AGAINST ADAPTATION? THE STRANGE CASE OF (POD)*PORUCHIK KIZHE*

> It is difficult to find an ambitious person who would not at some point write a screenplay.
>
> We are abstract people. Each day divides us up between ten different activities. That is why we go to the cinema.
>
> (Iurii Tynianov)[1]

The rise of the so-called 'formal method' in the immediate post-revolutionary years has been associated almost exclusively with questions of literary specificity, and with the search for a methodology that would not only exceed various forms of intentionalism and/or determinism, but would also destroy the pretensions of a general aesthetics to account for the presumably transgredient 'essence' of art.[2] As a consequence, the logical corollary of any claims for the specificity of the literary, namely that this implies also the formal specificity of the other modes of art from which literature is differentiated, has been just as consistently neglected: what does the differentiation of the means available to literature imply for 'not literature', whether 'not literature' be seen primarily as the broad verbal context against which the literary defines itself ('practical language'), or as the technically variegated forms of art against which, in a sense, it competes—painting, music, theatre, and of course cinema? This question takes on yet more practically dramatic dimensions when we consider the extent of the involvement in cinema of the leading Formalists, not just as theorists and critics, but also as writers and, in certain cases, administrators. The present article proposes, then, to proceed from a brief account of Formalist engagement with cinema to a more focused examination on the activity of Iurii Tynianov, and, specifically, the screen version of his 'Podporuchik Kizhe', which will allow us to return to the question of artistic specificity, and to reconnect, on a necessarily provisional basis, to a more recent discourse around the relationship between literature and cinema—adaptation.

It is important in coming to this material to bear in mind two related provisos: the first, as indicated by the use of the qualifier 'so-called' in relation to Formalism and the Formalists, is that the theorists and critics who have been grouped under the heading 'Russian Formalism' do not represent a unified or consistent school or 'method' of literary theory; they were characterized as such in the 1920s chiefly by their opponents, and, conversely and understandably, in the 1960s–1980s by their supporters, anxious to recover and champion what

[1] Respectively: Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O stsenarii' (1926), in *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 323–24 (p. 323); 'Kino — slovo — muzyka' (1924), ibid., pp. 320–22 (p. 322).

[2] Accounts of the development of Formalism have understandably varied as material relating to the period has gradually become more accessible. See in particular: Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History—Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1955; 4th edn, 1980); Aage Hansen-Löve, *Russkii Formalizm: metodologicheskaia rekonstruktsia razvitiia na osnove printsipa ostraneniia* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2001; originally published in German in 1978); Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984).

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had been lost through repression in the 'cultural revolution'. With regard to the cinema, however, in terms equally of theory and practical involvement, there is even less ground for considering their activities under a broad unified heading. Boris Eikhenbaum, for example, although the most conservative of the leading Formalists with regard to disciplinary and institutional range, not only published on cinema in the mid-1920s, he also taught a course at the State Institute for the History of Art [GIII] on 'General Theory of Cinema' and, along with Tynianov and leading literary figures such as Evgenii Zamiatin and Mikhail Zoshchenko, joined the newly formed 'Cine-Literary Committee' of the Sevzapkino studio in late 1925.[3] This relative reticence contrasts with the sustained involvement of Osip Brik, as both screenwriter and, for a time at least more significantly, as a 'creative administrator' and head of the Script Department [*Litotdel*] at the Mezhrabpom studio. Brik achieved this influential position following the production of his script for Pudovkin's *Potomok Chingis-Khana* [Storm over Asia] (1928), but this would turn out to be the height of his success, creatively and administratively. As a leading figure in Lef [*Levyi front iskusstva*], Brik's position at Mezhrabpom became increasingly compromised after 1928, and indeed the difficult production process of his script for *Dva-Bul'di-Dva* [The Two Buldis] (Kuleshov and Agadzhanova, 1929) is an illustrative case of how Mezhrabpom and the studio system in general was 'purged' and reorganized as the 1930s dawned. Brik's relations with Mezhrabpom and other major studios deteriorated to the point where his scripts were routinely and sometimes mercilessly rejected, culminating on more than one occasion in the threat of legal action for return of fees paid in advance.[4] Brik's engagement with the cinema in the 1930s is restricted largely to *kul'turfil'm* and *kinokhronika*, often trading on his former association with Lef's undisputed and now deceased star, Vladimir Maiakovskii.[5] Brik's involvement in cinema is above all else exemplary of the manner in which the film industry became a domain like any other for the evisceration of the cultural intelligentsia, and is therefore far from being unique.

By way of a very different contrast, Viktor Shklovskii was so prolific, as a writer in general and as a screenwriter in particular, that it becomes impos-

[3] See Iurii Tsiv'ian and Evgenii Toddes, '"Ne kinogramota, a kinokul'tura": kino i literatura v tvorchestve Iuriia Tynianova', *Iskusstvo kino*, 7 (1986), 88–98 (pp. 90, 93). Eikhenbaum's most significant theoretical work on the cinema, probably closely related to the theory course at GIII, is the essay 'Problemy kino-stilistiki', in *Poetika kino*, ed. by Eikhenbaum (Leningrad: Kinopechat', 1927), pp. 11–52; 'Problems of Cine-Stylistics', in *The Poetics of Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor, Russian Poetics in Translation, 9 (Oxford: RTP Publications, 1982), pp. 5–31.

[4] Brik's personal stock reaches its nadir in 1933 during the abortive production of his and his former deputy at Mezhrabpom Oleg Leonidov's script 'Pod lichnuiu otvetstvennost'' [On Personal Responsibility]; like *Potomok Chingis-Khana*, the film was to be directed by Pudovkin, but the production was halted by the studio manager (and sometime actor) Iakov Zaitsev, who described the script as 'hack-work' [*khaltura*] and expressed the view that Anatolii Golovnia, Pudovkin's cinematographer, could only have accepted it because of a 'temporary loss of judgement' [*vremennoe pomrachenie rassudka*]. Zaitsev would later write threatening legal action and referring to Brik's 'script' in devastating inverted commas: RGALI, f. 2852, op. 1, d. 335, ll. 1–7; d. 332, l. 7.

[5] Witness Shklovskii's withering accusation in 1932, partly motivated by the personal enmity that had played a significant role in the dissolution of Lef, that Brik and his wife Lilia were 'boiling [Maiakovskii] down for glue': Kornei Chukovskii, 'Iz dnevnika 1832–1969', *Znamia*, 11 (1992), 135–94 (p. 136).

sible to contextualize his film work against the constricted background of his former association with *Opoiaz*, or of his continuing personal and professional relations with either Tynianov or Brik. It is also extremely difficult to correlate his writing on film, with its characteristically polemic and almost occasional manner,[6] to his work in film, which stretches from screenplays for *Bukhta smerti* [The Bay of Death] (Room, 1926) and the brilliant *Kryl'ia kholopa* [The Wings of a Serf] (Tarich, 1926), all the way to *Ballada o Beringe i ego druziakh* [The Ballad of Bering and his Friends] (Iurii Shyrev) in the distant year of 1970. This is exacerbated by the fact that Shklovskii's scripts are often co-authored, his input being of a corrective nature, rewriting a problematic script or developing an early treatment. Shklovskii's name crops up in archival materials on the cinema in the 1920s and 1930s with astonishing frequency: more than any other writer attracted into the cinema from the 1925 literary campaign onwards, Shklovskii became an almost ubiquitous consultant, adviser, and troubleshooter, a role which was not at first undermined by the final 'defeat' of Formalism and Shklovskii's very public recantation of his former 'errors' in 1929.[7] Shklovskii's adventures in the cinema are in fact best contextualized against the long-running story of the wit and resourcefulness of Shklovskii the personality, a story that can be accessed in its most perfected form in the extensive memoir literature authored by none other than Shklovskii himself.[8]

Tynianov's engagement with the cinema is distinct from that of each of his colleagues in a number of ways, which combine to make him a more productive subject for integrated analysis and, at the same time, a more challenging one. First, the relatively small number of films made from his screenplays were all produced—or, in the case of the exception that will be our main focus of

[6] Shklovskii also contributed to the *Poetika kino* collection, in the form of a characteristically brief and provocative sketch on the relations between 'prose' and 'poetry' and, respectively, plot and 'plotlessness' in the cinema. It is tempting to attribute Shklovskii's participation, and the brevity of his contribution, to the emphasis in Eikhenbaum's invitation on an advance of 50 roubles: see Tsiv'ian and Toddes, 'Ne kinogramota, a kinokul'tura', p. 92; V. B. Shklovskii, 'Poeziia i proza v kinematografii', in *Poetika kino*, ed. by Eikhenbaum , pp. 137–42; 'Poetry and Prose in the Cinema', in *The Poetics of Cinema*, ed. by Taylor, pp. 87–89. See also V. B. Shklovskii, *Za sorok let* [Forty Years] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1965).

[7] Among countless examples of the demand for Shklovskii's services are his retention as a 'script consultant' by Brik during the latter's tenure as Head of the Script Department at Mezhrabpom, on terms that not only guaranteed him additional fees for any original script material he himself submitted, but which also did not prevent him developing scripts for other studios, and all for a salary not much short of Brik's, who was effectively locked into an exclusive contract: RGALI, f. 2852, op. 1, d. 324, ll. 1, 2, 20b. Other notable examples, both of which have resonance for later discussion, are Shklovskii's engagement in 1928 to write a screenplay based on Tynianov's initial treatment of his own novel, *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara* [The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar] (RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 191, l. 5) and his replacement of Tynianov on Esfir Shub's unrealized documentary project on Pushkin in 1936 (RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 191, l. 7). See also Tsiv'ian and Toddes, 'Ne kinogramota, a kinokul'tura', pp. 94–96. A total of five feature films with scripts written or co-written by Shklovskii were completed and released in the 1930s: two silents for Goskinprom in Georgia—*Amerikanka* [The American] (Esakiia, 1930) and *Ochen' prosto* [It's Very Simple] (Lomidze, 1930); two early sound pictures for Mezhrabpom—*Gorizont* (Kuleshov, 1932) and *Mertvyi dom* [The House of the Dead] (Fedorov, 1932); and, after a period of politically enforced reticence, Mos'film's patriotic historical epic *Minin i Pozharskii* (Pudovkin, 1939).

[8] See e.g. Shklovskii, *Za sorok let*, and V. B. Shklovskii, *Tret'ia fabrika* [The Third Factory] (Moscow: Krug, 1926).

attention, conceived—in the relatively homogeneous period between the 1925 'literary campaign' and the onset of 'cultural revolution'. Second, Tynianov's writing on film, which is more extensive than Eikhenbaum's and more controlled than Shklovskii's, is almost entirely contemporaneous with his practical work as a screenwriter. Tynianov's key essay 'Ob osnovakh kino' [The Fundamentals of Cinema] and the shorter 'O stsenarii' [On the Screenplay] and 'O siuzhete i fabule v kino' [On *Siuzhet* and *Fabula* in the Cinema] not only represent a more coherent and indeed fundamental contribution to film theory than Shklovskii's film writings, but were also written and published in 1926 and 1927,[9] in the closest possible relationship to the discussions, negotiations, and creative activity that would result in the films *Shinel'* [The Overcoat] (Kozintsev and Trauberg, 1926), *S.V.D.* [Club of the Great Deed] (Kozintsev and Trauberg, 1928), and *Poruchik Kizhe* [Lieutenant Kizhe], the last of which, by a series of twists of circumstance, was not produced until 1934. Tynianov's film writings in themselves warrant re-examination as a contribution to film theory, but the temporal coincidence between their composition and the production of his screenplays presents itself as an almost irresistible ground upon which, albeit with appropriate caution, to assess the theory in direct contiguity to the practice.[10]

The third reason Tynianov holds such appeal in this context has two particular though by no means distinct aspects, each of which bears on the problem of adaptation. The first of his films, *Shinel'*, is an ambivalent response to the vogue for literary adaptations that was in a sense the natural consequence of the literary campaign in the mid-1920s, and which, to some extent, invoked the risk of compromising the drive to develop a specifically cinematic language that united the otherwise disparate elements of the Soviet avant-garde.[11] Yet Tynianov's career had begun to develop in a way that would further complexify the relation between theory and practice in his work: by the time he and Eikhenbaum had joined Sevzapkino's Cine-Literary Committee in late 1925, Tynianov had

[9] Iu. N. Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino', in *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 326–45; 'The Fundamentals of Cinema', in *The Poetics of Cinema*, ed. by Taylor, pp. 32–54. Also: 'O siuzhete i fabule v kino' [On *Siuzhet* and *Fabula* in the Cinema], in *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 324–25; and 'O stsenarii' (above, n. 1). Tynianov also published 'Ne kinogramota, a kinokul'tura' [Not Cine-Literacy, but Cine-Culture], *Kino*, 7 September 1926; and 'O feksakh' (1929), in *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 346–48; this last piece is available in English translation in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1886–1939*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 257–59.

[10] This contemporaneity might also serve as a ready-made and highly desirable safety mechanism, preventing us from falling into a trap that has claimed even illustrious commentators such as Iurii Tsiv'ian and Mikhail Iampol'skii, namely the temptation to read Tynianov's films through his earlier, and to some extent canonized, *literary* theory. This, I want to suggest, is merely a different way of falling into the same broad category of error as we shall later see in relation to adaptation; it is, moreover, an error that Tynianov himself consistently—if not always successfully—endeavoured to avoid. See M. B. Iampol'skii, '"Poruchik Kizhe" kak teoreticheskii fil'm', and Iu. G. Tsiv'ian, 'Paleogrammy v fil'me "Shinel'"', both in *Tynianovskii sbornik: vtorye tynianovskie chteniia*, ed. by M. O. Chudakova (Riga: Zinatne, 1986), pp. 28–43 and 14–27 respectively.

[11] It is, moreover, an adaptation of a writer on whom Tynianov—along with at least one other of his Formalist cohorts—was regarded as something of an academic authority; compare the vastly different outcome of Shklovskii's later treatment of Dostoevskii's *House of the Dead*, the above-noted *Mertvyi dom* (Fedorov, 1932), which is less an adaptation than a cinematic polemic on its author's place in Russian cultural and literary history.

already published a short story 'Popugai Bruksa' [Brooks' Parrot] under the pseudonym Iuzef Motl',[12] and was working on a novel on the early nineteenth-century writer and schoolmate of Pushkin, V. K. Kiukhel'beker. The novel, *Kiukhlia*, was published on 2 December, a week after the Cine-Literary Committee had met for the first time.[13] He had also already delivered the first draft of the screenplay for *Shinel'*, for which he had signed a contract on 13 October.[14]

The early part of 1926 sees Tynianov engaged in a range of activities, the sheer volume of which may strike us as remarkable, but it is their interlocking and mutually affective nature that is crucial to an understanding of his work in the cinema in general, and of his significance for adaptation in particular. Tynianov was co-opted as consultant on the production of *Shinel'*,[15] a position he retained in a more general capacity until becoming a member of Sevzapkino's Script Department in July.[16] The script for *S.V.D.* was conceived and written with Iulian Oksman in January–February, at which time Tynianov, who was also preparing a preface to accompany the republication of his article 'Arkhaisty i Pushkin',[17] actually screen-tested for the role of Pushkin in what would later become *Poet i Tsar'* (Gardin, 1927).[18] 'O stsenarii' and 'O siuzhete i fabule v kino' were published in March, by which time Tynianov was already at work on what would become his second novel, *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara* [The Death of Vazir-Mukhar], which commenced serial publication in the journal *Zvezda* in January 1927, but would not be completed until March–April 1928.[19] While writing *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara*, Tynianov published the story 'Podporuchik Kizhe', which later became the ostensible model for the film of (almost) the same name. Understood against this background of creative quotidian life—of artistic *byt*—the putative comparison between Tynianov-film theorist and Tynianov-screenwriter is thus problematized by its imbrication in a second species of comparison, between Tynianov-screenwriter and Tynianov-*literary*

[12] V. F. Shubin, *Iurii Tynianov: biobibliograficheskaia khronika* (*1894–1943*) (St Petersburg: Ardis, 1994), p. 31.

[13] To pronounce negative judgement on Semen Timoshenko's film *Napoleon-Gaz*, a verdict which appeared in published form in *Rabochii i teatr* [Worker and Theatre], 50 (1925), 23; cited from Tsiv'ian and Toddes, 'Ne kinogramota, a kinokul'tura', pp. 90–91.

[14] RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 191, ll. 1, 10b.

[15] Grigorii Kozintsev describes Tynianov as being utterly consumed in the cinematic process, without in any sense compartmentalizing his literary and cinematic undertakings: indeed, Tynianov acknowledged the common genesis of the film 'scenario' and the short story in the situational miniature or anecdote, one of which, involving a sentry 'guarding an empty space', is a clear precursor to 'Podporuchik Kizhe'. Kozintsev paints an appealing, if perhaps somewhat romanticized, picture of Tynianov's involvement with his FEKS [Factory of the Eccentric Actor], in which Tynianov would squeeze readings of his literary and theoretical works in between lessons on clowning and boxing. Kozintsev also recalls Tynianov writing in the editing room, on the back of editing lists, and it is tantalizing to imagine that this was not restricted to his writing for the cinema: Grigorii Kozintsev, [No Title], in *Iurii Tynianov: Pisatel' i uchenyi. Vospominaniia. Razmyshleniia. Vstrechi*, ed. by V. Kaverin, ZhZL series (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1966), pp. 166–75.

[16] Toddes, Chudakov, and Chudakova argue that Tynianov was in fact Head of the Script Department, until replaced in February 1927 by Adrian Piotrovskii: Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, p. 550.

[17] Shubin, *Biobibliograficheskaia khronika*, p. 34; Iurii Tynianov, 'Arkhaisty i Pushkin' (1921/24), in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), pp. 87–227.

[18] Shubin, *Biobibliograficheskaia khronika*, p. 34.

[19] Ibid., pp. 35–36, 39–40.

author, an exercise that becomes all the more pregnant when we characterize him, in the specific instance of *Poruchik Kizhe*, as adapter of his *own work*.

(*Pod*)*'Poruchik Kizhe' Comes Out from Gogol's 'Overcoat'*

The story 'Podporuchik Kizhe' was published in the first number of the journal *Krasnaia nov'* for 1928,[20] and was subsequently produced as a film—*Poruchik Kizhe*, from Tynianov's own script—directed by Aleksandr Faintsimmer and released by Belgoskino in 1934. A preliminary comparison of story and film—or even, in fact, a preliminary reading of just the story—immediately points to certain fundamental difficulties in the process of adaptation. The story's central conceit, in a clear invocation of Gogol, is the invention of a shadowy second Lieutenant through a clerk's transcription error in the court of Pavel I. In a list of personnel for a guard rota, the clerk is interrupted at the point where he is about to record additional personnel with the plural formula 'Poruchiki zhe'; when he returns to his transcription, the plural becomes a singular and the syllables 'ki' and 'zhe' are conjoined and capitalized to form a surname. Rather than suggest that this conceit is somehow definitively textual, and therefore does not transfer intact to the screen, it is more accurate to say that is in fact neither: it is, rather, definitively *oral*.[21] What might, somewhat unsatisfactorily, be described as a 'device' is in fact a point of the greatest readerly tension, in that it obliges the reader, mentally or even aloud, to rehearse the sequence of enunciations that could lead to such an error; what is given on the page is merely a prompt. In the context of a sound film, however, this tension might have been overcome by a more effective use of the resources of dialogue: the film's juxtaposition of a mumbling clerk and shots of the text on which he is working are less effective than, for example, a repetitious dialogue sequence involving more than a single character might have been (Chico and Harpo Marx spring to mind, as does Roberto Benigni's repetitious play on 'I scream' and 'ice cream' in Jim Jarmusch's 1986 picture *Down By Law*, which is itself a reference to a song popularized by the light-jazz band leader Fred Waring in the 1920s). The textual prompt, which is nothing less than the 'birth sequence' of the story/film's main character, is none the less more effective on screen than it is on the page. We are now relatively unaccustomed, with the obvious exceptions of silent films and perhaps animated fairy tales, to seeing text on screen, and the framing of the benighted clerk by the hyperbolized imperial decree, hung on the wall and increasingly dominating the shot, renders perfectly the story's sense of how the decree—the Tsar's abstracted but authoritative 'word'—has come utterly to oppress and displace the human. The story's and the film's respective means for rendering the motivating device of the transcription error might therefore be compared in the latter's favour. This, however, is an isolated example, involving the comparison of a point of readerly tension in the story

[20] Iurii Tynianov, 'Podporuchik Kizhe', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1 (1928), 97–119; all citation of the text is from 'Podporuchik Kizhe' [henceforth 'PK'], in Tynianov, *Voskovaia persona* [The Wax Figure] (St Petersburg: Limbus, 2001), pp. 339–70.

[21] This is one of the most compelling reasons why Iampol'skii, as already mentioned, could not resist entering the vortex of the relationship between oral and/or everyday speech, poetry, and, finally, cinema: Iampol'skii, '"Poruchik Kizhe" kak teoreticheskii fil'm'.

with what is, despite its failure to take full advantage of the resources of dialogue, a rare moment of strength in the film; but from the moment Kizhe is brought into being, so too are a range of more challenging problems for the process of adaptation.

The dominant device of the story, which is merely facilitated by the clerk's error, is the device of the 'absent hero'. This might once again be associated with Gogol, whose work abounds with play on absence; in 'Podporuchik Kizhe', however, Tynianov takes absence as a device to its illogical conclusion. Fiction is more often than not driven by a controlling narrative voice, which establishes a technical point or points of view from which the 'events' of the story are organized and represented, these 'events' ranging from the straightforwardly situational, the imagined or supposed, all the way to the content of the narrator's and/or various characters' consciousnesses. In this context we can see immediately that the apparent absence of the hero need not present insurmountable difficulties: the fictional narrator is able without particular difficulty to organize a particular sequence of events and the dynamics of their narration in order to convey to the reader that, to take the present case, 'Kizhe did not really exist, although Pavel and others were led to believe he did, and with such-and-such consequences'. The absent hero is in fact no kind of problem or difficulty at all, but is rather the primary means by which the story achieves its effect. Thus when Nelidova's lady-in-waiting declares hysterically that Kizhe must have been the officer with whom she had a lovers' tryst, and is later prepared to go through with a phantom wedding on the pretext that her groom's absence has been decreed by Pavel himself, our response, in Tynianov's sub-Gogolian world, is not to disbelieve, but rather to accept his dramatically refracted commentary on the mores of Pavel's court, the sense in which *anything* is possible in this twilit, enclosed world, which has become severed from any sense of 'reality'. Similarly, Pavel's serial promotion of the non-existent Kizhe, his lament on learning of Kizhe's 'death' that 'My best people are dying' ('PK', p. 370), and Pavel's final isolation before the death we know will follow, are all intended to emphasize that Pavel, too, does not fully 'exist', but has become a phantom or 'fake' Emperor, for the people and for his court.

The cinematic medium, which in all but a very few cases dispenses with voice-over narration and in which the expression 'point of view' carries more precisely technically—even literal—connotations, clearly presents a different set of difficulties with regard to the absent hero. On screen, to put it simply, we must *see* that Kizhe does not exist. Or, to be more precise, we *do not* see a representation of his character. Kizhe's non-existence, which in the story is necessarily counterbalanced by the narrator's representation of the circumstances surrounding him—the fundamental task of narration in the context of fantastic realism—is in the film *confirmed* in the most graphic and almost entirely unavoidable manner. This confirmation is at its most dramatic in four key sequences, which, along with Kizhe's textual/circumstantial 'birth', form the spine of his conventional biography: his punishment, exile, wedding, and funeral. In the first, we see an empty space 'flogged' on the parade square as the ranks look on; we then witness a pair of bemused soldiers 'escorting' an

empty space along the Vladimir highway into exile, a conceit that is at least milked for comic potential when the soldiers inform a provincial garrison commander en route that the prisoner 'requests vodka'. In the wedding sequence, Palen, who orchestrates the circumstances surrounding Kizhe for his own benefit throughout, announces that the groom will not be in attendance 'by decree of the Emperor', then himself stands holding the matrimonial crown above the empty space where Kizhe ought to be. In response to the officiating priest's enquiry as to whether Kizhe is betrothed to any other, Palen moves the crown back and forward, gesturing 'no', upon which the bewildered bride is invited to kiss thin air. Finally, once Palen's resourcefulness has been exhausted and it better suits his purpose to declare Kizhe deceased, the funeral procession, led of course by Kizhe's widow, walks mournfully after an empty coffin—with only the subtlest implication that Pavel himself will soon fill it. It might have been possible, as Iampol'skii has suggested, to deal with the problem in all of these sequences by associating the camera's point of view with Kizhe; Iampol'skii's example here is Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957), although a more recent and perhaps yet more compelling example is Sokurov's *Russkii kovcheg* [Russian Ark] (2003). Another possible solution, to which we shall later return, is the introduction of a parallel, 'secondary hero', a role that is in the film distributed between Pavel and Palen. Both these solutions might have gone some way to neutralizing the problem posed for the cinema by the device of the absent hero, but both would struggle none the less to deal with the implications of the broad literary style that in the present instance produces and contains the absent hero, namely fantastic realism.[22]

Tynianov's use of the device of the absent hero is an indication of his intention in 'Podporuchik Kizhe' to interrogate the entire system of conventions of realist fiction. Here, as indeed in Gogol, 'verisimilitude of detail is used in order to gain the reader's trust, which is necessary in order to convince the reader that s/he can regard fantastical elements with precisely the same trust'.[23] Just as in Gogol's 'The Nose', for example, Tynianov establishes different 'levels of reality', on each of which events—and indeed the existence of characters—are believable in varying degree, the effect of which is to render believable the 'merely' unbelievable through its contrast with the downright fantastical. It is not so much the case that the establishment of a differentiated reality is less problematic in the textual medium than it is in the visual—cinema habitually uses variations on 'dream sequences', stylistically marked to a greater or lesser degree, in order to achieve this—but rather that it is more difficult in the cinema to obscure the boundaries between different levels of reality, to destabilize the viewer's perception of the 'realness' of different sequences without undermining the narrative altogether.

[22] It should at least be noted, however, that this term has a pronounced retrospective character in relation to Tynianov (and to Gogol). Two useful treatments of the fantastic, both of which perhaps not incidentally reference Gogol, are Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la literature fantastique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), and Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990). A useful introduction to the extensive secondary literature on Gogol is Robert A. Maguire's *Exploring Gogol* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[23] A. Belinkov, *Iurii Tynianov* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1960), p. 402.

It might be instructive in this regard to turn briefly to Tynianov's first screen work, his adaptation of Gogol's 'The Overcoat', which will facilitate direct comparison of the literary imperatives of fantastic realism and the means the cinema has at its disposal for their mediation. Tynianov's script in fact also incorporates elements from Gogol's 'Nevsky Prospect' and 'How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich' in order to create a fictional youth for Akakii Akakievich, before reverting in its second part to a more 'faithful' rendition of the story. From the point of view of fantastic realism, there are clear examples in the film of how the device of the dream-sequence can be rendered through simple montage, and to much greater effect than in literature: Akakii's fevered imaginings towards the end of the film work very simply in terms of technical construction—in one shot the overcoat-clad 'important person' sits at the foot of Akakii's bed, whereas later, when the dream has passed, he has disappeared. Similarly, Akakii is finally persuaded to embark on the ruinous purchase of the luxurious new coat by a 'vision' of it that is rendered by means of a simple dissolve. The viewer reads what is 'real' for Akakii through the syntax of shot juxtaposition, and the cinematic challenge—to which Tynianov, Kozintsev, and Trauberg admirably rise—is to maintain a balance between verisimilitude and the creation of a liminally fantastical cinematic world in which certain events *might* be possible; for the viewer will more readily rebel against what is seen, than will the reader against what is read, whether it be a nose in an overcoat deep in prayer, or a crown floating above the head of a non-existent groom.

Perhaps the most telling confirmation of the differential effects of this tension of verisimilitude, which is the engine of fantastic realism, is that for all the willingness of writer and directors to augment Gogol's story with elements that will combine to produce a specifically cinematic narrative, one utterly essential sequence from the story is actually omitted from the film, the concluding 'fantastical' resurrection of Akakii Akakievch as vengeful phantom. *Shinel'* was roundly criticized in the contemporary press for the equally predictable transgressions of lack of fidelity to the original and, on a quite different level, its alleged 'formalism'. The latter of these criticisms is a sign of what was soon to come, in culture generally as much as in the cinema, but the former is directly connected with the literary campaign that first brought Tynianov to the cinema, and to certain related expectations of the function of literary adaptation. It is important here to distinguish two completely different types of 'infidelity', and to argue that the addition of alien elements from elsewhere in Gogol, the focus of contemporary complaint, is not motivated by some form of crisis of adaptation, in fact quite the contrary; the excision of Akakii's fantastical resurrection, on the other hand, is *directly* related to an appreciation of the different means available to the cinema and of its different mode of perception. In Gogol's story the knowingly unsustainable pathos of Akakii's struggle is released, quite literally at the stroke of a pen, in the transition from the narrator's laconic intimation of Akakii's death to the arch rhetoric of the following:

> But who could have imagined that this was not the end of Akakii Akakievich, and that he was destined to live noisily for several days after his death, as though in reward

for a life that no one had noticed? But this is what happened and our miserable story unexpectedly takes on a fantastic ending.[24]

In the context of the film, however, as Tynianov was clearly aware, and notwithstanding our earlier remarks about the possibilities of montage, no such unproblematic 'progression' is available. As Tynianov wrote in an essay published between the film's completion and release:

> Even the cinematic 'adaptation' [*instsenirovka*] of 'the classics' should not be illustrative—literary devices and styles can only be stimuli, ferment for the devices and styles of the cinema (and certainly not all literary devices; just as certainly not all 'classics' can provide material for the cinema). The cinema can, on its own plane, provide an *analogy* for literary style.[25]

The film version of *Shinel'* does not embody Gogol's poetics of fantastic realism, because, quite simply, *it does not attempt to*. Tynianov recognizes, like the good 'formalist' he is, and as his theoretical essays consistently confirm, that a literary poetics cannot expect to find in the medium of the cinema an 'equivalent', but, in the best case, an 'analogy'. *Shinel'* may, as Tynianov's published libretto claims, be a '*kinopovest'* [cine-tale] in the manner of Gogol',[26] but the cinematic prefix is as important here as the 'privileged object' [Gogol] towards which it is directed.

Tynianov's story 'Podporuchik Kizhe' is as perfect an embodiment of the poetics of fantastic realism as was produced in Soviet literature, but it failed to find even an 'analogy' in its film adaptation, despite the fact that the latter was produced from a screenplay by the same author. This is partly due, as we have begun to suggest, to fundamental differences in the stylistic and technical repertoire of literature and film, and with specific regard to the three areas we have identified—the story's heightened textuality, its use of the device of the absent hero, and its global challenge to the conventions of realism. It is also related to a factor we have to this point ignored in relation to *Shinel'*, the broadly sociological aspect of adaptation theory, which focuses on cultural conditions of reception rather than questions of formal 'transposition'. Our discussion of the formal and aesthetic difficulties in the course of adaptation from literature to film would be incomplete without an analysis of the radical cultural, ideological, and industrial changes in Soviet society and in the film industry between 1927 and 1934. Such analysis would range across factors such as the industrial reorganization of the film industry, the advent of sound (which incidentally demonstrates the inseparability of 'formal' and 'industrial' factors), the strengthening of the censorship apparatus, which, along with sound, led to a sharp decline in production numbers. In this respect once again, however, *Poruchik Kizhe* presents itself as an exemplary case, chiefly because the film and, indeed, the story possess a history entirely different from the one implied by their respective dates of publication and production. It is through that history

[24] Nikolai Gogol, 'The Overcoat', in *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. by Ronald Wilks (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 71–108 (p. 103; translation modified).

[25] Tynianov, 'O stsenarii', pp. 323–24.

[26] Iurii Tynianov, 'Libretto kinofil'ma "Shinel'"', in *Iz istorii Lenfil'ma*, vyp. 3, ed. by M. Iu. Bleiman (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1973), pp. 78–80 (p. 78). This is also an echo of Gogol's characterization of his own stories as being 'in the manner of Hoffman'.

in its specific detail that we might begin to approach the 'sociological' aspects of Kizhe's adaptation, and at the same time take its formal analysis to quite another level.

'Fil'm sekretnyi, i istorii ne imeet': Script-to-Script

Over a year before the story appeared in *Krasnaia nov'*, Tynianov submitted a libretto for *Kizhe* to Sovkino, perhaps based on an anecdote attributed to Vladimir Dal'.[27] On 2 February 1927 he signed a contract to produce a screenplay on the basis of the libretto, with a delivery date of 16 February, for which he would receive the not inconsiderable sum of 800 roubles.[28] Between the end of February and the end of March, the studio became locked in the by that time common battle of nerve and will with Glavrepertkom over the script's ratification and permission for production to begin. It was to be directed neither by Kozintsev and Trauberg, nor Faintsimmer,[29] but by Sergei Iutkevich, for whom this would have been a directorial debut. Iutkevich's redaction of the script was rejected by Glavrepertkom on 28 February, for somewhat predictable reasons, relating to what they saw as its historical and ideological deficiencies, summarized in its alleged 'lack of social significance' and failure 'to do justice to the epoch'.[30] Iutkevich then made a final attempt to rescue his first directorial assignment by suggesting a number of changes (including strengthening the geo-political dimension by involving Palen in a plot against the throne with the former English Ambassador); he also argued, with admirable cheek, that he required the last of the fast disappearing winter weather for his exteriors.[31] The script was rejected once again on 19 March,[32] and Iutkevich, reaping the seeds he had sown in appealing to the weather, formally requested release from the project three days later.[33] Thus a new front has opened up in our analysis of the genesis of *Poruchik Kizhe*, one that does not necessarily depend on the film's specifically literary antecedent, but rather on a consideration of (at least) two script treatments.

Tynianov's formal association with Sevzapkino ended at the same time as its reorganization as part of the new *Sovkino* structure. *S.V.D.* had, however, been completed in the spring and Tynianov does not initially seem to have

[27] This is made explicit in the 'prologue' to the story in the original *Krasnaia nov'* publication, which was removed in later redactions: Tynianov, 'Podporuchik Kizhe', *Krasnaia nov'*, 1 (1928), 97. See also Belinkov, *Iurii Tynianov*, pp. 399–400; for a fuller account of the range of historical and literary sources upon which Tynianov may have drawn, see E. Toddes, 'Posleslovie' [Afterword], in Iu. N. Tynianov, *Podporuchik Kizhe* (Moscow: Kniga, 1981), pp. 164–200 (pp. 187–200).

[28] RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 191, ll. 2–4.

[29] Faintsimmer worked as assistant director on Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* [The End of St Petersburg] (1927) and Iulii Raizman's *Katorga* [Exile] (1928), before going on to be Belgoskino's 'house director' throughout the 1930s.

[30] GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, l. 67. Toddes claims that Tynianov completed the script in May, but this would seem highly unlikely in view of the fact that the supposition is based on a remark by Tynianov that envisages Iutkevich continuing to work on the script: see Toddes, 'Posleslovie', p. 164.

[31] Sergei Iutkevich, 'Dokladnaia zapiska ob izmeneniakh v stsenarii "Podporuchik Kizhe"' [Report on Changes to the Script 'Podporuchik Kizhe']: GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, l. 69.

[32] GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, l. 1

[33] GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, l. 70

been deterred by the difficulties relating to the production of *Kizhe*, insisting to Eikhenbaum that he intended to continue working in the cinema.[34] Events were, however, to take a somewhat different turn. Tynianov spent much of the summer in the Crimea, struggling with the ill health of his wife Elena Aleksandrovna and, briefly, his daughter Inna, and at the same time with the ongoing composition of *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara*. In a letter to Nikolai Stepanov of 3 September 1927, he complains that work on the novel is going badly, but writes also that 'unexpectedly even for myself, I have written a short story "Podporuchik Kizhe"'.[35] Shubin suggests that the story was written in May,[36] but this reference, accompanied by a similar reference in a letter to Shklovskii on the same day, would suggest that it was written in late summer 1927. This can be further narrowed down by a letter written to Pavel Antopol'skii on 1 August, which throws yet another shaft of light on the genesis of *Kizhe*: Tynianov, who had been invited to write a stage play for the Vakhtangovskii Theatre, tells Antopol'skii that 'the most important question for me is "Kizhe" or another *play*' (emphasis added).[37] The screenplay for *Kizhe*, it would seem, was briefly regarded as the basis for a stage play, and only 'unexpectedly' became a prose story some time between 1 August and 3 September; this is a decisive herald of the later direction of Tynianov's career, confirmed in his remark in the same letter to Shklovskii that 'I am beginning to really love literature and have given up on cinema'.[38]

Leaving aside its implications for Tynianov's engagement with the cinema generally, however, this sequence of events confirms that the conventional dynamic of adaptation from literature to film is in this case reversed, and that Tynianov's story 'Podporuchik Kizhe' is in fact an 'adaptation' of his *earlier* film script 'Poruchik Kizhe'. Any comparative reading of story and film must therefore confront another compelling and perhaps even more productive line of enquiry than script-to-script comparison, and focus also on the relationship between an original screenplay and what would in other circumstances have been its literary progenitor; when, in other words, the 'precursor text' is film and not literature.[39]

The relationship between the 1927 script and the 1934 film is aptly sum-

[34] Eikhenbaum tells Shklovskii in a letter of 9 April 1927 that 'Iurii insists on working in the cinema'; cited from Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, p. 550. He had also submitted another libretto to Sovkino in March, once again co-authored with Oksman, based on Turgenev's 'Asya'; the film would be completed in 1928, directed by Aleksandr Ivanovskii, but without any further participation by Tynianov: *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, p. 550.

[35] RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 224, l. 1.

[36] Shubin, *Biobibliograficheskaia khronika*, p. 37.

[37] Cited from Toddes, 'Posleslovie', p. 165.

[38] Cited from Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, p. 550.

[39] The studio made a number of further attempts to persuade Glavrepertkom to allow the film's production, including an unsuccessful attempt by Arsen Aravskii to invest it with the required 'social and historical significance', an unrealized attempt to persuade Shklovskii to rewrite, and, finally, a complete reorientation of the project by the director Aleksandr Razumnyi and the screenwriter Viktor Turkin. Tynianov signed a new contract with Belgoskino on 8 August 1932, over five years after abandoning the original project (RGALI, f. 2224, op. 1, d. 191, ll. 6, 6ob.). A version of the script for the 1934 film has been preserved only in the inaccessible personal archive of Veniamin Kaverin (see Iampol'skii, p. 29), so we are obliged, just as with the 1927 script, to base our analysis on the shooting script.

marized in I. Sepman's characterization of the former as a 'tragicomedy' and the latter as a 'pamphlet' and, more significantly, a 'farce'.[40] There is no lack of elements of farce in the 1927 script, including an ill-advised sequence at the beginning of the fourth reel in which Pavel's adjutant Kablukov dresses in women's clothing in order to persuade Pavel to pardon her 'fiancé', inevitably Kizhe.[41] This sequence is no doubt present in the 1927 script in order to emphasize the recurrent theme of identity, but also, on another level, simply to motivate such scenes as when Kutaisov, another of Pavel's male courtiers, takes a shine to his erstwhile colleague Kablukov in drag and makes the predictable romantic advances ('1927 script', sc. 371). The presence of farce in the 1927 script notwithstanding, there are two notable differences in this respect from the 1934 film: the first is that in 1927 even this unsurpassably farcical sequence contains elements necessary to the development of the plot, and indeed is intercut with its dramatic opposite, when Palen learns that the difficulties he is having with the income to his estate is a result of Pavel's trade embargo with England, and makes his personally motivated intentions towards Pavel explicit for the first time:

> TITLE: THIS WON'T HELP PUG-FACE [Pavel], AND IT WON'T HINDER US.
> ('1927 script', sc. 385–86)[42]

Farce here functions as an accumulating preparation for the decisive change in tone that will characterize the second half of the 1927 script. Palen's declaration of intent is followed by a sequence, again absent from the 1934 film, in which Pavel plays with mechanical toy soldiers gifted by Bonaparte, which develops seamlessly into a dream-sequence (see above remarks on *Shinel'*). Pavel, alone on his throne, is surrounded and saluted by the mechanical grenadiers, who respond to him with a rousing: TITLE: YOUR GOOD HEALTH, GENERAL KIZHE ('1927 script', sc. 416–17). From this point forward all other plot elements are contained by and develop the plot against Pavel and his own headlong, self-blind rush to collude with unfolding events. Pavel himself, for example, decides that Sundukova will marry Kizhe in the 1927 script, because Kizhe has been 'betrayed' by his current fiancée—who we of course know to be the adjutant Kablukov in disguise. And when, in a bravura closure of this plotline, Kablukov drunkenly mistakes Pavel's room for the room of Sundukova after the wedding sequence, the spectacle of Kablukov attempting to get into bed with the Emperor is not primarily motivated by a desire for cheap entertainment ('1927 script', sc. 548), but is rather a bold and consistent means of rendering the tragi-comic pathos of Pavel, who responds to the presence of anyone at all in his quarters at night with unmitigated terror. This is ironically emphasized as we cut immediately to Palen and his conspirators, one of whom asks: TITLE: AND WHAT IF THE TYRANT RESISTS? ('1927 script', sc. 550). It is typical of the dramatic unity of the 1927 script that Kablukov is led into his mistake by one

[40] I. Sepman, 'Tynianov — stsenarist', in *Iz istorii Lenfil'ma*, vyp. 3 [From the History of Lenfilm, vol. III], ed. by M. Iu. Bleiman (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1973), pp. 51–77 (p. 75).

[41] 'Podporuchik Kizhe', Director's Script, 2nd version, sc. 309–89: GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, ll. 64–68. Henceforth '1927 script'.

[42] All reference to the broader historical dimension of the Napoleonic wars is absent from the 1934 film.

of the mechanical soldiers 'posted' outside Pavel's chamber door: whereas the film builds the wedding sequence around an empty space standing next to the bride, the 1927 script utilizes one of the toy soldiers in this role; and the bride Sundukova, to the indignation of the priest conducting the service, whispers conspiratorially to Kablukov that she will station this 'dummy' [*bolvan*] outside her bedroom door so that Kablukov can find her, and so that the soldier/Kizhe can 'guard this night for us' ('1927 script', sc. 520).

The 1927 script is a tragi-comic tale of Pavel himself, in which 'Kizhe' is nothing more than a 'device', or an 'absent cause'. This is reflected most dramatically in each version's contrasting denouements: the film, in which the assassination plot is more implied than explicit, ends on a suitably oblique note, with the repeated intonation 'The Emperor sleeps' immediately following Kizhe's funeral; in the 1927 script, however, the assassination plot is taken to its literal conclusion, and Kizhe's empty coffin finds an equally literal occupant. The script ends with Pavel alone apart from his toy soldiers, who 'triumphantly and welcomingly throw open the doors' for the human shadows creeping along Pavel's walls ('1927 script', sc. 624). Pavel's death is figured through a shot of his legs, which we have earlier seen failing to reach the floor as he sits on the throne, shaking and collapsing underneath him ('1927 script', sc. 407, sc. 629). This is followed by the somewhat awkward TITLE: THE EMPEROR SLEEPS, THE EMPEROR IS RESTING, before a cut to the triumphant Palen closing the lid on *Pavel* in Kizhe's coffin ('1927 script', sc. 630). Kizhe's 'absence' is thus resolved, and the metaphorical 'absence' of Pavel confirmed in a single move, one which at the same time removes any difficulties that may have persisted in the mind of the querulous viewer, forced once again during the funeral to 'see' what the other characters in the film cannot. Not satisfied with this brilliant resolution of both plot and theme, which is also a local resolution of the problem of the absent hero, Iutkevich attempted to take advantage of the otherwise frustrating impasse with Glavrepertkom by suggesting a change that would make Palen's triumph yet more explicit: before closing the lid on Pavel in the coffin, Palen would utter the words 'Sleep tight, Emperor Kizhe'.[43]

Script-to-Story

The story Tynianov published as 'Podporuchik Kizhe' at the beginning of 1928 is marked by a number of striking points of coincidence with and divergence from the script upon which we now know it to be 'based'. It is, like the 1927 script, more tragi-comedy than comic farce; it is also, however, a tragi-comedy with a very different emphasis, both in terms of theme and in terms of its response to the problem of the absent hero. In the 1927 script, as indeed in the 1934 film, the absent figure of Kizhe has a pair of doubles: Pavel himself is Kizhe's double on the thematic level, the latter signalling the emptiness, absurdity and *podmenennost'* of the former; on a technical level, however, although it is Pavel and his inhuman system of government who in a sense *authors* Kizhe, Kizhe is also doubled with the figure of Palen, who manipulates Kizhe's effect

[43] Iutkevich, 'Dokladnaia zapiska': GFF, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1897, l. 69.

on the narrative throughout. This is an example of another means by which film can deal with the problem of the absent hero: through the introduction of a parallel 'secondary hero'. Carol Reed's *The Third Man* is a well-known example, but a more recent and still more appropriate one is Andrew Nicol's 2002 film *S1mOne*, starring Al Pacino and Rachel Roberts. Roberts plays a non-existent female star, computer-generated and gifted to Pacino in order to save his failing career, as coincidence would have it, as a film director. Simone only ever appears on screen, of course, and Pacino is the locus of the drama centring around her absence/presence off it. In both script versions of *Poruchik Kizhe*, Palen is to Kizhe what Joseph Cotton is to Orson Welles's Harry Lime, and what, in a more thoroughgoing sense, Pacino is to Simone: Palen is not quite a secondary 'hero', but rather a secondary character who acts to maintain the illusion of Kizhe's existence and through whom we experience the 'absent cause'. In the story, however, these relationships are disordered: Palen is virtually absent from the story, as are all forms of human agency other than the ironically *ineffective* Pavel, who is doubled with Kizhe technically as well as, at one end of the spectrum, thematically. At the other end of the story's thematic spectrum, Tynianov replaces Palen with a quite different double for Kizhe, Lieutenant Siniukhaev, who does not appear in either version of the script. In the story, Siniukhaev is in fact born at the same moment as Kizhe, the result of a parallel error by the unfortunate clerk; or, to be more precise, he dies at that same moment. Where Kizhe is conjured into being, Siniukhaev, almost as if the static equilibrium of Pavel's world requires it, is erroneously declared dead. The fact that Siniukhaev stands, living and breathing, on the parade ground at the moment the decree proclaiming his passing is read out is as irrelevant to those around him as Kizhe's non-existence. Both 'facts' are accepted because both have been decreed by the law and by the letter, manifestations of Pavel's overweening but essentially groundless authority. Both are thus bound to Pavel in a relation of perfect symmetry, Kizhe a present absence, Siniukhaev an absent presence, a symmetry that is disturbed in both redactions of the script by the interposition of the all too mundanely 'real' characters of Palen and Gagarina, whose own relationships to Pavel are driven by simple self-interest, and who 'operate' Kizhe as a device in pursuit of those interests.

In the character of Siniukhaev, Tynianov succeeds in providing the necessary 'foil' for the absent Kizhe, a secondary hero with whom the reader is invited to empathize, although the irony is that such a secondary hero is, as we have suggested, *less* essential in the text than it is on screen. Kizhe, as someone who does not exist, can only be a nominal 'hero', occupying the technical space of the hero, but as such he can never quite become a *victim*. No matter how many times we are told of him being beaten or exiled, hear of his betrayal or even his death, he can never be an object of sympathy, because the entire fiction—text or film—turns on his non-existence. Siniukhaev performs this parallel function in the story, and it is in this sense that his absence not only from the 1927 script, but also, after the publication of the story and the resumption of the process of 'adaptation', from the 1934 film, is particularly damaging. We have seen that one of the predictable criticisms aimed at the abortive 1927 production was its lack of social significance, its failure to expand anecdotal material into

a dramatization and critique of the social system of Pavel's Russia. When we consider in addition that the Soviet co-option of Gogol and many other of the nineteenth-century 'classics' was, justifiably or otherwise, founded on a sense of their 'revolutionary pathos', of the Belinskii-inspired idea of underlying social critique, Siniukhaev's absence from the film seems all the more surprising. And, finally, when we acknowledge that by 1934 one of the key strategies in the nascent sound cinema for expressing social and ideological orientation was its personification in youthful individuality, the irony of the film's rejection of this element of the strategy Tynianov chooses in adapting script to story becomes overwhelming. The story's introduction of Siniukhaev not only broadens the story's ideological and social spectrum, it also endows it with a perfect narrative *and* thematic balance. Passages of description of Kizhe's 'exploits', with their inevitable and deliberate tendency to stretch the reader's credulity, are, dare we say it, intercut with passages of description of the 'real' sequence of events that befall Siniukhaev, thus providing a form of verisimilitudinal relief; although, as is generally the case with the device of the secondary hero, here again such verisimilitudinal relief is all the more necessary in the visual context of cinema than it is in the conventionalized textual world of fiction.

We can see how this functions by returning to the series of challenging visual set pieces described earlier from the film, Kizhe's punishment, exile, marriage, and funeral. The nakedness of the film's punishment scene, with the guards beating 'no one', is slightly mitigated in the 1927 script by the addition of two further 'real' arrestees, who are punished at the same time as Kizhe, and one of whom is an entirely innocent victim: the barest seeds, perhaps, of the character of Siniukhaev. In the story, however, Tynianov, protected by the more pliable laws of verisimilitude in literary fiction, is able to emphasize the theme of injustice in altogether darker terms:

> because the wood had been buffed by thousands of stomachs, the [punishment] horse seemed not at all empty. Although there was nobody on it, it seemed all the same that there was ('PK', p. 353)

Then, after a brief conversation in which a young soldier doubts the existence of the Emperor, and is reassured that the Emperor exists, but is a 'fake' [*podmennenyi*], we move to a scene in Siniukhaev's quarters that is one part Gogol, three parts Hoffman, and which, in a further complication of the process of composition 'beyond adaptation', as it were, is itself absent from the original published version of the story ('PK', p. 355). Siniukhaev refers to himself in the third person, before an unknown young man enters his room and, without any explanation, behaves as if he belongs there, cautioning Siniukhaev about his behaviour and eventually demanding that he hand over his decent overcoat in exchange for the young man's poor one. The fantastic realism of the punishment scene, in which the massed troops behave as if an absent figure actually exists, is here relieved and at the same time reinforced by a different, more subtle shade of fantastic realism, in which two living, breathing individuals conduct a conversation wholly predicated on the idea that one of them *no longer exists*.

Similarly, the film's reliance on clowning in a somewhat desperate attempt

to relieve the palpable inadequacy of the scene with Kizhe's guards and the provincial garrison commander is poor return for the story's sinister reminder of the real fate of exiled prisoners as Kizhe is escorted into exile: 'The chains made no sound and there was no need to drive him along with the butts of their rifles' ('PK', p. 357). It is here, incidentally, that Tynianov introduces what will later become the signature refrain of the 1934 film, but which is absent from the 1927 script, the guards' 'explanation' of Kizhe's status: 'The prisoner is secret and has no form [*arestant sekretnyi i figury ne imeet*]' ('PK', p. 358). This is contrasted and complemented by scenes of Siniukhaev seeking out his father in order to find a way of confirming his own existence, a theme Tynianov also develops in relation to Pavel, but which, incredibly, given who Pavel's parents were and the relationship between them, is entirely absent from both redactions of the script. Siniukhaev tells his father simply that 'I am not living' [*Ia ne zhivoi*], upon which his father deposits him in hospital, with the sign at the bottom of the bed reading 'Mors occasionalis' ('PK', p. 361). And while Siniukhaev, as we are told at the beginning of his story, never had much to do with women, Kizhe is to be married, in description of which Tynianov, once again from the relative safety of textual narration, prefers what will resurface in the 1934 film, the adjutant holding a wedding wreath above the absent groom's head, to the 1927 script's determination to fill the empty space by enlisting one of Bonaparte's toy soldiers. Finally, in the story, in contrast to all variants of the script, Kizhe will produce a son, 'rumoured to look like him' ('PK', p. 364), just as Siniukhaev's father will lose one; Kizhe's son will, in the story but not in the later film, accompany his weeping mother at the funeral.

Against Adaptation

While it would be erroneous, as we have suggested, to consider Tynianov's theoretical writing on cinema in isolation from his practical activities as writer and administrator, there is a clear and important sense in which the 'theory' is in fact distinct from the 'practice'. The two broad elements we have described—writing and administration—are necessarily inadequate to define Tynianov's day-to-day life in the studios, with its shifting and seamless pattern of creative discussions, writing and rewriting, processing and commissioning new scripts; the task of the theoretical essay, on the other hand, is to establish some kind of order and clarity among entities that are at once disparate and intimately related. In the present case, as we saw at the outset, these are nothing less than the fundamental modes of art, the comparative differentiation of which silently motivates Tynianov's turn to the cinema. Tynianov-film theorist comes to the cinema in terms of the same central aesthetic questions that have driven the rise of literary Formalism, the comparability and non-comparability of the specific technical and formal resources that are available to any given art form and which therefore distinguish it from all others. It is only in the context of this move from a 'general aesthetics' to a series of 'specifying' aesthetics of different art forms that certain of Tynianov's more unexpected—to modern ears, at least—statements of principle can be understood, for example his pronounced and consistent resistance to sound cinema. Tynianov's rousing objection to the

contemporary dismissal of cinema as 'the great mute' [*velikii nemoi*]—'no one calls poetry "the great blind"'[44]—is somewhat undermined by his insistence on equating sound as an innovation with colour and even stereoscopic cinema, all of which 'excite us very little'.[45] Sound cinema is even characterized on one occasion as 'the mongrel offspring of theatre and cinema—a pitiful compromise'.[46] More important in the present context, however, is the fact that this broad drive towards a 'specifying' aesthetics also conditions Tynianov's discourse on adaptation.

Tynianov dwells on this specific problem at greatest length in the otherwise brief 1926 article 'O stsenarii', which establishes the broader aesthetic context before turning to the practicalities of actually producing work for the screen:

> The cinema has been slow in freeing itself from the captivity of the neighbouring arts—from theatre and painting. Now it must free itself from literature. Three-quarters of cinema is still like the painting of the *Peredvizhniki*—it is literary. [. . .] Until the question of the relationship between cinema and literature is re-examined, the best kind of screenplay will be halfway between a spoiled novel and an unfinished drama. And the best kind of screenwriter will be halfway between an unsuccessful dramatist and a belletrist who has tired of belles-lettres.[47]

The slightly later essay 'Ob osnovakh kino' is an attempt at such 're-examination' of the relationship between cinema and literature, and can be characterized as marking the transition from an aesthetics of specificity as such to what will later become the basis for a thoroughgoing semiotic approach to cinema, an approach which in fact aims to reconcile the demands of specificity and difference in a total theory of variously constructed signifying material. Just as the verbal sign carries within it a referent—objectified material—which is transformed into 'an element of art' through the function it is required to perform in the literary text,[48] so too, to cite Roman Jakobson's later development of Tynianov's postulates, is the optical 'thing' (i.e. the object of visual representation) transformed into a sign: 'every phenomenon of the external world is transformed on the screen into a sign'.[49] It is in this precise connection, as a proto-semiotician of cinema, that Tynianov begins to be assimilated into Russian theoretical discourses around film in the late 1970s and early 1980s: 'adaptation' is a present

[44] Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino', p. 327=p. 34 in Taylor.

[45] Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino', p. 326=p. 32 in Taylor.

[46] Tynianov, 'Kino — slovo — muzyka', p. 322. Tynianov is far from alone in the Soviet 1920s in adopting a cautious and even resistant attitude towards sound, an attitude most famously recorded in Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Aleksandrov's 'Zaiavka', *Zhizn' iskusstva*, 5 August 1928, pp. 4–5; 'Statement on Sound', in *The Film Factory*, ed. by Taylor and Christie, pp. 234–35.

[47] Tynianov, 'O stsenarii', pp. 323–24. The *Peredvizhniki* [travellers] were a group of late nineteenth-century painters who broke away from the Russian academic tradition in favour of a socially oriented realistic style.

[48] Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino', p. 330=p. 36 in Taylor.

[49] Cited from Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, p. 555. Jakobson's essay 'Upadok kino?' [The Decline of Cinema?], written in 1933 when the sound cinema had become a reality, exceeds Tynianov in also including 'acoustic things' in the broad category of 'phenomena of the external world': Tynianov has earlier agonized over the fear that 'to fill the cinema with words' will result in 'nothing but a chaos of words', and will destroy the constructive relationship between shots that is constitutive of cinematic specificity: Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino', p. 328=p. 34 in Taylor.

but secondary element in that process, little more than a convenient means by which to pursue theoretical (semiotic) ends.

In something of a blind parallel, Western critical discourse on adaptation began to develop into a thoroughgoing aesthetic theory at roughly the same time, based on Western appropriations and reorientations of the core 'formalist' principle that had fuelled the rise of *Opoiaz* in the 1910s and early 1920s, now transformed into an all-pervasive structuralist semiotic. Adaptation *theory* sought to critique inherited assumptions about the relative cultural value of film and literary texts and, perhaps more significantly, about the basis (or lack of it) of their 'formal' relations. The identified and/or resultant bifurcation in studies of adaptation can be summarized in the words of Dudley Andrew, who characterizes adaptation as both 'the most narrow and provincial area of film theory' and at the same time 'potentially as far-reaching as you like'.[50] The second part of this evokes the formalist/semiotic projection of a new kind of comparative aesthetics, in which specificity and generality are inseparably and even organically interrelated, and for which individual adaptations provide ideal 'laboratory' conditions.[51] Andrew's implication is that, in the hands of the trained (formalist) aesthetic specialist, adaptation might reach as 'far as you like' beyond the inconsequential straw men of such concepts as 'fidelity' or the 'precursor text' towards the theoretical vistas of both cinema as a specific art form and of art 'in general'. The obverse of this implication, however, given especially that the institutional rise of adaptation is intimately connected with the English Department's (and, more recently, the Modern Language Department's) need or desire to protect and/or extend its teaching base, is that the study of adaptation will pathologically break its 'provincial and narrow' teeth on precisely these same (non-)problems of fidelity and anteriority.

Rather than simply suggest, however, that Tynianov, as theorist or as writer and 'adapter' of *Poruchik Kizhe*, offers a rebuke to this latter tendency—which would be to substitute a straw man with a vaporous figure akin almost to Kizhe himself—I want to locate Tynianov's continuing utility in what is a quite different 'rebuke' to the former. Despite (or perhaps in another sense because of) their later association with a structuralist semiotic in the Soviet Union, Tynianov's essays on the cinema are not entirely consistent with the direction in which his Formalist colleagues, and later Tynianov himself, were developing and in some ways transforming their earlier focus on art and literature in narrow or even exclusive terms of formal specificity. Eikhenbaum, Shklovskii, and Brik were all increasingly concerned in the second half of the 1920s with the extra-literary and even sociological basis for literature,[52] and this only partly

[50] Dudley Andrew, 'Adaptation' (1984), in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 28–37 (p. 28).

[51] Andrew, 'Adaptation', p. 29.

[52] Shklovskii published 'V zashchitu sotsiologicheskogo metoda' [In Defence of the Sociological Method], *Novyi Lef*, 3 (1927), 20–25, and reproduced that article's argument in his contribution to the pivotal dispute 'Marxism and the Formal Method' which took place on 6 March 1927: see Anon., 'Disput o formal'nom metode' [Dispute on the Formal Method], *Novyi Lef*, 4 (1927), 45–46; D. Ustinov, 'Materialy disputa "Marksizm i formal'nyi metod" 6 marta 1927 g.' [Materials on the Dispute 'Marxism and the Formal Method', 6 March 1927], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 50 (2001), 247–78. These positions would be developed into a virtual sociology of literature in his 1928 book on *War and Peace*: V. B. Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane L'va Tolstogo 'Voina i mir'*

as a pragmatic response to external pressures from increasingly belligerent Marxist opponents. Tynianov would take this development to new and quite distinct heights in his 1927 essay 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii' [On Literary Evolution], which represents a high-water mark for attempts to synthesize formal and socio-historical literary methodologies.[53] Tynianov's essays on the cinema remained, in other words, more 'formalist' than the approaches to literature latterly propounded by himself and his 'Formalist' colleagues. The brief 'sociological turn' in late Formalism and Tynianov's subsequent synthesis were prompted by an awareness not only of the limitations of the immanent study of the work of art in itself, be it literary or cinematic, but also of the limitations of processes in which such immanent study might be opened out through comparison with other forms of art, and other specific artefacts: the 'extra-literary' did not primarily refer to other 'artistic series' such as film, but rather to the material, experiential, objectified world beyond artistic series as such. The sum implication for adaptation theory of Tynianov's work as a screenwriter and as a theorist of cinema *and* literature is that the 'laboratory conditions' in which the respective cinematic and literary texts are to be examined must be understood as facilitating not simply the identification of a higher theoretical generalization about the forms and functions of film and literature themselves, but also an integrated understanding of how each, inseparably from their relations to one another, articulates with the environment in which it has been produced and with the historical evolution of the mode to which it belongs. This is another way of saying that theory and history, rather than the combatants in the battle for the humanities they are often characterized as being, in fact depend on one another for the realization of their respective projects; or, at one further level of 'specification', that the justifiable demand that adaptation theory work harder in developing a sociological aspect need not—in fact cannot—imply the need to sacrifice its 'purely' formal dimension.

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[Material and Style in Tolstoi's *War and Peace*] (The Hague: Mouton, 1970). Eikhenbaumpursued what was if anything an even more deterministic line in his articles 'Literatura i pisatel'' [Literature and the Writer], *Zvezda*, 5 (1927), 121–40, and 'Literaturnyi byt' [The Literary Environment], in Boris Eikhenbaum, *Moi vremennik/Marshrut v bessmertie* [My Life/The Road to Immortality] (Moscow: Agraf, 2001), pp. 49–59 (published in 1927 as 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt').

[53] Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii' (1927), in Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 270–81; 'On Literary Evolution', in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1971; repr. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), pp. 66–78.