

1: Making Strange: On Victor Shklovsky | The Nation

Theory of Prose is one of the twentieth century's most important works of literary theory. It not only anticipates structuralism and poststructuralism, but poses questions about the nature of fiction that are as provocative today as they were in the s.

Life[edit] Shklovsky was born in St. During the First World War , he volunteered for the Russian Army and eventually became a driving trainer in an armoured car unit in St. Shklovsky participated in the February Revolution of Subsequently, the Russian Provisional Government sent him as an assistant Commissar to the Southwestern Front where he was wounded and got an award for bravery. Shklovsky returned to St. Petersburg in early , after the October Revolution. He opposed bolshevism and took part in an anti-bolshevik plot organised by members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. After the conspiracy was discovered by the Cheka , Shklovsky went into hiding, traveling in Russia and the Ukraine, but was eventually pardoned in due to his connections with Maxim Gorky , and decided to abstain from political activity. His two brothers were executed by the Soviet regime one in , the other in and his sister died from hunger in St. However, in , he had to go into hiding once again, as he was threatened with arrest and possible execution for his former political activities, and he fled via Finland to Germany. In the same year he was allowed to return to the Soviet Union , not least because of an appeal to Soviet authorities that he included in the last pages of his epistolary novel Zoo, or Letters Not About Love. The Yugoslav scholar Mihajlo Mihajlov visited Shklovsky in and wrote: When we said goodbye to Viktor Borisovich and started for Moscow, I felt that I had met one of the most cultured, most intelligent and best-educated men of our century. Writer and theorist[edit] In addition to literary criticism and biographies about such authors as Laurence Sterne , Maxim Gorky , Leo Tolstoy , and Vladimir Mayakovsky , he wrote a number of semi-autobiographical works disguised as fiction, which also served as experiments in his developing theories of literature. Shklovsky is perhaps best known for developing the concept of ostranenie or defamiliarization also translated as "estrangement" in literature. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By "enstranging" objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and "laborious. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant. Film[edit] Shklovsky was one of the very early serious writers on film. A collection of his essays and articles on film was published in Literature and Cinematography, first English edition He was a close friend of director Sergei Eisenstein and published an extensive critical assessment of his life and works Moscow , no English translation. Beginning in the s and well into the s Shklovsky worked as a screenwriter on numerous Soviet films see Select Filmography below , a part of his life and work that, thus far, has seen very limited attention. In his book Third Factory Shklovsky reflects on his work in film, writing: The first factory was my family and school. The second was Opoyaz. And the third â€” is processing me at this very moment. On the Dissimilarity of the Similar , translated in Energy of Delusion:

Viktor Shklovsky's book Theory of Prose might have become the most important work of literary criticism in the twentieth century had not two obstacles barred its way: the crackdown by Soviet dictatorship on Shklovsky and other Russian Formalists in the s, and the unavailability of an English translation.

The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant. Then Shklovsky goes about breaking down these two ideas: The work of successive schools of poetry has consisted essentially in accumulating and making known new devices of verbal arrangement and organization. In particular, these schools of poetry are far more concerned with the disposition than with the creation of imagery. In any case, it is not imagistic thinking that unites the different arts or even the different forms of verbal art. And it is not the changes in imagery that constituted the essential dynamics of poetry. If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic. So eventually all of our skills and experiences function unconsciously – automatically. I read this as a reaction to the idea of economic artistry. Sher, in his introduction, explains a little bit about this term and why he coined it: I think, based on how I understood this chapter, for Shklovsky, estrangement is the making of an object into an active textual object, a textual object that can interact, somehow, with the reader. A few lines later he refers to the practice of whipping their behinds. In a note on this passage, Tolstoi asks: Then Shklovsky closes the chapter with a look at plot construction: Poetic speech is structured speech. Prose, on the other hand, is ordinary speech: I shall speak in more detail of the device of impeding, of holding back, when I consider it as a general law of art in my chapter on plot construction. Is there a way you think of it in your head that is unique to how you learned to read? I pull them all the time. I imagine that many of those people that everyone puts on their lists of towering or amazing or influential or whatever authors in some way create that effect for their readers:

3: HTMLGIANT / Reading Russia: Chapter 1 of Viktor Shklovsky's Theory of Prose

Viktor Shklovsky's Theory of Prose was published in Shklovsky himself is still praised as "one of the most important literary and cultural theorists of the.

In any case, it is not imagistic thinking that unites the different arts or even the different forms of verbal art. And it is not the changes in imagery that constitute the essential dynamics of poetry. This is indeed a way of thinking but has nothing to do with poetry. March] " qtd. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By "estranging" objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and "laborious. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant. Poetic speech is structured speech. Prose, on the other hand, is ordinary speech: Of course, it is just as easy to walk while talking up a storm, when the act of walking disappears from our consciousness. In this sense, the rhythm of prose is important as a factor leading to automatization. But such is not the rhythm of poetry. There is indeed such a thing as "order" in art, but not a single column of a Greek temple fulfills its order perfectly, and artistic rhythm may be said to exist in the rhythm of prose disrupted. The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness. Khristiansen, *Philosophy of Art*, " qtd. This is so because suffering is absent from the situation. However, every thought that is expressed in words loses its meaning and degenerates horribly whenever it is taken by itself, that is, whenever it is ripped out of the integral structure of which it is a part. The structure of words consists not of ideas as such I believe, but of something else, and it is impossible to express the basis of this structure directly through words. This basis can be expressed only through the mediation of words, that is through images, actions, situations. As an example, we may cite stories dealing with the origin of names. To do this, we must first and foremost "shake up the object," as Ivan the Terrible sorted out his henchmen. We must extricate a thing from the cluster of associations in which it is bound. It is necessary to turn over the object as one would turn a log over the fire. I am stating this as a chronological fact, without necessarily implying a causal relationship between these genres. Transportation in time, as we see, may serve as a basis for a "mystery. Another gun shoots instead. Rather, it plays with the possibility of establishing a number of parallel structures. The main thing is not to allow the reader to find out what is in fact going on, because, once recognized, such a situation loses its horror. He does so, in general, by manipulating the structure of his novel, and it is the consciousness of form through its violation that constitutes the content of the novel. Sterne was the first writer to introduce a description of poses into the novel. Thrust into the basic action of the plot, they deflect us from the flow of time. No, it just rhymes with "flood. For this reason, art is pitiless or rather without pity, apart from those cases where the feeling of sympathy forms the material for the artistic structure. But even in that case, we must consider it from the point of view of the composition. Similarly, we if want to understand how a certain machine works, we examine its drive belt first. That is, we consider this detail from the standpoint of a machinist and not, for instance, from the standpoint of a vegetarian. As a matter of fact, though, the story line is nothing more than material for plot formation. The crises of a writer coincide with the crises of literary genres. A writer moves within the orbit of his art. This is so because a work of art distorts such a correspondence in accordance with its own laws.

4: Theory of Prose - - Google Books

Viktor Shklovsky's Theory of Prose, published in and still available today, is advertised as as "one of the most important works in the history of literary theory." It's written for people who work on novels, and especially those who work on literary form - the how a thing is written as much as the why and what of it.

Shklovsky had from the start fought for a notion of art directly opposed to socialist realist pieties, one that hinged on the need to push beyond established models, to make things strange so that we might see the world afresh in its cruelty and splendor. Shklovsky called Vitale a few hours later to apologize: Formalism would survive here mainly as an academic epithet, shorthand for overindulgent abstraction and inattention to the tug and shove of history. These last two years brought a flurry. In , Dalkey published the extraordinary late theoretical work, *Bowstring*: It was born not in the academy but out of the literary avant-garde and alongside the Russian Revolution. The freedom of art. The world was sick and palsiedâ€”who can now deny it? When the uprising began, Shklovsky, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, rushed to join. No less and no more than of rebuilding the entire world. He would soon endure the misery of the trenches, be shot in the stomach, and survive to return to Petersburg and accept a posting in Persia, which was then occupied by Russia, where he nearly died in a pogrom: He witnessed all the stupidities of imperial domination. He joined a Socialist Revolutionary conspiracy to re-establish the Constituent Assembly, which the Bolsheviks had dissolved. His comrades were arrested and killed. His brother Nikolai was arrested and killed. The civil war raged on. Another brother, Evgeny, was arrested and killed. The revolution was still the only thing worth fighting for. He made it to Moscow, where Maxim Gorky smoothed over his problems with the regime a function the older novelist would be fated to fulfill time and again , freeing Shklovsky to rejoin his old Opopoz comrades in Petersburg. Food was scarce and the winter fierce. They kept writing, burning furniture and books to stay alive. White armies besieged the city. He took up arms again and joined a demolition squad. A bomb blew up in his hands. Who would write it now? Triolet had allowed him to write to her on the condition that he not mention love. The constraint proved productive. Triolet had little to do with it. Her own letters, several of which he included in *Zoo*, suggest she knew as much. Employing a narrative strategy of purposeful digression, *A Sentimental Journey* toys with a similar range of Sterne-ish tricks. Automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war. If it is anything, art is oppositional and insurrectionary, and literature an authorial conspiracy to overthrow anachronistic modes of thought. It revitalizes the world. Art changes not out of fashion or habit, but because it must. New forms are created when the old ones become as sclerotic as the ones they replaced. No wonder Shklovsky made the Bolsheviks edgy. From there, Shklovsky leaps a few wide boulevards and, post-extrication, tosses out all the scraps from which the work emerged: Plot is mere structural play. If this sounds counterintuitive, it wasâ€”and remainsâ€”an intensely fruitful insight. And it allowed works of literature to become visible, not as natural objects like fingernails or trees, but as complex creatures of artifice, as purposeful forms of play. This notion did not go down smoothly. The swelling MFA- industrial complex and the now almost entirely monopolized corporate publishing market enforce their edicts with no more flexibility than the bureaucratic state: Ignoring centuries of literary whimsy, 91 percent of American MFA studentsâ€”I base that figure on my own informal pollingâ€”and a similar proportion of mainstream book reviewers regard the novel as a type of window tasked with representing the real. But literature, the young Shklovsky insists, is its own planet, bound by the rules that it creates. And the novel, call it dead or alive, is not a thing among things of a certain weight and size, obliged to obey established formulae. It is a weird box of almost bottomless openness, a compact revolution in a cloth and cardboard binding. Or, if you prefer, in pixels. In his exuberance, Shklovsky allowed himself some blind spots. If the purpose of *ostranenie* was to perceive the world anew, Shklovsky had kept on pushing and tossed the world away. In the fall of , Shklovsky received an amnesty again thanks in part to Gorky and returned to Moscow from Berlin. By the time Vitale knocked at his door in , he had published *Bowstring*, in which he displayed an earnest effort to sort through the contradictions of his youth. This term simultaneously assumes the existence of a so-called content. At the end of that decade, still a young man and very much in the thick of

things, he began work on *A Hunt for Optimism*. The book is thus a raw one, almost throbbing with grief, a collection of anecdotes, aphorisms and more experimental forms. Every betrayal is a double betrayal. The exile returns and finds his home a foreign country. And then you find out suddenly there, on the moon, that you have been forbidden forever to return to Moscow and that they have rented your apartment to someone else. Only a few can play themselves without it. The book proceeds in exemplary Shklovskian style: The turns throw back the highway like a roll of fabric on the counter. Bridges are being built. Swamps are being drained. Its feet are big. A second person bursts right in: My dear friend, please cough if you are alive. Especially when it hurts. Unity, reader, is in the person who is looking at his changing country and building new forms of art so they can convey life. Browse through our works, look for a point of view, and if you can find it, then there is your unity. I was unable to find it. To submit a correction for our consideration, [click here](#). For Reprints and Permissions, [click here](#).

5: Theory of Prose by Victor Shklovsky

Theory of Prose by Victor Shklovsky Theory of Prose is one of the twentieth century's most important works of literary theory. It not only anticipates structuralism and poststructuralism, but poses questions about the nature of fiction that are as provocative today as they were in the s.

He revealed the manner in which Tolstoy rendered familiar concepts, like property ownership, unfamiliar by narrating events from the vantage point of a horse: For Shklovsky, literary works were not documents of social history or human psychology; they were neither comedies nor tragedies. Instead, they were best understood as language experiments devised to tactically derange our notions of life and of literature. To everyone except writers of fiction and poetry, this position sounds distressingly inhuman, painfully mechanical, regrettably ahistorical, perhaps even philosophically bogus. And indeed, these are some of the very charges that have been leveled against Formalist poetics from the start. But we should remember that Shklovsky attributed a deeply humane and benevolent purpose to the virtuosic machinery of literature: For many North American readers, this is the Shklovsky we know, a Shklovsky we remember, a literary insurrectionist who resides, under lock and key, in a narrow chamber of the past. Although Shklovsky lived through both World Wars, endured two periods of punitive exile, and survived into his nineties—working steadily all the while—he essentially disappeared from view. Much of his work sat relatively idle for years, awaiting publication outside the Soviet Union. For all intents and purposes, Shklovsky has remained under intellectual quarantine, marooned on an island gulag, a casualty of Cold-War power politics that essentially retarded the course of his career and limited his role on the world stage of literary criticism and theory. On the Dissimilarity of the Similar have all been published in the last decade. And we greet the arrival of these works with joy, gratitude and some trepidation, as if we were welcoming home a family member long absent due to calamity, presumed dead: Bowstring was first published in , and the Shklovsky writing this work bears a passing resemblance to the one we remember. But deep changes have been wrought in the man, and the book reads as a revision, inclining to a recantation, of several of his most influential ideas. The text is strange: However, for anyone interested in the legacy of Formalism—which includes everything that we conceive of as craft instruction in creative writing—the publication of this book is profoundly consequential. Further, in aggregate, the work is a manifesto of sorts—a little wistful, a bit opaque—about the purpose and processes of literature. This alone suggests that readers of every stripe should consult Bowstring. The book allows us to take the measure of latter-day Formalism, and, like all great books, it takes the measure of us. Perhaps Shklovsky feels that clarification is unnecessary, but he also chooses not to prosecute this disagreement in a linear and explicit fashion. Rather, Shklovsky counters Tolstoy whom he reveres, naturally, as an artist and countryman by indirection; he mounts a cumulative assault that emerges as he careers idiosyncratically through the annals of world literature. But in the second half of the book, the fireworks start to fly, the cannons boom, and we better understand the rhyme and reason of Bowstring. He discusses fairy tales and parables, Shakespeare and Pushkin, ancient Hindu sacred narratives, and he also comments on techniques in painting and cinema. Lenin, reading Hegel, and of Tolstoy, on Shakespeare. The course of a page might span centuries and continents, and thus, the writer often articulates his conclusions arcanelly, and not always convincingly. Shylock is a villain to Shakespeare. In this run of paragraphs, Shklovsky skips from Othello to The Merchant of Venice to, eventually, Romeo and Juliet, only grazing the evidence that shores up his assessment. His compositional method is one of willful juxtaposition, strategically withholding the connective tissue that binds the observations together in the manner of a conventional argument. He stacks his observations side by side, rapidly shifting the focus, often requiring readers to infer the connections—rather like a man laying out cards in a game of Solitaire. Near the end of Bowstring, he summarizes his position plainly: However, readers are richly compensated for their pains as virtually every page of Bowstring contains a radiant apothegm, a one-sentence koan of arresting power. Trees bloom one after the other, nightingales sing and crows caw. Someone even heard the blackbirds. They imitate other birds. The nightingales are still on their way. But Shklovsky himself acknowledges that this is hardly new, and in fact, Bowstring ultimately proffers

conclusions that seem eerily familiar. For example, Shklovsky cites Heraclitus, offering a glimpse of his position regarding the interpretation of individual works: Shklovsky and Brooks are unlikely bedfellows, even now, and Shklovsky does add some new wrinkles to this theoretical position. Shklovsky argues, albeit obliquely, that art evolves through a process of generic mutation: He notes the way the love poem draws on the conventions of classical rhetoric to find its form, producing an unusual combination, a linguistic fusion of the public and the private, the impersonal and the personal, the high and the low, the old and the new. Shklovsky summarizes his assessment: However, Shklovsky discusses very candidly the faulty premises on which he had founded his interpretive house. Sterne, Tolstoy were trying to return the sensation of what? Shklovsky reflects on his early work and renders an unequivocal verdict: And this he does. He discusses Don Quixote, in part, as a period piece: These are huge, perhaps heretical, concessions from a card-carrying Formalist, and though Shklovsky consistently writes, in this fashion, with hat in hand, his heart sometimes appears to be elsewhere, not engaged in the work. He often deals with history in the most cursory and brittle fashion, offering sweeping generalizations about places and eras. Eichenbaum, we learn, died under absurd circumstances, immediately following the delivery of a lecture that flopped he expires in his chair in the audience. And one gets the sense that Shklovsky is here explicitly linking his theory of literature to the convulsions of history: He enters his house where his wife, out of temper, insists on nursing their two-year-old child who is too old for such nursing. I live simultaneously in the old world and the new. I have been reading books by Structuralists with interest, difficulty and benefit. I am getting acquainted. Everything is interesting, but forgive the man who has long been absent from theory. And Shklovsky presses this relation farther; he writes, Here, as before—“forty years later”—they are still primarily analyzing the poem; of course now they have applied mathematics to it, as it was expected a long time ago. The weather is pleasant, but everyone is walking dressed up in academic clothes. The method, here, is less rigidly juxtapositional than searingly prismatic; instead of side-by-side comparison, shimmering palimpsest. And though this chapter concludes, typically, with another rapid and seemingly incongruous turn—as Shklovsky summarizes another tale, this one by Jules Verne—the strategy retains its power. The past and the present, like texts and contexts, are densely interwoven, impossible to disentangle. In a run of short chapters, he prosecutes, almost fifty years too late, a disagreement with Vladimir Propp on the structures of folkloric narratives. Sometimes being right is simply the less interesting alternative. It might have been enough for him to conclude, as Tzvetan Todorov does when defending Structuralist poetics against the posthumous ire of Henry James, that the distinction between form and content, *suzhet* and *fabula*, can be a useful fallacy. It allows us to concentrate our attentions in new ways on literary works, to see new facets of their construction, and perhaps this remains the necessary first step before we can synthesize the two poles once more. It has been needlessly prolonged and it lacks in emotion. He bemoans novelists who would write about novel-writing, poets who would write about composing poems—that is, those who make *fabula* of *suzhet*, content of form. These writers, the conventional wisdom goes, sap the life from art. There is wisdom in this injunction, naturally, but coming from Shklovsky, it feels like a confession elicited under bare-bulb duress, a defeatist compromise struck between his revolutionary ideas and the precepts of Socialist art. In the end, the publication of *Bowstring* is a major literary event. This book radically alters the legacy of Russian Formalism and contains abundant rewards for anyone with a vested interest in the art of literature. Occasionally it is hard to turn the pages. But the path that Mann chose is the path of a person who carries with him not objects but ideas, who does not want to lose the magnitude of the past. You can hear him talk about fiction writing here. He teaches writing and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

6: Viktor Shklovsky - Wikipedia

Theory of Prose Russian Literature Series by Viktor Shklovsky and a great selection of similar Used, New and Collectible Books available now at www.enganchecubano.com

Using Viktor Shklovsky My hero. What did this reading do for me? And why might you care? Different members of this circle studied different devices, and there was not always a clear consensus as to which devices mattered the most. Rather, what unified the Russian Formalists was their dedication to identifying devices, and to explaining how they worked in concert with one another—as well as how those arrangements changed over time. Forgive me this oversimplification. Here is one such example: The two need not line up exactly. Formalism helps us explain this kind of narrative phenomenon. By separating story from presentation, we can begin to speak of them independently from one another, as well as to understand how they relate. From this follows many other concepts: Roger Ebert, for instance, regularly says words to that effect: Therefore, to dismiss or praise a film solely because of its subject matter, it is not necessary to see it. That distinction can be traced back to Shklovsky and the other Russian Formalists. In other words, Shklovsky and the other Russian Formalists gave us ways of understanding how narratives are artificial things, assembled from many different conventional pieces or devices—and how the results may themselves be more or less conventional. These pieces tend to be inherited, as do the ways of assembling them. After I read ToP several times, I understood how to do that, as well as everything that Curt had been trying to teach me in workshop. And that enabled me to write my first novel, as well as other novels. Which strikes me as pretty powerful! In my own case, however, I found Theory of Prose the single most productive text in this regard. And I think others could learn the same thing from it. It would of course be an understatement to say that many others have found Shklovsky similarly useful. So ToP can help us understand and write narratives. But the book goes much farther than that. In other words, Shklovsky wants formalist analysis to be something more than just theory—he wants to use it to demonstrate how and why telling narratives is essential to being human. Seeing, by contrast, happens when something causes you to look again, and to regard a thing as though for the first time. Having established this distinction, Shklovsky wonders how we might escape recognition, and return to seeing. He proceeds to say and this passage from Theory of Prose is probably its most quoted: And so, held accountable for nothing, life fades into nothingness. Automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. It is the job of the artist to live outside of prescribed reality. Art becomes experimental living. This is why I have written elsewhere on this site that Christopher Nolan is an artless filmmaker. In Inception and elsewhere I just watched Batman Begins again, god help me, Nolan reduces his technique to the most instantly familiar, the most comprehensible and understandable, the most formulaic. He aspires to recognition, not seeing.

7: Theory of Prose | Dalkey Archive Press

Viktor Shklovsky. THEORY OF PROSE Translated by Benjamin Sher with an Introduction by "erald # \$ Brans UWE, %alkey & r!hive Press English translation.

8: The Formalist's Formalist: On Viktor Shklovsky – The Forward

When I moved to Thailand in , Theory of Prose was one of the few books I took with me (another was David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's Film Art, a work heavily indebted to Shklovsky). For the next two years, I did little else beside ride buses and boats around Bangkok, reading and rereading those two books (while listening to Cat Power.

9: Prose - Wikipedia

SHKLOVSKY THEORY OF PROSE pdf

Both "process" and "creativity" are utterly wrong (in fact, algebraic) for Shklovsky's theory. And while Sher typically stays closer to Shklovsky's text than Lemon and Reis, these wild hairs I've pointed out here are pretty typical.

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