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The Philosophical Narrative as a Semiotic Laboratory of Theatrical Language: The Case of Jean Paul in the Context of the Russian Reception

“Theater” and “drama”: this familiar but invariably troublesome distinction requires a word of explanation, since it has important consequences with regard to the objects and issues at stake. “Theater” is taken to refer here to the complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it. By “drama”, on the other hand, is meant that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular (“dramatic”) conventions. The epithet “theatrical”, then, is limited to what takes place between and among performers and spectators, while the epithet “dramatic” indicates the network of factors relating to the represented fiction. This differentiation demarcates discrete levels of a unified cultural phenomenon for purposes of analysis. A related distinction arises concerning the actual object of the semiotician’s labors in this area; that is to say, the kinds of text which he is to take as his analytic corpus. Unlike the literary semiotician or the analyst of myth or of the plastic arts, the researcher of theater and drama is faced with two quite dissimilar—although intimately related—types of textual material: that produced in the theater and that composed for the theater. To put the question differently: is it possible to re-found in semiotic terms an exhaustive poetics of the Aristotelian kind, concerned with all the communicational, representational, logical, fictional, linguistic, and structural principles of theater and drama?¹ This is one of the central motivating questions behind this article.

I

The study of metaphor is becoming increasingly intensive, penetrating the most diverse domains of knowledge, such as philosophy, logic, psychology, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, literary studies, literary criticism, the theory of fine arts, semiotics, rhetoric, linguistics, philosophy, etc.

1 T. Hawkes, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, London 1987, p. 9.

Of all the numerous theories of metaphor, this study focuses on two trends, the semantic and pragmatic ones. The reason for this is that, even though the cognitive efficiency of metaphorical conceptualization is well recognized, the jury is still out on the peculiar phenomenon of metaphorical truth. For instance, adherents of the semantic school believe that metaphor effects consist in shaping a new meaning by creating some kind of a screen filter² and thus approach the phenomenon of metaphor as a tool for the construction of meaning. Their conception of metaphor creates a peculiar optics, where the tenor is revealed *through* metaphorical expression, or, to put it in other words, the tenor is “projected” onto the vehicle’s semantic field, and a unified integral system of characteristics is used to filter or organize the interpretation of another system. Interactions imply demonstrating one system of characteristics using the other one in order to build a new conception of or a fresh perspective cast on the object.³

Treating metaphor as a form of thought became possible with the emergence of broader views on thinking, which was now understood not only as a domain of formal logic but also as a creative process. This approach contributed much to undermining the conventional theories of the mind and defying the existing stereotypes.⁴ Such theories were named *interactive metaphor models*—a prevalent approach in the theory of metaphor in the twentieth century, which interpreted metaphor as an interaction of ideas,⁵ the meaning of metaphor thus being regarded as the outcome of a special kind of interaction among various contexts.⁶

The idea of metaphor representing a special form of thought was discussed in terms of various interaction theories that studied the mechanism of metaphor.⁷ One of the strongest conclusions was that the intellectual activity behind metaphor is essentially *imaginative thinking* interpreted in terms of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s aspect perception. Aspect perception manifests itself in that the same conception can first be seen as one thing and then as another. Wittgenstein understood this type of mental activity as involving a flight of fancy.

The antagonistic pragmatic school reduces the effects of metaphorization to metaphor’s aesthetic role and denies the possibility of creating a new

2 M. Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY 1962.

3 M. Black, *The Labyrinth of Language*, New York, NY and Toronto 1968.

4 M. Beardsley, “Metaphorical Senses”, in: *Nous*, vol. 12, 1978, pp. 3–16.

5 C. Bazzanella, “Metaphor and Context: Some Issues”, in: *Langage et référence: Mélanges in Honour of Kerstin Jonasson*, ed. H. Kronning, C. Norén, B. Novén, G. Ransbo, L.-G. Sundell, and B. Svane, Uppsala 2001.

6 I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1967.

7 R. Harris, M. Lahey, and F. Marsalek, “Metaphors and Images: Rating, Reporting and Remembering”, in: *Cognition and Figurative Language*, ed. R. Honeck and R. Hoffman, Hillsdale, NJ 1980, pp. 163–181.

meaning within a metaphorical framework. Advocates of the pragmatic school do not differentiate between the content of metaphor and the literal meanings it is based on. The phenomenon of metaphorization is thus associated with novelty produced by overlapping heterogeneous meanings.⁸

The past decades have seen the focus of metaphor research shift from philology (rhetoric, stylistics, literary criticism), where the analysis and evaluation of the poetic metaphor prevail, to spoken language and the domains synthesizing styles, traditions, and genres; in particular, the theatrical metaphor has become a subject of research interest in the humanities.⁹ Metaphor is now being analyzed as closely interrelated with mental processes as well as in terms of articulating certain epistemological and even metaphysical problems. Researchers interpret metaphor as the backbone of the processes of thinking and of creating not only culture-specific worldviews but also the universal vision of the world. The growing theoretical interest in metaphor was inspired by the expansion of metaphor into various types of discourse and the increased frequency of usage in diverse texts, from poetry and journalism to languages of different scientific domains.¹⁰ Since the Middle Ages, the versatility and ubiquity of metaphor in multiple genres of literary, everyday, and scientific speech have made researchers concentrate not so much on its aesthetic value as on its application advantages,¹¹ which implies genre-specific functional limitations¹² and results in diluting the very concept of metaphor, which has come to denote any form of indirect figurative reference in the literary or visual arts.¹³

Widely recognized as a literary device, metaphor becomes scientifically legitimized and treated as a valid mental mechanism. While it used to be understood as a comparison between two static semantic forms, now metaphor is represented as the outcome of interaction between meanings and thus becomes an integral part of the constantly developing language system. The functions of metaphor go well beyond producing a linguistic setting to frame new facts. Metaphor also serves to express a special way of conceptualizing those facts based on the principle of the imaginary, which makes it possible to acknowledge the heterogeneity between

8 H. G. Coenen, *Analogie und Metapher: Grundlegung einer Theorie der bildlichen Rede*, Berlin and New York, NY 2002.

9 W. Shibes, *Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History*, Whitewater, WI 1971.

10 *Theorie der Metapher*, ed. A. Haverkamp, Darmstadt 1983.

11 R. Hoffman, "Some Implications of Metaphor for Philosophy and Psychology of Science", in: *The Ubiquity of Metaphor: Metaphor in Language and Thought*, ed. W. Paprotté and R. Dirven, Amsterdam 1985, pp. 327–380.

12 *Ibid.*

13 J. P. Aarts and J. Colbert, *Metaphor and Non-Metaphor*, Tübingen 1979.

image and meaning.¹⁴ By enriching philosophical vocabularies, metaphors produce polysemantic terms, which result in the overlapping of semantic fields and their distinctive features. The semantic scope of metaphors is defined intuitively, as term/content compatibility is assessed through linguistic intuitions, which vary across individuals and situations.¹⁵ Metaphorization, which is ultimately eradicating metaphor as such, results in categories of linguistic semantics.¹⁶

The mechanisms of metaphor in different texts and the transformations it has gone through since ancient times have been analyzed at the interface of historical and cultural processes, leading to conventionalization of meaning.¹⁷ P. Ricoeur was the first to apply a hermeneutic approach in the theory of metaphor. He offered a corresponding model of metaphor which drew on the ideas of philosophical hermeneutics and associated metaphor with the deepest worldview level concealed by everyday life. Ricoeur argues that there cannot be an adequate theory of metaphor that does not take imagination and perception into account, yet he insists on interpreting these two processes in terms of semantics rather than psychology. He believes that images and imagination form a special kind of medium similar to flowing imagery, in and through which similarities can be seen; in addition, images help bring different concepts closer together and change logical distances between them. According to Ricoeur, imagination is about exposing relationships through images. He demonstrates that it is imagery that brings the process of metaphorization to its specific maturity.¹⁸

Modern metaphor analysis also draws on the hypothesis proposed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, which holds that metaphor embraces the principle of theatricalization, theatrical optics, and play, as it serves to conceptualize a phenomenon using terminology that is normally used to describe other phenomena.¹⁹

The past quarter-century has yielded definitive studies which explore the origin of metaphor as a phenomenon using tools that range from describing the overall mechanism of metaphor²⁰ to analyzing its specific applications in texts of different types (scientific, literary, political, etc.).²¹ It should be noted, however, that along with scientific (linguistic, neuropsychological) metaphor

14 P. de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor", in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 13–30.

15 M. Mühling-Schlapkohl, "Metapher: Schlüssel des Verstehens?", in: *Theologie und Philosophie*, vol. 79, 2004, pp. 189–199.

16 *Aspects of Metaphor*, ed. J. Hintikka, Dordrecht, London, and Boston, MA 1994.

17 A. Biese, *Die Philosophie des Metaphorischen*, Hamburg and Leipzig 1893.

18 P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, tr. R. Czerny with K. McLaughlin and J. Costello, London 1978.

19 G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, IL 2003.

20 A. Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors*, London and New York, NY 1997.

21 R. Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind*, Cambridge 1994.

analysis and related research in linguistic philosophy, metaphor has also been approached as a fundamental property of any language, philosophical or scientific, that has a specific set of metaphorical matrices.²²

Disputes over metaphor as a phenomenon also reveal the modern trend of utilizing its epistemological potential. Although the idea of metaphorical conceptualization being related to cognition dates as far back as the philosophy of Romanticism, the way metaphor is associated with cognitive processes today is something different. While the abundance of metaphors in the language of philosophical Romanticism had to do with the urge to validate the principle of imagination and spontaneity in cognition, modern philosophy regards metaphor as a means of reflection of a special type. Metaphor allows for the synthesis of different layers of knowledge and for the fusion of hypotheses and assumptions on the one hand and verified knowledge on the other into one connected whole.²³ Metaphor's ability to unite different meanings into integrated wholes implies a mechanism for adjusting facts. This mechanism is triggered by the very principle of fictitiousness and assumed likeness. The modus of likening enables metaphor to equate different phenomena and integrate the unknown into the structure of existing knowledge.²⁴

The modus of fictitiousness typical of metaphorical conceptualization provides an insight into seemingly ambiguous verbal expressions as well as logically and linguistically unregulated structures, breaking the patterns of logical organization in texts and lifting the restraints on a recombination of their components. The introduction of metaphor thus makes it possible to bring together objects that are extremely remote from one another.²⁵ The combination of the known and the unknown in semantic meaning transfers is always the result of conventions, and metaphor is an effective tool to provide such a dialogical development of content.²⁶

II

Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, 1763–1825), one of the most unorthodox German writers, eludes classification under the titles of Romanticism,

22 J. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. A. Bass, Chicago, IL 1982.

23 H. Kubczak, "Begriffliche Inkompatibilität als konstitutives Prinzip der Metapher", in: *Sprachwissenschaft*, vol. 10, 1994, pp. 22–39.

24 J. D. Sapir, "The Anatomy of Metaphor", in: *The Social Use of Metaphor: Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric*, ed. J. C. Crocker and J. D. Sapir, Pittsburgh, PA 1977, pp. 3–32.

25 J. Vervaeke and J. M. Kennedy, "Conceptual Metaphor and Abstract Thought", in: *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 19, 2004, pp. 213–231.

26 F. G. Droste, "Metaphor as a Paradigmatic Function", in: *Poetics*, vol. 11, 1982, pp. 203–211.

classicism, neo-baroque, or sentimentalism, his oeuvre embodying the cultural project of the transitional period of the turn of the nineteenth century. His texts, dubbed a “dreadful monster” by Thomas Carlyle and considered “unbelievably mature” by Goethe, seem to comprise multiple incongruous layers, aesthetic techniques, literary styles, cultures and identities, drawing the reader into a phantasmagoric space, astoundingly ordinary and yet surreal at the same time. This study seeks to demonstrate this creative (contrapuntal and ironical) multi-layeredness and identify Jean Paul’s mechanisms of creating literary works and essays in philosophical aesthetics, which, on the one hand, fit into the cultural context of the “end of the age of rhetoric”, and on the other, anticipate the challenges of the upcoming age of modernist art. A large-scale symposium held several years ago in Moscow discussed the comparative issues associated with the reception of Jean Paul’s works in various national contexts where his ideas, images, techniques, and strategies have been employed for local cultural and literary needs.²⁷ The reception of Jean Paul in Russian literature has been intense, with the 2010s seeing another climax in interpretation of his oeuvre.

Jean Paul’s role, influence, and literary charm are as great as the extent to which he was disregarded, at least among Russian-speaking readers, throughout the twentieth century and the very beginning of the twenty-first century. The label “the German Laurence Sterne” suggests a very inaccurate analogy, which can only give the most superficial and tentative idea of the writer’s hierarchies, contexts, and narrative style. The degree of inaccuracy is directly proportionate to the differences in sentimentalism and pre-Romanticism between England and Germany. German literary culture of that period features much more elements of the Baroque, mannerism, and (*avant la lettre*) expressionism than is the case in texts from the British Isles; the description of German novels of the eighteenth century as “frantic encyclopedias”²⁸ is a perfectly appropriate term to define the genre and style of Jean Paul’s works. Jean Paul was on everyone’s lips and minds in nineteenth-century Russia. It might suffice to recall that Vissarion Belinsky, a famous Russian literary critic, demanded that this writer’s influence should be restricted.²⁹

27 “Tvorchestvo Zhan Polya: na granitse kul’tur i stiley” [Jean Paul’s Oeuvre: At the Interface of Cultures and Styles]. Report presented at the international conference held by the Gorky Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences (17 June 2014, Moscow).

28 J. W. Smeed, “Thomas Carlyle and Jean Paul Richter”, in: *Comparative Literature*, vol. 16, 1964, pp. 226–253.

29 Vissarion Belinsky, “Retseziya na ‘Antologiyu iz Zhan-Pol’ Rikhtera” [Review of *Anthology of Jean Paul Richter*], in: Vissarion Belinsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy: V 13 t.* [Complete Works in 13 vols.], vol. 8, Moscow 1955, p. 59. A work on Jean Paul was published in Russia in 1844. It was an anthology that not only failed to shed light on the author, but even distorted the very concept of him: sentences pulled out from different works were presented as

The composer Robert Schumann was referred to as “Jean Paul in music”,³⁰ a “translator of Richter’s verbal metaphors and images into the language of sounds, a skillful interpreter of the Baroque phonological structure of his figures of speech”.³¹

The case of Jean Paul is unique, indeed. The nature of his narration is polysynthetic and based on his own philosophy of theatrical language, the origins of which are discovered at the interface of theater, literature, and dramaturgy. In his novels and literary works, the researcher will find a hybrid combination of various genres and forms, which allows him to regard theater as a space for cultural transformation.³² In such a dynamic environment, metaphor plays a pivotal role in Jean Paul’s literary system and intellectual pursuits. According to Jean Paul, metaphor extends the potential of speech.

This paper provides insight into the specific aspects of theatrical space in non-theatrical works by Jean Paul (as well as some of his quasi-theatrical plots) connected with his reception within Russian culture and literature.³³ We will dwell on the structure of his works and his theatrical perspective, which had a latent yet considerable influence on the subsequent culture of Europe, including Russia. The urgency of this endeavor originates from the fact that Jean Paul is barely known to present-day Russian readers; his works are rarely published and little studied.³⁴

anecdotes, no more than that. Belinsky produced a very awkward article on this account, which boiled down to a recommendation not to fall for the eccentric Jean Paul too much.

30 S. Goddard, “[Review of] *Der Einfluss Jean Pauls auf Robert Schumann* by Hans Kötz”, in: *Music & Letters*, vol. 15, 1934, p. 177.

31 J. Daverio, “Reading Schumann by way of Jean Paul and His Contemporaries”, in: *College Music Symposium*, vol. 30, 1990, pp. 28–45.

32 The bibliography of Richter’s works as well as of scholarly studies devoted to his oeuvre is extensive. See E. Berend, *Jean Paul-Bibliographie*, Berlin and Munich 1925; E. Berend, *Prolegomena zur historisch-kritischen Gesamtausgabe von Jean Pauls Werken*, Berlin 1927; E. Berend, *Jean Paul-Bibliographie*, Stuttgart 1963; T. Schestag, “Bibliographie für Jean Paul”, in: *MLN* (German Issue), vol. 113, 1998, pp. 465–523.

33 Twelve volumes had been published by July 1934. Richter’s works were translated into Russian mostly in journals of the first half of the nineteenth century: *Mnemozina* (1824, vol. I); *Moskovskiy Telegraf* (1827); *Moskovskiy Vestnik* (1827, vols. I–III; 1830, vol. IV); *Sovremennik* (1838, vol. XII; 1841, vol. XXII), *Moskovskiy Nablyudatel* (1839, vol. I), etc. Independent publications: *Antologiya iz Zhan-Polya Rikhtera* [Anthology of Jean Paul Richter], St. Petersburg 1844; *Tsvety, plody i shipy, ili brachnaya zhizn’, smert’ i svad’ba advokata bednykh Zibenkeyza* [Flower, Fruit, and Thorn Pieces, or The Wedded Life, Death, and Marriage of Firmian Stanislaus Siebenkäs, Parish Advocate in the Burgh of Kuhschnappel], tr. Ye. Barteneva, St. Petersburg 1937; *Zibenkez* [Siebenkäs], Leningrad 1937.

34 A. Sidorov’s translation of Jean Paul’s novel *The Life of the Little Schoolmaster Maria Wuz in Auental* was prepared for publication by Academia in 1922, yet it was never finalized. An edited typescript is stored in the Academia Fund of the Russian State Archive of Literature and

One major reason for this situation is the fact that he is incredibly hard to translate (which did not pose a problem in the nineteenth century, when reading knowledge of German was common among the educated in Russia). Only one of Jean Paul's novels has been translated into Russian so far—*Siebenkäs*, by A. Kardashinsky in 1937.³⁵ The translation leaves out large passages, namely all of the “digressions” that are so typical of Jean Paul.

The Russian translation of *The Awkward Age* was published by the German publisher Otto Reichl, who has opened a branch in Moscow and divulges, among other things, classical German literary works that are unexplored in Russia.³⁶

A new surge of interest in Jean Paul's artistic heritage has been observable in Germany since the mid-1990s.³⁷ Theatrical dimensions, by the way, are mentioned in each of the relevant studies. The titles of these books represent highly

Art (RGALI) (fund 629, series 1, archival unit 1393). Academia was a publishing house of the Petrograd University Philosophy Community, which existed in 1921–1937 in the RSFSR and later in the USSR. The publishing house is famous for high-quality classical literature publications and illustrations as well as for employing a number of well-known translators and artists. Sidorov (1891–1978) was a Soviet art historian, bibliophile, collector, expert in bibliography and history of drawing, Doctor of Sciences in Art History (1936), corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union (1946), Honored Art Worker of the RSFSR (1947), author of works on individual issues of Western European art of the Renaissance and Modernism, the research papers *The Graphic Language of Rembrandt*, *The Art of Beardsley*, and others. Sidorov was recruited by the Joint State Political Directorate in 1928 under the codename of *Stary* (“Old”) to conduct secret surveillance of the Moscow artistic intelligentsia. Investigating the case of the Moscow-based artist and political prisoner Leonid Nikitin, his son Andrey wrote in his book *Mystics, Rosicrucianists and Templars in Soviet Russia*: “A. Sidorov, who owned the largest collection of books and manuscripts on occultism in Moscow, a Templar, a Rosicrucianist and a high-ranking Mason—as reported by informed contemporaries—remained intact amidst that purge. He kept taking interest in mysticism, discussed it enthusiastically with his acquaintances and sometimes even lent them books on occultism and theosophy. While many of those people ended up in prison and forced labor camps, he survived through the horrendous years successfully.” Sidorov went on translating Jean Paul Richter's works and commenting on them. His manuscripts remained unpublished and are now kept in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) (fund 632, series 4, archival unit 305).

35 *Siebenkäs* was published by the publishing house Khudozhestvennaya in the thick of the Great Purge in Leningrad in 1937.

36 *Zhan Pol': Grubiyanskiye gody. Biografiya. V 2 tomakh* [Jean Paul: *The Awkward Age*. Biography. In 2 vols.], Moscow 2017. The book includes extensive commentaries based on German academic publications and was largely improved by the translator T. Baskakova. The afterword contains a detailed analysis of *The Awkward Age* (in the context of Jean Paul's work) and touches upon Jean Paul's influence on modern Western literature.

37 H. Kaiser, *Jean Paul lesen: Versuch über seine poetische Anthropologie des Ich*, Würzburg 1995; U. Hagel, *Elliptische Zeiträume des Erzählens: Jean Paul und die Aporien der Idylle*, Würzburg 2003; S. Eickenrodt, *Augen-Spiel: Jean Pauls optische Metaphorik der Unsterblichkeit*, Göttingen 2006.

relevant problems that open up new paths of interpretation; however, the time for a comprehensive understanding of Jean Paul's texts is obviously yet to come.

Jean Paul's place in the history of German and European literature is hard to determine, as very few studies go deep into at least one of his novels, which appears strange. Russian researchers of Jean Paul consistently analyze poetic devices but never summarize (or interpret) the content of any specific novel.³⁸

There are reasons for reckoning Jean Paul among the pre-Romantics, partially because he pays a lot of attention to humor and irony in his theoretical work *Introduction to Aesthetics*. However, the ways in which he constructs and ironically presents his plots are based on visual—theatrical—collisions. They are extremely controversial and often involve nearly palpable forms, intrigue and conflict, i.e. everything the reader needs to feel like a spectator. The instantaneous switching between narratives creates a powerful optical illusion in which readers/spectators find themselves submerged. For instance, Jean Paul applies irony when opposing routine life (mediocre and sometimes hilarious) to an eternal perspective on this routine and human life as such.

This is where it comes to a crucial characteristic of his textual production. Jean Paul impregnates many of his works, whether philosophical, autobiographical, or fictional, with visionary images of outer space. They are full of theatrical metaphors: *The Awkward Age* (an autobiographical novel), for example, ends with a visionary picture of the evolution of the human language, which is presented as a scene with a drop curtain and linguistic elements appearing as characters in a mystery play.

The theatrical dimension of Jean Paul's metaphors reveals his connection to an earlier literary tradition. This "ancient pedigree" of his can be observed in his theatrical symbols and emblems as well as in the allegorical structure of his narratives. Emblems do not play a great role among other Romantic writers. Jean Paul uses his theatrical ciphers that pass from text to text and live a life of their own, combining and forming individual internal plotlines within the narrative. For instance, there is a scene in *The Awkward Age* where a man wearing a mask offers money to people in a tavern for throwing eggs out of an open window. No one can succeed because the window is enchanted. This reads as a comical scene, but broken eggs are compared to the "unhatched" intentions and hopes of young writers in another work of Jean Paul's, *Life of Fibel*. A man

38 V. Admoni, *Zhan-Pol' Rikhter: Rannii burzhuazny realism* [Jean Paul Richter: Early Bourgeois Realism], Leningrad 1936; M. Trotskaya, *Zhan-Pol' Rikhter v Rossii* [Jean Paul Richter in Russia], Moscow and Leningrad 1937.

in a mask appears, and then another one, compared to a puppeteer. The same episodes, if only more extended, can be encountered in *Introduction to Aesthetics* and *Titan*. A description of a puppet theater occurs three times in *Introduction to Aesthetics*. The roles in these puppet plays are played by Jean Paul's literary teachers, such as Cervantes, Shakespeare, Swift, and Sterne.

It is well established that Jean Paul borrowed quite a lot from Laurence Sterne, including the plot of *The Awkward Age* revolving around a mysterious heritage (this storyline is presented in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, in the chapter "The Fragment. Paris"). However, Jean Paul embellished Sterne's plot with a multitude of important details—theatrical, tellingly—creating a much more interesting book, to my mind, yet intentionally leaving the reference to Sterne in his text. He incorporates entire passages from *Introduction to Aesthetics*, in which Sterne is present as a character in a puppet play. Both Sterne and Jean Paul can be regarded as the founding fathers of the meta-novel or the meta-play, i.e. a novel that recounts how a novel is written and going deep into the nature of a literary or theatrical text.

Ludwig Börne, a younger contemporary of Jean Paul, said in his *Speech on Jean Paul*, commemorating the writer's death in 1825:

He did not live for everyone! But the time will come when he will be born for everyone, and everyone will lament his death. He is simply standing patiently by the gate to the twentieth century and waiting with a smile on his face for the slow people he is a part of to catch up with him.³⁹

Börne wishes to convey that Jean Paul was far ahead of his readers, and this is perfectly true. Back in the nineteenth century, what was valued most was the way Jean Paul described the life of the so-called humble man. Altogether, Jean Paul found little understanding in the nineteenth century. He was rediscovered in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century by the poet Stefan George and his circle of disciples. It was, indeed, George who most profoundly delineated the significance of Jean Paul. In a eulogy from 1896, George reunited Jean Paul and Goethe and declared Jean Paul Germany's second greatest poet after Goethe. As to the historical facts, Goethe was disposed positively towards Jean Paul in the beginning, but when Jean Paul came to Weimar to meet him, both Goethe and Schiller found him frenetic or somewhat strange. Perhaps they felt irritated by the abundance of baroque metaphors in his works that was beyond

³⁹ Ludwig Börne, "Denkrede auf Jean Paul Friedr. Richter", in: Ludwig Börne, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. I. and P. Rippmann, vol. 1, Düsseldorf 1964, pp. 787–799, p. 798.

all reasonable limits. Neither of them allowed themselves such extravagances as references to the Gothic novel or the creation of fantastic fiction.

George intended a radical revision of the German literary tradition, insisting on the two centers of gravity within it—the one occupied by Goethe, the other by Jean Paul. If Goethe is a great observer, the master of clarity, precision, and balanced construction, then Jean Paul, the dreamer, provides the objects' aura, colors, metaphors, hues, and tones. For George, Goethe is the architect of the German language, while Jean Paul is its musician and theater producer.⁴⁰

George published an anthology of fragments from Jean Paul's works in 1900, focusing on things that differed strikingly from what mesmerized readers in the nineteenth century: the anthology included descriptions of dreams and bright, surrealistic theatrical metaphors. George referred to this anthology as "the surrealistic theater".⁴¹ "Jean Paul's theatrical darkness"—this is how his biographer Börne described his style.⁴²

In one of his letters, Jean Paul explains that in *The Awkward Age* he depicts himself as two twin brothers with different tempers. The brothers compose and stage various scenes and plays all the time, and all those scenes and plays evolve into a "garden of forking paths", just like that of Borges.

However, the story of the protagonists themselves turns out to be even more captivating. The novel begins with a scene in which a rich man's last will is read aloud. The man leaves all his property to a poor rural boy, provided that he will do a series of—at first sight—rather meaningless tasks. In addition, the will demands that a writer be found to document the boy's actions day by day. The drafts describe eleven versions of those tasks—their number is reduced in the print-version—which refer to quests as familiar from medieval literary texts. A writer is found, and his name is Johann Paul Richter. As we can see, *The Awkward Age* is created by Jean Paul (whose real name is Johann Paul Richter) himself, but as a literary character created by the "real" Jean Paul. Moreover, the will says that the deceased man's name used to be J. P. Richter, and the poor young boy will inherit this name together with all the property in case he succeeds. There are also seven other claimants, who are to receive some part of the inheritance for every mistake the boy commits. The register of mistakes is described as plots of plays revolving around *qui pro quo* situations. Five of them

⁴⁰ P. Fleming, "June 10, 1796: An Alien Fallen from the Moon", in: *The New History of German Literature*, ed. D. Wellbery, J. Ryan, H. U. Gumbrecht, A. Kaes, J. L. Koerner, and D. E. von Mücke, Cambridge, MA 2004, pp. 465–470; E. Förster, "1796–1797: A New Program for the Aesthetic Education of Mankind?", in: *ibid.*, pp. 470–474.

⁴¹ Stefan George, "Jean Paul", in: Stefan George, *Tage und Taten*, Berlin 1927, p. 61.

⁴² Börne, "Denkrede", p. 790.

are purely comical, vaudeville-like. The “potential heirs” probably impersonate some dubious personal traits of the protagonist—otherwise speaking, they point to temptations that the boy will have to cope with in his further life. The novel is teeming with riddles and symbols, so the reader had better be extremely attentive not to get lost or confused. This results in a very perceptible theatrical mishmash, which turns the novel into a sort of immersive theater.

In order to understand Jean Paul, one needs to pay attention to details. All characters in the novel are parts—or partial reflections—of the author’s personality. One of the most intricate problems related to this work has to do with its title. It translates from German as “age of transition”, or “awkward age”, but the protagonist is 24 years old, far past the “awkward age” (meaning: adolescence). Some reliable dictionaries claim that the very notion of *Flegeljahre*, i.e. the awkward age, appeared only after Jean Paul’s novel was published, hence was coined by this text. The German word *Flegel* has a variety of meanings, including “threshing flail” and “rude fellow”. For an ultimate understanding, it is important to take into account the “rude literature” trend that was popular among German writers at that time. Adherents of this philosophy presented themselves as illiterate rednecks and behaved rudely to those with refined taste. This latter meaning seems to be decisive to me. In the end, the novel describes the period during which the two brothers gradually evolve into writers. They venture into different forms, jointly create a novel called *Kogel Mogel, or Heart*; the draft versions of the text contain seventeen namesake plays. The years of discipleship are awkward for the brothers, who live in poverty, with nothing coming easily to them. At the same time, they are rude rebels themselves (the avant-garde, using contemporary language) and they create a sort of rude theater. *Introduction to Aesthetics* features Jean Paul’s philosophical argument about what rude theater looks like. Curiously, Antonin Artaud would reproduce this philosophical argument almost entirely when explaining the principles of his Theater of Cruelty.

Theatricality gets concentrated in those fragments of Jean Paul’s works which describe events that are very similar to nightmares. The same plot travels from text to text: action takes place at night, a man wearing a mask appears, etc.

A separate work of his is devoted uniquely to dreaming. When Jean Paul was nominated an honorable member of the Frankfurt association *Museum*, he felt obliged to “work off” his title and wrote his book *Museum*, published in 1815, which is a collection of essays of various kinds, including his text about dreaming.

One of the most obsessive dreams is the one about puppets, including mechanical ones, and scenes from a puppet theater with the puppeteer wearing a

mask. The piece about dreaming, *A Glance Thrown into Dreaming*, turned out to be a very profound one. Jean Paul is trying to show how dreams are born, arguing that they are created by “co-workers”, which include “brain” (an accumulator of sensual impressions), the mind (the “thinking I”), “the power of the subconscious”, and the “outside world”.

According to Jean Paul, theater is where the imagination, which is in charge of dreaming, is triggered. Traces of such stagings can be found in *The Awkward Age*. The very idea of the novel—to show a few characters in one—originates from here, too. At times, Jean Paul’s narrative seems visually convincing—“as if one could see the story played out on stage”, according to his attentive reader and biographer Börne.

For instance, Jean Paul uses only a few sentences to describe a scene where a man sneaks back to the village where his mother lives. The details are nearly photographically precise: what his mother is wearing (a sleeveless jacket tailored for males), the way she is dumping out bad and defective lettuce leaves from a bowl, and the fact that she “didn’t have a single word [with her husband], which is so typical of rural families”. Jean Paul was a man of endless literary experiments.

Jean Paul explains that the relationship between the book and the reader is analogous to that between the stage and the spectator. He believed that books and stages were basically the same things. Books are capable of creating powerful optical illusions, too. This is manifested, for example, in the way Jean Paul provides some trustworthy information about himself, despite all the fantastic nature of *The Awkward Age*. The narrator suddenly mentions having moved to another city and even specifies his new address and describes the view to be seen from the window. All of this miraculously matches the events in Jean Paul’s “real” life at the time of writing this chapter. However, the new address is immediately followed by the phrase: “my shelter (which is also what my body is)”.

Jean Paul’s theatrical fantasies manifest themselves on the level of the plot, in his metaphors, in sentence structures, and in the way space and time are organized. For instance, a character is walking along a road on a fall day. Out of the blue, he finds himself in a valley “in the midst of spring”: flowers are blooming, nightingales are singing, etc. He soon gets back to the road, which is followed by the phrase: “[. . .] *fall* birds were squawking in the woods of the river valley left behind”.

Jean Paul’s texts are similar to linguistic labyrinths, moving through which is a separate storyline with a scenario and drama of its own. In particular, they feature an abundance of Latin words and titles of various books, e.g. law lists of those times.

Jean Paul had a penniless youth and could not afford to buy books. Whenever a novel title caught his attention, he would imagine a book it might fit. Then he started writing out passages from books. He accumulated thousands of notes on most diverse subjects: witchcraft, kinds of birds, etc. Later on, while working on yet another novel, he would use those notes as a basis for his refined metaphors. The twentieth-century German writer Arno Schmidt also produced note cards first and then knitted them together into his novels—I believe he learned the method from Jean Paul. The University of Würzburg has uploaded all of Jean Paul’s notes onto their website. There are myriads of them, but keyword research tools are very helpful. This project helps reconstruct the theatrical aspects of Jean Paul’s language.

Intricate syntax is another aspect of his theatrical perspective and yet another useful tool for creating and preserving theatrical space. In *The Awkward Age*, Jean Paul as a character obtains rewards for every chapter written. Rewards are objects from the testator’s *Kunstkammer*, and each chapter is entitled after the respective object. The difficulty lies in the fact that it is not always clear what exactly those objects are, e.g. a rare shell, a “mammoth bone from near Astrakhan”, etc. The titles are also a sort of author’s comment on what is going on in the chapter. For example, gemstones can be genuine or fake, expensive or cheap, and all of them assign specific color accents to the chapters. This information is embedded in the titles in German but lost when translated into Russian. One of the chapters translates as “red hawk”, while the calque translation would be “scissor tail”. Scissors in *The Awkward Age* and other Jean Paul novels are a metaphor for the writer’s and playwright’s “styling” efforts. Jean Paul approaches the content of a literary work and its stylistics, or form, separately, which is why he depicts himself as two twin brothers.

Jean Paul became an iconic figure for modernist authors. For instance, Paul Celan was his admirer and would frequently cite his words. The first book that Celan bought when he moved to France in 1948 was a multivolume collection of Jean Paul’s oeuvres. Hans Henny Jahn’s novel trilogy *River without Banks* is full of Jean Paul’s theatrical metaphors and references to the writer. Jahn depicts the protagonist as several characters, namely as the crew and passengers of a “wooden ship”. Jean Paul had already introduced this device, as we can see in *The Awkward Age*.

III

In conclusion, I would like to come back to the three essential yet non-researched cases of the reception of Jean Paul in Russian culture in the second half of the

nineteenth century, which provide insight into the theatrical metaphors of Jean Paul's literary discourse and its subsequent interpretations.

The theatrical semantics of images pervades Jean Paul's most significant works, which have traditionally been associated with the fundamentals of nihilism at its climaxes in the early nineteenth century, in the 1860s, and at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴³ It should be recalled that an extended debate was caused by the way nihilism was interpreted by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, to whom the term allegedly owes its popularity. Jacobi used the word "nihilism" to describe the theoretical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (whom he considered to be a convinced Kantian). "Jacobi invented the notion of nihilism, and that was [. . .] a seminal discovery of his."⁴⁴

Nihilism in Russia had its ideological roots in the German and French interpretations of the notions of "nihilism" and "nihilist". However, the theoretical origins alone cannot explain exactly why the movement was so widespread in Russia in the 1850s–1860s. It is commonly believed to have spread due to the newly emerged milieu of *raznochinets intelligentsia* (intellectuals of various social classes). Having appeared suddenly and in large numbers, *raznochintsy* dissociated themselves from their social roots, shaping the image and worldview of outcasts who broke with their family and social class traditions but never found new ones. At the same time, the fascination with nihilism was a way of fighting for personal identity. Russian critics of the nineteenth century considered Jean Paul to be a pioneer of European nihilism. For example, Belinsky used the word "nihilism" as a synonym of "idealism" when referring to Jean Paul. N. Dobrolyubov in his critical analysis of an 1858 book by Bervi interpreted nihilism as "negation of any real existence" and as a sort of revival of skepticism.

In his article *From the History of "Nihilism"*, the present-day Russian researcher A. Mikhaylov names two of Jean Paul's works among the sources of this intellectual movement, namely *Speech of the Dead Christ from the Universe that There Is No God*, which is a section of his novel *Siebenkäs*, and *Introduction to Aesthetics*, where Jean Paul describes Romantic poetry as "nihilistic". Jean Paul's writing style is very concise in these texts, and his discourse is palpable, rhetorically convincing and suitable for being performed on stage.⁴⁵

⁴³ W. Mueller-Lauter, "Nihilismus", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter and K.-F. Gründer, vol. 6, Basel and Stuttgart 1984, pp. 846–853; K. Risenhuber, "Nichts", in: *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, Munich 1973, pp. 991–1008; *Le Petit Robert*, Paris 2001, p. 1152.

⁴⁴ A. Mikhaylov, *Jean Paul: Vorschule der Aesthetik*, Moscow 1981, p. 21.

⁴⁵ A. Mikhaylov, "Iz istorii 'nigilizma'" [From the History of "Nihilism"], in: A. Mikhaylov, *Obratny perevod* [Reverse Translation], Moscow 2000, pp. 537–627.

Jean Paul's influence on later literature and, in particular, on the ideology of nihilism is unquestionable. However, his ideas were rarely transformed beyond recognition when being transplanted into different literary periods.⁴⁶ An unpublished essay, *Jean Paul Richter* by the Russian writer Vsevolod Krestovsky, has been recently discovered in state archives.⁴⁷ Krestovsky (1839–1895) was a writer, poet, and literary critic. He is most famous for his novel *The Slums of Saint Petersburg* (1864–1867). Krestovsky was among the first to address criminal issues and the lowest social strata, which he exposed in his novel dramatically in most diverse manifestations, including the ties of the Russian elite of that time with organized crime. This novel about the seemingly refined life of Petersburg and its covert but true life concealed from the public eye constitutes a social portrait of the whole of Russian society. Contemporaries would read the novel avidly, recognizing familiar locations and characters. Reader interest and broad discussion were stimulated by a caper storyline, psychological and realistic accuracy of character description, familiar localities, and convincing sketches of life typical of various social strata.

In his essay *Jean Paul Richter*, written in 1863, Krestovsky investigates *Speech of the Dead Christ from the Universe that There Is No God* to trace optical and acoustic metaphors in Jean Paul's text; the whole scene passionately describing Christ's travel around the universe is interpreted as a polyphony of music and light, a majestic theatrical performance.

Now a sublime noble figure, bearing an imperishable sorrow, sank down from on high to the altar, and the dead all cried: "Christ! is there no God?"

He replied: "There is none."

Each whole shadow of the dead, not only their breasts alone, shook, and one by one they were ripped apart by their quaking.

Christ went on: "I traversed the worlds, I ascended into the suns, and soared with the Milky Ways through the wastes of heaven; but there is no God. I descended to the last reaches of the shadows of Being, and I looked into the chasm and cried: 'Father, where art thou?' But I heard only the eternal storm ruled by none, and the shimmering rainbow of essence stood without sun to create it, trickling above the abyss. And when I raised my eyes to the boundless world for the divine eye, it stared at me from an empty bottomless

46 N. Kovalev, "Zhan-Pol' i yevropeyskiy nigilizm XIX–XX vekov" [Jean Paul and European Nihilism of the 19th–20th Centuries], in: *Romano-germanskaya filologiya: Konteksty kul'tury i literaturnye svyazi. mezhdunar. sb. nauch. st.* [Romance and Germanic Philology: Cultural Contexts and Literary Connections. International Research Paper Collection], Novopolotsk, pp. 143–145.

47 V. Krestovsky, *Zhan Pol' Rikhter* [Jean Paul Richter], Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fund 341, series 1, archival unit 514, pp. 1–7 (autograph).

socket; and Eternity lay on Chaos and gnawed it and ruminated itself.—Shriek on, discords, rend the shadows; for He is not!”⁴⁸

This universal drama depicted by Jean Paul is epistemologically described by Krestovsky as the cradle of nihilism, assuming the role of a social masquerade in the Russian and European contexts of that time. Nihilism as theatrical performance, as a theater of masks, can also be observed in the feuilleton chapters of *The Slums of Saint Petersburg*. Thus, Krestovsky’s essay devoted to Jean Paul and the study of his theatrical metaphors became a laboratory of thought and imagery for his own novel.

It has been established that Jean Paul’s novel *The Awkward Age* has a number of draft versions. These drafts, incidentally, are kept in the archive of the Russian playwright Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin (1817–1903),⁴⁹ author of the trilogy *Scenes from the Past*, who considered himself a Russian Hegel. He devoted his life to translating Hegel’s works into Russian and later developed a philosophical system of his own. Sukhovo-Kobylin studied in Heidelberg in the 1840s and obtained Jean Paul’s documents from Hegel’s disciples. He looked up to Jean Paul as his literary mentor and even imitated some of his works in his younger days, especially the novel *Titan* (Sukhovo-Kobylin’s drama *Cleon*, a text that remained unpublished, imitated the plot of *Titan*).

N. Minin, the first biographer of Sukhovo-Kobylin, mentions the edition of *Titan* with the playwright’s margin notes that he kept in his library.⁵⁰

Sukhovo-Kobylin would refer to Jean Paul’s works, especially his novel *Titan*, as his own “preparatory school for aesthetics”.⁵¹ No early works of Sukhovo-Kobylin have survived, but his drafts and diaries allow for the reconstruction of his consistent interest in Jean Paul as well as Jean Paul’s influence on his

48 The text is an excerpt from *Speech of the Dead Christ from the Universe that There Is No God* (1796), a section from Jean Paul’s *Siebenkäs*. This “dream” passage was celebrated throughout Europe at one time, especially when Madame de Staël translated it into French. This translation by E. Casey comes from the anthology *Jean Paul: A Reader*, ed. T. Casey, Baltimore, MD 1992. It is the only English translation of Jean Paul besides the early ones by Thomas Carlyle and others.

49 Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin, *Nabroski. Chernoviki. Filosofskie sochineniya* [Sketches. Drafts. Philosophical Essays], Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fund 438, series 1, archival unit 1, pp. 2–49.

50 N. Minin, *Katalog biblioteki Aleksandra Sukhovo-Kobylina* [Catalog of Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin’s Library], Manuscript section of the Institute of Russian Literature, fund 186, archival unit 14, p. 47. Sukhovo-Kobylin owned the following edition: Jean Paul [i.e. Paul Friedrich Richter], *Titan*, 4 vols., and *Komischer Anhang zum Titan*, Berlin 1800–1803.

51 Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin, *Dnevnik: 14 aprelya 1867* [Diary: April 14, 1867], Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fund 438, series 2, archival unit 14, p. 12.

literary and intellectual life. *Titan* and its intrinsic theatrical metaphors play an exceptionally important role in Sukhovo-Kobylin's reflections. In his margin notes, the playwright points to the abundance of hyperbolae, comparisons, personifications, and similes in Jean Paul's baroque language. Whenever Sukhovo-Kobylin mentions Jean Paul's aesthetics and novels in philosophical, journalistic, or epistolary contexts, he regards him as the "creator of metaphors", invariably using the authentic Greek term *μεταφορά* in its original Aristotelian meaning, which implies understanding art as imitation, or mimesis, of nature.

Sukhovo-Kobylin describes *Titan* as a "dramatic novel" whose synthetic structure is a melting pot for an array of epochs, from classical antiquity, Renaissance, and the Baroque to the Enlightenment and Romanticism. This conception is captured in his *Vsemir (All-World) Doctrine*, the manuscript of which contains verbatim fragments of *Titan*.⁵² Sukhovo-Kobylin's diaries contain various translations of Jean Paul's story *Biographical Recreations under the Brainpan of a Giantess* (1795), which was an important phase in shaping the key masked characters of *Titan*. These translated fragments are used in the drafts of the last play of Sukhovo-Kobylin's trilogy, *The Death of Tarelkin*, as well as in his philosophical utopia *The Vsemir Doctrine*. The story's protagonist, Count Lismore, originally was named Albano (which is the name of Sukhovo-Kobylin's character who presents Jean Paul himself to the Russian reader, bringing his shadow from behind the scenes). Count Lismore, the prototype of the *Titan* character, is represented by Sukhovo-Kobylin as being biographically close to himself, which is manifested in his disgust for the enjoyments of social life.

Another aspect worth attention has to do with the fact that Jean Paul realized more and more that the end of the century meant saying goodbye to the Enlightenment era. That was when he began to develop two new trends in his works, reflecting on the departing year and critically re-evaluating the present and the future. Both trends are embodied in the concept of *Säkulum* (end of century), which acts as a literary code encompassing historical, philosophical, moral, and religious issues of the turning point in history in both retrospective and prospective dimensions. The ideas of "the end of the age", "the end of the world", and the Apocalypse as Judgment Day are developed by Sukhovo-Kobylin in his philosophical sketches and his dramatic trilogy *Scenes from the Past*, particularly the second and third parts, i.e. the plays *The Case* and *The Death of Tarelkin*.

⁵² Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin, *Negelism. Uchenie Vsemira. II tom. Materialy k teme: "Vsemir i ego formula"* [Nihilism. The Vsemir (All-World) Doctrine. Materials on the Topic: Vsemir and Its Formula], Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fund 438, series 1, archival unit 80, p. 27.

Sukhovo-Kobylin felt attached to Jean Paul's aesthetic theory. His drafts of *The Case* contain excerpts from *Preparatory School for Aesthetics* and *Preface to Titan*. He literally uses the pieces where Jean Paul talks about form, composition, and narratives. For instance, he introduces a metaphor of theatrical play to the discussion of the principles of creating characters in a novel: "Theatrical mask in my works is not a Greek comedy mask manufactured on the model of someone ridiculed; instead, it is the Nero mask, which resembled his lover when he played a goddess and himself when he played a god."⁵³ Like Jean Paul, Sukhovo-Kobylin attached great importance to the historical and biographical background of his works. Like Jean Paul, he perceived himself as the "guide", his readers as being "guided", and his works as "the world's free ball".

Dwelling on the problem of discriminating between "historiography" and novel in *Preparatory School for Aesthetics*, Jean Paul reflects on the ratio of truth to fiction in "historiographic" and poetic texts. The writer makes reference to the historiographer Voltaire, "the great poet of the world theater", who called for writing "history by the rules of drama" and articulated his aesthetic postulate accordingly. Since truth is available to neither historian nor novelist, for different reasons, both have to create their own literary truth by means of aesthetic deception. "This truth", wrote Jean Paul, "is a romantic story corresponding to a historical novel". His "true-to-life" portrayal of the contemporary historic processes in the novel format is similar in its structure, disposition of characters, and conflicts to the classicist aesthetics of Enlightenment drama, which brings it close to Voltaire's "historiography". Later, in *Preparatory School for Aesthetics*, Jean Paul would refer to historiography as a type of "dramatic novel". "In the focus of drama", a narrative work is organized as a historical one. As Jean Paul says in *Preface*, in each of his "historical chapters", dubbed *Jobelperioden*, he would like to "provide the reader [...] with multiple ideas—they are the length and mass of time [...], so that short time periods seem long, as the chapter implies."⁵⁴ The "mandatory pages" in *Titan*—the satirical excursions—must be integrated in the novel's plotline, providing the background to

53 Ibid., p. 29.

54 Sukhovo-Kobylin's drafts and fragments from *Titan* were compared using the following edition: Jean Paul, *Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. E. Berend, Weimar 1927ff. and Berlin 1952ff.; Abteilung I: Zu Lebzeiten des Dichters erschienene Werke, Abteilung II: Nachlass, Abteilung III: Briefe. This collection of Jean Paul's complete works was commissioned by the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften and carried on, in 1952, by the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften and, later, the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Section ("Abteilung") I, in 19 vols., contains the works published in the poet's lifetime; section II, in 5 vols., is dedicated to the writings Jean Paul left behind unpublished; section III, in 9 vols., collects the letters by Jean Paul. (A fourth section, dedicated to the letters

highlight the main events. Instead of being intricate digressions to readers, those pages must help their understanding of the novel's events through their qualities of freedom and judgment.

The mandatory pages tell about people who are almost unrelated to my characters; it is not only the extravagant blister of satirical digressions that should be visible on those pages but also the soulful reader and the lector, who walk freely and consciously among historic figures in a courtyard warehouse or in a manège, surrounded by armies, laborious miners and Jews, [...] theater companies, and nevertheless feel undersatisfied.

This fragment was excerpted by the Russian playwright and inserted into his *The Vsemir Doctrine* drafts. Sukhovo-Kobylin's commentary may be boiled down to the following statements:

- (i) "Titanism" is one of the pivotal symbolic images in the novel. This borrowing from ancient mythology embodies Jean Paul's paramount idea, which is the main reason for creating this grandiose architectural structure—the idea of synthesis. However, all kinds of interpretations and evaluations are possible, be they elevated, ironical, or harshly satirical.
- (ii) The titanic characters form a "carousel", twirling around and reflecting one another like mirrors, destroying one another in a system of mutual annihilation.
 - (a) The first "titan" is Gaspard de Cesara, Albano's mentor. The teacher is the most important figure. And, while teaching, he demands a practical approach to the world from his disciple. Gaspard's ambitious aspirations turn to dust, and he ends up as a deceived deceiver run over by the wheel of reality that he had wanted to control.
 - (b) Another "titanic" character is that of the librarian Schoppe. Jean Paul sees him as a philosopher and humorist, who annihilates the elevated with his humor. The writer decomposes the "normal", familiar understanding of the world, people, and things, discovering new relations among them, unexpected similarities and analogies between antithetical objects. Jean Paul perceived the world not as harmonious but as chaotic, seeing the abnormal and bizarre as the truth about the mad world, where the "beau-idéal" is nothing but an abstract norm.⁵⁵
 - (c) In his letter to Albano, Schoppe imposes a cruel sentence on his age and contemporaries:

written to Jean Paul, was prepared later; 9 vols. were published from 2003 to 2017). In the following, Roman numerals denote sections, Arabic ones indicate volumes and pages.

⁵⁵ This character is biographical to some extent (for both Jean Paul and Sukhovo-Kobylin), being an earthbound man full of pungent criticism.

But, honestly speaking, old pal, this poses the question, what is left for someone (in terms of prospects as well as desires) whose life has been oversalted [...] by the outgoing century, [...] who is equally distressed by everyone's flat hypocrisy, the glittery polish of preserved wood, the disgusting immorality of the German theater of life, the Pontine Marshes of Kotzebue's spoiled and careless sentimentality, which even the Holy Father could not make dry and solid, and the dead pride that neighbors living vanity? That is why the only thing I can observe for hours is children and animals at play, as I am convinced that their love is real and not flirtatious. What, I am asking for the last time, is left for someone who is sick of life, first of all because it is too difficult to make it better and too easy to make it worse? Even the best people make you believe in the evil—with all their elevated ambitions [...], they have to balance between money and honor [...]. What is then left for a human being in an era where black is made, well, not white, but gray and where [...] no feelings can arise except hatred towards the tyrants and slaves at the same time and anger at ill-treatment? And how is someone so tormented by their life supposed to react?⁵⁶

The lonely Schoppe—Sukhovo-Kobylin notes, drawing parallels with his own life—is drawn into the vortex of an intrigue centering around Albano. This scandal drives him mad. He suffers from guilt imposed by society. It is no coincidence, as Sukhovo-Kobylin remarks, that Fichte's mask appears—Fichte's philosophical system was detested by the playwright. He quotes Jean Paul:

"My Lord", Schoppe said to his friend Albano, "whoever often reads Fichte and his main vicar and servant Schelling from boredom, as I do, finally understands all the gravity. The *I* organizes itself and the rest, referred by many as the world. When philosophers create something, e.g. an idea or themselves, they look like that drunk pal who, having peed into a well, spends a night before that well, waiting for the sound of urine landing to cease and, consequently, takes credit for everything that he hears. The *I* thinks itself, which makes it a pseudo-subject and at the same time the place for storing both the empirical and pure *I*s. The last thing that mad Swift said shortly before his death was, "*I* is me, philosophically enough!"⁵⁷

Schoppe's reflections on alienating human beings from their human self and turning from alive to dead may be considered the chief motif in the historiosophy and theatrical world of Sukhovo-Kobylin, which is evidenced in the fragment that the playwright purposefully wrote out and translated:

I look at the epoch from all the sides and I smile. I have nothing to say: people are folded as a napkin on a plate into the most diverse and whimsical shapes—a nightcap, a pyramid, [...]. And the outcome, old pal? Oh Lord, the outcome? I have nothing to say, dang me. . .

⁵⁶ Jean Paul, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 5, p. 235.

⁵⁷ Sukhovo-Kobylin, *Nabroski. Chernoviki. Filosofskie sochineniya*, p. 19.

- (d) The most significant character for Sukhovo-Kobylin is Roquelaure, whose name is transcribed as a reference to the travel raincoat invented by Henry IV, one of the favorite clothing items of the playwright, who left Russia almost for good after 1862. Commenting on the play *A Tragic* written by Roquelaure, Sukhovo-Kobylin spots parallels with his own grotesque character Tarelkin, who also deliberately plays his own death on stage. The end of Roquelaure in the structure of the “dramatic novel” is double, both in the novel and in the play. While the macrostructure of his five-act drama reproduces the key elements of the novel—Jean Paul’s grand master plan of making his novel a collision of life and art—the last act depicts the death of Roquelaure himself. Wearing the mask of Albano, he must seduce Linda, who suffers from night-blindness. “That would easily come to my mind in a poetic work, but never in real life!” he says. “Yes, this is brilliant, only a great tragic actor can do it [...],” he said [...] Tarelkin, for his part, wears the mask of a deceased functionary to find out dark secrets, bring discredit upon his boss and get the money.

The novel’s reality, aesthetically transposed to *A Tragic*, reveals its contradictory aspects just as the distorting mirror of art reflects the lives of Roquelaure and other characters in the novel and Sukhovo-Kobylin’s trilogy reflects his own life.

In *Preparatory School for Aesthetics*, Jean Paul describes the form of his novels as “dramatic”, the structure of narration and the disposition of characters and conflicts being largely determined by the classicist method of Enlightenment drama, which brings it close to the historiography of Voltaire, who urged historians to create “history by the rules of drama”. Jean Paul tried to cement the “disconnected prose” with a “certain rigor of form”. “Such a form”, he explains, “lends passionate maturity to scenes, a modern touch to words, an agonizing suspense and poignancy to characters and the motive, power to the intrigue, etc.”. Sukhovo-Kobylin considered his trilogy *Scenes from the Past* to be a dramatic novel.

Finally, the last thing to mention is that the Russian theatrical producer Vsevolod Meyerhold translated Jean Paul’s works, *The Awkward Age* and *Siebenkäs* in particular, but those translations have never been published. Some of his draft essays on Jean Paul’s poetics have survived, in which he points to the theatrical imagery of his writing style and the special expressive ability of the “dark spots”. As is known, Meyerhold staged a constructivist-biomechanical version of Sukhovo-Kobylin’s tragical farce *The Death of Tarelkin* in 1922, in which he intended to use fragments from Jean Paul’s novels *Die unsichtbare*

Loge (1793), *Hesperus oder 45 Hundsposttage*, and *Titan*, translated by Meyerhold himself and mentioned in Sukhovo-Kobylin's diaries.⁵⁸

As we can see, the theatrical metaphors of Jean Paul Richter's philosophical and literary works have made their way into other genres as well as other historical and cultural contexts.

58 Sukhovo-Kobylin's play *The Death of Tarelkin* was staged by Meyerhold at the GITIS Meyerhold Workshop; see Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fund 998, series I, archival unit 146.