

Chapter 1 : Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine - PhilPapers

I give it 3 stars not because it's not good, but who really enjoys reading Russian Formalist literary theory? I will give it to them, though. Russian Formalism is a lot more comprehensive and flexible than American Formalism. Shklovsky makes Cleanth Brooks look positively curmudgeonly.

When printing this page, you must include the entire legal notice. This material may not be published, reproduced, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed without permission. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our terms and conditions of fair use. This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy. Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelianism Formalists disagreed about what specific elements make a literary work "good" or "bad"; but generally, Formalism maintains that a literary work contains certain intrinsic features, and the theory " Formalism attempts to treat each work as its own distinct piece, free from its environment, era, and even author. This point of view developed in reaction to " Formalists assume that the keys to understanding a text exist within "the text itself" a common saying among New Critics , and thus focus a great deal on, you guessed it, form Tyson For the most part, traditional Formalism is no longer used in the academy. However, New Critical theories are still sometimes used in secondary- and post-secondary-level instruction in literature and writing Tyson There has been a renewed interest in form among groups like the New Formalists. How does the work use imagery to develop its own symbols? In other words, does how the work is put together reflect what it is? How are the various parts of the work interconnected? How do paradox, irony, ambiguity, and tension work in the text? How do these parts and their collective whole contribute to or not contribute to the aesthetic quality of the work? How does the author resolve apparent contradictions within the work? What does the form of the work say about its content? Is there a central or focal passage that can be said to sum up the entirety of the work? Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

Erich became recognized as a major scholar of modern Russian literature with his study, "Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine," which remains a classic in the field.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Notes Introduction 1 E. Oxford University Press, , For calling my attention to this book, I am indebted to E. Gombrich, "The Evidence of Images," in C. Theory and Practice Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, , Thus the object of representation may refer to the imaginings of the author , to the contents of mind. For further discussion of this, see William H. Knopf, , Harcourt, Brace and World, , Farrar, Straus, Giroux, , Sally and Robert Fitzgerald New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, , Temple University Press, , Farrar, Straus, Giroux, , xvi. Voice of the Peacock New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, Indiana University Press, , 7. Harcourt, Brace, , History and Doctrine The Hague: Mouton, , Many of the stories were revised and published under separate titles, or incorporated in later novels. Except for an occasional phrase, which serves partly as a rhetorical signal that more than ordinary verisimilitude is at stake, there are no unavoidable pressures to consider these stories in a strictly religious sense. They stand securely on their own, as Notes to pages 8 to 13 renderings and criticisms of human experience. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, , xxxiii. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

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analysis argued artistic Arxaisty i novatory Belyj Boris Ejxenbaum Boris Tomasevskij Brik Brjusov chapter concept creative Czech device emphasis essay esthetic fiction Formalist critic Formalist movement Formalist School Formalist theoreticians Foxt Futurist genre I. A. Richards Ibid ideological imaginative literature insisted jazyka Jurij.

Distinctive ideas[edit] Russian formalism is distinctive for its emphasis on the functional role of literary devices and its original conception of literary history. Russian Formalists advocated a "scientific" method for studying poetic language, to the exclusion of traditional psychological and cultural-historical approaches. Two general principles underlie the Formalist study of literature: To achieve these objectives several models were developed. The formalists agreed on the autonomous nature of poetic language and its specificity as an object of study for literary criticism. Their main endeavor consisted in defining a set of properties specific to poetic language, be it poetry or prose, recognizable by their "artfulness" and consequently analyzing them as such. This approach strips the literary artifact from its connection with the author, reader, and historical background. Broadly speaking, literature was considered, on the one hand, to be a social or political product, whereby it was then interpreted in the tradition of the great critic Belinsky as an integral part of social and political history. In both cases, literature is not considered as such, but evaluated on a broad socio-political or a vague psychologico-impressionistic background. The aim of Shklovsky is therefore to isolate and define something specific to literature or "poetic language": Formalists do not agree with one another on exactly what a device or "priem" is, nor how these devices are used or how they are to be analyzed in a given text. The central idea, however, is more general: Shklovsky, however, insisted that not all artistic texts de-familiarize language, and that some of them achieve defamiliarization ostranenie by manipulating composition and narrative. The Formalist movement attempted to discriminate systematically between art and non-art. Therefore, its notions are organized in terms of polar oppositions. One of the most famous dichotomies introduced by the mechanistic Formalists is a distinction between story and plot, or fabula and " sjuzhet ". Story, fabula, is a chronological sequence of events, whereas plot, sjuzhet, can unfold in non-chronological order. The events can be artistically arranged by means of such devices as repetition, parallelism, gradation, and retardation. The mechanistic methodology reduced literature to a variation and combination of techniques and devices devoid of a temporal, psychological, or philosophical element. Shklovsky very soon realized that this model had to be expanded to embrace, for example, contemporaneous and diachronic literary traditions Garson Organic formalism[edit] Disappointed by the constraints of the mechanistic method some Russian Formalists adopted the organic model. An artefact, like a biological organism, is not an unstructured whole; its parts are hierarchically integrated. Hence the definition of the device has been extended to its function in text. The analogy between biology and literary theory provided the frame of reference for genre studies and genre criticism. Having shifted the focus of study from an isolated technique to a hierarchically structured whole, the organic Formalists overcame the main shortcoming of the mechanists. Still, both groups failed to account for the literary changes which affect not only devices and their functions but genres as well. Systemic formalism[edit] The diachronic dimension was incorporated into the work of the systemic Formalists. The main proponent of the "systemo-functional" model was Yury Tynyanov. Since literature constitutes part of the overall cultural system, the literary dialectic participates in cultural evolution. As such, it interacts with other human activities, for instance, linguistic communication. The communicative domain enriches literature with new constructive principles. In response to these extra-literary factors the self-regulating literary system is compelled to rejuvenate itself constantly. Even though the systemic Formalists incorporated the social dimension into literary theory and acknowledged the analogy between language and literature the figures of author and reader were pushed to the margins of this paradigm. Linguistic formalism[edit] The figures of author and reader were likewise downplayed by the linguistic Formalists Lev Jakubinsky and Roman Jakobson. The adherents of this model placed poetic language at the centre of their inquiry. As Warner remarks, "Jakobson makes it clear that he rejects completely any notion of emotion as the touchstone of literature. For Jakobson, the emotional qualities of a literary work are secondary to and dependent on purely

verbal, linguistic facts" Practical language is used in day-to-day communication to convey information. In poetic language, according to Lev Jakubinsky, "the practical goal retreats into background and linguistic combinations acquire a value in themselves". Eichenbaum, however, criticised Shklovsky and Jakubinsky for not disengaging poetry from the outside world completely, since they used the emotional connotations of sound as a criterion for word choice. This recourse to psychology threatened the ultimate goal of formalism to investigate literature in isolation. A definitive example of focus on poetic language is the study of Russian versification by Osip Brik. Apart from the most obvious devices such as rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and assonance, Brik explores various types of sound repetitions, e. He ranks phones according to their contribution to the "sound background" zvukovoj fon attaching the greatest importance to stressed vowels and the least to reduced vowels. Linguistic analysis of the text[edit] In "A Postscript to the Discussion on Grammar of Poetry," Jakobson redefines poetics as "the linguistic scrutiny of the poetic function within the context of verbal messages in general, and within poetry in particular" Linguistic devices that transform a verbal act into poetry range "from the network of distinctive features to the arrangement of the entire text" Jakobson Jakobson opposes the view that "an average reader" uninitiated into the science of language is presumably insensitive to verbal distinctions: A systematic inquiry into the poetic problems of grammar and the grammatical problems of poetry is therefore justifiable; moreover, the linguistic conception of poetics reveals the ties between form and content indiscernible to the literary critic Jakobson Attempts to define literature[edit] Roman Jakobson described literature as "organized violence committed on ordinary speech. In other words, for the Formalists, literature is set apart because it is just that: The use of devices such as imagery, rhythm, and meter is what separates "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. Look at this tangle of thorns Nabokov Lolita 9", from "the assignment for next week is on page eighty four. A piece of writing in a novel versus a piece of writing in a fishing magazine. At the very least, literature should encourage readers to stop and look closer at scenes and happenings they otherwise might have skimmed through uncaring. The reader is not meant to be able to skim through literature. When addressed in a language of estrangement, speech cannot be skimmed through. By forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, literature refreshes these habitual responses and renders objects more perceptible" Eagleton 3. They are living people, with a crystallized psychology representing a certain unity, even if not entirely harmonious. This psychology is the result of social conditions", Legacy[edit] Russian formalism was not a uniform movement; it comprised diverse theoreticians whose views were shaped through methodological debate that proceeded from the distinction between poetic and practical language to the overarching problem of the historical-literary study. It is mainly with this theoretical focus that the Formalist School is credited even by its adversaries such as Yefimov: The contribution of our literary scholarship lies in the fact that it has focused sharply on the basic problems of literary criticism and literary study, first of all on the specificity of its object, that it modified our conception of the literary work and broke it down into its component parts, that it opened up new areas of inquiry, vastly enriched our knowledge of literary technology, raised the standards of our literary research and of our theorizing about literature effected, in a sense, a Europeanization of our literary scholarship. Poetics, once a sphere of unbridled impressionism, became an object of scientific analysis, a concrete problem of literary scholarship "Formalism V Russkom Literaturovedeni", quoted in Erlich, "Russian Formalism: The diverging and converging forces of Russian formalism gave rise to the Prague school of structuralism in the mids and provided a model for the literary wing of French structuralism in the s and s. There is no direct historical relationship between New Criticism and Russian Formalism, each having developed at around the same time RF: However, despite this, there are several similarities:

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Russian formalism is distinctive for its emphasis on the functional role of literary devices and its original conception of literary history. Russian Formalists advocated a "scientific" method for studying poetic language, to the exclusion of traditional psychological and cultural-historical approaches.