
 NIETZSCHE

 A KNIGHT'S MOVE: NIETZSCHE AND THE
 GENEALOGY OF RUSSIAN FORMALISM

Когда Иосиф Сталин с Жуковым
 Поля Германьи обходил
 Один другому говорил:
 Вот сколько их детей и внуков их
 Сломил советский наш металл
 А Сталин тихо добавлял:
 И история!

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One of the most cited Russian Formalist statements about literary history has it that literary genealogy is not a linear succession from one literary generation to another, but one in which “the legacy is transmitted not from father to son, but from uncle to nephew” (Shklovsky 1923, 27). One critic notes that a title of another of Shklovsky’s books, which is borrowed from chess, *The Knight’s Move* (*Khod konia*; Shklovsky 1923), “is perhaps the best metaphor for the Formalist perception of literary genealogy” (Holquist 1985, 88). Few critics writing about Russian Formalism have failed to comment upon this statement, and have related the Formalist theory of literary evolution to their relentless criticism of organicism (Wellek 1949; Ribnikar 1976). The critic most mentioned as a predecessor of the Russian Formalists, and at whom the critical thrust of the Formalist polemics was directed, is A. N. Veselovsky. Since his *Historical Poetics* was “the most serious attempt at solving theoretically the problem of literary history ever formulated in Russian literary theory” (Ribnikar 1976, 17), Veselovsky represented both an inspiration and the theoretical figure with whom Russian Formalists most vigorously polemicized. And,

indeed, "the Formalist theory of literary evolution evolved through the direct polemics with the historical poetics of Alexander Veselovsky" (Ribnikar 1976, 17). Veselovsky is seen by René Wellek as "one of the originators of Russian Formalism" (Wellek 1966, 280). In establishing the predecessors of Russian Formalist theory of literary evolution, most critics have tried to establish a linear, genealogical history of the movement, which would resemble the way the rook or the bishop moves in chess, and not, as the Formalists themselves would do writing about history, that of a knight.² Indeed, both Wellek and Ribnikar speak about the "direct evolution" and origin of Russian formalism, establishing Veselovsky as that point of origin from which Formalism evolved in a linear, if polemical, way.

Veselovsky's influence on Russian Formalism has been sufficiently documented.³ I would therefore like to pursue another, more skewed intertextual path, that is, more like a knight than a bishop. Such a two-directional critical move would attempt to inscribe Russian Formalism in the general frame of Russian Nietzscheanism, and relate Formalist interpretations of history to those formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche. This move seems promising for several reasons. To relate the writings of Russian Formalists to Nietzsche especially in those aspects concerning history, is to open up a possibility of discussing Russian Formalism in the context of Russian and European Modernism in a way that seems to offer more theoretical complexity than relating Formalism solely to Veselovsky. This relation would posit in a radical way a question about the role of memory and forgetting in structuring (literary) history, an all-pervasive Formalist problem, barely (to my knowledge probably, never), discussed in relation to Russian Formalism. One can even say that the question of historical memory/forgetting is the central problem for Russian Formalists, the one that cannot be properly interpreted without recourse to Friedrich Nietzsche. This recontextualization of Russian Formalism would allow for some of its most interesting theoretical messages to surface, and appear as far-reaching statements on modernism, modernity, and (literary) history. It would also situate our reading beside other recent discussions (Lachman 1989) dealing with the problem of Russian modernism and memory, as well as those writings about history which themselves, in many ways, find their inspiration in Friedrich Nietzsche.⁴ To relate Russian Formalism to current criticism is not without its ground and benefit. If what is generally referred to as "post-structuralism" may be seen in some of its important aspects as a combination of Nietzscheanism and Saussurean linguistics, it is precisely Saussure and Nietzsche that serve as the most powerful "hypograms" (Riffaterre) for Russian Formalist writing on literary history. By making this connection more visible, one is able to explain where, for example, Roman Jakobson's interest in monuments in Pushkin's works, and his

recurrent interest in memory (aphasia) come from. It is in this context that some of the very prominent aspects of Yury Tynianov's work may be better perceived as well. Tynianov is often considered the most important among the Formalist theorists of literary evolution (Ambrogio 1974; Ribnikar 1976). Therefore, if we were to graft his theories of literary history onto the Nietzschean historical paradigm, one could see the modernist consequences of Tynianov's interest: what is archaic and what constitutes an innovation, what is parody and why it is related to history and the historical, what constitutes a change in history, and, in the final instance, what constitutes history and the historical itself.

The historians of the Russian Formalist movement have been reluctant to recognize the relationship between Nietzsche and the Formalists, and references to Nietzsche very often invoke him only as a negative theoretical point of departure for Russian Formalism.⁵ A typical argument mentions the connection between Nietzsche and the Symbolists, and then posits Formalism as the movement that radically breaks with this tradition of "French 'esprit,' German 'inwardness,' Oscar Wilde, Nietzsche . . . Eleusinian mysteries and Neo-Kantian philosophy" (Erlich 1981, 34). Even when such a subtle and thorough historian of the movement as Hansen-Loeve⁶ discusses the role music plays in the Formalist poetics, he fails to elaborate on a connection between Nietzschean ideas about the birth of tragedy from the spirit of music, and the role that sound (*zvuk*) played in the Formalist theory of both poetry and prose. Shklovsky says in his *Resurrection of the Word* that Tolstoy writes "musically formal things" and that "the complicated constructions of the modern novel are achieved by the repetition of certain words, not unlike some types of *Wagnerian leitmotif*" (Shklovsky 1914, 71, the italics are mine). The Nietzschean motifs are obvious here. Hansen-Loeve writes that, "In 1910 Kandinsky in his essay 'On the Spiritual in Art' included music in his hierarchy of abstract art, which shows that he thought in similar categories as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche" (Hansen-Loeve 1978, 59). Unfortunately, this reference is not further elaborated as Hansen-Loeve discusses music in Formalist poetic and prose theories.

RUSSIAN MODERNISM: A MERRY SCIENCE

Yury Tynianov himself has explicitly, in various articles, referred to Nietzsche. In his essay "Journal, Critic, Reader, Writer" ("Zhurnal, kritik, chitatel', pisatel'") published in 1924, he calls for "new genres" in literary criticism—those that would be more "merry and new" ("bolee veselykh i novykh," Tynianov 1977, 149). The commentators of the critical edition of his criticism relate this reference to Nietzsche (*Merry Science*), and point

out similar references in Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky.⁷ Another mention of the merry science of criticism by Tynianov is made in explicit modernist, Dionysian, anti-traditional terms. "Literary culture," says Tynianov, "is light and merry, it is not—'tradition,' not a decorum, but understanding and ability to make things necessary and merry" (Tynianov 1977, 462). Eikhenbaum wrote in 1922 that "they venomously call us 'merry literary historians.' So what? It is not that bad. To be 'merry' can only be a merit. And to work merrily, this is an achievement in itself" (Tynianov 1977, 462). "At the bottom of art, like a nest of fermentation, lies gaiety," writes Shklovsky (Tynianov 1977, 462). One of Tynianov's essays, "The Other Pushkin" is referred to by some Tynianov's contemporaries as "merry" (Tynianov 1977, 462). Despite the obvious and programmatic references to Nietzsche, and the calls for a new, merry science of criticism and literary history, these references have not been discussed at all in the literature about Russian Formalism.

The few references to this relationship are all the more valuable as they are made by some of the most important recent critics of Russian history of ideas. One good example of this is the attention given to the subject in the seminal collection *Nietzsche in Russia*: "The adherents of . . . Formalism," writes Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "a school of literary criticism and theory that had emerged during the Great War, which rejected metaphysical and sociological approaches to literature and stressed techniques and devices . . . were . . . indebted to Nietzsche" (Rosenthal 1986, 34). Katerina Clark in her *The Soviet Novel* writes that "Nietzsche's ideas colored the writings of many Russian thinkers of this century, including, in the twenties, Zamiatin, Tynianov, and Kaverin" (Clark 1985, 152). James M. Curtis provides a quotation from Vinogradov in order to show the context in which the Formalists, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin grew up: "Something that Vinogradov said about the formalist critics Viktor Shklovsky (b.1893), Boris Eikhenbaum (1866–1959), and Yury Tynianov (1894–1943) applies to Bakhtin as well: 'The Formalists grew up on the soil of subjective-idealistic philosophy'" (Curtis 1986, 332). Later in the same article Curtis equates the "subjective-idealistic" philosophy with Nietzscheanism. Yet these remarks represent only sketchy allusions to the relationship between Formalism and Nietzsche. The only essay that discusses this relationship at length is Boris Groys' "Nietzschean Themes and Motifs in the Soviet Culture of the Thirties" (Groys 1991), which describes the wide scope of Nietzschean influence on Russian avant-garde authors, Formalists, Bakhtin, and Socialist Realists.⁸ Before I turn to Nietzsche's writing on history with a view to establishing a theoretical paradigm within which my interpretation of Formalism and Tynianov will take place, a

reading of Groys' essay will provide a historical framework which may justify my theoretical enterprise.

The culture of the Russian avant-garde, up to and including the Stalinist culture of the 1930s, was heavily indebted to the German philosopher. There are two major reasons why his name is virtually absent from the cultural scene, and is never mentioned in the works of the Russian Formalists. One is that Russian Formalism has developed in many ways as a response (or, as several historians of the movement have it, polemic) to the explicitly Nietzschean culture and artistic and critical practices of Russian symbolism. This explains both the reluctance to openly mention Friedrich Nietzsche, and the fact that Nietzsche's name is rarely, if ever, mentioned in the studies of Russian Formalism. Another reason, given by Groys, is that political circumstances, as is often the case in Soviet history, had prevented critics from publicly quoting Nietzsche. Nietzsche's conspicuous absence from the 1920s and 1930s cultural scene cannot be taken as evidence of his actual irrelevance to the cultural or political processes in Russia. The culture of the avant-garde, "was permeated by the Nietzschean themes of the 'new man,' the unity of the will and the esthetic principle, and so forth. Behind the external rationalism of the avant-garde stands a belief in the super-human power of the artist-creator, who is able to impose a new esthetic order onto all humanity and universe" (Groys 1991, 7).⁹

The similarity between the Nietzschean ideas and the Russian avant-garde is not limited to the realm of the artistic. The political realm has shaped itself in many ways after the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche: "Lenin himself extensively uses vitalistic rhetoricity and his usage of the term 'ideology' can be considered to be closer to Nietzsche than to Marx: to the bourgeois 'idealistic' ideology Lenin opposes not science, but 'the proletarian ideology' which is closer to life" (Groys 1991, 7).¹⁰ Nietzsche was deliberately excluded from the Soviet canon, because:

his explicitly expressed animosity towards socialist society outweighed in this case the characteristics that affiliated him with the official Soviet ideology: atheism and the critique of philosophical idealism as a specific will to power (which can be compared with the Marxist thesis about the ruling ideology being the ideology of the class in power), a love for the authors of the French Enlightenment, general positive orientation towards the future, belief in the eternal possibilities of man, moral relativism, the understanding of the world as a battlefield of various forces, and, in particular, as a power struggle among ideologies, etc. (Groys 1991, 1)

That is why even though Nietzsche's presence in Soviet culture is almost palpable, the Nietzschean components of the period cannot, in Groys' opinion, be retrieved by analyzing explicit references to Nietzsche, for the simple reason that such references are, as a rule, absent. A relevant discussion of this relationship has been offered by Katerina Clark, who in her *Soviet Novel* discusses the "spontaneity vs. consciousness" dialectic in the structuring of the socialist realist "master plot" (Clark 1985, 15–24). Groys interprets this same dialectic as the reverse side of the Nietzschean dualism between the Dionysian and Apollonian (Groys 1991, 6). Since the opposition "spontaneity vs. consciousness" in the Socialist Realist novel is not overcome by either the Hegelian *Aufhebung* or the Marxist dialectical principle, it remains a duality that is not synthetic. According to Clark, the duality of "spontaneity vs. consciousness" resists interpretation within either a Hegelian or a Marxist paradigm. According to Groys this dualism remains profoundly Nietzschean (Groys 1991, 7).

The dualistic Nietzschean cultural paradigm, with its orientation towards the super-human, Dionysian and Apollonian, the belief in the divine creative forces of man, permeates, in Groys' view, the Russian Formalist school as well. Formalist interpretation of the history of culture as a battle of various artistic wills, "in which the young and new artistic movements win due to their vitality, while the old ones get 'automatized' and cease to be perceived" (Groys 1991, 7), is indebted to Nietzsche's vitalistic philosophy. Nietzsche's critique of genealogy in *The Genealogy of Morals*, his philosophy of parody in *The Merry Science*, his celebration of vitalism and duality in *The Birth of Tragedy* all found their way into the writings of Russian Formalists. A random overview of the recurrent Formalist positions suggests an indebtedness to Friedrich Nietzsche.

Tynianov's first published work, "Dostoevsky and Gogol. Towards a Theory of Parody," invokes Nietzsche's parodic, all too parodic philosophy, and his philosophy of parody; Shklovsky's choice of *Tristram Shandy* for its parodic aspects as the most typical novel of all times (in itself a magisterial parody of birth and genealogy); or Eikhenbaum's obsession with masks in "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Is Made," all bear witness to the fact that Nietzsche's presence looms large under the surface of Formalist writings. The vitalistic metaphors that the Formalists (especially Shklovsky) use to describe the change of literary devices, stress the bringing back of the feeling of life into our perception of a text. Shklovsky writes that "Literature needs to be specific, and to hybridize itself with a new life, in order to create a new form" (Shklovsky 1924, 155). These metaphors betray the vitalistic will to power guiding this kind of literary historical change (Groys 1991, 7–8). The journal LEF from which this quote by Shklovsky is taken, abundantly displays this relationship between life and

form or art. The titles of some of the essays maintain that “The Comrades—[are] the Moulders [formovshchiki] of Life” (LEF 1923, 3); that in order to “comprehend the experience of the day” one has to be “Under the Sign of the Life Building [“Pod znakom zhiznestroeniia”] (N. F. Chuzhak 1923, 12). This leads us to translate “byt” as “life,” since these terms seem to be interchangeable for both Futurists and Formalists alike. Without taking into account the Nietzschean subtext of this key theoretical term of Russian Formalism, one can hardly proceed to interpret correctly other Formalist concepts such as “defamiliarization,” their version of “parody,” “interval,” or “literary fact” which are but derivatives of the relationship between life (*byt*) and form.

Some other authors and their relation to the ideas of the German philosopher that are the object of Groys’ discussion are not without relevance. Groys discusses several aspects of Russian Nietzscheanism that permeate the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Mikhail Bulgakov, especially those pertaining to the questions of Stalinist ideology and power. Groys claims that the relation to Nietzsche defined in a crucial way the relationship of these authors with Stalinist culture. They perceived this culture as one in which the Apollonian principle had the advantage over the Dionysian. It is in this context that Groys interprets Bakhtin’s writing on the carnival, as well as the carnivalesque scenes in *The Master and Margarita*. The carnival appears to be a supplement to the Apollonian principle of the Stalinist terror. Thus, both Bulgakov and Bakhtin appear to be in dialogue with rather than criticizing the Stalinist regime, and this relationship is not without resemblance with the one between Woland and the Master (i.e., the Apollonian and Dionysian principles), or with the dialogues between Joshua Ha-Nozri and Pontius Pilate, in *The Master and Margarita* (Groys 1991, 22–33). The fact that these two authors favored a Dionysian dissolution of the subject and individuality in the spirit of music over the Apollonian principle, or that they saw a carnivalesque principle as a supplement to terror, leads Groys to conclude that (in this specifically Russian version of Nietzscheanism) they opted for the early Nietzsche over the later one. In his “The Wax Effigy” (see chapter 6) Tynianov sets up the drama between the two modes of historical representation as that between the Apollonian power structure related to Peter the Great, and Dionysian, related to the master Rastrelli who is, time and again, likened to Silenus, Dionysos’ father.

The role of Friedrich Nietzsche in shaping Russian avant-garde, Russian Formalism, and Stalinist culture, is not one of marginal intertextual reference, but, rather, one which in a crucial way conditioned Russian Modernist ideas and ambiance. A discussion of Nietzsche’s ideas that are pertinent for this aspect of Russian Modernism seems to be in order.

THE MODERNIST PARADIGM AND THE DIGESTION OF HISTORY

Friedrich Nietzsche's "History in Service and Disservice of Life" ("Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie fuer das Leben," 1874), is in itself one of the most important essays on the question of modernism and history, both in Nietzsche's oeuvre and in the context of European modernism in general. Some interpreters see this essay as complementary to *The Birth of Tragedy*—"a retrospective ground clearing operation; it prepares the way for the new kind of historiography displayed in *The Birth of Tragedy*" (White 1973, 356). Its radical criticism of history makes this essay also one of the most profound statements on modernism and modernity. Therefore, "it can serve as an introduction to the more delicate problems that arise when modernity is applied more specifically to literature" (de Man 1983, 145).

At the core of Nietzsche's essay is the opposition he sets up between remembering and forgetting, that is, the opposition between the historical and the modern. History is a specter haunting man's memory, and those who remember the past carry the chain of history wherever they go (Nietzsche 1990, 88). To those haunted by history, Nietzsche opposes those with an ability to forget. What "a man of most exceptional nature . . . cannot master, he knows how to forget—for him it no longer exists" (Nietzsche 1990, 90). The ability to forget is what allows this man to stay alive, and to live the present moment to its fullest. It is this metaphor of surviving the historical that thoroughly permeates Nietzsche's text. In this context "Life," as de Man notes, "is conceived not just in biological but in temporal terms as the ability to forget whatever precedes a present situation" (de Man 1983, 146). It is this life, a will to power marked by the ability to forget, that Nietzsche wants to save from the ghostly, deadly grasp of history. In a passage that seems of great relevance to Russian Formalism (since it explicitly addresses the question of forms), Nietzsche argues that the ability to forget is of importance not only to individuals, but to nations and cultures as well:

To determine this degree and thereby the boundary beyond which the past must be forgotten if it is not to bury the present, we would have to know precisely how great is the shaping power of a man, a people, or a culture. I mean the strength to develop uniquely from within, to transform and assimilate the past and the alien, to recover completely from wounds, to redeem losses, and to refashion broken forms. (Nietzsche 1990, 90)

The historical, for Nietzsche, has always something to do with death, and the metaphors employed in his descriptions depict as a rule a certain

catastrophe. History is a “ghost,” “wound,” “a broken form,” “loss,” it “buries the present,” it is destructive and dangerous, it is, in a word, the trash of time. The dust heap of history, for Nietzsche, is a literal statement, not a metaphor, and our lives depend on our ability to deal with this historico-temporal garbage: “There is a degree of insomnia, of rumination, of historical awareness, which injures and finally destroys a living thing, whether a man, a people, or a culture” (Nietzsche 1990, 90). History for Nietzsche is always tied with the notion of persistence, indigestion, resistance to assimilation. History, to use a recent metaphor, is nonbiodegradable. This resistance to withering away constitutes the catastrophe of history. Talking about the historical knowledge of his contemporaries, Nietzsche says that “in the end the modern man carries around with him an enormous load of these indigestible stones of [historical] knowledge, which then at every opportunity, as the fairy tale has it, rattle loudly in his stomach” (Nietzsche 1990, 104).

The fairy tale to which Nietzsche only tangentially refers is Grimm’s “Mother-Goat and the Seven Little Kids.” As the story goes, the wolf devoured the kids which were then saved from the wolf’s stomach by the mother-goat, who replaced them with stones while the wolf was asleep. The wolf woke up, went to drink at the pond, fell into it, and drowned. The story ends with the kids dancing and singing around the pond. This narrative, neglected by Nietzschean scholars, actually condenses two central Nietzschean motifs. It entails the historical act as catastrophe, (of being eaten), and the resistance of history to wither away as indigestion. Interestingly, this fairy tale is cited by historians of Greek mythology (not in relation to Nietzsche), as an “instance of the tale of Kronos and his children” (Rose 1959, 296), that is, as an allegory of temporality as such.

The pedagogical message of the narrative is announced as an effect of indigestion, but also of gestation, since the wolf gives birth to the kids by a Caesarean. The gestation gives birth to *gesta*, laws, the pedagogy of history, not unlike those scrolls of the law in *Ezekiel*, which are “sweet in your mouth but bitter in your stomach.” Furthermore, the story ends with the kids singing around the pond. Now, the singing goats are the paradigmatic metaphor for tragedy. What the fairy tale displays is the birth of history as tragedy, out of the spirit of music. The goats singing around the pond (water = the index of Lethe, oblivion) enact the commemorative gesture by which history is “properly” buried, mourned, and forgotten.

We should keep in mind this scene with goats singing around the pond when we discuss Dionysos-Rastrelli, and his fountain works in stone covered by water, which are, in “The Wax Effigy,” explicitly tied to the drama of remembrance, forgetting, and history.

It is this resistance of history to become history that gives the historical its deadly aura. History, for Nietzsche, is never dead, but always not-dead-yet (or not properly dead: a ghost), and this unburied, rotting corpse, indigestible food that resists becoming excrement, presents the most threatening danger to the “hygiene of life” (Nietzsche 1990, 143). A culture obsessed with the historical is literally for Nietzsche a constipated culture, one not able to process, and to get rid of, the historic excrement: “The casual observer can only hope that this kind of culture does not die of indigestion” (Nietzsche 1990, 105).¹¹ History’s resistance to temporality has detrimental effects for the living: “when the historical sense no longer preserves life but embalms it, then the tree dies unnaturally” (Nietzsche 1990, 101). The history that resists its own historicity is not simply deadly, or a death, it is a mummy (it “embalms life”), it is the other, not proper, unnatural death.

Two interesting consequences stem from these metaphors of history as a mummy or a ghost, which suggest an ambivalence towards history at the heart of Nietzsche’s essay. One is that history is deadly because it refuses to die, to become past and history, to become digested, done with, and finally forgotten. What for Nietzsche constitutes history is this resistance to dissolve in time, this nonbiodegradability. The other consequence, opposed to the first one, is that history, by “properly dying” can actually enhance and support life. It can do so, nevertheless, only if it gives up being history, and becomes a definite past, a nonmemory—or if life can reshape it, recycle it, digest it, and feed and nourish on its decaying body. In this respect, history stands in a supplemental relationship to life. For history to be proper history, it has to prey on life, to resist the presence and the forces of forgetting; for life to experience the presence in full, what Nietzsche elsewhere calls “Bejahung des Daseins,” it has to abolish history, and yet keep it, and nourish itself on it: “without forgetting, it is utterly impossible to live at all” (Nietzsche 1990, 90). For life to remain alive, it is necessary to have a history to forget. The solution for this historico-temporal paradox consists in “creative forgetting” (White 1973, 372), which, for Nietzsche, is the other name of art.

The concept of “creative forgetting” shall become clearer if we take into account the typology of the modes of history proposed by Nietzsche. There are three types of history that Nietzsche discusses in his essay: monumental (or exemplary), antiquarian, and critical. This historical typology is derived from the relation that each of these histories has to presence, “life,” and the modern in general.

Monumental history explicitly calls for a historical consciousness putting itself “in the service” of life. This type of the historical is also constituted in Nietzsche’s writing with the metaphors of “proper” death,

and it seems that it is the idea of “proper” dying and of “proper” funeral that underlies this concept of the historical.

If the ordinary man clutches his mortal span so morbidly and greedily, these great men, on their way to immortality and monumental history, knew how to treat it with Olympian laughter or were proud enough to disdain it. And they often climbed into their graves with an ironic smile—for what was left of them to be buried? Only what they had always regarded as mere ashes, refuse, as something vain and bestial, and which now lapses into oblivion after long exposure to their contempt. But one thing survives, the personal signature of their most inward nature—a work, a deed, a rare perception, a creation; it survives because future generations cannot do without it. . . . From this study [the man of the present] concludes that greatness was at least possible once, and therefore may be possible again. (Nietzsche 1990, 96)

It is instructive to note how Nietzsche’s concept of “life,” the utmost presence of the present, borders on the deadly, thanatological drives. Those who are most able to remain in history, and who lived their lives to the fullest (“the man who is ready to risk his existence lives most beautifully” [Nietzsche 1990, 96]), are at the same time those who accepted their own death without any hesitation, with laughter. It is those who regarded their physical presence as already a garbage, a waste of history (“ashes, refuse”), that remain in history as its examples, or monuments. It is their ability to leave (and live as) an alternative, sublime waste, that of writing (“signatures of their most inward nature”), that makes these men remain in history. It is as if this happiness of dying produced the most lively moments in history. What remains in history is a signature, a structure of pure repetition without any physical presence of bodily waste. The great future to which this monumental experience should lead us (and it is to the future that this type of history speaks: “future generations cannot live without it”), is made possible by the structure of empty and pure repetition (“signatures without bodily ashes”) which seems to structure pure temporality without history. “In this way,” says Deleuze, writing about Nietzsche’s concept of repetition and history, “repetition is the thought of the future. It is in repetition that Forgetting becomes a positive force” (Deleuze 1985, 15). To remain in history is to remain as a subject dissolved in pure repetition, and to live the presence of the present, the *Da-sein* is to attain this pure form deprived of its bodily, earthly waste: “The superior form of everything that exists—that is the unmediated identity of the eternal return and the superman” (Deleuze 1985, 16). This higher form of history “without” history is not without its inherent contradictions. One of the most

apparent is that the unique presence is carried on into the future by means of signature and writing, such as a repetition of the sameness which doubles, and splits the uniqueness of this historical "presence."¹² This repetition of the initial historical greatness without history is best preserved in public festivals, in which these "effects of the monumental" are repeated, while forgetting the historical causes that have led to them. "What we celebrate in public festivals . . . is really such an 'effect in itself'" (Nietzsche 1990, 97).¹³

Nietzsche warns about two dangers of the exemplary, or monumental history. One is that it may deceive contemporaries into rushing to do the same deeds it depicts, without true knowledge of the historical causes of these effects. The other is that the contemporaries tend to canonize this history as what it is: a monumental history. Monumental history is desirable as long as it remains nonhistorical, noncanonized, history without history. In both cases monumental history becomes a "ravenous weed" (Nietzsche 1990, 99). A historical event has, for Nietzsche, a dual status in terms of its ability to be remembered or forgotten. One is that what remains in history as a pure signature feeds on the body of the decaying, biodegradable subject. On the other hand, as soon as this signature is appropriated by culture as a "monument," it in turn becomes a deadly (and dead), broken form, which deserves to be biodegraded, or forgotten. This antithetical yet supplemental relationship between history and life, memory and forgetting, does not seem to be reducible to any unequivocal set of oppositions. Rather, its dynamism is ensured by the constant reinvention and forgetting that a subject, as long as it remains "in" history, never ceases to repeat.

Antiquarian history serves life by venerating the past. "Small, humble, fragile, old-fashioned things are endowed with dignity and sanctity when this antiquarian spirit, preserving and venerating, enters into them and makes itself a home and nest" (Nietzsche 1990, 100). This mode of the historical is fraught with "immediate danger" (Nietzsche 1990, 101), since it is intrinsically conservative. In it, "everything new, everything emerging—is rejected and condemned" (Nietzsche 1990, 101).

Since the two modes of history do not fully "serve" life, Nietzsche sees a need to supplement them with a third, critical mode: "In order to live, man must possess the strength, and occasionally employ it, to shatter and disintegrate the past" (Nietzsche 1990, 102). Critical history is a history which breaks with itself, debases itself in order to make room for the present and the future. What is left of history is a phantasm of history which tells a story about fictional genealogies, invented predecessors, a history which is "a poetic elaboration and . . . spirited retelling" (Nietzsche 1990, 117).

Two aspects of this historical mode are directly related to modernism in general and Russian Formalism in particular. Critical history fictionalizes genealogies, "it is an attempt to give ourselves a past a posteriori, as it were, as opposed to the past from which we did descend" (Nietzsche 1990, 103). Shklovsky's idea of literary legacy which is passed not from father to son, but from uncle to nephew seems to stem from this kind of historical thinking. The other is the ability of this type of history to recycle reality, everyday habits ("broken forms") into new symbols:

And so I hope that history may discover that its meaning is not general ideas as the final fruit of its effort, but that its value lies precisely in the spirited retelling, enhancing and heightening of a familiar or even ordinary theme, an everyday tune, into a comprehensive symbol, and thereby intimating in the original theme the presence of a whole world of profound meaning, power, and beauty. (Nietzsche 1990, 117).

And, further on, "the true historian must have the power of making the *familiar* sound like something *wholly new*" (Nietzsche 1990, 118, italics are mine). It is in this ability to create the "new" out of the everyday, repetitive and ordinary (which underlies the Formalist theory of defamiliarization as well), to turn the literal into the symbolic, that creative forgetting borders with the artistic: "and only when history can be transformed into a work of art—that is, become pure artistic creation—can it perhaps preserve or even awaken instincts" (Nietzsche 1990, 119). This mode of history has an ability to, in a sense, remember itself as forgetting, transcending its own historical status by constantly reminding itself of the historical that it forgets.¹⁴ In a gesture that prefigures futurism, Nietzsche situates the voice of this historical subject not in the past (which for him always speaks with an "oracular," i.e., deathly tone), but in the future: "Only as master builders of the future, who understand the present, will you comprehend the past" (Nietzsche 1990, 118). Active, artistic memory is the memory that is supra-historical, since it remembers not the past, but the future, and from the perspective of the future keeps forgetting the past that will have preceded it. Thus, active forgetting is not a "simple" forgetting. It is, in a sense, a paradoxical, "double" forgetting: forgetting that at the same time remembers to forget the historical, since it speaks from and for the future; and a forgetting that keeps remembering the future from which to forget the historical. This kind of history gets its origin and authority from the future, and is not without Apocalyptic overtones. If, as Hayden White says, "the history of human consciousness can be emplotted as a 'fall' out of the original, Metaphorical mode of apprehending the world into the Synecdochic and Metonymical modes of

comprehending it" (White 1973, 371), Nietzsche's supra-historical or unhistorical forgetting remembers the time which "gives existence eternal and unchanging character," in art and religion (Nietzsche 1990, 142). The language of this history is the language which has regained its own prelapsarian naiveté, and to speak metaphorically, in this sense, is not to speak in artistic constructs, but to recuperate the initial freshness of the primordial, pre-(supra)-historical subject: "The return to the innocence of consciousness was, then, necessarily conceived in terms of a return to the Metaphorical stage of language" (White 1973, 360). The supra-historical, unhistorical principles, ultimately, "are the natural antidotes to the suffocation of life by history" (Nietzsche 1990, 143).

What are the consequences and internal paradoxes of Nietzsche's conception of the historical? As Paul de Man says, Nietzsche's essay represents an attempt to formulate "the authentic spirit of modernity."

Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of at least reaching a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure. The combined interplay of deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity. Thus defined, modernity and history are diametrically opposed to each other in Nietzsche's text. (de Man 1983, 148)

For a modernist subject, there is nothing worth cherishing or remembering, this subject is a perfect machine of forgetting which Foucault, writing on Nietzsche and history, calls a "counter-memory" (Foucault 1977, 160). On the other hand, the modernist ecstasy is possible exactly because the subject has history to forget, that is, because he is deeply and irreducibly historical. The forces that make something remain "in" history are the same as those that cause something to be forgotten and obliterated. The new in the historical sense, paradoxically, resembles or is what is meant to perish in history as its waste. That which falls out of the everyday as a temporal garbage, and by the same token becomes meaningful, is also what is "new." Both the historical, archaic, and the innovative, new, defamiliarize the ordinary by displacing an event, a fact or a text from the usual, linear temporal genealogy. In that sense what remains after these historical operations as "new" or "old" seems to represent the two sides of the same coin of history which "rattles at its every turn."

Modernity and history relate to each other in a curiously contradictory way: "If history is not to become sheer regression or paralysis, it depends on modernity for its duration and renewal; but modernity cannot assert itself without being at once swallowed up and reintegrated into a