RUSSIAN FORMALISM AND DEFAMILIARIZATION IN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: Formalists broke a category of previous studies that did not rely on the text, by moving the object of study from the outside of literature, to the inside of literature. As pioneers of this study method, they built concepts that would crystallize only later. They represented goals that were bigger than their possibilities and this happened because, in general, they applied linguistic studies in their literary studies, while it is known that language or linguistics in the '20s, XX century, was in its first phase of development. But language made them very connected to the text, perceiving the tool as the main protagonist of literature. This connection with the text would give them a stronger resilience in comparison to other methods that distance from the text, by going to abstractions, without a pure reference to the text. If N. Fraj's opinion that when we analyze literature we speak of literature and when we assess it we speak of ourselves is to be considered reasonable, then we can say that Russian formalists, in general, spoke about literature, not about themselves. At all costs, they sought to distance themselves from outside of literature, regardless of the form of study it would manifest itself, as the study of the author, the reader, or the one studying. To them, text and its characteristics were everything.

KEYWORDS: Formalists, Protagonist of Literature, Text, Literature, Linguistic, Defamiliarization in Language

1. Introduction

The year 1914 marked the year when Russian Formalism started — when Viktor Shklovsky wrote the essay on the futuristic poetry "The Resurrection of the Word", an essay that would then live until the political ideology would strengthen and pressure this line of thought, and then Shklovsky withdrew in January 1930, a year that marked his end. "After this year efforts for continuing Shklovsky's line of thought continued outside of Russia, in Prague, although it went to a different stage. Formalism recognizes two cultural circles of students where a debate on literature takes place and where its main notions are born.

The first, with headquarters in St. Petersburg, was named the Opojaz group (Society for the Study of Poetic Language), and the second one, with headquarters in Moscow, was named Moscow Linguistic Circle. Members of the first group were Viktor Shkolovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, Osip Brik, Boris Kušner, and Yury Tyanianov, whereas members of the second circle were mainly linguists, who studied poetic language within language as well, among whom, the most prominent member was Roman Jakobson" (Eagleton, p. 23). In fact, it was in these two circles where the disagreement of their students about the ways of literary study in universities and the interest in futuristic poetry began.

2. Cultural and linguistic context

Formalism, a term given by others, is based on the characteristics that the studies/interpretations represented. This term that others used, back in the day was used to ironize the fact that they did not see literature as a form, and even less the study of literature as a study of form. This represents studies before Russian Formalism that did not stop only in the literary works, but also in what "produces" it, by seeing the literary work as a product of social, ethical, cultural, and ideological order. Such an order took into account a time and a place, a political/ideological state, whereas formalism did not preoccupy with that. When we spoke about positivism we recognized the study, whereas in formalism — interpretation, as two ways of communication of two different lines of thought.

This way, the change of a cultural context does not merely change the elements that must be researched (both literary and non-literary) but also the inquiry into the literary works (study or interpretation). "Positivism, the method of communication — the study — had borrowed from natural sciences, whereas formalism was creating its method of communication — interpretation. The first (positivism) accepted the study to a greater extent and not how we know it today in the literary study (now

the essay is considered a study), borrowed by positivist sciences, recognizing the status of critique as science, whereas the second (formalism) was creating interpretation by now recognizing the status of science to critique" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 88).

We mentioned all the above, in order to see the break that occurs in the '20s, 20th century, with the aim of underscoring that often, the biggest achievement of formalism as a method of the study lies in the break it does. Its object now is the literary work. Its problems in formalism will know a beginning phase but will be crystalized in structuralism. With this, we want to emphasize two characteristics:

- one part of the credits for structuralism will be born as indicators in formalism and

- structuralism will not be born as a break, as positivism and formalism did, but as a further development of formalism.

Therefore, formalism reflects values in two directions between positivism and structuralism. That is because it breaks the first by drawing the attention to the author and non-literary circumstances; and because it feeds the second with elements, some of which will become essential to it (narrator, language, etc). For this, Ann Jefferson says "...everything that belongs to them (structuralists) is considerably dedicated to Russian formalism."

They would name it formalism because it focuses on the form. It was called formalism by several publications and their representatives. More or less, at that time some essential principles of it would arise, in those published works. Therefore, the principles arose before the line of thought itself. Like all other historical-literary periods (classicism, symbolism, realism, etc.) and study periods (positivism and structuralism).

3.   Formalism and Futurism for all

In 1914, Viktor Shklovsky wrote his essay on futurist poetry "The Resurrection of the Word". This text is considered as the one starting Russian Formalism, a new way of writing on literature. Writing on futuristic poetry, which had started being written four years before this, while two years earlier had codified its tractate (A slap in the face of Public Taste). "More or less, born at the same time as formalism, the first one belongs to literary theories, whereas the second one to methods. The first one, more or less teaches how the literary work is created, whereas the second one teaches what the literary work is. But without a clear boundary between them. There were literary theories, while there were no methods, and when methods were born, they lost their boundaries. This means that when methods lacked critique, they were led by literary theory (of place and time, i.e Art Poetique by Boileau, etc.) a task that will be removed when the methods would be born" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 26).

This is not the first time in formalism when the type of writing (now futurism) will be this connected to the method, by becoming its central motivator. Before it, realism had inspired positivism (especially in the introduction of The Human Comedy, without a well-defined status, to theory or to the method, and then Flaubert, Zola, etc.) and after it, it would inspire postmodernism and poststructuralism. "Seems like the characteristic of writing is being transferred to the characteristic of the method.

Unique writing demands a unique method. In this context, we will only remember the importance that futurism gave to language by creating completely new semantic and musical signs, an illogical language (Russian: zaumnijezk). In this context, would formalism be more successful in futurism or for example, in realism? Therefore, it is not only the writing that demands method but also the method that demands literary writing, it chooses it, a tradition that will be applied multiple times when study methods will multiply, as often as it happens that within one essay two-three methods appear, depending on the elements of the text that are studied" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 32). We stopped in futurism since formalism communicates more with it in a level of interpretation, but also all other lines of thought of avant-garde are of the same intensity.

All that literary theory declared and sunk within those few years as if it was warning an earthquake that would bring the method that syncretizes various theoretical problems that in the past would look like a separate school. "This multidimensional connection with the avant-garde is shown also by the closure of them as schools and by the development of formalism in structuralism, where the method will not claim to

be more connected with a specific writing, but with the entire writing" (Eagleton, 2005, p. 23). A goal that would distance it from the text, and will lead it to abstractions. A goal that in the end will suffocate it. Post-structuralism is a return to the text one more time, and oftentimes it is even a return to those methods that were so well-connected to the text. For this J. Culler in one case says "...post-structuralism…returns from the initiative of interpretation [of literature]".

4.   Two central concepts of Formalism

The two central concepts of formalism are literariness and defamiliarization (rus.*otsranenie*) (Eagleton, 2005, p. 23). Literature, according to formalists, did not identify with literariness. It also communicated with other non-formal structures, both in a level of structure and form. The first case (form) is more in the aspect of different verbal or written forms, and the second case (content) is more in the semantic aspect where the interventions of the social or ideological life can be noticed. Because of these communications or the *stranger's hand* in text (that later would be named intertext), literature was seen as a result of a pre-existing non-literary order. For this even as an inherency of positivism is an extra-literary aspect.

Despite this order, formalists will have literary work as an object. This would happen even when communication with other structures is visible. They do not recognize the rules of that world any longer, while those rules are recontextualized in a new system, now, a literary one. This way we see the status of literature as independent from others and what makes it distinctive now is precisely the distinction between them and literature. For this "The object of the science of literature is not literature, but literariness, that which makes a work be considered literary."

But with this distinction begins a new world, which is not a distinction in parallel relation with other writing worlds. It is above them, against all of them, defamiliarization of all of them. "While all of them together constitute a category of writing or meaning, on the contrary literature constitutes a category facing all of them. What a great definition formalism gives to literature at this level. A definition that it did not have in the past.

On the other hand, literature is being identified with defamiliarization. In fact, it is the promoter that destroys orders and creates literature. Here, defamiliarization and literariness are consents that live independent, one as the cause, the other as a consequence" (Culler, 2001, p. 59). Defamiliarization as a cause and literariness as a consequence. What defamiliarization takes from literariness is that not every defamiliarization is literariness, but only that kind of defamiliarization that adheres to the rules of literariness. A reciprocal relation of giving and taking of these terms makes them both dependent and separate.

5.   The history of defamiliarization in language

Defamiliarization as a phenomenon has been spotted before, but not raised to the extent and the status that it gains in formalism. Let us stop in only a few key cases so that we can see what it looks like. It is more often seen as a phenomenon/concept, although the names that represent it are different.

Aristotle will raise tragedy above reality because words, action, stage, and music are syncretized, things that are impossible to be found in reality. More or less defamiliarization is seen in arts with its syncretic nature opposite reality, which does not represent it. During late medieval times, when the East had a great cultural development, Ibn Sina (Avicena), said that "[arts]...relies on surprises and the unexpected". In the European renaissance, Philip Sidney, as a prominent figure in literary theory, in his essay *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) notices that "the poet thanks to his fantasy and powerful inspiration, manages to create a second nature by inventing things that are either better than those nature has or new things that nature does not recognize". Then in classicism, this phenomenon will be identified with what the possible, meaning not the truth but the possible or the possibility. In romanticism, the literary works will gain the status of the super-real, and because of this the cult of the genius poet, one that understands that superreality will be born. Contrary to romanticism, in realism literary works will be seen closer to reality than ever before and the works of the writer will be valued based on the writer's capacity to maneuver

with this reality. Let's not discuss the avant-garde period and the importance defamiliarization will occupy in all these manifestos.

6. The phenomena of defamiliarization in poetry and language

Defamiliarization as a phenomenon, according to formalists, tackles poetry and prose— as language. We spoke earlier about how formalism as a first push has Russian futurism and avant-garde in general. Futurism in its entirety touches poetry, and even the first text of formalists "Resurrection of the word" is on poetry. The need to analyze prose too will arise only later, and more or less the same terms of analysis will be adapted to prose too. Poetry as a genre has this characteristic more emphasized. For formalists, it would touch more on the structure of language in poetry, whereas the difference between the fable and plot in prose. In poetry, it touches on the rhythmic, sound, and semantic structure, always comparing it with the larger structure of a natural lecture. "Natural lecturing as an inherency has reality and the phenomena that represent reality, and not literary lecturing.

The comparison will be a general policy of formalism in comparison to other methods, for example, structuralism, which will demand general art structures with no comparisons" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 94). The aforementioned characteristic of poetic lecturing will be seen as unfamiliar. This way, it will be seen that the rhythm and sound are not respected in other non-literary works, whereas in poetry, they are essential. Semantics, regardless of those, enjoys strong attention in ordinary parlance, but not in that of literature. In the semantic aspect, in poetic works, second meanings are functionalized. The three are different fields of poetic works and are found together in the entirety of the work. Therefore, it is defamiliarization that affects the entire poetry, but on different levels. The different levels have raised also different queries for study. When it affected the linguistic aspect, linguistics dealt with it. Rhythm and sound used to be analyzed by phonetics and later by phonology because phonetics was too narrow for them. Whereas for the meaning – – semantics would be born later on. "So, it is seen that the goals were much bigger than the fields accessible for analysis" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 103). For this, some challenges that were already there would be crystallized only in structuralism, because other more advanced fields would be born, including phonology, Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, etc.

7. Defamiliarization in prose and style

In prose, defamiliarization includes the difference between the fable and the plot. But in prose, defamiliarization is not as pure as in poetry, it has tried to adapt the previous difference between works in the difference between fable and plot. This way, the change of genre happens together with the demands for study, especially when the distinction between natural and literary works was seen as impossible. Now, in prose, the difference does not affect the works, for as long as there is no noticeable difference from the literary one, instead, it affects the content. It is content demanded as form, whereas the plot does not deal with the event, but with its order.

The plot will affect different parts of the content of the works: the problem of different positions of the narrator (later, narratology), the interventions of descriptions and the places of those interventions, complications and how events are depicted, and tensions created in a different place, etc. "All are seen as non-coincidental but as part of a conscious system, where the destruction of any element and the micro-structure is considered essential destruction that creates a new version in comparison with the previous one. With this attention given to the plot, formalists advance writings on similar topics, but with different plots, that give versions of writing depending on the abilities of the authors. For this "the subject creates an alienating effect in fable; the tools of the subject must not be understood as instruments through which the fable is transmitted, as they are primary in relation to the fable" (Culler, 2001, p. 59).

We have two types of texts in prose: a fictional fable and a historical fable. In the first case, defamiliarization is the form of ordering fictional events, narrative interventions, reclaims, etc., in relation to the fable. Both, the fable and the plot are fictional. In the second case, the fable is historical, it is non-fictional and referential, whereas the plot is fictional and non-referential. Now, we have the difference between referentiality and non-referentiality, just like in poetry, only that in this case it affects the content

and not the form. "In this case, the plot, besides the aforementioned things that are characteristics of it, does a spiritualization of the historical fable, which is a defamiliarization of that fable in relation to its first nature, where it was taken from" (Jefferson, 2004, p. 77). Defamiliarization in both cases is the same, as a destructive nature, but the nature of familiarization opposite of which it is placed is positioned the first time in fictionality and the second time in referentiality.

8.   Conclusion

At the end of this paper, as a logical flow of what we have discussed about formalism and language learning, we can conclude that formalists managed to change the opinions of a category of previous studies, which were not based on the text, by conveying the object of study from what cannot be said to be literature to what is true literature. As founders of this method of study, formalists will deal with concepts, which will be clarified only later. They represented goals greater than their possibilities, because they applied linguistic studies within literary studies. Meanwhile, it is known that language or linguistics in the 20s of the 20th century was in the first stage of development. In this way, the language made them to relate mainly to the text, treating the text itself as the main tool of literature.

If we are based on Northrop Fry's opinion that when we analyze literature we talk about literature and when we evaluate literature we talk about ourselves, we can conclude that the Russian formalists generally talked about literature and not about themselves. They tried in every way to escape from what is not literature, no matter in what form of study it could manifest itself, as the study of the author, the reader or the researcher. For them, the text and its characteristics were essential. For this reason, they considered defamiliarization as the main key to the analysis of the literary text. Defamiliarization, according to them, was the promoter of all the changes that took place in the text, both in form and content.

The first change — that of the form — gave more results in the interpretation of poetry, whereas the second change — that of the content — gave more results in prose. To better understand the interest formalists showed in defamiliarization we will mention the introduction of Viktor Shklovsky's study, on Laurence Stern's novel "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman": "In this article, I do not indent to analyze Stern's novel, but I will just use it to illustrate the general laws of the plot…[in it] the event is constantly interrupted; the author moves forward and backward,…tenses are mixed with tens of pages that are full of bizarre resonations for the impact of the nose, or the name on the character, or full of conversations on fortification."

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