

Sentimentalism Made Strange: Shklovsky, Karamzin, Rousseau

Alison Beth Annunziata

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2013

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates the use of sentimentalist tropes in the work of Viktor Shklovsky, Nikolai Karamzin, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in order to draw conclusions regarding the overlaps between eighteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic imperatives. Specifically, it looks at love's literary forms—epistolary, triolet, *conte*—as models and spaces for autobiography, and compares love and self-expression as two literary phenomena that, for these three authors, demand the undoing of cultural mores as the means for their artistic portrayal. For the bulk of my analysis, I take the three authors' "Julie" texts—Rousseau's *Julie, or The New Héloïse*, Karamzin's "Julia," and Shklovsky's *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love, a Third Eloise*—in which love and self-expression meet to enact what I call *Sentimentalism made strange*. Using estrangement (*ostranenie*), the literary device identified by Shklovsky, as an organizing principle, I investigate the cultural shift towards an underlying crude, elemental, and ultimately 'savage' aesthetic that is treated in the work of the three authors I examine, and which sanctions a shift towards de-acculturation, de-institutionalization, and disarticulation that is seen in both sentimental and formalist fiction and criticism. While Rousseau factors into my analysis as the model sentimentalist, as the basis for Karamzin's and Shklovsky's own forays into Sentimentalism, in his effort to capture an authentic literary self he also estranges Sentimentalism's canonical forms, revealing, along with Karamzin, proto-formalist tendencies.

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## Acknowledgements

It is quite rare that I have the opportunity to extend thanks in printed form to those who selflessly support my endeavors, no matter how far-reaching, unrealistic, and seemingly impossible they may be. I do not wish to squander this opportunity. I beg my reader's patience as I acknowledge my family and friends, without whom I could not have completed this dissertation. Daily notes and words of encouragement, weekly food and coffee deliveries, thoughtful care packages, and friendly visits all helped me to see this project through to its end. These acts of kindness prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that it takes a village to write a dissertation.

I also owe a great deal of gratitude to my advisor, Professor Irina Reyfman, for all of her help and guidance, as well as to my other professors and colleagues at Columbia University who provided the encouragement, freedom, and faith that I needed to take the intellectual leaps and bounds that have led to this dissertation and that will inspire my future work. Thank you for a wonderfully supportive and generous intellectual environment.

## Note on Transliteration

I am using a dual system of transliteration, following the guidelines in J. Thomas Shaw's *Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications*:

In the text and in all discursive parts of the endnotes, Shaw's "System I" is used, which anglicizes Russian proper names: the "y"-ending is used instead of "ii"; "yu"/"ya" is used instead of "iu"/"ia"; Tynianov and OPOIAZ are two exceptions.

When citing Russian sources in the bibliography and notes, I use the Library of Congress system without diacritics (Shaw's "System II").

*Sentimentalism Made Strange: Shklovsky, Karamzin, Rousseau*

This dissertation traces the junctions and disjunctions between the fiction and criticism of Russian Formalism and the sentimental prose of Russia's and France's late eighteenth century through the work of twentieth-century Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky, eighteenth-century Russian Sentimentalist Nikolai Karamzin, and eighteenth-century French Sentimentalist Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In the hope of closing the gap between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and of uncovering the inherent similarities between two contrasting critical approaches to literature—Sentimentalism and Formalism—this dissertation looks at the phenomenon of love as an organizing principle that guides literary self-expression. The proliferation of scholarship (from 2001 onward) that reexamines the major tenets of Formalism within the disciplines of literature, architecture, art history, and political science, among others, suggests that this topic is immediately relevant.<sup>1</sup> I hope that considering the eighteenth century—in terms of both the literature it produced and as a period that is re-imagined in the literature of later generations—as a productive lens through which to assess the development of Formalism will contribute to this academic trend. This investigation leads to conclusions not only regarding how the eighteenth century influenced the development of Formalism, but also, inversely, how Formalist strategies were already alive in the eighteenth century.

The motivation for this project is above all to satisfy an intellectual curiosity regarding the fundamental links between Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau in their central conceits; most importantly, I examine love as a coping mechanism that sanctions

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<sup>1</sup> For example, W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Commitment to Form; or Still Crazy after All These Years," *PMLA* 118, no. 2 (March 2003): 321–325; Alexei Bogdanov, "Ostranenie, Kenosis, and Dialogue: The Metaphysics of Formalism According to Shklovsky," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49, no. 1 (April 2005): 48–62; Cristina Vatulescu, "The Politics of Estrangement: Tracking Shklovsky's Device through Literary and Policing Practices," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 35–66.

and initiates a rebellion from the (neoclassical) mandates confining literary expression. In so doing, I demonstrate how the Formalist Viktor Shklovsky drew upon the eighteenth century as a source of inspiration for drafting his literary science. I investigate why he consistently, if quietly, engages eighteenth-century sentimental tropes and techniques in his fictional pursuits, and whether this relationship between periods—that is, late eighteenth century and early twentieth century—can be understood as intentional or as the ‘accidental’ result of a matrix of events that coalesce in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In taking a giant leap over the nineteenth century, I am methodologically inspired most by the thesis set forth in Jeffrey Perl’s critical work, *The Tradition of Return*, in which Perl uses *The Odyssey* to illustrate a trajectory that is characteristic of how history is often read and philosophized. This trajectory he reads as an A-B-A cyclical pattern, the logic of which proceeds as follows: Odysseus leaves home (Classical Antiquity [A]) in search of the ideal (Middle Ages [B]) only to return home to reinstate the status quo (Renaissance [A]). This orientation towards homecoming, or *nostos*, from the Homeric tradition, Perl defines as “a return to something old but also a new beginning: it is a meeting of oldest and newest, yet it is in addition the seemly conclusion of an unbroken continuum.”<sup>2</sup> As Perl argues, *nostos* does not presume a perfect return. As “something old” as well as “a new beginning,” the Renaissance (A-copy) recognizes itself as a “revival” and not a “replica” of Classical Antiquity (A-original). Thus, if history were poetry its rhyme sequence would scan as A-B-A, but the rhyme would be imperfect. My

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey M. Perl, *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 23.



dissertation is in a sense a recasting of Perl's hermeneutic, with Russian Formalism as the imperfect return to the eighteenth century—its A made strange.

By “making strange” I mean two different theories. On the one hand, as per Perl's assessment and as regards Shklovsky's position within Russia's literary canon, I mean a return (however, imperfect) to an earlier cultural period. On the other hand, I refer explicitly to Shklovsky's *estrangement* (*ostranenie*), an artistic strategy for de-historicizing and de-contextualizing the reader by engaging his senses and dispelling the automatized forms that congest his modern mind; this, I believe, is a possible method for ‘reviving,’ according to formalist standards, the tropes, devices, systems, and conceits of literary sentimentalism. With estrangement as a guiding principle, I read Karamzin's and Shklovsky's idiosyncratic sentimentalisms as attempts to estrange Rousseau's, to engage Rousseau's techniques and philosophical approach, while at the same time reorganizing his principles to an unexpected, de-automatized, and counterintuitive end. This analysis will be conducted with the use of what Gary Saul Morson defines as “boundary works,” works that boast fluid lines between fiction and non-fiction, between criticism and literature, and thus challenge our expectations, in effect performing the very same estrangement that inspires this analysis. The fluidity of genre, which, as Morson argues, is a concept born not in form but in flux as a dialogue between forms, is an inspiration for this dissertation, for it is “boundary works” that are most ripe for this comparative project.<sup>3</sup>

In order to explore what it means to make Sentimentalism strange, I must first address two fundamental issues: what are the defining features of Sentimentalism and

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<sup>3</sup> Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), x.

Formalism, and how might these broad *-isms* relate to each other. While this dissertation engages with *-isms*, it does so only peripherally, adopting them as points of reference, recognizing the instability of any doctrine, and remaining sensitive to the variables that make exact categorization impossible. In fact, to explore the links between Sentimentalism and Formalism, through the prism of three distinct and disparate authors, works well as a strategy for undoing these literary systems by breaking barriers to gather data regarding the overlaps between principles, techniques, and strategies as opposed to doctrines. This is not to do away with categories altogether but rather to make a critical move in an alternative direction—to move from theme to approach—to see how sentiment, specifically love, dictates the developments of (Rousseau and Karamzin’s) Sentimentalism and (Shklovsky’s) Formalism, and to consider the possible connections and correlations between these two *-isms* as ‘points of reference.’

This dissertation offers a twofold understanding of the Enlightenment: it is a delimited historical period that begins and ends in the eighteenth century, yet whose exact dates are still the subject of debate; and it is a particular brand of anthropocentric philosophy that takes man’s empirical reality as the foundation for epistemology. Only that which is rationally ordered and catalogued can be considered ‘known’ (such is the philosophy behind *L’Encyclopédie*). As a result, “to enlighten” in this period means to make things known, and yet also to limit what constitutes knowledge. Totalizing projects, such as *L’Encyclopédie*, which, according to Robert Darnton, tried to “impose an order on the new world” while being fully “conscious of the arbitrariness in all ordering,” become symbols of this paradox.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 195.

Together with Neoclassicism, Sentimentalism is one of the Enlightenment's main modes for processing and representing positive reality, and thus shares in the *esprit systématique*<sup>5</sup> of the period. However, inherent in Sentimentalism is the tension between reason and sentiment and therefore much of what is “brought to light” runs counter to the standards of the Enlightenment—the subject can be undisciplined yet still rational. Expressing the interiority of the mind, valorizing the ‘natural world,’ evoking sentimental response, and co-opting sentimental expression for social commentary are all earmarks of sentimental literary expression. In its most general capacity, Sentimentalism is a call for revelation in order to unveil human emotions, concretize them in literature (as the primary keeper of one's authenticity) and to thereby restore sentiment to its rightful position as the cornerstone of the human condition.

As regards the term “Formalism” it is well known that not one of the original Russian Formalists—Boris Eikhenbaum, Osip Brik, Boris Tomashevsky, Viktor Shklovsky, Yury Tynianov, Roman Jakobson, Grigory Vinokur, among others—agreed to this nomenclature. While it is difficult to define precisely what Formalism is, this school of literary thought was divided into two distinct intellectual circles—in Saint Petersburg, OPOIAZ (Общество изучения Поэтического Языка [Society for the Study of Poetic Language, 1916-1930], which included Shklovsky, Tynianov, and Eikhenbaum; and in Moscow, the Moscow Linguistic Circle [1916-1924]), whose most notable members were Jakobson, Petr Bogatyrev, and Tomashevsky. On the distinction between the Petersburg and the Moscow Circles, Peter Steiner cites Bogatyrev and Jakobson:

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<sup>5</sup> Ernst Cassirer, “The Mind of the Enlightenment,” in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); see also Etienne Bonnot, abbé de Condillac, *Treatise on Systems*, in *Philosophical Writings of Etienne Bonnot, abbé de Condillac*, trans. Franklin Philip (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1982).

“while the Moscow Linguistic Circle proceeds from the assumption that poetry is language in its aesthetic function, the Petersburgers claim that the poetic motif is not always merely the unfolding of linguistic material. Further, while the former argue that the historical development of artistic forms has a sociological basis, the latter insist upon the full autonomy of these forms.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, while the Moscow Linguistic Circle focused on how the word, as a carrier of socio-cultural traits, functioned artistically within literature, members of OPOIAZ isolated the “literary fact” (according to Tynianov, the devices, motifs, and modes that distinguish literature from other verbal texts), which was more than a linguistic unit. They were interested in how the literary fact evolved and changed *autonomously* (outside of sociological, psychological, or cultural influences) within the realm of literature.

This sharp contrast between ‘formalist’ schools is one reason that members considered it impossible to find an all-encompassing, unifying term. From the OPOIAZ camp, Eikhenbaum, in his essay “Theory of the Formal Method” (*Teoriia formal’nogo metoda* [1925]) argues that the term “formalism” worked more as a ‘battle cry’ than as an appropriate term to define the work the OPOIAZ and Moscow Linguistic Circle groups were doing, not to mention the individuals from each group.<sup>7</sup> Beyond the philosophical differences between the two, the term “formalism” implies a polemic with content, which, argues Eikhenbaum, was across the board fundamentally not the case. Formalists understood ‘form’ somewhat idiosyncratically, not as a mere shell that kept content’s shape, but a living “force” that acted upon and in conjunction with content. In re-conceiving the relationship between content and form as equally contentious and

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum, “Teoriia formal’nogo metoda,” in *Literatura: Teoriia, Kritika, Polemika* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1927).

collaborative, Russian Formalists were able to rescue form from its undue negative relationship to content (form as anti-content), which, the Formalists argued, did nothing to capture form's "dynamic," aggressive spirit (Tynianov). Form was valued as more than the sum of devices at work in a text; the term was used as a battle cry against homogenizing poetics that collapsed form and content and thereby diminished their distinct qualities.

Just as sentimental release marked the end of neoclassical restraint in the late eighteenth century<sup>8</sup>, so too did the rise of Russian Formalism mark the close of Russia's twentieth-century Neoclassical Revival, a conservative modernist movement—arguably, most clearly expressed in architecture, yet also found in the literature and criticism of turn of the century<sup>9</sup>—that advocated for artistic stability and uniformity. If we accept that Neoclassicism leads to Sentimentalism, then this suggests that Russian Formalism may be understood as a parallel Sentimentalism. While on the surface these two modes of literary expression seem incompatible, upon closer inspection similarities emerge. Generally speaking, Sentimentalism is a style of writing that, through finessing content and form, attempts to capture personal authenticity and sincerity, and Formalism is a style of literary analysis that, by comparing and contrasting content and form, attempts to tease out the attributes that make literature authentically literature, or in the words of Tynianov, to isolate the "literary fact." Moreover, both engage phenomenology as the basis for their disciplines; for instance, as I argue in Chapter One, not unlike Rousseau's

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<sup>8</sup> Neoclassical motifs, however, do return in the late eighteenth century within the applied and verbal arts.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the 1908-09 critical compendium *Literaturnyi raspad: kriticheskii sbornik*, ed. Iu. Steklov et al. (St. Petersburg: Izd. 'T-va Izdatel'skoe Biuro', 1908-09), a multi-authored attack on the "degenerate" state of contemporary Russian literature, specifically, its willful disregard for moral boundaries; or the poetic movement, Acmeism, a neoclassical cleansing of symbolist obscurity inspired by Kuzmin's groundbreaking article, "On Beautiful Clarity" (*O prekrasnoi iasnosti*, 1910).

sentimental philosophy, Shklovsky's famed *estrangement* takes the art object as a means for affecting your mind on a sensory level to generate an artistic response. Finally, both movements are liberation projects—Sentimentalism seeks to liberate subjectivity from Neoclassicism's emotional restraints, its order and its logic, and Formalism seeks to liberate the word and the work of art from the trappings of life, denying the relevance of psychological and social influences. As I demonstrate in Chapter Three, this defiant anti-psychology manifests itself as a search for autonomy and (primitive) a-historicity.

Part and parcel of this comparative project is investigating the use and manipulation of literary models, and for this reason I have decided to design my project to be cross-cultural and comparative, isolating Rousseau as one literary manifestation of the French sentimentalist school that was used and modeled by the Russian late eighteenth century authors, and came to be known among Formalists in the early twentieth century as one likely paragon of sentimental expression.<sup>10</sup> Although it may seem unnecessary to include the French tradition, my decision to do so is informed by two significant academic traditions, one in the study of Russian Sentimentalism and one in the study of Russian Formalism. Scholarship on Russian Sentimentalism—Sentimentalism that was developed in the works of N.M. Karamzin, I.I. Dmitriev, A.N. Radishchev, V.V. Kapnist, and N.A. L'vov, to name a few—acknowledges the fundamental influence of the French eighteenth-century literary canon on the Russian literature of the same period.<sup>11</sup> The French model bequeathed to the Russians a

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, see M. Rozanov's article on "Russoizm" in *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia: Slovar' literaturnykh terminov*, in which he writes that Rousseau was a leading figure of the sentimental school and also that he inspired the French revolution as a "prorok i filosof revoliutsii [prophet and philosophe of the revolution]," (742) (volume 2 [P—IA], 1925, pp. 741-748).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, L.V. Pumpianskii, "Sentimentalizm," in *Literatura 18-ogo veka, Istoriia russkoi literatury* 4, eds V.A. Desaitskii, G.A. Gukovskii (Leningrad; Moscow: Institut russkoi literatury, 1941), pp. 430-435; P.A. Orlov, *Russkii sentimentalizm* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1977).

vocabulary for developing its own *sentimental aestheticism*, to borrow from Rudolf Neuhäuser,<sup>12</sup> which developed in the late eighteenth century. For instance, the pleasant “middle style” of Karamzin’s sentimental prose, and the strides he made in the Russian sentimental (*chuvstvitel’nyi*) language, is intrinsically linked to French vocabulary and syntax, not to mention the salon culture and societal models of eighteenth-century France.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, I would argue that the French sentimental model (as opposed to the English) passed on to the Russians a rich storehouse of emblems, motifs, and, especially, a lexicon, for speaking, reading, and writing about liberty, first to be used in the political sphere but also in literature. For this reason, French sentimental literature registered in the mind of the Russian sentimentalist as a space of liberation, disobedience, and self-recovery, practices that Neoclassicism tried to stifle, and that later became the major tenets of nineteenth-century Romanticism.

The deep-seated relationship between French sentimentalism and liberty is what most inspires the inclusion of the French model and most justifies its connection with Russian Formalism. The historical trajectory I believe to be in place—the analogous evolutions of Neoclassicism to Sentimentalism, Neoclassical Revival to Formalism—helps bridge the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and with it Sentimentalism and Formalism; however, it is this particular undercurrent of French Sentimentalism that I believe connects Sentimentalism and Formalism on a more intimate and substantial level.

To both engage and disavow neoclassical principles, to both abide and fight against the

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<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Neuhäuser, *Towards the Romantic Age: Essays on Sentimental and Preromantic Literature in Russia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 28.

<sup>13</sup> See Yurii Lotman, *Sotvorenie Karamzina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1981); Gitta Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin’s Sentimentalist Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); William Mills Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); B. A. Uspenskii, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVIII-nachala XIX veka: Iazykovaia programma Karamzina i ee istoricheskie korni* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1985).

system, to have dual, mutually competing “orientations” (Tynianov) are the primary imperatives of the subtle revolutions that are Sentimentalism and Formalism. This connection I hope will explain why Shklovsky engages with Rousseau’s *Julie* (beyond the obviously common theme of forbidden love). What, for Shklovsky, does Rousseau’s sentimentalism provide in terms of solace? What gaps in his literary practices does it fill?

While the French line of influence is well documented with respect to Russian Sentimentalism, with respect to Russian Formalism the opposite is true. This influence, however, can be discerned. In addition to Shklovsky’s explicit engagement of Rousseau’s *Julie* in *Zoo, or Letters not about love, a Third Eloise*, there are several other reasons to consider the French sentimental model as undeniably influential for the development of Formalism. Benjamin Sher, in the introduction to his translation of Shklovsky’s *Theory of Prose*, claims that “[l]ike Pasternak, Mayakovsky, Tsvetaeva, Mandelshtam, Akhmatova and other luminaries of the post-Revolutionary era, Shklovsky was undoubtedly an outstanding representative of a *pre*-Revolutionary Russian intelligentsia that called Paris its home no less than St. Petersburg or Moscow. That is, it had strong links with Western values as we have come to know them since the Renaissance.”<sup>14</sup> The fascination with the French-Russian connection was mutual, however, from the Western European perspective, not in Russian culture, but rather in Russian francophilia. Intellectual curiosity in Russian-French (unidirectional) cultural overlaps inspired the Parisian serial publication, *Bibliothèque de l’Institut français de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1912-1938), which covered topics from explicitly Russian (such as “Emplois des aspects du verbe russe”

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<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Sher, introduction to *Theory of Prose*, by Viktor Shklovsky, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), xvi.



[tome 4]) to cross-cultural (such as “L’Architecture Classique à Saint-Pétersbourg” [tome 2] and “La Correspondance de Falconet avec Catherine II” [tome 7]).<sup>15</sup>

While it may be impossible to define succinctly the term Formalism, some of its central tenets—the poetic function of the word, the development of genres as the result of literary evolution, a purist approach to literary analysis—are consistently read as trademarks of German Romanticism, specifically, Hegel’s phenomenology.<sup>16</sup> My decision to include the French model means to go both with the grain, with respect to scholarship on Sentimentalism, and against it, with respect to scholarship on Formalism. This is not to say that I wish to replace the German with the French as Formalism’s primary foreign influence (such a project would be ill-conceived); I would rather attempt to show that the relationship between French and Russian sentimental literature is both directly and inadvertently influential for the development of specifically Shklovsky’s Russian Formalism. Conceived as a locus amoenus for individual revolution and freedom, literary form is taken as an emblem of liberty that breaks what was once the imposed co-dependence between a text’s content and its form (that a novel should contain fiction, a critical essay should contain criticism, or that an epistolary novel should contain letters about love) and re-conceives the relationship between form and content obliquely (the novel may contain literary criticism, the critical essay may contain fiction, and the epistolary novel, for Shklovsky in particular, letters *not* about love). While the proposed antagonism between form and content falls in step with the modernist trends of

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<sup>15</sup> Institut français de Saint-Pétersbourg, *Bibliothèque De l’Institut Français De Saint-Pétersbourg* (Paris: H. Champion).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, B. Paramonov, “Formalizm: Method ili mirovozzrenie” NLO 14 (1996): 35–52; Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965); Douglas Robinson, *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

the early twentieth century, Formalism's particular take on form as a declaration of independence I believe betrays the influence of the late eighteenth century. Thus, while I argue that Russian Formalism is Sentimentalism made strange—that is, inverted, negated, distorted, made anew—I also demonstrate the striking overlaps in their capacities as literary (and life) philosophies.

Chapter One, “Love and the Literary System: The Autobiographical Attempts of Shklovsky and Rousseau,” explores the genre of autobiography as an efficient way for matching Sentimentalism and Formalism, and, more centrally, for enacting Sentimentalism made strange. Occupied foremost with issues of authenticity and sincerity, Chapter One investigates the degree to which love and its traditional literary forms—here, the epistolary novel and the triolet—interact with autobiography, and how this matching of sentiment and literary structure results in a model genre for proper self-exploration, and thereby self-representation. The degree to which autobiography should or might correspond with reality is a line of inquiry that, particularly with respect to the eighteenth century, is far from novel. However, Formalism (Shklovsky's brand thereof), a literary discipline that advocates for the reduced importance of psychologism and the exclusion of extra-literary facts, provides an interesting counterbalance to Rousseau's eighteenth-century Sentimentalism.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it is my hope that in comparing seemingly disparate texts from authors of seemingly disparate periods I can offer a new

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<sup>17</sup> On the subject of using diary entries and other examples of ‘realia’ as tools for exegesis, Shklovsky argues: “There is a hidden lie here—as though a writer creates and writes all by himself and not in conjunction with his genre and all of literature, with all its conflicting tendencies...Moreover, diaries lead us into the psychology of the creative process and the question of the laboratory of the genius, when what we need is the thing.” Viktor Shklovsky, *Third Factory*, ed. and trans. Richard Sheldon (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), 61.

understanding of sentimental writing, and with it autobiography—to clarify what it means to treat the author’s subjectivity with artistic form.

In order to offer a new take on an old matter, I use two “boundary,” quasi-autobiographical texts—Rousseau’s *Dialogues: Rousseau judges Jean-Jacques* (*Dialogues de Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, 1782<sup>18</sup>) and Shklovsky’s *Third Factory* (*Tret’ia fabrika*, 1926)—as the main texts for my analysis, with supplementary evidence drawn from each author’s epistolary novel: Rousseau’s *Julie, or The New Heloise* (*Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761) and Shklovsky’s *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love* (*Zoo, ili Pis’ma ne o liubvi*, 1923).<sup>19</sup> The least read and most experimental of all of his autobiographical works, *Dialogues* was Rousseau’s follow-up defense, after his previous first-person account, *Confessions* (*Les Confessions*, published in 1782), against the extreme backlash he faced from his peers. Like Rousseau, Shklovsky composed his autobiography, *Third Factory*, in response to opposition on both aesthetic and political fronts. While *Zoo*, the first of Shklovsky’s three autobiographical texts (*Third Factory* and *Sentimental Journey* [*Sentimental’noe puteshchestvie*, 1923] being the other two), was composed soon after he fled persecution in Russia and settled in Berlin, *Third Factory* appears right after its author’s repatriation and yet is all the more rife with indignation and recalcitrant prose, against which, as Richard Sheldon shows, Veniamin Kaverin, member of the 1920s literary group, Serapion Brothers, struck the harshest

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<sup>18</sup> 1772: publication of the first dialogue; 1773-74: second dialogue; 1774-75: third dialogue; 1775 (end): preface; 1776 (summer): postface.

<sup>19</sup> Republished four times, with some letters removed and others added, *Zoo* has a publishing life that suits a literary mapping of the effects of (self-)censorship. Richard Sheldon writes in the preface of his translation of *Zoo*: “The second edition of *Zoo* was substantially different from the first. Twelve letters were omitted (1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 16, preface to 19, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 28), and five new letters were added. In the third edition, all the original letters were restored, with the exception of Letters 7 and 20...the fourth and fifth editions...kept the same basic format as the third, except that one of the new letters...was omitted.” Richard Sheldon, preface to *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, by Viktor Shklovsky, trans. Richard Sheldon (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), v-vi.

blow.<sup>20</sup> In contradistinction to their attempts at autobiography, Rousseau and Shklovsky's epistolary novels were by far more widely appreciated at the time of publication. *Julie* was not only the more popular of Rousseau's twin philosophical novels (the other being *Emile*, 1762), but was one of the most commercial novels of its time, not only because it takes up a love plot that was popular in the eighteenth century—the affair between the instructor Abélard and his student Héloïse—but, most significantly, because it seeks to rescue France's beloved twelfth-century couple by providing them with a hypothetical moral program for how to *properly* pursue love. Although bearing the mark of Rousseau's *roman à these*, Shklovsky's *Zoo* does not have the same moralistic or even philosophical overtones; the expression of love (or, for that matter, not love) that lies at the center of his epistolary work is as formative for the characters within as it is linked to broader notions of freedom, relevance, and self-expression, and for this reason had greater appeal for the reading public, even for Shklovsky himself. Thematically, *Dialogues* and *Julie*, *Third Factory* and *Zoo*, autobiographies and epistolary novels, could not be more disconnected, nor their authors, Shklovsky and Rousseau, more contextually distant. However, I demonstrate that Rousseau and Shklovsky are united methodologically in that their attempts at autobiography share a fractured, unorthodox approach to self-representation that is more system- than plot-driven, and that takes cues from love's literary forms while, counterintuitively, using (and abusing) sentimentalist tropes to de-centralize the ego in their acts of mimesis.

Chapter Two, "Love and Negative Poetics: Karamzin's Self-reading," looks at Karamzin as a figure who stands between Rousseau and Shklovsky, not only historically,

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<sup>20</sup>Richard Sheldon, "Viktor Shklovsky and the Device of Ostensible Surrender," introduction to *Third Factory*, by Viktor Shklovsky, ed. and trans. Richard Sheldon (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), xxx.

but also with respect to his literary praxis. Owing in part to the “performativity” of eighteenth-century Russian Sentimentalism—the literary conceit of posturing as equal to self-expression, what Lotman calls the “dual perception”<sup>21</sup>—I look at Karamzin’s sentimental prose, most specifically his short stories “Natalie, the Boyar’s Daughter” (“Natal’ia, boiarskaia doch’,” 1792), “Island of Bornholm” (“Ostrov Borngol’m,” 1793), and “Julia” (“Iuliia,” 1796) in order to develop a comprehensive picture of how this relationship between love and self-representation functions in a *selfless* literary world, where the text is a stage upon which the self is merely a performance. However, in this chapter sentimentality interacts with life-writing in an unexpected way, showing Karamzin’s “implied” reader as a trope of *feigned* intimacy, a stylistic tool for circumventing the modalities of self-expression, and revealing the degree to which love, a sentiment carrying ontological weight in Shklovsky and Rousseau, is diminished to device.

Critics often read Karamzin’s sentimental prose collectively as the place where Karamzin composes his autobiographical voice through an author-narrator lyrical meld. When read in succession, Karamzin’s sentimental prose forges an “implied” reader that supports the author’s articulation of an intimate self, transforming his writing into a surreptitiously self-representative project. However, as I demonstrate, Karamzin’s lyrical combination of narrator and author serves a tripartite function—he is writer, reader, and interpreter, manifesting as an internal schizophrenia. In a step beyond artistic mimesis, Karamzin re-qualifies the process of interpretation as a means of self-expression such that

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<sup>21</sup> “The Russian nobleman of the post-Petrine period has assimilated this sort of everyday life, but at the same time felt it to be foreign. This dual perception made him treat his own life as highly semiotized, transforming it into a play.” Yuri Lotman, “The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth Century Russian Culture,” in *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History: Essays*, ed. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 72.

*reading*, in addition to or possibly more so than *writing*, becomes his approach to autobiography. If the author is traditionally identified as the creator of the literary text, then, by making ‘reading’ the primary task of his narrator-cum-author, Karamzin designs the authorial persona in the negative: he is no longer the active agent who creates the work of art, but rather the witness or interpreter of the work’s apparent autogenesis. This negative approach to authorship, which in Karamzin is applied to narrator and characters alike, all of whom come to life through the act of (self-)reading, unites Karamzin with Shklovsky across the generational divide. Both employ negative poetics—here understood as a method of artistic representation that finds fecundity in absence, as opposed to the negative approach found in Rousseau. While Rousseau gives negativity a name (enemies who espouse and spread negative rumors), Shklovsky and Karamzin, in contradistinction, engage with negativity as a space, a void, a literal absence that is ripe for artistic play.

Chapter Three, “Love and the Devices of Primitivism: The Portrait of Autonomy,” continues to explore manipulations of love’s literary forms (each of the authors’ “Julie” is taken as the primary texts for analysis); here however, I use love as a point of access for examining another phenomenon that finds expression in both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries: primitivism and, later, neo-primitivism. This chapter broadens its scope to return to the overlaps that unite the two critical periods that set the parameters of this dissertation—Sentimentalism and Formalism—and isolates ‘the primitive’ as a particularly striking commonality between the two. Starting with Giambattista Vico’s *New Science*, I outline the development of the ‘primitive’ as a philosophical and historical principle that advances a strict divide between ‘primitive’

and ‘civilized,’ axiomatic categories determined by their contrasting relationships to time, epistemology, and autonomy. Vico’s categorization proves highly influential particularly for Rousseau. To recuperate a lost world is a driving force behind Rousseau’s various political programs, which culminate in his *Social Contract*. Interestingly, the French philosopher’s idealized, savage man—who is happy and above all autonomous— influences Karamzin and Shklovsky in opposite ways: in Karamzin it inspires cultural anxiety, while in Shklovsky we find the autonomous consciousness monumentalized in Formalism’s championing of the autonomous text.

In order to draw critical conclusions regarding the similarities and differences between the cultural shifts towards an underlying “crude,” “elemental,” explicitly “primitive” outlook that occurs in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, I balance Karamzin, Rousseau, and Shklovsky’s critical work against their fiction in which the primitive, as an artistic technique, is valorized and/or challenged. Karamzin meets Rousseau in this chapter through their respective critical engagements with the primitive past, read as a space from which—for better (Karamzin) or for worse (Rousseau)—mankind has emerged. For Shklovsky, however, the primitive modality provides the bearings needed to break the habits of the automatized reader and help the author overcome the limitations of linear time. As a means of superimposing new and old forms, estrangement transforms the work of art into an expression of polychronicity—it demands that the past, automatized reading be considered alongside the new.

The methodological apparatus that inspires my analysis comes from criticism by Formalism’s direct successors, as many of the linguistic ideas set forth by the Formalists were later taken up after World War II by the Structuralists (represented in the

dissertation by Hammarberg, Lotman, and arguably Foucault)<sup>22</sup>—and later engaged/challenged by the post-Structuralists (de Man, Derrida, and obliquely Starobinski of the “Geneva School”). These voices help me demonstrate how the cult of personality that Rousseau’s sentimentalism engenders is complicated in Russia’s eighteenth and twentieth centuries by certain aesthetic-political realities; the slack in the reins that is typically allotted the sentimentalist writer in terms of freedom of expression is consequently handled in other ways. Without relying too heavily on the cultural divide between French and Russian breeds of Sentimentalism, this dissertation traces Shklovsky and Karamzin’s reformulations of the Rousseauian model, the result of which I call Sentimentalism made strange.

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the intellectual evolution, see Fredric Jameson’s *Prison House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), which outlines quite well the genealogy that connects Formalism and Structuralism.



## Chapter One

### Love and the Literary System:

#### The Autobiographical Attempts of Shklovsky and Rousseau

*“The love boat has crashed up against the everyday [byt]”*  
*Mayakovsky*

What most complicates a comparative study of Shklovsky and Rousseau is not only the fundamental distinction between the freedom of expression of traditional eighteenth-century sentimental prose and the formal rigidity that accompanies the aesthetico-political reality of the 1920s, but also the contradiction between Shklovsky’s formalist theory and his sentimental praxis; between what he describes as the phenomenon of art, an autonomous form of expression that is devoid of emotionality, and the art he creates, like *Zoo* and *Sentimental Journey*, which, as he articulates in a late work of criticism, *Bowstring* (*Tetiva*, 1970), “bled.”<sup>23</sup> *Zoo*, in particular, is a cogent example of this contradiction at work: it is an emotional love story told to us as a story not about love. Shklovsky treats *Zoo*, his “boundary” work, with more care than literature in general (even more than his other works), in the sense that he refers to the text on numerous occasions in his diary and elsewhere, noting humorously its birthday, the means through which it was composed, and how the text itself must feel. It is interesting to compare the late evaluation of *Zoo* in *Bowstring* with Shklovsky’s earlier assessment of art in general in *Theory of Prose* (*O teorii prozy*, 1925) in which he argues that “in art, ‘blood’ is not bloody. No, it just rhymes with ‘flood.’ It is material either for a structure

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<sup>23</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Bowstring: On the Dissimilarity of the Similar*, trans. Shushan Avagyan (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), 440. In this moment in *Bowstring*, Shklovsky himself notes the contradiction between his theory and praxis: “Back then [during his time with OPOIAZ] I used to say that art had no content, that it was devoid of emotion, while at the same time I wrote books that bled, like *Sentimental Journey* and *Zoo*. The latter was also called *Letters Not about Love* because it was a book about love” (440).

of sounds or for a structure of images.”<sup>24</sup> Shklovsky here proposes that words do not themselves carry emotion, only sound and image—they emit a sound when spoken, and are themselves images to be seen. However, while words are emotionless, Shklovsky, in conversation with Lydia Ginzburg, later reveals that literature—the formal organization of (emotionless) words within an enclosed system—is capable of bleeding. Ginzburg records Shklovsky as saying that *Zoo* “was so in love that it was impossible to hold it in your hands without burning yourself.”<sup>25</sup> While the word ‘blood’ is not bloody, *Zoo* bleeds, falls in love, and generates heat. By Shklovsky’s own admission, *Zoo* is not only a sentimental work; it is itself capable of sentimentality, thereby adding a literal dimension to what the Formalists believed was the inherent “autonomy” of art. Thus, if, as Shklovsky argues in his essay on Rozanov, “a work of literature is the sum-total of all stylistic devices employed in it,”<sup>26</sup> then Sentimentalism, or what he might more likely refer to as literary emotionality, is, paradoxically, the “sum-total” of the emotionless words employed within.

Even if for Shklovsky art is meant to be apathetic, to a large extent Shklovsky’s formalist discourse, possibly in spite of himself, is inherently sentimental. In its modern usage, “sentimental” not only signifies emotional overindulgence but also characterizes a relationship recognized by Locke at the end of the seventeenth century between epistemology and the senses that limits human comprehension to the material world.<sup>27</sup>

According to Locke, only that which can be perceived can be known. This experience-

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<sup>24</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park, IL.: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 159.

<sup>25</sup> Lidiia Ginzburg, *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom: Esse, Iz vospominanii, Chetyre povestvovaniia* (Leningrad: Sov. pisatel', Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1989), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 15.

<sup>27</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

based, epistemic practice was formative for aesthetes and philosophers alike in the eighteenth century; however, it moved to the periphery in the nineteenth century as the focus of knowledge turned extra-empirically toward the abstract metaphysical world (which becomes the focus of the Romantics). Sentimentalism's anthropocentric limitations have ties with Shklovsky's *ostranenie* (estrangement, or defamiliarization), as well as with the modernist environment from which *ostranenie* emerges. In its efforts to convey the new, industrial civilization, Russian Modernism sought to transform articulated fact into felt fact; to make palpable the world rendered impalpable by modernization.<sup>28</sup> In his 1914 essay "Resurrection of the Word" ("Voskreshenie slova"), Shklovsky calls for a return to the "sensation of the world" (*oshchushchenie mira*):

We have lost our awareness of the world; we are like a violinist who has ceased to feel the bow and the strings, we have ceased to be artists in everyday life, we do not love our houses and clothes, and easily part from a life of which we are not aware. Only the creation of new forms of art can restore to man the sensation of the world, can resurrect things and kill pessimism.<sup>29</sup>

To avoid the petrification, or "fossilization," that breeds "pessimism," Shklovsky, in his later essay, "Art as Device" ("Iskusstvo kak priem," 1918) proposes *ostranenie*, a method of intentioned perception that turns ossified forms into motion, de-automatizes in order to re-animate, and thus "make[s] a stone feel stony" (*Theory of Prose*, 6). "Art," he proposes in *Third Factory*, "converts the particularity of things into perceptible form" (61). When executed properly, *ostranenie* charts the process through which reality is transformed into artistic expression, which makes reading laborious and breathes new life into old forms. For Shklovsky, as well as for the other founding members of the OPOIAZ

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<sup>28</sup> See Victor Erlich, *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt, eds., *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation* (Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), 46.

School, ossification, monumentalization, what Derrida might call “non-biodegradability”<sup>30</sup> are all consequences of heavy modernization and thus states of existence to be either avoided or ameliorated. For its ability to transform the normative into the strange, art was conceived of as a capital way to make the necessary transition back from immobility into mobility.

Much like Sentimentalism, which in its faithful relationship to Lockean epistemology uncritically takes the individual as a microcosmic sample of larger humanity, *ostranenie* presumes the existence of a universal ego—since the universal ego has been automatized in the same way and in the same domains, Shklovsky assumes that the vision of reality being altered is also universal. “An idealized theory like Shklovsky’s,” reasons Robinson in his work *Somatics of Literature*, “depends cognitively on the assumption that everyone experiences precisely the same proprioceptive boundary between the familiar and the strange, the own and the alien, and that any given literary estrangement device will therefore have precisely the same de-alienating effect on every reader.”<sup>31</sup> There is a tribal simplicity to Shklovsky’s *ostranenie* that precludes subjectivity and with it cognitive diversity and multivalent textual experiences. As per Robinson’s interpretation, the “de-alienating effect” of *ostranenie* on the individual ends up counter-Marxist since it assumes the individual has been through cultural assimilation.<sup>32</sup> This contradictory relationship between the individual and the collective is fundamental to both Sentimentalism and Formalism and thus creates their most striking

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida and Peggy Kamuf, “Biodegradables: Seven Diary Fragments,” *Critical Inquiry* 15.4 (Summer, 1989), 812-873.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas Robinson, *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>32</sup> Robinson here appropriates the Marxist theory of alienation (*Entfremdung*, literally “estrangement”), by which the individual is absorbed by the collective, “estranged” from his own individuality by the demands/strains of a capitalist economy.

similarity. Both in its day and beyond, the same charge was leveled against Sentimentalism as a uniform human space where all sentimental acts are calls for revelation in order to unveil human emotions. In this case, literature in both Sentimentalism and Formalism is taken as a phenomenal event, where both author and reader enter into a genetic contract with the text—the piece of writing and the act of writing itself have existential consequences.

In light of the strong connection between Shklovsky's cognitive aesthetics and Sentimentalism, it comes as no surprise that he often invokes Sentimentalism—its tropes, devices, freedoms, and forms—in his critical and fictional pursuits. His forays into Sentimentalism are typically linked to Sterne, whose *Tristram Shandy* was a central text for the development of *ostranenie* as an example of a formal response to the automatization of the novel in the eighteenth century, and whose *Sentimental Journey* informs Shklovsky's own idiosyncratic travelogue by the same name. Emily Finer, in her monograph, *Turning into Sterne*, outlines the specific attributes that Shklovsky identified as “Sternian,” which, she argues, are both formal and thematic, including the device of the “found manuscript,” the overabundance of non-sequiturs, and the neo-baroque, jittery prose.<sup>33</sup> While immensely insightful, Finer's analysis remains technical and does not do much in the way of exploring why Shklovsky, as well as other leading formalists, calls upon sentimental prose and its forms, a line of inquiry that is made all the more crucial by Shklovsky's notoriously ambiguous treatment of the sentimentalist school. As Finer acknowledges, Shklovsky maintained a complicated relationship with Sentimentalism throughout his career, both employing and disavowing it in a single moment. For instance, in his essay on Sterne, “Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and a Theory of the Novel”

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<sup>33</sup> Emily Finer, *Turning Into Sterne: Viktor Shklovskii and Literary Reception* (Leeds: Legenda, 2010).

(“*Tristram Shendi Sterna i teoriia romana*” 1921), Shklovsky argues that Sentimentalism, while a literary school, can hardly be understood as a proper “art form”:

It would be interesting to take up for a moment the subject of sentimentality in general. Sentimentality cannot constitute the content of art, if only for the reason that art does not have a separate content. The depiction of things from a “sentimental point of view” is a special method of depiction, very much, for example, as these things might be from the point of view of a horse (Tolstoi’s “Kholstomer”) or of a giant (Swift). By its very essence, art is without emotion...art is pitiless or rather without pity, apart from those cases where the feeling of sympathy forms the material for the artistic structure. But even in that case, we must consider it from the point of view of the composition. Similarly, if we want to understand how a certain machine works, we examine its drive belt first. That is, we consider this detail from the standpoint of a machinist and not, for instance, from the standpoint of a vegetarian. (*Theory of Prose*, 159)

Art may restore perception to the reader; for Shklovsky, however, art’s engagement of the senses does not necessarily imply that it should also generate an emotional response. After all, “art is without emotion” or “beyond sympathy,” and must be “consider[ed]...from the point of view of the composition.” If the aim of literary studies is to examine *how* a work is made and not *of what* it is made, then Sentimentalism, in its traditional capacity, sets up a false relationship between literature and sentiment, institutionalizing the connection between them as a basis for artistic creation. To take emotion as a subject for literary expression and to view the text from the emotional perspective of the author is to admit that emotions maintain a central transformational role within a given work of literature. Shklovsky and the Formalists declare the opposite: sentiment is nothing more than the means of building a structural apparatus.

To a certain extent, Shklovsky is right to separate the qualities of Sentimentalism from what Sterne accomplishes in his novels. What Sterne considered “sentimental literature” is not causally related to the devices he employed, and, similarly, what

Shklovsky defines as *sternianstvo* is not necessarily synched with what he may think of as Sentimentalism. Therefore, while Sterne appears to be Shklovsky's greatest influence from within the sentimentalist school, Sentimentalism itself registers in the formalist's mind as a literary category that both persists and takes cues from beyond the limited world of Sterne's oeuvre. However, clues from Shklovsky's own "sentimental" works of fiction are no more revealing about his relationship to the eighteenth-century literary tradition than is his criticism. Throughout his memoirs, *Sentimental Journey* and *Zoo*, the terms *sentimentalizm*, *sentimental'nyi*, *sentimentalnost'* are used too infrequently and, moreover, ambivalently to be taken as clues regarding Shklovsky's understanding of the "sentimental" model. Examples from *Zoo* include: "He had begun to weep in Prague not out of sentimentality, but the way windows weep in a room heated for the first time in many weeks" (А заплакал он не из сентиментальности, а так как плачет стекло в комнате, которую затопили после долгого промежутка)<sup>34</sup>; "And I might ask the steam shovel to say to me: 'Look you sentimental pup, at the iron standing on its hind legs. It's no good, this whining and sniveling; if you can't go on living, then stick your head in an iron coal bucket to be bitten off'" (И чтобы сказал мне паровой кран: 'Смотри, сентиментальный щенок, на железо, поднятое дымом. Не хорошо ныть и плакать, а если не можешь жить, то всунь свою голову в железный угольный черпак, чтобы ее откусило') (65); and "I'm very sentimental, Alya. That's because I take life seriously. Maybe the whole world is sentimental" (Я очень сентиментален, Аля. Это потому, что я живу всерьез. Может быть, весь мир сентиментален) (124). In each instance, Shklovsky maintains distance from the term "sentimental," and with a cold irony throws

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<sup>34</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, trans. Richard Sheldon (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), 43.

the word about ambivalently; even in the final instance, “sentimentality” is condemned as a handicap. Simultaneously engaging and demeaning sentimentality, Shklovsky presents an inconsistent understanding of the sentimental school—he mocks its traditional, clichéd application while also relying on its forms and the stereotypes it engenders. Bearing in mind this blatant contradiction, the following pressing inquiries remain: what exactly was Sentimentalism for Shklovsky? At a time of such modernist literary innovation, why was this antiquated model evoked? What solace did it provide? Which gaps did it fill?

I attempt a limited response to these questions by way of an alternative view of Shklovsky’s work with Sentimentalism from the perspective of Rousseau. In so doing, it tries to reach a broader understanding of Shklovsky’s relationship to Sentimentalism that reaches beyond the text’s surface, beyond the tools of expression, to an ontological depth that unites author and form. In *Zoo*, Shklovsky is overt in his tribute to Rousseau, whose *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* serves as both the inspiration for the subtitle, “The Third Eloise,” and for the epistolary form of Shklovsky’s non-romance novel. Apart from these direct references to Rousseau, there is arguably little that suggests a deeper connection between the two.<sup>35</sup> While I choose to explore the connection to Rousseau over Sterne as the more fruitful exercise—or the road less traveled—I neither deny nor discount the influence of Sterne, and thus part of my goal here is to assess the role of Sentimentalism

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<sup>35</sup> While Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa* were original sources of the “polylogic” epistolary novel (in which there are several pairs of correspondents and love letters are punctuated with other “confidential” letters [Maarten Fraanje, *Epistolary Novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (München: Sagner, 2001), 17]), here Rousseau’s *Julie* appears to be the more influential novel. While Finer admits that Rousseau’s *Julie* is the inspiration for Shklovsky’s title, she argues that Richardson’s *Clarissa* is the true inspiration for the content. This claim seems unjustified in consideration of the remarkably minimal role the Editor plays in *Clarissa*, as opposed to his pronounced, even central role in both Rousseau and Shklovsky. When present in *Clarissa*, the Editor is purely diegetic, providing just enough commentary to keep the narrative linear. *Julie* and *Zoo*, in contrast, transform that which was for Richardson a structural principal into the author’s mouthpiece, a safe space for self-expression.



in general in helping Shklovsky develop a set of devices for autobiography that comprise his own enigmatic Sentimentalism. Sentimental form—that is, the storehouse of stylistic devices that play with the reader’s expectations and break tradition—undoubtedly Shklovsky learns if not entirely then in part from Sterne. I would argue that sentimental formalism, if such a distinction can be made, is above all what binds Shklovsky and Rousseau. Sentimental Formalism I see as a deeper connection between form and genesis; the conviction that form can simultaneously mimic, adulterate, and transform human cognition; and form’s ability to perform the task of ordering one’s world by shaping and guiding it.

Shklovsky’s late critical work, *Lev Tolstoy* (1963), demonstrates not only that he considered Rousseau and Sterne to be the main voices of eighteenth-century Sentimentalism, but also that he read them as entirely incompatible sentimental figures. While both supported the articulation of the interior world—psychological and domestic—Rousseau engaged the senses to ontological/epistemological ends, while Sterne, argues Shklovsky, manipulated rather than engaged the senses, transforming Sentimentalism from a literary philosophy into a set of formal exercises.

But Sterne played with human feeling, he played with his description of it, deceived the reader, coquettishly displayed his superiority over the reader, and slowed up the action artificially, fastening attention on his description of feeling. He did teach people to understand feeling, but at the same time he taught them a disdain for action.<sup>36</sup>

For Shklovsky, Sterne “defamiliarizes” in order to teach his reader something about the normative values that make up his/her vision of the natural world.<sup>37</sup> The diegetic

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<sup>36</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Lev Tolstoy*, trans. Olga Shartse (Moscow: Raduga, 1988), 84.

<sup>37</sup> According to Ginzburg: “Shklovsky’s interest in Sterne is not accidental. But the shifts, transfers, and digressions appear to him as literary devices, perhaps, to a much lesser degree than they did for Sterne; they

developments of the text matter less than the overarching formal strategies and critical outcomes. In this way, Sterne represents for Shklovsky a version of Sentimentalism that lies closest to the goals of *ostranenie*, a strategy for re-sensitizing the relationship between individual and world in order to renew one's relationship to positive reality, and thereby come to a more appreciable understanding of the universe. In contrast, Shklovsky reads Rousseau (and rightfully so) as a sentimental figure focused more on the interrelationship between the senses and interiority and whose literary career centers on pronouncing his inner, subjective world. Shklovsky writes in *Lev Tolstoy*:

Rousseau was a great thinker, but he was a thinker who saw the world as a mergence of countless human destinies, seemingly dependent on nothing but themselves. It was a consciousness that wanted to re-make the world and grieved over its impotence. It was a consciousness that was not ashamed of itself, it laid itself bare, and spoke out about things that had been passed over in silence for centuries. Rousseau thought that if everything were said out loud about an ignominious deed it would be finished and done with. Tolstoy's talent ripened in this process of tense self-analysis. It is most difficult to understand how a great writer takes shape. (75)

Shklovsky is one of many to take issue with the contradictory "individual universalism" found throughout Rousseau's oeuvre; Peter Gay, in his 1954 introduction to Ernst Cassirer's *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, names it as the central internal contradiction that pervades all of Rousseau's work: Is Rousseau an individualist or a collectivist?<sup>38</sup> While Shklovsky's *ostranenie* is not necessarily synched with Rousseau's solipsism, whatever philosophical gripes he may have had with Rousseau, this chapter

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are derived from the structure of his conceptual apparatus." *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom: Esse, iz vospominanii, chetyre povestvovaniia* (Leningrad: Sov. pisatel', Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1989), 5.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Gay, introduction to *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, by Ernst Cassirer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 6. In *Emile*, Rousseau confirms the individualism that lies at the heart of his political philosophy: "Natural man is entirely for himself. He is a numerical unity, the absolute whole which is in relation only to itself or its kind." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Allan Bloom (Hanover, NH: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1990), 13:39.

charts the significant and revealing overlaps between their versions of Sentimentalism.

As regards the relationship between Shklovsky and Rousseau, it is not an influence that I would propose, but rather an affinity. I read this affinity as a shared appreciation not only for form's (as opposed to content's) ability to alter perception, defy expectations, and, for Rousseau, to reverse judgments, but also for form's malleability, and its capacity to stand in for the author as a replica. In its inherent structural give, form emerges as authentic for its ability to mimic—this is what unites Shklovsky and Rousseau as (proto-) formalists. It may be true that all knowledge of external reality rests on nothing but an accumulation and combination of sense impressions, but the inner world can neither be explained nor constructed in this manner. Both Shklovsky and Rousseau agree that sentiment is not enough to articulate an inner self. Form is the next best thing. Using Shklovsky's *Third Factory* and Rousseau's *Dialogues*, in conjunction with *Zoo* and *Julie*, I explore how each author seeks to build an autobiography that is at once structured and fractured (specifically, in three distinct parts) and thus takes a circuitous path towards self-representation. In true modernist fashion, Shklovsky insists not only on capturing autobiography, but also on showcasing the devices with which it is and should be made, employing in both *Zoo* and *Third Factory* an “architectonic tautology,” to cite from Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose*, that borrows from the structural format of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel. With a similar strategy yet in a different direction, Rousseau seeks a form of self-representation that also adapts the epistolary form, yet simultaneously takes cues from outside the ‘insidious’ word of art and representation, and that demoralizes neither its reader nor its subject. Shklovsky and Rousseau's shared tripartite approach to autobiography is an attempt to multi-

dimensionalize and thus revitalize autobiography by broadening perception. In order to take autobiography out of the world of literary portraiture, which, in its homage to the two-dimensional art form, is static, ossified, and vulnerable to inaccuracy (for Rousseau), or to automatization (for Shklovsky), the genre is transformed from a monologic into a polylogic project, from subjective to inter-subjective, and thus is thrown back into motion.

What is at stake in creating an authentic self-image in literature is not just self-representation, but self-*re*-creation—the lexicological, or, more likely, tropological recasting of the self in literature. Thus, broadly speaking, the codependency between self-creation and form found in both Rousseau and Shklovsky, in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, is the focus of this chapter, which, while looking specifically at the epistolary form as a structural model for self-representation, seeks answers to the problem of artistic rendering: in the relationship between art and world, between “mirror” and “original,” can there ever be an equally balanced correspondence? Namely, does art represent, and thereby reflect, the world or does it stand on its own as an autonomous creative expression? For Shklovsky, if art mirrors life, it does not passively reflect it, but rather actively augments it, refracts it:

We know that art reflects life. But sometimes we think that art reflects happenings that actually occur in life. We are wrong there. Art reflects life not as in a mirror, not continuously; it reproduces life as it explores the world, using the experience of the previous generation to go by, and often exposes in the reflection things that are invisible to the eye looking straight at the object. (*Lev Tolstoy*, 492)

Shklovsky here demonstrates the markedly para-Symbolist angle of the Formalist movement. The Symbolist school, whose main thrust was “life-creating” (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), strove for the exact opposite of what Shklovsky proposes, that is, to

make distinct the line between life and art.<sup>39</sup> In many ways, Rousseau's aestheticism smacks of the Symbolist doctrine; however, within the limits of eighteenth-century rational thought that treated aestheticism conservatively, as a model for measuring beauty according to reason. Rather than conflate life and art, as *zhiznetvorchestvo* demands, Rousseau, as Derrida argues, "stays convinced that the essence of art is imitation (mimesis). Imitation duplicates presence: it is added to the presence of the entity which it replaces."<sup>40</sup> Imitation in Rousseau is expressed as an avowed desire to compound and perpetuate reality through creative expression; in his work this functions as a blatant paradox regarding the irresolvable dissonance between a work of art and the reality it expresses: mimesis both is and is not successful; everyday life both can and cannot be simulated by its artistic forms.

The strength of Rousseau's conviction lies in the fact that, for him as for the aesthetes and philosophers of his generation, art and life were at once distinct and indivisible, cooperative and contentious; despite their constitutional differences, they were held to the same moral standards. For this reason, Rousseau's aestheticism is a

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<sup>39</sup> Khodasevich's 1928 essay, "The End of Renata" ("Konets Renaty"), summarizes well this aesthetic practice: "They [Symbolists] attempted to transform art into real life and real life into art. The events of life were never experienced as merely and solely life's events; instead, because of the lack of clarity and the instability of the boundary lines that outlines reality for these people, the events of life immediately became a part of the internal world, a piece of creation. Conversely, something written by any member of the circle became real, an even of life for all." Translated in Irina Paperno, ed. *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2-3. For more on the legacy of *zhiznetvorchestvo* see Michael Wachtel, *Russian Symbolism and Literary Tradition: Goethe, Novalis, and the Poetics of Vyacheslav Ivanov* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

Eikhenbaum on the relationship between OPOIAZ and the Russian Symbolists: "We entered into a fight with the Symbolists, in order to rip poetics from their hands and, having freed it from the connections with their subjective aesthetic and philosophical theories, return it to the path of scientific analysis of facts. Brought up on their work, we saw their mistakes with all the more clarity. Having established by this time the insurrection of the futurists (Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Mayakovsky) against the poetic system of symbolism was buttress for the formalists, for it gave their fight an even more pressing nature" (B. M. Eikhenbaum, "Teoriia 'formal'nogo metoda,'" in *Literatura: Teoriia, Kritika, Polemika* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1927).

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 289-90.

likely counterpart to Shklovsky's estrangement, which attempts, among many things, to destroy any given notions of the relationship between art and life, *iskusstvo* and *byt*, so that they may be better valued; to restructure how they are connected so that both may be experienced anew. For Shklovsky, one way to break the binary between art and life and to fathom this artistic dilemma is to enact *ostranenie*—that is, to solve the problem of representation as mere reflection through a process of *refraction*. As he concludes in *Bowstring*: “People can be reflected in art, but the course of perception is transformed as a ray of light is refracted in a prism. The optics of art deflects the rays in order to make them visible in a different way—to make them palpable” (440). Shklovsky here provides his 1970s reader with a variation on an old theme, redefining *ostranenie* to fit the genre of autobiography. The new mode of artistic representation that Shklovsky proposes employs the cognitive connection between art and sight, using the process of *prelomlenie*, “refraction,” as a way of complicating and thereby ameliorating the deceitful analogy between reality and representation.

Refraction, decidedly an abstract concept, is given formal bearings in the epistolary novel. With letters between two individuals compiled and critiqued by a third, “the Editor,” the epistolary novel is literary evidence of a representation relationship that is triangulated rather than confined to a tight binary, refracted rather than reflected. This said, I intend to demonstrate how the internal architecture of the epistolary novel set the standards not only for representation, but also for self-representation for both Rousseau and Shklovsky. Residing in the background, yet also mediating the conversation, the Editor becomes a role model for the author in moments of self-representation. He provides the “much needed differential impression” (*Theory of Prose*, 25) necessitated by

Shklovsky's *ostranenie* and Rousseau's sentimentalism, and thereby returns authenticity to autobiography. In this interpretation I am inspired by a host of critical scholarship, from literary to theological, that addresses the contentious relationship between original and representation and charts the controversy of authenticity in artistic creation.<sup>41</sup> The mimetic crisis here, however, reaches far beyond the dispute between the empirical and the fictional self, that is, the 'double-faced' self; rather, it is concerned with the epistolary novel and autobiography as literary systems with stable rules and regulations that govern the means of representation and also how their systems, while distinct, overlap through the compositional devices that unite them.

Much of the following analysis looks at the making of "others"—the making of alternative perspectives: binaries where traditionally there is singularity, triads where there are binaries. The difference between what Shklovsky and Rousseau propose as answers to this aesthetic dilemma is essentially ideological and specific to their respective periods: Shklovsky is inspired more by the Russian modernist, Nietzschean impulse towards artistic self-creation and less, as is Rousseau, by a higher calling to remain faithful to the natural world (of which, arguably, most Modernists harbored an intense distrust). While both writers handle main quandaries such as impossibility, incapability, loss of information, and lack of information, the difference between them is that Shklovsky, representing the modernist camp, accepts that he is inherently not the master of everything; he applies the same Enlightenment-motivated, systemic perspective to literature, yet from a godless, "de-centered" (Derrida), point of view. Rousseau, on the other hand, fully accepts his position as Author-God, as he who is most equipped to

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<sup>41</sup> Some prominent examples: Aristotle (*Poetics*), Plato (*Republic*), Auerbach (*Mimesis*), Adorno, (*Aesthetic Theory*), Wilde (*The Decay of Lying*), and Girard (*Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and *Violence and the Sacred*).

narrativize his subject (himself), even if a fully-fledged narrative of the self can never be achieved. Despite this fundamental difference, their literary systems match on the question of autonomy, a central focus that undoes the very systems Rousseau and Shklovsky are trying to maintain. As I will show, autobiography is meticulously oriented to get at the opposite—that is, to find and give form to an authentic self, an entity that ultimately cannot be structured or articulated.

While *Julie* and *Zoo* are not works of autobiography (they can be called autobiographies only in the loosest sense), I include them here because there appears to be a structural symmetry between these sentimental novels and the tripartite autobiography. For Rousseau, love, like autobiography, is a triangulated affair: both require an interlocutor to be an authentic experience, and the works *Julie* and *Dialogues* explore with equal fervor the relationship between polylogism and authenticity as it develops through the use of three distinct participants—in *Julie*, love letters between Julie and Saint-Preux are collected, evaluated, and judged by the “Editor,” who “discovers” their letters;<sup>42</sup> in *Dialogues*, “Jean-Jacques” is the subject of and thus silent partner in a dialogue between “Rousseau” and “The Frenchman.” While in *Julie*, first-person narrative is used to simulate the inner psychological world and to help resolve the dissonance between fiction and improbability, in *Dialogues*, Rousseau designs an eviscerated autobiography in which the ego lingers on the periphery, demoted to marginalia, his voice appears in the form of commentary; and yet, it is the ego’s absence, for Rousseau, that confirms its authenticity. In both the epistolary and autobiographical forms, the “I” is at risk of being mistaken for (or recognized as) a fictitious invention or

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<sup>42</sup> Although *Julie* also consists of letters from other secondary characters—cousin Claire, Milord Edward, Wolmar—I am taking the epistolary novel’s original title, *Lettres de deux amans habitans d’une petite ville au pied des Alpes*, at face value to justify centralizing only the letters between Julie and Saint-Preux.



conceit of each genre, and this threat of misconception motivates Rousseau's *Dialogues* to de-center the ego in what is traditionally a monologic project. Composed entirely in dialogue, Rousseau's *Dialogues* does away with autobiography's—and Sentimentalism's, for that matter—first-person crutch and attempts self-representation from outside the solitary world of the ego.

As in his *Confessions*, in *Dialogues* Rousseau presents *une âme déchirée* (the torn/fractured soul/mind), which Trilling reads as an early literary manifestation of the Romantic “disintegrated consciousness.”<sup>43</sup> However, Rousseau's broken ego is not a formal demonstration of what Goethe referred to as the “ineffability” of the personality, but rather a formal exercise in reconciling and uniting competing notions of the self—joining self-proclamations (“le mien”) with rumors (“le leur”). As in *Julie* and *Confessions*, authenticity in *Dialogues* consists in being perceived and judged by an outside viewer—whether it is a judge built into the structural framework of the novel—as in *Julie* and *Dialogues*—or a judge that is situated outside the text—as in *Confessions*. “Jean-Jacques cannot elucidate his nature, his character, and the principle of his unity in a single word,” argues Starobinski, “he must rely on witnesses; it is up to them to construct his image and judge it.”<sup>44</sup> *Dialogues* is a formal demonstration of this ontological process. The “I”, the ego, Jean-Jacques himself is absent from the textual world demonstrating in no uncertain terms a shift from egotistical to communal anthropocentrism, such that the ego is comprised of multiple voices, is both individual and community, parole and langue. Much like Rousseau's political theory of alienation—in which the individual makes sacrifices in personal freedom for a greater freedom—

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<sup>43</sup> Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), 59.

<sup>44</sup> Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Transparency and Obstruction*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 182.

*Dialogues* shows the construction of the self in these negative terms: Rousseau self-abnegates in order to self-realize.

In *Dialogues*, self-denial is achieved on both a formal and contextual level. Paul de Man, in his famous rebuttal of Derrida, “The Rhetoric of Blindness,” describes the drive to confirm existence through negation as symptomatic of Rousseau’s era, and refers to it as a quintessential Rousseauian moment, wherein “Rousseau’s theory of representation is not directed toward meaning as presence and plentitude but toward meaning as void.” De Man argues that Rousseau’s autobiographical works, when taken as a whole, “postulates the necessity of its own misreading. It knows and asserts that it will be misunderstood.”<sup>45</sup> To employ negativity as a means of positive epistemological reinforcement presages the powerful negativity that is fundamental to Shklovsky’s theory, since it assumes that paradox and revolution are characteristic of literary life. For this reason, Shklovsky’s theoretical work is often characterized as bearing the mark of Hegel, who, according to Trilling, “envisioned the developing hegemony of the disintegrated consciousness and consigned the honest soul to the contempt of history” (*Sincerity and Authenticity*, 54). While the relationship between Shklovsky’s formalism and Hegelianism is a subject too great to be dealt with here,<sup>46</sup> it serves as inspiration for the following apophatic reading of autobiography as an exercise in negative poetics, in which one arrives at the proof of existence not through presence but through absence.

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<sup>45</sup> Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 136.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the relationship between Hegel and Shklovsky see Robinson, “Shklovsky’s Hegelianism,” *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature*. Whereas Robinson argues for the Hegelian genealogy of Shklovsky’s formalist poetics, Svetlana Boym provocatively argues the opposite: “Hence, such an understanding of estrangement is different from both Hegelian and Marxist notions of alienation. Artistic estrangement is not to be cured by incorporation, synthesis, or belonging.” Svetlana Boym, “Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt,” *Poetics Today* 26.4 (December 1, 2005): 588.

The notion of negative poetics in Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau will be covered in more depth in the next chapter (“Love and Negative Poetics: Karamzin’s Self-reading”); however, for now it leads us to another concern that lies at the center of the epistolary and triolet forms—the search for a “much needed differential impression” (Shklovsky), or the “contre-pied” (Rousseau), that is built into the structure of each genre. The reader of any literary portrait thinks he has seen a totality, whereas much more could be disclosed by seeing “the other side,” by considering multiple perspectives, and by thus relocating the boundaries of the frame. As with love in *Julie*, autobiography for Rousseau is the point of intersection between multiple perspectives, consisting of naysayers and proponents; as part of an ongoing conversation, it is never static but always in flux. Shklovsky brings this operational relationship between the epistolary novel and autobiography to a hyper-realized level in *Zoo*, bearing the devices of polylogism and multi-dimensionality in a *faktographic*, or texturized recasting of Rousseau’s *roman à thèse*. Shklovsky’s *Zoo* simulates the device of the “found manuscript,” and thereby retains the structure of Rousseau’s *Julie*; however, there is no pretense of authenticity or sincerity. “I built the book on a dispute between people of two cultures,” admits Shklovsky, “the events mentioned in the text serve only as material for metaphors” (4). The woman, “The Third Eloise,” is “a certain configuration” (4) and even the author himself is denied agency: “the book began to write itself” (3). In other words, *Zoo* is an exercise in estrangement; it transforms life into device, de-familiarizes the real, and thereby “decelerates” the reading process.

A cogent example of this transformation is Elsa Triolet, whom Richard Sheldon calls a “realized metaphor”; however, I would argue that she is more than that—she is life

made device, ‘reality metaphorized.’<sup>47</sup> Elsa Triolet, sister of Osip Brik’s wife, Lili is the inspiration for the character Alya, to whom the narrator-Shklovsky writes his letters. Shklovsky fell in love with Elsa Triolet while living abroad in Berlin, and *Zoo*, which features actual letters from Elsa to Shklovsky (one of which started her literary career; encouraged by Maksim Gorkii, Triolet developed her letter from Tahiti [Letter 21, 76-8] into the 1925 Russian novella, *In Tahiti* [*Na Taiti*]), to a certain extent traces their love affair. However, while *Zoo* is inspired by real life, Shklovsky’s choice of Elsa Triolet as Alya was also motivated by what she represents. The novel’s original preface (Berlin 1923) warns readers that, despite appearances, *Zoo* is not the traditional epistolary love story. It runs counter to the “usual motivation” for love stories: “since the basic material of the book had nothing to do with love,” Shklovsky writes, “I introduced a prohibition against writing about love” (3) Furthermore, Shklovsky admits, “the events mentioned in the text serve only as material for the metaphors” (4). These stipulations in mind, one cannot ignore, as I assume Shklovsky did not ignore, the correspondence between Triolet and her poetic namesake—an eight-line stanza in which the first line is repeated in the fourth and seventh, and the second line is repeated in the eighth—which Shklovsky covers in some detail in *Theory of Prose*. Drawing from A.N. Veselovsky’s extensive work with psychological parallelism (*Poetics of Plots* [*Poetika siuzheta*] 1897-1906)<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Sheldon, introduction to *Zoo*, xxviii.

<sup>48</sup> The degree to which Shklovsky and the Formalists drew from the psychological work of Veselovsky and Potebnia is charted in Victor Erlich’s *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965). While in 1948, Shklovsky admits that the school of Russian literary criticism is founded on Veselovsky’s findings, which are “crystallized” in the critical work in the early twentieth century (“Aleksandr Veselovskii—istorik i teoretik,” *Oktyabr’* 12 [1947], 174), in his earlier works, *Theory of Prose* and *Third Factory*, Shklovsky argues that the Veselovsky school is not responsible for Russian Formalism. From *Third Factory*: “The distinction between the school of *Opoyaz* and the school of Aleksandr Veselovsky lies in the fact that Veselovsky views literary evolution as an imperceptible accumulation of slowly changing phenomena. If Veselovsky sees that two moments in the history of a plot differ from one another rather sharply, he will, if unable to locate the transitional moment, assume the existence of a missing link. I

Shklovsky uses the triolet as a poetic example of how “form creates for itself its own content” (*Theory of Prose*, 24) insofar as the parallel structure generates meaning within the poem. More importantly, however, the triolet is a poetic model of estrangement-at-work. As “a phenomenon that is very close to a tautological parallelism,” the effect of the triolet, Shklovsky argues, “lies partly in the fact that one and the same line of verse lands in different contexts, a fact which produces a much needed differential impression” (25). Estrangement arises from the coexistence of three parallel situations, each of which re-contextualizes, “transfer[ring] [...] an object from its customary sphere of perception to a new one” (12), and thereby redefines the original—all conflicting, and yet, by nature of the triolet’s tautological structure, all equally true.

The configuration of the triolet mimics (or is mimicked by) the internal architecture of the epistolary form, in which three figures provide three distinct, yet equally viable perspectives on love. A *bout-rimé* which captures predetermined and often sentimental subjects like love, the triolet shares with the epistolary novel several structural qualities, and the possible causal relationship between these two modes of narrativizing love is something yet unexplored and significant to the thesis at hand. In their strict organization, the triolet and the epistolary novel take the Enlightenment’s categorization of the sentiments to a heightened level, lending structure to an otherwise

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assume that a plot develops dialectically, spurning its original form and sort of parodying itself. Veselovsky now and then comes close to the truth when he asserts that a certain artistic device might reflect an actual social custom, but such a solution to the problem strikes me as inadequate” (57-58). The distance between the Formalists and Veselovsky is an assertion that Boris Maslov, in his yet unpublished article, “Comparative Literature and Revolution, or the Many Arts of (Mis)reading Alexander Veselovsky,” finds “conspiratorial” and part of the mythic “self-proclaimed originality” of Russian Formalism. Even the term, “poetics” as it is employed throughout Formalist criticism, argues Maslov, owes its significance to Veselovsky’s Historical Poetics, which is responsible for the modern resurrection of the Aristotelian meaning of the word as a “scholarly investigation into literature.” Boris Maslov, “Comparative Literature and Revolution, or the Many Arts of (Mis)reading Alexander Veselovsky,” *Compar(a)ison: An International Journal of Comparative Literature* (forthcoming): 3.

amorphous love, formalizing sentiment, subjecting it to an organizing principle, and transforming subjective experience into an ontological process. This matching of system and sentiment is one of the particulars that characterize the transition between Neoclassicism and Sentimentalism in the late eighteenth century, and that form the interesting overlap between the developments in creative expression in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The triolet and the epistolary novel also follow a similar historical trajectory, both coming back into fashion after a long hiatus during the nineteenth century. Tynianov explains the revival of the epistolary novel as a return to *byt*. In his work *Archaists and Innovators* (*Archaisty i novatory* 1929), Tynianov argues that the epistolary form marked the shift in *ustanovka* (“orientation”) brought on by literary salons in the late eighteenth century (in the move from Neoclassicism to Sentimentalism) and became its optimal form. In the twentieth century the letter was again a fact of *byt*, and thus became re-automatized.<sup>49</sup> Like the epistolary novel, the triolet was very popular in eighteenth-century France and mildly popular in Russia at the same time (most examples within the Russian canon issued from the collected works of Karamzin and P.A. Pel’skii, a minor sentimentalist poet and Karamzin’s friend and collaborator). While in the nineteenth century lyrical repetition had all but disappeared,<sup>50</sup> fixed poetic forms of Romance origin were later revived in the Russian modernist literary canon, particularly among Symbolists

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<sup>49</sup> Iurii Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i Novatory; Stat'i* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929). For the fate of the epistolary form, see N. Stepanov, “The Familiar Letter of the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Russian Prose*, eds. Boris Eikhenbaum and Yuri Tynianov, trans. Ray Parrott (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985).

<sup>50</sup> V. M. Zhirmunsky provides the following statistics regarding the number of poems with compositional repetition: Pushkin 43/558, Baratynsky 12/222, Lermontov 27/377. *Rifma, ee istoriia i teoriia*, (Peterburg: Academia, 1923), 123, n93.

Balmont, Sologub, Briusov, and Rukavishnikov, who were imitating the lyrical repetition distinctive of the French symbolist style.<sup>51</sup>

As was previously mentioned, Formalism evolved somewhat in opposition to the aesthetic practices of Symbolism, finding the philosophical melding of life and art offensive to the Formalists' more puritanical study of literature and the "literary fact." However, Formalism's codification of a text's working parts and structural elements as scientific evidence was in homage to the Silver Age poets, who radically altered the common perception of form by emulating it and conceiving of it as the most perceivable part of a work of art. In fact, it was the Symbolists' strict division of form from content (form as essential and artistic; content as external to art) that informed Formalism's own idiosyncratic relationship to form; recognizing content and form as distinct and independently functioning parts, the Formalists were inspired to consider not only the separate behaviors of form and content, but also the ways in which their behaviors influenced, inspired, and revised each other: where they overlapped, and to what extent they were one and the same. In this way, the Formalists stood in stark contrast not only to the Symbolists, but also to other modernist, avant-garde groups who were captivated by a Marxist reading of the text as a battle between content and form. Formalism, in contradistinction, presented a more harmonious alternative to modernist literary studies.

The anomalous reading of the relationship between content and form articulated by the Formalists adds yet another significant dimension to the twentieth-century revival

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<sup>51</sup> Deservedly, the Symbolists valued the artistic capacity of the triolet. Examples of its popularity are 1) three volumes of Iosif Kalinnikov, published between 1915 and 1918, which contained triolets; 2) articles on "bout-rimés" in *Literaturnoi entsiklopedii* in 1925 by the Symbolist poet, Ivan Rukavishnikov. See *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia: slovar' literaturnykh terminov v dvukh tomakh*, ed. N. Brodskii et al., 2 vols. (Moscow: Frenkel', 1925).

of love's two main literary forms. Specifically, Shklovsky's invocation of Elsa Triolet in *Zoo* may be read as an example of content's (Elsa Triolet) meeting, or rather blending, with form (triolet). T/triolet is a space where form and content, no longer distinguishable, work in tandem to complete the process of signification: where poetic form intersects with real-life through double-entendre. Thus, in *Zoo*, the notions of "threes," polylogism, and love all cohere around the allusive Elsa Triolet. Like lines 1, 4, and 7 of the 8-line stanza, the intersection of these three parallel contexts—Shklovsky, Elsa, and the Editor (the meta-Shklovsky)—collide and intersect (this collision of voices often manifested visually with a large "X" plastered across a "censored" letter), all exerting equal power in the novel, resulting in an estranged love story that simultaneously is and is not about love. Shklovsky takes the format of the canonized epistolary novel and morphs it into a device. He removes its traditional content—"letters not about love"—and thus concentrates only on the form, manipulating it to an estranged end. As Finer argues, the epistolary form for Shklovsky was an "ideal form with which to explore ironic relationships between different formal conventions and their proponents. Shklovsky's novel in letters conveys an understanding of the meta-fictional possibilities of the epistolary novel..." (107). More than just social commentary, *Zoo* is a laboratory in which Shklovsky experiments with matching form and real-life, and where love serves as the backdrop for developing a means of literary self-discourse.

The effort to triangulate representations of love and autobiography is bound up with the complications surrounding the issues of artistic representation and authenticity. As was mentioned at the outset of this chapter, my reading of the autobiographical works of Rousseau and Shklovsky handles the notion of refraction as opposed to reflection.



*Julie*, as has been argued by a number of scholars, is an unorthodox approach to autobiography insofar as each character within the novel bears Rousseau's imprint and can be taken as a literary manifestation of the author. The relationship between author and work, maker and made, which lies at the forefront of *Julie*, asks whether love, the subject of much derision, parody, manipulation, and, above all, trivialization, actually carries ontological weight. Certainly, the most well-known triadic creative relationship is bound inextricably to the subject of love: that is, the creative relationship between creator-Pygmalion, creation-Galatea, and interlocutor-Venus. As the myth dictates, although Pygmalion sculpts Galatea with his bare hands, it is Venus who ultimately brings her to life, taking pity on the sculptor in love with his creation. In Rousseau's retelling of Ovid's myth, however, Venus is replaced with an alternative third party, a slab of marble, an aide-mémoire of the sculptor's generative power. The "Pygmalion effect," the relationship between creator and creation, in Rousseau's re-telling comes to life in the interaction between Pygmalion and Galatea and the sculpting material. In Rousseau's *Julie*, the "Pygmalion effect" is enacted through the relationship between Julie and Wolmar. Wolmar, as both a landowner and husband, poses as Rousseau's Pygmalion, who, through will alone, molds his immediate world to fit his ideal. Although not carved from stone, Julie emerges from Wolmar's moral teachings a reformed woman, no longer a Julie d'Étange, but a Julie de Wolmar, a "Julie of Wolmar." And, as with Pygmalion and his Galatea, the motivating force is love.

Correlated arrangements that match love and structure in order to emphasize the relationships between maker and made, such as the epistolary novel, the triolet, and "the Pygmalion effect," are repeated throughout Rousseau's oeuvre and reinforce his literary

system. Even a cursory look at the relationships between Pygmalion and Galatea, Wolmar and Julie reveals a resemblance between Rousseau's conception of artistic activity and the experience of love, and his two versions of Pygmalion ask whether, under the "Pygmalion effect," self-expression can be properly executed outside of love's literary domain. Starobinski notes the correspondence between self-expression and love in developing *pygmalionism*, an alternative, deferred and deflected version of narcissism where love of self is experienced first as love for one's creation:

The undivided narcissism of self-involvement is followed by another antithetical form of narcissism: self-projection. It would be better perhaps to call this attitude not narcissism but pygmalionism. Instead of falling back immediately upon itself, love alienates itself in the form of a *work*. Through the work, however, it still seeks union of self with self. Love abandons the ego only to pave the way for a happy return. "I adore myself in what I have made."<sup>52</sup>

Starobinski's *pygmalionism* highlights well a particular type of creative relationship in which the desire to create is motivated above all by a surreptitious impulse to self-love. The creator's likeness is remade in his creation, and, looking at his creation, which is identical with his own self, allows him a referred understanding of his identity. When abstracted, *pygmalionism* as a psychological condition demonstrates in metaphorical terms the system operative in the epistolary novel for valuing and understanding the self: it is always a mediated process in which the self is arrived at through a series of evaluative tasks—gazing, judging, assessing, appreciating, and, above all, loving. The self is not a concept that is bound to the individual alone, but rather is a constellation of its refracted images: whom it loves, who loves it; what it creates, who creates it.

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<sup>52</sup> Jean Starobinski, *The Living Eye*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 70-71.

For Shklovsky's Eloise, however, the desired effect is inverted. To transform life into device (Elsa Triolet into T/triolet) is to enact a Pygmalion moment in reverse—to take life and make it marble, to make stone once again stony. In de-animating life, Shklovsky reconfigures the link between the creative process and self-discovery. This is the Sentimentalism made strange that lies at the core of his work: an aesthetic imperative to retrograde Pygmalion's creative process, to proceed from life to material, and to break the alleged ties between creator and his creation in order to underline the autonomous, autogenetic spirit of artistic material. When in *Third Factory* Shklovsky writes "wet clay taught me how to properly understand art," he insists that art be understood as process, as material that is manipulated, and in so doing, insists that the critic unpack, understand, and evaluate the creative process starting from art's beginning rather than its final stages (45). Shklovsky's Formalism takes a radically critical view of the role of the author/creator, suggesting at one time that the creator both does and does not exist, and thereby ameliorates the contentious yet also interdependent relationship between creator and creation wherein self-identity, that is, identity as distinct and extricable from another, is at stake—creator and creation, Shklovsky insists, exist independently of each other. In fact, Shklovsky takes this genetic separation one step further. The link between creation and creator, he insists, is "nonfunctional": "With regard to the writer, art has three freedoms: 1) the freedom to ignore his personality, 2) the freedom to choose from his personality, 3) the freedom to choose from any other material whatsoever. One must study not the problematical connection, but the facts" (*Third Factory*, 61). What exactly is meant by this declaration is unclear; in true modernist form, a good amount of *Third Factory* reads as a series of utterances without much of what Shklovsky often refers to as

*tkan'* (connective tissue). However, the implication is that Shklovsky values art as an autogenetic entity endowed with a certain set of “freedoms,” most important of which is the right to declare independence from traditional notions of the creative process.

In a sense, Shklovsky’s campaign for art’s autonomy is a way to rescue literature from its role as a tool for social approval and to return it to the world of creative praxis. He treats literature as integrated material that melds art and *byt*, device and life. In this respect, *Third Factory*, Shklovsky’s third effort in life-writing (alongside *Zoo* and *Sentimental Journey*), may be read as an attempt to match life and device in his own world by applying the epistolary-triolet template—a three-part, “architectonic tautology”—to autobiography. A “de-novelized,” de-centered self-portrait, *Third Factory* finds affinity with Rousseau’s negative approach to self-representation; however, Shklovsky takes Rousseau’s effort a step further. “I have no desire to construct a plot,” he writes in the preface, “I am going to write about things and thoughts. To compile quotations” (3). Rousseau’s *Dialogues*, while equally fractured, is composed with more systematic organization. Although it is presented as a non-linear narration of the self, its ultimate endgame is comprehension—not only a comprehensive image of the author, but a dialogue between author and reader, and between opposing viewpoints, that results in a comprehensive understanding at least of what exactly constitutes “Rousseau.” Shklovsky’s *Third Factory*, in contradistinction, asserts neither a comprehensive image of the author, nor a plan to construct one. The impulse to build a non-linear narrative stems from the desire to de-automatize and ultimately to destroy the reader’s expectations, and, in so doing, to commit to a more authentic image of the author in formalist terms.

In *Dialogues*, Rousseau takes the notion of self-fragmentation to a capital level by claiming that “notre plus douce existence est relative et collective et notre vrai moi n’est pas tout entier en nous.”<sup>53</sup> Totality is a mere illusion, however, to which art should aspire. While the search for a holistic literary rendering of the self defines the process of self-representation, totality is not the endgame. As Rousseau writes in his autobiographical fragment, *Mon portrait* (1764-5[?]), “I throw my scattered and disconnected thoughts on scraps of paper, afterward I stitch it all together somehow or other and that is how I write a book” (fragment 35).<sup>54</sup> For Rousseau, the only type of portrait that approaches authenticity is the literary portrait, which, in its hermeneutical dependence on the reader, is itself intrinsically incomplete. Without relying too heavily on the Romantic notion of *l’âme déchirée*, I support the general opinion that the reliable portrait for Rousseau is a fractured one—broken not because of its ineffability, but because it is the artistic yield of a system in place that involves a complicated process of interpretation, misinterpretation and re-interpretation; for de Man, an explicitly three-part process:

In the more complicated case of the non-blinded author, as we have claimed Rousseau to be, the system has to be triadic: the blindness is transferred from the writer to his first readers, the “traditional” disciples or commentators. These blinded first readers...then need, in turn, a critical reader who reverses the tradition and momentarily takes us closer to the original insight. The existence of a particularly rich aberrant tradition in the case of the writers who can legitimately be called the most enlightened, is therefore no accident, but a constitutive part of all literature, the basis, in fact, of literary history. And since interpretation is nothing but the possibility of error, by claiming that a certain degree of blindness is part of the specificity of all literature we also reaffirm the

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<sup>53</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dialogues de Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques ; suivis de Le Lévitte d’Ephraïm* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 227.

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Autobiographical, Scientific, Religious, Moral, and Literary Writings*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. and trans. Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 2006), 12:43.

absolute dependence of the interpretation on the text and of the text on the interpretation. (*Blindness and Insight*, 141)

Motivated in two directions, Rousseau avoids and celebrates error; he preempts misinterpretation by employing its mistakes. The self that is reproduced in autobiography must be seen at several removes, refracted rather than reflected, and for this reason mistakes become the undeniable underbelly of any attempt at life-writing. The idea that the personality is best represented not only as a composite of parts (which allude to, yet do not form a complete image), but also as not entirely factual is a notion that finds affinity with Russian Formalism. For instance, Lev Yakubinsky, in his work on dialogic speech, emphasizes the value of error in his presentation of *apperception*—the process through which self-discovery merges with dialogue. He explores *speech automatism*, a speech act that one produces without thought, which is encouraged more in dialogue than in monologue, and which renders dialogue more “progressive” than monologue. Linguistic creativity, he argues, arises from the automatism of dialogue. When one is engrossed in an automatic act, errors are committed and neologisms are made: “we may conclude that dialogue promotes speech as a simple, volitional, and unconscious activity.”<sup>55</sup> In this sense, dialogue is innovative in its errors; its significance depends on pre-conceived notions, for it relies on the listener at times to infer what is meant despite what is said. This correspondence between two conversation partners, a practice in which one must take into account “others,” the Formalists apply to the text, recognizing that within the text’s linguistic system meaning changes and evolves with each and every reader. A thumbprint of Yakubinsky’s work on dialogic speech is found in the theoretical makeup of estrangement, a strategy for transforming life into art which insists that

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<sup>55</sup> Lev Yakubinsky and Michael Eskin, “On Dialogic Speech,” *PMLA* 112, no. 2 (March 1997): 255.

automatic behavior be looked at critically in order to give new life to old art forms.<sup>56</sup> Misconceptions, misconstructions, essentially all alternative viewpoints that may or may not be true to fact make estrangement effective. Estrangement gives aesthetic weight to the value of error, which is then valorized and heightened to the level of empirical fact particularly in Shklovsky's autobiography. Within this process of (mis)interpretation and reinterpretation, mistakes are inevitable, which, as in dialogue, is a necessary part of any portrait, whether literary or otherwise.

As in *Zoo*, the only element that unites the material in *Third Factory* is the work's architecture—in *Zoo*, the presence of the Editor; in *Third Factory*, the division of the work into three formative “factories” which make up Shklovsky's sentimental education. Shklovsky's goal in creating a “bezfabul'nyi” (plotless) autobiography is two-fold. First, to project a new (modernist) image of the personality that can be represented as “organic” (*Theory of Prose*, 209), even if it “lies outside the scope of the plotted genre” (206), which, as Shklovsky tells his reader in *Third Factory*, has been “consigned to the attic” (4). For this reason, Shklovsky employs the anecdote, a condensed genre that may be understood as an “organic” representation of the personality (as an unadulterated speech act, it can conceivably be taken as one's “essence” as it is, and not as it is shaped). Furthermore, the anecdote is essentially a dialogic genre, derived from the oral tradition, which, in light of Yakubinsky's study, in which dialogue, categorized as “estestvennaia rech'” (natural speech), is set against the more tyrannical and “artificial” (iskustvennyi) monologue, only increases the anecdote's organic potential. To turn towards anecdotal material as opposed to traditional narrative means to accept non-conservative forms of

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<sup>56</sup> Aleksandr Galushkin's authoritative study of OPOIAZ reveals that Shklovsky's professor and mentor Baudoin de Courtenay introduced Shklovsky to Yakubinsky in the second half of 1914 (Shklovsky confirms their meeting in *Third Factory*); see Galushkin, ed., *Literaturnaia zhizn' Rossii 1920-kh godov*.

representation as effective for realigning the artificial and the real. *Third Factory* emblemizes the movement in the formalist camp towards melding form and life in an attempt to reinstate the real, natural world within literature, one that prioritizes the immediacy of language and breaks the habits of the automatized reader.

The second motive, causally related to the first, is to include others, as does Rousseau, in the representation process, and thus to demonstrate how art can function as a de-automatizing force. The multiplicity of anecdotal detail unloaded on the reader compels him to reassemble the story, to make a whole out of disparate parts, and, in this way, teaches him to be an active participant in the mimetic process—to “see” and not to “recognize” (*Resurrection of the Word*). As with epistolary narratives, Shklovsky’s quasi-autobiography has a particular way of playing with the reader’s pleasure in coordinating fragments. While, to a certain extent, the ego is the subject of *Third Factory*, art as device is the focal point; it is the ego that is at stake of ossification, the ego that Shklovsky wishes to set in motion—to change, transform, and evolve. If, as Starobinski argues, Rousseau’s *Dialogues* is a declaration of *vitam impendere sibi* (to risk one’s life for the self), then Shklovsky’s *Third Factory* takes the same risk, however, in support of art.<sup>57</sup>

Describing the work of the "second" of three "factories" operative in his life, Shklovsky calls attention to the systemic approach that comprises the early work of the OPOIAZ Formalists.

The important thing is that we approached art systematically. We spoke about art as such. We refused to view it as a reflection. We located the distinctive features of the genus [*rod*]. We began defining the basic tendencies of form. We understood that, in fact, you can distill from works of literature the homogenous laws that determine their shape. In short, science is possible. (*Third Factory*, 38)

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<sup>57</sup> Note that letter thirty-one of *Zoo* admits to the same secret project: “Even so, I’m not going to write about love. You see, Alya? I never write about anything but literature” (121).



In conceiving of literature as a “machine,” or aesthetic “system,” the Formalists, according to Shklovsky, were able to isolate the defining features that made a work of literature “literary,” and thus were able to build a “scientific” discipline out of literary studies. In a radical step beyond late nineteenth-century literary criticism, the Formalists did away with empiricism as influential for the study of literature in order to let the artistic creation stand “autonomously.” As P. N. Medvedev phrases it: “European Formalism [Russian Formalism—A. A.] developed equally hostile to the positivism of the previous epoch and to the idealist philosophical aesthetics, with its gross generalizations and disinterested view in the concrete phenomena of art.”<sup>58</sup> Unlike biographical material, diary entries, and sociological influences, the “autonomous” literary system was for the Formalists the only legitimate object for literary studies. With external influences held at bay, the autonomous work of art could be taken as a “machine,” or “system”: self-standing, self-regulating, and virtually autogenetic.

In Shklovsky’s criticism as well as his (quasi-) fiction, the notion that literature is a self-governing system of parts, movable in their own right, and yet also part and parcel of the greater literary “machine” is a metaphor upon which Shklovsky relies heavily. Peter Steiner, in his seminal work, *Formalism: a Metapoetics*, outlines the machine metaphor as it is used throughout the development of Formalism, arguing that the Formalists—particularly Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum—developed their literary science as a means of tabulating a counter-positivistic ‘will to system,’ a modernist reformulation of the Enlightenment’s spirit of systematization. For example, Shklovsky’s assessment of a

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<sup>58</sup> P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: a Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Trans. Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978. Rev. Ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985, 5.

literary work as the "sum-total of devices" gave rise to the notion of literary form as an enclosure of individual parts. This view was then significantly modified, and Shklovsky's "sum-total of devices" was replaced by the concept of an aesthetic system, in which each device had a certain function to perform. The notion of the machine later transformed into a "system" (namely, the "systemo-functional" model), which first appeared in Jakobson and Tynianov's 1928 article, "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language" ("Voprosy izucheniia iazyka i literatury"), published in *Novyi Lef*. They write:

Literary history is closely bound up with other historic 'series.' Each of the series is characterized by peculiar structural laws. Without an inquiry into these laws, it is impossible to establish a connection between the literary 'series' and other sets of cultural phenomena. To study the system of systems, while ignoring the internal laws of each individual system, is a grave methodological error.<sup>59</sup>

The progression from Shklovsky's "set of devices," to the more structuralist, or "systemic Formalism" (Steiner 99) of Tynianov and Jakobson demonstrates the move within Russian Formalism towards sociological poetics, a method of analysis that seeks structural parallels between literary and other cultural systems. "The role of systemic Formalism," writes Steiner, "was...to describe the relationship between art and *byt* and to provide an account of literary history capable of explaining the dynamic interplay between these two domains" (99). For the most part, *byt*, or the categorically "sociological," is missing from Shklovsky's theoretical contributions until 1927. Possibly the least Marxist of all the OPOIAZ Formalists (despite his official endorsement of the sociological method [see his "In Defense of the Sociological Method," 1928]), Shklovsky remained convinced of the fundamental specificity of the literary text throughout his career.

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 134.

For the most part, Rousseau's systemic approach is not anomalous but rather symptomatic of his era, the late Enlightenment, which fostered what Cassirer, in his work on the Enlightenment era, terms an "esprit systématique" (*The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*). However, what sets Rousseau apart from the elite group of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers is precisely the emotionality (coupled with a fierce, yet surreptitious religiousness) that so often bleeds into his work. Unlike his more rationalist contemporaries, Rousseau was not convinced that the sentiments, when applied to the basic epistemology of the self, were accurate sources for deductive reasoning; sentimental about sentimentality, Rousseau contested the notion that the subjective experience could be systematized and employed as an instrument for self-discovery. As Cassirer notes, it is on this point that Rousseau breaks ties with eighteenth-century conservative positivism and begins his main opposition with the Parisian *philosophes* (*The Problem of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 114).

Sentimentalism, for Rousseau, was more a soft science intended only for knowledge of the external world. For this reason, he devised a second tier to his "système d'étude," what he refers to in *Dialogues* as "le vrai système du cœur humain" (99). In an early letter to his father, Isaac Rousseau, Rousseau outlines the two camps that make up his organization of the world: "D'abord, je me suis fait *un système d'étude* que j'ai divisé en deux chefs principaux: le premier comprend tout ce qui sert à éclairer l'esprit et à l'orner de connaissances utiles et agréables, et l'autre renferme les moyens de former le cœur à la sagesse et à la vertu" (À [Isaac Rousseau à Nyon], Chambéry, 1735). The first system, dedicated to enlightening of the spirit ("éclairer l'esprit"), categorizes knowledge pertaining to the concrete, material world. The second system, which conditions/trains

(former) the heart, explores the categories of the subjective world. When matched together, these two systems comprise a comprehensive approach to general epistemology.

On the subject of the systematization of art, Rousseau was also convinced that literature must rely on a system—his “système d’étude”—in order to be productive and not fall prey to the illicit motives of entertainment literature.<sup>60</sup> However, Rousseau’s system, unlike that of Shklovsky and the Formalists, was for the most part moralistic and not aesthetic: while literature must act according to a system, it itself was not a self-regulating system. Although Rousseau does not address literature as an isolated system, like Shklovsky, he does emphasize “autonomy” as the basis of creative work. In his personal letters, Rousseau defends creative genius by advocating its equality, dignity, and naturalness. Exterior controls—whether patronage or the salon’s socio-aesthetic code—are deemed to be stifling and sterilizing; in essence, antithetical to creative work. This relationship between autonomous freedom and naturalness is seen again in Rousseau’s defense of savage man, who was a capital example of a perfect autonomy of consciousness. “The savage lives within himself,” he writes in his *Second Discourse*, “the sociable man knows how to live only in the opinion of others and it is from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own being.”<sup>61</sup> Rousseau is dedicated to fostering a creative and human type whose defining characteristic is autonomy, and this idealized primitive simplicity is reminiscent of how Shklovsky believes art should be perceived.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See James Hamilton, *Rousseau’s Theory of Literature: The Poetics of Art and Nature* (York, S.C.: French Literature Publications Co., 1979).

<sup>61</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59.

<sup>62</sup> The pronounced primitivism behind Shklovsky’s *ostranenie* as it relates to Rousseau’s “savage nation,” as well as to Karamzin’s (re)interpretation of Rousseau’s primitivism, is the subject of the dissertation’s third chapter.

Much like Rousseau's binary "système d'étude," the Formalist method depends on a diametric opposition, dividing the world (of art) into two axiomatic groups—form and content; art and *byt*. The binary between art and *byt* plays out in literature much like the polemic between form and content—as a symbiotic "dynamism," to borrow from Tynianov: art makes *byt* perceptible, just as form gives shape to content. The art/*byt* polemic central to Formalism suggests that the world of artistic creation stands at the border of two mutually competing systems—one, socio-cultural (*byt*), which sets the standards and expectations of our everyday behavior; the other, aesthetic (art), which is derived from the very socio-cultural system that it is also designed to counteract in order to make *byt* "palpable," "perceptible," "phenomenal," and thereby delay, if not stifle completely, its automatizing effects. Much like the dynamic between content and form—in which one system is designed to disempower the other while also informing the other's development—art is set against *byt* yet is also charged with giving it shape.

Within Rousseau's systemic worldview, there exists an analogous dichotomy between nature and society, in which society sets our standards for normative behavior yet also acts aggressively against our "natural" and thereby decidedly more moral inclinations. On a general level, Rousseau's "système d'étude," structured to maintain and perpetuate authenticity and sincerity, is an effort to apply the "système universel des choses"<sup>63</sup> to the literary universe and to thereby reinstate the power of the natural world

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<sup>63</sup> In the following excerpt from a letter to Malesherbes, Rousseau recounts the "système universel":  
 Bientôt de la surface de la terre, j'élevais mes idées à tous les êtres de la nature, au système universel des choses, à l'Être incompréhensible qui embrasse tout. Alors, l'esprit perdu dans cette immensité, je ne pensais pas, je ne raisonnais pas, je ne philosophais pas: je me sentais, avec une sorte de volupté, accablé du poids de cet univers, je me livrais avec ravissement à la confusion de ces grandes idées, j'aimais à me perdre en imagination dans l'espace ; mon cœur resserré dans les bornes des êtres s'y trouvait trop à l'étroit, j'étouffais dans l'univers, j'aurais voulu m'élancer dans l'infini. Je crois que, si j'eusse dévoilé tous les mystères de la nature, je me serais senti dans une

within the artistic domain. Those who have strayed from the “système universel” (“un Système vrai mais affligeant”), argues Rousseau in his letter to Lyon academician Charles Bordes (written in response to Bordes criticism of Rousseau’s *First Discourse*), “[have] degenerated from their primitive goodness, [and] have lapsed into all the errors that blind them and the miseries that oppress them” (*Discourse*, 109). In this way, the society that contaminates is the very same that creates the system holding everything together. This diametric, yet symbiotic correspondence between polarities is what makes up the most striking overlap between Rousseau and Shklovsky, between one’s Sentimentalism and the other’s Formalism. And the source of their respective inquiries into this correspondence between polarities is essentially the same: the autonomous work of art, like the autonomous consciousness, are the objects of study—to see how they operate when suspended without connection to the civilized world, when they are de-aculturated, or, in a way, de-systematized. This would mean that for Shklovsky a work of art represents, like Rousseau’s “savage nation” (*Second Discourse*), a happy medium between two worlds.

I elucidate here the relationship between the systemic perspectives of Shklovsky and Rousseau since it applies directly to the subject (and/or crisis) of self-knowledge and self-representation; for Shklovsky, specifically, isolating the paradoxical relationship between the genre of autobiography, which naturally points to the existence of the author, and the supposition that literature is self-standing, autogenetic, and ostensibly authorless. For Rousseau, however, the question of the autonomous text was not a concern and thus

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situation moins délicieuse que cette étourdissante extase, à laquelle mon esprit se livrait sans retenue, et qui, dans l'agitation de mes transports, me faisait écrier quelquefois : O grand Être ! ô grand Être ! sans pouvoir dire ni penser rien de plus (À Montmorency, le 26 janvier 1762).

the paradox lies in his desire to realize himself in autobiography, a task he knows is impossible to achieve. The system as it is recounted by Rousseau and Shklovsky is at one time cohesive and fragmented, consisting of parts that operate according to universal laws and yet that function independently of the system. The unfortunate paradox for Rousseau and Shklovsky is that the system, like self-knowledge, seeks comprehension—to see all, speak all, know all, and be all—in vain. The power of any system, it seems, lies ironically in its incompleteness and instability. As Shklovsky contends, “the most vital genres in contemporary art are the collection of articles and the variety show, which depends for its interest on the individual components, not on the connective tissue [tkan]” (*Zoo*, 81). Gary Saul Morson insists that Shklovsky’s take on the journal or encyclopedic form can be extracted and applied to his perspective on the function of art as a whole (*Boundaries of Genre*). So doing reveals that Shklovsky links artistic importance to art’s ability to portray thematic connections between parts that could simultaneously stand on their own. In his theoretical and applied work, he seeks to build literary systems—however, systems that are not stable, and this is what makes the campaign for the autonomy of art at once a catalyst for and an act of sabotage against the systemic sensibility. By making autonomy the purpose of the literary system, Shklovsky renders the system no longer a system.

Like the literary system, affinity without coherence is also how self-representation for both authors functions: all parts of the whole are suspended in correspondence with one another without ever coming together to form a static image. For instance, in the preface to the Neuchâtel manuscript of his *Confessions*, Rousseau insists that there has been no such thing as an authentic portrait (literary or otherwise) since it captures only

one moment in time along the axis of a person's life. *Confessions* precedes *Dialogues* by ten years and is thus the beginning of Rousseau's final steps towards revitalizing the life-writing genre and remaking it according to the late eighteenth century's parameters of authenticity and full disclosure. *Dialogues* is one concluding move in this process, a means of turning the *camera obscura* into a formal method by treating the three-part dialogue as a real-life "sketch" of the author; a literary act of admission that no self-portrait is static or final but rather is always rough and in the process of development.<sup>64</sup> Any work of autobiography, admit both Shklovsky and Rousseau, by virtue of being written is thus mediated. There are missing pieces, some of which are locatable, residing either in the reader or in the author, even though he himself is unable to express them. Also significant, however, are the pieces whose whereabouts are unknown—the secret rumors, preconceived notions, unspoken judgments that produce anxiety, yet that nonetheless are pieces of the portrait's puzzle. As "Rousseau" informs "The Frenchman" of *Dialogues*, in order to know on a comprehensive level the "Jean-Jacques" on trial, "I had to begin by seeing everything, hearing everything, taking note of everything before reaching a verdict about anything, until I had assembled enough material on which to base a solid judgment..." (*Dialogues*, 204). However, a complete picture is impossible by virtue of the fact that "Rousseau is unable to say all that he knows about him [Jean-Jacques]" (210). Like unknown rumors floating about, the effort yet ultimate inability to express oneself is one of many undeniable lacunas that make up the personality and that

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<sup>64</sup>"Je vais travailler pour ainsi dire dans la chambre obscure; il n'y faut point d'autre art que de suivre exactement les traits que je vois marqués... je dirai chaque chose comme je la sens, comme je la vois, sans recherché, sans gene, sans m'embrasser de la bigarrure. En me livrant à la fois au souvenir de l'impression recue et au sentiment present je peindrai doublement l'état de mon ame, savoir au moment où l'évenement m'est arrivé et au moment où je l'ai décrit." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, in *Œuvres Complètes De J.J. Rousseau, Mises Dans Un Nouvel Ordre, Avec Des Notes Historiques Et Des Éclaircissements* (Paris: P. Dupont, 1823), 1154. Cf. G.J. Gravesande, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mathématiques*, ed. Jean Nic. Seb. Allamand, 2 vols. (Amsterdam : chez Marc-Michel Rey, 1774), 1: 73-88).



therefore must be acknowledged in any attempt at self-representation.

Much of the dispute over which type of self-portrait is most faithful to real-life arises from issues surrounding time and evolution. As for Rousseau, for Shklovsky the authentic portrait is one that stands out in relief against the backdrop of history (context).<sup>65</sup> If a unified portrait exists, it exists as a succession of facts, without much “connective tissue” between them. Both Rousseau and Shklovsky are troubled by time as a harbinger of life’s end and seek ways through art to circumvent the issue of historicity. Their separate efforts produce remarkable affinities between what Starobinski terms Rousseau’s “theory of unveiling” and Shklovsky’s effort to “lay bare the device,” two concepts that tackle the problem of writing as an act of historical anxiety and that strive to detain the text in present-time (turning the text into a “writerly” text [Barthes], in which the reader takes an active role in bringing the text out of the past into the present moment). In developing his “theory of unveiling,” Starobinski discovered that, for Rousseau, “language is emotion immediately expressed” (*Transparency*, 196). Taking Starobinski’s assessment into account, it seems that, for Rousseau, language, like estrangement for Shklovsky, bridges the historical gap between the artwork as an artifact of the past and the viewer as situated in the present. If, for Shklovsky, “form exists only insofar as we feel it,” then estrangement becomes a process in which multiple historical dimensions meet, in which the old automatized forms of the past serve as a backdrop to the new, present perception.

For this reason, formal innovations in autobiography that prioritize the immediacy of language and break the habits of the automatized reader help the author overcome the

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<sup>65</sup> As Shklovsky writes: “We must extricate a thing from the cluster of associations in which it is found” (Нужно вырвать вещь из ряда привычных ассоциаций, в которых она находится). *Theory of Prose*, 61.

limitations of time-linear, which ultimately raises the question: can autobiography, as a form of literary portraiture, behave like estrangement? Can autobiography, like estrangement, be a possible means for ameliorating the perpetual problems of representation and authenticity? In terms of duplicity and ‘double faces,’ correspondence and fragmentation, these two processes of assessing, organizing, and synthesizing aesthetic information attack the problem of habituation (what Shklovsky condemns “the greatest econom[izing] of perceptual effort” [*Theory of Prose*, 5]) using the same approach. This chapter has looked at love and self-discovery as real-life exercises in defamiliarization (for Shklovsky, particularly, when they develop in tandem—when love leads to self-discovery, or when self-discovery leads to love—which, incidentally, is the central theme of *Zoo*), and assesses how and why these psychological experiences are transformed into device, mapped onto the literary stage. While the amount of literature on autobiography is paltry from within Formalism’s critical canon (certainly, Rousseau’s provides a wealth of writing on the subject), it seems that estrangement for Shklovsky operates much like the Rousseauian process of self-discovery: when one relaxes and suspends preconceived notions—*begins “to see” and not “to recognize”*—this is where the true epistemology (of the self) is found. As Rousseau writes, “It is in the familiarity of intimate commerce in the continuity of private life that a man eventually lets himself be seen as he really is, when the incentive for self-awareness relaxes [le ressort de l’attention sur soi se relâche]” (*Dialogues*, 206). In his effort to recuperate a moral, natural, and primitive self, Rousseau seeks out ways to reinstate autonomy by de-automatizing, and even de-systematizing the process through which one arrives at self-knowledge. As with Shklovsky’s estrangement, Rousseau’s “method” is perceptual and assumes that while

sight is the main means through which a greater, more authentic version of the self can be attained, visual *acuity* is unfortunately what leads to automatism. True self-knowledge comes about through refractive error. One way in which this “method” can be applied to the world of literary representation—autobiography—is, as I have shown, by reconfiguring it as a multi-dimensional project. If portraiture is at its most authentic when it is broken, then the epistolary novel is an ideal modality for self-representation for its ability to capture the spirit of communalism and dialogism that lies at the heart of authenticity for both Shklovsky and Rousseau. In this way, love is reconceived of as a model sentiment whose literary forms are most adequate for attempts at self-representation.

“Love probably doesn’t exist,” Shklovsky writes in *Third Factory*, “it is not a thing, but a landscape, consisting of a series of objects unconnected to each other, but seen as a whole” (33). This excerpt represents well the structural connection between representations of love and self that I find at work in both *Dialogues* and *Third Factory*. In joining love and self, epistolary and autobiography, Shklovsky demonstrates the particular way in which he seeks counsel from Sentimentalism for transforming life into device. Matching these two literary systems, Shklovsky can make metaphor out of real-life material, and thus ease the pain of distance by filling the gap through artistic expression—the gap between man and the object of his unrequited affection, between theoretician and the artistic environment that is growing stagnant around him as the fluidity of modernist forms began to become ossified under political pressures.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> I refer here to the encroaching, highly-politicized aesthetic of early Bolshevik art that took aim at Formalism’s a-historical, a-teleological, a-political, “anti-Marxist” literary program (see Trotsky’s *Literature and Revolution*, 1924) and that eventually, in 1925, brought down the avant-garde group *LEF*, of which Shklovsky was a central member.

Sentimentalism, that is literary emotionality, not only teaches Shklovsky the tricks of the trade, but also lingers in his formalist discourse as a coping mechanism, a sanction of release from the constraints of a life made too comprehensible and too unbearably ordinary.

To be sure, there is something remarkably ‘revolutionary’ about Shklovsky’s attempt (not) to write about love. As recorded in his diary, published in 1939, “the theme of love has returned to our literature...but it returned in a completely new way.”<sup>67</sup> What was particularly new about the return of love to literature in the early revolutionary era is that sentiment becomes device, an organizing principle for structuring self-discourse and for securing a place for the individual experience within the greater socialist narrative. Mayakovsky, argues Shklovsky, is a prime example of this correspondance between love and revolution: “Mayakovsky was a poet and told about love. Telling about love, he became a revolutionary” (*Dnevnik*, 117). Similarly, Rousseau is emancipated by the late eighteenth century’s turn to sentiment. Surrounded by the persecuting thoughts of his *philosophe* peers, Rousseau seeks refuge in his oeuvre, which becomes a perpetual search for freedom from scrutiny and judgment. Rousseau, Starobinski reasons, is a fatalist, albeit a redeemable one: “freedom preserves one refuge, however: feeling (and the act of writing itself)” (*Transparency*, 194). Recording sentiment becomes a chronic assertion of his autonomy since feeling provides the means to dramatize the self—at its most authentic—in literature.

So why is love, as opposed to other sentiments, or even other themes like work, war, or travel, the essential thing to dramatize as a model for self-representation? One reason may be love’s literary history. In his work *Fragments of a Lover’s Discourse*

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<sup>67</sup> Viktor Shklovskii, *Dnevnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1939), 117.

(*Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, 1977), Barthes argues that within literature “the lover” is one who resides on the outskirts of society and for whom the real is an illusion, while love, itself an illusion, constitutes for him the real. While he does not refer directly to Rousseau, Barthes outlines the ontological dilemma that lies at the core of Rousseau’s experiments with the “lover’s discourse,” which in *Julie* is as much a means of unraveling and divulging the characters within as it is a method of self-representation for the author. Similar to Shklovsky’s presenting love as landscape, the “Editor” in *Julie* argues that, “love is but illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone has given being; and as it renders all its sentiments by images, its language is always figurative [comme il rend tous ses sentiments en images, son langage est toujours figuré]” (10). It seems that, for both Shklovsky and Rousseau, love is the ultimate form of estrangement; it creates a “differential impression” of life and the illusion of a possible world that, while not immediately perceivable, with a bit of artistic labor, may be made such.

In a more literal, less literary way, when Mayakovsky in his notorious final verses, composed just before his suicide in 1930, writes, “The love boat has crashed up against the everyday [*byt*],” he illustrates quite well the differential, and, especially, hostile relationship between love and life, referring possibly to his own torrid affair with Lili Brik. And while there is some ambiguity as to who is the victim here—whether the love boat is prematurely brought ashore by the everyday, or whether the shore of the everyday is violently smashed by the love boat—it is clear the meeting of the two victimizes one, if not both parties. Diametrically opposed, in no possible scenario might these two worlds—love and life, *liubov*’ and *byt*—coexist. Shklovsky was well aware of

Mayakovsky's romantic crisis; his relationship with the Briks (Osip and Lili [née Kagan]) joined him to Shklovsky through the latter's unrequited affections for Lili Brik's sister, Elsa Triolet (a.k.a. Alya), who, in 1918, married French officer André Triolet. Both entangled in a love triangle with a Kagan sister and another man, Mayakovsky and Shklovsky might be considered each other's "differential impressions," each other's possible worlds, the exact expression of love only in another context. In other words, lines two and eight of the very same triolet.

And yet, while love and estrangement are both intended to rescue the individual from ordinary life, the fact that this other possible world, this "differential impression," could morph into reality is, for Shklovsky if not also for Rousseau, a source of anxiety for it suggests that life's estranged version, like reality itself, is fated for automatization. On the subject of love as destiny, Shklovsky writes:

Love has its own methods, its own logic—set moves established without consulting either me or us. I pronounced the word 'love' and set the whole thing in motion. The game began. And I no longer know where love ends and the book begins. The game is underway. After a hundred pages or so, I will be checkmated. The beginning is already played out. No one can change the denouement. (*Zoo*, 64)

In composing an epistolary novel, and choosing (not) to write about love, Shklovsky fears he may have consigned his work to fate; that *Zoo*, regardless of its own autonomous inclinations, is subject to love's literary history. Contrary to the freedoms imparted by love's tripartite literary form, love is a fatalist system: it is an act of genesis that is ultimately self-degenerative.

In the next chapter, I will look at another incarnation of this theme of love as estrangement as it appears in Karamzin's sentimental prose, which, while engaging Rousseau's sentimentalism directly, also takes aim at the literary suppositions of his

French mentor and counterpart. Love in Karamzin sets the stage for an entirely new series of tasks. As part of his trial at sentimental prose, Karamzin turns literary self-expression into literary self-reading; reading about love, taking voyeuristic pleasure in the romantic triumphs and tribulations of his characters, becomes his primary means of self-representation.

## Chapter Two

### Love and Negative Poetics:

#### Karamzin's Self-reading

*“Tel est le neant des choses humaines qu'hors l'Etre existant par lui-meme, il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas.”*

*Rousseau*

*“Пустота всасывает. Дайте скорость.”*

*Shklovsky*

In the forward to the second volume of his collection of poetry, *Aonides* (*Aonidy, ili sobranie raznykh, novykh stikhkhotvorenii*, 1797), Karamzin writes:

One must not think that only lofty subjects can excite a poet and serve to demonstrate his gifts: on the contrary, the true poet finds the poetic side in the most ordinary [обыкновенных] things; it is his business to present everything in living colors, to attach to everything a witty thought, a delicate feeling, or to adorn the ordinary thought, the ordinary feeling, with an expression that shows the nuances hidden from other people's eyes, to find the imperceptible analogies, similarities [обыкновенное чувство украшать выражением, показывать оттенки, которые укрываются от глаз других людей, находить неприметные аналогии, сходства]...<sup>68</sup>

Composed at the height of Karamzin's sentimentalism, this excerpt represents well the author's perspective on what it means to write sentimentally, which, for Karamzin, is to embellish the ordinary, “to adorn” (*ukrashat'*) or dress reality to look ‘literary’, attaching witty thoughts, colors, and expressions, and heightening reality to the level of literature. His exposition of the writing process in *Aonides* expresses the pleasure of poetic play, which runs rampant throughout Karamzin's prose. However, much of Karamzin's literary legacy lies in his contribution to developing a more sober sentimental style that was “good,” “pleasant,” “moralistic,” and easily transmittable. He represents “the climax of

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<sup>68</sup> Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, *Selected Prose of N.M. Karamzin*, trans. Henry M. Nebel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 167. All translations for Karamzin will come from Nebel's *Selected Prose* unless otherwise noted.



the [Russian] sentimental movement,”<sup>69</sup> writes Neuhäuser, a movement that the scholar defines in the following way:

In later sentimentalism, particularly from the 1790s on under strong masonic and preromantic influences, emotions were no longer directly related to actions as an indicator of their moral essence, but were viewed as an expression of the self, the only valid self-expression, in fact. Emotions became a value and end in themselves. In an extreme, view, their cultivation became the aim of civilized existence (74).

Karamzin’s oeuvre, Neuhäuser writes, “indicate[s] the victory of this attitude” (74); however, Karamzin also successfully distinguishes himself from contemporary sentimental practitioners, such as Murav’ev and Kutuzov who make up a large part of Neuhäuser’s analysis, and whose work breeds on a more global level a balanced mix of morality and self-expression. In teasing out the definitive qualities of this period between neoclassical stagnancy and romantic chaos wherein Karamzin composed the majority of his prose, Neuhäuser seeks answers in Nikolai Polevoi’s essay “Sochineniia I. I. Dmitieva.” Polevoi understood the shift between literary periods as wholly attributed to Karamzin’s debut as a prose writer in the late 1780s. Polevoi writes: “Karamzin...was born with a tender, fiery, genuinely poetic soul; he renounced the world and its illusions, thirsting for enlightenment, he gave himself completely to literature, he lived a poet’s life and with his person gave the first example in Russia of a man who made literature the aim of his life.”<sup>70</sup>

Polevoi’s reading casts Karamzin as a sentimentalist who, though possessing a “tender soul,” seeks only answers and enlightenment from literature, and neither the “embellishment” nor “adornment” that Karamzin himself in 1797 claims is significant to

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<sup>69</sup> Rudolf Neuhäuser, *Towards the Romantic Age: Essays on Sentimental and Preromantic Literature in Russia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 72.

<sup>70</sup> N. Polevoi, “Sochineniia I.I. Dmitrieva,” *Ocherki russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1839), II, 464. Quoted in Neuhäuser, *Towards the Romantic Age*, 3.

the writing process. To take Karamzin as a sentimental writer who “renounced the world and its illusions” precludes readings that revel in the author’s ambiguity, his guile, and his idiosyncrasy. Acute analyses of Karamzin’s prose by scholars such as V. V. Sipovskii (*N. M. Karamzin, avtor ‘Pisem russkogo puteshestvennika’*), Yu. M. Lotman (*Sotvorenie Karamzina*), Gitta Hammarberg (*From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin’s Sentimentalist Prose*), and Andreas Schönle (“Karamzin’s Journey and the Taste of Fiction,” in *Authenticity and Fiction*) are so well executed that contemporary readers of Karamzin are liable, if only tempted, to take them as confirmed fact. They reveal Karamzin’s primary distinction to be that, while he adheres staunchly to Sentimentalism’s marriage of self and sentiment, the authorial voice that arises in Karamzin’s sentimental prose is, almost inadvertently, more fictional than factual. Karamzin’s fiction reveals itself at once as an act of storytelling and self-creation, performing double-duty as a means of rectifying on a narrative level the constellation of cultural impulses and demands that were active in his life—to perpetuate European behavioral codes and narrative forms, and to promulgate accessible linguistic reform, but also (with much ambivalence and timidity) to self-express. He charges his literature with a series of tasks, the heavy weight of which is felt in a narrative voice that ultimately takes on far too much within such a small amount of narrative space.

This chapter builds on the immense scholarship that precedes me and contributes to this trend in Karamzin criticism, which takes his approach to Sentimentalism as ambiguous and broadly counterintuitive in the way that he manipulates the forms of his European predecessors and contemporaries (here explicitly Rousseau). What follows will not dispel these qualifications of Karamzin’s work but will rather perpetuate and

compound them with another look at Karamzin's sentimentalism that not only accepts his narrative voice as simultaneously fictional and authentic, but also looks at the processes through which authorship in Karamzin is formed. As the opening epigraphs of this chapter suggest, my reading of Karamzin will situate him between Rousseau and Shklovsky; it will examine how he manipulates the sentimental system of the former and, in so doing, comes closer to the latter in developing a process of writing built on interpretation.

“We want to live, act, and think through a transparent glass [*v prozrachnom stekle*],” writes Karamzin about members of his generation. This assertion, taken from his “quasi-autobiographical” (Hammarberg) work *My Confession* (*Moia ispoved'*, 1802), is the author's personal contribution to this era of openness. Andreas Schönle points to this moment in Karamzin's prose as a glaring example of the fundamental contradiction between the Russian sentimentalist's lifestyle and his literary practice, a dissimulation of quotidian life coupled with a compulsive, no-holds-barred divulgence of the “private” self in literature. Transparent though the glass may be, it still stands to distinguish the world of the author from the world of the reader; if sentimental “transparency” exists, it has its limitations, a contradiction Schönle attributes to the late eighteenth-century “scare of the self.”<sup>71</sup>

Building on the theories set forth in Lotman's “The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in the Eighteenth Century,” Schönle asserts that the literary class of the late eighteenth century was particularly responsible for establishing and perpetuating dress codes and speech acts, and for setting the standards of taste within the realm of literature. Schönle,

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<sup>71</sup> Andreas Schönle, “The Scare of the Self: Sentimentalism, Privacy, and Private Life in Russian Culture, 1780-1820,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 4 (Winter, 1998): 723-46.

however, argues that the Russian social reality of the late eighteenth century gave rise to a new sentimentalism, one that was concerned not with articulating an intimate self, but with codifying behavioral norms. Owing to conflicts between the noble class and the state during the reign of Catherine the Great, the nobility was compelled to distance itself from the powers that be and seek autonomy. According to Schönle, “in the absence or weakness of formally implemented rights and definitions, the nobility developed customary practices aimed at defining and organizing itself” (729). The compulsion to define itself as a group separate from the state left the nobility anxious about any behavioral norms that would “discourage individuals from fashioning themselves in too idiosyncratic a fashion” (730). The nobility looked towards literature, journalism, and other print media to codify and perpetuate these behavioral norms. Schönle refers to this compulsion, or this “discourse spread,” as “a scare of the self,” defined as “a strong reluctance to heed the desire for psychological and moral autonomy and to explore the interiority and subjectivity of one’s self” (746).

This paradoxical tension between external and internal worlds, between behavior and creative practice, is presumed to be elemental to Russian Sentimentalism and to be the primary characteristic that distinguishes it from its Western European counterpart. Within the bounds of literature, Sentimentalism functioned as a literary method in which form was a space to mediate and ideally to amend the contentious relationship between life and creation. This dissertation is particularly interested in Rousseau’s legacy with respect to the development of Russian Sentimentalism; it examines how his oeuvre becomes a pedagogical tool, an enclosed system of poetic figures, emblems, and motifs that helped to shape the “sentimental” empiricism guiding Karamzin’s own literary

methodology. The power of literary form to replicate reality, a power aggrandized by Rousseau, is both renewed and challenged in the creative modalities of Karamzin, and more than a century later, of Shklovsky's Formalism. Both Karamzin and Shklovsky perpetuate and, at the same time, question the notion proposed by the Enlightenment: if it can be formalized—that is, organized, structured, canonized—it can be known.

Karamzin's prose fiction could be qualified as "texts of behavior," for they were the central avenues through which culturally normative practices were perpetuated and through which the nobility's public persona was fashioned. This was accomplished intratextually on both the level of form and rhetoric. Using high-society jargon and a colloquial register along with elliptical syntax to mimic the art of conversation, authors like Karamzin, I.I. Dmitriev, P.A. Pel'skii, among others, worked and manipulated language and form in order to capture the essence of social discourse. Literary language was replaced with what William Mills Todd refers to as "talk," a high-society vernacular that

[F]ostered a lexicon free of technical and chancellery terminology...a less convoluted, shorter sentence than the one cultivated in the ecclesiastical literature of earlier ages; and a carefully studied casual manner—the style of a person of fashion and culture of the sort that flourished in the French salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>72</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, "talk" became the basis for literary language, and speech genres like the anecdote became viable genres for creative expression. The thrust of Karamzin's project lies in simplifying language to make it publically accessible, and, in so doing, to narrow the gap between author and reader. Karamzin was a staunch supporter of this "new style" and spent a substantial portion of his career advocating for a

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<sup>72</sup> William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 19.

merging of literary and colloquial lexicons.<sup>73</sup> As he claims in “Some thoughts...,” Karamzin saw life and literature as inextricably linked and thus sought ways for words to “perform” the cultural affectations of the eighteenth century’s day-to-day. Schönle notes that Karamzin was “keenly aware of and genuinely committed to the performative function of language.”<sup>74</sup> His prose is motivated by a curiosity to see how far he might stretch language to perform multiple tasks simultaneously—can words carry meaning as well as don contemporary fashion? Might they be figuratively “cloaked in” (or, “adorned with”) the cultural affects of the eighteenth-century belletrist? His essay “On Love of One’s Country and National Pride” (“O liubvi k otechestvu i narodnoi gordosti,” 1802), first published in *Messenger of Europe* (*Vestnik Evropy*, 1802-1830) confirms that words can perform a multiplicity of functions and that using “salon talk” as a way to appeal to society women, whose speech is emotive, is an effective means of capturing life’s “tender simplicity” (*nezhnaia prostota*). Lotman notes that while Karamzin’s transparent approach pleased the general reader, his contemporaries and critics were irritated by his appeal to “ladies’ language”:

Readers were convinced that all the tender declarations, which abound in the pages of Karamzin's texts, seemed as if they had been taken right from literature to the sphere of reality. This simultaneously generated success for Karamzin among young female readers as well as irritated the literati and critics as an immodest breach of propriety.<sup>75</sup>

Karamzin, according to Lotman, considered literature a sphere of moral education where ideas could be easily transmitted to the reading public (208). The “harshness” of the

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<sup>73</sup> For more on Karamzin’s role in the evolution of Russian literary language in the late eighteenth century, see B. A. Uspenskii, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVIII-nachala XIX veka: Iazykovaia programma Karamzina i ee istoricheskie korni* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1985).

<sup>74</sup> *Authenticity and Fiction*, 71.

<sup>75</sup> Yu. M. Lotman, *Sotvorenje Karamzina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1981), 207. (My translation).

Russian language, according to Karamzin, congested what should be a fluid transference of ideas.

Collected works like Karamzin's two-volume *My Trifles* (*Moi bezdelki*, 1791-92) or his *Aglaia* (1794-95) demonstrate well the potential of language to be reformed to fulfill Karamzin's needs. An anthology of anecdotal tales, *My Trifles* transforms aristocratic "talk" into a bona fide literary genre. As reality merged with fiction in the late eighteenth century (what Lotman sees as an "approach to personal life as plot"<sup>76</sup>), Gitta Hammarberg claims that "what were previously regarded as facts of life, trivial from a literary point of view, became sanctioned as literary facts."<sup>77</sup> These "literary facts" were elevated to the level of speech genres, which Hammarberg labels "quasi-literary" and "extra-literary" (93). They included anecdotes, letters, and other salon trifles, which, when "cross-fertilized" with traditional literary genres, result in what Hammarberg terms the "salon chronotope." The salon chronotope, she writes, "reinvigorate[d] literature," and, most importantly, established "a narrator/narratee framework of intimacy" (94). Each a creative reinvention of the anecdotal model, the sentimental prose pieces from *Aglaia* and *My Trifles* accomplishes the late eighteenth century's artistic task to codify everyday behavior through poetics. The anecdotal narrative frame establishes a "framework of intimacy" between author and reader by placing them in direct dialogue (sharing anecdotes). Moreover, anecdotes, as examples of oral exchange and cultural happenings, when placed in literary field, help in the overall project to fashion life out of literature, and vice versa.

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<sup>76</sup> Iurii Lotman, "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth Century Russian Culture," *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History: Essays*, ed. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 94.

<sup>77</sup> Gitta Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin's Sentimentalist Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93.

To interrelate life and form is a method Karamzin develops early on in his *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (*Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika*, 1791-92) and perfects throughout the remainder of his writing career (culminating in his *History of the Russian State* [*Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, 1816-26]); however, in Karamzin, the anecdotal frame sets not only the stage for a performance of the everyday, but also, to build on Hammarberg's analysis, for enacting the power dynamics of storytelling, and thereby the shifting trends in authorship. Composed during a thirteen-month journey abroad to Western Europe, *Letters of a Russian Traveler* depicts Karamzin's gentleman's journey to France, Germany, and Switzerland in a series of letters, published originally in the *Moscow Journal* (*Moskovskii Zhurnal*, 1791-92). The traveler in *Letters* punctuates his "non-fictional," albeit highly subjective, narrative with anecdotal pauses, in which he recounts pieces of local lore, or what the narrator calls "anecdotes" (*anekdoty*). The tradition of the anecdote was already firmly in place at the time of Karamzin's *Letters*. Throughout Europe, and especially England, anecdotes—a piece of oral folklore that became canonized as literary genre most strongly in the eighteenth century—were gathered into collections, published as miniature "biographies" of authors, cultural sketches, or as exposés. In the eighteenth century the anecdote was made most famous in journalism, for instance in Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (1711-12), which served as a model for the Russian satirical periodicals of the eighteenth century (namely the Empress' *Every Trifle* [*Vsiakaia vsiachina*, 1769-70] and Nikolai Novikov's *The Drone* [*Truten'*, 1769-70]), which made use of the anecdote as a source of journalistic evidence and cultural truisms. Karamzin might have been inspired by this tradition when writing his *Letters*, not only because it helped him to formulate a comprehensive picture of the



culture in which he was situated while abroad (whether French, German, or Swiss), but also because it helped the writer, in the role of traveler, to become a reader. Anecdotes to the narrator were ways he could “read” the given culture (its *histoire*, its “story”). In *Letters*, Karamzin uses the anecdote not only to convey intimate relations between narrator and reader, but also to prove the narrator to be an intimate reader of a culture that has taken him into confidence.

Whether as a bridge between author and reader, or between author and subject, the anecdote facilitates an intimate relationship. As Karamzin turns towards sentimental fiction, however, the anecdote takes on a new function. Like the majority of anecdotes from his travelogue, the anecdote of Karamzin's sentimental prose is centered around the topic of ill-fated love, what Lotman terms *zabluzhdeniia serdtsa* (*delusions of the heart*) (*Sotvorenie Karamzina*, 207)—the tales of unhappy love and subsequent suicide (*Poor Liza*, [“Bednaia Liza,” 1792], unrealized incestuous love (*Eugene and Julia, a true Russian tale* [“Evgenii i Iuliia, russkaia istinnaia povest',” 1789]), and realized, yet punished, incestuous love (“Island of Bornholm” [“Ostrov Borngol'm,” 1793]). The anecdotal frame that is the underlying architecture of these love stories allows for a clear demonstration of the links between author and reader: when they are joined in dialogue and equalized by the anecdotal frame; when they are once again separated by a boundary. According to Lotman, Karamzin saw literary progress as directly proportional to the writer's development as an independent and individual personality (*Sotvorenie*, 208). Karamzin's sentimental prose both confirms Lotman's argument and tells a different story. The following analysis will study the two imperatives that dictate his writing: to develop an independent author, but an author that is cast more often than not as a reader:

either a reader of culture (as in *Letters*), or a reader of his own fiction, that is, a reader of love.

I must therefore frame my inquiry with the assumption that, unlike poetry, sentimental prose is the preeminent discursive genre of the eighteenth century to acknowledge form itself as a divulgence of the self, or as constituting the self in its fullest disclosure (the textual body taken as an approximate recovery of the author's "body" in literature). As was argued in the previous chapter, love was a partial answer to the question of how to represent the self insofar as the epistolary novel, the triolet, among other popular romance genres, best captured the sentiment of love and thereby could most likely do the same for self-representation, the two subjects being, as I argued, intimately interlinked. The underlying architecture of the epistolary novel—fractured, polylogic, partially rendered—was valued as authentic particularly for its inadequacies, and thus Rousseau constructed his autobiographical works with the epistolary form in mind, seen most explicitly in the structural mirroring between *Julie* and *Dialogues*. However, despite attempts at formal innovations, whether structural manipulations or twists in perceptions, all attempts at self-representation are exhaustive efforts towards an unattainable end. Rousseau had little hope of reaching true authenticity in art—any self-portrait, literary or otherwise, was an exercise in futility. Perfect mimesis is an impossible ideal, and the writer must come to terms with art's shortcomings (while remaining staunchly committed to finding ways around them).

As with Rousseau's fractured *Dialogues*, the form of Karamzin's narratives to be sure also have their self-creative energy at the level of ruptured prose, ellipses, and abrupt transitions. Lotman informs us that, for Karamzin, writing, whether autobiographical or

not, is a self-generative act and that Karamzin's *Letters* marks the beginning of an authorial voice that is at once fictional and self-expressive (*Sotvorenie*, 28-9).<sup>78</sup> In contradistinction to Rousseau, Karamzin does not view the process of articulating the self in literature as potentially artificial, and, arguably, would not have seen an inherent conflict in what de Man calls the "double-faced self." In fact, I would argue that the central point of contention between Karamzin and Rousseau is their divergent views on art as a "natural" extension of our everyday world. In his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* (*Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1750), or First Discourse, Rousseau famously argues against the institutionalization of the arts and sciences as no more than a breeding ground for competition, or amour-propre.<sup>79</sup> Karamzin, on the other hand, in his essay, "Some thoughts on the sciences, arts, and the Enlightenment" (*Nechto o naukakh, isskustvakh i prosveshchenii*, 1794), argues that arts are necessary because they are "the fruit of natural inclinations and the gifts of man and joined with his existence."<sup>80</sup> Within Karamzin's world, writing is valued as more than a voluntary, creative impulse, superfluous to our everyday needs; it is an instinct, a search for sustenance, as embedded in our survival memory as is the desire for food, drink, or sleep.

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<sup>78</sup> A likely rationale for Karamzin's sentimental style can be found in the "Second Preface" of Rousseau's *Julie*: "[A] letter really dictated by love; a letter from a truly passionate Lover, will be desultory, diffuse, full of verbose, disconnected, repetitious passages. His heart, filled with an overflowing sentiment, ever repeats the same thing, and is never done, like a running spring that flows endlessly and never runs dry. Nothing salient, nothing remarkable; neither the words, nor the turns, nor the sentences are memorable; there is nothing in it to admire or to be struck by" (10).

<sup>79</sup> "[T]he Art of writing was joined by the Art of thinking; a sequence which appears strange but is perhaps only too natural; and the major advantage of commerce with the muses began to be felt, namely of rendering men more sociable by inspiring in them the desire to please one another with works worthy of their mutual approbation." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau: Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, trans. Christopher Kelly and Roger D. Masters (Hanover: Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1990), vol. 2, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Izbrannye sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozh. lit-ra, 1964), I: 127. My translation.

Undoubtedly, however, Karamzin's attitude towards the arts must be read within the context of what Schönle defines as the "scare of the self." If the self that Karamzin designs is a performance for cultural consumption, a text for behavior, he would see no problem with articulating an (artificial) self by using artificial means—logically, artificial means reach an artificial end. Confident of art's capacity to embody our most natural urges, Karamzin employs love to a different end than Rousseau. Love's literary forms (for Karamzin the *conte* as well as the epistolary novel) serve not as apparatuses for presenting or writing the self in literature; rather, they provide the sentimental barriers within which reading, judging, and interpreting love become acts of self-representation—self-writing becomes self-reading. If, in Rousseau, the authorial self is cast as a stylized arrangement of locutions, a recitation to be united and restored to status quo in the mind of the reader, in Karamzin, the authorial self is presented intra-textually as a reader, as an entity that reveals itself through its own hermeneutic processes—it self-creates through reading about love, not experiencing it, dialoguing about it, or narrativizing it. Karamzin's textual world transforms Sentimentalism's phenomenology (the cognitive processing of one's environment) into a modality of passive self-expression, what I have referred to as self-reading. To view it another way, what makes Karamzin distinct from Rousseau is his autobiographical project that seeks restoration not in the mind of the reader, but rather in the mind of the narrator, who, in an impossible feat of being present for both the moment narrative is created and read, simulates dual existential processes.

Lotman terms his work *The Creation of Karamzin* (*Sotvorenie Karamzina*) a "roman-rekonstruktsia," ("novel of rebuilding") which, much like Rousseau's *Dialogues*, attempts to "turn the fragments back into a whole," and to "recreat[e] a lost, reconstructed

identity through documents, always incomplete, ambiguous, always bearing the subjective position of its creator” (12). In the role of *rekonstruktor* (“rebuilder”), Lotman, in his own words, “does not invent—he seeks, correlates [*sopostavliaet*]” (13). In this way, the critic bears resemblance to his subject, to Karamzin, who in a similar vein positions neither himself as an “inventor,” nor his literature as “invented” material, but rather accomplishes quite the opposite. His sentimental tales, most especially, feel self-generated, which is due in large part to the disjointed prose, frequent apostrophe to a reader, and an overall writer’s anxiety that punctuates nearly all of his tales, manifesting as either complete abandonment of the creative principle—“Listen—I will tell you a story—I will tell you a true story, not a figment of my imagination” (“Island of Bornholm,” 118); “Let us see what will happen” (“Natalie, the Boyar’s Daughter” [“Natal’ia, boiarskaia doch’,” 1792], 89); “The reader can imagine all the consequences” (“Natalie,” 115); “Aris will not deceive Julia; but Julia—we shall see!” (“Julia” [“Iuliia,” 1796], 141)—or failure to fulfill his role as author—“which I do not know how to describe” (“Island of Bornholm,” 127); “Here I could depict a terrifying picture to the eyes of the readers...I could depict all these events as probable...but in such a case I would have departed from historical truth” (“Natalie,” 97-8). More often than not Karamzin’s narrator reveals himself as a storyteller at a meeting of friends, with present-tense outcries that imply that he too is watching the story unfold before his eyes: “Be fearful, giddy Prince!” he cries out to Julia’s Aris as if he seated at a performance (137). In an impossible feat of being present for both the moment narrative is created and read, Karamzin’s narrator-author simultaneously creates and reanimates his material, as would Lotman’s *rekonstruktor*, by “giv[ing] them meaning, mak[ing] them talk” (13). This basic

distinction—between a self that is actively created and a self that is passively developed or ripened, uncovered or discovered—is what divides Karamzin and Rousseau, and consequently, what unites Karamzin with Shklovsky as a proto-Formalist (to which I will come later) in an exercise in Sentimentalism made strange.<sup>81</sup>

Guided by Schönle’s understanding of Russian Sentimentalism (or that which he “broadly and somewhat arbitrarily” names Sentimentalism [723]), as an era of contradiction between intimacy and publicity, I investigate the distinct qualities that constitute Karamzin’s narratives of love and self with his 1793 sentimental tale, “Island of Bornholm.” “Island of Bornholm” illustrates well the evolution, or possibly devolution, of the author into reader, a process that appears also as a clash of neoclassical to sentimental standardized imperatives: on the one hand, to simulate self-activity and self-expression (arguably, a sentimentalist project), and, on the other, to render that “self” supra-personal, meta-textual, untraceable to an actual Karamzinian self; to join narrator and author in such a way that author, as a literary category, is stripped of its power. I believe “Island of Bornholm” is a fossilized account of this shift. Framed as an anecdote, Karamzin’s tale works to fabricate an intimate connection between reader and author in a decreasingly intimate, yet increasingly personalized (or rather, personality-ized) textual world. The result is a Barthean prose piece on the death of the author, a creative suicide

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<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, Shklovsky never wrote one piece of theory on the topic of Karamzin. In fact, his investigation into Russia’s eighteenth century stops at Matvei Komarov (*Matvei Komarov—zhitel’ goroda Moskvy*. Leningrad, 1929). Eikhenbaum, on the other hand, picked up Karamzin, among other authors from the eighteenth to the twentieth century (including Derzhavin, Tiutchev, Tolstoy, Pushkin, and Blok) for his early essays (1916-17) as one of several fruitful exercises through which to explore the philosophical underpinnings of Formalism; particularly to discover how “general conclusions serve philosophy: generally their aspiration towards the epistemological foundation of aesthetics.” “Predislovie,” *Skvoz’ literaturu: Sbornik statei* (‘s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1962), 3.

that is touted as creative occupation, in which the story is sought out and competed for, yet is not necessarily created.

“Island of Bornholm” is about the exchange of stories within an intricate network of narrators (some who are willing to share a story, and others who are not), and narratees (all of whom are willing and eager to listen). Hammarberg describes “Island of Bornholm” as a “trivocal utterance”: “[I]t is the account of the narrator’s personal experience as a narratee...framed by two narrators, primary (present) and secondary (past)” (128). With three narrators, comes also three narratives: (1) the salon gathering of narrator and “friends”; (2) the narrator’s journey in pursuit of the anecdote; and (3) the anecdote itself. The role of the narrator changes in each narrative: in the first narrative, the narrator represents what Hammarberg terms the “transparent” narrator who is joined with his reader in a “framework of intimacy” (94); in the second narrative, the narrator is the solipsistic sentimentalist; and in the third narrative, the narrator is narratee. The fluidity of function within the narrative frame captures well the spirit of iconoclasm that lies at the heart of Karamzin’s self-reading project. The idea that the author is he who creates the story is, in Karamzin, challenged at the level of self-reading, which becomes the primary way in which Karamzin seeks out an alternative form of Sentimentalism’s solipsism.

“Island of Bornholm” begins with the apostrophe, “Friends!” (“Druz’ia!”); at this point, the narrator invites the reader into his narrative space, which is not his, but theirs together: he shares with his reader a study (“let us take shelter in our quiet study!” [117]), and a fireplace (“in our hearth” [117]). He invites his reader to share stories in order to stave off boredom (“we know a remedy for boredom...Let us sit around the crimson fire

and tell one another fairytales, stories, and all sorts of true happenings” [117-118]). With the line “we will tell stories to each other” (будем рассказывать друг другу), the narrator welcomes the possibility of trading places with the reader. This first frame narrative captures the dialogism of the “transparent” narrative. Concerned with bridging the gap between himself and his reader, the “transparent” author includes his reader in the aesthetic process by framing the narrative as a casual conversation among “friends.” The reader comes to trust the narrator as both a “friend,” but most importantly, as a raconteur, as someone who will deliver an entertaining and truthful story (or, at the very least, a complete story). As Henry Nebel argues: “[T]he intimate relation between narrator and reader would preclude any deviation from the truth, since the reader has entered the circle of beloved friends to whom all falsehood is repugnant.”<sup>82</sup>

As the narrative progresses into its second frame—the narrator in pursuit of the anecdote—the narrator’s fidelity with respect to his reader is called into question. The second narrative begins much like Karamzin's *Letters*; the second frame is a first-person travel account told from the perspective of the sentimental observer. However, in “Island of Bornholm” the traveler of *Letters* is transformed into a wanderer, a *strannik*, the aimless sentimental persona made famous by Rousseau’s *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (*Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, 1776-78). Much like the narrator of *Letters*, who both reads and retells cultural narratives, the narrator of “Island of Bornholm” is both reader and narrator of this anecdote. In the third narrative, the ‘narrator in pursuit of the anecdote’ becomes the ‘reader in pursuit of the narrative.’ As Hammarberg argues, the narrator’s pursuit is made all the more difficult by the lack of communication. All verbal exchange between the narrator and other narrating agents (Lila, the old and the young

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<sup>82</sup> Henry Nebel, *N. M. Karamzin: A Russian Sentimentalist* (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 151.



man) is never completed. The search for the story begins with the young man who tells the narrator his tale in the form of a Danish song. From the song, the narrator discovers that the young man was exiled from the island of Bornholm. The elegy, recited in a foreign language and in the metaphoric language of poetry, confounds the narrator and provokes him to seek out the tale: “The sad sounds of the words of his song echoed in my ear. ‘They contain the secret of his heart,’ I thought; ‘but who is he? What laws condemn the love of the unfortunate? What oath forced him to leave the shores of Bornholm, so sweet to him? Shall I, sometime, find out his story?’” (122). Neither the old man nor Lila (who pleads with the narrator not to mention her story: “You, perhaps, know my story, but if you do not, then do not ask me—for God’s sake, do not ask!” [129]) wishes to reveal the story. However, according to Hammarberg, once they understand that the narrator knows “too much” (*Idyll*, 190) they decide to take him into confidence. At this moment of diegetic exchange, the narrator is transformed back from a naive reader into an omnipotent narrator.

At the end of “Island of Bornholm,” the narrator wins possession of the story; yet in an interesting turn of events, he decides not to share his story with his reader: “the old man told me a most horrible story—a story which you will not hear now, my friends; it will wait until another time” (131). Hammarberg, Lotman, and Anderson<sup>83</sup> claim that the narrator refuses to share because he cannot share. The topic of incest is too risqué for the likes of sentimental literature. I am more interested, however, in the narrator’s choice to begin a story he knew he could not complete. How is the reader meant to reconcile the narrator of the beginning with the narrator of the end of the story? Although a narrator of

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<sup>83</sup> Roger B. Anderson, *N.M. Karamzin's Prose: The Teller and the Tale* (Houston: Cordovan Press, 1974).

the same frame—both the opening and closing narrator are of the salon variety—the narrator of the beginning promises to share while the narrator of the end decides to withhold, transforming the act of storytelling from a meeting with friends into a power struggle between narrator and reader (both intra- and extra-textual readers). In this regard, the anecdote of “Island of Bornholm” reveals the categorical divide between reader and narrator: the narrator is in the know, and the reader is not.

In “Island of Bornholm,” Karamzin outlines the power dynamics of storytelling that is found throughout his sentimental prose and yet which receive more fluid treatment in his other prose pieces, inspiring play with the story’s reins and allowing author to relinquish power and become reader. As the line dividing categories slackens, the primary tasks of the author-cum-narrator are subverted as are the traditional modalities of self-writing; and Karamzin’s autobiographic voice, which is forged within his fiction, finds itself most poignantly in moments of experiencing the very text he is writing. Works like Karamzin's “Natalie, the Boyar’s Daughter” and “Julia” are primary accounts of this movement towards self-reading, wherein for author and characters alike, identity arises from evaluating literature. Both sentimental prose pieces chart the progress of a love relationship from the main perspective of its female character as she comes to terms with who she is, as well as explores major themes of morality, verisimilitude, all via a sentimental journey. “Natalie,” first published in *Moscow Journal*, traces the heroine’s love affair with Aleksei, whom she follows into war. The tale culminates in what Nebel reads as positively Sternian “sentimental irony” where Karamzin “pokes fun at the irrationality of intuitive love” and “parod[ies]...sentimental conventions” (40). “Julia,” to the contrary, is neither ironic nor humorous (though Nebel reads it as a “balance between

spoof and seriousness” [41]), and yet all the same matches “Natalie’s” play with the tropes, devices, and systems of sentimentalism in its treatment of the affair of marriage between Julia and Aris. While Karamzin intended to publish “Julia” in *Aglaia* (the same collection in which “Island of Bornholm” was published) in 1794, Nebel informs us that it was instead published on its own in 1796. Possibly due in part to its absence from Karamzin’s two major collections of prose (*Aglaia* and *My Trifles*), “Julia” remains one of Karamzin’s least treated works, unlike “Natalie,” which, like “Poor Liza” (Karamzin’s most tragic tale of love), is one of the author’s most popular.

“Natalie, the Boyar’s Daughter” is a work of sentimental prose that seems intent on cruelly punishing its heroine for misunderstandings due not just to improper reading, but to overall illiteracy: “Natalie took the letter and, although she did not know how to read, nonetheless looked at it [*smotrela na nego*], and tears poured from her eyes” (95). To compensate for her illiteracy, Natalie enacts moments of ‘visual’ reading within the text, moved either through perception (moved by the words she sees before her, regardless of how unintelligible they are), or through performance (cued by what she sees—the love letter—to perform the act of being moved to tears). Throughout the narrative, Natalie, owing to improper reading (both literal and figurative), never gets born, so to speak, as a full-fledged character. When she escapes with Aleksei and her nurse to Aleksei’s home, they encounter a stranger in the forest, which brings her nurse to cry out in fear, “Alas! We are lost! We are in the hands—of brigands!” (97). The narrator informs us that “Natalie is not among brigands!” and that the stranger is in fact “good people” who bows to Aleksei “as to the master of the house” (98). Natalie is unable to read the situation that her nurse at best misreads, miscued by “seeing the wild, solitary

dwelling...seeing these armed servants and observing in their faces something sullen and ferocious...” (97). In response, Natalie clings to Aleksei and searches his eyes for an answer to the question: where are we? Animated by her heart alone (“Love, inspired by hope, crimsoned at this moment the cheeks of our sweet beauty, love shone in her glances, love beat in her heart, love raised her hand when she crossed herself” [88]), Natalie knows not how to read situations or herself, but can masterfully read Aleksei and respond accurately to his cues, in the end even swapping her identity for a “handsome” young man in order to follow Aleksei to war. The ultimate consequence of her misreading situations and her inability to read herself is that Natalie, despite significant triumphs in life and in battle, meets her end as nothing more than Aleksei’s spouse, forever marked by her grave’s following inscription: “Aleksei Liuboslavskii and his spouse are buried here” (116).

For the narrator, however, the relationship between reading and self-knowledge is more nuanced. The narrator begins his tale as if he were an amateur storyteller anxious of the consequences he will inevitably suffer due to his inability to retell his great-grandmother’s tale. Here, the classical muse is domesticated, brought down from the high heavens into the interior world of the writer in the figure of his great-grandmother. In an absurd display of feverish writer’s frenzy (“a rapture”), she appears to the narrator as a fiery light that illuminates his dark corner of the world (“I see fiery circles, which revolve glittering and crackling and finally—Oh miracle!—they reveal your image, an image of indescribable beauty, of indescribable majesty!” [75]). He fears that his “худое риторство,” thin rhetoric, will “disfigure,” or “deface” her tale (“Only I am terrified to distort her tale” [74]), which establishes a crucial link between storyteller and story—in

Karamzin's world, we are the stories we tell, a profound commitment to the tale that Polevoi reads as the significant shift in late eighteenth-century Russian prose, and as Karamzin's most significant contribution to the Russian literary canon. The deep-seated anxiety that guides Karamzin's storytelling process suggests that, for the narrator, to mutilate his great-grandmother's story would be to mutilate his great-grandmother.

And yet, the narrator seems also content not to tell the story to its fullest extent and burdens his reader with a multiplicity of excuses as to why he cannot tell his tale properly; for instance, when describing Natalie, he writes: "I hesitate to continue the comparison in order not to bore the reader by repeating the obvious because in our affluent times the store of poetic similes for beauty had been quite exhausted and many writers chew their pens in vexation, seeking but not finding new ones" (77). Unable to shake the impulses of a sentimental writer, in an ironic shift, the narrator begins to describe Natalie using these same "exhausted" similes: "[Natalie] was as tender as a turtledove, innocent as a lamb, sweet as the month of May [имела прелестную душу, была нежна, как горлица, невинна, как агнец, мила, как май месяц]"(78). Despite attempts to confirm the accuracy of his historically minded eye, the narrator shows himself to be no more than an amateur writer, with nearly every moment of precise prose muddied by his highly ornate and extravagant style.

Like "Island of Bornholm," "Natalie" is framed as a historical tale that takes cues from the oral tradition. The collision of these two lyrical perspectives—sentimental and historical—result in collisions on other significant diegetic levels—narrative time, ethos and quality—and leads to improper storytelling as per the narrator's own demands and expectations. Most significantly, this meeting of sentimental and historical has a strong

effect on how love relates to self. In “Natalie,” love, in order to be fully experienced by all of the story’s participants, must be read. Natalie’s most overwhelming moments of infatuation compels the narrator to drop his pen, to not write, but to read: “Fate, fate! Will you not really take pity on her? Do you really want these bright eyes to grow dull with tears?—Let us see what will happen” (89). As readers, in this moment, we are catapulted into the present alongside the narrator who employs the perfect future with “посмотрим, что будет,” (“we will see what will be”) but then transports us back to a historic past with the immediately following transitional phrase, “odnazhdy” (“once,” or “one time”). In general, time takes on a particular relevance in “Natalie.” The strength of this particular sentimental tale lies in its attempt to reconcile the pastoral past with an immediate sentimental present often captured in moments where the author comes to the fore as the narrator expresses doubt as to his ability to render true to fact: either to anticipate the skepticism of his readers (“At dinner she did not eat, a custom of all those who are in love—but why not tell us directly and simply that she had fallen in love with the stranger? ‘In one minute?’ the reader will say” [86]), or to share his reading/viewing experience (“The young consort returned to his beloved—helped her undress—their hearts were beating—he took her by the white hand...But my modest muse covers her face with a white handkerchief—not a word! The sacred curtain descends, sacred and impenetrable to curious eyes!” [104]). However, these moments of ‘faulty authorship’ are more than just self-creative strategy. Eikhenbaum has argued that Karamzin in his prose employs the poetics of a historian and in his *History of the Russian State* employs the poetics of a fiction writer as a way of handling, negotiating, and overcoming the limits of reason (*Skvoz’ literaturu*, 39). In *History*, Karamzin suggests the very same when

asserting his position and philosophy in writing history to be that of a *bytopisatel'* (“writer of the everyday”<sup>84</sup>), an artistic stance that is explored in early terms in *Natalie*.

Just as “history...with righteous judgment, orients the soul towards correctness,” (*History*, I: xi)<sup>85</sup> so too do love stories demand judgment as a means of self-activity. The opening of “Julia”—“[w]omen complain about men, men about women: who is innocent? who is guilty? who can decide this litigation?” (133)—speaks to this as Karamzin turns Rousseau’s epistolary project into a self-reading project—don’t write the self; judge the self, read the self. In fact, what sets “Natalie” apart from “Julia” is the role that judgment plays in forging the narrator’s identity. “Julia” is framed as evidence that might help resolve the “litigation” (*tiazhbu*) or competition between men and women, with a conclusion that seems to resolve the case in no one’s favor. Much like Shklovsky and Rousseau’s Héloïse, Karamzin’s Julia, Natalie, and Liza, among others, are more device than character, serving as catalyst for the development of the narrator-cum-author; through his central heroine, building her, interpreting her, he comes closer to understanding himself. Natalie is in the strictest terms devoid of human qualities since she cannot read, which, in Karamzin’s world of hermeneutics, is equal to non-existence.

Ostensibly, the same task—to produce meaning through reading and not writing—is at issue in “Julia.” Herself more concept than character, Julia is referred to as “ornament,” “ukrashenie,” and taken to the level of absurdity: for instance, the narrator remarks, “Julia shone as the sun; envy sought dark spots in it, did not find them...” (134). In contrast to Aris, who is arguably more life-like than literary (“Who was Aris?” [“Kto

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<sup>84</sup> Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, “Predislovie,” *Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskago. Izd. 4-e* (St. Petersburg: V tipografii vdovy Pliuushar s synom, 1833), vol. 1, xi.

<sup>85</sup> As to why Karamzin sees historiography as necessary, he writes: “Вот польза: сколько же удовольствий для сердца и разума [Here is the purpose: so much pleasure for the heart and mind]” (vol. 1, xii).

byl Aris?"] asks the narrator [135]), Julia is introduced with the markedly less humanizing inquiry: "What is Julia?" ("Chto zhe Iuliia?" [134]). The narrative progresses as Julia seeks out her identity in a series of interpretative events, ultimately, in an attempt to ascertain to which text she belongs: what book is she reading? Her interactions with Prince N\*, an attractive suitor from the town ("a favorite of Nature and fortune, which lavished all their glittering gifts on him" [136]), who, like the text itself, is a phenomenal event ("a phenomenon [*fenomen*] appeared suddenly on the horizon of society" [136]), together read as a movement through love's literary history, with the narrator noting the transitions between paradigms (a reading that rewards readers): Julia is described as "some" ("nekotoraia") Lydia, "some" Arethea, Petrarch's Laura, new Dido, and (avoids becoming) a "new" Aspasia and a "new" Laïs; Prince N\* is described as a new Alcides, Antinous, Cicero, Petrarch, and Narcissus. Even beyond these literary qualifiers, the actions of Julia and Prince N\* are guided by the hand of 'literature's fate.' After the Prince's near affair with Julia, when his character reaches the end of his literary trajectory and just before the tale transitions back to the pastoral, the Prince devolves into a "motionless statue," with an abrupt exit from the narrative to the theatre, almost asphyxiated, as a fish out of water, by the narrative's threat of leaving the urban environment (146). When Julia gives birth to her son, Erast, she takes up the script of Emile. When Aris leaves and it seems the "Julia" narrative has reached its end, Julia, alone in the country, gives birth to a son, metaphorically to the text of Emile ("Now Julia hurried to show her small darling all Nature" [149]), and in so doing swiftly swaps novels—no longer the heroine of one (Rousseau's Julie), she becomes the heroine of



another (Rousseau's Sophie): "I am a mother, she thought, and walked through the meadow at a brisker pace" (149).

Ironically, when Julia does come across her actual text, that is, Rousseau's *Julie*, she is humorously unaware and profoundly skeptical: "It would be good if things were so; but are they really like that?" (142)—an approximation of the criticism voiced by "N" in the preface to Rousseau's *Julie*, in which he cries out "Oh! If only she had existed!" (*Julie*, 7), as well as Karamzin's own exclamation in *Letters* when wandering Lausanne: "Ah, friends! And yet in fact there was no Julie!" ("Ах, друзья мои! для чего в самом деле не было Юлии!").<sup>86</sup> Self-reading in this moment finds its apotheosis as Julia engages critically with the text she both lives and reads; and it is her textual interpretation, her unpacking of Rousseau's idyll, that ultimately leads to "the fog" being lifted, behind which her identity is revealed.<sup>87</sup> After reading Aris' final letter, in which he forsakes his wife and, in the hyperbolic style of Rousseau's Saint-Preux, declares his departure for "parts unknown," Julia is afforded a moment of self-reflection: "O women! You complain of the treachery of men: your frivolity, your inconstancy, serve to justify them" (146). Literal reading here meets literary self-reading wherein Julia's epiphany comes about not through live action, that is, not in the moment of Aris' actual departure

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<sup>86</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, trans. Andrew Kahn (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), 182.

<sup>87</sup> Essentially the same moment occurs in *Julie* when Saint-Preux reminds Julie of the time they read together (as pupil and teacher) the letters of Abelard and Heloise. "I have always pitied Heloise; she had a heart made for love: but Abelard has never seemed to me anything but a wretch deserving of his fate, and as little acquainted with love as with virtue. Having judged him, must I imitate him?...But such is not the case, my Julie, with two lovers of the same age, in love both with an equal flame, when they are joined by a mutual attachment, unconstrained by any particular bond, both in the prime of their freedom, and no law prohibits their mutual engagement" (70). Saint-Preux believes that Abelard sacrificed his honor for Heloise, which Saint-Preux claims he would never do; however, although he identifies the links between their situations, he cannot see the irony of his own.

(at which point, the narrator remarks, she “sits silently” [145]); comprehension is delayed until she can properly reflect back on the event by way of reading his letter.

And yet, while Julia seems to reach the proper conclusions, in the end Aris blames Julia’s “injudicious upbringing” (151) for their brief separation—it appears she was a bad reader. While bad reading does not necessarily make a bad person—Julia’s literary journey concludes more happily than that of her predecessor, content in the arms of her sentimental educator—it could possibly make for a bad author, who, throughout the narrative, makes himself known through frequent outbursts of joy or displeasure, judgment and narrative analysis. Overall, the author takes pleasure in recounting Julia’s tale, weaving his personal impressions (“what a glance!...what a meeting!” [137]) and judgments (“women complain about men, men about women: who is innocent? Who is guilty? Who can decide this litigation [tiazhbu]?”[133]) into the narrative fabric. If, for Julia, self-representation comes about in the form of locating the most appropriately fitting text, for Karamzin, as author-cum-narrator, self-representation arises hermeneutically, that is, in his ability to interpret, judge, and assess Julia’s path towards love (or, in other words, to be the most appropriate reader). When Aris remarks, “the outcome has proved the justice of my system” (152) (here system, *sistema*, is a weighted term that most likely refers to Rousseau’s *systeme*), Karamzin confirms and justifies the interpretive steps that he as author and narrator took along the way: his acquittal of women which opens the story (“I, without a hearing or an investigation, shall acquit...the women” [133]), and his subsequent testimony (“Justice must be rendered to you, dear women...” [147]). In the end, the outcome of Julia’s story must prove the efficacy of his text: that he has done right by her as a proper reader, not as a proper writer. In this way,

the authorial voice is forged not in moments of writing but in moments of reading. Note, again, the disjointed locutions (“Imagine yourself in poor Aris’ place!...What was to be done? Slay both with one dagger...and then,...kill himself as well...No!” [145]), ellipses, and general withholding of information on the part of the narrator in moments where he squanders opportunities for great embellishment (“I realize the weakness of my pen and, therefore, shall not say another word of this rare event” [151]). Writer in this sense is valued most literally as the sum of his parts. As *rekonstruktor*, Karamzin designs his writing process not as one that builds new and possible worlds by means of invention (he is not concerned with what he might do with the material he has uncovered) but rather, through presentation, a performative demonstration of parts that he revivifies, and, like Lotman’s *rekonstruktor*, “makes them talk,” “gives them life.” (13).

In his essay, “What Does the Writer Need?” (“Chto nuzhno avtoru,” 1794), written in the same year as “Julia,” Karamzin proposes that a writer, should he hope to be successful, must possess “a good, tender heart” (161) This equation, that a good writer must possess a good heart, seems simple enough as Karamzin establishes a logical link between inherent goodness and good writing (might this mean that all good men are good authors?). Writing talent, he argues, is inherent, unchanging, and correlates directly to ‘goodness’: “In a word: I am convinced that a bad man cannot be a good author” (163) For this reason, Karamzin writes, “if you want to paint your portrait, then look first into the faithful (*vernoe*) mirror: Can your face be a subject of art, which must be concerned with the beautiful, depict beauty, harmony, and diffuse pleasant impressions in the area of the emotional?” (162). Karamzin demands that potential authors look inside and consider whether they are good people before embarking on a writing career. It is unclear exactly

why, whether it is because it makes for “high quality” writing or popular writing, or whether these two qualities are actually one in the same. Rousseau, he argues, is popular, or “pleasing,” despite the internal contradictions within his writing simply because the reader remains convinced of the fact that Rousseau “loves” humanity and possesses a “natural goodness” (163). “You want to be a good author,” Karamzin concludes, “[r]ead the history of the misfortunes of the human race—and if your heart is not suffused with blood, forsake your pen—or it will depict the cold gloom of your soul” (162). Most striking in this passage is not just the strict protocol for becoming a good author (which one either is or is not, and essentially cannot “become”), but also the presumed link between pen and person, writing and self, that Karamzin sets forth. Two associations arise: a good person is a good author; a person is what he writes.

This logical formulation—a good person must be a good writer—both aligns Karamzin with Rousseau and sets him apart. In *Julie*, Rousseau applies the very same logic to love—those in love cannot be debauched; those in love must be happy: “[T]rue love is the most chaste of all bonds...” Julie tells Saint-Preux, “Believe me, my friend, debauchery and love are incapable of dwelling together, and cannot even compensate for each other. The heart affords the true happiness of those who love each other, and nothing can take its place the moment they no longer do” (113). In this moment, Saint-Preux accuses Julie of abandoning “love” in favor of the convenience—social assimilation—afforded by a life with Wolmar. Julie justifies her decision citing her renewed understanding of love, of which she now sees there can be only one form—love is non-sensual, unchanging, and chaste. Redefining “love” is her only means for self-redemption, for compensating for sins committed, and most especially, for justifying her

choices (imposed upon her by society's restrictions). For Julie, Saint-Preux becomes a dangerous example of ambiguity, "l'obstacle," to borrow from Starobinski (*Transparency and Obstruction*), and the world in chaos, in which declarations of "love" can mean unhappiness, ecstasy, and debauchery. He introduces ambiguity to meaning, something that he suffers for throughout the epistolary novel. In order to live peacefully, fully accepting her fate designed by the Protestant faith, Julie must come to the conclusion, like Karamzin, that goodness is directly correlated to "good" actions—good loving, for Julie; good writing, for Karamzin.<sup>88</sup>

However, while Karamzin and Rousseau's heroine may share an axiomatic mind, Rousseau's approach to writing as an art form is entirely distinct from Karamzin's. For instance, in *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (*Essai sur l'origine des langues*, published posthumously in 1781), Rousseau argues that writing bears the heavy hand of civilization. Passions are more organized and structured than expressed, and thus writing is more artificial than speech:

Writing, which seems as if it should fix language, is precisely what alters it; it changes not its words but its genius; it substitutes precision for expressiveness. Feelings are conveyed when one speaks and ideas when one writes. In writing, one is forced to take all the words according to common acceptance; but he who speaks varies the meanings by the tone of his voice, he determines them as he pleases; less constrained to be clear, he grants more to forcefulness, and it is not possible for a language one writes to keep for long the liveliness of one that is only spoken. Words are written and not sounds: now, in an accented language it is the sounds, the accents, the inflections of every sort that constitute the greatest energy of the language; and that make a turn of phrase, even a common one, belong only in the place it is found. The means taken up to compensate for this quality diffuse, elongate written language and, passing from books into

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<sup>88</sup> It would be interesting to consider the extent to which Rousseau celebrates the sentiments and senses as agents of epistemology, given that debauchery appears to be the breaking point of his phenomenology. Rousseau's Protestantism implies that there should be limits to how intensely one uses the senses to know the self.

discourse, enervate speech itself. To say everything as one would write it is to do no more than read while speaking.<sup>89</sup>

To begin, I should note that this passage, like Rousseau's *Dialogues* (as I briefly noted in Chapter One), anticipates early twentieth-century cognitive linguistics, specifically what early Formalist Lev Yakubinsky will refer to as the "apperceptive mass,"<sup>90</sup> the storehouse of information, associations, implications that serve as a backdrop against which meaning is determined and produced in dialogue. In much the same way that Rousseau emphasizes spoken as opposed to written language as more organic and more reflective of one's personality, Yakubinsky prefers dialogic to monologic speech for what he decides is its lack of artifice (he explicitly calls dialogue *neiskustvennyi iazyk*, "inartificial language"). In contradistinction to Yakubinsky, however, Rousseau devalues writing precisely for its conservatism and imposed formality—writing "fixes" and "makes precise" our "feelings" (*sentimens*) and for this reason lacks the ability to capture a prolonged sense of "liveliness." To put this in linguistic terms, one might argue that, for Rousseau, writing is paradigmatic while speech is syntagmatic—it expresses and confirms time as linear since it changes and evolves in accordance with it.

In line with Rousseau's totalitarian *système*, which insists that the underlying thrust of his oeuvre remains logically consistent, his argument in favor of oral speech as an organic mode of expression must and therefore does reflect his notions regarding self-portraiture, a genre that both can and cannot express or capture reality. Again, for Rousseau, there is no real way to capture the self in literature; the best attempts are those that foreground this impossibility, the "impossibility of totalization," according to de

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<sup>89</sup> Rousseau, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, 300.

<sup>90</sup> Lev Petrovich Iakubinsky and Michael Eskin, "On Dialogic Speech" *PMLA* 112, no. 2 (March 1, 1997), 252.

Man,<sup>91</sup> hence, the explicit brokenness of *Dialogues*, or the abstruse first line of *Confessions*: “Je forme une entreprise qui n’eut jamais d’exemple....” De Man argues that autobiography since the eighteenth century had become demonstrably incomplete and unreliable, a genre in which the author is “defaced.” Most significantly, autobiography, he argues, is realized not through a process of writing, but through a process of reading: “Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts. The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution” (921). In other words, the reader accepts the text as substitute for the author, and the author accepts the reader as the necessary cumulative end to his process of building his portrait.

However, while for de Man composing an autobiography may be an inter-subjective (between author and reader) process, the process he describes does not ask that both parties read simultaneously. If reading is the means through which autobiography is made, for de Man this act is unilateral—the author writes, while the reader reads. Karamzin’s self-writing, on the other hand, comes about as a radical form of defacement in the sense that reading, as his sentimental prose demonstrates, is synchronized activity—we read Julia’s tale simultaneously along with the author who vocalizes his reading experience with repeated present tense exclamations (most often “Ah”). As I mentioned, Rousseau emphasizes first-hand experience with a distinct stress on an organicism that seeks out forms of artistic expression that least impede the connection between individual and world. This explains why, in *Essay on the Origins of Language*, he prefers oral speech; why, as I demonstrated in Chapter One, he wishes to capture in

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<sup>91</sup> Paul de Man, “Autobiography as De-facement,” *MLN* 94, no. 5 (Dec 1972), 922.

writing the *camera obscura*, a modality for portraying life as a projected sketch without artifice; why, in *Confessions*, he justifies stealing as a means of restoring organic relations between man and the object he desires “because between money and the possession of the desired object there is always an intermediary, whereas between the thing itself and the enjoyment of it there is none”(39); and why, as Starobinski attests, Rousseau seeks a “de-veiled” (*Transparency*, 73-80) world without socially instituted arbitration. Karamzin’s processes, on the other hand, are notably more inorganic and artificial, more dependent upon reading than writing, reading about life rather than recording it first-hand. His phenomenology, one might say, is limited to the text, with the a posteriori knowledge of his sentimental persona derived exclusively from reading. This explains why Rousseau’s *Julie* guides foremost Karamzin’s journey through Switzerland; why in his essay “What Does a Writer Need?” he instructs the nascent writer to test his sensibilities by “read[ing] the history of the misfortunes of the human race” rather than venturing outside to see it for himself (162); and why, as recent studies have hypothesized, Karamzin did not in fact make it to many of the places to which he claimed to have visited on his sentimental journey (one unvisited yet described place being Strasbourg, Alsace), choosing instead to paraphrase—without citation—the accounts of other travelers.<sup>92</sup> Even if his travelogue is a demonstration, or, as Schönle might argue, a performance of the sentimental act, the necessary final step towards realizing his personhood through live-action is never brought to term. In this sense, I am inclined to accept Terras’ interpretation of Karamzin’s *My Trifles*, as a testament to the

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<sup>92</sup> See: Rodolphe Baudin, *Nikolai Karamzine à Strasbourg : un écrivain-voyageur russe dans l'Alsace révolutionnaire, 1789*; see also Lotman and Uspensky, “‘Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika’ Karamzina i ikh mesto v razvitii russkoi kultury,” *Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (Leningrad: “Nauka,” Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1984).



Sentimentalist's self-abasement, as a proper way to describe Karamzin's overall sentimental project—to transform the philosophical and aesthetic immensity of Sentimentalism into *bezdelushka*, or “trifle.”<sup>93</sup> When Thomas Barran writes, “[Karamzin] reads Rousseau as only a Russian could,”<sup>94</sup> one could argue that this “Russian” way is to imitate or perform Sentimentalism rather than exercise it in earnest.

Barran, however, argues that Karamzin spent his travels abroad investigating feverishly the metaphysical links between person and experience laid out by Sentimentalism, and wrote a great deal of “meta-literature” on the subject of reading—how to properly do it and to what end (195). Barran brings our attention to a moment in the travelogue in which Karamzin puts the meta-narrative to good use and describes in great detail what it means to be in the very places where Rousseau drew inspiration for *Julie*. For instance, while in Lausanne, he writes in apostrophe to an unnamed *Vy* (You):

As you know how much I love Rousseau, you will have an idea of the feelings that these objects produced in me, and with what pleasure we read his *Héloïse*! Although this novel contains much that is unnatural, much that is exaggerated—in a word, much that is romantic—still, no-one in the French language has painted love in such bright, vivid colours as it is described in *Héloïse*: in the *Héloïse* without which the German *Werther* would not exist. The beauty of the local area must have made a deep impression on Rousseau's soul; all his descriptions are so lively, and for that matter so true! It seemed to me that with my eyes I had found the very ravine (*esplanade*) that was so attractive for the unfortunate Saint-Preux. Ah, my friends! And yet in fact there was no Julie! Why does Rousseau tell us not to seek any traces of her? Cruel man! First you described for us such a wonderful being, and afterwards you say: ‘She doesn't exist!’ You remember the place in his *Confessions*: ‘I will tell all those who have taste, all who have sensitivity: journey to Vevey, survey the surroundings, walk about the lake—and you will agree that these beautiful places are worthy of Julie, Clara and Saint-Preux; but do not look for them there.’ Coxe, the well-known English traveller, writes that Rousseau composed *Héloïse* while he was living in the village of Meillerie; but this is not correct.

<sup>93</sup> Victor Terras, ed., *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 397.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Paul Barran, *Russia Reads Rousseau, 1762-1825* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 197.

Monsieur de L\*, about whom you have heard, knew Rousseau and assures me that he wrote this novel when he was living in the Hermitage, three or four miles from Paris. (182)

This moment in Lausanne is a capital example of how Karamzin enacts his own moment of self-reading. Having seen Rousseau's famed loci first-hand, Karamzin concludes unambiguously that there is a distinct separation between life and text and that Rousseau's world, which he describes as "unnatural," "grandiose," and "romantic," or, possibly, "novelistic," nevertheless captures well, as it should, Karamzin's present positive reality ("these places here," [*zdeshnikh mest*]). Rousseau, Karamzin gathers, did not write the world of Clarens, but painted it with his prose, with "vivid," "bright" paints. His reaction at first reads as just viewer's euphoria, but on a deeper level Karamzin's proclamation reveals his expectations for literature. Why should Julie exist in real life? Why should it matter where exactly Rousseau wrote *Julie*? For Karamzin, neither the character of Julie, nor Rousseau's imaginary world is too "grandiose" to exist—in fact, he laments their non-existence and does not recognize the imaginary world as a step beyond positive reality. The mind of the author tries to reconcile, collate, and amalgamate the two—real and fantasy—to produce a supra-reality, confirming that, while the literary world might be a performance, it is a performance that provides more guidance or insight than reality is capable of offering.

As I noted earlier, critical works by Lotman, Hammarberg, and Schönle have conditioned our understanding of Russia's late eighteenth century as a period of compulsive perpetuation—perpetuating codes, dress, speech, and taste within and without the world of literature. By repeating forms and personalities, these "texts of behavior" help to fashion a public persona, which is achieved both formally and rhetorically, and

also to propagate a culture of reading, from which it seems the desire to self-read rather than self-re-create in literature is born. Karamzin's well-crafted implied reader is not just an example of the intimate connection between author and reader, but moreover, an existential melding of the two, whereby author is diminished to device, as much a "literary fact" as we might understand a narrator to be. By narrowing the gap between them, Karamzin not only forges a new reader, but also forges a new author—one who reads as he writes, and is because he reads. However, Karamzin's reflections on Rousseau and the Enlightenment confirms his views of art as an extension of life not in the sense that they are both organic, but more likely inorganic—always mediated, always artificial. This is why he commits to self-reading, since the world for him has always been to a certain extent a book, an open tableau of tropes, devices, and figures. Karamzin's dedication to reading exceeds the eccentricities of a bibliophile and reaches the level of a Don Quixotian epistemic delusion (however, hopeful and endearing). Foucault's reading of *Don Quixote* as "the book in flesh and blood"<sup>95</sup> (similarly, when Shklovsky reads *Don Quixote*, he sees "an insane man read[ing] a story about himself"<sup>96</sup>) in a subtle way applies as well to Karamzin, who, possibly due to his relationship with Swiss physiognomist Lavater, viewed positive reality as a visual narrative from which we may glean definitive notions about our interior worlds—simply put, reading the world is reading ourselves.<sup>97</sup> In fact, Schönle, in his critical look at Karamzin's *Letters*, took

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<sup>95</sup> Michel Foucault, *Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 48.

<sup>96</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, "Regarding Psychological Footlights," *Knight's Move*, trans. Richard Sheldon (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>97</sup> According to Eikhenbaum, Lavater taught Karamzin that "нет и не может быть познания души вне мира предметов и явлений и что, с другой стороны, самый этот мир познается только как зеркало души [there is not, nor can there be, a knowledge of the soul outside of the world of objects and phenomena and yet this is the world known as the mirror of the soul]" (*Skvoz' literaturu*, 41). For more on

notice of a moment in which Karamzin calls himself the “knight of the jolly countenance,” an innovation of Cervantes’ “knight of woeful countenance.” As Schönle notes: “He seems to announce a tale not of disillusionment but of illusions, of the realization of fantasies” (*Authenticity and Fiction*, 43).<sup>98</sup> As Schönle argues in his endnotes, in presenting himself as a Quixotian inverse, Karamzin is most likely borrowing from Sterne, who makes the same claim in his own fictional travelogue. Schönle argues that, in so doing, Karamzin links his project to Sterne’s, not only in terms of execution, but also in endgame—both seek, according to Schönle, “to ascertain the existence of the soul” (230, n56).

Despite its origins, within this world of literary living, Karamzin’s narrator-cum-author becomes a very real defacement as the heavy hand of the author slowly recedes into the background. While in Rousseau, love and self inform and confirm each other, both in how they encourage personal growth and how they together create the structural forms through which each might be expressed, in Karamzin, love and self, while mutually dependent, seem to negate each other. Particularly in “Julia,” reading about love triggers a destructive streak within the text, which devastates the authorial voice in moments of extreme sentimentalism (he drops his pen). For instance, compare with a moment in Rousseau’s *Emile*, where the narrator (meta-Rousseau) admits he would like to “paint...the beginning of their [Emile and Sophie’s] conjugal love” but is exhausted by

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the relationship between Karamzin and Lavater, see Edmund Heier’s *Studies on Johan Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) in Russia* (New York: P. Lang, 1991).

<sup>98</sup> In addition, it is interesting to note that Schönle’s reading of Karamzin’s journey runs perfectly counter to what Rousseau takes as the educational value (and thus primary purpose) of travel: “I am quite convinced that in matters of observation of every kind one must not read, one must see...To observe, it is necessary to have eyes and to turn them toward the object one wants to know. There are many persons who are informed still less by travel than by books, because they are ignorant of the art of thinking; because when they read, their minds are at least guided by the author; and because when then travel, they do not know how to see anything on their own” (*Emile* 451-52).

his subject—"I am too weak for works requiring so much endurance"—as is his pen—"I also feel that my pen is weary"—but, in contrast to Karamzin, Rousseau decides not to drop his pen "[i]n order not to leave [the work] imperfect" (475). Rousseau feels a moral imperative driving his work, and this is what defines his role as author. Karamzin, on the other hand, feels an emotional imperative, an allegiance to his experience as a reader rather than an author and, for this reason, prioritizes narrativizing his reading experience (non-diegetic) over developing the plot (diegetic). Readers in effect know less about Julia, Natalie, and Liza (though she is regrettably left out of this analysis) than they do about their supposed author, and his hedonism counterintuitively renders the author in the negative, lying somewhere in the void. By his own testimony, Karamzin's narrator is not a writer, knows not how to describe events ("not a word of the eloquent silence [...] not a word of the tears of joy and bliss!" ["Julia," 151]; "I do not dare describe it—but it was touching" ["Natalie," 92]), remembers not the names of certain individuals ("One great psychologist, whose name I do not really remember" ["Natalie," 78]), forgets facts, is neither a good writer nor a good historian. In essence, he is null and void.

In the previous chapter I mentioned a distinct negative poetics that runs throughout the works of Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau. In Rousseau this manifests as an inverse image—in *Dialogues*, in particular, 'scriptor' Rousseau is the inverse image of 'interlocutor' Rousseau, as are "le pour et le contre," the proponents and naysayers, that make up "Rousseau's" persona.<sup>99</sup> In Shklovsky and Karamzin, however, Rousseau's negative poetics manifest as a literal absence, a cancelling out of the author. As I remarked earlier, the negativity in Shklovsky's prose might be due to the anti-psychology

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<sup>99</sup> Even in *Emile*, a child's education should "be purely negative. It consists not at all in teaching virtue or truth but in securing the heart from vice and the mind from error... Take the opposite of the practiced path, and you will almost always do well..." (93-94).

imposed by the Hegelian-Formalist perspective, the desire to sever ties between the author and the creative process.<sup>100</sup> One can easily detect throughout Shklovsky's oeuvre a tremendous appreciation for the creative potential of negative space, which is at once abysmal and fertile, destructive and productive. "We think through negation in art [мы в искусстве мыслим отвергая]" writes Shklovsky in *Bowstring*, "we still use religious terms to say something anti-religious...[t]he rhetoric of the Russian Revolution incorporated biblical phrases in their antithetical forms...The Bible, Homer, and Tolstoy all co-exist in Russian Literature" (66, 77). The most effective way to isolate the properties of one thing is to use the lexicon of its opposite—to use fire to describe water, for example. The interrelationship/codependence of opposites is the basis of the book *Bowstring*. So it seems highly appropriate for Shklovsky to use not love to talk about love. As he writes in *Zoo*, "You gave me two assignments. 1) Not to call you 2) Not to see you. So now I am a busy man" (32). *Zoo* is an epistolary novel about the potential of negativity and negative space, which at times is rendered literally with the use of "X" mimicking the mark of censorship: what should be letters between lovers, is instead the letters of one lover; what should be a novel about love, is instead a novel about unrequited love.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> However, in his essay on the theatre, Shklovsky recognizes the need for "spectators," acknowledging that in a way they provide the necessary backdrop against which a certain side of a character's psychology comes to life—this is the theatricality that lies at the heart of theatre, which Shklovsky transforms into literary device ("Regarding Psychological Footlights," *Knight's Move*, 48).

<sup>101</sup> "The poet's forceful, imageless, and as if unfinished address to the woman is an example of a unique negative form, which in this instance becomes especially powerful" (294). This quote from *Bowstring* is telling for the value of uniting love and negativity for autobiography; Victor Erlich writes: "The insistent motif of a love that dares not speak its name is clearly reminiscent of V. Mayakovsky's lyrical masterpiece 'About That,' most notably of its prologue, a powerful emotional crescendo which keeps insisting on the centrality, the inescapability, and the explosiveness of 'this theme' while seemingly refusing to identify it" (*Modernism and Revolution* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994], 226).

Negative space is most profitable for its capacity to invert the universe, inspiring a necessary reorganization that ushers in change and staves off automatization. For instance, Shklovsky's collection of essays, *Knight's Move* (*Khod konia* 1923), documents the ambivalence of negativity—both destructive and productive—most poignantly in the essay “Pounding Nails with a Samovar” (“Samovarom po gvozdiam”), a title that expresses in humorous terms a world where objects are repurposed to an absurd end: “War—privation—reorganizes things in its own way, which is terrible but honest. However, to change the meaning of things, to bore through a door with a spoon, to shave oneself with an awl and, at the same time, give assurances that everything is going well—that's not honest” (25). Despite hardships, war is also fertile ground for estrangement, where “making do,” so to speak, compels society to reassess, to innovate, and to complete everyday activities with more awareness—in so doing, these activities quickly turn from everyday (*bytovye*) to artistic, or artificial (*iskusstvennye*).<sup>102</sup> However, as Shklovsky admits, the other side of the coin is dishonesty and discontentment (or a society-in-negative that is dishonest about its contentment), the end result being an inversed world that wants only to return to normal. Or, to use Shklovsky's barefaced prose, “[t]he void sucks, give speed.”<sup>103</sup> This is the internal contradiction that lies at the heart of Shklovsky's estrangement—that living in negativity (war) and creating in

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<sup>102</sup> For more on the political implications/dimensions of estrangement, see articles by Svetlana Boym, “Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt,” *Poetics Today* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 581–611; Galin Tihanov, “The Politics of Estrangement: The Case of the Early Shklovsky,” *Poetics Today* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 665–696. See also Victor Erlich, who writes: “As for Shklovskij, presumably the main exponent of Formalist ‘escapism,’ his attitude towards revolutionary politics was more complex than some of his extravagantly ‘a-social’ utterances would imply. In the Civil War period he oscillated intermittently between the pose of an ironic spectator, or passive victim, of the revolutionary upheaval and inconclusive attempts at political action.” *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 59.

<sup>103</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, “Tret'ia fabrika,” *Gamburgskii schet : stati, vospominaniia, esse* (1914–1933) (Moscow: Sov. pisatel', 1990), 310.

negativity (estrangement) are fundamentally at odds—which never reaches a resolution, and yet which always yields creative results. For example, Shklovsky’s earliest prose piece, “In a Void” (“V pustote”) composed most likely in 1921, depicts a reality of reorganization, where the world stands “in a void” as the result of war. Narrated in first-person, “In a Void,” follows Shklovsky’s journey during the Russian Civil War, and explores the theme of negative space in the form of an adventure novella.<sup>104</sup>

There are several striking theoretical overlaps between Shklovsky’s “void” and Tynianov’s “interval,” a concept that was born of the latter’s theory of cultural evolution. Tynianov argues that cultural history does not progress self-aware as a sequence of intellectual ‘periods’, but rather is interrupted by “intervals,” or *promezhutki*, that encourage artistic innovation.<sup>105</sup> Like Shklovsky’s “void,” Tynianov’s “interval” is responsible for the formal and thematic changes that take place within the arts and accounts for the development of new trends, genres, and styles. The sense of being in an interval between cultures seems to describe Shklovsky’s condition in “Pounding Nails with a Samovar” quite accurately: in time of war something has ended, but, as a result, something new might take form. While the void/interval means that life will be temporarily impractical—samovars will be used as hammers—the void’s abundant artistic yield makes up for the inconvenience, however extreme it may be.

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<sup>104</sup> By 1921, Shklovsky had joined the Petrograd House of Arts managed by the Serapion Brothers, a group of avant-garde authors, named for E.T.A. Hoffman’s character of the same name, who promulgated freedom of creative expression. For this reason, their influence might explain the generic melding of theoretical prose and adventure novella.

<sup>105</sup> Tynianov, “Interval” (“Promezhutok,” 1924). For a comprehensive look at Tynianov’s “Interval,” see Dragan Kujundžić, *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 73-76.



In his essay on counter-reliefs and *faktura*, “Regarding Texture and Counter-Reliefs,” (“O fature i kontrrel’efakh” 1920), Shklovsky relays the effects negativity has on self-expression:

It often behooves one to read complaints about the difficulty of expressing one’s thought in art...To look at the form of art, that is, at art itself, as at an interpreter translating the thoughts of the artist from the language of his soul into a language comprehensible to the spectator is commonplace. For those who support such a view, “the word” in literature is “a color” in the painting—a regrettable necessity. From these “means” available to artists have been demanded, above all else, transparency and intelligibility...What makes art enchanting (очарование)? The outside world does not exist. Equally nonexistent, and equally imperceptible, are things replaced by words, and non-existent are words which are hardly used, hardly pronounced. The outside world is outside of art. Art is perceived as a series of hints, a series of algebraic signs, as a collection of things having volume, but no substance—texture (фактура).<sup>106</sup>

Here, Shklovsky considers the risks of mimesis, which attempts to render real life as word or material. For this reason, Shklovsky presents an avant-garde artist, Vladimir Tatlin, as a perfect strategist for issues of representation, and the artist’s counter-reliefs, or “sketches,” as one possible answer to the problem of autobiography: “A counter-relief, a sketch, pieces of some sort of special paradise where there are no names and no voids, where life is like our life today—a ‘flight in a sphere,’ from one point to another like traveling on an invisible road, from station to station” (68). Behaving self-sufficiently, dependent only on a juxtaposition of materials as the source of its communicative power, Tatlin’s counter-reliefs are one possible answer for how to express the self in an anti-authorial, artistic world. Counter-reliefs persist outside of time and space, essentially in a void, which is, however, of a different sort—not, as we see in “Pounding Nails with a Samovar,” a war-time void, cruelly divorced from time and waiting to return, but a void that is self-sufficient, autogenetic, liberated from the expectations of time, never to

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<sup>106</sup> Shklovsky, “Regarding Texture and Counter-Reliefs,” in *Knight’s Move*, 65.

return. “The new world should be a continuous world” (68), Shklovsky concludes in this essay—ostensibly he seeks a world without voids, without *promezhutki*, yet beautifully estranging all the same.<sup>107</sup>

Taking cues from trends in Constructivist Art, in *Zoo*, through graphic embellishments, such as the printed “X,” coupled with the spotlighted negative particle “ne,” Shklovsky materializes negativity at the cutaneous level of *faktura*, or texture, in a modernist literalization of the absence of the author. As he writes in *Zoo*, “writing about love is actually writing about literature” (123), and “I am becoming part of a book” (121). Sharing in Shklovsky’s modality of superimposing artist and his work, Karamzin employs negativity to a similar end, and, in so doing, arises as a proto-Formalist. Karamzin took life and literature as mutually dependent—it was literature’s job to answer life’s questions as best it could—and thus sought ways to have words “perform” life, to don words in contemporary fashion, to figuratively cloak them in cultural effects. Karamzin’s sentimental prose demonstrates in metaphorical terms the system operative in Rousseau’s epistolary novel for valuing and understanding the self: it is always a mediated process in which the self is arrived at through a series of evaluative tasks—gazing, judging, assessing, appreciating, and, above all, reading. As with Rousseau’s *Dialogues*, the self is not a concept that is bound to the individual alone, but rather is a constellation of its refracted images: whom it loves, who loves it, what it reads, and who reads it. And yet, beyond Julia’s own process of self-identification, the authorial self in

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<sup>107</sup> In the following excerpt from *Theory of Prose*, Shklovsky implies a striking parallel between his interpretation of Tatlin’s counter-reliefs and his view of the literary system: “A literary work is pure form; it is neither a thing nor material but a relationship of materials. And, like any relationship, this one, too, is zero dimensional. Which is why the ratio of a composition is irrelevant, the mathematical value of its numerator or denominator doesn’t matter; what matters is their relationship.” *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 2.

*Julia* is, in effect, artificial, a recasting of the self as logos, notably in the form of reader and not author, which has causal links once again with the “scare of the self.” In turning life into literature, life into device, Karamzin breaks Rousseau’s alleged ties between creator and his creation. The author is not lead creator but rather a member of the text’s community, allowing the illusion to persist that artistic material is autonomous in its autogenesis. A self-contained world, an enclosed system in which all literary participants—characters and author alike—are born, raised, and then die intra-textually, Karamzin’s sentimental prose reveals itself, cumulatively, as an effective modality for maintaining the ethos of Sentimentalism while generating artificial means of circumventing its core project—which is, to arrive at the self. In designing his *Julia*, *Natalie*, and *Liza* as more concept than character, Karamzin inevitably transforms life into device, and, like Shklovsky in *Zoo*, enacts a Pygmalion moment in reverse—taking life and transforming it back into marble; making stone once again stony.

To turn life into literary material, to make stone once again stony, leads, albeit circuitously, to a concern regarding the relationship between creator and creation which has thus far received peripheral treatment, yet which receives more critical attention in the following chapter. The mimetic debate that resides in the background of Rousseau’s oeuvre—which considers art’s ability to capture real life—is representative of Sentimentalism’s standardized reading of the creative process, a recouping of divine ability wherein creation and creator are inseparably linked. As I have argued in Chapter One, Shklovsky, due in part to his modernist environment, is centrally concerned not with the creative process, but with the creative result, which, in its autonomy, should be autogenerative and self-standing. Karamzin and Shklovsky challenge Rousseau’s creative

relationship, which links linearly creator to creation, life to literature. This is not to say that Karamzin was not occupied with literature's capacity to depict reality, but, in the way that all of life is a text and all of life is mimesis, Karamzin's creative process prioritizes literature as the "reality" that should be emulated. The following chapter to a certain extent aligns mimetic philosophy with literary device to look at the trends of primitivism that play a role in developing each author's conception of the creative process. Karamzin arises as the most interesting product of this analysis. His negative poetics reconfigures Rousseau's celebrated wilderness in a way that speaks to the anxiety of alterity that constitutes Karamzin's distinct Sentimentalism.

## Chapter Three

### Love and the Devices of Primitivism:

#### A Portrait of Autonomy

*“...[W]hen they speak of the origin of commonwealths and laws, [they] relate that in the primitive state preceding the cities men led lives like so many Adams in the state of innocence.”*

*Vico*

In the previous two chapters I explored how Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau, though separated by tremendous cultural and generational divides, are intimately interconnected with respect to their treatment of love and self, not only on the level of narrative—how love’s literary forms inform the literary structuring of the self—but also with respect to ontology—that there is a genetic link between sentiment and self that all three authors explore from the rudimentary perspective of love, demonstrating in no uncertain terms: you are what you feel. The central focus of this chapter shifts from love to primitivism as another potent phenomenon that guides the development of certain literary conceits prevalent in sentimental and formalist fiction. For instance, I explore how Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau, under their respective headings of Formalism and Sentimentalism, develop aesthetic practices that are exacted by the presumed existence of an alternative reality—a-historical, a-temporal, a-systematic—that is set apart from the modernized world and whose borders can only be breached through the artistic imagination.

The strict rationalism fostered by the Enlightenment is useful in its ability to organize, or at least re-imagine the world as organized, but is flawed in its audacious, totalizing approach to epistemology. As we have seen in the previous two chapters with the design of literary system or of autobiography, totality is impossible, and for this

reason disintegration, to again paraphrase Lionel Trilling, is an unavoidable conceit of modern (that is, post-primitive) prose. Totality (or, more likely, totalitarianism), a state of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, does have one refuge within rationalized society: the literary imagination. The present chapter considers primitivism as a literary phenomenon charged with an impossible task: to safeguard totality from the threat of disintegration and to provide the tools for coping, on an artistic level, with several psychological conditions incurred by the onslaught of modernist ills. For Rousseau, the savage world, a generic space from which all modern men have involuntarily departed, is retained as an emblem of perfect autonomy, and he conceives of his oeuvre as a practical way of integrating elements of this early time into the modern cultural fabric. For Shklovsky, too, the savage world is valued for its autonomy yet as it applies not to the consciousness (as for Rousseau), but to the text—how the text might be reconceived as autonomous, and, as readers, how our autonomy might be reinstated by way of hermeneutics. Karamzin's fiction, as I will demonstrate, presents the most complicated image of where these themes of love, primitivism, and autonomy collide.

Thus, in order to provide answers to how primitivism reveals itself in Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau, following an initial assessment of how the primitive is understood by these three authors, I will examine a moment that finds itself repeated across the three "Julies"—the portrait episode. Engaging with an image or representation of the object of one's affection (or, in Shklovsky's non-romance, appropriately *not* the object of his affection) opens up the possibility for extensive consideration on the ways in which primitive idealism works against or with notions of love; furthermore, how this relationship might reveal even broader notions of temporality among Shklovsky,

Karamzin, and Rousseau.

Residing in the background of this chapter is a broader fascination with the role of primitivism and neo-primitivism in instigating and sanctioning a release from neoclassical standards and subsequently the shift towards disarticulation that we see in both sentimental and formalist fiction. For instance, the savage fetish that held sway for the latter part of the eighteenth century runs rampant throughout Rousseau's sentimentalism as he tries to de-acculturate society and deinstitutionalize the arts and sciences. Rousseau's *Dialogues* is a literary instantiation of this approach insofar as self-representation is fundamentally incomplete, ineffable, and rife with mistakes and lacunas. The same process of de-sophistication can be said to be the guiding principles of one of Formalism's major tenets—Shklovsky's *ostranenie*—that takes the undoing of cultural mores as the jumping off point for artistic expression. Drawing from his aesthetic approach, Shklovsky designs his quasi-autobiographies, specifically, *Zoo* and *Third Factory*, as counter-intuitive, and most importantly, counter-functional insofar as they circumvent the 'self' that seeks 'representation.'

In her critical work, *The Sleep of Reason*, Frances Connelly examines the "aesthetic framework" of primitivism, specifically how it developed in Europe and which principles are its defining features. As she sets forth in the first chapter, primitivism was a normative aesthetic in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that developed in reaction to the staunch institutionalization of the arts supported by classicism: "The classical norm cast the 'primitive' as a dark mirror image of itself."<sup>108</sup> As a result, primitivism developed as a "phenomenon that highlights the relationship between the

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<sup>108</sup> Frances S. Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 9.

Western and non-Western arts” (1), and came to be known as “collection of visual attributes that Europeans construed to be universally characteristic of early or primal artistic expression” (5).

As do many scholars of this complex and multi-faceted cultural phenomenon, Connelly locates the beginning of primitivism in the publication of Giambattista Vico’s *New Science (La scienza nuova 1725)* since it “first articulates, in a systematic manner, the essential framework of ideas through which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans would understand ‘primitive’ expression” (5). To be sure, Vico’s look at the development of civilized man and the bodies of knowledge that guide his inquiry is formative for the study at hand, particularly for his presentation of the civilized outlook as directly related to the diffusion of divine knowledge into categories of institutionalized knowledge. *New Science* outlines the fundamental attributes of the primitive mind and makes substantial claims as to how these qualities might relate to the development of the humanities. In the heated debate between Vico and Descartes (1708-09), Vico contests Descartes’ attempt to apply mathematical principles to other natural sciences. True knowledge, to paraphrase Vico, can only be gained through causes (*per causas*), that is, by testing and understanding the material with which certain knowledge is made. For this reason, Vico maintains, God is the sole possessor of true knowledge; as the maker of the universe and all its parts, God alone has intimate understanding of the processes and means of creation. Man, in contrast, cannot know the world that comes to him ready-made as an unalterable fact. As Isaiah Berlin summarizes, “only the Creator looking at, or rather ‘within’ himself, that is, at the Universe, which is identical with his own self, can



be said to have knowledge.”<sup>109</sup> As a product of God’s all-encompassing, generative power, man can only know to a limited extent what he himself creates; since he must create using materials created by another, he cannot, as per Vico’s assessment, ever fully know his creation.

This relationship between maker, made, and material is one that has been underlined in the previous two chapters as a means through which Shklovsky and Karamzin *estrangle* Rousseau’s sentimentalism; either by literary self-reading or negative poetics, Shklovsky and Karamzin sever the Pygmalion-esque, ontogenetic link between maker and made—as the master of his material and thereby master of his creation—and displace the author as the sole creator of his literary universe. In Vico we see not only the early understanding of this relationship as inherently flawed, but also one instance of philosophy’s adaptation of the Judeo-Christian divide between divine and mortal knowledge. *New Science* dictates that the world—civilized man included—is God *mise en abyme*; each small part of the universe refers back to its central point of reference, God, confirming his creative authority and reasserting his image, as do each microscopic pixel of a hologram. The relationship between God and man, and man and knowledge appears to be clear—God creates man; man attempts to systematize the knowledge of the universe by categorizing it into the natural sciences; however, full knowledge belongs only to God.

The frontispiece that accompanies the 1730 and 1744 editions of *New Science* reveals yet another layer to what seems to be a straightforward relationship. In accordance with Vico’s layout of the universe, God, a statue representing “metaphysic,”

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<sup>109</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment : Vico, Hamann, Herder*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 38.

or the sciences, and the poet Homer stand in a stratified triad—God above metaphysic, metaphysic above Homer. As Vico explains in the opening chapter (“Idea of the Work”), “through this aspect, metaphysic in the attitude of ecstasy contemplates Him [God] above the order of natural things through which hitherto the philosophers have contemplated Him.”<sup>110</sup> A stream of light flows continuously from God, situated in the heavens, to the statue of metaphysic and then further down to Homer. The light’s trajectory demonstrates not only the path by which knowledge should be acquired and transferred—from God to man, diffused through the sciences—but also links together the three fundamental components that make up Vico’s “gentile world”:

Metaphysic...contemplates Him above the order of natural things...ascending higher, she contemplates in God the world of human minds...in order to show His providence in the world of human spirits...The ray of the divine providence illuminating a convex jewel which adorns the breast of metaphysic...indicates that knowledge of God does not have its end in metaphysic taking private illumination from intellectual things...The same ray is reflected from the breast of metaphysic onto the statue of Homer...For metaphysic, directing a history of human ideas from the beginnings of truly human thinking of the gentiles, has enabled us finally to descend into the crude minds of the first founders of the gentile nations...This poetic wisdom, the knowledge of the theological poets, was unquestionably the first wisdom of the world for the gentiles. (5)

Here and elsewhere throughout *New Science*, Vico strives to articulate what is inherently a complicated relationship between human knowledge and divine intelligence. Not necessarily linear, the transfer of knowledge comes about as a give and take, replete with the emotional nuances of sharing, divulging, and withholding. In Vico’s worldview there are two types of knowledge: divine, which is entirely self-generative, and self-sufficient, yet compelled by an internal generosity to share itself with man; and mortal, which is

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<sup>110</sup> Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, revised translation of the third edition by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948), 3.

developed in the natural sciences as a careful mixture of intellectual adventurism and divine benevolence. Vico's genealogy of the natural sciences tells the following story: everything before the development of the natural sciences is unified under divine knowledge. When, through the categorization of knowledge into sciences, man decided to take on that knowledge for himself, he broke away from the divine unity, subsequently complicating the relationship between them—what was once a steady flow of light between God in the heavens and Homer, with the invention of human knowledge becomes refracted through metaphysic.

As Connelly argues, Vico's *New Science* is first in a long line of efforts during the Enlightenment era to reconstruct the origins of culture, most of which read the birth of culture as a temporal rupture, an irreparable break with God due to hubristic efforts to behave, command, and judge just as he does: "In fact, the notion of 'primitivity' as an infant state of development through which all cultures passed was an invention of Enlightenment universalism" (5). Arguably, as with Adam and Eve, the development of the natural sciences represents another key moment in which man's attempt to appropriate God's power ends catastrophically as he is forced to sacrifice some element of his "original-ness"—for Adam and Eve, their innocence, for Vico's "gentile," possibly happiness, as the endless pursuit of an unfathomable knowledge could only end unhappily. Thus, this extended look at Vico is significant for the study at hand because it helps to locate the dawn of the binary divide between notions of primitive and civilized that began in earnest during the eighteenth century yet permeates the cultural consciousness of both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. With *New Science*, Vico canonizes in the early eighteenth century what will become a formative link between

autonomy and pre-civilization, a world that is self-generative, self-reliant, such that all notions of *return*—a return to a beginning, to a more natural state—become, in essence, a return to the unity secured and legislated by God. The Vico mapping of civilization’s progress gives rise not only to the notion of autonomy as, in its purest form, inherently primitive—or, at least, pre-civilized—but also as an unattainable, utopian vision, a condition (previously) inhabited only by God. Furthermore, Vico’s *New Science* illuminates the tension between material and creation that becomes formative for the development of the arts and the artistic sensibility, as well as the most distinguishing feature of civilized man—civilized man is he who is set apart from his material. Without drawing a direct causal link between Vico’s conclusions and the literary outlook that follows him, I note that much of the eighteenth century following Vico tries to emulate this notion of return, or regression that is counterintuitively progressive, and, particularly within the literary world, to recuperate this totalized self embodied only by God.

Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, Rousseau’s writing remains one of the most cogent and fully developed examples of this primitive outlook, which, in his work, is coupled with an intense and rampant desire to *recuperate* elements of the state of nature lost in the transition to the state of society.<sup>111</sup> Testimony in *Dialogues* proves that Rousseau’s primitivism is complicated and was often misunderstood in his day. To begin with, he is often falsely credited with giving rise to the idea of the “noble savage,” a term that not only never appears in Rousseau’s work, but moreover, finds its actual origin in

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<sup>111</sup> As Jeffrey Perl argues, “The first, fully self-conscious ideologies of return are, possibly, those of the philosophes Vico and Rousseau, Hegel and Michelet.” Jeffrey M. Perl, *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 21.

the seventeenth century.<sup>112</sup> However, the origins of this expression notwithstanding, the paradoxical quality embodied by the notion of a noble savage, emulated for his primitive yet inherently more civilized qualities, has definite links to Rousseau's underlying philosophy. In his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (*Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* 1754), or the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau's teleology is guided by the conceit, promulgated by philosophers of his generation, that mankind, in its move from nature to society, primitive to civilized, has somehow fallen off course from its ideal trajectory. Rousseau writes: "If I have dwelt at such length on the assumption of this primitive condition, it is because I had to dig to the root, and to show in the depiction of the genuine state of Nature how far inequality, even natural inequality, is from having as much reality and influence in that state as our Writers claim" (*Discourses*, 157). Rousseau laments certain aspects of the movement from crude to civilized, while Vico reads man's negative progression as an inevitable part of the human condition—we not only must, but also should progress towards civilization.

Rousseau's *Second Discourse* paints the most extended portrait of primitive man, who is without possessions, strong, vital, and without rivals: "Alone, idle, and always near danger, Savage man must like to sleep and be a light sleeper like the animals...Self-preservation being almost his only care, his most developed faculties must be those that primarily serve in attack and defense, either in order to overcome his prey or guard against becoming another animal's prey" (139-141). Within these parameters, the emotional world for savage man, who, suggests Rousseau, is more distinct from civilized man than man is from beast, is utilized to a concrete end for his survival. As he is

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<sup>112</sup> Terry Jay Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 81-82.

portrayed in *Second Discourse*, savage man's most striking emotional distinction is his negative relationship to love. While passion is at large in the world of early man— "[Savage man] heeds only the temperament he received from Nature, and not a taste which he could not have acquired, and any woman suits him" (155)—love is unknown and unnecessary "since it is based on certain notions of merit or of beauty which a Savage is not in a position to possess" (155). Seeing that savage men can only experience "physical love," that is "the general desire that moves one sex to unite with the other," there are fewer quarrels among them: "It is therefore indisputable that love itself, like all the other passions, acquired only in society the impetuous ardor that so often causes it to be fatal among men..." (155-6). Falling in love is part of a destructive chain of events that quickly ushers man from his primitive state. He is compelled to concretize that love by pursuing property, setting up house, and in so doing he unwittingly falls into the traps of civil society that is driven by competition and greed. As Anthony Vidler notes, in between Rousseau's *First* and *Second Discourse*, domestic property becomes, as we see with Shklovsky's and Karamzin's negative poetics (harnessing the creative potential of the void), an embodiment of both negative and positive qualities:

This advance on the development of primitive dwellings, "had a double and morally contradictory effect. On the one hand, bringing husbands and wives, fathers and children together in a common habitation engendered 'the sweetest sentiments known to man, conjugal and paternal love.' On the other hand, the building of huts immediately introduced 'a kind of property' from which originated quarrels and combat. Thus, while in the first discourse we are led to see the primitive hut as an alternative to civilization, in the second we find that the first hut, product of the inevitable process of *perfectability*, is morally necessary for awakening the best of human sentiments, but it is also the cause of the worst."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987),16.

Thus, like property and competition, the capacity to love becomes one of the defining features that set civilized man apart from primitive. While, as Vidler argues, love together with property leads to the “sweetest sentiments,” the primitive life also remains undeniably appealing for Rousseau because savage man lives inspired not by competition and completely free of love; living independently from these conditions of modernity, early man is able to maintain his autonomy.

While *Second Discourse* charts the historical conditions that account for man’s movement from natural to unnatural, it is not until *Emile* that Rousseau provides his curious reader with a more precise picture of the possible fusing of intellectualism and primitivism, civility and savagery. If Rousseau’s political oeuvre conceives of modern development as falling off course, *Emile* is conceived as the modern man to put humanity back on track. As a *roman à thèse*, *Emile* is most celebrated as a plan for educational reform; however, on its rudimentary level, *Emile* is a portrait of possibility, hope, utopia; he is a beginning for a new race of man, forged in early age through proper education to remain civil with a sympathetic eye on the natural worlds and forces that should be given proper credence. Throughout Rousseau’s oeuvre, particularly in *Emile*, to be savage is to be “free” (“*Emile*, who has been raised with all the freedom of young peasants and young savages...”<sup>114</sup> and “self-educated” (“...an absolutely savage life, deprived of the enlightenment which is acquired only in commerce with men” [258]). Similarly, *Emile* is “laborious, temperate, patient, firm, and full of courage” (208). He is “rustic” (“But our *Emile*, more rustically raised...” [180]); an “experiential learner” (“No book other than

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<sup>114</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly. 13 vols. (Hanover, NH: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1990), 13:315.

the world, no instruction other than the facts. The child who reads does not think, he only reads; he is not informing himself, he learns words" [168]); and most importantly, "autonomous":

[Emile] considers himself without regard to others and finds it good that others do not think of him. He demands nothing of anyone and believes he owes nothing to anyone. He is alone in human society; he counts on himself alone. More than anyone else, he had the right to count on himself, for he is all that one can be at his age. He has no errors, or only those that are inevitable to us. He has no vices, or only those against which no man can guarantee himself. He has a healthy body, agile limbs, a precise and unprejudiced mind, a heart that is free and without passions. *Amour-propre*, the first and most natural of all the passions, is still hardly aroused in him. Without troubling the repose of anyone, he has lived satisfied, happy, and free insofar as nature has permitted. (208)

In order to be autonomous, Emile must be uncompromising in his solitary lifestyle: "every attachment is a sign of insufficiency...A truly happy being is a solitary being" (221). However, as Rousseau concedes, complete solitude is impossible for man, who is "imperfect," and whose undeniable "weakness" is his sociability since he cannot, unlike God, be alone and be happy ("God alone enjoys an absolute happiness"): "I do not conceive how someone who needs nothing can love anything. I do not conceive how someone who loves nothing can be happy" (221). Rousseau admits the need for love in life, not only for happiness, but because it balances out the ills of modernity—if modern man is destined to modernize, then love, even though a source of modernity (in its moral demands), keeps him anchored in some respect to an earlier world, wherein God represented a totalizing sentiment of love. In this respect, the entirety of *Emile* seeks to strike a balance on rhetorical and philosophical levels between Rousseau's savage fetish and what he reads as the unstoppable force of modernity. The ills of property and love are thus appreciably modified to fit this ideal. For one, Emile's room is the closest modern



adaptation of the primitive hut, whose only purpose is for the *utility* of shelter, without any affectations to encourage staying indoors or domestication, is as simple as the outdoors: “Let their quarters be fitted with coarse and solid furniture, no mirrors, no china, no objects of quality. As for my Emile, whom I am raising in the country, his room will have nothing which distinguishes it from a peasant’s. What is the use of decorating it so carefully, since he is going to stay in so little?” (93). Rooms negatively affect Emile’s ability to learn since he might become distracted by an oppressive sense of impending non-freedom. “Look at a cat entering a room for the first time,” writes Rousseau “He inspects, he looks around, he sniffs, he does not relax for a moment, he trusts nothing before he has examined everything, come to know everything. This is just what is done by a child who is beginning to walk and entering, so to speak, in the room of the world” (125). Emile’s room is a meeting of past and present, as is the love between Emile and Sophie a meeting of two worlds, primitive and civilized, a union of both “love” and “conjugal love.” Their relationship begins as “love” and develops into “conjugal love,” which is “love founded on esteem which lasts as long as life, on virtues which do not fade with beauty, on suitability of character which makes association pleasant and prolongs the charm of the first union into old age...” (475).<sup>115</sup>

If modernity is an unstoppable force that mankind cannot resist, then Emile stands apart from mankind and civil society for his ability to bridge savage and civilized consciousnesses. His journey through the text is a moderately paced acculturation towards “consider[ing] himself in his physical relations with other beings and in his moral relations with other men” (455). Raised in near-isolation in the natural

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<sup>115</sup> Note that, in *Julie*, Rousseau’s heroine is forced to compartmentalize love—love is shared with Saint-Preux, and conjugal love with Wolmar.

environment, Emile can resist civilized notions of competition while maintaining and adhering to a civilized telos: living in fear of his ultimate death, Emile, like all civilized individuals, makes decisions to offset his mortality, such as acquiring knowledge beyond the needs of survival, seeking conjugal love, and, ultimately, procreating. In the eighteenth century, the primitive consciousness is conceived not necessarily as a-temporal but rather as expressive of the idea of absolute time. Emile embodies both consciousnesses in that though his life culminates—as does the text, *Emile*—in his union with Sophie, family building is presented as a ‘modern’ means of conserving autonomy. With love, family, and then property, primitive autonomy is no longer an option for Emile, and yet autonomy’s central moral imperatives—freedom from competition, freedom from social judgment, moderate isolation—continue to govern his world as per usual.

The search for autonomy points up a striking parallel between Rousseau’s sentimentalism and Shklovsky’s formalism—the autonomous consciousness matches the autonomous text. In the first chapter, I highlighted the relationship between these two concepts and traced Shklovsky’s notion of textual autonomy as it develops from within the Formalist tradition. To briefly reiterate, the Formalists understood poetic language as operating synchronically and anti-psychologically, a development that Erlich, in his outline of the constellation of theoretical strains that gave rise of Formalism, links to the Russian Futurists.<sup>116</sup> In Erlich’s view, early formalism essentially transformed Futurism’s ‘trans-sense’ experiments into a literary science, from which the notion of the

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<sup>116</sup> “The Futurist’s shrill insistence on the complete autonomy of the poetic word was a wholesome, if extravagant, reaction against the disregard of form...The theory of the ‘self-sufficient word’ and its practical implementation highlighted the inadequacy of the purely thematic approach to verse.” Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 29.

autonomous work of art was born. Critical essays such as Jakobson's 1921 monograph on the futurist poet Khlebnikov, in which Jakobson details the "self-contained word" ("self-valuable word," or "self-made word," "samovitoe slovo"); Eikhenbaum's 1919 "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Was Made" ("Kak sdelena 'Shinel' Gogolia"), in which he examines narrative devices and wordplay in the text without drawing any extra-literary, socio-cultural conclusions; and Shklovsky's 1916 essay, "On Poetry and Transrational Language" ("O poezii i zaumnon iazyke"), in which he argues that communication is merely one function of language—each critical work emphasizes the autonomous, self-referential nature of verbal art.

The preferential treatment allotted autonomy accords with the neo-primitivism that was prevalent at the time Futurism was finding its bearings in Russian culture, and most significantly, when Russian Formalist theory was first taking shape.<sup>117</sup> According to art historians John E. Bowlt and Nicoletta Missler:

At least three interpretations of the "primitive" can be identified with the theory and practice of the Russian avant-garde. The first followed in the wake of the general European reassessment of the antique and the "savage," manifesting itself in a discovery of the primitive or, rather, archaic arts produced by peoples or ethnic groups within the Russian

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<sup>117</sup> From within Russian cultural history, the most immediate precursor to Russian Modernism's neo-primitivism can be located at the end of the Crimean War in the nineteenth century at which point members of the *kuptsy-metsenaty*, a group of merchant art patrons, in their search for "indigenous" Russian art, began to buy exclusively Russian art (see John O. Norman, "Pavel Tretiakov and Merchant Art Patronage, 1850-1900," *Between Tsar and People*, eds. Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991]). Collectors Pavel Tretiakov and Saava Mamontov were frontrunners in this new trend, interested mainly in collecting works of fine art that captured an "indigenous" Russian style (a style that was in its nascent stages, loosely defined by V. V. Stasov in his article, "On Dutch Art" ["O gollandskoj zhivopisi" 1856], as anti-classical and contemporary); however, it is Mamontov's reaching beyond the limits of the traditional fine arts to the world of arts and crafts, decorative arts, amateur theatre and other expressions of Russian "indigenous" art that begins the artistic shift within Russian Modernism towards neo-primitivism. Mamontov's estate, the Abramtsevo colony, becomes an artists' sanctuary, where plays were staged and operettas written inspired by Russian folklore, and where artists often worked in-residence. The spirit of artistic revolution that Mamontov cultivated is said to have had a significant role in inspiring the Modernist arts, in particular the Modernist theatrical arts, to come (see contributions by members of *Mir iskusstva*, Benois, Bakst, Diaghilev, Filosofov, and Lanceray).

Empire...The second interpretation came with the actual ethnographic rediscovery of national folklore and minor arts...In turn, their encounter with the “primitive” led not just to the perception and reception of new forms, but also to a search for the “primitive soul,” whether among the “barbarians” and the “Asians,” or the Russian peasants and children....<sup>118</sup>

Essays such as Aleksandr Shevchenko’s “Neo-Primitivism” (“Neo-Primitizm,” 1913<sup>119</sup>), Kornei Chukovsky’s “The Futurists” (“Futuristy,” 1913) and Jakobson’s “Furturism” (“Futurizm,” 1919—in which he names futurism “the antipode of classicism”<sup>120</sup>)—are some of the most formative works for this period of neo-primitivism. Shevchenko writes that neo-primitivism centers on locating Russian culture in the East, in Asia, which *ipso facto* makes Russian art primitive, “barbaric art.”<sup>121</sup> However, as he claims, this is not to say that neo-primitive art simply “re-popularizes” Eastern art, but rather incorporates it, innovates it, and appropriates its methods: “it is entirely original” (49). Isolating the totalizing aspect of the primitive aesthetic, Shevchenko writes, “We [neo-primitivists] demand good form...this inheres in the whole composition’s harmony of drawing and in the correct distribution of reliefs in accordance with the weight of individual parts and colored quantities” (50). In a similar vein, in *Theory of Prose* Shklovsky writes, “A literary work is pure form; it is neither a thing or material but a relationship of materials. And, like any relationship, this one too has little to do with length or width or any other

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<sup>118</sup> John E. Bowlt and Nicoletta Missler, “The ‘New Barbarians,’” *Origins of the Russian Avant-garde: Celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg: State Russian Museum, 2003), 30.

<sup>119</sup> In her brief comparative analysis of Shklovsky’s “Resurrection of the Word” and Shevchenko’s “Neo-primitivism,” Sarah Pratt isolates the shared religious undercurrent that unites Shklovsky and Shevchenko (see Sarah Pratt, “The Profane Made Sacred: The Theology of the OBERIU Declaration,” *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-garde and Cultural Experiment*, eds. John E. Bowlt and Olga Matich [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996], 176).

<sup>120</sup> Roman Jakobson, “Futurism,” *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art: 1890s to Mid-1930s*, ed. Ilia Dorontchenkov, trans. Charles Rougle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 164.

<sup>121</sup> Aleksandr Shevchenko, “Neo-Primitivism,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934*, trans. John E. Bowlt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 48.

dimension. It's the arithmetic significance of its numerator and denominator (i.e., their relationship) that is important" (189).

While a close comparative reading of Shevchenko and Shklovsky reveals several theoretical linkages, in contradistinction to the neo-primitivism of the Russian avant-garde, which took inventory of *lubki* ("popular literature") and attempted to index explicitly Russian primitivism,<sup>122</sup> Shklovsky is occupied more with primitive notions in the abstract. Primitivism reveals itself in Shklovsky not as a distinctly Russian phenomenon, but rather, not unlike Rousseau, as expressive of a universal consciousness contingent on a historical model that places all of mankind at the very same point of departure. Shklovsky accomplishes the most innovative incarnation of the primitive theme with his theory of *ostranenie*, which in essence is a method of perception that demands that art be considered with the a-temporality of the primitive consciousness, and which makes literature, like savage man, autonomous for its lack of psychological conditions and historical contexts. Rousseau forges the autonomous consciousness in *Emile* and designs Emile and Sophie as plausible solutions for how to circumvent the modern condition, albeit only marginally. Shklovsky has art perform this very task. According to the terms of estrangement, art, when made properly, asks its modern consumer to exercise his innate primitive mind by releasing all ties to his immediate environment; yet, like Rousseau's *Emile*, taken as an exercise in developing the autonomous psychology, Shklovsky's estrangement cannot forgo modern reality entirely.

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<sup>122</sup> For more, see John E. Bowlt and Nicoletta Missler, "The New Barbarians": "The response of the 'New Barbarians' to the primitive artifact was very different from that of the preceding generation, because their primary goals were to elevate the vulgar and demote the noble, to cancel the presumed differences between high and low, to explore alternative methods of perspective, proportion, anatomy, and coloring in their own studio paintings, and ultimately, to contend that Russia's artistic renaissance would come to pass not from France or Italy, but from her national, indigenous traditions..." (28).

The strength of estrangement lies in its direct correspondence with the ‘reality’ that it delights in setting askew. In this way, we see Rousseau realigned with Shklovsky in this chapter. As in Chapter One, we find their axiomatic categories once again perfectly matched—Shklovsky’s art, like Rousseau’s natural savage, stands apart from *byt*, or Rousseau’s “State of Society”; both of their versions of primitivism seek some superimposition of temporal frames—between a primitive ideal that exists in the past, and a civilized condition that is accepted as the present.<sup>123</sup>

Primitivism in Karamzin, however, is more convoluted than the blatant fascination that manifests itself time and again throughout Rousseau’s oeuvre, and, moreover, is beyond reconciliation with Shklovsky’s outlook. Karamzin’s work neither idealizes a past nor wishes to estrange its reader. In fact, his motivation is quite the opposite; to run from the past and to ‘de-estrangle’ its Russian reader, so to speak, into becoming Western European normative. What is deemed universal humanity in Rousseau is distinctly Russian in Karamzin, such that bad Russian writing is attributed to any remaining barbarity in Russian society. In general, savagery and barbarity, while guiding principles in Karamzin’s poetic consciousness, are deemed wholly negative ones. When Karamzin considers the primitive wilderness he conceives of it as a “desert,” as a lifeless void, employing the word *pustynia* on nearly every occasion. As a literary construct, primitive nature is on several accounts confirmed as ripe for sentimental reverie, deemed organized and tamed, refined and sweet, and, for this reason, Karamzin seeks out natural

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<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, Linda S. Kauffman, in her work *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction*, argues that Shklovsky’s particular take on time bears the influence of Einstein’s theory of relativity: “Between 1919 and 1922, Shklovsky was already assimilating the radical transformations Einstein’s theories had begun to make on our consciousness of space and time. Rather than perceiving time as an inevitable linear progression, he saw that henceforth it would be perceived as a relative construct that could be variously conceptualized.” Linda S. Kauffman, *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5-6. The influence of Einstein on Shklovsky’s work is in part corroborated by a brief mention of the theory of relativity (*printsip otnositel’nosti*) in Letter 27 of *Zoo*.

environments in his *Letters*. However, any ‘primitive’ focus, whether inside or out of the Western European canon, is unnerving, possibly reminding this once “barbaric” Russian of the pre-Petrine innate impulses he works to quell.

In *Letters* solitude is linked almost inseparably with *pustynia*, and thus also takes on a negative coloring in Karamzin. Solitude, in essence loneliness, is a sentiment that is found throughout Karamzin’s *Letters*, where, whether in pastoral or urban environments, the traveler is haunted by the thought of being alone. For example, while in Zurich, the traveler meets with a pastor and his wife, whose beautiful simplicity brings to mind verses by the English poet Thomson and inspires a momentary jubilant reflection on the surrounding beauty that matches its inhabitants. “If at any point,” writes Karamzin, “the world should come to tire me; if at some point my heart should become insensible to all the joys of life in society; if it should no longer find a single sympathetic heart: then I shall retreat to this deserted place [*v etu pustiniu*], which nature herself has fenced about with high walls impermeable to vices—and where it is possible to forget everything, everything except God and nature” (140). The joy of the rural couple both invigorates and troubles Karamzin. If he “should no longer find a single sympathetic heart,” he will treat his loneliness with even more loneliness and “retreat to this desert...fenced about with high walls.” Later in Geneva, in apostrophe to friends the traveler writes:

I do not know what to think of your silence, my dearest friends! I await the post with impatience—it comes, I run, I ask—and with downcast steps return home, my head lowered, looking at the ground and seeing nothing. I imagine everything, and the possibilities terrify me. Ah! If you are no longer alive then my tie with my homeland will be sundered; I shall go and seek some kind of retreat [*pustynia*] in the depths of the Alps and there, amidst the sad and awesome subjects of nature, will spend my life in eternal despondency. (221)

The desert in both situations is a welcome escape however, not from a world over-

populated, hyper-civilized, or unnatural, but rather from a world that is too isolated, lacking “sympathetic hearts” and “dearest friends.” To deal with his social disappointment, Karamzin seeks out the one coping mechanism he knows—the wilderness, a prophylactic he learned from Rousseau—and applies it in counterintuitive ways to cure loneliness by withdrawing himself even further from society. Finally, his sorrow at the thought of being alone reaches its narrative climax when he sees it institutionalized as it is in the lives of the Carthusian monks:

Isolation is pleasant when it is rest; but constant solitude is the path to nothingness. Initially our soul protests against a captivity that is abhorrent to nature; a feeling of inadequacy (since man on his own is a fragment or excerpt: only with similar creatures and with nature does he make up a whole thing)—the feeling of inadequacy tortures him; finally all the noble impulses in our heart go to sleep, and man falls from the first rung of earthly creation into the sphere of brutes. (237)

Collectively, these moments in *Letters* reveal that isolation runs counter to our most natural impulses.

The negative association between solitude and desert is extended to the natural environment as well. While sailing along the Saône river in the south of France, along with several other passengers, Karamzin contemplates what he sees along the river bank:

Green plains stretch on both sides of the river; occasionally hillocks and knolls are visible; everywhere there are beautiful villages of a kind I did not find in Germany or Switzerland, gardens, summer houses of wealthy merchants, chateaux with tall towers; everywhere the earth is *cultivated* in the best manner; everywhere you can see the generous *fruits* of industry. I imagine the primordial state of these flowering banks. Here the Saône murmuring in wilderness and gloom; dark forests rustled above its waters; men lived like beasts, taking shelter in deep caves or under the branches of century old oaks—what a transformation!...How many centuries were required in order to efface from nature every sign of its primordial wilderness! (246)

In a perfectly counter-Rousseauian move, Karamzin turns his boat ride into a pathetic



fallacy, where the environment captures his own internal fears for returning to barbaric times. The primordial is not inspirational; Karamzin does not wish to recapture or return to it for it is less natural than his current modern state since it is uncivilized and unpopulated. In fact, this is why he re-contextualizes the natural lexicon to suit the civilized world—the “cultivated” earth gives way to “fruits of industry.” The possibility of return for Karamzin is devastating: “But perhaps, friends, perhaps in the course of time these places will once again grow deserted and wild; perhaps within a few centuries, instead of pretty girls sitting on the bank of the river in front of me, combing their white goats, ferocious beasts will appear here, howling as they do in the deserts of Africa!...A dreadful thought!” (246). That the image of civility will be replaced with barbarity is his greatest fear: “who can guarantee that France...will not one day become like the Egypt of today?” (246).

The scene along the riverbank inspires Karamzin to reflect on the course of a culture's history, which, he concludes, cycles between periods of barbarity and civility. Here Karamzin reveals Vicovian notions of historical fatalism, which assumes that society cycles towards an ideal through a series of *ricorso* or returns (Vico, 423-24). A prime example for Karamzin is Greece, whose classical models serve as the fundamental inspiration for the Western European Enlightenment and yet whose borders had been invaded by the Ottoman Empire: “Where the Homers and the Platos lived, there now live the ignorant and the barbarians” (247). Barbarism and civility for Karamzin are cultural categories determined by the lineage of certain philosophical and artistic strains—those that continued the intellectual legacy of Ancient Greece are civilized; those that did not, those that perpetuate cultural practices that run counter to the Greek, such as cultural

invaders (the Turks), are barbaric. Russia, which in its cultural past has shown both barbaric tendencies and civilized potential is, for Karamzin, in a precarious position in the late eighteenth century. For this reason, it seems not only telling, but also quite appropriate for Karamzin to conclude this letter with the proclamation: “I have run out of space for writing,” “boleee pisat’ negde,” literally, “there is nowhere left to write,” as if Karamzin feels himself being swallowed into the barbaric void that, according to history’s ebb and flow, will inevitably become the space he currently inhabits (247). “There is nowhere left to write” is a defeatist’s claim that he too is destined to become (or rather, return to being) a member of barbaric lands where no writing, no philosophy, no Enlightenment can be accomplished.

Karamzin’s choice of “desert” as an equivalent for Rousseau’s primitive utopia does not seem to have roots in Rousseau, who uses the French “désert” quite infrequently, and not in reference to the “darker” side of his primitive world. In the travelogue Karamzin criticizes a fellow traveler for being a “second Rousseau” in his desire to “denigrate the Enlightenment” by “prais[ing] primitives” (348). However, his mood slightly shifts when he reaches Ermenonville, where Rousseau spent the final days of his life. Upon arriving, he remarks “Ermenonville was previously darkened by thick forest, surrounded by swampland and deep and infertile sands; in a word it was a primitive wilderness [*pustynia*]. But a man of abundant wealth and taste bought it and remade it so that the wild woodland and desert were transformed into an English garden” (358). Deserts should be avoided for their unwieldy nature that is in need of transformation and refinement. As we travel deeper beyond the property’s borders, the traveler notes: “You will then go down along a road and fear will grip your unwilling

heart: the gloomy pines, sad cedar trees, wild cliffs, deep sand, all conjure up a picture of a Siberian landscape [*pustynia*]” (360). But there is a sudden inexplicable shift: “But you will soon be reconciled to it....” He comes across an incarnation of Laugier’s primitive hut on which is inscribed “*A ruler is happy in his palace, a forester in his hut; each his own master*” (360). Karamzin responds with delight—“It follows that even in a wild desert one can be happy!”—and he gives over to Rousseau’s version of wild bliss, reciting a quotation from *Emile*: “He alone is able to be free who can satisfy his own will independent of others” (360).

And yet, while solitude, when temporary, is meaningful for the balance it restores to the active, well-educated mind, Karamzin nonetheless considers isolation a counterproductive condition. His perspective is later theorized in his 1802 essay, “Thoughts on Solitude” (“*Mysli ob uedinenii*”), which, teeming with cultural anxiety, reveals an author who on many levels tries to forge a new Russian sentimental voice, one that parodies and plays with the Sentimentalism of Rousseau, yet also a voice that is trying desperately to write its way out of barbarism into assimilation. As Boym argues about Shklovsky’s poetics of exile, *ostranenie* came out of his own feelings of estrangement, a connection that he does not explicitly state but that lingers in the background as a point of reference for understanding why he might make artistic play out of the dissonance between the normative and the strange. I believe her methodology might also suit Karamzin’s relationship to primitivism and solitude. Not unlike Shklovsky, Karamzin transforms his own cultural anxiety into an aesthetic program in which feelings of isolation, and expansive, unrepressed wilderness are condemned as lifeless and unproductive. “Thoughts on Solitude” takes direct aim at Rousseau’s

philosophy as a means for returning to a primordial essence:

Some words have a particular beauty for the sensitive heart, representing to him ideas that are melancholy and kind. The name of solitude belongs to these magic words. Name it—and the sensitive person imagines an amiable desert, the thick shadows of trees, the languid murmur of the light stream, and the river bank where sits a deeps reverie with its own sorrowful and sweet memories! But the fate of tender hearts deceives! As in love and in friendship they rarely find their hopes fulfilled, so too does their own solitude not correspond to their expectations; its flowers are fragrant in the imagination and wither in the crude element of existence.<sup>124</sup>

Solitude is not ripe for philosophical reverie as it is in Rousseau. Karamzin finds the solitude deafening, inhibiting, and overall counterproductive. It recalls the feeling of barbarism, which for Karamzin is reminiscent of Russia's pre-Enlightenment era when art and philosophy were not practiced with nearly as much fervor as in the West and Russia was isolated from the Western European cultural dialogue. The entirety of the essay shows its author yearning to join the universal community. The close of his essay in response to Rousseau, "Some thoughts on the sciences, arts, and the Enlightenment" speaks most poignantly to this:

When the light of science, the light of truth, will shine upon the earth and penetrate the darkest caves of ignorance: then maybe all the moral harpies will disappear, having hitherto defiled mankind [...] then maybe there will be a Golden Age of poets, an age of virtue [...] In the meantime, you are my consolation, you, tender children of the mind, feelings and imagination! With you I am rich without riches, with you I am not alone in solitude, with you I know neither boredom nor heavy emptiness. Although I live at the edge of the north, in the homeland of the terrible Aquilons, with you, dear muses! with you the Vale of Tempe is everywhere—touch it with your hand and the sad pine laurels of Apollo transforms; you breathe with divine lips, and on the golden, frigid sands, Olympian flowers bloom. (140-41)

The strength of his desperation is palpable in the ellipsis and frequent exclamations; however, it is a desperation that can be easily remedied through the power of the

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<sup>124</sup> N. M. Karamzin, *Izbrannye sochineniia v dvykh tomakh*, ed. G. P. Makogonenko (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1964), 2:180. My translation.

imagination. Creative thought bridges the geographical divide, such that, against all odds, a member of the “Aquilon” tribe (a Latin epithet for those who live in the north) meets the “tender children of the mind, feelings and imagination!” “Aquilon” is a rhetorical reconciliation of the cultural divide; using the epithet designed by the Romans, Karamzin offsets his ‘barbarism’ with the lexicon of his mentors.

Karamzin is an interesting subject for analysis not only for how he contests Rousseau’s primitivism, but also for how his sentimental work circumvents the primitive impulse, and for how his texts resist, both consciously and unconsciously, the narrative techniques that are typically at play in Rousseau’s enactment of primitive nostalgia. If in Rousseau the primordial is an impulse of partial return, in Karamzin it is emblematic of where Russians came from and where they dare not return. Karamzin’s poetics collectively express an urgency to run from the space of Rousseau’s sentimental return. Karamzin finds comfort in the trajectory that Rousseau actively works against—primitive to society—as the lifeline that will rescue Russia and himself from the traps of uncivilized reality. If we were to contextualize this argument, we might note that Karamzin, a member of a culture Rousseau himself named “barbaric” (*Social Contract*), does not have the luxury of pining for an earlier time and must use his creative energy more wisely. Much like the negative poetics at work in the previous chapter, the desert registers as a void or absence from which Karamzin’s authorial persona is born. The looming threat of returning to the void/desert propels him to write his way out of barbarism.<sup>125</sup>

The portrait episode that unites Rousseau’s *Julie*, Karamzin’s *Julia*, and

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<sup>125</sup> According to Fraanje, a particular character of Russian Sentimentalism is that it has to combat a stereotype that Russians are incapable of sentimentality. (Maarten Fraanje, “La sensibilité au pays du froid: Les Lumières et le sentimentalisme russe,” *Revue des études slaves* 74.4 (2002-3), 664.)

Shklovsky's *Zoo* provides us with a viable opportunity and productive framework for assessing how the themes of love and primitivism interact. To set the tone for the analysis to follow, I remind my reader of the words professed by Rousseau's editor figure, "R," in the "Second Preface" of *Julie*, here quoted in full:

Love is but an illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone had given being; and as it renders all its sentiments by images, its language is always figurative. But such figures lack precision and sequence; its eloquence is in its disorder; it convinces more when it reasons less. Enthusiasm is the final degree of passion. When passion is at the full, it perceives its object as perfect; makes it into its idol; places it in Heaven; and just as the enthusiasm of devoutness borrows the language of love, so does the enthusiasm, of love borrow also the language of devoutness. It can see nothing but Paradise, Angels, the virtues of Saints, the delights of the celestial abode. In these transports, in the midst of such lofty images, will love evoke them in pedestrian terms? Will it bring itself to lower, to sully its ideas with vulgar phrases? Will it not elevate its style? Give it nobility, dignity? How can you speak of Letters, of epistolary style? When writing to one's beloved, who cares about that! It is no longer Letters one writes, but Hymns. (10-11)

It is difficult to know exactly how this passage fits into *Julie* as a whole, mostly because it comes in the context of a debate regarding not only whether "R" authored or edited this text, but more significantly, whether figures such as Julie and Saint-Preux could have even existed. Readers begin to question whether this passage is an implicit admission on the part of the Editor ("R") that *Julie* is brought to life through the sheer power of fantasy (which explains why later editions of *Julie* place the preface at the end of the novel). As the Pygmalion of Rousseau's retelling, who brings Galatea to life through wishful thinking, "R" seems to admit to the same act. Or, if he did not create Julie, then he stirs up doubt as to whether Julie is a mere fantasy of Saint-Preux, who is an "enthused" lover

guilty of heightening his beloved to the level of divine incarnation.<sup>126</sup> However, regardless of whether or not Julie and Saint-Preux existed, the relationship between love and destabilization in *Julie* is made explicitly clear at the novel's outset. Love behaves not unlike what Lotman terms a *semiosphere*, a semiotic space that creates a 'world-picture' to which its participants conform. Love, in this case, becomes a tool for generating the specificity of the Saint-Preux's *semiosphere*—it distinguishes between where a particular worldview persists and where it does not.<sup>127</sup> In the "Julies" of Rousseau, Karamzin, and Shklovsky, the distinction between isomorphic realms is amplified by the portrait, which brings into stark relief the semiotic differences between two worlds—the world governed, tainted, and augmented by love, and the world of commonsense.

It is most appropriate to begin with Rousseau's *Julie* since Rousseau sets the stage for the portrait episode that will be repeated by both Karamzin and Shklovsky; moreover, the portrait episode seems an integral part to any exposition, literary or otherwise, of love. After Saint-Preux and Julie are separated, Julie sends Saint-Preux, who is living in France, a secret package. "I warn you not to open it until you are alone and in your room,"<sup>128</sup> Julie cautions Saint-Preux, heightening his anticipation regarding the package's contents. Before discovering that it is a portrait, Saint-Preux is informed that in the package can be found an "amulet," "a small furnishing intended for your use," something

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<sup>126</sup> Later in *Julie*, Saint-Preux returns to this notion of enthusiasm: "Love is deprived of its greatest charm when honesty abandons it. To appreciate its full value, the heart must delight in it and raise us up by raising up the loved one. Take away the idea of perfection and you take away enthusiasm; take away esteem and love is reduced to nothing" (70).

<sup>127</sup> Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman (New York: Tauris, 1990), 129.

<sup>128</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, 13 vols. (Hanover, NH: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1990) 6: 216.

that “must be gazed upon every morning for a quarter-hour until one feels possessed of a certain tenderness,” a “prophylactic,” a “talisman,” and something that “operates only between faithful lovers” (216). From the outset, through cryptic description, Julie implies there is something mystical about her portrait, as if, though inanimate, it somehow possesses some of her same qualities. The portrait is thus autonomous in its ability to take hold of its viewer, to safeguard him from “the unhealthy air of the land of gallantry [Paris]” and to “communicate” the feeling of a kiss (216-17). This moment in *Julie* is capital in terms of assessing Rousseau’s philosophical perspective on artistic representation. Cassirer argues, “Rousseau wants to let the knowledge of the physical emerge from such direct intercourse with objects. In every field, direct acquaintance with things—which can be attained only through activity—should prepare for and lay the basis of the knowledge of them.”<sup>129</sup> As Rousseau writes: “Je me reposais agréablement au retour, en me livrant à l’impression des objets, mais sans penser, sans imaginer, sans rien faire autre chose que sentir le calme et le bonheur de ma situation.”<sup>130</sup> Here we see that Saint-Preux functions similarly. The portrait takes on its own spirit in *Julie*, ultimately taking possession of Saint-Preux so completely that exorcism is impossible. When Julie sends her cousin Claire to retrieve the portrait from Saint-Preux, he refuses to relinquish it. As Claire reports to Julie: “[H]e would sooner consent never to see you again than surrender your portrait” (359). Julie is more desirable to Saint-Preux in the form of an object that he can hold and possess at will.

In the lexicon of Baudrillard, the copy has replaced the original as “the

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<sup>129</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, ed. and trans. Peter Gay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 119.

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Rousseau to M. de Malesherbes, À Montmorency, le 26 janvier 1762.



hyperreal”;<sup>131</sup> and, as an object of hyperreality, the portrait becomes an effective surrogate for Julie with which Saint-Preux can simulate acts and satisfy otherwise forbidden desires, all in (near-)chaste ways. Unwrapping the portrait from its packaging is a figurative disrobing, and beholding the portrait is beholding Julie in all her “naked” simplicity:

Finally, I arrive, I hurry, I shut myself in my room, I sit down out of breath. I place a trembling hand on the seal. O the first effect of the talisman! I felt my heart throb with every paper I removed, and soon found myself so greatly oppressed that I was forced to catch a moment’s breath at the last layer...Julie!...O my Julie!...the veil is rent...I behold you...I behold your divine charms! My lips and my heart pay them their first homage, my knees bend...charms I worship, once more you will have enthralled my eyes. (229)

It takes “a minute, an instant,” for Julie’s “talisman” to take effect, and the swiftness of the act of infection draws our attention to the rift between time frames, which severs the passage nearly in half. Once the process of unwrapping the secret package begins, so too does the temporal frame shift from the past (*imparfait*) to the present: Saint-Preux *arrives, hurries, shuts himself* in his room, and *sits down*. With the rending of the portrait’s “veil,” Saint-Preux is brought even closer to the text’s surface, to the reader’s present, and, in this one compelling narrative moment, Rousseau rends the pages of his work as the narrative begins to disintegrate with ellipses leaving gaping holes in the text (“Julie!...O my Julie!...the veil is rent....”). Rendered with ellipses and in the present tense, Saint-Preux’s declaration brings readers nearer to him than ever before. Although Saint-Preux makes sure to emphasize the moment in which he beholds Julie’s portrait—“at the moment I write this letter, at the moment your portrait is receiving all that your idolatrous Lover addressed to your person” (229)—the overwhelming presence of the

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<sup>131</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

portrait strikes a chord with Saint-Preux's memory and transports him to the past: "How powerfully [*Avec quelle violence*] it recalls times that are no more! When I look at it I think I am beholding you once more; I think I am once more living those delightful moments of which the memory now constitutes the grief of my life, given by Heaven and revoked in its anger!" (229). His time with Julie that takes place in the past and the aesthetic moment that takes place in the present are understood similarly: both are instantaneous and in dialogue with Julie. For Saint-Preux, viewing Julie and viewing a portrait are both narrative events, and, while he revels in revisiting on a figurative level his lost relationship with Julie, the superimposition of one temporal frame onto another, the past onto the present, unnerves Saint-Preux and registers in his mind as an intolerable "violence."<sup>132</sup>

Despite his initial euphoria, in a response letter to Julie Saint-Preux notes his disappointment with the artist's rendering. Saint-Preux is not impressed and makes an attempt at painting his own verbal portrait of Julie replete with convoluted metaphors—"purple branches" that are her veins, or the "nestfuls of cupids" that sit in the corners of her mouth (238)—rendering his literary portrait just as baroque as the one that is painted. He detests the painted portrait first because it is not Julie herself, second because art is insufficient, and third because it is 'momentous' and cannot capture linear time: "in order

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<sup>132</sup> The absurdity of his infatuation with the portrait is rendered even more so when Julie reveals that Saint-Preux might not even behold a portrait of her—that is, a work of art that is separated from its subject by one degree—but rather a replica of Julie's portrait, a portrait of her portrait, a work of art that is separated from its subject by two degrees. "Then without minding which was the original or the copy," Julie notes, "I adroitly chose the best likeness of the three to send to you" (237). The wording here is quite peculiar, and telling for the argument at hand: "Ensuite sans m'embarrasser de copie ni d'original, je choisis subtilement le plus ressemblant des trois pour te l'envoyer." Julie wishes to avoid that which we already know is the result—that Saint-Preux will heighten her portrait to the realm of the hyperreal, that her portrait would surpass her: "I do not want you by whatever means to acquire a taste for charms I do not possess." However, Julie admits that the painter improvised and "enhanced my person with the works of his imagination" (237).

to express all your charms, you would have to be painted at every instant of your life” (238). Saint-Preux amends the portrait using his own imaginative version of Julie. “Love!” he insists, “thou alone knowest these secrets...Indeed, your face is too chaste to tolerate the disorder of your breast; it is obvious that one of these two objects must preclude the appearance of the other; only the delirium of love can reconcile them, and when its eager hand dares to unveil the one that modesty conceals...” (239). Saint Preux, using only his ‘lover’s memory,’ commissions another portrait: “I explained them [Julie’s attributes] to a skilled painter, and judging by what he has already done, I hope soon to see you more like yourself. For fear of spoiling the portrait we try out the alterations on a copy I had him make, and he transfers them to the original only once we are quite sure of their effect” (239). However, even this portrait does not come even close to resemblance. It seems the only cohesive, authentic, true to form portrait exists not even in reality, not even in Julie’s presence, but only in Saint-Preux’s mind: “Ah! How much more touching your portrait would be if I could invent the means of having it show your soul alongside your face, and depict at once your modesty and your charms!” (239-40).

In a letter to Julie’s cousin, Claire, Wolmar priggishly rewraps, so to speak, Julie’s portrait: “A veil of virtue and honesty makes so many folds around her heart, that it is no longer possible for the human eye to enter it, not even her own” (417). Wolmar, the one voice of pragmatism and cold rationality (“the living eye,” according to Starobinski [*The Living Eye*, 9]), decides that Saint-Preux is in love with a projection: “[H]e does not hate me as the possessor of the person he loves (*qu’il aime*), but as the ravisher of the one he has loved (*qu’il a aimée*)” (417). Wolmar’s testimony brings remarkable closure to the portrait’s appearance in the novel, not only because he rewraps

and thereby embargos all future engagements with Julie d'Etange, but also because he dispels the portrait's allure and in so doing swiftly deconstructs the image of Saint-Preux's love. What Saint-Preux believes is his present reality—"la personne qu'il aime"—is actually the past—"celle qu'il a aimée." As Wolmar harshly concludes, "[Saint-Preux] loves in the past tense" ("Il l'aime dans le temps passé"); "the past," he emphasizes, is "the key to the enigma" ("le vrai mot de l'enigme"). "Take away his memory," Wolmar gathers, "and he will have no love left" (417).

Love as a condition of the temporal and grammatical past reflects Rousseau's relationship to memory, which, as Judith Shklar argues in her article "Rousseau's Images of Authority," is indebted to Locke, who inspired Rousseau and his contemporaries to recognize the immense psychological importance of memory. However, for Rousseau, Shklar remarks, memory like love is unnatural—neither love nor memory is built to last; in their inherent temporality, both are designed to decline and fade.<sup>133</sup> In *Second Discourse*, Rousseau explicitly argues that love comes from memory, a cognitive faculty that is only awakened when man leaves the "State of Nature," an exit journey in which every step is challenged by nostalgia's resistance. Memory is necessitated only by civil society; it becomes the one secure locus for the "state of Nature" once man leaves the primitive nest. Thus, for Rousseau, Wolmar's statement is painfully true: Saint-Preux's relationship to the portrait is like that between memory and a mnemonic; without it, his love for Julie would fade. Once again I turn to de Man's essay, "Rhetoric of Blindness":

Representation is an ambivalent process that implies the absence of what is being made present again, and this absence cannot be assumed to be merely contingent. However, when representation is conceived as imitation, in the classical sense of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, it

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<sup>133</sup> Judith N. Shklar, "Rousseau's Images of Authority," *The American Political Science Review* 58.4 (Dec., 1964), 919-932.

confirms rather than undermines the plenitude of the represented entity. It functions as a mnemotechnic sign that brings back something that happened . . . the model for this idea of representation is the painted image, restoring the object to view as if it were present and thus assuring the continuation of its presence. (123)

If representation is where memory finds expression beyond the confines of the imagination, then for Rousseau mimesis is not a testament to artistic ability, but rather to sentimentality. Saint-Preux's critique and then remake of Julie's portrait reveal love as the ultimate artistic device. For Rousseau, love is not only a sentiment through which the self can develop and become self-aware, but also a primary agent of phenomenology. To restate the Editor's opinion, through love Saint-Preux assembles an alternative version of the world. Love provides, on the one hand, a Vicovian 'pre-gentile' worldview: a perfect system, completely self-referential, with Saint-Preux as the author-God of his immediate reality. However, on the other hand, the system's seemingly perfect unity is accompanied by an "ambivalence," as de Man rightly points out, since the world of representation is never literal but always figurative: portraits stand in for loved ones, and the utopia from which we all supposedly emerged lingers only in the memory. While Emile and Sophie are allowed to progress in tandem from "love" to "conjugal love," Saint-Preux and Julie are not nearly as fortunate. There is no real world program through which they can recoup a love lost (unlike Emile and Sophie, they cannot just set up a home in the woods). Along with Wolmar, Julie advances to "conjugal love," while Saint-Preux remains a victim of nostalgia. Both 'new world' couples—Emile and Sophie, Wolmar and Julie—are able to return to the (modified) "state of Nature," since their lives reconcile the dissonance between time periods, between a past "love" and a present and soon to be future "conjugal love," thereby offsetting their (temporal) civility with an

element of the (timeless) primitive. Lovesick Saint-Preux, to the contrary, is mired “dans le temps passé”: so long as he belabors the hyperreal (his love for Julie), he will be condemned to the hypercivilized world.

The relationship of the primitive world to society as distinct realms according to Rousseau’s axiomatic worldview is informative for pursuing a critical reading of Karamzin’s primitive outlook in “Julia.” After reading *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Julia turns to Aris and questions the strength of a love born and bred in solitude:

The pleasure of a happy love is the prime pleasure in life; but can it always be uniformly vivacious, always satisfy the soul? Can it replace all other pleasures? Can it people the wilderness for us? Ah, the human heart is insatiable; it constantly desires something new, new impressions, which like the morning dew refresh its inner feelings and give them new strength. For example, I think that the warmest love can grow cold in complete solitude; it needs to compare in order to recognize the value of its object all the more. (143)

Julia wants to situate her love within a rotating tableau of objects so that it may be revived in its constant comparison to new things. Her inquiry, “Can it people the wilderness for us” (*mozhet li naselit’ dlia nas pustyniu*), is striking on multiple levels. For one, Julia’s desire to populate the wilderness reflects Karamzin’s own counter-sentimental contentions against solitude, seen most explicitly in “Thoughts on Solitude.” Karamzin argues against the fecundity of solitude by in essence paraphrasing the words spoken by his Julia eight years earlier: “[The] heart,” he writes, “is made to feel along with others and to delight in their pleasures. Separated from society, the heart dries up, like a plant deprived of the invigorating influence of the sun....” (181). Love cannot thrive in the desert, not because, as Rousseau would argue, conjugal love is a civilized notion, unsupported by the wilderness’s unrestrained space, but because the desert is lifeless, literally a void where nothing can persist. Love needs to appear in society to live:

“Isn’t it true,” Julia asks, “that the amusements of town and the variety of objects revitalize our love even more? My heart exhausted by the social tumult, enjoys repose in this embrace” (143).

And yet, though Julia shares Karamzin’s harsh perspective on solitude, it is precisely her inability to love in the desert that drives Aris away. When Aris leaves Julia, he takes with him her portrait—“a portrait—of my former spouse...I shall speak with it as with the shade of a dying friend; as with the sole and last sweet object of a dying heart!” (145). Julia is despondent and regrets her inability to live in solitude: “My rural cottage! I could have been happy within your quiet walls but knew not how to be; I left you with a most worthy, a tender, husband. I return alone, a poor widow, but with a heart that loves virtue” (146-47). Both Aris and Julia conceive of their separation as a death (Aris thinks of her as a dying shade; she thinks of herself as a widow) and an explicit rupture between a past and present, wherein the portrait serves as the only bridge between what existed prior to Aris’ departure. However, for both Aris and Julia, the portraits they hold are neither of the present nor past, but portray future possibilities. For Aris, the portrait of Julia, which he takes with him when he leaves Julia after finding her with Prince N\*, is a projection of what he thought she could become (a quiet, homebound wife despite her restlessness, outstanding beauty and countless suitors); and, for Julia, the portrait of Aris portrays the moment when he loved her for this very future potential. When Julia beholds his portrait from the past, there is no desire to return as there is for Saint-Preux (“I do not dare to wish your return—I wish only the serenity of your dear soul; I wish you to forget your wife if her image torments your heart” [147]). Now that Julia has reconciled herself to living in solitude (“Here my days will pass in quiet solitude

[*v bezmolvnom uedinenii*]” [146]), the break with the past comes as a welcome relief.

As Julia continues to live alone in their country home, the narrator informs us that her “vain desires” begin to wither away. Aided by the portrait and her memory (“she devoted her life to the memory of her dear spouse” [147]), Julia starts a slow transformation towards realizing the potential Aris saw in her, towards actualizing the portrait. This reverse mimesis—wherein Julia aspires to become the portrait, as opposed to what occurs in Rousseau’s *Julie*, wherein the portrait aspires to capture Julie—suits not only Julia’s literary trajectory (as an enactor of love’s literary history), but also Karamzin’s literary outlook on a whole. In Chapter Two, I discuss Karamzin’s impulse to turn life into literature (in proto-formalist fashion, to revivify *byt* through its representation and reorganization in art), rather than to turn literature into life as we see in Rousseau. Moreover, Karamzin’s method of reverse mimesis echoes his perspective on history and primitivism. When Aris returns to the country to find Julia a perfectly changed woman, he remarks, “You were born to be virtuous...the immodest desire to please, the fruit of an injudicious upbringing [*vospitaniia*] and bad examples, produced your momentary aberrations...” (151). Julia, Aris argues, was not born virtuous, but born *to be* virtuous, to follow a trajectory ending in virtue; however, a bad education delayed her potential and held her back in her development. Not unlike Russia’s savage start, the beginning, for Karamzin, is not a sacred space to which one should ever hope to return, but rather, like the *pustynia*, a warning of one’s crude beginnings before ‘proper’ *vospitanie* (“acculturation”) or, more appropriately, *obrazovanie* (“education”), before one is able to actualize the portrait (notably *obraz* in “Julia”) of the ideal, enlightened self.



In the previous chapter, I noted the distinctness of time in Karamzin's sentimental prose. "Natalie" in particular presents a cogent picture of the artistic value of marrying a pastoral past with a sentimental present. As his essay "Some thoughts on the sciences" demonstrates, Karamzin conceives of art and life as contiguous, a forward movement away from a pastoral past. Sentimentalism is valuable for Karamzin insofar as it functions within his prose as a method for bringing the pastoral past to meet the present. For instance, when Julia says to Aris, "the distance which separates us, will be warmed, will be vivified by my love," Karamzin demonstrates on a metaphoric level that love when mechanized can bridge two worlds that are otherwise irreparably disparate. Paradoxically, however, through estranging Rousseau's sentimentalism, in the act of what Tynianov might term "parody," Karamzin mocks Rousseau, disfigures him in such a way that reproduces and erases literary history at the same time. As per Tynianov's definition, Karamzin's "Julia" forms a "dual structure"<sup>134</sup>—it both engages Rousseau's *Julie* while simultaneously repurposing it to a different end, effectively "parodying" Rousseau by replacing the anticipated literary outcome (Julie's death and unhappy marriage) with another (Julia ends happily married to Aris). In other words, through reinterpreting Rousseau, through the juncture of two literary models (the model of the past and the 'new' model of the present), Karamzin joins two temporal worlds, and, in so doing, unwittingly commits an act of noble savagery (cf. the temporal fusion that comprises the domestic bliss of Emile and Sophie, Wolmar and Julie).

Typically in an epistolary novel, existence is confined to correspondence—aside from the Editor, who in Rousseau especially finds his most self-expressive moments in

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<sup>134</sup>Yuri Tynianov, "Dostoevsky and Gogol': Toward a Theory of Parody" ("Dostoevskii i Gogol' (k teorii parodii)" 1921), translated in *Twentieth-Century Russian Criticism*, ed. Victor Erlich (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975) 104.

his critical asides that appear in the text's margins, no character is allowed to breathe, think, or in any way persist outside of correspondence with another. Karamzin, however, circumvents Rousseau's tradition by unfurling the epistolary structure to form a narrative in which all voices, layers, and threads are compressed into a narrative fabric. To the same end, yet via a different modality, Shklovsky's para-epistolary novel breaks free from Rousseau's tradition by inverting it and structuring an anti-love story in which correspondence takes place outside of the confines of time linear: the traditional cause and effect, question and response patterning of Rousseau's model is annulled and the problem of time resolved precisely by dramatizing a love that is unrequited. To this end, the portrait moment is executed counter-traditionally. In the seventh letter of *Zoo*, Shklovsky, in the voice of the Editor, informs his reading public that the following letter will be "about Grzhebin on canvas, Grzhebin in the flesh" (27) ("O portrete Grzhebina, o samom Zinovii Isaeviche Grzhebine"). Like Shklovsky, Zinovii Grzhebin, an artist, poet and publisher, is also living abroad in Berlin and his works are also denied publication in Russia. The traditional mixing of unattainable love and portraiture remain. Shklovsky, however, manages to rearrange the parts and to estrange the literary system: the unrequited relationship is between Grzhebin and Russia, and the passion is for property. Writing about love, Shklovsky reminds us, as per Triolet's instructions, is "forbidden, so I'll write about Zinoviy Grzhebin, the publisher" (27). Within this letter, where passion for an individual is replaced by a "passion for property," in response to a Russia that denies his books entry, Grzhebin behaves "like a rejected suitor who ruins himself buying flowers to turn the room of his unresponsive beloved into a flower shop and who admires this absurdity" (29-30).<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Letter Seven, "O Grzhebine..." appears in the first and second publications, but was removed from the

Like Saint-Preux before him, Shklovsky begins to describe the portrait by casting a critical eye on its execution:

In Yury Annenkov's portrait of Zinovy Isaevich Grzhebin, the face is a soft pink color and looks downright delectable. In real life, Grzhebin is pastier. In the portrait, the face is very fleshy; to be more precise, it resembles intestines bulging with food. In real life, Grzhebin is more tight and firm; he might well be compared to a blimp of the semirigid type. (27)

Like Saint-Preux, Shklovsky regrets the portrait's inability to capture its subject; remarkably, however, Shklovsky is not concerned with the psychology of the portrait's subject, as Saint-Preux is, but rather only with the accuracy of the physical features. He stresses on two accounts the distinction between the portrait's features and Grzhebin's features "in real life" ("samom") and ironically, the portrait is more life-like, more Grzhebin in the flesh ("In the portrait, the face is very fleshy") than Grzhebin in real life, leading one to wonder which portrait falls under which category—is Annenkov's portrait "Grzhebin on canvas" or "Grzhebin in the flesh." And the ambiguity of this situation brings into focus once again Shklovsky's penchant for art that estranges, art that does not wish to seem life-like or mimetic, but rather art that defies *byt*, exceeds it.

While set apart from the main narrative thread, that is, from his love for Elsa Triolet, this portrait moment nonetheless parallels those in Rousseau and in Karamzin. As Karamzin's Julia gazes on the portrait and reminisces about her prior intolerance for sitting still within the walls of her country abode,<sup>136</sup> Shklovsky considers the portrait and

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third edition and thus is neither in the fourth nor the fifth edition. Here, I cite from the novel's first edition ([Berlin: Gelikon, 1923], 33-36).

<sup>136</sup> The relationship between the walls of the country home as instigating Julia's near-primitive transformation remind me of Gaston Bachelard's comments on the home in *The Poetics of Space*: "Now my aim is clear: I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another." Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6.

regrets that he once disliked Grzhebin “for having gulped down so much Russian literature” (28). The portrait provokes Shklovsky to consider a previous time and condition, accentuating the divide between past and present selves. By insisting on the divide between Grzhebin in the flesh and Grzhebin on canvas, Shklovsky’s prose ameliorates and overcomes the rupture between original and copy and also between time frames—when the portrait was painted and the present “portrait,” so to speak, of Grzhebin in the mind of the Shklovsky. That which is so troubling for Saint-Preux—that Julie exists more clearly in the portrait than in reality (that the past and present are unable to meet, forever irreconcilable)—is ameliorated in Shklovsky’s moment of estrangement where two time periods meet in the work of art, where Grzhebin in the flesh is the backdrop against which Grzhebin in the portrait is better assessed; and where artifice, described as “fleshy” and “bulging,” is indistinguishable from real life.

Thus in Shklovsky’s novel a discussion of the portrait gives way to a discussion of temporality, and to the themes of regret and progress as they relate to the past and present. On the subject of portraiture as an instantiation of clarity, Shklovsky, with regard to Pushkin’s 1835 poem “The Commander” (“Polkovodets”) writes, “The portrait does not matter for the poetry, it is not a pretext for talking about the commander—it serves to clarify the plot.”<sup>137</sup> In a large way, Shklovsky’s remarks on Pushkin’s poem can be applied to the portrait moment in *Zoo*, not only because in “The Commander” Pushkin explores the triangulated relationship between man, his image, and the viewer, but also because, as in Pushkin’s poem, in Shklovsky’s para-epistolary novel, the portrait serves to “clarify the plot,” providing the narrator with an opportunity to insist once again that,

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<sup>137</sup>Viktor Shklovsky, *Povesti o proze; razmyshleniia i razbory* (Moscow: Khudozh. literatura, 1966), 60.

contrary to appearances, *Zoo* is not a novel about love. With this in mind, one might reason that Shklovsky keeps love out of the picture in order to keep unwelcomed temporality out of his epistolary novel, an artistic decision he ascribes to a bitter Alya who demands that he cease writing about love. Shklovsky reveals to Alya, “Even so, I’m not going to write about love. You see, Alya? I never write about anything but literature” (123). Without love as a guiding principle, Shklovsky’s *Zoo* is displaced from its customary context and can thereby fulfill its potential as a work of art. As I have noted in previous chapters, Shklovsky believes that art should require maximal effort on the part of the audience. The work of art is a functional object whose purpose is to change the mode of our perception from everyday to artistic. This change can be enacted in several ways, most simply by extracting an object from among the facts of life; from *Theory of Prose*: “In order to transform an object into a fact of art, it is necessary first to withdraw it from the domain of life” (61).

Shklovsky’s estrangement demonstrates that primitivism can be taken as a principle that guides the aesthetic process, and that regulates the way in which we appreciate, value, and come to terms with art, all of which should ‘primitivize’ us, rendering us de-historicized. For Shklovsky, the primitive consciousness provides the model for proper hermeneutics, by means of which the reader engages with an autonomous text that, in its superimposition of temporal periods, past and present, renders its viewer timeless and, in this way, primitive. Rousseau expresses a similar desire to join past and present as a central part of any savage world, where primitive man lives in an a-temporal idyll set apart from impending civilization (cf. Shklovsky’s void discussed in Chapter Two). For Karamzin, the primitive is empty and uninhabited, the

antithesis of life—an interesting counterpoint to Rousseau’s natural world.

To sum up, love for Rousseau is dependent on memory in order to persist, and the minute memory is engaged, man steps out of the “state of Nature.” In Rousseauian terms, primitive man cannot be in love; love (whether *amour-propre* or desire) inspires a series of modernizing, civilizing tasks, such as setting up house. Moreover, love, always dictated by time, is a sentiment that inhibits autonomy since it runs counter to the supposed a-temporality of the primitive world. For Karamzin, love is liberation from the primitive past precisely because it makes us un-autonomous, dependent, and rescues us from the desert/void of solitude. Finally, for Shklovsky, love is taken to be a backdrop for the execution of literary devices, but, ironically, has no place in literature; and yet, love’s residual effects—temporality and civilization—are still guiding principles in Shklovsky’s *Zoo*. Extracting love from the narrative quite literally, Shklovsky rescues the text from the fate of civilization and deems it autonomous. Like Karamzin’s *Julia*, *Zoo* parodies the literary models from the past (Rousseau) and generates new forms while defying expectations, effectively marrying disparate temporal frames through the act of reading. And we as readers also reap the benefits: reading an epistolary novel that is not about love estranges us to a perfectly savage end.

## Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I argued that Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau confront and conceptualize time in three different ways. For Rousseau, man, in accordance with linear time, moves along the x-axis retrospectively, that is, with his back to the finish line in constant yearning for his humble beginnings. Karamzin conceives of man's historic start similarly, as from a primitive space, but while the Rousseauian man moves with caution away from savagery, the Karamzinian man moves forward with haste. Shklovsky's relationship to how time moves is difficult to diagram similarly. In proper modernist fashion, Shklovsky takes the eighteenth-century linear mentality and contorts and bends it, twists and turns it, compressing it into one moment in the work of art.

One way in which we might imagine Shklovsky's perspective on time comes from *Knight's Move*. In the first preface, Shklovsky considers the "strangeness" of the knight's fixed path in a game of chess: "forbidden to take the straight road," Shklovsky's knight must move in an "L-shaped manner" (3). He writes, "[t]here are many reasons for the strangeness of the knight's move, the main one being the conventionality of art, about which I am writing. The second reason lies in the fact that the knight is not free" (3). Although he slavishly follows a path that he did not forge, the knight, Shklovsky wishes to make clear, is neither a slave, nor a "coward": "Our torturous road is the road of the brave" (4). In her work *Another Freedom*, Svetlana Boym argues that "Shklovsky proposes the figure of the knight's move...preferring it to the official teleology of the revolution or the master-slave dialectics of dutiful pawns and kings."<sup>138</sup> Her reading

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<sup>138</sup> Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 8.

offers another suitable way for conceiving of Shklovsky's temporality, imagined as "off-linear," as Boym might argue, or, to return to my original thesis, as the eighteenth century's linearity set askew, or made strange.

Regardless of their differing views on time, each author takes literature as a means for exacting justice or revenge against a world that ceases to hold him; against a seemingly unstoppable historical progression that runs counter to his very hopes and desires. Through literary expression, Rousseau, Karamzin, and Shklovsky seek to realize, even on a minute level, the utopian fantasies that may or may not be realizable in their own lifetimes, either because current cultural trends make living in accordance with nature impossible (Rousseau); or because geographical, linguistic, and cultural divides are often too stark to be defeated (Karamzin); or because modernization has already wiped the world clean of all sensations (Shklovsky). Delusional though they may be, each author cherishes literature as a method for exploring possible worlds and for coping with his place in history.

Among Formalism's most noted accomplishments—Eikhenbaum's *literaturnaia domashnost'* (literary domesticity) and *literaturnyi byt* (literary everydayness); Jakobson's *literaturnost'* (literariness); and Tomashevsky's *siuzhet/fabula* dichotomy—Shklovsky's estrangement stands out for its poetic and philosophical potential, and for its ability to function as a life program rather than simply operating as a literary device or construct. The way estrangement demands that we view art might also provide answers to many of the problems that persist outside of art's frame. Art, according to Shklovsky, fulfills its potential by rendering life strange, forcing its viewer/reader to experience it with more diligence, more consideration, and much more cognitive labor. Might living



life to the fullest demand the same amount of effort? In 1929, Eikhenbaum effuses that Shklovsky “had literature in his blood”; he was “soaked through with literature, and vice versa”; “literature is as inherent to him as breathing or walking. Literature is part of his appetite. He tastes it and he knows what it should do, and he loves to prepare it himself and to variegate it [и любит сам ее готовить и разнообразить].”<sup>139</sup>

In a similar way, the creative method provides Karamzin with the tools to cope with his way of living outside of literature. In his essay “Some thoughts on the sciences, arts, and the Enlightenment,” in which he takes up the philosophy of Rousseau, Karamzin asks the question: “What lies at the heart of art [Что суть искусства]?” And his answer is: “A reflection of nature” (126). Karamzin takes creation as an indigenous bricolage: much like nature’s creatures, who make due with their immediate environment, seeking only that which their present reality provides, Karamzin reads creativity as derived exclusively from necessity; the poet learns from nature all the poetic techniques he could possibly need. Karamzin uses the “primitive hut” (первая хижина) as a perfect example: “Thick, fused branches made the image of the primitive hut and were the foundation of architecture” (126). The primitive hut, according to Vitruvius, developed purely from need: branches, caught in a storm’s breeze, rubbed against each other, igniting a fire. Primitive man found the fire comfortable and, wanting to live comfortably from that moment forward, decided to build a structure.<sup>140</sup> For Karamzin, just as need gave primitive man the outline for his first abode, the natural environment gives the poet all

<sup>139</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, *Moi vremmenik: marshrut v bessmertie* (Moscow: Agraf, 2001), 130.

<sup>140</sup> Here, Karamzin seems to pay tribute also to Marc-Antoine Laugier, who valorized the primitive hut as an example of the development of sciences in response to utility (*An Essay on Architecture* [*Essai sur l’architecture*, 1754]); however, more so to Vitruvius’ *Ten Books of Architecture*, wherein the art of building structures is traced back to a savage origin (at which point “men of old were born like the wild beasts, in woods, caves, and groves, and lived on savage fare”). Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 38.

the tools he needs to survive, that is, to write poetry, and more importantly, to feel poetically. Man, Karamzin argues, learned even elegy from his environment, specifically, from “the turtledove mourning the death of its friend” (126).

Art, in this respect, accomplishes much more than pure “imitation.” Like Rousseau’s *Emile*, art is born of the natural world, which educates it, raises it. In turn, art builds upon nature and makes considerable improvements. In this way, art, for Karamzin, is a communal experience in correspondence with nature and with others. This policy leaves a doleful mark on Karamzin’s oeuvre, registering as an acute yearning for incorporation. For this reason, as Chapter Two demonstrates, any attempt at monologic thought or self-expression is thwarted, mismanaged, and treated as device. And yet, what seems to be literary play is revealed as a psychological apprehension about solitude or solitary activity. To write his way out of barbarism, to make sure his ‘vernacular’ world is properly ripe for poetic expression, Karamzin must rearrange Rousseau’s parts—his tropes, emblems, and lexical markers—to estrange himself out of alienation into the Western European creative community.

To a certain extent, Rousseau’s oeuvre plays out its own literary assimilation: a Swiss-French writer who writes in French is bound to maintain his own feelings of alienation. Starobinski informs us that there is little linguistic difference that would set Rousseau’s ‘mother tongue’ apart from that of his French contemporaries, and that, for all intents and purposes, Rousseau was considered a French writer—that is, a writer who writes in grammatical French. Rousseau, although Swiss-French, also does not seem to consider his work to be “foreign” in terms of political borders; and yet, to a large extent his work takes up the theme of crossing borders—borders dividing normative and

strange, moral and immoral, natural and unnatural. Despite the cultural affinities between France and Rousseau's native Republic of Geneva, as Starobinski argues, "a gap remains, and, like all gaps, I believe this one to be fertile. For difference invariably provokes reaction: it must be either abolished or magnified..." (*Transparency*, 335). The gap, for Starobinski, manifests in Rousseau's prose foremost as a moral divide (compounded by Rousseau's philosophical and particularly religious inclinations that set him apart from the French philosophes), and he argues that writing novels was the primary way in which Rousseau hoped to bridge that gap. For instance, Starobinski reads Rousseau's *Confessions* as an escape from the rural 'simplicity' into which he was born: "The romantic dreams of Jean-Jacques' youth were incompatible with the narrow limits of the small city..." (341). Not unlike how I read Karamzin's sentimental and critical prose as a collective effort to escape the void of barbarism, Starobinski reads *Confessions* as a testimony of, among many things, Rousseau's regretful start in Geneva. *Confessions* becomes a safe place for considering (while, never having to actualize) the 'simple' life that could have been "had [Rousseau] remained in Geneva, had his dreams not taken him beyond the walls, had he grown up to be a humble artisan" (340). Much like the anxiety-ridden Karamzin we find at the end of "Some thoughts on the sciences," who, through the power of the imagination, leaves his "Aquilon tribe" and rejoins the literary universe, Rousseau, argues Starobinski, harnesses his imagination's power to extricate himself from the simple rural life into Paris' cosmopolitan circle. "His imagination," writes Starobinski, "was responsible for his rejection of the simple life, his flight, his adventure, his exorbitant hopes" (341). Both Karamzin and Rousseau embrace literature as a method of overcoming the shame and disgust with one's beginnings; with, however, one

notable difference: imagination's ability to perform assimilation remains figurative in Karamzin, and literal in Rousseau.

If Shklovsky, Karamzin, and Rousseau are joined not by Sentimentalism, then certainly a sentimental attitude towards literature, one that credits writing with the promise of life alteration, unites these three authors. At the opening of this dissertation, I posed the following question: what did Sentimentalism offer Shklovsky in terms of solace? Through the course of this analysis I have provided my reader with some examples of the forms (epistolary), themes (love), and motifs (portraiture) that constitute Shklovsky's idiosyncratic sentimentalism. However, in terms of solace, it seems Sentimentalism—not just a literary philosophy, but a program for survival—was a culture club to which the literary hungry belonged, providing Shklovsky with compatriots across generational and national borders to join him in what Eikhenbaum reads as his literary feeding frenzy.

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