A Word about Material (Bakhtin and Tynianov)

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> Il y a pour toute chose une théorie qui se
> proclame elle-même 'le bon sens'.
> Victor Hugo[1]

WHEN Mikhail Bakhtin wrote in 1924 of the dangers of a 'material aesthetics',[2] his primary concern was not the broadly Marxist approach with which materialist thought is most commonly associated in the literary domain; the primary addressee in Bakhtin's polemic was, rather, the so-called 'formal method', the variegated proponents of which offered the only significant alternative to 'Marxism' in the struggle for pre-eminence in Soviet literary studies. Bakhtin's motivations in attacking the Formalists may have been partly pragmatic, as Pavel Medvedev's were to a greater extent in his later extended statement of the case against Formalism, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, published in 1928 when the outcome of the struggle was less open to doubt;[3] they may also have involved a certain *hauteur*, with the

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[1] Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, Paris, 1951 [1862], p. 1073.
[2] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Problema soderzhaniia, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve', in *Raboty 1920–kh godov*, Kiev, 1994, pp. 257–318; 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art', in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; trans. Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom, Austin, TX, 1990, pp. 257–325 (hereafter, Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form'; translations modified, page references from the Russian edition given first [and throughout]).

The article was partially published as 'K estetike slova', in *Kontekst–73*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 258–80, and in full in the following year in M. M. Bakhtin, *Voprosy literatury i estetiki: issledovaniia raznykh let*, ed. S. Leibovich, Moscow, 1975, pp. 6–71. For a full, if in places tendentious account of the context and circumstances of the article's non-publication in 1924, see the commentary in M. M. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, ed. S. G. Bocharov and N. I. Nikolaev, Moscow, 2003, pp. 707–41.

[3] P. N. Medvedev, *Formal´nyi metod v literaturovedenii. Kriticheskoe vvedenie v sotsiologicheskuiu poetiku*, Leningrad, 1928; P. N. Medvedev/M. M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle, Baltimore, MD, 1978. This translation was reprinted in 1985 with the authors' names reversed: M. M. Bakhtin/ P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle, Cambridge, MA, 1985 (hereafter, Medvedev, *The Formal Method*; all English citations are from the later edition).

implication that the crudely deterministic approaches that passed for Marxist scholarship represented, on a theoretical level, an unworthy opponent. The most important element of Bakhtin's motivation, however, is the conviction that Formalism and Marxism, rather than being the natural enemies their engagement in struggle would seem to imply — a presumption that has subsequently been entrenched by canonical literary history — in fact represent two sides of the same coin.[4]

Two related, fundamental theoretical problems lie at the heart of this conviction: the first is the venerable dichotomy of form and content, and the second, which flows from the first, is as stark as it is neglected — what, indeed, is the *material* of literature?

I

In the period between the dissolution of *Lef* and his eventual 'capitulation' to the ostensible representatives of Marxism in literary scholarship, Viktor Shklovskii made a last attempt to reunite the scattered forces of *Opoiaz*.[5] Shklovskii's objective may have been organizational security rather than the restoration of a long-lost theoretical unity, but he was encouraged in his attempts — or at the very least indulged — by Roman Jakobson and Iurii Tynianov, whose programmatic statement of 1928, 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language', was

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[4] It should also be noted, however, that Bakhtin has sometimes been seen as operating in the space *between* Formalism and Marxism: see for example Ann Shukman, 'Between Marxism and Formalism: the Stylistics of Mikhail Bakhtin', in Elinor Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, 2, 1980, pp. 221–34; Michael Bernard-Donals, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Between Phenomenology and Marxism*, Cambridge, 1994.

Galin Tihanov, in a broader assessment of the place of Formalism in Western intellectual history, has expressed its curiously 'doubled' relationship to Marxism in terms of it trying to be 'more Positivist than Positivism' and attempting to compete with Marxism in the same (conceptual and pragmatic) arena: Galin Tihanov, 'Zametki o dispute formalistov i marksistov 1927 goda', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 50, 2001, pp. 279–86; see also D. Ustinov, 'Materialy disputa "Marksizm i formal'nyi metod" 6 marta 1927 g.', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 50, 2001, pp. 247–78.

[5] *Opoiaz* [Obshchestvo izucheniia teorii poeticheskogo iazyka] ceased to function as a formal group from the time of Shklovskii's enforced departure to Berlin early in 1922, although he, Boris Eikhenbaum and Iurii Tynianov remained associated in personal and professional terms long after that date. Following his return to Russia late in 1923, Shklovskii sought institutional succour in the more utilitarian and, perhaps, politically promising context of the Marxist/Futurist alliance *Lef* [Levyi front iskusstva], which had absorbed another former member of *Opoiaz*, Osip Brik, and could boast at its heart the emblematic figure of Vladimir Maiakovskii. *Lef* itself fell apart in the autumn of 1928 due to ideological and personal tensions, the precise combination of which is difficult to ascertain.

to be the theoretical *and* organizational focus of *Opoiaz*'s restoration.[6] Shklovskii must also have been encouraged, however, by something much more elusive, namely his appreciation of the continuing failure of avowedly Marxist critics to occupy the centre ground of literary-critical debate with any degree of theoretical conviction. As Shklovskii writes to Osip Brik in February 1929:

> The most difficult question is the question of our relations with the Marxists. This is in essence a question of an attitude towards an attitude, because Marxists themselves are not to be found.[7]

This might even stand as an epitaph for the range of attempts to construct a Marxist theory of literature during the first Soviet decade: 'Marxists are not to be found'.

Shklovskii's diagnosis of a virtual absence of convincingly Marxist approaches to literature is not as surprising as it might first appear, chiefly because the foundations upon which a Marxist aesthetics were to be constructed were themselves deeply problematic. There are two main reasons for this, which are in fact so closely related as to be virtually inseparable: the first is Marx's relative reticence on strictly aesthetic questions (an expression which in itself may have seemed to him a contradiction in terms);[8] the second is the concomitant necessity for this

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[6] Shklovskii invited a number of scholars of varying degrees of proximity to *Opoiaz* to respond to the theses set out in Tynianov and Jakobson's article as the basis for a form of published manifesto for the new organization; it is ironic, then, that the attempt culminates in the publication of Shklovskii's response alone, as the deeply ambivalent and/or compromised 'Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke', which has been read with some justification as embodying an unreserved, if tactical, capitulation: V. B. Shklovskii, 'Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 27 January 1930, p. 4. Also, Iurii Tynianov and Roman Jakobson, 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka' [1928], in Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, Moscow, 1977 (hereafter, *Poetika*), pp. 282–83; 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language', in Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (eds), *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1978 [1971], pp. 79–81.

  For a recent detailed account of Shklovskii's endeavours in this respect, see Aleksandr Galushkin, '"I tak, stavshi na kostiakh, budem trubit´ sbor": K istorii ne sostoiavshegosia vozrozhdeniia Opoiaza v 1928–1930 gg.', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 44, 2000, pp. 136–58.

[7] Ibid., p. 142. Shklovskii goes on in the same letter to relate Lev Iakubinskii's insistence on the need for a Marxist linguistics, despite the latter's uncertainty as to what precisely that would entail. Linguistics offers an instructive parallel for literary studies in this respect, and I am indebted to Nikolai Nikolaev for pointing out an aspect of the particular 'logic' of Shklovskii's objective: if Marxism was able to establish itself as the authorized 'Marxist' linguistic doctrine, why not a brand of modified (i.e. historicized or 'sociologized') Formalism as the 'one method' for literary criticism?

[8] This difficulty is further compounded by the publication history of certain of Marx's works in Russian translation: *The German Ideology*, for example, was first published in 1932, long after the point when it may have affected on-going debate in theory and criticism. For an extended excerpt, see Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, Oxford, 1977, pp. 159–91. With the benefit of long hindsight, the section on 'The First Premises of the Materialist Method' from *The German Ideology* seems almost predictive of Voloshinov's critique of Plekhanov's idea of 'social psychology' and, in particular, of his definition of the materiality of the sign, for which Marx's assertion that 'from the start the "spirit" is afflicted

deficiency to be supplemented by followers and interpreters of Marx in the Russian and Soviet context, often, and most damagingly, with direct reference to those core principles of Marxism which were only secondarily, and even tangentially, concerned with aesthetics.[9] Thus, to take an obvious example, the laws of supply and demand might be invoked in assessment of the production and circulation of literary 'goods', an approach which found expression in the work of Boris Arvatov,[10] and rather more sophisticated treatment at different points in Trotskii's *Literature and Revolution*. Trotskii attempts to relate aesthetic investigation to the canon of Marxist theory and, at the same time, to anticipate and obviate the unacceptably crude and self-defeating attempts of others to do something similar:

> That the demand for art is not created by economic conditions is inarguable. But neither is the demand for food and warmth created by economics. On the contrary, economics is created by the demand for food and warmth. [...] Works of art must in the first place be judged by their own laws, i.e. by the laws of art. But only Marxism is capable of *explaining* why and from where a given direction in art has arisen in any given epoch, i.e. who has demanded certain artistic forms and not others, and why.[11]

The supplementation of Marxist aesthetics by reference to non-aesthetic strictures was not, however, restricted to the question of supply and demand, which might be regarded as a surface manifestation of a more fundamental problem: the relationship of the (economic) 'base' to the (ideological) 'superstructure'.

The difficulties implied by this foundation stone of dialectical materialism can be summarized in a single word which has haunted Marxist and materialist approaches to art in and beyond the Soviet context:

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[8] *Continued*
with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language' is a paradoxical 'forebear' (Marx, *Selected Writings*, p. 167). See V. N. Voloshinov, *Marksizm i filosofiia iazyka*, in Voloshinov, *Filosofiia i sotsiologiia gumanitarnykh nauk*, St Petersburg, 1995, pp. 216–380 (pp. 221–28); *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1986, pp. 9–15 (hereafter, Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*).

[9] Chief among these is Plekhanov, who in effect furnished the aesthetic backdrop of 'orthodox' Marxism in the Soviet 1920s, and was particularly influential in his idea of 'social psychology' as a mediator between base and superstructure; see G. V. Plekhanov, *Literatura i estetika*, Moscow, 1958. Lev Trotskii's *Literatura i revoliutsiia*, Moscow, 1991 [1923] (*Literature and Revolution*, London, 1991) was an important polemical continuation of the aesthetic supplementation of Marx; a less frequently acknowledged refinement of both Plekhanov and Trotskii is Nikolai Bukharin's 'O formal´nom metode v iskusstve', *Krasnaia nov´*, 3, 1925, pp. 248–57, a stenogram recording of his contribution to the dispute 'Iskusstvo i revoliutsiia', which took place on 13 March 1925.

[10] B. Arvatov, 'Literatura i byt', *Zvezda*, 6, 1925, pp. 308–19; B. Arvatov, 'Utilitarizm v literature', *Oktiabr´*, 12, 1925, pp. 100–06.

[11] Trotskii, *Literature and Revolution*, pp. 141–42; p. 207.

determinism. If the range of human activities that combine to form 'culture' are phenomena of the superstructure which develops from the economic base, the question arises as to the precise nature of the relationship between culture, or any element of it, and the economic relations that underpin it. The response that the characteristics of the base *determine* the nature of superstructural elements leads all too easily to an assumption of direct, mechanistic causality: to use the example given by Valentin Voloshinov as something of a 'straw man' in his argument *against* the tenability of such mechanistically causal interpretations of base-superstucture relations, the appearance of the *lishnii chelovek* in mid-nineteenth-century Russian fiction might be directly and causally related to a crisis in the autocracy and in the quasi-feudal economy of the immediately preceding period.[12] Voloshinov's response is to argue that

> the establishment of a connection between the base and an isolated phenomenon, torn from its integral and unified ideological context, is of no cognitive value whatsoever.[13]

Voloshinov in fact follows very closely the argument of Bukharin, although, as we shall see, with a very different purpose:

> You can isolate any phenomenon of social life, any fragment or series, but [...] if you do not see its function in life, if you do not regard it as an organic component of a *social whole*, [...] you will never understand these phenomena.[14]

Bukharin essentially argues that the base-superstructure model requires a high degree of sophistication in its application to ideological and cultural phenomena, which will consist, more or less, in a refusal to perform the kind of specific isolation Voloshinov later mocks: early-nineteenth-century political and economic crisis causally *determines* the appearance of the *lishnii chelovek*. Yet, just as conclusively as the crudest of determinists, to whom (along with the arch anti-determinists of early Formalism) his strictures are addressed, Bukharin, as he must, leaves intact the base-superstructure paradigm, which is the basis for a dichotomy that has proved problematic, and often insurmountable, for most critical methodologies: form *versus* content.

A theory of causality, whether mechanical or not, is inclined to be resistant to consideration of form, inasmuch as form is immaterial to ideology: why would it matter, to continue with our example, whether the *lishnii chelovek* should be manifest chiefly in fiction, or in verse, or in

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[12] Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 230; p. 18.
[13] Ibid., p. 229; pp. 17–18.
[14] Bukharin, 'O formal´nom metode v iskusstve', p. 255.

both? Similar economic and social stimuli to those that 'produced' the *lishnii chelovek* might have found their expression, on a thematic level, in whatever literary forms were currently dominant; formal means are receptive to the ideological effects produced by changes in basal economic relations, but they are powerless to 'determine' them. And even when Marxism turns to questions of form, there is a tendency to treat it exactly like content: the question of which particular forms are 'demanded', *pace* Trotskii, by the dominant class is related to the basal factors that have determined the dominance of that class, or are in the process of shifting class relations. Form either obeys content, i.e. they stand in a particular, hierarchical relationship; or, somewhat bizarrely, form is the 'same' as content, which implies an even greater deformation of their relationship. The possibility of an integral, mutually constitutive relationship is obviated from the very outset by adherence, in whatever degree, to the base-superstructure model.

From the other side, the stimulus for the arguments of Trotskii, Bukharin and, in a different way, Voloshinov, is the aggressive, polemically-charged commitment to form over content which, alongside the idea of the distinctiveness of a specifically 'poetic' language, was the self-defining hallmark of early Formalism. This iconoclastic brand of Formalism, replete with the pathos of Futurism, found its most robust expression in works by Shklovskii such as 'Kak sdelan "Don Kikhot"' and *Khod konia*, the latter of which is the specific object of Trotskii's disdain in *Literature and Revolution*.[15] As Medvevev will later argue, Shklovskii's rejection of the dialectics of the base-superstructure model implies not only that form predominates over content, but does so to such an extent that content, and hence meaning, is finally *expelled*, if not quite from the literary work itself, then at least from the process of its study. This expulsion of content consists in two related operations: first, the 'material' of the literary work is associated with *fabula*, the range of ethical, political, historical and 'real-life' events and phenomena which in various ways *precede* it; these are artistically organized to form its *siuzhet*, sometimes referred to as 'plot', but better understood as the immanent, literary organization of the events and phenomena which constitute *fabula*, transformed in a range of processes that would become the technical focus of Formalist theory. The literary work, in this analysis, is literally 'made out of' disparate elements of its pre-literary environment, conceived in the widest possible sense, and it

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[15] V. B. Shklovskii, 'Kak sdelan "Don Kikhot"' [1921], in Shklovskii, *O teorii prozy*, Moscow, 1929, pp. 91–124; 'The Making of *Don Quixote*', in Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher, Elmwood Park, 1990, pp. 72–100. Viktor Shklovskii, *Khod konia*, Orange, CT, and Dusseldorf, 1986 [1923].

is the job of literary study to determine precisely *how* this process takes place.[16]

Secondly, the hierarchical relationship attributed to literary artifice and 'real' material in early Soviet Marxist scholarship is reversed:[17] the literary work is no longer the 'vessel' of ideologically significant material, but rather that material serves, in a celebrated formulation, 'only as motivation of the narrative devices'.[18] Thus the 'content' of the literary work is not directly significant in itself, but rather for the way in which it enables various transformative techniques, specifically, various compositional devices ('braking' [*tormozhenie*], 'making difficult' [*zatrudnenie*], 'repetition' [*povtorenie*], etc., all of which are related to the 'master' device of 'alienation' or 'making strange' [*ostranenie*]). Hence Shklovskii's hyperbolic contention that Don Quixote's travels are significant only in so far as they motivate the device of 'stringing together' [*nanizyvanie*], in so far, that is, as they provide the 'raw materials' for the construction of a uniquely literary 'reality'.[19] Shklovskii's aim is clearly to undermine an idea of 'faithful' realistic representation and, by extension, deterministic conceptions of the relationship between art and life (or, as we have seen, base and superstructure). Yet even though this characteristically extreme step might be regarded as rhetorically overdetermined, as opposed to theoretically 'sincere', it vividly illustrates the ostensible gulf between the Formalists and the Marxists at this early stage, and its theoretically disastrous implications for the problem of form and content.

A methodological alternative did emerge in the mid-1920s, which promised to ameliorate the worst effects of (Marxist) determinism and (Formalist) abstraction. This took the form of a 'staggered' critical methodology, which would perform an immanent textual analysis of the literary work before proceeding to examination of its relations with the surrounding 'extra-artistic social environment' ('vnekhudozhestvennaia sotsial´naia sreda'). Voloshinov attributes this approach

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[16] Tynianov manages to provide an admirably clear statement of this principle in an article devoted to the problem of *siuzhet* and *fabula* in cinema as much as in the literary text, but without becoming diverted by the specificity of material in film, which is deserving of closer examination in its own right: Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O siuzhete i fabule v kino' [1926], in Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 324–25.
  See also Iu. N. Tynianov, 'Ob osnovakh kino' [1927], in ibid., pp. 326–45; Yury Tynyanov, 'The Fundamentals of Cinema', *Russian Poetics in Translation*, 9, 1982 (*The Poetics of Cinema*), pp. 32–54.
[17] It should be noted that Soviet Marxist scholarship did not of course invent what was and is the most enduring principle of non-academic understanding of the functioning of literature.
[18] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 146; p. 107.
[19] It is in 'Kak sdelan "Don Kikhot"', incidentally, that Shklovskii utters what will later provoke direct refutation in Bakhtin: 'the word is a thing' ('slovo — veshch´'); see note 35 below.

in its mature form to Pavel Sakulin, although there are a number of earlier examples of a similar methodological orientation, including Aleksandr Tseitlin and, once again, Trotskii's *Literature and Revolution*.[20] Tseitlin begins by acknowledging what has earlier been admitted by Plekhanov, and will later be repeated by Shklovskii in his letter to Brik, namely that 'a Marxist [...] aesthetics still does not exist'.[21] He then attempts to bring together the methodologies of Formalism and 'sociologism', but in a very particular hierarchical relation: a 'purely formal analysis' of the literary work, which will initially involve the description and classification of the 'facts', is not only 'primary and essential', but is in fact the 'fundament, without which any [subsequent] sociological synthesis is inconceivable'.[22] Trotskii advances a very similar proposition, but with a markedly different valorization of each successive methodological 'phase': the work of art may, as we have seen, be judged in the first instance 'according to its own laws', but this aspect of literary methodology must accept its essentially subsidiary (*sluzhebnaia*) role, its preparatory status in relation to the core 'scientific' business of establishing the work's social and ideological significance. For Trotskii, formal analysis of the literary work performs the same function as statistics in the social sciences, and the microscope for biology.[23]

There are two obvious difficulties with this all-too-convenient joining of diverse critical methodologies: as the distinct valorizations of each phase in the process offered by Tseitlin and Trotskii strongly imply, and as Robert Maguire has pointed out, critical practice would always tend to emphasize one side or the other; sociological analysis seeking to relate itself more convincingly to the text through essentially supplementary formal means, or formal analysis seeking to 'justify' itself

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[20] V. N. Voloshinov, 'Slovo v zhizni i slovo v poezii' [1926], in *Filosofiia i sotsiologiia gumanitarnykh nauk*, pp. 59–86 (p. 59); 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry', *Russian Poetics in Translation*, 10, 1983 (*Bakhtin School Papers*), pp. 5–30 (p. 5) (hereafter, Voloshinov, 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry').

P. N. Sakulin, *Sotsiologicheskii metod v literaturovedenii*, Moscow, 1925. See also P. N. Medvedev, 'Sotsiologizm bez sotsiologii: o metodologicheskikh rabotakh P. N. Sakhulina', *Zvezda*, 2, 1926, pp. 267–71; 'Sociologism Without Sociology: On the Methodological Works of P. N. Sakulin', *Russian Poetics in Translation*, 10, 1983 (*Bakhtin School Papers*), pp. 67–74. Sakulin is also worthy of Maiakovskii's impatient attentions in his 1923 poem 'Rabochim Kurska': 'V vash / stoletnii iubilei / ne prol'iut / Sakuliny / rechei elei', Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*, Moscow, 1955–61, vol. 5, pp. 149–65 (p. 164).

[21] A. Tseitlin, 'Marksisty i formal'nyi metod', *Lef*, 3, 1923, pp. 114–31.

[21] Ibid., p. 115.

[22] Ibid., pp. 121–22.

[23] Trotskii, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 131; p. 193.

by working outwards from the text to the social context. More funda-
mentally, however, both versions of this superficially integrated or
'staggered' method end by reaffirming precisely what they have set out
to resolve or overcome: the fatal division between form and content.

II

The factor that determines this counter-intuitive similarity, and which
is the basis of our characterization of Marxism and Formalism as the
two sides of the same — material aesthetic — coin, is their shared
conception of the material of literature. Whether the events of history,
domestic life, class relations, etc. are merely the 'motivation of the
device', *pace* early Formalism, or constitute the ideological content that
must be absorbed, transformed and represented in the literary 'vessel',
neither tendency doubts that it is indeed what is *external* to the literary
work, in the crudest of ontological terms, that constitutes its material.
Shklovskii's conception of material as 'absolutely indifferent', in
Medvedev's words, leads inexorably to 'the devaluation of content'
('nizvedenie soderzhaniia'),[24] damning evidence of Formalism's

> fear of meaning, which, with its 'not here' and 'not now' is able to destroy
> the quiddity of the work and the fullness of its presence in the here and
> now.[25]

Medvedev goes on to dismiss this — Shklovskian or early-Formalist —
conception of material in the following conclusive terms:

> It is inadmissible to treat *fabula* (in the sense of a specific event 'in life'),
> the hero, the idea, and everything ideologically significant in general as
> material, since all this does not exist *as a given* outside the work.[26]

What is remarkable, however, is that this would function also as a con-
vincing dismissal of a *Marxist* conception of the material of the literary
work, were we only to omit the word '*fabula*' and replace it with the
gloss Medvedev provides in parentheses. Formalism's devaluation of
content may ostensibly place it in diametrical opposition to Marxism,
but both extremes are in fact predicated on a broadly *shared* conception
of what the material of the literary work consists in. For the Formalists,
this pre-literary material may have been conceived predominantly in
terms of neutral experiential phenomena, the raw material for a
nascent narratology; for the Marxists, of course, it was profoundly
ideological, related more closely to the social context of any given
experiential phenomena and to their imbrication in 'relations of

[24] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, pp. 148, 151; pp. 108, 110.
[25] Ibid., p. 145; p. 105.
[26] Ibid., p. 153; p. 112; my emphasis.

production', the basis for a nascent sociology of literature. For the For-malist 'fear of meaning' read the Marxist 'fear of form'. Formalism's expulsion of content and Marxism's disregard for form are produced by the same misconception of the material of the literary work.

In 1924, however, when Bakhtin first engaged the spectre of a 'mate-rial aesthetics' in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', which was destined to remain unpublished until 1974–75, his dismissal of this conception of material is only — and perhaps crushingly — implicit. Bakhtin prefigures (and, in view of the publication history, echoes) Medvedev's objection to the conception of 'life' or 'reality' as in any sense the raw material for the literary work, arguing that reality is 'already thoroughly aestheticised' ('uzhe sushchestvenno estetizovana') prior to being brought into contact with art:

> We must remember once and for all *that there is no reality in itself, no neutral reality which can be placed in opposition to art: in the act of talking about reality and placing it in opposition to something, we also define and evaluate it in some particular manner.*[27]

Bakhtin too accuses 'contemporary poetics' of the 'denial of content' ('otritsanie soderzhaniia'), by describing it either as an aspect of form, or as an aspect of material.[28] Bakhtin and Medvedev even employ an apparently identical analogy in dismissing the idea of material as an inert element of pre-creative reality, that of the sculptor working marble. Here, however, we are forced to confront problematization on two levels: first, we must at least acknowledge the question of the authorship of *The Formal Method*, which remains more intractable than Medevev's and Bakhtin's recourse to a similar analogy might suggest;[29] second, and more importantly, their respective uses of the analogy open new perspectives on the question of material itself.

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[27] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 278; p. 276.
[28] Ibid., p. 284; p. 282.
[29] As well as academic, ideological and even national factors, respective positions on the question of authorship have been partly conditioned by the publication history of these texts, in Russian and in English. It should at the very least be noted, however, that what little documentary evidence there is tends to support Medvedev's 'physical' authorship: see [M. M. Bakhtin], *Besedy V. D. Duvakina s M. M. Bakhtinym*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 77–78; 'Pis′ma M. M. Bakhtina', *Literaturnaia ucheba*, 4–5, 1992, pp. 144–52. See also Iu. P. Medvedev, 'Pis′mo v redaktsiiu zhurnala "Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop"', *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, 4, 1995, pp. 148–56; Iu. P. Medvedev, '"Nas bylo mnogo na chelne …"', *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, 1, 1992, pp. 89–108.

For a summary of various approaches to the problem of authorship prior to the publica-tion of Bakhtin's 1961 letter to Vadim Kozhinov (in 'Pis′ma M. M. Bakhtina', above), see Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, Stanford, CA, 1990, pp. 101–19; for a survey of more recent contributions to the debate, and one that is particularly attuned to the question of what is actually at stake — academically and ideologi-cally — in this ostensibly neutral 'question of fact', see Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 126–40.

Medvedev's use of the analogy is not only intended to force home his rejection of the association of material and *fabula*: it is also a preface to examination of a second and *quite different* conception of 'material', which he attributes to Viktor Zhirmunskii and later, in modified form, to Tynianov:

> The word 'material' itself, as it is used here, is ambiguous in the highest degree. [. . .] It seems to us that it is admissible to talk of material in art only as something already found by the artist, and not as something created by him according to an artistic plan. [. . .] It is possible to treat language as the material of literature, as Zhirmunskii does, because language in its linguistic specificity is indeed found by the individual artist.[30]

Medvedev, in search of something that might be said to 'exist as a given outside the work' and is not 'already thoroughly aestheticized', performs an act of subtle rhetorical sleight of hand: having denied the validity of what we must now call the *first* Formalist conception of material, for which we have used Shklovskii's militant iconoclasm as a convenient shorthand, Medvedev now identifies a *second* conception of material, which he characterizes as both hyper-formalist and hyper-abstract, but not ontologically and aesthetically impermissible. Medvedev, as we shall see, questions the *limitations* of this second Formalist conception of material as language, not its fundamental tenability.

If Bakhtin were in fact the author of *The Formal Method*, however, we would be obliged to term this an act of rhetorical regression. In 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', having paid scant attention to the first conception of material in its association with *fabula*, which is implicitly consigned to the ranks of the 'unworthy' opponent, Bakhtin utilizes the analogy of a sculptor working marble in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of this *second* conception of material as 'language in its linguistic specificity'; he anticipates, that is, the inadequacy of what Medvedev turns his critical attentions to only after rejecting a broadly Shklovskian notion of the relation of material and *fabula*. For Bakhtin, in a polemic of a quite different character, the artist's 'axiological-artistic activity' is directed not at what is 'found', but at the 'aesthetically significant form of the *human being and his body*', at the 'aesthetic object', which cannot simply be identified with the material from which it is 'made'.[31] The realization of the artistic form is certainly

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[30] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 153; p. 112. Medvedev has earlier cited Zhirmunskii's explicit statement of this principle from 'Zadachi poetiki' [1919], in V. M. Zhirmunskii, *Teoriia literatury. Poetika. Stilistika*, Leningrad, 1977, pp. 15–55: Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 119; p. 85. The proposition that language is the material of literature is assumed, but not discussed, in the article that is the most direct object of Bakhtin's polemic in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', namely V. M. Zhirmunskii, 'K voprosu o "formal′nom metode"' [1923], in *Teoriia literatury. Poetika. Stilistika*, pp. 94–105.

[31] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 267; p. 265.

impossible *without* the marble, just as it is, incidentally, without the chisel, which 'is in no sense part of the artistic object'.[32] Where the material is *verbal,* Bakhtin argues, 'the situation becomes somewhat more complex and is not quite so obviously absurd at first glance [. . .] but is in principle no different'.[33] Material thus conceived — in terms of the second Formalist conception of material — takes on a quasi-instrumental character, and any 'material aesthetics' becomes a theory of instrumentality, a theory of the 'secondary, derivative' ('vtorichnyi, proizvodnyi') aspects of the artist's relation to his or her object.

What is crucial here is that Bakhtin at no time associates material, within the frame of Formalist poetics, with *fabula,* with the ethical and experiential data that *precede* the literary work. He makes no attempt to respond to Shklovskii's inversion of the substance of life and the mechanics of representation, and assumes from the beginning that the operative Formalist definition of the material of verbal art is simply 'the word in linguistics' ('slovo lingvistiki'), and that it is precisely linguistics' misprision of the nature of 'the word' which most urgently requires redress. Medvedev, writing after Bakhtin, embarks on a critique of the implications of conceiving of language as inert material, and the artistic work as '*organized material,* as a thing',[34] only after he has dealt with the 'genetic core' of Formalism, its first conception of material. We are thus able to identify a certain distance between the exteriorized, performed 'concrete utterances' of Medvedev and Bakhtin on this matter, despite their origins in an avowedly common conception.[35]

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[32] Ibid., p. 267; p. 265.

[33] Ibid., p. 267; p. 265.

[34] Ibid., p. 266; p. 264.

[35] It must be noted, however, that the question of authorship is further complicated by the orientation of 'Uchenyi sal´erizm: o formal´nom (morfologicheskom) metode', written in late 1924 and published under Medvedev's name in 1925. Here, as in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', the focus is emphatically on the second Formalist conception of material, and we are left to attribute Medvedev's *later* emphasis on the *earlier* Formalist conception of material in *The Formal Method* to that book's greater consistency with the political, as opposed to theoretical, temper of the times. See P. N. Medvedev, 'Uchenyi sal´erizm: o formal´nom (morfologicheskom) metode', *Bakhtin pod maskoi. 5/1: Maska piataia, pervaia polumaska*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 10–24; see also Nikolai Nikolaev, 'Publishing Bakhtin: A Philological Problem (Two Reviews)', *Dialogism*, 4, 2000, pp. 67–111, which makes a detailed and emphatic case for the common authorship of 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form' and 'Uchenyi sal´erizm', but which fails to sustain the implication that this extends also to *The Formal Method.*

Tynianov's 'O literaturnom fakte', which was published between the writing of 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form' and 'Uchenyi sal´erizm', is cited in the latter. There are, as we shall see, grounds for assuming that it is Tynianov's particular development of Formalism in the second half of the 1920s that provokes Medvedev's greater differentiation between the two Formalist conceptions of material in *The Formal Method*; or, in other words, that it is Tynianov who 'lays bare' the instability of the Formalist approach to material. See Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O literaturnom fakte', *Lef*, 2, 1924, pp. 101–16; cited from Iu. N. Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', in *Arkhaisty i novatory*, Leningrad, 1929, pp. 5–29 (hereafter, Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt').

Bakhtin is not primarily concerned with the earlier Formalist conception of material, and in fact never directly refers to it. The corollary of such a conception, i.e. the usurpation of ideologically significant content by the technical 'device', is implicitly rejected in the discussion of the 'already aestheticized' nature of reality and Formalism's 'denial of content' to which we have already referred, but the conception itself is apparently unworthy of explicit response.[36]

Bakhtin concentrates instead upon the second Formalist conception of material, the later proposition that it is *language* itself that must be considered the material of literature and, crucially, the fundamentally conflicting conclusions that may flow from this premise. This in a sense marks not the end, but the beginning of Bakhtin's engagement with Formalism; it is possible to imagine Bakhtin and, say, Zhirmunskii provisionally agreeing that language must in some way be the material of the literary work, but any consequent definitions of the function of material and of the processes involved in its transformation in aesthetic activity remain separated by their fundamentally opposed conceptions of *language itself*. Bakhtin will later take linguistics to task for its impoverished conception of what he insists on terming *living* language,[37] but at this early stage in his own engagement with language it is the imperialism of linguistics, as opposed to its inadequacy (nonetheless implied), which is of primary concern: linguistic analysis should restrict itself to the 'mastery' (*ovladenie*) of its own object (in which respect it has not progressed beyond the complex sentence), rather than speculating on the 'significance [of the purely linguistic particularities of language itself] for art, for science and for religion', a task more appropriate for aesthetics and for cognitive science.[38] Essentially, Bakhtin accuses linguistics of attempting to pass itself off as aesthetics, to subsume analysis of the aesthetic nature and function of verbal art in its own implicitly inappropriate methodologies. More specifically, he accuses 'contemporary poetics', increasingly convinced of the significance of a simplistically conceived linguistic material basis for literature, of coalescing with abstract linguistics in a project that will culminate in the 'impoverishment' (*obednenie*) of the object of poetics, and even 'the replacement [*podmena*] of this object [. . .] with something quite different'.[39]

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[36] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', pp. 278, 284; pp. 276, 282. This is also an important theoretical premise of Bakhtin's brief analysis of Pushkin's 'Remembrance' (*Vospominanie*): Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', pp. 297–300; pp. 296–98.

[37] 'The word is not a thing' ('Slovo ne veshch''), Bakhtin later writes in his book on Dostoevskii: *Problemy tvorchestva/poetiki Dostoevskogo*, Kiev, 1994, p. 418; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis and London, 1984, p. 202.

[38] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 293; p. 292.

[39] Ibid., p. 260; p. 258.

The immediately perceived danger is thus the enlistment of an abstract linguistic analysis in the construction of a new 'immanent' poetics. Despite the 'undoubted productiveness and significance' of certain works produced by 'representatives of the so-called formal or morphological method',[40] the problem is that

> poetics clings tightly to linguistics, fearing to take more than a single step away from it (in the case of the majority of the formalists and of V. M. Zhirmunskii), and sometimes even directly striving to become only a division of it (in the case of V. V. Vinogradov).
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> For poetics, as for any specialised aesthetics, in which it is necessary to take account of the nature of the material (in the present case — verbal) as well as general aesthetic principles, linguistics is of course necessary as a subsidiary discipline; but here it begins to occupy a completely inappropriate leading position, almost precisely the position which should be occupied by general aesthetics.[41]

III

The implications of this for our understanding of the history of Formalism in Russia, and of its later impact in the West, are quite startling: the Formalists, it would appear, despite a certain tendency towards terminological innovation, had no fixed conception of the material of the literary work. This has been noted, but by no means resolved, by Viktor Erlich in his *Russian Formalism: History — Doctrine*, which asks whether 'material' constitutes 'the subject matter of reality embodied in literature, or its medium, language'. Erlich's revealing answer is that, although 'there was apparently no complete unanimity among the Formalist and near-Formalist spokesmen' on this matter, the 'latter interpretation appears to have prevailed' (this extremely tentative non-conclusion is preceded, incidentally, by conflicting instances drawn from Shklovskii, who 'paid his due to both rival interpretations; consistency or terminological neatness was not his forte').[42] The extent to which this constitutes a congenital flaw in the Formalist 'system', as implied by Bakhtin — a material aesthetics founded on a miscomprehension of 'material' itself — or, alternatively, a *defence* against that same implication, will be the subject of later remarks. The implications — albeit secondary — for our understanding of Bakhtin's relations to one of his co-thinkers, however, are somewhat clearer: there is something of a paradox in the fact that the *earlier* work,

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[40] Ibid., p. 261; p. 258.
[41] Ibid., p. 263; p. 261.
[42] Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History — Doctrine*, The Hague, 1980 [1955], p. 189.

unquestionably Bakhtin's, pays almost no explicit attention to the *earlier* stage of Formalism's development, virtually ignoring, as we have seen, the first Formalist definition of material; Medvedev's later work, although its scope covers the period in the mid-1920s when this conception of material (along with much else in Formalist thinking) undergoes fundamental revision, nevertheless dwells on the 'genetic core' of Formalism, the foundational principles his analysis will not allow it to overcome, and moves only belatedly onto the ground Bakhtin occupies from the outset.

The contribution of another of Bakhtin's co-thinkers is relevant both to the theoretical and to the bio-bibliographical aspects of the problem. Voloshinov's 1926 article 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry' has also been attributed to Bakhtin but, like *The Formal Method*, also lends credence to the hypothesis of distinct authorship when read as a contribution to the problem of material. Distinguishing two 'false' views of literary production, the first concentrating on the psychology of either author or reader, the second banishing both author and reader alike in favour of '*the fetishization of the artistic work as a thing*',[43] Voloshinov, using a qualifier that was increasingly favoured by the Formalists themselves, names the 'so-called Formal method' as a species of the latter:[44]

> For [the Formal method] the poetic work is verbal material, organized in a particular manner by form. Further, [the Formal method] takes *discourse* not as a sociological entity, but from an abstract linguistic point of view. [...] Understood more broadly, however, as a product of cultural interaction, discourse ceases to be a self-sufficient object and can no longer be understood independently of the social situation that has produced it. [...] In fact, if we remain within the limits of the objectified aspect of art, it is impossible even to indicate the boundaries of the material and those aspects of it that have artistic significance. Material itself combines directly with the surrounding extra-artistic environment and possesses an endless quantity of facets and definitions — mathematical, physical, chemical and, finally, linguistic.[45]

[43] The second of these is in fact doubly false in Voloshinov's view, in that it merely pretends to scientific objectivity, but ultimately, and inevitably in view of the fundamental nature of the object of the human sciences, smuggles in its own 'subjectivist' contraband: Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 277; p. 62.

[44] By the mid-1920s in Russia it had become almost compulsory to enclose the terms 'Formal Method' and 'Formalism' firmly in inverted commas, or even to preface them with the epithet 'so-called' ('tak nazyvaemyi'). This practice was by no means restricted to opponents of Formalism: see for example, Osip Brik, 'Tak nazyvaemyi formal´nyi metod', *Lef*, 1, 1923, pp. 213–15; 'The So-called Formal Method', *Russian Poetics in Translation*, 4, 1977 (*Formalist Theory*), pp. 90–91.

[45] Voloshinov, 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry', p. 63; p. 8.

Here, as elsewhere in 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry', Voloshinov echoes Bakhtin's and Medvedev's concerns regarding contemporary poetics' illusion of immanence, its fetishization/ reification of the literary work, its fatal attraction to abstract linguistics, and its inability to distinguish verbal art from the merely verbal; he also, however, makes quite explicit what has been only implicit in Bakhtin's prior treatment in 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form' — namely that the problem does not lie in conceiving of material as language, *but rather in conceiving of language itself as abstract.*

Although Voloshinov prefaces his definition of material by opposing the equally 'false' paths of the immanent approach to the literary work (Formalism) and the psychological subjectivism that has characterized traditional literary criticism, these are not dialectically opposed, and Voloshinov does not seek their synthesis. Voloshinov's proposed development is in fact much more subtle and unexpected. He refers, as we have already seen, to Sakulin's attempt to develop a more sophisticated 'sociological method' by distinguishing the 'immanent' and 'causal' series in which literary works have their existence, and in terms of which they must be studied. Voloshinov, however, although ostensibly writing from a broadly Marxist point of view, is not concerned to adjudicate between the claims of the 'immanent' and the 'sociological' approaches conceived in these terms, and rejects the idea that sociological analysis (historical, social, diachronic) will properly follow and 'complete' immanent analysis (poetic, synchronic). Voloshinov takes us beyond the initial problem we have identified with Sakulin's 'staggered' methodology, i.e. that critical practice would always tend to emphasize one phase in this process at the expense of the other, and offers instead a quite distinct methodological alternative, which is attentive to, and indeed predicated on, the problem of material. Voloshinov does not offer the 'sociological method' as a straightforward alternative to the immanent, asocial specification of contemporary poetics (Formalism), but seeks instead to transform the sociological *method* into a sociological *poetics*, which will reject the methodological distinction between 'immanent' and 'causal' just as it rejects the separation of material into verbal and non-verbal. The sociological *method* is reproached for having failed to 'make a single serious attempt to study by its own methods the so-called immanent structure of the artistic work'.[46] But how could it? It must let others, poeticians, complete that task before it comes into its rights. Alternatively, in a manner that prefigures the later direction of Soviet literary criticism, sociological analysis might precede poetic analysis, leaving for the latter only relative irrelevancies. For Voloshinov, however, 'sociological' and 'immanent' are merely terms

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[46] Ibid., p. 60; p. 6.

of a false opposition, and the question of which should precede the other is therefore obviated. They are, moreover, founded on the false opposition from which we began, which in turn produces alternative, but equally problematic conceptions of material: sociological analysis takes the *first* Formalist conception of material as its starting point, then proceeding to the question of its expression in linguistic form; immanent analysis begins from the *second* conception of material, and only then (if indeed at all) considers the relationship of the material of the literary work to the material of 'life'. A conception of material that unifies linguistic phenomena (the former domain of immanent analysis) and extra-linguistic phenomena (the former domain of sociological analysis) methodologically nullifies the distinction between immanent and sociological approaches. Voloshinov finally defines art as 'immanently sociological' ('immanentno-sotsiologichno') and, in what is an alternative description of the dynamics of our new conception of material,

> the extra-artistic social environment, which influences [art] from without, finds in it a direct internal response. It is not a case of one alien entity influencing another, but rather of one social construction influencing another.[47]

All of the 'false' or partial approaches to which Voloshinov refers — the immanent approach, the sociological approach, even the discredited psychological subjectivist approaches of the 'pre-scientific' era — share a common tendency to mistake the part for the whole. In Voloshinov's analysis the misprisions of these partial approaches to the study of literature are mirrored perfectly by their respective and fatally partial accounts of literary material. Although Medvedev and Bakhtin have been equally scathing in their diagnoses, neither (at least to this point, in the case of Bakhtin) has offered the means to overcome these methodological deficiencies; Voloshinov, however, ultimately demands a conflation of the alternative and apparently mutually inimical sociological and immanent critical approaches, a conflation which is predicated upon an entirely new conception of literary material. For Voloshinov, the material of the literary work is indeed language, but language understood as a:

> *particular form of social interaction, which is realized and fixed in the material of the artistic work.*[48]

Voloshinov thus gestures towards the possibility of a new 'poetics', towards the literary strand of a new 'material aesthetics', which will be founded on the inseparability of real-life phenomena and speech or, in other words, on the indivisibility of material.

[47] Ibid., p. 62; p. 7.
[48] Ibid., p. 64; p. 9.

This is the critical link between Bakhtin's 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form' and Medvedev's later discussion of an embryonic 'translinguistics' in *The Formal Method*, which develops Bakhtin's tentative proposition of 'the utterance' as the basic unit of a concrete (as opposed to abstract) linguistics in the light of Voloshinov's *programmatic* re-definition of material. Medvedev identifies the missing link 'which unites the material presence of the word with its meaning' as 'social evaluation' ('sotsial´naia otsenka').[49] Thus social evaluation can have nothing to do with the linguistic example, which is only a 'conditional utterance' ('uslovnoe vyskazyanie'), as opposed to the 'concrete speech performance' ('konkretnoe rechevoe vystuplenie') that is the social utterance;[50] and thus poetry itself (and by extension all literary production) must be understood not as a hermetically-sealed domain for conveniently abstract linguistic analysis, *but as a type of concrete utterance*, cognate with a limitless range of other types of utterance associated with the various non-literary locations of linguistic performance.[51] Or, to return to the specific terms of the present analysis, having rejected the earlier Formalist conception of material as the motivation of device, Medvedev voices a unified Bakhtinian rejection of the second conception of material as language in arguing that:

> Language, understood as a totality or system of linguistic possibilities (phonetic, grammatical, lexical), is, least of all, the material of poetry. The poet chooses not linguistic forms, but rather the evaluations that are deposited in them.[52]

Bakhtin's 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', in which this principle finds its earliest statement, is famously prefaced by his assertion of the article's freedom 'from the superfluous ballast of citation and reference, [...] unnecessary for the competent reader, and of no help whatever to the incompetent reader'.[53] This, as we have seen, is thrown into yet more dramatic relief by Medvedev's later emphasis on the

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[49] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 162; p. 119.

[50] Ibid., p. 166; p. 122.

[51] Ibid. pp. 171–74; pp. 126–28. Properly speaking, the cross-reference here should be to Voloshinov, the most expansive and explicit proponent of the social basis of language among the Bakhtin school: see part two of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.

[52] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 166; p. 122.

[53] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 259; p. 257. Bakhtin may not in fact be referring to the immediate critical debate, from which no interested party could be immune, but to the so-called European formalism of Wölfflin, Hildebrand, Fiedler and Worringer, to which Medvedev later devotes a chapter of *The Formal Method*, 'The Formal Method in European Art Scholarship'. We should, however, be careful in attributing too much significance to these sources, as indeed is Medvedev: 'It is true that it is not possible to show that our formalists directly depended on their Western-European predecessors. To all appearances there was no direct genetic connection between them. Our formalists generally rely on no one and cite no one other than themselves': Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 59; p. 41. Compare Rosaliia Shor's bad-tempered dismissal of Formalist ignorance of what she characterizes as a long tradition of formal analysis in Western, and particularly German,

earlier Formalist conception of material in *The Formal Method*. The issue of Bakhtin's actual engagement with early Formalism is thus buried under a layer of doubt and depends on the willingness of the reader to 'trust' Bakhtin, who *does* make repeated, if unsupported reference to the presumably more 'worthy opponent' Zhirmunskii.[54]

IV

That Medvedev should focus in his analysis of a second Formalist conception of material not on Zhirmunskii, but on Tynianov, to whom Bakhtin makes no direct reference is, however, wholly consistent with the time of writing.[55] Medvedev's acknowledgement of at least the

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[53] *Continued*
scholarship: R. O. Shor, 'Formal´nyi metod na zapade', in *Ars Poetica*, 1, ed. M. A. Petrovskii, Moscow, 1927, pp. 127–43.
    Alternatively, Bakhtin may be deliberately choosing to 'engage the other' in a manner that later Western scholarship has found scandalous: see for example Ladislav Matejka, 'Deconstructing Bakhtin', in C. A. Mihailescu and W. Hamarneh (eds), *Fiction Updated: Theories of Fictionality, Narratology and Poetics*, Toronto, 1996, pp. 257–66, which situates the origins of Bakhtin's ideas on form and material in an unacknowledged debt to Broder Christiansen's *Philosophie der Kunst* [1909]. For an overview of the philosophical sources that may have conditioned Bakhtin's approach to questions of form and material, see Craig Brandist, *The Bakhtin Circle: Philosophy, Culture, Politics*, London and Sterling, VA, 2002, pp. 15–52.
    [54] Bakhtin also later makes explicit reference to Eikhenbaum as a preface to his discussion of the various literary forms of double-voiced discourse in the first edition of his book on Dostoevskii, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, in Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva/poetiki Dostoevskogo*, p. 90, p. 406. For the English translation, see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 191. See also the direct refutation of Shklovskii's 'the word is a thing', on which we have already commented, a moment at which Bakhtin's 'polemic' with Formalism is anything but 'hidden' (notes 19 and 37 above).
    The question of Bakhtin's engagement of his specifically Formalist 'other' forms the backdrop to Michael Holquist's 'Bakhtin and the Formalists: History as Dialogue', in Robert Louis Jackson and Stephen Rudy (eds), *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance*, New Haven, CT, 1985, pp. 82–95, in which Holquist sets up an opposition between Bakhtin as a 'Russian thinker sponsored by American Slavic Departments' and as a 'subfunction of the Parisian redaction of Formalism' (p. 82); see also Igor´ Shaitanov, 'Zhanrovoe slovo u Bakhtina i formalistov', *Voprosy literatury*, May–June, 1996, pp. 89–114; 'The Concept of the Generic Word: Bakhtin and the Russian Formalists', in Carol Adlam et al. (eds), *Face to Face: Bakhtin in Russia and the West*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 233–53.
    [55] Bakhtin may not have been aware at this stage of Tynianov's 'Oda kak oratorskii zhanr', published in 1922, although its path-breaking confrontation of the relationship between literature and 'not literature' would later prove highly significant for the Bakhtin school: Tynianov, *Poetika*, pp. 227–52. Direct reference to Tynianov in Bakhtin is, somewhat ironically, limited to an entirely negative assessment of the former's *literary* output, mediated through the 'private' lecture notes taken by R. M. Mirkina between 1922 and 1927: 'Tynianov [...] has neither the style nor the language that would allow him to create an artistic work. 'Kiukhlia' is only fit to be a reading book for the middle school. Lev Tolstoi [...] worked for many years on the materials for *War and Peace*. Tynianov has produced his work in two weeks': M. M. Bakhtin, 'Lektsii po russkoi literature (1922–1927 gg.)', *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, 1, 1993, 2, pp. 97–104. The Russian *material* or *materialy* are here used in the conventional sense of 'sources', without any implicit reference to the theoretical problem we are addressing.

possibility of change in the Formalist conception of material is made with his by now familiar rhetorical scepticism. His description and rejection of a 'Second Conception of "Material" in Tynianov' is prefaced by a restatement of his conviction that the *first* Formalist conception of material 'is a crucial and inalienable component part of the formalist system'.[56] Equally, in confirming that Tynianov conceives of material 'as language, and not at all as motivation of the device', Medvedev characterizes this as an 'adherence [...] to Zhirmunskii's concept of material', and one which is accompanied by occasional lapses in the direction of the earlier conception, 'without any methodological account'.[57] Two works published in 1924 would appear to confirm Medvedev's judgement: *The Problem of Verse Language* opens with an apparently unequivocal statement of the specifically verbal nature of material, and the conviction that the central question for literary studies is the relationship of such material to what Tynianov calls 'the constructive principle', the means by which material is transformed in the literary process;[58] in 'Literaturnyi fakt', however, Tynianov appears to vacillate between the earlier and later conceptions of material, at times confirming the essential interaction of 'verbal material' ('rechevoi material') and the constructive factors which organize it, at times indeed 'lapsing' into consideration of pre-literary historical or experiential elements of a potential *fabula* as the material to which constructive factors are 'applied'.[59] This apparent inconsistency in Tynianov's reformulation of the concept of material might equally, however, be attributed to the ground-breaking nature of his thinking, and indeed to his own uncertainty with regard to all of its implications.[60] *The Problem of Verse Language*, however, is not just a clear acknowledgement of the growing influence of the association of material and language in his thinking; it also, and crucially, signals the beginnings of a *problematization* of the relationship between verbal and 'non-verbal'

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[56] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 159; p. 116.

[57] Ibid., pp. 160, 159; p. 117. In a gesture that might suggest a deepening of the spiral of influence operative in the process of Formalism's transmission, Albert J. Wehrle's English translation of *The Formal Method* here uses the quite unwarranted expression 'haphazard', *precisely* the same term Erlich has used to characterize the broader 'retreat' of late Formalism (Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, p. 129).

[58] Iu. N. Tynianov, *Problema stikhotvornogo iazyka*, The Hague, 1963 [1924]; *The Problem of Verse Language*, ed. and trans. Michael Sosa and Brent Harvey, Ann Arbor, MI, 1981.

[59] Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', p. 16; p. 19.

[60] Vladimir Novikov concedes a 'definite, although historically excusable' lack of 'explicit development of the concept of material in all its aspects and nuances' in the work of Tynianov and his colleagues: Iu. N. Tynianov, *Literaturnaia evoliutsiia: izbrannye trudy*, ed. Vladimir Novikov, Moscow, 2002, p. 476. On the other hand, Medvedev, perhaps not surprisingly in view of our earlier discussion, is elsewhere prepared to call Tynianov 'the most cautious, restrained and academic of the formalist leaders': P. N. Medvedev, *Formalizm i formalisty*, Leningrad, 1934, p. 171.

material, and indeed a questioning of the fundamental tenability of such a distinction.[61]

Tynianov establishes verbal material as the first locus for the study of verbal art by referring not simply to material, but to 'shaped material, the simplest conventional marker of which is speech, the word'.[62] The qualifier 'shaped' (*oformliaemyi*) might initially appear to imply that Tynianov persists in conceiving of a fundamental separation between material and its linguistic expression (its 'vessel'): that is, that he persists in the positivist illusion which has on occasion distracted Shklovskii, and which allows the artist only to find and 'shape' material, but not to create it. The more critical inference, however, is that *it is impossible to speak of any cultural or experiential phenomena as simply 'found'*. This is borne out by Tynianov's development in 'Literaturnyi fakt' of the idea that the literary work is essentially the application (*prilozhenie*) of the constructive factor to linguistic material, it comes into being in the process of the 'shaping of the material' ('v oformlenii materiala').[63] Cultural, historical or experiential phenomena, the 'material' of the earlier Formalist conception, must always be constructed (indeed, to an extent, they already are constructed) in the medium of language; in other words, '*there is no reality in itself, no neutral reality which can be placed in opposition to art*', because 'life' and 'reality' are 'already thoroughly aestheticized'.[64] Moreover, this process of construction, whether or not it is specifically related to the creation of a specifically 'literary' work,

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[61] Marc Weinstein has made a detailed study of the (four) different denotations of the term 'material' in Tynianov, but with the rather unfortunate purpose of *distancing* him from Bakhtin, whose aesthetics are characterized merely as a contradictory recapitulation of their essentially Kantian roots. Weinstein, ironically in view of the present article's (and Tynianov's own) emphasis on evolution, is content to leave Bakhtin frozen in 1924, which is the equivalent — if it is not in fact much worse — of insisting on Tynianov's unseverable association with early Formalism; see Marc Weinstein, 'Le débat Tynjanov / Bakhtin ou la question du matériau', *Revue des Études Slaves*, 64, 1992, 2, pp. 297–322.

Aleksander Skaza, by way of contrast, offers a highly sensitized reading of the significance of material in Bakhtin, but persists in opposing this to an undifferentiated Formalist 'position', which not only encompasses Tynianov and Shklovskii, but also encompasses — and effaces — the chronological development of each of their respective positions; see Aleksander Skaza, 'Kontseptsiia "material'noi estetiki" M. M. Bakhtina v polemike s formal'nym metodom: neskol'ko zametok', in Miha Javornik et al. (eds), *Bakhtin and the Humanities: Proceedings of the International Conference in Ljubljana, October 19–21, 1995*, Ljubljana, 1997, pp. 45–55.

[62] Tynianov, *The Problem of Verse Language*, p. 7; p. 31.

[63] Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', p. 15.

[64] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 278; p. 276. Here, as on many occasions in the essay, Bakhtin's subject matter and terminology clearly construct one section of his anticipated audience as being familiar with the neo-Kantian struggle with idealism and, in conjunction with his earlier remark about the 'ballast of citation', ironically signals the relative ignorance of the remainder — among whom, presumably, number his formalist opponents. The philosophical sources of Bakhtin, and in particular questions of influence, are not, however, the concern of the present article; see in this respect, Brandist, *The Bakhtin Circle: Philosophy, Culture, Politics*.

already and in itself implies the construction also of *form*:[65] 'material' is in no way opposed to 'form'; material is also 'formal', *because it does not exist outwith the constructive [factor].*[66]

The ground of this all-encompassing, harmonizing resolution of the problem of material in the literary work offers the strongest clue as to why this problem has provoked such varying expositions in the work of the various Formalist critics, in the work of Tynianov himself (sometimes, apparently, within a single work), and in the different critical responses to these works authored by Medvedev and Bakhtin. Tynianov does not in fact *replace* one conception of material with another, as Medvedev suggests: he *conflates* both of those conceptions in a formulation that has the unexpected capacity to resist:

1. Medvedev's derision of the early Formalist tendency to treat *fabula* as material 'since all this does not exist as a given outside the work';[67]
2. Bakhtin's and Medvedev's criticism of the 'abstraction' of language which is implied by its conception as 'inert' material. Tynianov implicitly rejects 'language understood as a totality or system of linguistic possibilities (phonetic, grammatical, lexical)' as the basis for a theorization of literary material,[68] and in so doing overcomes Bakhtin's stricture against seeing the literary work as merely *'organized material*, as a thing'.[69]

There is no such thing as 'material' *without* language but, equally, to equate material with language is to include in its definition all the varied cultural, historical and experiential phenomena previously associated with *fabula* and the motivation of the device. Tynianov combines both conceptions of material on the grounds of the fundamental inseparability of phenomena 'in life' and the myriad forms of their linguistic instantiation (construction). Or, at least, Tynianov allows us to infer such a conflation, and it has been left to his present-day editor, Vladimir Novikov, to (re)state this new conception of material in the following terms:

> Material is the entire pre-creative reality of the artistic work: its real-life or historical basis; the range of abstract ideas reflected in it; the totality of extra-aesthetic emotions and natural and objective realities recreated by the author; *and language in its linguistic specificity.*[70]

[65] The critical distinction here is not that between literary and non-literary, but between externalized (artistically represented, pragmatically expressed) and 'inner' speech, which ultimately determines the entire question of form and genre in Bakhtin.
[66] Tynianov, 'Literaturnyi fakt', p. 15.
[67] Medvedev, *The Formal Method*, p. 153; p. 112; and above.
[68] Ibid. p. 166; p. 122; and above.
[69] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 266; p. 264; and above.
[70] Tynianov/Novikov, *Literaturnaia evoliutsiia*, p. 475; my emphasis — AR.

This is not only a useful resolution of the difficulties in Tynianov's reformulation of the concept of material, it defines also the point at which his direct comparison with Bakhtin becomes productive for the latter — the basis, that is, for a response to the question of precisely how reality is aestheticized in the different phases of verbal artistic creation. What is initially astonishing and yet ultimately crucial in Novikov's summary is not the particular terms in which he chooses to characterize the first three, apparently 'non- or extra-verbal' components of 'the entire pre-creative reality of the artistic work', but rather what is implied about the relationship between these three categories and the final one, 'language in its linguistic specificity'. Language is freed from abstraction and 'inertness' in the act of being forced to cohabit with or, better, *to inhabit, to bring into being* what was previously mistaken for 'non-linguistic' content: just as material cannot be 'formless', neither can it be emptied of content (which itself, in turn, cannot be conceived in isolation from language).

Tynianov's reformulation of the concept of literary material rests on the dual idea that language and 'reality' (and art) cannot be separated, and that literary material is *formed* in the process of concrete verbal performance. He comes close to an outright statement of the mutually constitutive relationship of language and ideological or experiential 'phenomena' (we should properly call them 'possibilities') as early as 1924, in 'Literaturnyi fakt'. His stance might, therefore, be termed almost 'Bakhtinian' in its recognition that language itself can only be conceived in terms of concrete performance (the outward manifestation of which, in the present case, is writing).[71] We should note also that all of this, although directed at resolution of the problem of literary material, does not necessarily imply the 'reliance' of reality upon specifically *literary* instances of aesthetic embodiment; aesthetic activity is, for Bakhtin, a component of any conscious interaction with the world, and Tynianov will also come close to this position in the 1927 essay 'On Literary Evolution'.[72] It does appear, however, to present certain logical difficulties, inasmuch as 'reality' does rely for its 'existence' upon aesthetic construction, which *includes*, but is not restricted to, the literary or artistic; Tynianov appears to run the risk, as Medvedev has indeed suggested, of obliterating literary material in the act of defining it.

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[71] Although any linguistic performance is processual, and cannot be reduced to or wholly identified with its outward manifestation, it is the point at which the process acquires an outward form that must dominate any analysis within a specifically literary-critical frame.

[72] Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O literaturnoi evoliutsii' [1927], in *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, pp. 270–81; 'On Literary Evolution', in Matejka and Pomorska (eds), *Readings in Russian Poetics*, pp. 66–78 (hereafter, Tynianov, 'On Literary Evolution').

Here again, however, Medvedev's characterization of Tynianov is wholly predicated on the latter's past associations. Medvedev has explicitly associated Tynianov with the refutation of the first Formalist conception of material, but he is unable or unwilling to accept that this implies also a refutation of the other pillar of early Formalist theory we remarked upon briefly at the outset, namely the distinctiveness of a specifically 'poetic' language. Medvedev's criticism is that Tynianov's second conception of material, as well as its problematic association with the abstractions of linguistics, also fatally undermines the idea of a distinctively and definitively literary language. This is essentially a repetition of the global Bakhtinian criticism of Formalism, to the effect that the Formalists have been consistently unable, even in their own terms, to conceptualize the distinction between the literary and what is verbal/textual but non-literary.[73] Yet Tynianov has, at the very least, long been uninterested in this task; indeed, in terms of his own published work as opposed to references to the work of his colleagues, it is possible to argue that it *never was* of primary concern to him. His ostensible apostasy from Formalist 'orthodoxy' is characterized by Medvedev as being born of inconsistency, an inevitable consequence of the flawed initial premise of the Formalist project. Yet Tynianov's apostasy results not in his identification with the 'other side' of the material aesthetic coin, with the 'Marxist' establishment to which Shklovskii's political manoeuvrings point;[74] and nor does it necessarily lead to his canonical association with the later of rise of Structuralism, which seized upon Tynianov and Jakobson's proposed resolution of the problem of synchrony and diachrony in terms of systemic evolution, but paid little or no attention to the underlying conception of material

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[73] 'Without a systematic concept of the aesthetic [. . .] it is impossible to isolate the object of poetics — the *artistic* verbal work — from the mass of verbal works of a different kind': Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form', p. 261; p. 259.

[74] Compare in this respect Shklovskii's changing relations with Eikhenbaum, who had gone furthest towards accommodating Marxism in his articles 'Literatura i pisatel′', *Zvezda*, 5, 1927, pp. 121–40, and 'Literaturnyi byt' [1927, as 'Literatura i literaturnyi byt'], in Boris Eikhenbaum, *Moi vremennik / Marshrut v bessmertie*, Moscow, 2001, pp. 49–59. Shklovskii could write to Jakobson in February 1929, at the height of his attempt to resurrect *Opoiaz*, that '[Eikhenbaum's] "literary environment" is the most vulgar Marxism. Besides, he has become jealous and is afraid of his own students' (cited from Galushkin, '"I tak, stavshi na kostiakh . . ."', p. 140); and yet, by the end of the year, Eikhenbaum and Shklovskii had co-edited *Slovesnost′ i kommertsiia. Knizhnaia lavka A. F. Smirdina*, Moscow, 2001 [1929], whose editorial introduction claims that while 'the authors of this book in no way contend that the so-called "literary environment" (B. M. Eikhenbaum's term) is a primary cause of literary evolution [. . .] they do consider that analysis of the literary environment might provide materials for an analysis of changes in the function of literature in different periods' (pp. 5–6).

which is the necessary precondition of that evolution.[75] It leads instead to his rejection of both sides of the material aesthetic coin, and to his association, *ex post facto* as it must inevitably be, with Bakhtin.

Tynianov's response to the ultimate crisis of Formalism, a response that had been formulating itself for some time, was to turn to historical fiction (and, to a lesser extent, to a sober literary-historical criticism).[76] Whatever the status of 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language', his last overt statement before adopting a theoretical 'silence', Tynianov's penultimate — and perhaps most substantial — theoretical statement points in a slightly different direction. 'On Literary Evolution', first published prior to Shklovskii's final abortive attempt to recover a secure institutional base for the broad 'Formal school', certainly shares the central problematic of 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language' (and of Structuralism in general) in its examination of the relationship between the literary and extra-literary series (which has also, and not at all incidentally, been at the heart of attempts at rapprochement between Formalists and Marxists). What has received less attention, however, is that Tynianov here approaches the global question of the literary vis-à-vis the extra-literary by identifying new and quite stunning implications of his conflated conception of material. Turning to the question of literary genre, Tynianov argues that

> The Novel, which seems to be an integral genre that has developed in and of itself over the centuries, turns out not to be an integral whole, but rather a variable, with material that varies from one literary system to another, and with varying methods of introducing extra-literary speech material into literature.[77]

Tynianov turns to the question of genre not simply because it has been 'less studied', but because it offers itself as the mechanism through which the effects and processes affecting 'material' can, quite literally, be observed: if Tynianov's conception of material accords with

[75] Tynianov and Jakobson, 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language', pp. 282–83; pp. 79–81.

[76] Although see, for example, Tynianov's agonized letter to Shklovskii at the end of March 1929: 'I am a little lost, I don't have a major work and I'm afraid I've lost the habit of working on history and theory. But I have absolutely no intention of becoming a novelist' ('Iu. Tynianov to V. Shklovskii, 29 March 1929', *Voprosy literatury*, 12, 1984, pp. 199–200).

[77] Tynianov, 'On Literary Evolution', pp. 274–75; p. 70. The Russian term *byt* has here been translated simply as 'the extra-literary' in recognition of its core meaning in this context; alternatives such as 'domestic life', 'everyday life' or 'environment' carry additional connotations, which detract from an understanding of the term in specific opposition to 'the literary' (as does Matejka and Pomorska's rendering 'social conventions').

Bakhtin's insistence on its already 'necessarily aestheticized' condition, genre is the category that allows us to establish precisely *how* reality is aestheticized in the different phases of the history of verbal art:

> how and by what means does the extra-literary correlate to literature? The extra-literary is complex and multi-faceted in nature, and only the function of all its elements is specific in it. The extra-literary correlates to literature above all in its verbal aspect. [. . .] There are no ready-made literary genres. Their place is occupied by extra-literary verbal phenomena. The verbal function or orientation seeks form, and finds it in the romance, the joke, the play on rhyme, *bouts rimés*, charades, etc. And here the aspect of *genesis, of the presence of certain kinds of extra-literary speech forms*, acquires its evolutionary significance.[78]

The second part of Bakhtin's Dostoevskii book may already bear the traces of his positive engagement with later Formalism, and his 'Discourse in the Novel', written in exile —— and therefore unhindered — in the early 1930s, is strikingly consistent with Tynianov's formulations in its approach to genre.[79] By the time of 'The Problem of Speech Genres' in 1952–53, however, Bakhtin's belated attempt to develop Voloshinov's initial proposition that 'social psychology is given mainly in the most varied forms of the "utterance", in the form of small *speech genres*, inner and outer, which have until this time not been studied at all',[80] the status of Tynianov's later theoretical essays as precursor texts is manifest on every page.

There is more at stake, therefore, in this association of Bakhtin and the later Tynianov than simply casting a different light on certain local difficulties in the critical environment of the Soviet 1920s, and more even than the more substantial implication that both (and perhaps many others) ultimately belong to a unified 'school' of Russian literary

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[78] Tynianov, 'On Literary Evolution', pp. 278, 279; pp. 73, 74.

[79] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Slovo v romane', in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki. Issledovaniia raznykh let*, ed. S. Leibovich, Moscow, 1975, pp. 72–233; 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, TX, 1981 (hereafter, *The Dialogic Imagination*), pp. 259–422.

[80] Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 20; p. 232. Bakhtin does make specific use of the term, although far from programmatically, in the Dostoevskii book; it then surfaces only once in his work between the late 1920s and the early 1950s, at the very close of 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse': see M. M. Bakhtin, 'Iz predystorii romannogo slova', in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki. Issledovaniia raznykh let*, ed. S. Leibovich, Moscow, 1975, pp. 408–46 (p. 445); 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 41–83 (p. 83).

Also, M. M. Bakhtin, 'Problema rechevykh zhanrov', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, ed. S. G. Bocharov and L. A. Gogotishvili, Moscow, 1996, pp. 159–206; 'The Problem of Speech Genres', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; trans. Vern W. McGee, Austin, TX, 1986, pp. 60–102.

theory.[81] Both Tynianov and Bakhtin, ostensibly from very different critical (and pragmatic) locations, imply not only the possibility of a fundamental renovation of literary study, but do so in a manner that is dazzlingly integrated and responsive to the recurrent problematics of literary theory. On one level, their conception of literary material as indivisibly verbal and extra-verbal is the basis for a synchronic textual study that is at one and the same time immanent *and* orientated outwards to the extra-literary (but not now, properly speaking, extra-verbal) context of its production. On another level, they imply a revolution in our conception of literary genre, which is seen as a kind of 'recorder' of the evolutions in the literary system that are produced by changes in the material itself, and in the ways it 'enters' or is 'brought into' literature: the basis, that is, for a diachronic study of systemic organization and change.

This methodology for literary study, predicated on an entirely new conception of literary material, was not accessible from the falsely dichotomous and hence mutually reinforcing 'material aesthetics' of either Formalism or Marxism; and, given the influence of various redactions of Formalism and Marxism on the later course of literary theory, it is perhaps not surprising that it has remained largely inaccessible since. It is both ironic and appropriate that Tynianov's later reorientation of Formalism, driven as it is by a perception of the need to historicize theory, should present itself as the moment from which the history of theory requires to be rewritten; it is even more appropriate that this historical imperative is inextricably bound up with the imperatives of renewal in terms that we should hesitate in labelling 'merely' literary or 'purely' theoretical.

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[81] This suggestion was made explicit by Igor´ Shaitanov at a Moscow conference in 1993, and met with what V. V. Zdol´nikov describes as 'extremely active opposition'; see Igor´ Shaitanov, 'Bakhtin i formalisty v prostranstve istoricheskoi poetiki', in *M. M. Bakhtin i perspektivy gumanitarnykh nauk*, ed. V. L. Makhlin, Vitebsk, 1993, pp. 16–21; Igor´ Shaitanov, 'The Concept of the Generic Word: Bakhtin and the Russian Formalists', in Adlam et al. (eds), *Face to Face: Bakhtin in Russia and the West*, pp. 233–53; see also, V. V. Zdol´nikov, 'Vopros ostaetsia otkrytym (Nemnogo syb´´ektivnye zametki o konferentsii "Bakhtin i perspektivy gumanitarnykh nauk", Moskva, RGGU, fevral´ 1993 goda)', *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, 1993, 2–3, pp. 198–200.

See also, D. Kujundzic, 'Bakhtin i Tynianov kak interpretatory Dostoevskogo', in D. Kujundzic and V. L. Makhlin (eds), *Bakhtinskii sbornik II: Bakhtin mezhdu Rossiei i zapadom*, Moscow, 1992, pp. 45–49, which lights upon the similarity in Bakhtin's and Tynianov's readings of the textual status of varied discursive forms in Dostoevskii, without making explicit the relationship between this problematic and the problem of material, from which, in our analysis, it is inseparable.