

Viktor Shklovsky vs. Roman Jakobson. Poetic Language or Poetic Function of Language

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Abstract

The essay aims at analyzing the theoretical dimension of the evolving relationship between Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky from the initial friendship, through the first tensions – Prague and Berlin were geographical and cultural scene where this rivalry was made its debut – to the final rupture, which has usually been explained by biographical and psychological factors. Beyond the personal causes, at stake there was rather literary theory and two approaches to it, linked with the Prague Linguistic Circle, on one hand, and the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOIaZ), on the other. If in 1923 the distinctions between the two approaches were not as obvious as was the personal rivalry of their founders, subsequently, however, these theoretical differences would become the basis of disagreement between the two theoreticians, one of whom would become the leading figure of Structuralism, while the other would time and again return to his early, formalist propositions. The theoretical divergences that were implicitly present in the two men's understandings of the nature of poetic language from the very inception of their careers became more and more apparent from the start of the 1930s in the work of Jakobson, who was not, like Shklovsky, forced to radically change his method and even his manner of scholarly prose.

Keywords

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World-wide recognition came twenty-five or even thirty-five years too late. But now I am recognized. Yet now, my former friend Roman Jakobson claims that it was he, not I, who created what was called the “Formal Method,” which gave birth to Structuralism. A belated, unnecessary argument is taking place about this, and much is being written about that as well.

(Viktor Shklovsky, *Pisma vmuku* 277)

The longstanding friendship between Viktor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson – their intellectual fraternity, which gave way to a gradual cooling of relations, and finally arrived at a complete rupture – has for almost a century been the subject of gossip and memoirs, scholarly articles and even a documentary film (see Nepevnyj). Clearly, any explanation of this rupture cannot be reduced simply to an observation of the distinct biographical trajectories of the two men, who were inscribed in divergent manner into completely distinct historical contexts. Neither can the break be attributed to purely psychological factors, however these are conceived: rivalry for the favors of Elsa Triolet; rivalry for

intellectual leadership within OPOIaZ; mutual jealousy regarding the role of leader in the development of Formalism, which each began to claim retrospectively from the start of the 1950s. All of these reasons and factors, undoubtedly, played their part, building on each other and propelling the former friends from one flare-up of tensions to the next. Ultimately, however, it must also be recognized that, quite problematically, the reality of personal conflict and the obviousness of the multiple psychological, biographical and historical causes that made this conflict inevitable have nearly completely obscured the persistent theoretical dimension of the evolving relationship between the two men.

Prague and Berlin were geographical and cultural scene where this rivalry was made its debut. I mean one year (1923) when Shklovsky lived in Berlin, Jakobson lived in Prague, and both of them visited each other, binding together not only by their common scholar interests but also by a common love affair. Love competition for Elsa Triolet creates the main plot of this play. As Shklovsky wrote about this later: “Roman Jakobson and I were in love with the same woman, but such was fate that I was the one to write a book about her” (Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy* 50). At the very moment when this rivalry of two enamored literary theorists was unfolding and when Shklovsky was transforming his unrequited love into a book about literature (*Zoo*), Jakobson was already reproaching him trying to stylize his own life and of the lives of those close to him as literature. In a letter to Elsa Triolet (March, 1923) he wrote: “Elechka, darling, I’m fed up with everything. Fed up with literature and men of letters. Fed up with Vitya for wanting to adapt you and me for the stage – and to buy himself a ticket to the performance, if he can’t play in a secondary role himself” (Jakobson, *Correspondence*). This is the biographical context of this story.

But nevertheless, this same tale, set in Prague and Berlin, can be told in a different way. In this other version, its subject isn’t a woman, two men and two cities, but rather literary theory and two approaches to it, linked with the Prague Linguistic Circle, on one hand, and the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOIaZ), on the other. At the moment in question, the distinctions between the two approaches were not as obvious as was the erotic rivalry of their founders. Subsequently, however, these theoretical differences would become the basis of disagreement between the two theoreticians, one of whom would become the leading figure of Structuralism, while the other would time and again return to his early, formalist propositions.

In his article concerning the conflict between Shklovsky and Jakobson, which slowly came to a boil at the end of the 1950s and conclusively broke out in 1964, Shklovsky’s last literary assistant, Aleksandr Galushkin, offered three possible root causes; the publication of Shklovsky’s essay “The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry,” including sharp criticism of Jakobson’s essay bearing the same title (Alexander Chudakov’s version of events); the absence of any mention of Jakobson in Shklovsky’s 1963 memoir *Once Upon A Time* («ЖИЛИ-БЫЛИ») (Georgii Levinton’s version); the elimination in the introduction to the new edition of *Zoo* of the words describing Jakobson as “my friend and brother” (Omry Ronen’s version). Yet regardless of the distinctions between these various explanations, they are all based on psychological factors, relating to accumulating, superimposed mutual insults, to Shklovsky’s insatiable vanity, or to Jakobson’s bluntness, bordering on boorishness, or, in the most generous explanation, to the two men’s competition regarding their personal versions of the past – of Formalism in particular and of the history of the literary processes of the 1920s as a whole. Galushkin’s own version of events sums up all of these causes, adding as well Jakobson’s critical review of Shklovsky’s book on Dostoevsky *For and Against* («За и против»), which Jakobson had written several years prior to Shklovsky’s review of Jakobson’s article “The Poetry of

Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry,” in so doing releasing the first salvo of public conflict between the two (Galushkin, “Eshche raz o prichinakh razryva”).

In all of these interpretations of events, theoretical disagreements are reduced to psychological tensions or to ethical evaluation of the two men’s approached to their lives and affairs. This observation is especially characteristic for the reception of Shklovsky’s later works, in which he attempted to return once again to the conceptual origins of Russian Formalism, reconceptualizing them from the perspective of subsequent historical experience and scholarly developments.¹ And as is always the case with Shklovsky, his approach to one or another theoretical or historical-literary question is imbricated with the imperative of resolving internal, intimate biographical problems: in this case, with the problem of comprehension of the causes of his break with Jakobson.

However, all subsequent interpretations of this clearly biographical, but also historical and (most importantly for us) theoretical controversy nearly completely ignore the important place of properly theoretical matters in the story of Shklovsky’s and Jakobson’s break. According this approach reviling of individual psychological motives seems to be more interesting than search for the fundamental conceptual logic, that inevitably led two theoreticians to mutual rupture. What is more, I am referring to theoretical divergences that were implicitly present in the two men’s understandings of the nature of poetic language from the very inception of their careers, and which became more and more apparent from the start of the 1930s in the work of Jakobson, who was not, like Shklovsky, forced to radically change his method and even his manner of scholarly prose.

Furthermore, we should note that disregard for these matters leads to yet another historico-theoretical aberration. Because the connection between Formalism and Structuralism has been, in general, personalized as a reflection of the relationship between Shklovsky and Jakobson, attempts of the former to problematize this connection by illuminating the fundamental distinctions between the two approaches to literary studies have not been taken very seriously. To the contrary, they have generally been interpreted as Shklovsky’s conscious or unconscious efforts to explain to himself (or to ‘insider’ readers) the reasons for his break with Jakobson, as well as to legitimate his 1923 choice to return to Soviet Russia. In other words, his description of theoretical distinctions is waved away as a rationalization of purely psychological matters, of biographical considerations or historical choices. Repudiation of Structuralism’s formalist genealogy is comprehended as a retrospective attempt to explain the sad story of a failed friendship, to compensate for a sense of guilt towards a friend by means of emphasis on a principled theoretical stance in relation to a colleague.

In other words, the accent on the real theoretical breaks, running through the history of scholarship, is comprehended as desire to produce a cultural alibi, sheltering ethic and psychological scandalousness of “real personal history”. As a result, the history of the relationship between Formalism and Structuralism has been rendered as the Story of How Viktor Borisovich and Roman Osipovich Quarrelled. Nevertheless, this personal quarrel simply adds more grist to the mill of those who see an “obvious and straight” genealogical tie between Formalism and Structuralism:² the actualization of theoretical distinctions,

¹ The most part of the late Shklovsky’s works has this retrospect dimension: they intersect new analysis of literary matters with addresses to the method of early Formalism and with the historical reflection striving to explain the later fate of Formalism. See: Shklovsky, *Tetiva; Energiia zabluzhdeniia; O teorii prozy*.

² Cf. the broadly shared conception of the absolute developmental linkage of the two movements: “While, on one hand, it appears absolutely justified to conclude that Russian Formalism, in its best

based on Shklovsky's own positions, is disavowed as being merely an attempt to grant a conceptual foundation to the OPOIaZ founder's personal ambitions. Yet this story can be told in a different way. For it can also be the story of two metalanguages, or of two ways to see the relationships between poetic language and language as such, between the subject and language, and between language and reality. It can also be the story about how one man saw two languages, whereas another saw language in its various forms.

In his 1926 book *Third Factory* («Третья фабрика»), Shklovsky himself documented the start of this story of the divergence of two friends and the transformation of two elements of a single mechanism into completely separate objects, no longer working as parts of a whole: “You and I, we were like two pistons in one cylinder. Such a thing is sometimes found in the life of steam engines. But then they extracted you and deployed you as equipment in Prague” (“Третья фабрика” 361). Still earlier, the names of the two theoreticians figured as part of a general formula of chemical combination in Aleksei Remizov's novella *Kukha* (written in 1922-1923, that is to say, when he himself, as well as both Shklovsky and Jakobson could regularly see one another in Berlin). Remizov wrote: “I've noticed the phenomenon of the coarticulation of names, their paired nature – when you speak one, and the other is already on the tip of your tongue, as with hydrogen and oxygen.” Remizov listed, among other linked names (Anaksimenes and Anaksimandros, Girya and Leonid Andreev, Bunin and Kuprin), the pair “Shklovsky-Jakobson.” (Remizov 56) Combined together into the formula for water, H₂O, in this Remizovian image Shklovsky and Jakobson relate to one other in a proportion of two to one – two atoms of Shklovsky to one of Jakobson. Their approaches to monolingualism and heteroglossia may be described in precisely the same manner. Whereas Shklovsky constructed his critical work on the basis of the displacement of genres and discursive registers, Jakobson saw only a “muddle of chaotic dissonance.”³ Further, whereas Shklovsky conceived of positive effects resulting from the traumatic impact of history on the writer (the poet or the intellectual), who interbreeds in this manner with his material,⁴ giving birth to internally contradictory, heterogeneous, but highly expressive texts – both with regard to history and to the subject of the texts – Jakobson saw no less than the traces of ethical surrender, intellectual degradation and scholarly prostitution. Most importantly, whereas Shklovsky perceived two fundamentally distinct languages, Jakobson saw a single, self-same language that was demonstrating its functional multiplicity. Let us pause on this last topic of disagreement.

The identification of distinct laws of prosaic and poetic language on the basis of essentially dissimilar economies (based on the law of the conservation of psychic energy, on the one hand, and on the law of the expenditure of additional effort, on the other) is one of the central tenets of early Formalism. In this lies one of the chief differences

instantiations, was essentially Structuralism, on the other and it is also true that the activities of the Prague Linguistic Circle in many areas, what is more in the most important ones, were simply further developments of Formalist ideas.” (Erlich 176)

³ With regard to the question of the first flare-up of polemic between the two men: in Jakobson's 1959 review “For and Against Viktor Shklovsky,” regarding his book on Dostoevsky (Shklovskij, *Za i protiv*), one may find the following pronouncement: “The scholar who calls us not to mistake a polyphonic construction of counterpoised responses for a discord and gibberish of discrepant utterances, prompts us to contemplate a polyphony of adjacent, contrasting genres, not to be confused with a muddle of chaotically ungainly dissonance” (Galushkin, “Eshche raz o prichinah razryva” 137).

⁴ “to work in newspapers, magazines, to work daily, to care not for yourself but only for the work, to change, to interbreed with the material, to change again, to interbreed with the material, to process it again, and then, there shall be literature” (Shklovskij, *Tret'ia fabrika* 369).

between Formalism and later variants of Structuralism that counted it as a predecessor. According to structuralist views, there is *a language* which is characterized by universal mechanisms, the operations of which may emphasize one or another element of linguistic activity, depending on circumstances, realizing one or another linguistic function. In this regard, the most fundamental and developed model of linguistic function, proposed by Roman Jakobson in the structuralist phase of his work, included six language functions (“Linguistics and Poetics” 1960). The logic of the distinction between them is distinctly teleological: depending on the orientation towards one or another goal (communication, expression, meta-description, establishment of contact, command or orientation on the utterance) language takes on one or another of its roles, realizing one of its functions. The structural relationship between the unity of language and the variety of functions is described as a hierarchical relationship between the whole and its parts. Each possessed of its particularity, the functional variants of language are not opposed to each other, but instead complement each other, inscribed into various horizons of goal-orientation. As Jakobson puts it: “undoubtedly, for any linguistic collective, and for any speaker, the unity of language exists; however, this over-all code is actually a system of mutually interconnected sub-codes.” (“Lingvistika i poetika” 202) This mutual complementarity allows the functional sub-codes to exist simultaneously within any concrete linguistic message hierarchically reordered in relation to the dominant function. This is the basic position of Jakobson around 1960.

However, as early as the mid-1930s, in his lecture course “The Formal School and Contemporary Russian Literary Studies,” that he taught in Czech at Brno University, he had definitively rejected the axiomatic distinction between practical and poetic language that had been fundamental for the formalists. Jakobson categorized the formalists’ interest in poetic language, which they had begun to describe via the analytical optics of teleology, as a reflection (that they themselves had failed to acknowledge) of the general development of linguistics, which had been emancipated from the deterministic views characteristic of neogrammarian linguistic theory. Furthermore, Jakobson critiques the formalists not only for incomprehension of the theoretical underpinnings of their own work, but for the declamatory nature of their claims: “The thesis of the axiomatic distinction of poetic language became a point of departure for the formalists. Of course, it is far easier simply to claim distinctiveness than it is to accurately define and formulate the actual content of this distinction.” (*Formal'naya shkola* 72) In his discussion of Lev Jakubinsky’s linguistic efforts to concretize these distinctions, Jakobson not only disavows that work, but also generally indicts it for its theoretically naïve position of insistence on the presence of completely distinct logics underlying practical and poetic language (i.e., causal and teleological):

Certain founders of the new science of poetic language failed to recognize that language, too, in its various functions, demanded new methods of study, corresponding to the spirit of the age. They (Eikhenbaum, for instance) even proclaimed that the teleological stance completely distinguishes the study of poetic language from the study of practical language and that the former belongs to the sciences of culture, while the latter belongs to the natural sciences. (63)

If for the formalists the delimitation of languages on the basis of their own logic (the relationship between language, linguistic subject and the world of meanings and forms) was reproduced even at the level of the delimitation of the disciplinary fields – poetics: the science of culture; linguistics: natural science (or, to follow the terminology of Dilthey, to

whom this distinction derives: poetics and linguistics can be respectively described as a science of the spirit and a science of nature) – by the middle 1930s, it appeared completely obvious to Jakobson that it was necessary to discuss goal-orientation in all circumstances, marking distinctions only on the level of different concrete goals.

Somewhat later, in 1940 (in the work “On Poetic Language”), Jan Mukařovský, moving in the same direction as Jakobson, summed up the latter’s theses:

Thanks to contemporary linguistics, which recognizes internal distinctions in correspondence with the goals pursued by linguistic presentations [...], poetic language has been revealed to us as a basic component of the language system, as a persistent formation, possessed of its own law-governed development, and as an important factor in the general development of the human capability to express oneself with the help of language. (77)

In contrast, Russian Formalism was based on the concept of conflict not between *various language functions*, but rather between *distinct languages* themselves, organized in dissimilar fashion. Sixty years after the founding of the formal method, Victor Shklovsky, well aware of structuralist theoretical developments, continued to insist on this approach:

The structuralists attempt to comprehend literature by means of the laws of language, but we began with the premise that words are not all alike: the poetic word is different from the word in prose.” (The Story of OPOIaZ 90)

Regardless of who has the last word in the debate concerning the relationship between everyday language and the language of literature, it was this orientation towards a conflict of languages – a conflict which, in Shklovsky’s opinion, unfolds not only in the tension between the two forms of language, but within each of them – that allowed early Formalism to grasp literature as a separate object of inquiry (distinct from social thought, from the psychology of the author, and from language as such) and to describe a model of literary history based on the mechanisms of conflict and struggle, rather than succession and inheritance. And while the theoretical energy of Formalism was directed toward the delimitation of poetic language as a unique object of study, as an autonomous phenomenon, subject to its own laws, the analytical force of Structuralism worked in the opposite direction: toward the normalization of poetic language as simply one form, among others, of communicative language in general.⁵ Structuralism, on the other hand, once again dissolved poetics into linguistics, literature into language, and narrative into the sentence.⁶

The theoretical potential borne in the theses of Shklovsky and the early OPOIaZ (estrangement, deautomatization, the device of form made difficult and the necessity of expenditure of additional energy for its perception, the accent on making in contradistinction to that which is made), is completely independent of the description of poetic language as part of “the development of the human capability to express oneself with the help of language” (Mukařovský). Instead, it relates to the description of liberation of socially taboo energies of pleasure produced in the encounter with poetic form. At the same time, this theoretical potential is linked to discovery of what would later be described

⁵ Right up till the last of his book Shklovsky will deny this universalizing reasoning, every time addressing to Jakobson as his friend and colleague: “Dear friend of mine, why do you restrict the theme? Why do you translate [...] art of drama, prose and poetry into linguistics?” (*O teorii prozy* 112-113).

⁶ “Any story is one great sentence, and narratologically speaking, a sentence is an outline for a story” (Barthes 95).

as the modeling function of literature – the production of new experience, forming a new relationship to the world.

In other words, poetic language appears in Shklovsky's works not as a vehicle for the expression of an internally stable subject who consciously and intentionally realizes a "capability to express oneself with the help of language," transforming the world in a poetic representation. To the contrary, the effect of poetic language was to be conceived as a destabilization of the subject, a problematization of the "capability to express oneself with the help of language," the introduction onto the scene of sexual inclinations subject to taboo in everyday language, the bringing into play of libidinal energies.

Thus Shklovsky describes poetic imagery – what he refers to as "poetic parallelism" – as the sublimation of libido, a revolution of language, making the emergence of repressed sexual desire possible.⁷ Simultaneously with this problematization of the rational autonomy of the subject, poetic language, from Shklovsky's point of view, transforms the world, but not within an aesthetic frame of representation (the position of Structuralism), but beyond it – it models real human experience, modes of interaction between people and the world (as Iu M. Lotman would later describe this phenomenon in his own works). In other words, poetic language, according to Shklovsky, transforms not merely the representation of the world, but the world itself. To cite the later Shklovsky:

Linguistic analysis is extremely important. And it's important that science should study poetry. But let us not forget that not only are the poet and poetry produced by life. They also themselves produce life [...] [The poet] sets the stage for our experience. [...] The models of the world created in poetry are created in order to reconstruct the world. Yes, these are words – but they are special words, which the lips and mouth actually feel, which renew our cognition, which break through conceptual sclerosis. (*Tetiva* 249-250)

When Eikhenbaum set the study of poetic and practical language in opposition as a science of the spirit (*Geisteswissenschaft*) and a natural science (*Naturwissenschaft*), he emphasized, following Wilhelm Dilthey, that the study of poetic language is concerned with a multitude of unique singularities, from which it is impossible to derive the sort of regular laws based on repetition that are fundamental in the natural sciences. This was an approach that took as its object not poetic language, but rather the concrete poetic text (and this is the source of the incapacity for typology and classification that is so characteristic for the majority of the formalists). One may perceive in this its weakness. Or one may see in it the perspective of an alternate genealogy, leading rather to Post-structuralism or to the late works of Iury Lotman (who distinguished between the systematic regularity of language and the heterogeneous singularity of the text based on the intersection of a multitude of languages that can never be fully translated one into the other) (cf. Lotman, *Kultura i vzryv, Vnutri myslyshikh mirov*).

Reading the early Shklovsky as well as his later returns to his origins, one may see that the theory of poetic language he constructed appears naïve only from the position of a Structuralism that had not yet reached its own limits or problematized its own foundations. Yet it appears pioneering from the perspective of other conceptualizations of the subject, of representation and of the relationships between subject, world and language (from the

⁷ According to this perspective, Shklovsky based his analysis of the main part of material in his early classical works ("Art as Device" and "On Poetry and Trans-sense Language"). See also Kalinin, "Istoria literatury kak *Familienroman*"; Kalinin, Formal'naja teorija sjuzheta / strukturalistskaja fabula formalisma."

point of view of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuze's and Guattari's schizoanalysis, Laclau's and Mouffe's critique discursive analysis, or Barthes' and Kristeva's work on textuality).

So, for instance, Shklovsky's 1916 article "On Poetry and Trans-Sense Language" begins precisely with the question of representation – to be precise, with a recognition of its problematic nature. Kicking off his discussion with the romantic problem of the inexpressible, Shklovsky does not even try to resolve this problem ("O poezii i zaumnom iazyke" 45). To the contrary, he sidesteps the very necessity of representation (of external reality or of the internal world of the poet), and devotes his paper to the word that has shaken itself free of this necessity. He offers as examples Afanasev's *Forbidden Tales*, riddles and proverbs with erotic subtexts, the glossolalia that accompanies sectant sexual and bodily ecstatic manifestations, the phenomena of quasi-erotic pleasure at the articulation of linguistic outpourings in the absence of meaning. Obsessively, Shklovsky enumerates examples in which the word functions not as a semiotic sign, linking a phonetic form with representation of a defined fragment of reality, but rather as a purely phonic gesture – a gesture constituting not a representation of reality, but rather a part of it – a gesture that establishes a connection not between the word and the real, but between the word and the subject that pronounces and perceives it. Moreover, it turns out that, according to Shklovsky, this connection is established not by a structure of meaning (in the manner described by structural linguistics and poetics), but rather a mechanism of desire, realized in the arbitrary "dance" of signifiers (in the manner that it was understood by psychoanalysis and Poststructuralism):

Undoubtedly, the pronunciation aspect of speech is quite important in the pleasure of the meaningless trans-sense word. Quite possibly, the majority of the pleasure brought by poetry is in general related to the pronunciation aspect of speech – to a special dance of the speech organs. (56)

That is, we find here not an accent on the phonic aspect of the poetic word: this is not an orientation towards expression (as Jakobson would have put it), but an orientation towards the physical sensation and orgiastic experience of pronunciation ("words..., that are felt by mouth") – an orientation on muscular flexion, on the "articulatory gesture," mimetically tied with the attempt to infect the addressee with the affect experienced by the speaker.

Pushing of from the positivist principle of the economy of psychic effort, Shklovsky (and early Formalism as a whole) inscribe poetic language into a completely distinct economic model than that of everyday language that is subject to the investigations of the natural sciences. As is well known, Shklovsky describes this model not via the concept of conservation of energy, but rather in terms of its expenditure. Poetic language is a language of "form made difficult," the perception of which demands additional effort – a supplementary investment of desire, the intensity of which is linked precisely with the delay of its fulfillment, as ensured by the posited difficulty of poetic language. In some measure, Shklovsky rejected in general the classical model of semiotics structuring the relationship between sign and meaning. He describes the space of poetic language as a space of pure motion, relationships of materials and surfaces, whose contacts produce pleasure. His conception of the human pursuit of this pleasure transforms the artistic gesture into a basic anthropological need, extending far beyond the limits of art, as well as beyond the limits of rational, subjective goal-orientation. It is characteristic that 65 years after these early positions of OPOIaZ were formulated, Shklovsky reproduces without

alteration this same view of poetic language, yet even more frankly and openly than he had at the start:

And then we had the idea that poetic language differs in general from prosaic language, that this is a special sphere in which even the movement of the lips is important; that there is the world of dance, when muscular movements bring pleasure [...], – and that art is restrained pleasure, or as Ovid put it in his *Ars Amatoria*: in loving, do not rush to your pleasure. (*O teorii prozy* 72)

Pleasure in the “pronunciation aspect of speech,” about which Shklovsky wrote, ties him to a completely different theoretical tradition than the one that Jakobson would come to personify. Early Formalism, that announced its existence together with the trans-sense poetry of the futurists, was opposed to the classical poetics of expression that would be inherited by Structuralism. In the case of Formalism, we are facing not the start of just another theory of representation, but rather a movement in the direction of what would later be described as “textuality” in the works of R. Barthes and J. Kristeva, who emancipated description of the process of meaning-and form-production from the reign of the autonomous subject’s conscious intentions, discovering a more fundamental level of the text, connected with the unconscious mechanisms of desire and transforming the text into a free play of signifiers.

And so instead of an account of rivalry over a woman or of the divvying up of personal fame and glory, the Story of How Viktor Borisovich and Roman Osipovich Quarrelled becomes an account of the clash of two perspectives on the development of contemporary humanistic scholarship.

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