day, but put their beards under the pillow at night and woke up sweating from terrible state nightmares.

Every day new decrees appeared threatening disasters and ruin. Great and small landowners were obliged to build on the geometrically outlined expanse of Vasil'evskii Island [...]

To the joy of the frightened landowners, great and small, the Builder himself did not live to the next year. [...] The Petersburg state remained unfinished and unroofed. German academics and Russian poets began to walk on Vasil'evskii Island. They began to build on the avenues of unbuilt houses with profound scholarship and lofty odes.[...]"<sup>31</sup>

To return to Eikhenbaum's original dual characterisation of the state both by autocracy and the harsh certainties of revolutionary politics, to which we can now add priamolineinost' as a common factor, what did he place in opposition to this? Lesgaft and anatomy were a kind of middle ground. On the one hand Lesgaft (also named Petr, but of German extraction), with his mockery of orthodoxies and his huge enthusiasm for his science, was an ally "in the struggle against the Petersburg state"<sup>32</sup>; on the other, natural science could not answer metaphysical questions. Eikhenbaum wrote: "I need to free myself both from the state and from the human skeleton."<sup>33</sup> He found the antidote to the fixed certainties of both 'states' and natural science in the opera house, where he was not required to judge or be judged, and where: "...Tannhauser curses Rome. [...] Wagner is my weapon against the state that has surrounded me."<sup>34</sup> In December 1906 he began to study music at Rapgof's Muzykal'naia shkola.

#### 'Romantic Failures'

Music was important to Eikhenbaum throughout his life, particularly during critical periods, as, for example, the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s<sup>35</sup>. This section of his autobiography describes his early experience of music and his effort to make music his profession (in somewhat the same manner as Pasternak later hoped to do); it is highly stylised and selective. As in earlier sections of his autobiography, Eikhenbaum established here a strong connection to his childhood, when music was a matter of compulsory study. Then, we are told, the violin had been his instrument, while his brother's was the piano, which he had longed to play. There was to be a family duet, and his mother tolerated no deviation from the allotted roles.



In Petersburg Eikhenbaum rejected anatomy, his mother's subject, and the violin, the musical instrument she had decided should be his. In this section Eikhenbaum personalised the instrument, and stressed its female gender; the violin of Voronezh is a "fashionable lady", whose "voice did not please [him]"<sup>36</sup>, a "madame [who] shrills and sings out of tune/acts insincerely (fal'shivit)"<sup>37</sup>. Eikhenbaum also sexualised the relationship; the violin and he are "unsuccessful lovers", she is accustomed to "passionate embraces", Eikhenbaum "touches her clumsily and timidly". The relationship "was an obvious mesalliance", and led to "deception and betrayal"<sup>38</sup>. The device is repeated and emphatic; we are presented with a male-female relationship (older female, young boy) which demanded passion and true reciprocal response and has failed. The parallel with Eikhenbaum and his mother is overt. There remained the possibility of a responsive, loving, male-male relationship. The same device, adjusted to this possibility, is used in the account which follows of Eikhenbaum's musical life in St Petersburg.

There Eikhenbaum took up his brother's instrument, the piano, which had been forbidden to him as a child. Both the Voronezh upright piano of his youth, his "true love"<sup>39</sup>, and the Petersburg Bechstein are personalised and stressed as male. When, as a child, Eikhenbaum "caressed the white body of his keys. He [the Voronezh piano] answered from the depths with sonorous chords [...and] moved [him] with true passion"<sup>40</sup> so that he began to cry. But in Petersburg the Bechstein "answered with an indifferent, cold, metallic voice"<sup>41</sup> and was "sexless and soulless"<sup>42</sup>. Response is primary in Eikhenbaum's writing about his music studies as a boy and as a young man, whether the instrument is personalised as male or female. What he seeks is 'answering'. He repeats that he was quite alone as he struggled to elicit a response from the "gloomy", "philistine" Petersburg instrument, and to ignore the amorous activities of his neighbour:

"I am quite alone. I need a friend who has been let in to my secret plans and hopes, and who sympathises with them. There is no one near me but the black concert grand."<sup>43</sup>

In this account Eikhenbaum did not find in music the brother/father/friend that he hoped to rediscover (while he was studying music, his brother Vsevolod escaped from prison where he was held on serious political charges, and fled to Paris), but he did make the final stages of his journey away from his childhood and his unhappy relationship with his mother, which he

referred to as the Voronezh injury:

“With music I treated the Voronezh injury (obida). In the Petersburg mansards, as in a glasshouse, my Voronezh childhood ripened artificially, turning into youth. Now I have to make an effort and step into life. [...]

I return to the Petersburg state.”<sup>44</sup>

The “Voronezh injury” is, as we have seen, one of the main constructive elements in the first three sections of Eikhenbaum’s autobiography after the memoir of his grandfather. Eikhenbaum selected and modified events in his life to focus on this area, both directly and metaphorically. In another version of these events, Eikhenbaum’s letters to his parents between 1905 and 1911, we learn that he studied both the violin and the piano in St Petersburg, that he studied music at Rapgof’s School and literature at the University at the same time from 1907, and that he did not resolve the conflict between the two disciplines until November 1909.<sup>45</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s autobiographical convention, emphasised by his omission of dates, that these activities were separate and sequential, becomes apparent. His use of a more obvious device, the metaphor by which the character of an inanimate instrument and the response he elicits from it <sup>are</sup> made to stand for the character and response of people close to him, is also exposed. In his daughter’s reading of his letters, Eikhenbaum’s “relations with his mother became tender”<sup>46</sup> in 1907, following Vsevolod’s arrest and flight, when Eikhenbaum “received the love of his mother, of which he had been deprived in childhood”<sup>47</sup>. But we need not therefore conclude that Eikhenbaum’s letters home at twenty-one contradict or bely an autobiography written when he was 43; rather they are evidence of the function of genre, and of variations in time, distance, the addressees and the author himself, and both are truthful. But, if we consider Eikhenbaum’s autobiography, it remains striking that, fifteen years after his mother’s death, and twelve years after his father died, he required the highly metaphorical language of ‘Romantic Failures’ to write about the “Voronezh injury” (a typically indirect locution), and to complement the direct but limited and restrained impression of his relationship with his mother in ‘Flight’.

### ‘Journey through Europe’

On Eikhenbaum’s return to the Petersburg ‘state’, that is, as we saw, to the realities of political power, in both its established and revolutionary manifestations, he found “the same struggle”<sup>48</sup> between these aspects of the state going on in the historico-philological faculty, where he decided to study literature in the Slavo-Russian Department in February 1907. It was “the same ancient struggle of two cultures: Slavo-Russian and Romano-German”<sup>49</sup>, Slavophiles and Westerners, lodged one at each end of the long main corridor. “I did not feel,” Eikhenbaum wrote, “any inclination at all to Slavophilism”<sup>50</sup>; the lectures of the distinguished A A Shakhmatov<sup>51</sup> did not attract him, the literature course recalled Voronezh, which he “had begun to forget, and to which [he] did not wish to return”<sup>52</sup>. From Eikhenbaum’s letters we know that he transferred to the Romano-German department more than two years later in September 1909<sup>53</sup>. In this account, however, the change appears almost immediate and as if accidental:

“I was already wandering again, not in the streets, but along the University corridor. And then, without leaving the building, I suddenly found myself in Europe. [...] I found myself in the atmosphere of German Romanticism, the Provencal lyric, the Old French epic, Dante’s Divine Comedy. My searches had come to an end.”<sup>54</sup>

This was the beginning of the ‘Journey through Europe’ of Eikhenbaum’s title, a journey which lasted two years and which he saw as the foundation of his life work in literature. With this discovery of Western European literature Eikhenbaum found that he fell in with the mood and concerns of the period as manifested in Symbolism; for the first time in his autobiography his perception of history (in its synonym ‘the epoch’) enters his narrative:

“The main thing was that the epoch was interested in us and helped us. This was perceptible not so much in the fourth lecture hall itself as outside its limits. We were in the flow - some sort of historical gulf-stream flowed round us, warming and inspiring us.”<sup>55</sup>

Part of this culture was German Romanticism, to which Eikhenbaum was introduced, as he acknowledged, by Zhirmunskii, of whom he gave a mainly sympathetic anonymous portrait. Zhirmunskii became the first of a series of close male friends. As we saw, Eikhenbaum made the painful absence of this type of relationship a main motif of the previous section:

“I looked at him as one in love. We became friends, and my journey through Europe acquired an altogether romantic character. Novalis, Tieck, the Schlegel brothers, the

English pre-Raphaelites - all this I began to know and love thanks to our friendship. He was a romantic, who had flowered in the gardens of Petersburg Symbolism. With the flowers of Symbolism he withered too, having turned into a classical scholar. My Voronezh childhood saved me from Symbolism.”<sup>56</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum gave the impression that his relationship with Zhirmunskii and Symbolism were coterminous, and that their influence was over before he left University in 1912. In fact his relationship with Zhirmunskii continued as a close literary and personal tie until at least 1918, when Shklovskii came to occupy an analogous role in his life, and, less closely, until 1922, when a serious, but not final, rift occurred. However, for the purposes of this autobiography, Eikhenbaum telescoped this relationship, in order, as we shall see, to dissociate himself from Symbolism and Acmeism and present himself as awaiting OPOIAZ.

In what sense was Eikhenbaum “saved ...from Symbolism”? In the terms of the Slavophile/Western struggle in which he has already presented literature at the University, Symbolism is a Westernising tendency. Voronezh is ne plus ultra Slav. Eikhenbaum represents himself at the end of two years of study of Western literature as not merely out of place, but out of place on a basis of “blood”:

“True, I sometimes began to be melancholy (toskovat’) amid this elegant European culture. I was surrounded by young men of Petersburg blood, while in me there sat a provincial wildness (dikarstvo).[...] I was drawn to Europe, but I did not want and did not know how to stylise myself.”<sup>57</sup>

Here blood is made equivalent to culture and experience (“Voronezh childhood”, “provincial wildness”) - which is also internal (“in me there sat..”). It is thanks to his internalised Voronezh experience that Eikhenbaum is incapable of stylising himself, and of remaining attached to Symbolism. Eikhenbaum uses blood not in the sense of race or, scientifically, of genetics, as a matter of physical differentiation, but metaphorically, along with culture, to express the transmission of temperamental particularity. “Petersburg blood” can logically refer only to cultural, not racial homogeneity; the phrase relates more to the old Moscow/Petersburg polarisation (as expressed for instance in Tolstoi), than to the essentialist discourse about blood, characterised by notions of purity and dilution and discredited in this century since the political exploitation of eugenics.

Blood, culture and the idea of heredity we noted earlier form part of a conceptual cluster that Eikhenbaum uses to express an idea of the nature of the individual in whom given propensities exist and will manifest themselves in one form or another. These concepts are also a means of placing oneself, or of belonging, both in the past and the present, as we saw earlier in Eikhenbaum's sense of his grandfather's talents as the source of his own. The widely varying backgrounds of his parents, his own early life in yet a third milieu, and the discovery of a 'home' in literature which his upbringing and experience had not led him to expect, gave greater force to questions of place and belonging, and of origins in the past. Discussing his plunge into studying Western literature Eikhenbaum wrote:

"My searches had come to an end. [The statue of] Peter had not pointed out to me in vain. The mixture of Jewish and Russian blood forms, apparently, a particular chemical compound which has an affinity with the blood of the Romano-German peoples."<sup>58</sup>

The prima facie absurdity of this statement to the late 20th century reader should not distract us; it affirms (and seeks to account for) the legitimate place of Eikhenbaum, himself a fusion of incongruous elements, within the great body of incongruities that makes up Western European literature, which nevertheless can be seen as a whole.

On Eikhenbaum's return "as a different person"<sup>59</sup> to the Slavo-Russian department where he finished his degree in 1912, one of the changes he found was that, with S A Vengerov at its head, "Slavo-Russian culture had obviously moved into the 19th-century"<sup>60</sup>. He gave a short anonymous portrait of Tynianov, whom he noticed for the first time in Vengerov's well-known Pushkin seminar:

"...a young man strongly resembling Pushkin asked to speak. In a voice that was not yet steady, but bold, he spoke against the student giving the paper. It was not the voice of a European, but nor was it that of a 'Slavo-Russian' student. During the time I had been on my journey, apparently, a new generation had appeared. I remembered that Pushkin student - and not in vain."<sup>61</sup>

## 'Poetry and the Elemental'

In this section, more than in any of the preceding ones, Eikhenbaum made his concept of history an explicit element of his narrative. History is stikhiia, the element of the title, and is an important factor in the choice and presentation of material in the whole autobiography. Initially we shall look at how Eikhenbaum in this, as in earlier sections, presents his own history by omission or selection.

In contrast to the detail of his years at the university, Eikhenbaum's account of his five years as a "budding literator of undefined party"<sup>62</sup> is sketchy. He presents himself as unallied, neither Symbolist nor Acmeist in sympathy, practising "literary scales and inventions"<sup>63</sup>, writing verse and "several articles in journals and newspapers".<sup>64</sup> His activity as a serious post-Symbolist philosophical critic is not mentioned and the sheer volume of work (more than fifty articles) is reduced. None of his important literary relationships of that time, with L Ia Gurevich, Iu. Nikol'skii and Zhirmunskii, is mentioned. His first sight of Shklovskii, at a Futurist meeting in 1914, which shocked and appalled him<sup>65</sup>, has been omitted. Six pages of verse take the place of an account of these and other activities. In this way Eikhenbaum emphasises the role of poetry in his literary apprenticeship, noting that Gumilev invited him to join the Acmeists. and printed two of his poems, and reinforcing the image of himself as literator rather than critic, scholar or theoretician.

Both what Eikhenbaum selects and what he omits in this version of his life between 1912 and 1918 are oriented to the advent of the war, revolution and OPOIAZ, "the muscular movements of history"<sup>66</sup>, the 'element<sup>-al</sup>' of his title. He presents himself as awaiting these elemental movements, as it were unaffiliated, not seriously involved in the issues of the day. At work here is an idea, similar to the idea Ginzburg derived from Hegel, which we noted in a previous chapter, of "historic and non-historic periods also in the life of the individual, [which] may be realised or unrealised in the categories of historicism"<sup>67</sup>. For example, in Eikhenbaum's account of his student life in Petersburg, Symbolism, historically influential though it was in general, did not present itself to him as an historic movement in his own life, though he perceived its effect in the "historic gulf-stream"<sup>68</sup> within which his studies took place. The

period of Symbolism for Eikhenbaum was thus in Ginzburg's terms historic, but unrealised. Similarly, the revolution of 1905, though he was present and to some degree involved, was not the time of his most direct involvement with history.

In what sense did Eikhenbaum think of history as *elemental*? We have seen in previous chapters how in 1921, for example, he understood history as the background and basis of all human actions, formed by the totality of preceding actions by individuals. Eikhenbaum's idea of history as elemental focused on one aspect of his 1921 view - history as the inescapable context and ground of human life and action - and left aside, for the moment, the role of individuals in creating it.

In conceiving history as elemental Eikhenbaum also chose to ignore its linear chronological dimension and was thus able to see history in terms of types of occurrence, regardless of when particular events occurred. This refusal of chronology is part of the thinking that gave rise to his use of historical analogy in his work from 1927. We see this view of history in the preceding section of the 1929 autobiography, following comments on the effect of heredity on him and in the context of his 1909 university studies, where, as we saw, "the same struggle"<sup>69</sup> as in Peter's time was taking place:

"People wrongly confuse history with chronology. History is reality: like nature, like matter, it is motionless. It is formed by the simple fact of death and birth - a fact of nature with no relation at all to time. Chronology and time are an abstraction, an invention, a convention which regulates family life and state service."<sup>70</sup>

To speak of history, or indeed nature or matter, as motionless is unsettling; later we shall see that, in the context of the 1914 - 1918 War, Eikhenbaum does attribute movement to history. Here, however, in the section covering approximately the years 1907 - 1912, motionlessness as a metaphor for history, associated with the borrowed elemental attributes of scale, irrepressibility and status as the agent of natural law, conveys vividly the sense of stasis and at the same time of impending, inexorable change of this period before the revolutionary events. Eikhenbaum has extended and adapted the elemental metaphor frequently used to describe the revolution in the immediate post-revolutionary period.

In a further extension the laws of history are also elemental and natural forces. History has become something close to a law of nature to which Eikhenbaum opposes artificial human constructions, as, for example, culture in the last line of the passage below, which probably refers here to the weak and compromised (in Eikhenbaum's view<sup>71</sup>) pre-revolutionary intelligentsia. To return to his metaphor, in order to divine the laws of the alien historical element the individual must interpret the odd signs and random events that indicate the disposition of the whole. From the point of view of one living in the period shortly before the revolutionary storm broke, Eikhenbaum wrote:

"The most important thing in life looks accidental, because it takes place according to the elemental laws of history. A person is young as long as he lives by the sense of the historical element and builds his life on it. The most untrustworthy activity, which usually ends in disaster, is diplomacy. History despises not only the diplomats of politics, but those of literature.

[...]

I was not a Symbolist, nor an Acmeist, because I lived by the sense of historical accident and waited for unexpected things. The time of uprisings and crises was approaching. Motionless in time, history was making muscular movements, like an animal turning round in its lair. Nature was on the march against culture."<sup>72</sup>

There is no doubt that in the first part of this passage Eikhenbaum was also writing of himself in 1929; the idea of building one's life by one's sense of the historical element was one that had informed his 1928 book on Tolstoi, as we have seen. Eikhenbaum saw himself as responding (like Tolstoi) to the challenges of history, while at the same time retaining his sense of himself, a dual and difficult task. Diplomacy, in his usage, indicates a failure to sustain both parts of the task, adapting oneself in whatever way to the concrete demands of history without maintaining a sense of personal integrity.

Eikhenbaum ended his autobiography with a brief list of the "historical accidents and [...] unexpected events" for which he presents himself as waiting in the passage above, and elsewhere in this section. A simple list, recorded with deliberate coolness, of upheavals which must have evoked an acute personal response in the memories of most of his original readers, it



rehearses the themes of other or further autobiographies which Eikhenbaum did not, as far as we know, write<sup>73</sup>. In this autobiography his purpose was to trace a single retrospective line through his early life, the indications of his future work, the wanderings which proved to lead to literature, up to the point at which he considered his work had started, the beginning of what he “invariably used to single out as the most outstanding period of his biography”<sup>74</sup> (1918 - 1922). These were the ‘accidents’ by which Eikhenbaum in 1929 understood his particular historical work, his own period of historical activity to have begun:

“War (a month before it, the death of my mother).

Revolution (a month before, the death of my father).

The October coup.

Hunger, cold, the death of my son.

Life around a trench stove.

Meat from the House of Scholars, the ark of the House of  
Litterateurs.

The cabins and decks of GIZ, the black, icy house of GIII.

The death of Blok, the destruction of Gumilev.

Viktor Shklovskii, who stopped me on the street.

Iurii Tynianov, still remembered from the Pushkin seminar.

‘OPOIAZ’.

These were all historical accidents and unexpected events.

These were the muscular movements of history. This was the elemental.

The time had come to expend one’s strength.”<sup>75</sup>

## Autobiography: Summary

If we attempt to summarise briefly this section on Eikhenbaum's autobiography, we can identify three main elements; the work belongs to the genre of literary autobiography with the selected omissions and emphases typical of the genre; it is constructed in order to make plain a certain retrospective historical pattern in Eikhenbaum's life, culminating in OPOIAZ and the revolutionary events. Although this historical point is the terminus ad quem of the autobiography, there is an important third element in it, the indispensable individual constituent of Eikhenbaum's view of history. This element is the difficult process of Eikhenbaum's development and self-definition, with several attempts in different directions, which is the subject of all but the first section of the work. In describing this, Eikhenbaum gave a model of the process of individualisation, of emerging as a lichnost', an important concept for him as early as 1921, in Molodoi Tolstoj, and in 'Nekrasov' in 1922, as we have seen. This model was central for Eikhenbaum, for without this concept of individualisation, the literary-political view of nineteenth-century literature which he put forward for twentieth-century consideration from 1927 loses an essential ethical dimension. We shall return to the relation of individuality to ethics in the following chapter; in the next section of this chapter we shall consider Eikhenbaum's view of 'Science' and 'Criticism' in his journal.

## 2 Moi vremennik: Science, Criticism, Miscellany

Under the rubric of Science Eikhenbaum collected the 1927 articles on literary byt which we have already considered, 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt' and 'Literatura i pisatel'. He added a third much shorter article, 'Literaturnaia domashnost', which appeared, also in 1927, as the preface of Literaturnye kruzhki i salony<sup>76</sup>, a book written by two of his pupils, Grits and Nikitin.

### 'Literaturnaia domashnost'

The ostensible subject of 'Literaturnaia domashnost' is the decline of domestic salon forms of verse and the almanac with the arrival of the literary journal in the late 1820s. Its subtext is

conflicting literary-political strategies, what Eikhenbaum called “the lack of understanding and disagreement of contemporaries”<sup>77</sup> about the proper tactics for the literary-political situation of the 1820s, but intended to be read for the 1920s.

Eikhenbaum set up a primary ‘open’/‘hidden’ opposition: the public, ‘stage’ (estradnaia) life of literature, and its more intimate ‘domestic’ life. To the ‘stage’ life belonged the professional writer, professional in the sense both of being paid for his work, and of making literature his whole work or livelihood. The journals which began to develop strongly in the 1820s and were, of course, subject to censorship, were also part of this ‘stage’ life of literature. In this context we should remember Eikhenbaum’s implied distinction in his prefatory note to Moi vremennik between the single editorial line of a journal and the multiple voices of almanacs and anthologies. To the domestic life of literature belonged the non-professional writer (diletant), less likely to publish or be paid for his work, and to that degree more independent, albums, almanacs, small private circles and groupings of writers. Eikhenbaum used a technique of indirect political reference throughout the article; we will take his description of the album’s function in the early 1800s as an example:

“Private (domashnie) albums were filled with verse [before the nineteenth century], but this verse did not travel beyond the limits of the albums. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in connection with a withdrawal from the court ode, these ‘private’ forms of poetry are used as a literary innovation, as a new genre, and at the same time the actual forms of circle or salon contact also acquire a new literary-byt significance. The principal verse genre of this period is the ‘album’ lyric, and the principal type of littérateur is the dilettante-poet, who already did not aspire to the position of a court ‘singer’, and did not yet need a public ‘stage’.”<sup>78</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum indicates political reference by 1) a signal word or phrase, which then shifts the context of the rest of the passage, 2) easily ignored pointers, and 3) the term literary-byt, which can nearly always be read as literary-political. Here “the withdrawal from the court ode” is the signal phrase, and, like the “already” and “yet” of the last two lines, also acts as a specific time cue. The period Eikhenbaum is describing here is that in which the Decembrist uprising was being, of necessity privately, planned. With the conspirators in mind, he proposed

semeistvennost'<sup>79</sup> as one form of domashnost'. Album verse in this context acquired a political character.

Tynianov had already described this movement of genres from private daily life (byt) into literature, with similar extra-literary implications, in 'Literaturnyi fakt' (1924)<sup>80</sup>. Here Eikhenbaum was making plain, or popularising, Tynianov's far less plain thesis, which was expressed almost telegraphically and in strictly literary terms. Eikhenbaum also extended the thesis; his categories here refer not only to the literary text proper, but to types of strategy, types of relations between writers, and, directly, to the writer's overall literary-byt/political position.

Without naming him as a Decembrist sympathiser, Eikhenbaum took Iazykov as a paradigm of the 'hidden' forms of activity; a private, 'domestic' poet, whose opposition to the developing journals, the "single market (edinotorgovitsa) of Russian literature"<sup>81</sup> took "a particularly sharp and principled form."<sup>82</sup> In case the intended political parallel with his day has not yet become apparent, Eikhenbaum risked a pun, on a variation in usage between the 1820s and 1920s; albums are "the main 'organs' ('organy') in which he [Iazykov] 'collaborates' (sotrudnichaet)"<sup>83</sup>. Eikhenbaum took care to date in the text the passages he quotes from Iazykov's letters, thus underlining their context, the failed Decembrist uprising. With two letters of January 1827, some time after the imprisonment of the conspirators, Eikhenbaum showed Iazykov as seriously opposed to Pushkin's new literary strategy, to work on a journal, Moskovskii vestnik, and to "stifle the [independent] almanacs"<sup>84</sup> to which he had been a major contributor in the Decembrist period. Eikhenbaum signalled the need to read a third letter of 1826 in a specific metaphorical way, by labelling it an 'outline' ('abris') of Iazykov's future (ie, post-Decembrist) life. In his reading Iazykov 'outlined' his intention, expressed in apparently non-specific, elevated language, vigorously to continue his "enlightened", ie, pro-reform, activity, but in retirement "in the country", ie, 'in (rural) Russia'. Iazykov wrote:

"I shall move/transfer (pereedu) forever, forever to live in the country (v derevniu) with books, with the passionate desire and firm efforts (krepkimi silami) further to enlighten myself, I shall spend the time in magnanimous (velikodushnykh) occupations, sacrificed to study and the Muse, perfectly free, without circumstances or conventions, forgetting everything except the sublime and the beautiful".<sup>85</sup>

Eikhenbaum presented Iazykov as defending those 'private', 'family' forms of literary activity which had been superseded by the brutal suppression of the reforms plotted in Petersburg, forms which were now, as he put it, "archaic for the end of the 20s"<sup>86</sup>. Pushkin, in similar circumstances, is presented as making a tactical transition, of which Iazykov strongly disapproves, from these to the more public, 'stage' forms of journalism and life as a professional writer.

Eikhenbaum expressed these literary-political differences, as one might expect, as a conflict between two different literary-byt systems, but it is interesting that his formulation of an opposition, one of his favourite means of setting up an argument, is not in this case fixed or invariable; he used this means to demonstrate the more complex political reality that writers working in such contrasting modes, whether in the 1820s or at a later time, may differ not at the level of political diagnosis, but, quite as intractably, at that of strategy and tactics, in their sense of *how* the problems of politics and literature are to be approached. In the case of the 1920s, one of many possible applications of this kind of thinking, which Eikhenbaum hinted at, is an understanding of the potential range of political understanding in principle between some writers publicly sympathetic to the party, and working as it were 'on stage', Maiakovskii for example, and others more openly opposed to the regime, and writing, to different degrees, in a 'private' or restricted mode, like Akhmatova<sup>87</sup>. Eikhenbaum's examples of domashnost in the preceding period included Rozanov's resurrection of the album, and the early Symbolist groupings, whose verse "was saturated, particularly in the first years [around 1905], with group semantics."<sup>88</sup>

Eikhenbaum's opposed categories were relative, intended to encourage complex (not literal-minded) literary-political thinking, and not intended to function as fixed, abstract literary theoretical concepts:

"As always in history, in any period one can find different forms and types coexisting - their appearances change, their literary and social meanings: the sign of historical characterisation moves from certain forms to others. These forms, like, indeed, everything in history, are relative - not one vanishes altogether or appears altogether anew."<sup>89</sup>

Like his longer 1927 articles, this short preface introduced a political-ethical subtext into an apparently apolitical discussion of literary history. From 1927 Eikhenbaum used this technique in order to expand and influence the perception of contemporary literary-political and ethical issues. In this he was by no means alone, and we shall return again in the last chapter to the significance of the concepts 'literature' and 'writer' in his milieu and the role this had in the fate of OPOIAZ. Eikhenbaum remarked at the end of this article: "History does not belong to the number of disinterested, purely theoretical sciences (if, in general, there are such things)."<sup>90</sup> Certainly literature had by now also ceased, whether by choice or imposition, to be a disinterested science for Eikhenbaum.

### Criticism

The Criticism section carries the significant subtitle 'The Cause (delo) of Literature' and consists of six articles on classic nineteenth-century writers, at least four of which had been published earlier in newspapers. As a collection they show the tenor of Eikhenbaum's literary-political and moral sympathies clearly, particularly in 'Literaturnaia kar'era L Tolstogo' (1928), 'Gogol' i "delo literary'" (1927) and 'Pisatel'skii oblik M Gor'kogo' (1927). Tolstoi is shown as a militant archaist, a paradigm of creative resistance to the historical pressures of several epochs, Gogol' as tragically unable to evolve under those pressures, and Gor'kii as the paradoxical defender of the intelligentsia, who had learned from Tolstoi the importance for a writer of both his 'fate' and his 'conduct' in history. These articles, which we discussed earlier, dominate the section; we shall consider the remaining articles on Turgenev, Nekrasov and Leskov below.

### 'Artistizm Turgeneva'

In this article Turgenev, not a highly respected writer in OPOIAZ circles, serves as a model (in a quite different way from Gogol') of the inability of a writer to respond creatively and with integrity to the successive challenges of history. Eikhenbaum constructs a figure of Turgenev which exemplifies his assertion in the last section of his autobiography: "History despises the diplomats not only of politics, but also of literature."<sup>91</sup> Initially the case, which Eikhenbaum makes with relentless humour, appears to be a matter of distasteful manners or style; Turgenev

bewails his fate in letters and then uses the same passages in books, he behaves like an actor, a coquette, a cynic; his life is causerie, an emploi de salon (salonnyi amplua). The reader feels a Tolstoian disapproval at work, and Eikhenbaum quotes Tolstoi frequently on Turgenev: Turgenev "plays with life"<sup>92</sup>, "With him all of life is a pretence of simplicity."<sup>93</sup>, he suffers from "the immodesty of enjoying sincere or insincere self-criticism"<sup>94</sup>.

However, Eikhenbaum constructs a serious argument from this style, which derives from the historical period - the 1830s and 1840s - when Turgenev began to write, and by which his whole development was conditioned:

"Turgenev has, overall, *one* style - the one which was worked out and matured in Russian literature (more in poetry than in prose) as a result of the struggle and polemics of the 30s and 40s. He does not create it [the style], but finishes it off, bringing it, within the limits of the possibilities of that stylistic system, to smoothness and beauty - regardless of whether he is writing a letter or a novel. Everything with him is 'stylistic' - the landscape and the hero and the lyric, but stylistic within bounds. That is why his works seem secondary, built on some other, more raw and 'natural' literature, as its finish or facing.[...] On the one hand Gogol' and Lermontov (the first stories and tales), on the other, Dal' and the 'sketch writers' [...] confronted each other at that time as two lines, between which Turgenev vacillated. Later, leaving his 'old manner' behind, Turgenev did not leave behind [these] traditions, but chose the path of merging them, refusing either to follow any single one of them (which, of course, would have made him 'second-rate'), or to attempt to work in several. Such a choice was bound to tell on the whole of Turgenev's writings and personal fate - to give it a particular historical colour."<sup>95</sup>

For Eikhenbaum it is this 'diplomacy', the decision to fuse or represent in one's work two opposing lines of literary activity that is "the most untrustworthy activity, that usually ends in disaster"<sup>96</sup>. How does this attempt at synthesis manifest itself? Eikhenbaum himself, as we saw in Chapter One, had tried to "merge" aspects of opposing traditions (in different circumstances, before 1917) and therefore, perhaps, condemned what he saw as Turgenev's attempt at synthesis the more strongly. He begins with contrasting Turgenev and Gogol'.

Turgenev acquired his sense of himself as a writer during the 1830s and 1840s, "a period of the formation of an 'artistic' intelligentsia, of the development of a salon aesthetic"<sup>97</sup>. Because of this background he was able to see himself exclusively as an artist<sup>98</sup> (artist, which Eikhenbaum pejoratively opposes to pisatel). The Gogol' of Portret, on the other hand, directly opposed the thinking of the new salon aesthetic and defended "the high principles of a solitary, ascetic service of art"<sup>99</sup>. 'Principle' in Eikhenbaum's language of this period frequently has a political connotation. This archaic literary-political position led Gogol' later to write his Avtorskaia ispoved', and ultimately Perepiska s druž'iami. In Eikhenbaum's view, unlike Turgenev's cries (recorded by Tolstoi) of "tra-agic, tra-agic!"<sup>100</sup>, these consequences of Gogol's principles were "genuinely tragic - without coquetry, without a game"<sup>101</sup>.

A natural test case for Eikhenbaum's argument about Turgenev's 'diplomatic' literary-political position is Ottsy i deti (1862), Turgenev's novel on the clash between the liberal philosophical debates of the 1840s and their successors of the 1860s, the radical, even nihilist, political convictions held by intelligenty of various classes, described in much other fiction of the time, for example Chernyshevskii's Chto delat'? (1863). Eikhenbaum argues that Ottsy i deti and Nakanune showed the pressure of history on Turgenev, but were essentially an accommodation to that pressure that involved him in no real change. By the 1860s Turgenev still thought in the terms of, and remained thereafter attached to, the ideas of the 1830s and 1840s, a period in Russian culture that had recently become anachronistic. This, in Eikhenbaum's view, was his weakness. Tolstoi, by contrast, though younger, belonged to a far older tradition, and derived his strength and ability to counter-attack in part from that archaic position.

In Eikhenbaum's terms, for a writer simply to use contemporary themes, without a personal engagement in the issues involved, is an attempt to accommodate or adapt oneself (popytka prisposobleniia<sup>102</sup>) to history - an option attended by its own consequences. Personal engagement in these issues also, naturally, has consequences; change, which Eikhenbaum describes variously as evolution, perelom or crisis, was inescapable in this case for the creative individual. Thus he notes that, where Gogol' and Tolstoi marked critical periods in their lives as writers with their Ispovedi, Turgenev expressed his dissatisfaction with responses to his



novels in “his capricious, coquettish Dovol’no”<sup>103</sup> and continued thereafter to write as he had before, with “no crises, no breaks (perelomy), no real evolution”<sup>104</sup>. Eikhenbaum quotes from Turgenev’s letter of 1863 in response to his correspondent’s desire (in itself an index of the period) that he should return to Russia and write “for the people”:

“You are wrong to demand from me in the *literary area* what I cannot give, fruits which do not grow on my tree. I have never written for the people. I have written for that class of the public to which I belong, beginning with Zapiski okhotnika and ending with Ottsy i deti. I do not know how much I have been of use, but I do know that I have undeviatingly followed the same aim, and in that respect do not deserve reproach.”<sup>105</sup>

Eikhenbaum comments: “To hold out in such a position and go on writing was possible only abroad.”<sup>106</sup> In Paris Turgenev was able to find the aesthetic response to his work which the Russia of the 1860s could not give him, to be absolved from demands he could not meet, and to await, in a new twist of history, a Russian generation (in 1879/80) that did applaud him. As a reading of Turgenev, this article, most strikingly of all those included in this section, embodies Eikhenbaum’s view that: “Every epoch reads a writer, even if he is a ‘classic’, in its own way, out of self-interest.”<sup>107</sup> Both witty and harsh, Eikhenbaum constructs a one-dimensional view of Turgenev in the interests of a literary-political education for the 1920s, of combatting literary diplomacy and, by extension, khaltura.

#### ‘Zhurnalizm Nekrasova’

Just as Turgenev, for Eikhenbaum’s purposes in this book, functioned as an illustration of the dangers both of literary diplomacy and of resistance to change, Nekrasov, who worked on journals in different capacities for more than 30 years from 1842, stood for a model of the journalist, the literary professional. At the beginning of the article, Eikhenbaum underlines his contemporaries’ mistrust of Nekrasov and suggests a controversial, perhaps ethically dubious element in his work. In Eikhenbaum’s words, “even” Chernyshevskii, the radical whom Nekrasov had brought onto the Sovremennik editorial board, and who might be thought to share his views to some degree, wrote to Nekrasov on the publication of his 1856 book of verse:

“Do not think it easy or pleasant for me to acknowledge your supremacy over other poets  
- I am an old believer, by the inclination of my nature, and acknowledge the new only

when forced by the decisive impossibility of denying it [...] I am foreign to any partiality towards you - on the contrary, your virtues are acknowledged by me almost against my will, - at least, with some unpleasantness for me.”<sup>108</sup>

What was the controversial element Chernyshevskii was so reluctant to recognise, and was it intrinsic to the profession of journalist-poet in the nineteenth century or unique to Nekrasov? From Eikhenbaum's earlier discussions of the literary professional we may suppose that the point he is making concerns the historical character of the work, and not the individual in himself. How then did Eikhenbaum understand the mid-nineteenth-century profession of writer/journalist?

Characteristically, Eikhenbaum situates it in terms of a historical opposition or contrast. On the one hand, the 'high' conception of literature accepted by writers and readers (a limited number of both) strongly in the first half, and less strongly in the second half, of the nineteenth century, and on the other, an extended, less exclusive idea of literature, which tried to reach a far wider readership, from about the 1830s onwards. The 'high' literature "held to aristocratic habits for a long time"<sup>109</sup>, looked to classical European traditions (the Muse, Parnassus) and was inspired by Romantic idealism. It was the work of amateurs - a krug of independent 'initiates' - where writers were readers, and vice versa.

Journals, the main medium of the new 'popular' literature, worked quite differently; the writer working for a journal was dependent on the editor, and on the reader. The editor (Nekrasov, for example) had a certain editorial policy but depended on sales and the good will of the censor for the survival of the journal. If readers of 'high' literature were a krug, journal readers were a tolpa. In this context, Belinskii argued the necessity for belletristika, easy fiction, or what Eikhenbaum calls chitivo, and vaudeville couplets on stage took the place of poetry, traditionally the highest of 'high' modes. Eikhenbaum notes that by the end of the 1830s "a radical reconstruction of the very concept of literature (slovesnosti)"<sup>110</sup> is in progress and, in a consciously brutal phrase, that "the journal has devoured (poglotil) literature".<sup>111</sup>

By the middle of the 1850s this split with the past, the transformation of literature and its readership had become a fact; poetry had come to seem an anachronism, a foreign body in the

journals, and parodies of the romantic poet and his inspiration appeared. Lyric poetry, where it survived, in the work of Fet, for example, betrayed an awareness of its isolation and inability to flourish<sup>112</sup>. In the pervading popular, democratic mood, the position of the poet itself was under attack. Eikhenbaum quotes Herzen's damning judgement of Nekrasov's Poet i grazhdanin, which ends: "And what is this rank of poet? Time that went to the devil as well."<sup>113</sup>

Here Eikhenbaum makes a parallel, familiar from Lev Tolstoi, of the 1850s with the 1920s; the 1920s also appeared to contemporaries as a period of the decline of poetry in relation to prose, as, for example, Tynianov's 1924 article, 'Promezhutok', made clear. The 1850s, like the 1920s, were a time when writers of the previous generation (by virtue either of age or temperament) were forced to rethink their literary-political positions, to adapt their work and their sense of themselves to radically altered conditions. With his statement 'Dovol'no', Turgenev 'retired', leaving the role of writer with political "tendencies"<sup>114</sup> to Saltykov-Shchedrin, and his artistic heritage, as he thought, to Tolstoi (Tolstoi's Al'bert and Liutsern had shown signs of Turgenev's influence).

In these conditions of the radical democratisation of literature, where poetry was in danger of vanishing from view, Eikhenbaum saw Nekrasov as the vulgar saviour of the poetic voice, in much the same way as he had in his 1922 article 'Nekrasov', which examined in detail the poetic means Nekrasov used to this end and compared Nekrasov to Maiakovskii in this role. By drawing together elements from vaudeville couplets, parodies, feuilletons and humorous journalism in a poetic voice with a new intonation, Nekrasov "justified the necessity itself of poetry, showed the *urgency of poetic speech*, which was then under suspicion."<sup>115</sup> It was this hybrid voice, unattractive, even offensive, to cultured ears, and far removed from 'aristocratic' verse, that prompted the grudging acknowledgement of Chernyshevskii, whom Eikhenbaum characterised in Lev Tolstoi as a political radical with private leanings towards high culture. Nekrasov removed poetry from its position as an inviolate but obsolete medium, altered it unrecognisably and returned it to common use; for Eikhenbaum in 1929, as in 1922, though from somewhat different standpoints, this achievement of Nekrasov fulfilled a necessary historical function<sup>116</sup>.

'Leskov i literaturnoe narodnichestvo'

This is the only article of the section unconcerned with problems of literary byt and the writer's ethical and political position. For Eikhenbaum here, just as in the preceding article on Nekrasov, but without Nekrasov's literary-political function, Leskov's value and interest is that of a writer whose work was a literary hybrid; Leskov effected a renewal of language, style and genre by crossing 'high' literature with the lubok.

Leskov's purely literary populism had nothing in common with the literary-political thinking of the 1870s and the movement 'to the people'. In Eikhenbaum's view, though this literary and scholarly populism grew weaker during the rise of the political movement, it was a continuation and development of an earlier Romantic, Slavophile tendency evident in the work of Dal', Vel'tman, the Kireevskii brothers and others, which continued as a secondary line to the main literary development. Leskov was accused of reactionary and outmoded Slavophilism, and his contemporaries (Mikhailovskii, Volynskii) misunderstood and undervalued the literary importance of his work, seeing it as exotica, or collections of words popularly misused. In this article, skaz, an important part of Eikhenbaum's 1925 article on Leskov, is barely mentioned; instead, the article gives the impression of naming themes for a longer work.

Eikhenbaum had studied Leskov with the intention of writing at length about him since at least the early 1920s, but although his diaries show considerable continuing interest in research, the decision to work on Tolstoi in depth and later on Lermontov meant that time for work on Leskov was effectively limited. Eikhenbaum never published a book on Leskov, although a seventeen page introductory article to his selected works and a thirteen page introduction to his rasskazy appeared in 1931, and he wrote a co-authored introduction to the 1956 eleven volume collected works.

#### Science and Criticism: Summary

These sections of Eikhenbaum's journal attempt to justify theoretically the change from the study of literature, specifically understood, to the study of writers in relation to their literary-political circumstances. They collect various illustrative studies of the conduct of writers in

these contexts, using such terms as sud'ba, biografiia, povedenie and khaltura. All the Science section articles and all but one of the six articles of the Criticism section contain a strong contemporary subtext and function as analogies or parallels for contemporary literary-political situations. By comparison with Eikhenbaum's earlier purely literary research, this was in part an educative undertaking with a strong ethical element, which sought to demonstrate to a novice public of readers and writers that literary-political situations similar to those which now obtained had occurred in the past and had occasioned various responses with potential contemporary application. We shall return to the question of the role of education and ethics in Eikhenbaum's writing at the end of the 1920s in the following chapter.

#### Miscellany: Contemporary Literature

In the last short section of his 'journal' Eikhenbaum turns his attention to contemporary literature, of which he gives a deeply pessimistic picture. His first target is the quantity of non-literature - novels sent to him for "harsh criticism" <sup>117</sup> by their authors, who were part of the "mass invasion of literature"<sup>118</sup> by novice writers that Shklovskii addressed in Tekhnika pisatel'skogo remesla (1927). Eikhenbaum leaves this non-literature deliberately nameless, the novels are too far from individuality, personality, from the writer in the true sense of the word. He deals with them by category, the countryside novels consisting of untransformed raw material, and the specialists in psychology or plot, who reproduce and exhaust old literary traditions. In Eikhenbaum's view, no cross-fertilisation or literary struggle is taking place, even the old controversy between fellow-travellers and proletarian writers is dead<sup>119</sup> (he failed to anticipate its revival in the State-inspired campaign against Zamiatin and Pil'niak a few months later). Literature, as opposed to this literaturshchina, is to be found in minor genres: the sketch, the feuilleton, biography and letters.

This point is taken up in Eikhenbaum's review of Ol'ga Forsh's historical novel about Gogol' and his contemporaries, Sovremenniki (1927). The novel is, in his view, part of the contemporary growth of the historical and biographical novel. This growth has developed from the contemporary interest in individual lives in memoir and biography, but also from the difficulty of writing novels on contemporary themes, where the material resists literary

treatment because of its immediacy. The new novels which have responded to contemporary circumstances are “‘historical’”, frequently biographical chronicles centering on a life: “The dominant material is not historical events but outstanding people who built their fate (*sud’ba*) - writers, musicians, artists.”<sup>120</sup> As Chukovskii records, Gor’kii had noted the same phenomenon in the West in August 1928:

“...all over Europe [there are] the same kind of biographical novels as Tynianov’s *Kiukhlia*, about great people [...] he listed dozens of French and German ones, and even named a Spanish one [...] He mentioned O Forsh in this context.”<sup>121</sup>

Eikhenbaum also noted the growth of the biographical novel in France and Germany; in the West, however, literary-political conditions were different. In the Soviet Union Eikhenbaum’s ‘life-building’ formulation, a recurrent strand in his private and published writing from 1925, compares interestingly with Mandel’shtam’s 1928 view of the novel in ‘*Konets romana*’. For Mandel’shtam the human *biografiia* - a word he used here in the same way as Eikhenbaum had previously used *biografiia*, and used *sud’ba* in this article - is “the compositional measure of the novel”.<sup>122</sup> Since “Europeans have been thrown out of their biographies like billiard balls from a pocket”<sup>123</sup> the novel has lost its *raison d’être*: “A person without a biography cannot be the thematic backbone of a novel and the novel, on the other hand, is unthinkable without interest in a particular human fate...”<sup>124</sup>

Thus for Mandel’shtam the loss of a degree of control over one’s life- *biografiia* - affects the existence of the contemporary novel, while Eikhenbaum notes its presence as vital to the ‘historical’ novel, and attributes the difficulty of writing a novel on contemporary life not to the loss of ‘biography’, but to the problems of turning topical material into literature. It would seem that Eikhenbaum at this stage still held to the viability of the concept of the individual’s *zhiznestroenie* which had an important part in resolving his period of crisis, while Mandel’shtam, already involved in the plagiarism scandal whose implications he later explored in *Chetvertaia proza*, had a more pessimistic view of the “real powers”<sup>125</sup> ranged against the individual.

This is not to say that Eikhenbaum was optimistic about the position of the writer, who was at the mercy of the superior ideology of any reader or reviewer;

“The writer in our day is in general a grotesque figure. He is not so much read, as discussed, because usually he thinks incorrectly. Any reader is above him, if only because the reader, as a professional citizen, is supposed to have a restrained, stable and clear-cut ideology. There is no point in even talking about reviewers (we have no critics, because there is no difference in judgements) - they are as far above, as much more significant than any writer, as the judge is higher and more significant than the defendant.”<sup>126</sup>

Here again Eikhenbaum and Mandel'shtam have common ground: in a 1929 article ‘Veer gertsogini’, Mandel'shtam characterised contemporary criticism as “arrogant, condescending, patronising” and the critic as a schoolmaster inclined to “give marks, allot marks of excellence, award prizes and relegate to disgrace”<sup>127</sup>. This view of contemporary critics was not confined to the circles of either Eikhenbaum or Mandel'shtam. Chukovskii, a writer who frequented many different circles, often made damning criticisms of readers and reviewers in his diaries towards the end of the 1920s: he spoke of a dubovaia auditoriia<sup>128</sup>, incapable of understanding irony or nuance, and deliberately invited the opinion of a certain poshliak and tupitsa, “representative of the majority of contemporary readers”<sup>129</sup>, on a piece of work in order to tailor it to suit editorial sensibilities.

Eikhenbaum discussed another aspect of the writer in society, his public status as a ‘literary personality’, in his appreciation of Shklovskii, originally intended for a book on him.<sup>130</sup> The term ‘literaturnaia lichnost’ was originally used by Tynianov<sup>131</sup> to distinguish between factual biographical details of a writer's life and the reader's view of the writer, acquired from the literary text, which then, as myth, affected how works were read. ‘Biographical’ detail in the text, selected and transformed into the writer's reputation or literary personality, thus became part of the reception of works - Tolstoi is one case in point. Not all writers or periods favoured this kind of mythologising; Tynianov pointed out that “biography in certain periods turns into an oral apocryphal literature”<sup>132</sup> and noted the existence of a ‘literary personality’ for Pushkin, Tolstoi, Blok, Maiakovskii and Esenin and its absence in the cases of Leskov, Turgenev, Fet, Maikov and Gumilev.

Shklovskii's writing with its deliberate conversational tone, 'simplicity' and personal orientation lent itself admirably to the mythologising of its author, of whom "people complain as they would at the injustice of fate"<sup>133</sup>. "He exists," Eikhenbaum wrote, "not only as an author, but rather as a literary character, as the hero of some unwritten novel, and a problematic one"<sup>134</sup>. One such novel had already been written, Kaverin's Skandalist, ili vechera na Vasil'evskom ostrove (1928).

Tynianov, too, as the author of successful historical novels, had, in Eikhenbaum's view, acquired a public 'literary personality'. In early May 1929, in response to a long 'historical' letter from Shklovskii which asked: "1) What to do about science. 2) What to do about us. The last question divides into a) what to do about Eikhenbaum, b) about Tynianov, c) about Shklovskii."<sup>135</sup>, Eikhenbaum wrote:

"... his [Tynianov's] position, both personal and historical, is very serious. But after all he is a diplomat of genius and his position at the moment is ingenious. He is surrounded by respect and even fear, as a secret unknown quantity (not to speak of envy). Soon there will be stories and legends going round about him, but he sits at home in a bourgeois setting with 'shameful' pictures on the walls and spits at the present day. In him there is the strength of an ill and proud person - the strength of Heine, perhaps. Both you and he are 'literary personalities', but opposing ones. But I shall become a literary personality on the brink of death - not before..."<sup>136</sup>

Eikhenbaum, who was a scholar, critic and journalist of great literary skill, but not, except for his autobiography in Moi vremennik, a writer of literature, knew he was not and would not become a 'literary personality', but his portrait of Shklovskii contained other elements with which he identified: his expertise in both the theory and practice of literature and his professionalism. Eikhenbaum noted approvingly the difficulty of defining Shklovskii by any one literary function;

"He is professional to the marrow of his bones - but not at all like the usual Russian writer-intelligent. People even have difficulty in deciding whether he is a writer of fiction, a scholar, a journalist or something else. He is a writer in the true sense of the word..."<sup>137</sup>



The simultaneous occupation of several different literary roles was common in different degrees to all three leading members of OPOIAZ, and if Eikhenbaum tended to idealise it here, omitting the problems of split perspective which it could involve, he was nevertheless aware of the phenomenon, which has been described in terms of the theatre:

“The attempt simultaneously to perform on the stage of 1920s literary byt as actor-litterateurs, to stand in front of the stage as part of the audience and to ‘fly’ over it, as a scholar describing it all from a bird’s eye view was typical of the formalists.”<sup>138</sup>

The several aspects of Eikhenbaum’s activity as literator form one part of the cluster of factors which brought about his departure from literary theory on the OPOIAZ model. Moi vremennik collected Eikhenbaum’s recent literary, critical and journalistic work and, with the scholarly, though, from the OPOIAZ standpoint, unorthodox Lev Tolstoi. Piatidesiatye gody, constituted his final resolution of the critical period which began in 1925. Having considered the work Eikhenbaum published in the second half of the twenties, we can now address more fully the question of why this departure from OPOIAZ literary theory took place and what Eikhenbaum’s sense of it was.

- 1 BME, Letter of 30. 11. 28, 'Iz pisem k V. B. Shklovskomu', Neva, 1987, 6, p 158.
- 2 BME, Moi vremennik. Slovesnost', Nauka. Kritika. Smes', L, 1929.
- 3 L Fleishman, Boris Pasternak v dvadtsatye gody, Munich, 1979, p 124.
- 4 BME, Mv, p 5.
- 5 ibid.
- 6 L Ia Ginzburg, Lpr, p 172; Chps, p 353.
- 7 'Stranitsy...', p 154.
- 8 BME, Diary entry, 7 March 1928.
- 9 BME, Mv, p 39.
- 10 ibid.
- 11 BME, Mv, p 33.
- 12 op cit, p 35.
- 13 op cit, p 26.
- 14 op cit, p 25.
- 15 op cit, p 24.
- 16 op cit, p 9.
- 17 op cit, p 19.
- 18 B Pinkus, The Jews of the Soviet Union, Cambridge, 1988, p 87.
- 19 V B Shklovskii, 'Pis'mo k Romanu Iakobsonu', Ku, 1922, 8, p 23. cf Lili Brik, whose "relation to [my] Jewishness was painful from the very beginning", see V V Maiakovskii i L Iu Brik, Perepiska 1915 - 1930, Stockholm, 1982, p 14.
- 20 BME, Mv, p 9.
- 21 L Ia Ginzburg, Chps, p 42.
- 22 BME, Mv, p 16.
- 23 ibid.
- 24 op cit, p 18.
- 25 op cit, p 40.

- 26 op cit, p 19.
- 27 op cit, p 23.
- 28 ibid.
- 29 op cit, p 22.
- 30 ibid.
- 31 op cit, pp 32 - 33.
- 32 op cit, p 25.
- 33 op cit, p 26.
- 34 op cit, p 24.
- 35 See, for example, BME diary entry for 2 December 1925: "Suddenly the 'gap' ('promezhutok'), which I foresaw and which I so feared has begun. [...] In part it matured under the influence of the Klemperer concert yesterday - everything that was dormant in my heart broke out. What I lived by from 1917 to 1922 is over." Ol'ga Borisovna, Eikhenbaum's daughter, in conversations with the researcher in April 1988, recounted that during the worst periods in the 1930s he would spend evenings with Tomashevskii, listening to classical recordings on Tomashevskii's gramophone. and 'conducting' the music.
- 36 BME, Mv, p 27.
- 37 ibid.
- 38 ibid .
- 39 ibid .
- 40 ibid .
- 41 op cit, p 29.
- 42 op cit, p 30.
- 43 op cit, p 29.
- 44 op cit, p 31.
- 45 BME, letter of 3 November 1909, 'Pis'ma k roditeliam', RES, p 23.
- 46 op cit, p 19.
- 47 ibid .
- 48 BME, Mv, p 35.

- 49 op cit, p 36.
- 50 ibid.
- 51 ibid. A A Shakhmatov (1860 - 1920), leading authority on Slavic languages, historian of the Russian language, professor of Russian philology at Petersburg University from 1910, member of Petersburg Academy of Sciences from 1894.
- 52 ibid.
- 53 BME, letter of 29 September 1909, 'Pis'ma k roditeliam', RES, pp 22 - 23.
- 54 BME, Mv, p 36.
- 55 op cit, p 37.
- 56 ibid.
- 57 op cit, pp 37 - 38.
- 58 op cit, p 36.
- 59 op cit, p 38.
- 60 ibid. S A Vengerov (1855 - 1920), literary scholar, bibliographer, graduate of Petersburg University where he remained as a teacher. He wrote monographs on, among others, K S Aksakov, Belinskii, Gogol', Goncharov, Pisemskii and participated in several encyclopaedic works, most notably as editor of the literary section of the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedia from 1891.
- 61 ibid.
- 62 op cit, p 39.
- 63 ibid.
- 64 ibid.
- 65 BME, letter to L Ia Gurevich, 6 February 1914, 'Stranitsy..', pp 136-139. See also Chapter I, Section 1.
- 66 BME, Mv, p 46.
- 67 L Ia Ginzburg, 'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...', TS3, p 229.
- 68 BME, Mv, p 37.
- 69 op cit, p 35.
- 70 ibid.
- 71 See, for example, 'Rech' o kritike' (1918), O lit, pp 328-330.

- 72 BME, Mv, pp 39 - 40.
- 73 Though there are in TsGALI (fond 1527, op 1, ed khr 242) several short autobiographical notes dating from various times, and no longer than a page in length, I have not been able to discover any further extensive autobiographical writings by Boris Mikhailovich.
- 74 'Stranitsy..', p 153.
- 75 BME, Mv, pp 45 - 46.
- 76 T Grits, N Nikitin, Literaturnye kruzhki i salony, L, 1927.
- 77 BME, Mv, p 84.
- 78 op cit, p 83.
- 79 op cit, p 85.
- 80 See PILK, pp 255 - 270.
- 81 BME, Mv, p 84.
- 82 op cit, p 83.
- 83 ibid.
- 84 op cit, p 84.
- 85 op cit, p 85.
- 86 op cit, p 84.
- 87 op cit, p 85.
- 88 ibid. Eikhenbaum was himself involved in 1929 in an interesting but unsuccessful attempt to collect the work of different literary groupings, OBERIU, members of OPOIAZ and their pupils, and others in a projected almanac, Vanna Arkhimeda, whose unifying aim was "the struggle with literary routine"; see A B Bliumbaum, G A Morev, "'Vanna Arkhimeda": k istorii nesostoavshegosia izdaniia', Wiener Slawistischer Almanach 28, 1991, pp 263 - 269.
- 89 BME, Mv, p 82.
- 90 op cit, p 85.
- 91 op cit, p 39.
- 92 op cit, p 93.
- 93 op cit, p 95.
- 94 ibid,

- 95 op cit, pp 96 - 97.
- 96 op cit, p 39.
- 97 op cit, p 98.
- 98 op cit, p 97.
- 99 op cit, p 98.
- 100 op cit, p 93.
- 101 op cit, p 98.
- 102 op cit, p 99.
- 103 ibid .
- 104 ibid ,
- 105 ibid ,
- 106 ibid .
- 107 op cit, p 89.
- 108 op cit, p 101.
- 109 op cit, pp 101 - 102.
- 110 op cit, p 101.
- 111 ibid ,
- 112 op cit, p 103.
- 113 op cit, p 102.
- 114 ibid ,
- 115 op cit, p 104.
- 116 ibid; see BME, 'Nekrasov', Lit, pp 79, 83, 88, 96 - 97: "The role Nekrasov chose was suggested to him by history and accepted as a historic act (postupok). He played his role in a play which history composed."
- 117 'Vmesto "rezkoi kritiki"', Mv, pp 123 - 125.
- 118 'Sots. praktika...', p 110; see V B Shklovskii, Gs, p 528.
- 119 BME, Mv, p 123.
- 120 BME, 'Dekoratsiia epokhi', Mv, p 126.
- 121 K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, p 453.

- 122 O E Mandel'shtam, 'Konets romana', Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh, Vol 2, New York, 1971, pp 268, 269.
- 123 op cit, p 269.
- 124 ibid.
- 125 ibid.
- 126 BME, Mv, p 133.
- 127 O E Mandel'shtam, 'Veer gertsogini', Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh, Vol 3, New York, 1969, p 52.
- 128 K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, p 429.
- 129 op cit, p 438.
- 130 BME, 'O Vikторе Shklovskom', Mv, pp 131 - 132. For plans for an anthology on Shklovskii see Iu N Tynianov, PILK, p 569.
- 131 Iu N Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', op cit, p 259.
- 132 Iu N Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii', op cit, p 279.
- 133 BME, Mv, p 131.
- 134 ibid.
- 135 BME, 'Iz pisem k V B Shklovskomu', Neva, 1987, 6, p 160.
- 136 op cit, p 161.
- 137 BME, Mv, p<sup>P</sup><sub>L</sub> 131 - 132.
- 138 A A Hansen-Löve, "'Bytologiia" mezhdru faktami i funktsiiami', RES, p 97.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary

The senses of literature

Eikhenbaum's relation to literature: "work as act"

"Work as act": The literary and political context

"Work as act": lichnost'

"Work as act": povedenie



CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters we have seen how Eikhenbaum reached a point of critical dissatisfaction with his literary theoretical work in the changing literary, social and political situation of the mid-twenties, and arrived at a new approach to the history of literature, closely connected to the contemporary literary-political situation. In the literary byt articles of 1927 Eikhenbaum offered a diagnosis by historical analogy of the problems facing contemporary literature; in the articles of 1928 and his book on Tolstoi he developed his use of historical analogy and offered models of the individual writer's conduct and evolution in the face of historical pressures, focusing on independence and strategies of principled resistance. In Moi vremennik all these concerns are restated in journal form and in a new autobiographical mode; they thus recur consistently throughout Eikhenbaum's work of the late 1920s. A view of the work as "drift" or "a piecemeal, haphazard retreat from an obviously untenable position"<sup>1</sup> sees it only in terms of a theoretical lapse or failure, and ignores its second, consistent, analogical level.

But, coherent though Eikhenbaum's new work was, several questions remain; how should his literary-historical work of the late 1920s be read? Did the 'literary circumstances' which Eikhenbaum observed also act upon him unawares, leading to a confusion between the study of literature as OPOIAZ understood it and social commitment? Did literary ambition take precedence over the claims of theory? Are these, indeed, the right questions? What did Eikhenbaum put in the place of theoretical work of the OPOIAZ type? We shall first give a summary of the argument so far and then return to these questions.

## Summary

We have seen that the key to Eikhenbaum's work of the late 1920s is to be found in the social and political context ('historical' in his usage) in which it was written, and the contemporary social and political purpose for which it was written, expressed in its second analogical level. If this level is ignored<sup>2</sup>, or partially noted, but misinterpreted,<sup>3</sup> the view of the whole is altered. Eikhenbaum's work of the late 1920s, assessed only in terms of its value as a contribution to or deviation from OPOIAZ theory or read only on its surface level as literary sociology, or, in the case of Lev Tolstoi, as literary biography of the old-fashioned 'life and works' type, is inevitably disappointing, and begs the question of how a scholar of his quality could suddenly produce apparently undistinguished work.

As we saw in Chapters Four and Five, the literary byt works were a response not only to a personal crisis about his work provoked largely by social and political change, but to Eikhenbaum's perception of the political control and stagnation of literature, the state take-over of literary studies - 'dogmatism and mediaevalism' - and the progressive suppression and disintegration of an ethical value-system centred on the individual in society. These works were Eikhenbaum's effort to intervene in and to counter the literary-political processes he could see taking place, not by teaching practical literary skills, like Shklovskii in Tekhnika pisatel'skogo remesla, but by pointing out analogous processes at work in the past and demonstrating a range of ethical responses to them. At the forefront of this range, from the first articles, Eikhenbaum placed the writer responding independently to historical pressures and resisting them. He showed the importance of conduct in the practice of literature, and of a certain ethic of personal integrity, responsibility and independence, demonstrated as much in its presence (Pushkin, Gogol', Tolstoi) as in its absence (Bulgarin, Turgenev).

This ethic, expressed not as a matter of a given, fixed morality, but in the range of responses by the individual to changing literary-political situations, is most strongly developed in Eikhenbaum's book on Tolstoi. Here he was engaged in a hidden polemic, an effort to demonstrate certain "humanist"<sup>4</sup> values, centred on the individual (lichnost') in history. In the retrospective view of a younger contemporary, L Ia Ginzburg:

“The historico-literary works acquire a particular dynamic quality from their hidden personal significance, a concealed relation to the writer’s life tasks. Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum’s large scholarly works had their own intimate sense - the problem of the historical behaviour of the individual.”<sup>5</sup>

In Ginzburg’s assessment we should not dismiss the “personal” or the “intimate” as apolitical or private spheres; on the contrary, as such they signal Eikhenbaum’s resistance to the official line. The behaviour of the individual in the face of state pressure to discipline, group and subdue individuals was precisely Eikhenbaum’s concern, and the focus of his “great civic courage and stubborn creative will”<sup>6</sup>. We shall return to this point.

This application of literary history was a major departure from Eikhenbaum’s previous literary-theoretical work, and he was aware that the two could not be combined, though he was initially at pains to make it clear that his new work complemented, and did not negate, earlier achievements. The fact that this “practical”<sup>7</sup> purpose for the history of literature had to be expressed indirectly, on a second level, by analogy and other means, inhibited theoretical clarification of the previous kind, and Eikhenbaum increasingly sacrificed theoretical considerations to strengthen his second level case. The threat posed by ‘adaptation’ to Soviet conditions and by khaltura to the existence of literature as a whole outweighed the claims of literary theory; it was a question not of a sudden blindness to theory, but, in Eikhenbaum’s adoption of Tolstoi, of “recognising what to do first and what afterwards”<sup>8</sup>. His priority was the effort to preserve the whole ‘undertaking’ (*delo*) of literature which was under threat. He saw his literary byt works, as he saw Tolstoi’s interest in popular education, as “a tactical manoeuvre, a kind of code with which [he] ‘deceived’ the present day”<sup>9</sup>, “a method of polemic and struggle”<sup>10</sup> which was directed to this aim.

The senses of ‘literature’

We should consider here the two distinct senses in which Eikhenbaum used the word literature. The first meaning of literature is the strict OPOIAZ-specific one, conditioned by the concept of literaturnost’, which we examined in Chapters One and Two. The delo literary, on the other hand, an expression Eikhenbaum took from Gogol’, covered literature in its widest meaning,

originating in the nineteenth century, as the field in which aesthetic, social and ethical issues of importance to the whole of society were identified and discussed. This conception of the centrality and importance of literature broadly understood was not confined to Eikhenbaum, or to the period of the mid-twenties on; OPOIAZ saw the development of their literary theory, the radical transformation of 'how to read', as a revolutionary movement within the Russian literary tradition of radical questioning. Literaturnost' was, as it were, contained within delo literatury from the beginning, but delo literatury was bracketed off from discussion by OPOIAZ, although a comprehensive knowledge of it was assumed in their writings. Kaverin, a student of Eikhenbaum, Tynianov and Shklovskii at GIII in the early twenties, described the study of literature in this wide sense as they communicated it to him:

"Sharing the demanding attitude of the older generation, they asserted that a scholarly composition - a note, a book, an article - should be precisely a composition, as real as the literary fact itself. They generously shared with us [...] their pride that they together with us worked in a great literature. They taught us that pride [...]"

The most significant seminar, which inspired in me the simple thought that without a complete and unconditional devotion to literature it was better to stay away from it, took place when I had already finished university. Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum and Iurii Nikolaevich Tynianov arranged it for their closest pupils. [...] The study sessions are linked in my memory with a strange feeling that literature itself was taking careful account of us. Discussing the most abstract questions, we knew that under its attentive gaze one could not dissemble, lie or sham."<sup>11</sup>

It is clear from Kaverin's memoir that to literature in this broad sense belonged all those whose work involved them in it; if the author, as one working in a great tradition, had a personal responsibility for what he wrote, so too did the critic and the scholar. In this wide sense, the critic and scholar were part of literature as much as the author, though in a different way, and their work, though not literature in the strict sense, was part of the whole undertaking of literature. Undoubtedly the opponents of OPOIAZ, particularly Marxist scholars and critics, also understood the nineteenth-century literary inheritance as theirs, in a way which excluded OPOIAZ and polarised the argument, as we saw in Chapter Three.

It is in this context that Eikhenbaum's sense of himself as a writer, or author (*pisatel'skoe samooshchushchenie*), which Ginzburg has noted<sup>12</sup>, should be understood. What is meant by this is less the wish to write prose fiction (though the consistent elegance of Eikhenbaum's language in scholarly work has been taken to reflect this), or the ambition for literary success, than the sense of the writer's particular responsibility to the literature, and the society, within which he works. The writer was at the centre of the delo *literature*. It was in this way, as Ginzburg noted, that Eikhenbaum always had a sense of himself as a writer in his scholarly work, and it is in this sense of the writer's responsibility to society that statements ascribing literary ambition to Eikhenbaum may be seen as valid.

In Eikhenbaum's work of the late 1920s key concepts, 'literature' and 'evolution', strictly defined and separated in OPOIAZ terminology, lost their exclusive distinctness and acquired 'new' meanings, previously excluded in discussion of poetics. The broad concept of literature as delo, present in the background, though bracketed off from discussion in OPOIAZ work on literary theory, returned to Eikhenbaum's vocabulary at the end of the 1920s. In this letter to Shklovskii Eikhenbaum, pleased at the recognition of his "manoeuvre" in Lev Tolstoi, associates his book on Tolstoi with literature in general:

"They say that my book on Tolstoi has come out very topical - many analogies. All our literature here is taken up with the portrayal of writers. Lavrenev has described S. Tret'iakov - fiction writers are already oriented to memoir-writing - that is the point it has reached."<sup>13</sup>

Having used scholarly research for purposes more often pursued in fiction, Eikhenbaum then associated the two areas in one broad 'literature', in the second of the meanings described above. This is not to say, however, that Eikhenbaum confused the two meanings, and considered his book on Tolstoi as 'literature' in the specific sense.

Similarly, 'evolution' in Eikhenbaum's work of this period refers less often to specifically literary evolution, the "dynamic of forms and styles" he described in 'Teoriia formal'nogo metoda' (in which the writer as *individual* was not important), than to the evolution of the writer as an individual faced with the problems of successive historical periods, of his

zhiznepovedenie. While it is true to say that Eikhenbaum offered no definition of this new sense of the evolution of the writer in history, it is clear from the text which kind of evolution, specifically literary or individual and historical, Eikhenbaum had in mind. Just as the broad concept of literature predominated over literaturnost' in Eikhenbaum's work from 1928, so the writer's evolving zhiznepovedenie came to preoccupy him, leaving strictly literary evolution only a minor role, as not central to his new argument. This was a deliberate, conscious shift of focus, which developed, as we have seen from Eikhenbaum's diaries, from 1925 on. If it is true to say of Eikhenbaum during the process of transition that:

“this simultaneity of reflection on two problems - [literary] ‘evolution’ and [personal] ‘evolution’, ‘literature’ and ‘literature’, scholarship and social conduct (which was more and more understood as the literator's conduct) - was a fundamental phenomenon in Eikhenbaum's biography from the middle of the 1920s”<sup>14</sup>

we must also stress that he continued to distinguish these central concepts both during and after the radical change of stance and purpose in his work of the late twenties.

Eikhenbaum's position in relation to literature: “work as act”

Several commentators have noted the problems of perspective which resulted from OPOIAZ' variable position in relation to literature; members of OPOIAZ were closely involved with contemporary literature, several of them wrote fiction or literary prose, and Eikhenbaum, as we have seen, had a literary approach to his scholarly work. At the same time they took on the more distanced roles of analyst (for example Eikhenbaum's 1920 portrayal of himself as an ‘astrologer’ of literature) and of observer-critic or member of the reading public. Both the meanings of ‘literature’ that we noted above are in part a function of these complex positions both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ literature. Such dual or triple roles were typical of OPOIAZ practice from its inception, and not confined to the later 1920s. Eikhenbaum, like the other Formalists, from the beginning of his OPOIAZ activity occupied a position both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ literature, but in the early period the overwhelming focus on the specifically literary preserved a sense of scholarly ‘distance’, of the scholar's position outside it.

The change of stance which began in 1925 was remarkable partly because of a change in the balance of the existing combination of positions; Eikhenbaum brought the whole delo

literature, literature in the broadest sense, into discussion, and turned away from poetics. In doing this he rejected the analysis of the text, or of literary evolution, from a point 'outside' them, and deliberately constructed a quite different type of literary history from the point of view of one avowedly inside the contemporary literary-political situation. This was the work Eikhenbaum called "work as act"<sup>15</sup> in his December 1925 diaries. I shall call this type of work self-involving. In this type of work the convention of the impartiality and invisibility of the scholar was exposed and replaced by the deliberate inclusion of the scholar's views in the terms of the research. The work included or made plain the author's relation to the subject discussed - in the case of Eikhenbaum's work after 1927, to the contemporary issues that formed the second level of the work. This explicit self-involvement, most clearly stated in the first pages of 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt', his first article of the new type, was one of the most significant new elements in the change of stance in evidence in his work from 1927.

But here too, there was a precedent. For Eikhenbaum OPOIAZ work, too, had had a strong element of self-involvement, although it was not made explicit in his work, and in spite of his apparently distanced position in relation to literature in it. As we saw in Chapter One, Eikhenbaum experienced entry to OPOIAZ as a kind of conversion; for him, to be in OPOIAZ was in itself a self-declaratory, self-involving position. This is evident from the early articles on Tolstoi, and in the fact that when he discussed the necessity of new work in his diary in 1925, he used the same phrase, 'work as act', for his entry to OPOIAZ in 1918 and his proposed new work. Eikhenbaum's use in his scholarly work of the terms of his reflection about himself (in his diaries), both in OPOIAZ work and in later work, was a related phenomenon. Just as Eikhenbaum had used metaphors of fracture in articles of 1919 and 1920 to describe Tolstoi's work which originated in his own sense of the break with the past caused by his conversion to OPOIAZ, so in his 1928 book Lev Tolstoi he used the vocabulary of his own recent crisis to describe Tolstoi's position.

But, apart from the coincidence of scholarly and personal vocabulary, the character of the self-involvement in the two periods was different. When Eikhenbaum joined OPOIAZ, that fact in itself constituted for him a significant act with certain consequences, a self-involvement which

consisted in accepting the radical project of the group as the whole focus of his work, and in which the group's exclusive attention to the specifically literary inhibited the expression of individual, not specifically literary, concerns. The self-involvement of the later period was of another kind; it was an individual statement, and as explicit or declared as the literary-political situation allowed. In his later works Eikhenbaum made his own position in the contemporary literary-political situation clear, and the reader was intended to perceive it, as we have seen in the analysis of the second level of Lev Tolstoi and the articles on individual writers of 1928. Another important difference between the two types of self-involvement is that when, in 1918, Eikhenbaum took on as his own the radical project of OPOIAZ he was making a decision which was congruent, though not identified, with the revolutionary mood of the time; in 1925 his new position was intended to counter the general tendency of literary development as politics affected it.

In different ways, both the placing of all his energies in the service of the OPOIAZ project and the decision of 1925 to make an individual stand against the contemporary uses of literature manifested Eikhenbaum's well-documented personal and social integrity, and were expressions of the "will to wholeness" which, as we saw in Chapter One, was a theme of his earliest critical work.

It is important to bear in mind that Eikhenbaum made a conscious decision to make his own stance plain in this way, and was aware that in making literary history the instrument of this decision he had turned away from the study of literature in the specific sense for the time being. The self-involving dimension of the 1925 project of 'work as act' did not involve *confusion* between literaturnost and literature in the broad sense, but it did indicate that Eikhenbaum had taken up a different position, writing as one 'inside' literature as a whole, responsible with others for the delo literary, and abandoning as a less urgent concern the distanced, 'uninvolved' study of the specifically literary from a position 'outside' it.

"Work as act": the literary and political context

What were the circumstances in which Eikhenbaum felt it necessary to make such a radical change of stance in his scholarly work? What was it that prompted his explicit self-



involvement in this work? In Eikhenbaum's assessment of the literary-political situation from the mid-1920s we can identify two strands, which will in turn affect how we assess what it was he attempted to achieve in his work from 1927.

The first and most clearly marked strand in Eikhenbaum's assessment of the literary-political situation was the recording of certain 'exterior' aspects of the "social existence" of literature<sup>16</sup> which were generally known, and remarked in different ways, either in private or published writing, by other writers. As we saw in Chapter Four, during the early twenties great changes were taking place in the composition of the literary profession and in the sense of identity of writers, which Eikhenbaum recorded. Great numbers of novice writers, proletarian and otherwise, had appeared, unformed by the intelligentsia's artistic, historical and ethical understanding of the responsibilities of literary work, "from professions with nothing in common with literature or scholarship", as Eikhenbaum put it in Lev Tolstoi<sup>17</sup>. At the same time pressure on all writers, negatively, by censorship, and positively, by publishing opportunities and other means, to produce politically conformist work increased, and the phenomenon of adaptation to prevailing Soviet conditions, analysed later by Ginzburg, appeared. Chukovskii, writing in his diary in 1928, described a conversation with M L Slonimskii which demonstrates contemporary consciousness of the far-reaching effects of adaptation and censorship on the part of writers who did belong to the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia:

"In the end they [the censors] do not after all stop that many [books], but how much they wear out nerves, before they allow them to appear. And they don't stop that many because we have all become so corrupted, have so 'adapted' ourselves that we are already incapable of writing anything unofficial, sincere. [...] Slonimskii says that undoubtedly some unsuitable books are deliberately not distributed under pressure from the political controllers. For example, Kaverin's Konets Khazy. The whole book is deliberately kept in the warehouse, so that it does not reach the reader. I think that isn't true. Konets Khazy might not sell anyway. But that we are in the grip of such a censorship as has never been seen before in Russia, that is true. Every editorial office, in every publishing house, has its own censor, and their ideal is official eulogy, taken to the point of ritual."<sup>18</sup>

This entry was the longest and most descriptive of many negative references to the censorship in Chukovskii's diaries during the 1920s, which increase in frequency from the mid-twenties. The references to censorship in Eikhenbaum's diaries of 1924 and 1925 are, as we saw in Chapter Four, comparable. It is another sign of the times that in this 1928 diary entry Chukovskii felt it necessary to add a declaration of loyalty to the state as a rider in case his diaries should be read by others. We should note that Chukovskii speaks of writers' adaptation to official requirements here almost casually, as of a well-known, accustomed phenomenon, a point supported by N Ia Mandel'shtam, who dated the beginning of consistent official pressure on writers to 1924 in her memoirs<sup>19</sup>. In 1929 Eikhenbaum described the lack of creative independence and the effects of adaptation among writers in terms similar to those he used in his first 1927 literary byt articles:

"Literature now is not divided and does not interbreed. We have no living literary struggle, no literary 'plots' - each man is for himself and all are together, like a crowd. Our writers go round the publishers and the editors' offices just as ladies go round Gostinyi dvor, except that they are not buying but selling. [...]

I have not named a single name - and quite consciously. Literature now is nameless, - like the cinema once was. It is groping its way - we still have a very long way to go to reach individualities, the personal path, the *writer with a name* in the true sense of that term ..."<sup>20</sup>

In the second part of this passage (the end of his article) Eikhenbaum referred briefly to the lack of personality and anonymity of literature, to the absence of writers who were individuals in the particular charged sense he gave that word. This loss of individuality, and therefore of the ability to act on one's own responsibility in society, was a fundamental cause of his deeply felt fears for the future of literature and of society, and we shall return to it in the next section. In terms of the immediate literary-political situation, however, it is clear that the prospect and, to some degree, the reality of a politically obedient and artistically undifferentiated literary profession, which had become indifferent to, or ignorant of, Russian literary traditions and the responsibilities of the artist, was clear to Eikhenbaum.

It was in part this indifference and ignorance which Eikhenbaum sought to change by enlarging the writer's sense of what concerned him and what he was responsible for. Ginzburg, in her

analysis of the action of the triple mechanism of adaptation, indifference and justification in the 1930s, gave a description of the area Eikhenbaum sought to affect:

The mechanism of adaptation, the double mechanism of distraction from suffering and attraction to pleasure, could not work without a built-in human indifference to what does not concern one. [...] A person is concerned by whatever acts directly upon his emotions and nerves.

[...] As well as what acts upon a person directly, emotionally, whatever becomes a fact of his realisation also concerns him: what he answers for, what he can change. This is the key to people's participation - often self-sacrificing - in all kinds of general movements, and the key to the indifference of those without responsibility."<sup>21</sup>

Eikhenbaum sought to make central to the writer's sense of himself, to his professional "realisation", the idea that he had a personal responsibility for his work, that it 'made a difference'. This was the area to which Eikhenbaum's concept of 'conduct' applied. We shall return to this central concept in the next section, but we may note in this context that conduct had a double effect, the effect on the individual agent and the effect on society.

A negative aspect of the writer's conduct which recurred in Eikhenbaum's diaries and published work from 1925 was khaltura, one of the consequences of adaptation. For him khaltura meant not merely simple hack-work, which did not concern the writer's primary interests, but also work written and sold because it was expedient or advantageous, without any sense of moral responsibility, irrespective of the effect on the writer or on readers. The writer of khaltura of this second type did not refer to his own sense of what was accurate or necessary in his work, referring instead to the standards of the commissioning agent. In 1927 Eikhenbaum remarked:

"A particular type of writer has appeared - a dilettante acting like a professional, who, without thinking about the essence of the question and about his own fate as a writer, responds to a commission with khaltura"<sup>22</sup>.

Eikhenbaum noted that the idea of a literary commission had itself become suspect; it was either "indefinite or contradicted the writer's ideas of his literary duties and rights."<sup>23</sup> Eikhenbaum did not labour the point, evident to his audience by 1927, that those commissioning literary work were subject to, or themselves operated official literary controls,

and that the standards they applied were therefore those of state policy. Shklovskii, in his 'dictionary' definition of khaltura in his 1928 book Gamburgskii schet, alluded to this political aspect of the practice, and distinguished two types of khaltura, Tartar and Greek, which correspond approximately to Eikhenbaum's conception of simple commissioned work and expedient commissioned work, performed without a sense of personal responsibility:

"In the south of Russia payment for a religious rite (a privately commissioned service) performed outside the diocese was called khaltura.

This word passed from the choir-boys to the members of the orchestra. In the years 1918 - 19 this word began to spread like rats under Catherine, and borne by actors took over the whole country.

[...]

There are two [types of] khaltura: Greek and Tartar.

Greek khaltura. That is when a person writes not where he should write and sings not where he should sing.

Tartar khaltura. A person works not as he should.

Khalturshchiki of these two types despise each other and are in eternal enmity.

Now this enmity has surfaced in the struggle between the fellow-travellers and On-guardists.

Khalturshchiki of the first type usually show off their talent, khalturshchiki of the second type, the correctness of their line. Mixed types exist - Greco-tartar.

Art exists separately."<sup>24</sup>

Here Shklovskii indicated the scale and undesirable nature of the practice by comparing its growth to infestation by rats, and identified it as a post-revolutionary phenomenon. He conveyed a connotation of political irresponsibility by associating the old root meaning of "payment for a religious rite" with rewards for analogous activity performed not by "choir-boys" whose work it properly was, but by "actors" hymning the Communist orthodoxy ("from the years 1918 - 19"). He underlined this political connotation in its Greek variant by the double sense of the word 'sing' (to sing "not where he should sing" could imply informing) which then reflected similarly on writing "not where he should write". 'Greek' khaltura, even excluding this sense of 'sing', was work mis-placed, done for the wrong masters. 'Tartar'

khaltura, on the other hand, was simply sub-standard work. Eikhenbaum's use of the word from 1925 was increasingly coloured by a sense of political and artistic irresponsibility similar to that implied here by Shklovskii, and by an additional sense of the consequences for the writer himself and for the delo literatury of such behaviour. Khaltura as he saw it was the inevitable result of unprincipled adaptation by writers to market or state pressures.

The influx of novice writers far removed from the intelligentsia, the effects (among them khaltura) of state censorship on the one hand and personal adaptation on the other were all features of the literary and political circumstances of the mid-twenties which motivated Eikhenbaum's work from 1927, and which he himself gave as reasons for his change of stance in the new work. On this basis it would be possible to characterise this work as broadly educative in purpose, designed to enlighten the new generation of writers about their "literary duties and rights" and offering nineteenth-century models of the writer's conduct in situations analogous to those of the 1920s. Chudakova, for example, characterises Eikhenbaum's work of this period as inculcating culture or 'cultivation' (*okul'turivanie*<sup>25</sup>) and offers an appealing imaginative comparison between the projected behaviour of Shklovskii and Eikhenbaum on an uninhabited island and their reactions to the literary-political situation in the second half of the 1920s, based on an anecdote in Sentimental'noe puteshestvie. Shklovskii wrote:

"I, if I arrived on an uninhabited island, would become not Robinson [Crusoe] but a monkey, so my wife said of me, and I never heard a more truthful definition [...] I know how to flow, while changing, even how to become ice and steam, I know how to fit my foot into any shoe."<sup>26</sup>

Chudakova comments:

"On this island Eikhenbaum really was Robinson Crusoe - he drew up an inventory of available equipment, domesticated wild animals, dug the soil, prepared to live, concerned to allow for the demands of circumstances as they applied to his own nature".<sup>27</sup>

Using arrival at an island inhabited only by animals as a vivid metaphor for the advent of an untamed 'new world' in the second half of the 1920s, Chudakova sees Eikhenbaum as acting to civilise his surroundings and taming his 'wild' fellow creatures with the means at hand, intent on surviving as himself in difficult circumstances. In this picture of ultimate isolation

Eikhenbaum appears as the representative of a vanished civilisation, and its sole arbiter, an amiable but somewhat absurd figure. The reality of Eikhenbaum's position and sense of himself was naturally more complex, not least because, though he may have suffered spiritual isolation, he was in a situation where those around him were faced with similar difficulties. The terms of the island comparison exclude or greatly distort this social dimension of his situation, placing Eikhenbaum as outside or above the predicament of his fellow creatures. While it is certainly true to say that education, or communicating his view of culture, was part of Eikhenbaum's intention in his post-1927 work, this does not fully describe it. The literary and political context which we have considered, and to which Chudakova's comparison relates, prompted reflections of a different order on Eikhenbaum's part, based on a more fundamental understanding, not restricted to literature, of what was taking place in the changes of the second half of the 1920s. This understanding concerned the serious consequences of these changes for all individuals, and for himself among them. The question of what prompted Eikhenbaum's explicit self-involvement in his work, and of what his sense of 'work as act' was, cannot be adequately answered without addressing this primary aspect of Eikhenbaum's thought in the mid 1920s.

#### Work as act: lichnost'

A primary category of Eikhenbaum's thought during his period of transition from 1925 and later in the decade was the concept of the individual or lichnost'. It was the basis of his ethics and of the self-declaratory socio-political position he took up in his work from 1927. In Eikhenbaum's work from 1921 lichnost' was linked to the social and political context of the time, to history, as he understood it. Both in his OPOIAZ period and later Eikhenbaum carefully differentiated his concern with the individual (lichnost') from "the old individual-psychological study"<sup>28</sup> (to which Marxists had returned literary studies) and from "worship of [the writer's] personality (lichnost')"<sup>29</sup> as a fixed, immutable quantity, detached from its social and historical context. Eikhenbaum's concern was with the individual as affected by and affecting history, not with personal detail per se; for this reason he described his memorial speech on Blok in 1921 as conducted "on a supra-personal level"<sup>30</sup>. This signalled the wider social importance of the personal detail used, not that personal material was irrelevant or

absent: "I take biographical facts precisely from that [historical] side, and use the word 'person' in that sense."<sup>31</sup>

As we saw in Chapter Four, every individual, in Eikhenbaum's view, was affected by history, but also had the potential to contribute to it. The individual began independent life as unconsciously part of a generation and a particular historical period, and lived through further changing historical periods, which demanded of him some evolution, crisis or adaptation. He might or might not become aware of himself 'in history'. Each person was simultaneously subject to (internalised) the various moods, ideas, convictions of the day and was in some way a contributor to them, and responsible for his part in them. Reflecting in 1921 on the deaths of Blok and Gumilev and the tragic consequences of the Revolution he had welcomed, Eikhenbaum accepted a responsibility: "History is us, we ourselves, all of us."<sup>32</sup> The individual's contribution - his conduct, in Eikhenbaum's later term - might be passive or active, it might reinforce, counter or otherwise affect the historical current. In Nadezhda Mandel'shtam's somewhat similar view, the human "splinter" in the violent flow of history had "a mysterious ability to direct the flow..."<sup>33</sup>.

Lichnost' in Eikhenbaum's usage referred to the person who had become aware of his place in the life of society - in history, as Eikhenbaum saw it - and in some way determined and took responsibility for his actions. Often, but not invariably, he applied it to creative individuals, writers and artists. It was by no means synonymous with 'person' as such. Indeed it functioned as the opposite of the person understood as a unit of a group, or of a mass of people, essentially undifferentiated from other members of the group or mass.

By extension, lichnost', in the sense of a self-aware, independently functioning personality, was the source of all ability to act on one's own account and to act ethically. It was the precondition of culture and ethics; a person could not act for himself in any sphere without first becoming an individual. If lichnost' was historically conditioned, it was also historically vulnerable. It was the awareness of the threat to individuality in this fundamental sense, posed by the state policies whose effects, as we have seen, he recorded in his diary, that prompted Eikhenbaum's

letter of 25 July 1925 to Shklovskii, which we quoted in Chapter Four:

“[...] History has exhausted me and I neither want to rest, nor do I know how. [...] Not only the history of literature, and not only the theory, but even ‘contemporary literature’ itself is needed by no-one now. Now only lichnost’ is needed. A person who could build his life is needed. If words, then words of terrible irony, like Heine, or of terrible rage.”<sup>34</sup>

The anger and disillusion with the contemporary situation (“history”) which induced Eikhenbaum in this letter to reject as irrelevant and unnecessary the literary activities to which he had devoted his adult life brought into consideration a far more fundamental category, that of the individual, the existence of which was taken for granted in his previous work, but which was now in question. To “build one’s life”, equally an idea which would have been assumed as an adult prerogative in the past, now acquired a sense of vital opposition to the current of contemporary life, in itself an historically relevant act (*postupok*). Earlier Zamiatin had described the post-revolutionary situation to which Eikhenbaum was reacting: “..we have lived through the epoch of the repression of the masses; we are living through the repression of the individual (*lichnost*’) in the name of the masses.”<sup>35</sup> If this was true in 1919, it was, as we have seen, enforced in an unprecedented fashion in the second half of the 1920s. Zamiatin was one writer who reacted to the increasing threat to individuality with the “words of terrible rage” that Eikhenbaum considered the only appropriate response. In 1926, in an article not published at the time, he wrote of the On-guardist critics, Lelevich and Averbakh:

“...these young men have in their hands not pen and ink, but a whip and a lump of meat. Basically, their criticism comes down to the command, ‘Serve!’. The writer to them is only a dog which must be taught to stand on its hind legs - then it is given its piece of meat, and all is well.”<sup>36</sup>

Eikhenbaum’s Leningrad diaries for 1924 and 1925 record separate incidents and impressions which reflect the Party’s “more concentrated attention to culture”<sup>37</sup>, as manifested, for instance, in Bukharin’s speech to a Party meeting with the intelligentsia in Moscow in 1925:

“For us it is essential that the cadres of the intelligentsia should be trained ideologically in a definite manner. Yes, we shall stamp the intelligenty, we shall manufacture them, as in a factory.”<sup>38</sup>



In such a climate the affirmation of the value and importance of the authentic individual was a serious social and political (historical, in Eikhenbaum's usage) position. We should not assume that Eikhenbaum simply reverted, after OPOIAZ, to his pre-revolutionary idea of lichnost'. The concept remained in his work and developed; it was discussed, though infrequently, in his OPOIAZ work, as we have seen. The increasing repression of individuality gave a quite different significance to lichnost' for Eikhenbaum from the one it had in his period as a post-Symbolist critic. Then he had conceived the task for literature as reconciling the status won for the individual by the Symbolists with social thinking (*obshchestvennost'*); by 1925 the concept of the independent individual itself was under threat in a way inconceivable before the revolution. In December 1925 Eikhenbaum planned a book of biographies which would:

“interweave the person's lifebuilding (creative work as act) with the epoch, with history.

(...) I feel that such a book, turning to the person, is historically necessary, and essential to me personally, it is at once work and act.”<sup>39</sup>

Work as act (*postupok*) here meant scholarly work as a self-declaratory, historically relevant act, in Eikhenbaum's case, the celebration of the creative individual in the face of State pressure to reduce the individual to a unit of the mass, in the face of “the State monopoly of thought”.<sup>40</sup> For this reason the historical models of lichnost' which were the result of this decision and which Eikhenbaum proposed from 1927, particularly in his 1928 book Lev Tolstoi and the articles on Tolstoi, Gor'kii and Gogol', cannot be described as merely educative. As the basis for his demonstration of historical and ethical issues in some ways common to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Eikhenbaum found it “historically necessary” and “personally essential” to defend the individual as such, the idea of the individual. This category was a necessary precondition for any ethics or independent thinking, and the threat to it was manifest. “Turning to the person” was a self-declaratory act which marked Eikhenbaum's strong resistance (not as an educator, outside it, but as one affected by it) to the profound corruption he saw taking place in public life.

The autobiography section of Moi vremennik, written in 1929, constitutes another approach, also not primarily educative, to the same problem of the politically enforced threat to lichnost'. It narrates the complex formation of an individual, the difficult transformation of the given

natura, of the multiple factors of childhood, into the adult soznanie, within a historical framework. Here the focus is on the process of definition as an individual, once again seen as the necessary pre-condition for independent thought and action in history, or postupok in Eikhenbaum's term. Another selectively autobiographical work of a different type which addressed the problem of lichnost' was Shklovskii's Tret'ia fabrika (1926). It received Eikhenbaum's enthusiastic support because it made the socio-political pressures on the individual writer explicit and simultaneously opposed them, by speaking of "the writer...himself, his life, his profession. If only so that it is finally acknowledged to be "unfree".<sup>41</sup> It is clear that Eikhenbaum was politically aware in a particular and profound way; he saw the fundamental threat to the individual posed by the policies of the Marxist state and enforced on every level of public life, and he registered the human effects those policies had already produced in khaltura and adaptation. Eikhenbaum, in common with his colleagues, was not, and had no pretensions to being, a skilled political analyst and perhaps therefore underestimated, as Chudakova implies, the power of the political processes he sought to resist, attempting "to influence history which was *yet to be*".<sup>42</sup> In any case, he could not foresee the far greater destructive forces that would be unleashed against the individual in the next decade. He did, however, know that intellectual and spiritual resistance of a different kind, by a remnant, "the stubborn preservers of the idea"<sup>43</sup>, as Herzen put it in the chapter of Byloe i dumy to which Eikhenbaum referred in the letter of July 1925 quoted above, had to take place and continue, or the whole foundation of culture and ethics, the independently thinking individual, would be eroded.

Work as act: povedenie

Povedenie, conduct, was the term Eikhenbaum used from 1928 to discuss the individual's expressed relation to the historically important issues of his times. In the case of the writer, it was the individual's concrete response to the question 'how to be a writer' which dominated Eikhenbaum's work from 1927. As we have seen, Ginzburg identified "the concept of the individual's historical conduct"<sup>44</sup> as the concealed personal meaning - what we have called the second level - of Eikhenbaum's large-scale literary-historical works.

Conduct, in Eikhenbaum's use of the term, was apparently ethically neutral; he described the

reactions of, for example, Bulgarin and Pushkin to the problem of literary professionalism without expressing overt approval or disapproval. He was neither overtly partisan nor prescriptive. But, both in his selection of the periods and issues he described, and in the way he described them, certain values were evident, for example in the particular weighting, which, as we saw in the preceding sections of this chapter, he gave to concepts such as khaltura and delo literary. Conduct in Eikhenbaum's use may be seen as a combination of strategy and ethics, both understood in relation to history. Though these elements are not easily separable, we shall consider first some of the main historical strategies Eikhenbaum demonstrated in his work on nineteenth-century writers, before we look at the ethical content of this work.

The precondition of any strategy was a consciousness or assessment of the historical situation and the writer's place in it. This kind of consciousness, which Eikhenbaum tried to foster and promote, was evident in, for example, Gogol's Avtorskaja ispoved', which he quoted, as we have seen, in his 1928 article, 'Gogol' i "delo literary"<sup>45</sup>. A year earlier, in 'Literatura i pisatel', Eikhenbaum had given his own diagnosis of the contemporary situation for the writer in a short review of the writer's position over the last twenty years, considered in terms of professionalism. Discussion of the issue of whether or not the writer should be a professional was one of Eikhenbaum's main means in his literary-historical work of identifying and subverting the intensifying contemporary official pressures on the writer, for whom publication depended on complying with official - professional - requirements. Professionalism as Eikhenbaum described it took different forms in different periods, but always carried the danger of enforced acquiescence with literary and political restrictions; this was the function of, for example, the parallels he drew between the workings of literary journals in the 1850s and 60s and those of professional writers' organisations in the 1920s.<sup>46</sup> In 'Literatura i pisatel' he wrote that writers since the revolution had justified their work by a new professional status as 'producers' of literature. He commented:

"This kind of solution was natural for the first years of the revolution, when the very existence of literature came under question. Now it sounds archaic. Now it is no longer necessary to save literature, but to build it. Now the point is not adaptation, not defence, but capturing (zavoevanie) literary positions."<sup>47</sup>

We should note here Eikhenbaum's decisive rejection of "adaptation" to official pressures as a strategy to resolve the present predicament of writers. In the nineteenth century Tolstoi provided him with abundant examples of the strategy of "conquering literary positions", and was, as we saw in Chapter Five, his most fruitful source for models of historical conduct relevant to the 1920s.

Having acquired a consciousness of his position in history, the writer needed a sense of priorities in the given situation; Eikhenbaum quoted frequently, in Lev Tolstoi and elsewhere, a phrase from a letter of 1860 from Tolstoi to E Kovalevskii: "Wisdom in all worldly matters, it seems to me, consists not in knowing what needs to be done, but in knowing what needs to be done first, and what later."<sup>48</sup> It is clear that this Tolstoian assertion functioned for Eikhenbaum not only as a model for one aspect of the writer's conduct in the 1920s, but also as a justification of his own conduct in adopting, as a primary necessity, a type of literary scholarship oriented to the contemporary literary-political situation, and giving up OPOIAZ work. Literary strategies might be indirect and complex: Eikhenbaum saw Tolstoi's interest in popular education (and his own post-1927 work) as types of khod or gambit in much the same way as Shklovskii used the word in his 1923 book Khod konia: "...[in chess] the knight is not free, - he moves sideways because the direct way is forbidden to him."<sup>49</sup> Thus in his view Tolstoi's adoption of popular education - a live issue in the early 1860s - was a means of returning his views to contemporary attention after the rejection by the critics of several of his literary works. and, in doing so, of "capturing literary positions":

The issue of popular education itself did not interest Tolstoi as such, but as a particular method of struggle with the present day: it is necessary to know what to do first and what later. He chose popular education at that moment as a skilful strategist. By overcoming and bringing down the opponent at that point, he hopes to dislodge him from other more important and occupied positions as well, from literary positions."<sup>50</sup>

Tolstoi's singular position in relation to the issues of his time was an aspect of his conduct which Eikhenbaum continually stressed in Lev Tolstoi; He portrayed Tolstoi as a militant archaist, both continuously in contact with present-day thinking and continuously in opposition

to it. For Eikhenbaum Tolstoi's determination, over several generations, to remain part of the current literary world, while at the same time successfully combatting the aspects of it to which he was hostile, contained an important lesson for the 1920s: to "pursue the present day"<sup>51</sup> without identifying oneself with it was a major element of historical conduct. The general (historical) and individual constituents of this dual task were in constant tension. As we have seen, in Eikhenbaum's view the fate of the writer, for example Turgenev or Gogol', who failed to remain vitally in touch with succeeding generations, was either questionable or tragic (though to remain part of contemporary life was neither easy nor necessarily honourable). The principled rejection of contemporary life, in which issues of personal integrity outweighed general considerations, was a position Eikhenbaum recognised; he ascribed it to Gogol' and, as we saw in the last chapter, saw Tynianov's situation in 1928 in similar terms<sup>52</sup>. At the other extreme, mere adaptation to the pressures of contemporary life, which gave them overriding importance at the expense of the individual's "self-preservation"<sup>53</sup> as a writer, was another manifestation of the failure to maintain the tension Eikhenbaum saw as the key to the writer's survival, and he invariably differentiated between adaptation, or compromise with contemporary expectations (as, for example, in the case of Turgenev), and the complex effort to remain part of contemporary reality while at the same time not identifying with it.

If we can speak of an informing ethic in Eikhenbaum's discussions of these issues, as I believe we can, it will be once again in terms of maintaining this characteristic tension between the individual and the historical, as an ethic of the writer's independence and integrity, conditioned by a vital connection to that view of the delo literatury which he referred to as a "high service"<sup>54</sup>. This term, which Eikhenbaum took from Pushkin, recurs in both Lev Tolstoi and Moi vremennik as the 'outmoded' view of their craft held by the aristocratic older generation of writers of the 1850s - Fet, Turgenev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Botkin, Druzhinin and (a younger member) Tolstoi, as opposed to the utilitarian views of younger writers. Although, as usual, no direct comparisons between the 1850s and the 1920s can be made, on the analogical level it is clear that Eikhenbaum used literature seen as a high service as an equivalent for the humane literary tradition which he saw to be under threat from present-day utilitarian views.

The dual character of the ethic of independence Eikhenbaum proposed meant that he emphasised the writer's responsibility both to the high service of literature and to himself - for "his own fate as a writer"<sup>55</sup>. This meant in part, as we have seen, such issues as avoiding khaltura and writing to satisfy what Eikhenbaum called literary, rather than the social or readers', demand. But these were aspects of the larger complex problem of literary professionalism, to which Eikhenbaum did not offer simple ethical prescriptions. While the struggle for independence and integrity remained a constant theme in his works of this period (and in later years), what it meant to be an independent writer in concrete terms altered in different periods and contexts, and according to the individual's perception of his position. For example, as we have seen, the figure of Tolstoi in the 1850s in Eikhenbaum's version functioned as a model of the attainment of literary independence and influence by means of rejecting the form of professionalism offered by the journals. However, in the case of Pushkin, who did see himself as a professional writer, the "central question [...] of professional independence, of maintaining his dignity as a writer"<sup>56</sup> involved publishing his work in journals which were then a new medium and had a different literary-political function. As Eikhenbaum described it, Pushkin's struggle for literary independence took place on two fronts, against popular commercial literary work of the Bulgarin type and against the patronage of powerful court figures; he embraced professionalism in this struggle, like Tolstoi, used his aristocratic status as a weapon in it, and made compromises. Even in the case of those writers with whose literary-political positions he was most in sympathy, Pushkin, Gogol', Tolstoi, the ethical element in Eikhenbaum's discussions of the writer's conduct was never presented as one-dimensional, separable from his historical situation, nor as simply and exclusively admirable or reprehensible. Eikhenbaum was concerned not with rules, or a system of moral absolutes, but with the survival and integrity of the writer as lichnost' in the Russian literary tradition. Indeed, the construction of moral absolutes on dubious grounds was one of the contemporary uses of literature to which he was, as we have seen in his assessment of current criticism, implacably opposed. Instead, in presenting the conduct of very different nineteenth-century writers in a wide range of complex situations, he proposed analogies which would clarify "the active choice of moral-self-preserving reference points"<sup>57</sup> in the equally complex problem of conduct for the writer in the late 1920s.

The complex interrelation of strategy and ethics in the writer's conduct, of his conception of the delo literary and his own sense of "self-preservation as a writer" with the particular historical circumstances of his time was the unifying theme of both the articles on individual writers collected in Moi vremennik, and of Lev Tolstoi, where it was developed in great detail and complexity. Eikhenbaum's work during the 1930s and 1940s, including the second and third volumes of his Tolstoi monograph (the third volume, Lev Tolstoi. Semidesiatye gody, was written in the 1940s, though published only posthumously, in 1960) continued this concern, and there is considerable evidence that his contemporaries saw both his published work and his conduct in general in these years as an example of "spiritual resistance to the epoch"<sup>58</sup>. Chukovskii, writing in December 1931, a year after Shklovskii had "easily and wittily repented" of Formalism<sup>59</sup> in his article 'Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke'<sup>60</sup>, recorded one such episode:

"Zhitkov is wholly taken up with the story of the self-flagellation of the critics who let themselves go in the Union of Writers. He recounted that when it was proposed to Eikhenbaum that he should subject himself to self-criticism, that is, run down his previous work, Eikhenbaum said:

'One should subject oneself to self-criticism *before* one writes something, and not after.'

That version I did not know, but at least ten people have told me in different ways about that reply of Eikhenbaum's. Some people said he said:

'My speciality is not self-criticism, but criticism. Now I have just written a book about Tolstoi, you can criticise that.'

Other people - [have told me] in a different way again. Shteinman at Krasnaia gazeta in yet a third way. Obviously his position has matched many people's feelings and around him legends are already being created."<sup>61</sup>

When Eikhenbaum, during Stalin's campaign against 'alien' influences in literature in Spring 1936, did make a public acknowledgement of the 'mistakes' of Formalism at a meeting of the Writers' Union, his speech did not meet the expectations of those assembled. His approach was entirely consonant with his view of recent history which, by "taking different paths", had prompted his departure from poetics ten years before in favour of the history of literature; he

defended Formalism as a serious movement in the context of its time, and announced, in effect, his intention to continue to respond in his work as a scholar to contemporary problems as *he* understood them:

“I think that all the mistakes of Formalism, which are now completely clear, and from which, essentially, life has turned away, are mistakes not of lightmindedness and not of indifference, they are mistakes, rather, of passion, and mistakes that come rather from the fact that they were unavoidable, like all historical mistakes [...] Essentially one can only repudiate them — in this way, that I was doing my historical work (delo) which is now ended, history has taken different paths, and one of two things, either I, taking a stubborn and obstinate stand on those views, stop my work, and stand aside, or, on the contrary, I do not want to stop, because I have understood that this was a historical mistake, this was a different epoch, and I am now ready to work differently.”<sup>62</sup>

Eikhenbaum was the subject of attacks in the press in 1937<sup>63</sup>, but he and his family survived the 1930s without imprisonment or arrest, although in daily fear of them<sup>64</sup>; at this period, as Ginzburg recalled, a constant awareness of the arrests and trials, and of the more distant famine and collectivisation coexisted with energetic participation in the flourishing cultural and academic life of Leningrad, where Eikhenbaum, with Zhirmunskii, Tomashevskii, Gukovskii and Propp, was responsible for the University Philology Faculty “in all its brilliance”<sup>65</sup>. To continue his work, whatever the circumstances, was for Eikhenbaum an essential constituent of his social conduct; as well as writing articles on Pushkin, Lermontov, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Tolstoi, he engaged in unremitting textological, editorial and commentary work, particularly on Lermontov and Tolstoi, during the 1930s and early 1940s, and was responsible for parts of volumes 26 and 38 of the Jubilee edition of Tolstoi’s collected works.

For a short period towards the end of the war new, more open opportunities for literature and for the renewal of literary-theoretical work seemed imminent, and Eikhenbaum published an article, ‘Pogovorim o nashem remesle’, in the February 1945 issue of *Zvezda* in which Akhmatova’s verse appeared, where his energy and readiness to take up these possibilities was clear. They were also evident in his controversy with Gukovskii about the aims and methods of literary scholarship, in which Eikhenbaum ridiculed his opponent’s journalistic stock



phrases<sup>66</sup>. The period of hope was short-lived. Eikhenbaum gave speeches at three evenings in honour of Akhmatova in January and March 1946, in which many of the ideas of his 1923 book on her were taken up; six months later he was present at the mass meeting of Leningrad writers in the Smol'nyi on 16 August 1946 and at the meeting of the administration of the Writers' Union on 19 August, at which Akhmatova and Zoshchenko were attacked, following the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist party 'O zhurnalakh Zvezda i Leningrad'. On 17 August he wrote in his diary, "Now a new difficult season is beginning"<sup>67</sup>. For him the most difficult period began three years later in 1949, when, following the death of his wife and a serious heart illness, he was expelled from Leningrad University, deprived of opportunities to publish his work and of the means of earning a living, and once again attacked in the press. As he had in earlier critical years, Eikhenbaum continued to research and write, but with difficulty<sup>68</sup>. It was not until three years after the death of Stalin that he was once again invited to take up professional work as a literary scholar; in the first entry (9 July 1956) in the diary he had abandoned since 1953 he noted:

"By all the signs I need to resume notes and even try to keep them more systematically and fully. Today there is an exterior but significant reason: I have been invited to IRLI [Institut russkoi literatury Akademii Nauk] - for a return to work [...] What a complicated and strange thing history is!"<sup>69</sup>

In the three years before he died on 24 November 1959, Eikhenbaum embarked on new textological and editorial work and planned a book on Lermontov and a book on textology. He also returned to ideas he had developed in his OPOIAZ period in an article 'Geroi nashego vremeni Lermontova'<sup>70</sup> and accepted an invitation to attend the conference of the Polish Academy of Sciences in August 1960 which marked the beginning of a scholarly reassessment of the work of OPOIAZ in Eastern Europe.

The whole body of his scholarly work remained as a record, not only of his activity as an originator, champion and brilliant exegete of a theory of literature which, though suppressed for more than forty years in the Soviet Union, changed the course of modern literary criticism, but also of his conduct as one of "the bearers of culture"<sup>71</sup> through the years of Stalinism. In both these ways Shklovskii's prediction of the future fate of the work of the OPOIAZ colleagues

was borne out in the case of Eikhenbaum; on 21 February 1940 Shklovskii wrote to him:

“So, you and I have been friends, and have even quarrelled for twenty-five years. Time has gone by, we have built a science, at times we have forgotten about it, it has been covered with sand. The pupils of our pupils, the pupils of the people who argue with us, will discover us. When they come to wash out the libraries, it will turn out that our books are heavy, and they will lie there, the books, like flashes of gold, I hope, and will flow together, and before great Russian literature, as far as I understand the matter, we need not be ashamed.<sup>72</sup>”

In the Soviet Union OPOIAZ works did indeed acquire a second life, as Shklovskii surmised, through “the pupils of our pupils and the pupils of the people who argue with us”; by circuitous historical routes as strange as any Eikhenbaum himself noted, OPOIAZ poetics became the progenitor of new literary theory in Eastern and Western Europe and in America. Both in his homeland and abroad Eikhenbaum’s original contribution to poetics was honoured, but it was left to one of his few surviving pupils, L. Ia Ginzburg, to point out and celebrate not only his achievement in poetics but the lifelong concern with the question of conduct which informed the greater part of his literary scholarship.

- 1 RF, p 129.
- 2 W Mills Todd III, 'Literature as an Institution: Fragments of a Formalist Theory', Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance, New Haven, 1985, pp 15-26.
- 3 RF, pp 125-127, 129-130, and 'Sots. praktika', pp 103-131.
- 4 BME, diary entry, 24.10.25: "Undoubted Middle Ages - endless analogies. One must understand that and expect nothing, but think out our role historically. We are something like humanists, and our life will be difficult to the end, with deprivations, persecution etc. ..."
- 5 L Ia Ginzburg, Chps, p 357.
- 6 op cit, p 356.
- 7 "You are against the history of literature. Yes, it needs a certain practical character, the clarification of the present day through the past...", BME, letter to V B Shklovskii, 25-29 June 1925, quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 125.
- 8 BME, LT, p 370.
- 9 op cit, p 374.
- 10 op cit, p 381.
- 11 V Kaverin, Sobesednik, M, 1973, pp 16 -17.
- 12 L Ia Ginzburg, Chps, p 353.
- 13 BME, letter of 30 November 1928, quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 126.
- 14 ibid.
- 15 BME, Diary entry, 15 December 1925. See Chapter IV, Section 1.
- 16 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt' (1927), Mv, p 51.
- 17 BME, LT, p 339. See Chapter V, Section 2.
- 18 K Chukovskii, Dnevnik 1901 - 1929, M, 1991, p 430.
- 19 N Ia Mandel'stam, Vtoraia kniga, Paris, 1972, pp 228 - 229.
- 20 BME, 'Vmesto "rezkoi kritiki"', Mv, pp 123, 125.
- 21 L Ia Ginzburg, "'I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...'", TS3, p 220.
- 22 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 51.

- 23    ibid.
- 24    V B Shklovskii, 'Zagotovki II', Gs, pp 351 - 352.
- 25    'Sots. praktika..', p 129.
- 26    ibid.
- 27    ibid.
- 28    BME, diary entry, 4 October 1925: "What I spoke about at the dispute in Moscow and wrote in the article is confirmed: the Marxists have returned science to the old individual-psychological (individual'no-psikhologicheskomu) study (individual changeability)."
- 29    BME, diary entry, 12 May 1928 (conversation with A B Gol'denveizer): "He belongs to the people who do not evolve: Tolstoi 'the seeker of truth', that is the main thing for him. Worship of Tolstoi's lichnost'. I don't understand that. I know only the pafos of history."
- 30    BME, 'Sud'ba Bloka'(1921), reprinted in O lit, p 364.
- 31    BME, 'Artistizm Turgeneva', Mv p 97.
- 32    BME, 'Mig soznaniia', Ku, 1921, 7, p 12.
- 33    N Ia Mandel'shtam, Vtoraia kniga, Paris, 1972, p 187.
- 34    Quoted in 'Sots. praktika..', p 106.
- 35    E I Zamiatin, 'Zavtra', in V zashchitu cheloveka, Pb, 1919, reprinted in Litsa, New York, 1967, p 174.
- 36    E I Zamiatin, 'Tsel'', in op cit, p 178.
- 37    M Heller, A Nekrich, Utopiia u vlasti. Istoriia Sovetskogo Soiuza s 1917 goda do nashikh dnei, I, London, 1982, p 209.
- 38    Quoted in op cit, p 210.
- 39    BME, Diary entry, 15 December 1925.
- 40    One of several passages of Belyi's 'Dnevnik pisatel'ia. Pochemy ia ne mogu kul'turno rabotat', Zapiski mechtatelei, 1921, No 2-3, p 115, which BME quoted in 'Sud'ba Bloka'; "We, the humanists, the free *philosophers* who protest against violence, - we are: the most refined violators, executioners and tyrants; the state monopoly of thought is our reflection: 'keeper of the threshold'; and - yes: 'Bolsheviks' - we are too." See O lit, pp 357 - 58.

- 41 BME, 'Kniga o zhizni'(1926), O lit, p 443.
- 42 'Sots. praktika..', pp 130 - 131.
- 43 A I Herzen, Sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh, M, 1954 - 1965, vol 10, 1956, p 120. See Chapter IV, Section 1.
- 44 L Ia Ginzburg, 'Problema povedeniia', Chps, p 357.
- 45 BME, 'Gogol' i "delo literary"', Mv, p 92.
- 46 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 57.
- 47 BME, 'Literatura i pisatel"', Mv, p 61.
- 48 BME, 'Literaturnaia kar'era L. Tolstogo', Mv, p 109.
- 49 V B Shklovskii, 'Khod konia', Gs, p 74.
- 50 BME, 'Literaturnaia kar'era L. Tolstogo', Mv, p 112.
- 51 ibid.
- 52 BME, 'Iz pisem k V. B. Shklovskomu', Neva, 1987, 6, p 60.
- 53 BME, 'Pisatel'skii oblik M. Gor'kogo', Mv, p 120.
- 54 First used by BME in 'Literatura i pisatel"' (1927), Mv, p 75.
- 55 BME, 'Literaturnyi byt', Mv, p 51.
- 56 BME, 'Literatura i pisatel"', Mv, p 69.
- 57 M O Chudakova, 'Sots praktika..', p 124.
- 58 BME, 'Iz pisem B. M. Eikhenbauma k G. L. Eikhleru', TS5, p 252.
- 59 I Z Serman, 'Problema istorii', RES, p 79.
- 60 V B Shklovskii, 'Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke', Literaturnaia gazeta, 1930, 4 (27 January).
- 61 K Chukovskii, 'Iz dnevnika (1930 - 1931), Neva, 1992, 3, p 277.
- 62 BME, 'Zhizn' ushla v storonu ot formalizma', Literaturnyi Leningrad, 16, 1 April 1936, quoted in I Z Serman, op cit, p 79.
- 63 BME, 'Iz pisem B. M. Eikhenbauma k G. L. Eikhleru', TS5, pp 259 - 263.
- 64 Ol'ga Borisovna Eikhenbaum recounted to the researcher how Boris Mikhailovich, at that time living in a Union of Writers house on Kanal Griboedova, would telephone her every morning with an agreed phrase for the almost nightly police visits; either they had come to flats before theirs - 'nedolet' - or to flats after theirs - 'perelet'.

- 65 L Ia Ginzburg, “‘I zaodno s pravoporiadkom...’”, TS3, p 219.
- 66 BME, ‘Nado dogovorit’sia’, Literaturnaia gazeta, 13 October 1945; qoted in O lit, pp 454 - 457.
- 67 See O lit, p 28.
- 68 Of this period, E. Maimin, one of Eikhenbaum’s students at the time, wrote that he rarely showed his distress at his position: “However, sometimes Boris Mikhailovich did allow himself to be depressed openly. At one of these moments he said to me: ‘Once on the street in Leningrad, before the war, my son and I came across a horse. Without a cart, without a cab, just a horse. My son was startled. He was a town child and had never before seen an unharnessed horse. He asked me: ‘Papa, what is that? A broken horse, is it?’ And after a short pause, Boris Milhailovich continued: ‘And that is how I am, Zhenia, now. Like a broken horse. Without literature. Without science. Without students..’” See E. Maimin, ‘Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum’, Literaturnoe obozrenie, 1990, 5, p 99.
- 69 Quoted in O lit, p 30.
- 70 BME, ‘Geroi nashego vremeni Lermontova’, in Istoriia russkogo romana (Prospekt), L, 1958.
- 71 ‘Stranitsy..’, p 161.
- 72 V B Shklovskii, letter of 21 February 1940, quoted in PILK, p 571.

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