

(Moscow and Leningrad, 1933) and in V. Markov, ed., *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov* (Munich, 1967). The more than twenty selections also included in Matsa's book again suggest an overemphasis on continuity between the avant-garde and the early Stalin years. In addition, a number of illustrations will be familiar to readers of Mary Chamot's study of Goncharova or catalogs of modern Russian painting that have been available since 1967. Nonetheless, Professor Bowlt has provided us with a comprehensive introduction to modern Russian art during the period when avant-garde individualism gave way to the demands of a revolutionary mass society.

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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Prior to receiving the March issue of *Slavic Review* I had no intention of resuming my exchange with Richard Sheldon. Having read his reply I have reluctantly concluded that a brief rejoinder might, after all, be in order: to my surprise Professor Sheldon has repeatedly misrepresented the tenor and the substance of my argument.

1. "Professor Erlich sums up his case as follows: The habit of intellectual timidity which Shklovsky had acquired by 1930 continues to manifest itself." This alleged summation is presumably given the lie by the "enthusiastic international" response to Shklovsky's "achievements since the Thaw." Now all this is wide off the mark. Conventionally enough, I "summed up my case" in the closing paragraph of my article rather than in the footnote paraphrased in part by Mr. Sheldon. Moreover, the effectiveness of Shklovsky's post-1953 critical studies is largely beside the point. Though I do not share Professor Sheldon's unqualified enthusiasm for these writings, I am prepared to grant their best moments acumen, breadth, and common sense. But then I had made it amply clear that the "painfully acquired habit of intellectual timidity" manifested itself only in dealing with "ideologically charged" subjects. The early poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky—proclaimed posthumously the Soviet poet laureate—is one such subject. The motif of the double in Dostoevsky, or the relationship between linguistics and poetics, is not.

2. In addition to inflating the relative importance of a parenthetical remark, Sheldon attributes to me a statement I never made: "Professor Erlich talks willingly about the moral emptiness of Soviet intellectuals. . . ." The fact of the matter is that I do not talk about this at all, willingly or otherwise. The phrase "moral emptiness"—which in its context appears to suggest a lack of firmly held convictions—is not mine but Nadezhda Mandelstam's. In citing her remarkable if admittedly lopsided memoir, I took care to distance myself from her somewhat intemperate language. ("The Western critic should not be too quick to echo this accusation—or self-accusation—borne from years of misery and travail.") As for the "inner confusion" and the mounting self-doubt which I sense in Shklovsky's autobiographical writings, Mr. Sheldon is willing to see the "disarray" in *Sentimental Journey* while staunchly denying the relevance of any such considerations to *Third Factory*. But once again

what disturbs me here is not Sheldon's unresponsiveness to my point of view but his apparent inability to present it accurately. It is one thing to call into question my notion of *Third Factory* as symptomatic of "a full blown methodological and spiritual crisis." It is quite another to turn this emotionally neutral formulation into the "more massive and repugnant (!) disarray."

In his cogent reply to a critic featured, as it happens, in the same issue of *Slavic Review*, George Kennan properly cautions against the practice—"common . . . to a growing number of younger American scholars—of building the phrases of others into one's own syntax." I submit that twisting the words of others into one's own vocabulary can at times be equally objectionable.

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PROFESSOR SHELDON REPLIES:

The opening words of the first sentence challenged by Professor Erlich would, it is true, have been more precise in the following rendition: "Professor Erlich's position might be summarized as follows:," but what comes after the colon strikes me as a fair summary of his views. I based that summary neither on the concluding words of his article nor on any parenthetical remark, but on my perception of everything that he has written about Shklovsky.

I was indeed aware that the intellectual timidity in question applied only to ideologically charged subjects, but that is a broad and volatile category in the Soviet Union—broad enough, as Professor Erlich knows, to include both Dostoevsky and poetics. In any case, I have mentioned several occasions after 1930 when Shklovsky was not timid in his choice and treatment of such subjects.

I chose the adjective "repugnant" not to duplicate one of Professor Erlich's phrases, but to indicate my perception of how he feels about *Third Factory*. I also wonder whether he can now step forward as a champion of the emotionally neutral formulation. On page 136 of *Russian Formalism*, for instance, we find: "This *enfant terrible* of Formalism had started losing his nerve rather early," an accusation repeated in the *Slavic Review* (March 1971). That approach is continued now in the phrases "intellectual timidity" and "double-edged loquacity." Are those phrases emotionally neutral?

Professor Erlich did not coin the term "moral emptiness," but he introduced it into the discussion and, with token reservations, elaborated on it with his comments about inward confusion and mounting uncertainty. He used it as ammunition. Unwillingly?

I have appreciated the opportunity to debate this matter with Professor Erlich, to whom all of us interested in Formalism are heavily indebted. He is probably right to suggest in his article that "Monument" is neither a total capitulation nor a passionate defense of Formalism. Perhaps our discussion will help an innocent bystander locate that position, somewhere between Professor Erlich's views and mine, that most closely approximates the truth about Shklovsky. What I regret, though, is that the discussion took this most recent turn. Being fair matters to me and I do not feel that I have twisted Professor Erlich's words or misrepresented his argument.

In his cogent reply to George Kennan, C. Ben Wright said that he would leave the final verdict to the readers of the *Slavic Review*. I will follow his example.

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