Russian Formalism

Steiner, Peter

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The meaningless pursuit of *meaning* by our writers is quite astonishing.

Wishing to portray the incomprehensibility, the illogicality of life and its terror or mystery, they resort (as ever, as always!) to "clear, precise" common language. [..]

We were the first to say that for portraying the new and the future *completely new words and new combinations* are necessary.

This striking newness will come through the combination of words according to their own immanent laws revealed to the poet and not according to the rules of logic or grammar, as has been the case before us.

—ALEKSEJ KRUCENYCH,
"The New Paths of the Word"

"Poetic language" was already a loaded term by the time it entered Formalist discourse. Aleksandr Potebnja (1835–1891), the heir to the tradition of Humboldtian linguistics, was the first to introduce the distinction between poetic and prosaic language into Russian philology. The Formalists' attitude toward their

“precursor” was rather ambivalent, however. Their willingness to borrow from him implied a respect extended to no other nineteenth-century Russian philologist but Veselovskij. Still they criticized Potebnja’s work violently in order to differentiate themselves from him, and especially from his numerous epigones. The Symbolist literary critic D. Filosofov, the first reviewer of OPOJAZ’s 1916 collective publication, described this dialectic relationship: “All the contributors to this new collection are in a sense Potebnja’s pupils. They know him by heart; they live off the late scholar’s ideas. But they are not arrested in them. They reexamine the mysterious correlations of sound and representation and in doing so they focus their entire attention on sound. But in the end they make clear that sound, even ‘nonarticulated’ sound, generates representation. They speak of the magic of sound, the magic of words.”

The Formalist departure from Potebnja should not be viewed merely as a struggle for recognition. Though a powerful and prolific thinker, Potebnja was often more suggestive than clear, and in his elaborate handling of topics he often multiplied the definitions of even his most cherished concepts. The opposition between prosaic and poetic language is a case in point. Sometimes it is presented as a simple formal dichotomy between prose and poetry, and at others, as a psychological antinomy between prosaic and poetic thought. In the latter case, the presence of a mental image is the essential feature of the poetic, and “poetic thinking” is defined as “thinking in which the image is important.” When the distinction is made on formal grounds, the differential feature is a matter of function; prose is thus “language oriented solely toward practical aims or serving as an expression of scholarship.”

Despite these inconsistencies, Potebnja’s poetics did rest on certain basic assumptions. The word and/or poetic work consists of three parts: the outer form (the perceptible aspect), the

6. Iz zapiskov po teorii slovesnosti (Char’kov, 1905), p. 98.
7. Ibid., p. 102.
meaning (the intelligible aspect), and the inner form or representation (the tropological link between the two). The crucial member of this triad is inner form, a notion heavily dependent upon certain ideas from psychology. In agreement with the atomistic theory of association so popular in his time, Potebnja treated mental life as an aggregate of simple sensory elements. For him, the perceptual identity of an object (what he termed its “image”) was guaranteed by the persistence of a simple characteristic through whatever contextual modification the object undergoes. Language follows this model when a distinctive characteristic motivates an object’s designation, that is, when the object is named according to this feature. But though thought and language coincide here, this is not a case of inner form proper. Only a single sensory image has provided the link between the outer form and meaning, whereas the inner form is an umbrella for a multitude of such images; in Potebnja’s words, “it is not an image of an object but an image of an image, that is, a representation.”

As a metaconcept, inner form is endowed with the power that a single image lacks: it links outer forms and meanings that were originally connected to diverse sensory images. In this respect, the inner form of language is the crossroads of the old and the new. As the “nearest etymological meaning of a word,” it stands for the linguistic past, but as the tertium comparationis that generates the figurative transformations of a word, it is the agent of the future. Because of this creative potential, the inner linguistic form became the central category of Potebnja’s poetics. Without denying salience to the other two components of the word, Potebnja found the eidos of poetic language in its polysemy, the capacity of its inner form to evoke multiple meanings. Stated in quasi-mathematical terms, “the general formula of poetry (or art) is: ‘A (image) < X (meaning)’; that is, there is always an inequality between image and meaning because A is smaller

8. Mysl’ i jazyk, 3d ed. (Char’kov, 1913), p. 117.
9. Ibid., p. 146.
As an anecdote than X. To establish an equality between A and X would destroy poeticity; i.e., it would either turn the image into a prosaic signification of a particular phenomenon devoid of relation to anything else or it would turn the image into a scientific fact and the meaning into a law.”

The Formalist redefinition of poetic language represents a considerable departure from Potebnja’s basic position. This departure, however, was not solely motivated by theoretical concerns but also by the current poetic practice. Some of the early Formalists entered the Russian intellectual scene not as disinterested observers or commentators, but as proponents and interpreters of Futurism, the most flamboyant artistic movement of their generation. The rise of Futurism in the early teens was directly linked to the decline of another movement that had dominated Russian letters for nearly two decades—Symbolism. The great poet-theoreticians of this movement had exploited Potebnja’s philology as the theoretical springboard for their own poetics. In Roman Jakobson’s words, “the Symbolists canonized Potebnja.” Thus, the Futurist onslaught against Symbolism involved at the same time a “de-canonization” of Potebnja, a search for new theoretical foundations upon which to construct their poetics.

Of the various groups in Russia calling themselves Furturists, the most iconoclastic was known as Hylaea, and it was with this group that the Formalists were most closely allied, both personally and in terms of a shared artistic sensibility. Hylaea’s membership included the Burljuk brothers, Chlebnikov, Krucenych, and Majakovskij. In the unceasing stream of public appearances, manifestos, and joint publications, all orchestrated to épater les bourgeois, the Hylaeans declared the art of the past dead and presented themselves as the only true champions of the artistic future. Their incompatibility with Potebnja’s system is obvious at first glance. Disdaining the cognitive function of art ("thinking

10. Iz zapisk, p. 100.
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in images"), the Futurists insisted on the shock effect. Artworks, according to Chlebnikov and Kručėných, ought to be "as if written with difficulty and read with difficulty, less comfortable than blacked boots or a truck in a sitting room," their language "resembling if anything a saw or a savage's poisoned arrow."\(^{12}\)

Against the historicism of Potebnja's poetic word (that is, its etymological meaning), the Hylaean's manifesto, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," proclaimed the poet's right to an "insuperable hatred for the language that existed before him."\(^{13}\) They ridiculed the entire psychologistic bias of the previous poetics. Poetry, they insisted, is not a mirror of the soul but "the unfolding of the word as such." Or in more epigrammatic form, "The work of art is the art of the word."\(^{14}\)

This conception of verbal art was obviously reflected in the earliest, mechanistic model. Key notions such as de-familiarization or the absolute split between art and byt are direct projections of Futurist poetics onto Formalist literary theory. The notion of poetic language was most profoundly influenced by the Futurist concept of zaum'. Coined by Kručėných, the term designated a special tongue that defied the rules of common sense: transrational language. Zaum' attacked the very heart of Potebnja's aesthetic system—the identification of poetics with the inner form of language, since this "ultimate" language of verbal art was without inner form. Its two main exponents among the Hylaean, Kručėných and Chlebnikov, disagreed about which of the remaining parts of the verbal parcel—outer form or meaning—was instrumental in zaum'. As Vladimir Markov has observed, "for Kručėných [zaum'] was a free, but often emotionally expressive, combination of sound, devoid of full meaning; for Chlebnikov, it was basic meaning expressed in the purest and most direct way."\(^{15}\)

13. \textit{"Posččenia obščestvennomu vkušu"}, repr. in ibid., p. 51.
14. A. Kručėných and V. Chlebnikov, a draft of \textit{Slovo kak takovoe}, repr. in ibid., p. 59.
A Synecdoche

If, as in traditional aesthetic discourse, the term Formalism applies to theories asserting the primacy of artistic form over content, Kručěných's zaum' would seem to be distinctly Formalist. "A new content," he proclaimed, "is born only when new expressive devices, new forms, are achieved. Once there is a new form, the new content follows. Thus, the form determines the content." Consequently, it was not the ideas or things presented by the literary work that were important, but the mechanism of this presentation itself. Because this mechanism is above all linguistic, Kručěných spoke of two types of language: rational common language governed by extralinguistic requirements, a vehicle of meaning; and self-sufficient transrational language governed by its own rules, "whose words do not have a definite meaning."

This indefiniteness of meaning in zaum' is quite different from Potebnja's poetic polysemy. The quantitative imbalance occurs not between the inner form of the word and its meaning, but between the meaning and the word as such, that is, its outer form. Moreover, transrational language reverses the ratio of Potebnja's formula: in zaum' sound always is greater than meaning. Kručěných wrote, "We declared in art: THE WORD IS BROADER THAN ITS MEANING. The word (and the sounds composing it) is not merely curtailed thought, not merely logic, but above all the transrational (its mystical and aesthetic components)." Hence, transrational language is literally language that goes beyond reason, that addresses the nonrational human faculties. To achieve this objective, the poet is free to dissolve language into elements that lack any logical meaning, or to combine these elements into nonsensical neologisms. The poet can also emulate the types of zaum' existing outside verbal art. One especially favored by Kručěných was the glossolalia of religious sectarians speaking the "language of the holy spirit." There was

also children’s language\textsuperscript{19} or the sound patterns of foreign languages unknown to the poet.\textsuperscript{20}

If Kručěných’s \textit{zaum’} privileged the outer form of the word, Chlebnikov’s privileged the meaning. To those familiar with the impenetrable hermeticism of Chlebnikov’s texts, this might come as a surprise. But understanding was never an issue for him. “Verses,” he wrote, “may be comprehensible or incomprehensible, but they ought to be good, ought to be truthful [\textit{istoven-nyj}].”\textsuperscript{21} To be transrational for Chlebnikov meant to go beyond ordinary reason, but only to express the higher reason that he believed language inevitably embodied. Potbenja’s notion of inner form was thus suspect, for it posited merely a figurative link between sound and meaning. Chlebnikov’s \textit{zaum’}, in contrast, was a quest for the direct, unmediated meaning of sound.

In his study of Chlebnikovian \textit{zaum’}, Ronald Vroon has identified four such linguistic structures: the languages of the “stars,” “Gods,” and “birds,” and “sound-painting.” He maintains that each of these tackles the issue of pure meaning in a different way.\textsuperscript{22} For instance, the “language of the stars”—Chlebnikov’s favorite—is based on the same kind of argument for the natural origin of names that Plato credits to Cratylus. It assigns a distinct spatiogeometric meaning to virtually all Russian consonants. This \textit{zaum’}, Chlebnikov believed, was not an arbitrary construction but a faithful reconstruction of the original language of mankind, of which our present-day tongues are mere shadows.

In rough terms, the rift between Kručěných and Chlebnikov over \textit{zaum’} corresponds to the conflicting theories of poetic language in the Formalist movement. OPOJAZ’s early concern for poetic sound and its emotive qualities betrays Kručěných’s influ-

\textsuperscript{19} According to the title page and a note inside, Kručěných’s 1913 collection \textit{Piglets (Porosjata)} was coauthored by an eleven-year-old, Zina V.

\textsuperscript{20} Another 1913 collection of Kručěných’s works, \textit{Explodity (Vzorval’)}, contains three poems written in “Japanese,” “Spanish,” and “Hebrew.”


ence, whereas the Moscow Linguistic Circle’s insistence on the meaningfulness of linguistic sound reflects the logocentrism of Chlebnikov’s zaum’. We shall now look more closely at the earlier of these two tendencies, those of OPOJAZ.

In 1916, Viktor Šklovskij undertook the first direct critique of Potebnja’s poetics. “Imagery, or symbolism,” he insisted, “is not what differentiates poetic from prosaic language. Poetic language differs from prosaic language in the perceptibility of its structure.”23 Šklovskij’s strategy here is quite obvious: he is revising Potebnja’s dichotomy between poetic and prosaic language according to the specifications of his mechanistic model. The special perceptibility of poetic language drains our mental energy and de-familiarizes our perception of language in general. This essential feature of poetic language is explained by its artistic telos. “If we study poetic speech . . . we encounter the same symptom of the artistic everywhere: that it was created intentionally to de-automatize perception and that the author’s goal was to call attention to this; that it was made ‘artificially’ in such a way that perception lingers over it, thus reaching its greatest possible intensity and duration.” The direct opposite of this “hampered and tortuous” speech is automatized prosaic language. “Prose is normal speech: economical, easy, regular (the dea prorsa is the goddess of regular, uncomplicated delivery).”24

It is significant that while Šklovskij’s treatment of poetic language rejects Potebnja’s, it retains his fundamental dichotomy of poetic and prosaic language. Here we witness yet another example of the peculiar contradiction in the mechanistic model mentioned earlier; namely, its propensity for merging the most radical stance with a traditional conceptual framework. This marriage of the old and the new tends to generate problems. The opposition between poetry and prose would appear to coincide with Šklovskij’s distinction between art and byt. But if this were the case, poetic speech, with its patent goal of de-familiarization,

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would be the only discourse to use language purposively, and prosaic speech, as a phenomenon of byt, would be governed purely by causality. As Šklovskij himself showed, “economical, easy, and regular” speech might also be used for the sake of de-familiarization. This is the case of artistic prose that renders extraliterary reality strange in the process of its verbal representation. In this way, one is forced to speak of not two but three types of language: the poetic, which makes strange our perception of language itself, the prosaic-artistic, which does the same to the perception of reality, and the prosaic proper, that is, normal everyday language. Yet according to the logic of Šklovskij’s model, the first two types are clearly different from the third. Whereas the two differ in what they de-familiarize, they are united through their common artistic goal. Normal everyday language, in contrast, belongs to byt. This fact, however, is completely lost in the simple opposition of prose and poetry that Šklovskij inherited from Potebnja. Thus, it was necessary to readjust Potebnja’s original opposition in such a way that the line between literature and nonliterature would be drawn more clearly.

This task was performed by another OPOJAZ member, the linguist Lev Jakubinskij, who was responsible for introducing the distinction between poetic and practical language into literary theory. In linguistics, Jakubinskij argued, the opposition between the teleological and the causal can be suspended, because every utterance, whether poetic or not, pursues some objective. From this perspective, language can be conceptualized as a means–end structure serving particular goals. This view of language is similar to the functional classification of linguistic sounds advanced by the Kazan’ School to which Jakubinskij’s teacher, Baudoin de Courtenay (1845–1929), belonged.25 It is also parallel to the thesis propounded by Franz Brentano’s fol-

lower, the philosopher Anton Marty (1847–1914), concerning the teleological origin of language as a means of human communication. Jakubinskij, however, avoided the psychologism of Marty’s teleology, which treated intention in terms of a conscious subject. For Jakubinskij, it was not the subjective intentions of the speaker but the objective correlation of linguistic means and ends that distinguished poetic from practical language.

“Linguistic phenomena,” Jakubinskij argued, “should be classified, among other ways, from the standpoint of the goal for which the speaker exploits the verbal material in a given case. If he uses it for the purely practical goal of communication, we are dealing with the system of practical language, in which linguistic representations (sounds, morphemes, etc.) have no value in themselves but serve merely as a means of communication. Other linguistic systems are conceivable (and exist) in which the practical goal retreats into the background and linguistic combinations acquire a value in themselves. . . . I conditionally call this system verse [stichotvornyj] language.”

Jakubinskij’s distinction between language as a means of communication and language as a self-valuable end should remind us of Kručenych’s distinction between common language and zaum’. This parallel becomes even more pronounced when Jakubinskij goes on to discuss the difference between practical and poetic language in terms of the opposition between sound and meaning. “In practical language the semantic aspect of the word (its meaning) is more prominent than its sound aspect. . . . details of pronunciation reach our consciousness only if they serve to differentiate the meaning of words. . . . Thus, various considerations compel us to recognize that in practical language sounds

26. “O zvukach stichotvornogo jazyka,” Poētika, p. 37. It is important to stress that Jakubinskij himself conceived of “verse language” simply as a “special case of poetic language” (“Skoplenie odinakovyh plavných v praktičeskom i poetičeskom jazykach,” ibid., p. 54). As I shall show later, this seemingly subtle difference developed into an important argument against the entire linguistic model.
do not attract our attention. It is the other way around in verse language. There, one can claim that sounds enter the bright field of consciousness and do attract our attention.”

This foregrounding of sound profoundly affects the structure of poetic language. Kručenych’s statement that zaum’ combines words “according to their immanent laws . . . and not according to the rules of logic and grammar” is relevant. Jakubinskij too claims that poetic and practical language are demarcated by antithetical combinatory laws. He states that the liquid consonants (r, l) tend to cluster in poetic language, whereas in practical language they are almost always randomly dispersed. If in practical language adjacent syllables contain the same liquid, this consonant will either be dropped altogether in one of them or replaced by another liquid. For the “clustering of the same liquids impedes pronunciation (even causing stammering) and violates the usual tempo of speech, thus willy-nilly directing the attention of the speaker toward the phonic aspect of the utterance. . . . [It] violates the automatism which is so essential to practical language.”

Poetic language, on the other hand, which aims at focusing attention on sounds themselves, not only tolerates the clustering of the same liquids but deliberately produces such clusters.

Jakubinskij’s equation of poetic language with zaum’ goes even further. In his 1921 essay, “Where Does Verse Come From?” he argues that the concern for the sound of an utterance to the neglect of its content links poetic language to other types of discourse that defy normal reason. For example, “first of all, [in] the dream . . . the association of words according to their sound may determine the dream content. Second, in mental illness some patients utter entire tirades that are relatively unconnected in their content (as they ought to be) yet obviously linked in their sound, and often in meter. Third, in states of ecstasy, for instance among religious sectarians,” utterances often contain “sound

repetition and meter." In a rather startling move, Jakubinskij invoked Freud's authority to claim that verse as well as the other three kinds of infantile language are in fact the first stage of infantile language emerging from the subconscious in moments of weakened rational control. Thus, he answers the question raised in the title of his article by claiming that "verse comes from infantile babble," providing a psychoanalytic explanation for Kručenych's transrational language.

Jakubinskij was not the only Formalist to conceive of poetic language as a particular manifestation of zaum', though the others usually did not invoke a psychoanalytic frame of reference. Not surprisingly, Viktor Šklovskij was one of the most powerful voices advocating the exclusion of semantics from verbal art. "We must ask," he wrote, "whether words have meaning even in language that is not overtly transrational but simply poetic, or whether this belief is a mere fiction—the result of our inattentiveness." In a speech to the Futurists at the Stray Dog, a Petersburg cabaret, Šklovskij spoke of transrational experiments in terms borrowed from Potebnja and the Symbolists. He compared zaum', for example, to the foreign languages used in liturgical services. "The religious poetry of almost all nations was written in such a semiunderstandable language: Church Slavonic, Latin, Sumerian (which died out in the twentieth century B.C. but was used as a religious language until the third century), and the German of the Russian Pietists [štundisty]." Later Šklovskij dropped such "metaphysical" explanations and preferred to speak instead of the "sweetness of verse on our lips," the de-automatized movement of our speech organs producing unusual phonic patterns. "Maybe," he mused, "the greatest part of the pleasure caused by poetry lies in its articulatory aspect, in the peculiar dance of the speech organs."

29. "Otkuda berutsja stichi," Knižnyj ugol no. 7 (1921), 23.
31. This speech was published separately in 1914 as The Resurrection of the Word; see Voskresenie slova, repr. in Texte der russischen Formalisten, vol. 2, p. 14.
The metaphor of dance employed by Šklovskij is telling. Once poetic language is purged of meaning, verbal art can quite conveniently be described in terms of another nonthematic art. Music—the art of pure sound—is an obvious parallel; that is, if literature is nothing but a striking organization of phonic material, the poetic text is very much like a musical composition. Osip Brik, another contributor to the early OPOJAZ collections, declared that “poetic language is musical language” and attempted to describe a major principle of the phonic organization of verse that had so far escaped the attention of other investigators. 34

Brik proceeded from the same assumption as Jakubinskij, namely, that poetic utterances are composed according to certain combinatory rules that are phonic in nature. For Jakubinskij, this was the clustering of liquids, but Brik went beyond this in two respects. First of all, he did not stop with liquids, but included all the consonants. Second and more important, he was not interested merely in isolated consonantal patterns but in the reiteration of these patterns throughout the poetic text. Traditional literary studies, according to Brik, merely paid lip service to the phonic aspect of poetic language and recorded only the most obvious cases of speech sound repetition: rhyme, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia. But these are merely an “obvious manifestation, a special case of fundamental euphonic laws,” and there are other cases that follow these laws but remain unnoticed. 35 Brik’s essay studied one of these—the recurrence of consonantal patterns—as it appeared, for example, in this Puškin line:

\[
\text{Vesuvius opened its gorge)36}
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Brik termed this type of consonantal reiteration “sound repetition” and attempted not only to provide a typology of such repe-

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35. Ibid., p. 60.
36. Ibid., p. 80.
tions but also to relate them to the overall outer form of the poetic text (verse, stanza, rhythm). Using literally hundreds of lines from Puškin and Lermontov Brik demonstrated that sound repetition permeates even the most canonical of Russian poetry.

Another contributor to the early OPOJAZ volumes, Boris Kušner, argued that the treatment of poetic language in terms of the other arts, for example, dance and music, is natural because their materials have something in common. They are temporal rather than spatial media. “But,” Kušner warns, “despite their shared sound material, one can speak of verse music only metonymically. Here the term music no longer signifies a given art but the basic material of its works—sound.” This figure of speech is therefore not productive for poetics, Kušner argues, for musical and poetic sounds are incompatible phenomena. The former are tones (tonirujuščie zvuki), sounds correlated according to precise scales and intervals, whereas the latter are merely sonorous sounds (sonirujuščie zvuki) whose actual phonic values are largely arbitrary. Music and poetry can, however, be related metaphorically, through the similarity of their artistic forms, that is, the precisely calculated organization of sound material. These “sonorous chords”—the repetitions of particular sounds and their groups in a poetic work—are what Kušner sets out to study.

But how do Kušner’s “sonorous chords” differ from Brik’s “sound repetitions”? First of all, in the way they are described: Brik presents his repetitions as objective phonic structures, whereas Kušner is concerned with the constitution of the “chords” in the perceiver’s consciousness. Second, Brik’s treatment of the poetic sound stratum is quite atomistic: he deals with a couple of isolated lines each time. For Kušner, on the other hand, the “sonorous chords” are the property of an entire poem. Of all the factors that create a rhythmical impression on the perceiver, Kušner focuses on two: the articulation of speech.

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into syllables, and the segmentation of the continuous utterance into verse lines. In this way each speech sound is assigned a precise place within a two-dimensional grid based on its position vis-à-vis the other syllables of the line and vis-à-vis corresponding syllables in other lines. The resulting grid of verse positions accounts for the distribution of all speech sounds in the poetic text, thus enabling Kušner to detect any patterns that they might form—the sonorous chords.

The Formalists discussed so far tackled the category of poetic language as a primarily phonic phenomenon. Their preoccupation with poetic sound was chiefly inspired by Krucenych's concept of zaum'—language contemptuous of everyday rationality and semantics. It must be stressed that even though Krucenych scoffed at language that merely conveys thought, he conceived of transrational language as something more than mere sound. The unfolding of the "self-valuable word" was only one aspect of zaum', for the destruction of syntax and grammar still served a particular objective. A normally structured utterance, Krucenych reasoned, contains a logical meaning that transmits thought into words. The deformed zaum', on the other hand, lacks such a definite meaning, but precisely because of this its words can express directly the noncognitive components of the poet's consciousness. "The clear and decisive evidence for the fact that until now the word has been in shackles is its subordination to sense. Until now it has been maintained that 'thought dictates laws to the word and not the other way around.' We have pointed out this mistake and provided a free language, transrational and ecumenical. The path of previous artists led through thought to the word; ours leads through the word to direct apprehension."38

Krucenych, however, failed to explain in any cogent way either the mechanism for this immediate apprehension or its object. His point might be expected to carry rhetorical weight within a poetic manifesto but certainly not elsewhere. Yet it caught

the fancy of the Formalists, who argued against Potebnja's identification of poetic language with inner linguistic form. From their point of view, Krüčėnys's zaum' was the best evidence that verbal art can do quite well without any images. To sustain this argument they had to translate Krüčėnys's statements about the direct expressivity of outer poetic form into more scholarly terms.

Here they could turn to a theory of another member of the Kazan' School, Mikolaj Kruszewski (1851–1887). In studying the universal laws of association operating in language, Kruszewski had argued that "the coexistence of the two aspects of the word—its external appearance and its meaning—rests on an association based on contiguity which binds these two aspects 'into an inseparable pair.' But to our memory 'such a binding seems weak and insufficient; it must be supported by an association to another word based on similarity.'" This dual linkage of each verbal unit is the engine that drives linguistic change. Kruszewski depicts the process of linguistic evolution as "an eternal antagonism between a progressive force determined by associations based on similarity and a conservative one determined by associations based on contiguity." 39

Kruszewski's two types of association correspond in turn to two figures of speech: metaphor and metonymy. The ingenious Šklovskij used this tropological distinction in attacking Potebnja. He claimed that not only poetic but prosaic language might involve inner linguistic form, that is, the figurative transference of meaning. But it is necessary to distinguish between two different figures of speech: the "conservative" metonymy, based on contiguity, and the "progressive" metaphor, based on similarity. Given the bias of Šklovskian aesthetics toward novelty in art it is not surprising that he considered the metaphor as the only truly poetic trope. Metonymy is merely the "practical means of thinking, of conceptualizing objects" and as such it

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characterizes prosaic language, but metaphor is the “means for intensifying perception” and hence the essence of poetic language. To illustrate, calling someone “a hat” simply because he happens to wear one is to evoke a prosaic image-trope, whereas the same designation for a helpless, languid fellow would be a poetic figure.40

Despite Šklovskij’s criticism, however, he was still operating with Potëbnja’s concept of inner form. The metaphoric designation that he described involved a cognitive tertium comparationis—a mental construct linking the outer form of the word with its figurative meaning, as in “helplessness” and “sloppiness” in his “hat” example. But the Formalists inspired by Krucených’s zaum’ were not much concerned with traditional poetic tropes. Rather, they looked for cases of what Roman Jakobson aptly termed “negative inner form,” that is, “words which so to speak seek their meaning,” or, put differently, words with a directly expressive outer form.41

One hypothesis about the immediate emotive value of poetic sound was enunciated by Lev Jakubinskij. He approvingly quoted the observation of the famous French Indo-Europeanist Antoine Meillet (1866–1936) that in “practical language there is no inner link between the sound of the words and their meanings. Their link is determined by an association based on contiguity and is factual, not natural.”42 This is so because in practical language sounds merely serve to differentiate meaning. The foregrounding of sound that is proper to poetic language, however, changes the picture. In such language, “because our attention is attracted by sounds, an emotive attitude is aroused toward them. This circumstance,” Jakubinskij stressed, “is very important for determining the interrelations of the phonic and semantic aspects of speech in verse language.”43 Here the two are linked by the relation of similarity. Jakubinskij’s notion of similarity is, howev-

42. “O zvukach stichotvornogo jazyka,” p. 44.
43. Ibid.
er, somewhat different from that of Kruszewski: what is similar in poetic language is the emotive charge belonging to the phonic and semantic aspects of the word. "The emotions evoked by certain sounds and their combinations can take various courses: 'pleasure-displeasure,' 'arousal-satisfaction,' 'tension-resolution.' It is also absolutely clear that the emotions triggered by sounds should not take a course antithetical to the emotions triggered by the 'content' of the poem (and vice versa). . . . Thus, the poet selects sounds and combinations that emotionally correspond to images valued by him for some reason, or, vice versa, he selects images that emotionally correspond to sounds and combinations that are significant for some reason in the given circumstances."44

In addition to the emotive charge of sounds, the similarity of the phonic and semantic aspects of poetic language is provided by what Jakubinskij called the "capacity of the speech organs for expressive movements."45 There is, he believed, a curious juncture of emotions and language in our facial expressions. The movement of our facial muscles can be caused on the one hand by our emotions, and on the other, by the articulation of speech sounds. In practical language, where the phonè is just a means, speech sounds can be modified to accommodate the emotions. This is impossible, however, in language dominated by sound. Thus, in verbal art the poet is forced to "select words whose sounds are pronounced through movements of the speech organs corresponding roughly to given expressive movements. . . . Broadly speaking, if the poet experiences emotions pertaining to a smile (a stretching of the lips sideways), then he naturally will avoid sounds articulated by pushing the lips forward (e.g., u, o)."46

Another theory of the direct expressiveness of linguistic sound was formulated by a specialist in Far Eastern languages, Evgenij Polivanov, in an essay dealing with a phenomenon that he termed "sound gesture." This essay constituted a partial dis-

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44. Ibid., p. 45.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 48.
putation of Jakubinskij's views. Polivanov began by dividing all the means of linguistic expression into two by now familiar categories: the one completely arbitrary and conventional, for example, the phonic structure of the Russian word for table—$s+t+o+l$—which in itself does not suggest its meaning; the other motivated and natural, such as the intonation that expresses emotional states and seems to be immediately understandable to anyone, even to animals. Gestures—nonlinguistic means of expression that often accompany emotive language—are prime examples of the latter category. They convey emotions in the most direct fashion.

Very soon, however, Polivanov undercut this simple opposition. As he argued, both motivated and arbitrary linguistic expressions are in fact conventional—deriving from the relation of contiguity between expressions and their meanings. “If we know that a given extralinguistic phenomenon is expressed through a particular intonation or gesture, the origin of this knowledge can be simply explained by the fact that we have always or often observed such an emotion accompanied by the given intonation or gesture. Thus, we have learned this link in precisely the same fashion as we learned the link between the phonic sequence $s+t+o+l$ and the representation of table, for this sequence was always used by the speaker when the thought of table was present.”47 Therefore, the difference between so-called natural and conventional linguistic expressions is not absolute but rather a matter of degree, an admixture of the two principles.

If all means of expression were placed on a scale from “conventional” to “natural,” the closest to the natural, in Polivanov’s opinion, would be mimetic gestures that copy objects or actions and seem spontaneously comprehensible to everyone. Well aware that the process of reproduction is always conventional, Polivanov calls these gestures “potentially natural.” The question, then, is whether language contains any “phonic sequences (combinations of vowels and consonants in a certain order)

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whose role is analogous to that of potentially natural gestures."

The answer is yes, as Polivanov illustrates with numerous Japanese onomatopoetic words imitating sounds, and reduplicative words imitating the repetition of an action or the recurrence of a phenomenon. By analogy with “mimetic gestures,” Polivanov termed these imitative linguistic expressions “sound gestures.”

Polivanov departed from Jakubinskij both in denying that emotions are the vehicle of the direct expressiveness of linguistic sounds, and in not considering the connection between sound gestures and verbal art. In some respects, however, the two Formalists shared common ground. First of all, Polivanov claimed that sound gestures and children’s language were related. “Japanese ‘sound gestures’ can be regarded in general as the principle of a special, childish morphology that has retained its right to existence in the language of adults.” In addition, both Jakubinskij and Polivanov believed that a substantial phonetic difference, which has its roots in pronunciation, existed between poetic language and sound gestures on the one hand, and practical or normal language on the other. For Jakubinskij, the clustering of liquids impedes pronunciation, thus attracting attention to the sounds themselves. Polivanov observed that in Japanese onomatopoetic and reduplicative words the phoneme [p] occurred, which has disappeared from contemporary Japanese except in loan words; the “nasal g” [ŋ] is also found in initial position in these words, though otherwise it occurs only medially or finally. Such aberrations, Polivanov believed, are

48. Ibid., p. 31.
49. Nevertheless, this connection is implied by the fact that Polivanov’s essay appeared in the OPOJAZ Studies in the Theory of Poetic Language. Viktor Šklovskij wrote, “The observation that in Japanese poetic language there are sounds which do not exist in practical Japanese was most likely the first actual indication that these two languages are divergent” (“Iiskusstvo, kak priem,” p. 104). Still, it seems far-fetched to claim, as Ladislav Matejka does, that Polivanov wrote about Japanese poetry (“The Formal Method and Linguistics,” Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, ed. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska [Ann Arbor, Mich., 1978], p. 282).
50. “Po povodu ’zvukovych žestov,‘” p. 36.
caused by the fact that the "value of the particular phonic structure [of sound gestures] is greater than in other words. In normal words, as a matter of fact, it does not make any difference which phonic complexes express a particular idea. . . . But obviously for 'onomatopoetic' words, some links between the expressed representations and particular sounds are important." Thus, Polivanov concludes, the $p$ in normal language can easily be replaced by any other speech sound, but it must be retained in words imitating, for example, the puffing of tobacco smoke or the sound of a flute.

The Formalists, to be sure, did not claim originality in discovering the importance of oral articulation in language and verbal art. They referred to such nineteenth-century scholars as the German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–920) or the Polish classical philologist Tadeusz Zieliński (1859–1944), who had made similar observations about pronunciation as the bridge between sound and meaning. But the Formalists' interest in the articulatory aspect of language was most likely triggered by the rise of Ohrenphilologie in the German literary studies of Eduard Sievers (1850–1932), his pupil Franz Saran (1866–1931), and others. In contrast to traditional Augenphilologie, which analyzed the text primarily as a visual or graphic manifestation, Sievers's "aural philology" emphasized the acoustic aspect of the text. Of particular interest were the involuntary motor reactions (movements of the diaphragm, bodily motions, facial expressions, and gestures) accompanying an utterance, which, in their opinion, were decisive in articulating the phonic substance of language.

There are several reasons that Ohrenphilologie was so attractive to the OPOJAZ Formalists. First of all, even though its overall
outlook and goals were incompatible with those of the Russian Futurists whom the Formalists found so congenial, their respective views of literature coincided on one important point, namely, that sound is central to poetry. Earlier I mentioned that Kručėnych attributed poetic value to foreign languages unknown to him as one source of his zaum’ (see note 20). In a striking correspondence Saran wrote: “the theoretician of verse . . . ought to adopt toward verse the attitude of a foreigner who listens to it without knowing the language in which it is written.”53 Jakobson considered this statement an epitome of the Ohrenphilological outlook.

Like Ohrenphilologie, OPOJAZ was essentially positivistic, attempting to establish a new science of literature that would “turn to the facts and push aside general systems and problems.”54 In this “new fervor of scientific positivism,” sound was considered the only concrete reality of verbal art, for meaning, in its ephemerality, was only a subjective mental construct that could not be pinned down with any certitude. An earlier linguist and teacher of some of the OPOJAZ members, Lev Ščerba (1880–1944), had expressed this view in his introduction to a “linguistic commentary [tolkovanie]” on one of Puškin’s poems that was primarily a directive for the proper oral delivery of this text.55 In it, Ščerba argued that “all semantic observations can only be subjective,” whereas the analysis of poetic sound, especially in the oral reading of a text, can attain to some degree the objectivity of a laboratory experiment.56 This claim to scientific objectivity is reflected in the title of an informative article on Ohrenphilologie

54. Boris Ejchenbaum, “Teorija ‘formal’nogo metoda,’” Literatura: Teorija, kritika, polemika (Leningrad, 1927), p. 120.
55. It was from Ščerba’s monograph on Russian vowels, Russkie glasnye v kačestvennom i kolichestvennom otnošenii (St. Petersburg, 1912), that the Formalists drew their conclusions about the nature of sound in practical language (see, for example, L. Jakubinskij, “O zvukach stichotvornogo jazyka,” p. 38; or R. Jakobson, Novaja russkaja poezija, p. 9).
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by Šklovskij’s brother Vladimir, which appeared in the second volume of the OPOJAZ Studies: “The Rhythmical-Melodic Experiments of Professor Sievers.”57 This esteem for the methods of “aural philology” extended beyond the early stage of Formalism.58 Aside from the German literary theorist Oskar Walzel (1864–1944), Sievers and Saran were the only honorary members of the Section for Verbal Arts at the State Institute for the History of the Arts, the institution that absorbed OPOJAZ in the twenties.59

Of the contributors to the OPOJAZ Studies, the closest to Ohrenphilologie was Boris Ėjchenbaum. His affinity to this approach was most likely a function of his age. Born in 1886, Ėjchenbaum began his literary studies before the advent of Formalism. Thus, he did not always share the Bohemian proclivities of some of the younger members of OPOJAZ, apparently more impressed by sober scholarship than the vague notions of Futurism. The scientism of Ohrenphilologie coincided with Ėjchenbaum’s own orientation, as recorded in his diary entry of January 1919: “Proceeding from Rickert, one realizes that the methods of the natural sciences must be applied to the history of the arts . . . when we deal with the ‘nature’ of the material from which the work is made. In [this field] the construction of laws and definitions is quite conceivable.”60 Moreover, Ėjchenbaum held that the material of verbal art is the oral word.

We always speak about literature, the book, the writer. Written-printed culture has inculcated the letter in us. . . . We often totally forget that the word has nothing to do with the letter, that it is a living, ongoing activity created by the voice, articulation, and intono-

60. Quoted in M. O. Ĉudakova’s commentary to Jurij Tynjanov’s Poetika, istorija literatury, kino (Moscow, 1977), p. 455.
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dnation and joined by the gesture and facial expression \([\text{mimika}\)]\). We think that the writer \textit{writes}. But it is not always so, and in the realm of the artistic word it is more often just the opposite. The German philologists (Sievers, Saran, et al.) began to argue a few years ago that the philology of the “eye” (\textit{Augenphilologie}) must be replaced by its “aural” counterpart (\textit{Ohrenphilologie}). This is an extremely fertile idea which has already yielded interesting results in the domain of verse. . . . Such an “aural” analysis, however, is also fruitful for the study of artistic prose. The bases [of this form] are also marked by its origin in the oral \textit{skaz} which influences not only its syntactic structure and the selection and combination of its words, but its very composition.\(^{61}\)

The untranslatable term \textit{skaz} (akin to the Russian verb \textit{skazat’}, to tell) subsequently gained wide currency in Slavic literary studies. It was the focal point of Řejchenbaum’s Formalist debut, his analysis of Gogol’s short story, “The Overcoat.” \textit{Skaz} designated a particular narrative technique in which the elements of oral delivery play a crucial role. The structure of Gogol’s story, Řejchenbaum claimed, is not organized according to the laws of the plot but rather by a “certain system of varied expressive-articulatory facial gestures.”\(^{62}\) In a later study devoted to the Akmeist poet Anna Achmatova, Řejchenbaum applied the notion of the articulatory gesture to poetry as well. His thesis was that Achmatova’s poetry “is oriented toward the process of pronunciation, of expressive \([\text{mimičeskij}\)] pronunciation.”\(^{63}\) This orientation is manifested in the frequent occurrences of what Řejchenbaum termed the “expressive quality of speech \([\text{rečevaja mimika}\)].” He showed how the repetition of the same or similar vowels or the juxtaposition of contrasting ones forces the reader to move his lips in a particular way so that the “words come to be perceived not as ‘sounds’ and not as articulation in general but as an expressive \([\text{mimičeskij}\)] motion.”\(^{64}\)

\(^{61}\) “\textit{I I I juzija skaza},” \textit{Kněžnyj ugoļ}, no. 2 (1918), 10.
\(^{63}\) \textit{Anna Achmatova: Ópyt analiza} (Petersburg, 1923), p. 87.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 86.
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The years separating Èjchenbaum's study of Gogol' and his monograph on Achmatova mark an important period in the development of OPOJAZ. As Èjchenbaum himself observed, the teens for the Petersburg Formalists were "years of struggle and polemics," so that "many of the principles [they] advanced during these years of intensive struggle with their adversaries were not merely scholarly principles but paradoxical slogans exaggerated for polemical and contrastive purposes. The failure to take this into account, to treat the 1916–1921 works of OPOJAZ as strictly scholarly, would be to ignore history." The stock-taking that followed this period of Sturm und Drang was to lead to an intensive reexamination of the earlier position. The linguistic approach to verbal art and the key notion of poetic language were among the first to undergo this scrutiny.

Èjchenbaum himself launched this critique. He commended the recent confluence of poetics with linguistics as a healthy counterbalance to the traditional domination of poetics by psychology or sociology. "But," he warned,

... a rapprochement with a neighboring discipline can be genuinely fruitful only if it does not lead to a new submission. In associating with linguistics, poetics ought to retain its independence. For linguistics, a poetic work is a "phenomenon of language" that furnishes interesting material for the study of phonetic, syntactic, or semantic issues. Linguistic observations about poetic language enrich the general science of language with new phenomena that occur only rarely in normal "practical speech." The literary theoretician, however fruitful he may find linguistic methods to be, should pose his questions in a completely different way. What emerges here is the distinction between the concepts of language and style, linguistic phenomenon and stylistic device. Linguistics belongs among the natural sciences, poetics among the humanities [nauki o duchе]. Linguistics classifies poetic language as one of its varieties; it differentiates among them according to their goals merely to classify the phenomena of language as functions. Poetics begins with the separation of poetic language from other linguistic phenomena as an activity set toward a particular goal. And

65. "Teorija 'formal'nogo metoda'," p. 132.
even though this goal cannot be defined with any precision, its symptoms are apparent. In this way, poetics is built on the foundation of a teleological principle and thus proceeds from the notion of the \textit{device}; linguistics, like all natural sciences, deals with the category of causality and therefore proceeds from the notion of the \textit{phenomenon as such}.\footnote{66. \textit{Melodika russkogo liriceskogo sticha} (Petersburg, 1922), p. 14.}

Linguistically oriented Formalists tended to dismiss this statement of Ėjchenbaum’s as a relic of nineteenth-century scholarship. Viktor Vinogradov, for example, claimed that “both the inclusion of linguistics among the natural sciences and the disregard for the teleological principle in it are widespread but incorrect, narrow-minded ideas.”\footnote{67. “O zadachach stilistiki: Nabljudeniya nad stilem zhitiya protopo Avvakuma,” \textit{Russkaja reč’}, vol. 1, p. 206.}

Ėjchenbaum was not the only Formalist in the early twenties to clash with the concept of poetic language and the linguistic approach to literature so central to OPOJAZ. In a proposal for a monograph on \textit{Evgenij Onegin}, Jurij Tynjanov listed as one of his topics, “Why poetic language is not a poetic dialect and does not belong completely within descriptive linguistics.”\footnote{68. \textit{Poetika, istorija literatury, kino}, p. 416.} Thus, Ėjchenbaum’s (and Tynjanov’s) dissent from the other Formalists cannot be simply swept aside.

Any characterization of Ėjchenbaum’s position will depend on what we make of his concept of the device. At first glance, his contrasting of poetic teleology with linguistic causality may appear to be another version of Šklovskij’s mechanistic model. However, Ėjchenbaum speaks of stylistics and linguistics, and contrasts the stylistic device with the linguistic phenomenon. In this respect his polemics recalls Žirmunskij’s critique of the mechanistic metaphor discussed in the preceding chapter. It was precisely through the notion of style that Žirmunskij reformulated the functional definition of the device. From his standpoint, style is a principle of unity determined by the overall artistic goal, which ascribes to each device a specific role within
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the artistic whole. The device is thus not an a priori, independent monad of artistic form for the morphologists, but a functionally integrated element of the work. In the same way, though from a different theoretical perspective, Tynjanov argued against an atomistic approach to the device. In his systemic metaphor, the identity of each element is a function of the hierarchical relations within the work and the higher systems in which the element participates.

It is obvious that Ejchenbaum’s rejection of the linguistic model was motivated by similar considerations. For the linguist, he believed, poetic and practical language are nothing but abstractions. In separating the two, the student of language might classify them, “among other ways” (Jakubinskij’s words), according to their respective goals. To do so, however, is only a heuristic procedure, a matter of choice, as Jakubinskij himself demonstrated when in 1922 he rejected the goal as an inadequate criterion and proposed to classify utterances according to their actual forms.69 Students of literature, however, do not have this choice, for they deal with concrete literary works, that is, intentionally created poetic wholes. From their perspective, the ontological difference between poetic and practical language (for example, the clustering of the same liquids) or between sound gestures and normal linguistic usage (for example, the occurrence of the speech sound $p$) is unimportant. It is not the presence or absence of these particular features that concerned Ejchenbaum as a literary scholar, but their functional place in the literary work. “Poetic language,” he argued, “is characterized solely by a particular set toward certain elements of speech and a specific utilization of them.”70

In more abstract terms, it might be said that the two factions in OPOJAZ used different “logics.” Those advocating the linguistic model were quite close to the mechanists in casting their categories in the form of polar oppositions. Their critics shunned this

disjunctive stance, instead casting their categories in terms of a gradation, a relative difference. Thus, the linguist Jakubinskij, inspired by the Futurists' zaum', split all linguistic behavior into two incompatible classes: poetic language oriented solely toward the phonic aspect of speech, and its opposite, practical language set toward the semantic aspect of speech. His critic, Ėjchenbaum, though considering this a powerful working hypothesis, claimed that it was not supported by the facts. Commenting on practical language, he wrote, "It is quite doubtful that there actually exists a type of speech in which our attitude toward the word would be totally mechanical, in which the word would be exclusively a 'sign.' Forms such as oratory, for instance, regardless of their 'practical' character, are in many respects quite close to poetic language." 71 And Žirmunskij criticized the absolutism of the opposite category, poetic language, conceived as a purely phonic structure. "If the poet really wanted to affect us by mere sounds he would take up music." Poetry "does not affect the listener by sound as such but by sounding words, i.e., sounds tied to meaning." 72

Though Žirmunskij and Ėjchenbaum both conceived of style as the functional integration of elements in an artistic whole, they disagreed on the nature of this integration. Žirmunskij, faithful to his organic metaphor, favored a static notion of the whole in which elements were harmoniously related. Ėjchenbaum, in contrast, prepared the way for the systemic metaphor by advocating a more dynamic view. According to him, the unity of a work was a fragile equilibrium of elements struggling for domination. I dwelt on this difference in the preceding chapter and repeat it only to avoid the false impression that Žirmunskij and Ėjchenbaum were speaking the same language. In fact, Žirmunskij's criticism of those conflating literature and music was not addressed to the linguistically inclined OPOJAZ members at all but to Ėjchenbaum, in a review of Ėjchenbaum's book The

71. Ibid.
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*Melodies of Russian Lyric Verse.* In this work Éjchenbaum had formulated his dynamic notion of the poetic whole as a struggle between the organizing element (the dominant of the work) and the other subordinate elements constituting this whole. He illustrated his position with lyric poems in which the dominant intonation deformed all the other aspects of language, including semantics, to its needs.

The deformation of semantics that Éjchenbaum discussed, despite Žirmunskij's claims to the contrary, was quite different from that described by the early OPOJAZ members. We recall that they treated poetic language as sound that might but need not be accompanied by a cognitive meaning. Éjchenbaum was concerned not with the presence or absence of meaning in a particular verbal construction, but rather with its function there, a function determining its hierarchical position relative to the other elements of the construction. In other words, for him, meaning is always involved in a verbal construction, but sometimes it is subordinate to other elements and at other times it dominates them. Oratory, Éjchenbaum argued, may foreground the phonic aspect of language for the sake of persuasion, whereas artistic prose may be quite indifferent to sound if its goal requires this.

Joining Éjchenbaum against Jakubinskij's separation of poetic from practical language was Boris Tomaševskij, who wrote, "Instead of the clear, though perhaps terminologically unfortunate opposition of the old scholastic theory, 'poetry' and 'prose,' we, following a linguistic path, have advanced another opposition: 'practical' versus 'artistic' language. This opposition, however, does not cover all aspects of a verbal composition. It pertains solely to the sphere of language and, secondly, does not coincide with the bounds of 'poetry' and 'prose.' For the 'prosaic' perhaps as much as the 'poetic' should be contrasted to 'practical' language."\(^{73}\)

\(^{73}\) "Konstrukcija tezisov," *Lef* 5, no. 1 (1924), 140.
Earlier in this chapter I described how Jakubinskij arrived at his frame of reference. He proceeded from Potebnja's original opposition between poetic and prosaic language, but replaced the second element with "practical language," which he considered more appropriate. His critics proceeded in the opposite fashion; they retained "prosaic language" and replaced the other element of the opposition with what they claimed to be the more accurate concept of "verse language." In the introduction to his pioneering 1924 monograph, _The Problem of Verse Language_, Tynjanov explained this step: "The notion of 'poetic language' put forth not so long ago is today in a crisis which is undoubtedly caused by the broad and diffuse character of this psychological-linguistic concept. The term 'poetry' that had long existed in our language and scholarship has now lost its concrete scope and content and gained an evaluative tinge. In this book I shall analyze the specific concept of _verse_ (in opposition to the concept of _prose_) and the specific features of _verse language._" 74

These conceptual shifts were not solely a matter of terminology. By substituting the notion of practical language for Potebnja's "prose," Jakubinskij was redefining the category of the poetic. The same was true of his critics. Their opposition between verse and prose is not equivalent to the earlier dichotomy of poetry and prose. The early OPOJAZ members ignored verse, considering verse rhythm just one of many artistic devices that de-familiarize the sound stratum of language, whereas their

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74. _Problema stichotvornogo jazyka_ (Leningrad, 1924), p. 5. In this passage Tynjanov insists on a subtle but untranslatable difference between two synonymic adjectives _stichotvornyj_ and _stichovoj_, both rendered in English as "verse." His preference for _stichovoj_ most likely can be attributed to the fact that Jakubinskij, who conceived of "verse language" as a mere subcategory of "poetic language," used _stichotvornyj_ (see note 26 above). For this reason, it is quite surprising that _stichotvornyj_, rejected by Tynjanov, should have appeared in the very title of his book. Tynjanov's correspondence reveals, however, that this title was chosen by his publisher who was apprehensive about the original title _Problema stichovoj semantiki_ (see Tynjanov's letter to Lev Lunc of January 14, 1924, reprinted in _Nový žurnal_, no. 83 [1966], 142).
critics argued that verse and prose occur in both literature and byl.\textsuperscript{75} What these two forms represent is not the opposition of art to nonart, but two different principles of verbal construction, or what Tynjanov called functions. Tomaševskij wrote in his comprehensive \textit{Russian Versification} that “the difference between prose and verse rests in the fact that in verse the phonic imperative [\textit{zvukovoe zadanie}] dominates the semantic one and in prose the semantic dominates the phonic one. Everything boils down to the relative role of these two origins.”\textsuperscript{76} Similarly, Tynjanov argued that “it would be premature to conclude that verse form differs from prose form merely because in verse the external sign of the word plays the exclusive role whereas in prose such a role is performed by its meaning.” He concluded, “Prose and poetry, it seems, do not differ from each other in their imminent phonation and in the consequent set toward sound in poetry and semantics in prose, but rather in the way these two elements interact: how the semantic aspect of prose deforms its phonic aspect (the mental set toward the semantic) and how verse deforms the meaning of the word.”\textsuperscript{77}

In short, the linguistic model and its fundamental concept, poetic language, underwent a criticism within OPOJAZ in the early twenties that entailed a significant shift in the scholarly endeavors of the group. Of course, this shift was not a total abandonment of the previous Formalist tradition. Those who rejected the “vague” and “inadequate” concept of poetic language followed the path established by their predecessors in one

\textsuperscript{75} In the conclusion to his “Art as Device,” Šklovskij promised to devote a special book to the problems of rhythm. This plan never materialized, however, perhaps because Šklovskij considered poetic rhythm nothing but a deformation of prosaic rhythm, a deformation that must remain unpredictable and hence unsystematizable in order to carry out its de-familiarizing function ("Iskustvo, kak prièm," p. 114).

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Russkoe stichoslozenie: Metrika} (Petersburg, 1923), p. 8.

\textsuperscript{77} “O kompozicii Evgenija Onegina,” \textit{Poëtika, istorija literatury, kino}, pp. 53 and 54.
important respect. They too focused their attention on verbal constructions in which sound played the dominant role. However, they no longer carried out their research under the banner of the theory of poetic language but under that of metrics and verse semantics.