# Bakhtin's Historical Turn and Its Soviet Antecedents / *A virada histórica de Bakhtin e seus antecedentes soviéticos*

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ABSTRACT

Based on previous work, the article provides a new understanding of Bakhtin's ideas on the stratification and historical development of language, drawing on unpublished archival materials of the Institute for the Comparative History of the Literatures and Languages of the West and East (ILIaZV). It focuses on Bakhtin's work from the late 1930s, when he shifts his attention from language to the historical development of specific images, semantic clusters, and plot structures. Bakhtin still maintained close connections with the work carried out at ILIaZV, but drew upon the work of different scholars, Aleksandr Veselovskii (1838–1906) and Izrail´ Frank-Kamenetskii (1880–1937), who become important influences on Bakhtin, especially on his idea of carnival as syncretic pageantry as a structuring feature of literature and on his analysis of plot structures and metaphors. The article provides insight into the assumptions behind Bakhtin's notions of the chronotope and carnival and the prospect of re-grounding these notions, so that they become useful tools for future research.
KEYWORDS: Language Stratification; Semantic Clusters; Plot Structures; Chronotope; Carnival

*RESUMO*

*Baseado em trabalhos anteriores, o artigo oferece uma nova compreensão das ideias de Bakhtin sobre a estratificação e o desenvolvimento histórico da linguagem, apoiado em material de arquivo do Instituto para a História Comparativa das Literaturas e Línguas do Ocidente e Oriente (ILIaZV), não publicado. O foco é o trabalho de Bakhtin do final dos anos 1930, quando ele desvia sua atenção da língua para o desenvolvimento histórico de imagens específicas, séries semânticas e estruturas de enredo. Bakhtin ainda manteve conexões próximas com o trabalho desenvolvido no ILIaZV, mas baseou seu trabalho em diferentes intelectuais, Aleksandr Vesselóvski (1838–1906) e Izrail Frank-Kamenetski (1880–1937), que se tornam influências importantes para ele, especialmente em relação a sua ideia sobre o modo como o ritual sincrético do Carnaval se torna um aspecto estruturador da literatura e em sua análise das estruturas de enredo e metáforas. O artigo oferece algumas informações sobre as assunções por trás das noções bakhtinianas de cronotopo e carnaval e a perspectiva de retomar essas noções, de modo que se tornem ferramentas úteis para pesquisa futura.*
*PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estratificação linguística; Séries semânticas; Estruturas de enredo; Cronotopo; Carnaval*

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Over the last few years, I have been working in Russian archives, looking at the work carried out in the most important institutes dealing with language, literature and cultural theory in the 1920s. Of particular importance for our understanding of the work of the Bakhtin Circle in its historical context have been the archives of the Institute for the Comparative History of the Literatures and Languages of the West and East (*Nauchno-issledovatel´skii institut sravnitel´noi istorii literatur i iazykov Zapada i Vostoka*, ILIaZV 1925, 30; formerly A. N. Veselovskii Institute (*Institut im. A.N. Veselovskogo* 1921, 25); subsequently State Institute for Discursive Culture (*Gosudarstvennyi institut rechevoi kul'tury*, GIRK 1930, 33)), at which Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov worked between 1925 and 1932. In previous work, I outlined how Bakhtin's ideas about the social stratification of language and its historical development were based on ideas worked out at ILIaZV by, *inter alia*, Lev Iakubinskii (1892–1945) on the development of the Russian national language at the end of the 1920s (BRANDIST, 2003). Subsequently, I showed how the most significant works of Voloshinov and Medvedev, and Bakhtin's own turn to sociological and discursive considerations, were related to the collective project for the development of sociological poetics at ILIaZV in the late 1920s (BRANDIST, 2006). In this paper, I continue this line of analysis, but looking beyond the 1920s to the years when the Circle and ILIaZV were no more. I will argue that in his work of the late 1930s, when he moves away from the centrality of linguistic questions and shifts his attention towards issues of the historical development of specific images, semantic clusters and plot structures, Bakhtin still maintained close connections with the work that had been carried out at ILIaZV, but this time drew upon the work of a different group of scholars who concentrated on these very issues.

## 1 Bakhtin's Early Work

In his early works in moral philosophy and philosophical aesthetics, Bakhtin's concerns closely resemble those of the early German Romantics, who had recoiled from the violence of the terror that followed the French Revolution that they had supported, and sought to educate the people to behave in an enlightened manner. Bakhtin similarly wrote as a fellow-traveller of the Russian Revolution, recoiling from the violence and

terror of the Civil War and seeking a means of making ethical principles relevant in current conditions. The early Romantics rejected the philistine orientation of utilitarian ethics along with the one-sided rationalism of Kant's ethics on the grounds that the former conforms to moral convention in the interests of an easy life, while the latter forces the individual to act contrary to his or her inclinations according to the strictures of the moral law (BEISER, 2003, pp.92–3). By the beginning of the twentieth century the same critique was also found in another and very different source, the phenomenology of Franz Brentano (1838–1917) and his followers,[1] and this was to lead to a sustained attempt to combine certain ideas of the Romantics with the analytical rigor of phenomenology throughout the 1920s. In the fragmentary text now known as *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin (2003 [1921–24]; 1993 [1921–24]) argues that neither Kantian nor utilitarian ethics was conducive to the development of individuality and the attainment of freedom, since not only reason but intuition itself needed cultivation. A sense of duty must derive from our inclinations rather than contrary to them, and so the cultivation of these inclinations is of special importance. While Bakhtin's philosophical sources, ranging from neo-Kantianism through *Lebensphilosophie* to phenomenology were certainly not those that had occupied the Romantics, Bakhtin's engagement with these philosophies closely resembled that of the Romantics with the philosophy of their day.

The Romantics had stressed the role of art in the moral education of mankind (*Bildung*). The once powerful and appealing myths and mysteries of religion, which had moved the emotions and imagination of the people, had been systematically discredited along with the church by the intellectuals and propagandists of the Enlightenment. But what had also been lost, along with religion, were popular forms of moral guidance. This was even more pronounced in Russia, where the moral leadership of the church, so tightly entwined with the reactionary tsarist state was, by the early nineteenth century, widely held in contempt. In each case it was the vernacular literature, through which urban intellectuals felt they maintained a common bond with the popular imagination

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[1] Brentano (1889) was to begin the trend in ethical thought that was to lead on to Max Scheler's (1874–1928) work on sympathy, on which Bakhtin drew heavily in the mid 1920s. On Bakhtin's debt to Scheler see Poole, 2001. However, Poole here exaggerates Scheler's exceptionality and fails to discuss the innovations of Brentano.

that held a central place. Thus, the founder of Russian literary criticism, Vissarion Belinskii (1811-48), noted in 1846:

> all our moral interests, all our spiritual life have hitherto been and will, still for a long time to come, be concentrated in literature: it is the vital spring from which all human sentiments percolate into society (BELINSKY, 1962, p.9).

The sense that both writer and critic had moral obligations, that concerned all 19th-century intellectuals, was transformed in the development of modernism and the avant-garde, but it never really disappeared from Russian literature itself, nor from literary scholarship. Thus, in his essay on Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Mikhail Bakhtin's brother Nikolai wrote approvingly of the "Russian approach to art," which clearly recapitulated that of the early German Romantics. Art strives

> to pervade our being, to affect our impulses and our most intimate reactions; to shape our sensibility; to transform and organize our vision - and thus ultimately to affect our behaviour; 'to teach us how to live' in short" (BACHTIN, 1963, p.26).

In his early phenomenological analyses of the ethical act Mikhail Bakhtin discerned an aesthetic moment, and came to the conclusion that art has a morally educative role in cultivating feelings and desires, rather than just the intellect, and thus develops the individual's sensibility. Bakhtin searched for the essence of the aesthetic, which he found in a conditional merging with the other before returning to one's own unique position from which to bestow form and completion. In *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (BAKHTIN, 2003 [1924–27]; 1990 [1924–27]) this developed into the contention that it is through adopting the appropriate modality of author-hero relations that the work of literary art can encourage spontaneity of thought, develop the person's sensibility and incline him or her to act according to reason. This ethical reason is jurisprudential, for it teaches us to regard the individual solely as a bearer of rights and responsibilities. It does so not through reasoned argument, but through inspiration and the stimulation of imagination. Literary art that is not excessively doctrinal, free from external constraint and constructed according to its inherent nature alone (Goethe's "inner form" of the work) can assist in cultivating our senses, refining,

ennobling and sublimating our desires and feelings to the demands of ethical life.[2] But art is always ethical, and to be true to its inherent nature the author needs, nevertheless, to assert authorial responsibility.[3]

## 2 Sociological Poetics

Such was the ethical force of Bakhtin's early, static investigations into the essence of aesthetic activity. But something important began to change when two members of the so-called Bakhtin Circle, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov began working on a project to develop a new sociological poetics at ILIaZV in the mid 1920s.[4] Voloshinov's plan for a book on this subject from 1925–6, which I have recently published, shows the agenda of the project at this time, and here we have not only directions of proposed research that were to result in Voloshinov's "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry," *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* and Medvedev's *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, but much of the agenda that Bakhtin was to pursue throughout the 1930s (VOLOSHINOV, 2008). This particularly refers to the study of the evolution of poetic and novelistic genres from a sociological perspective and the aim of overcoming the separation of theoretical and historical poetics. If Bakhtin's 1929 *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* represents his attempt to translate the earlier phenomenological approach into sociological and discursive terms, on the model of the project for a sociological poetics, it was still only incipiently historical, with just a few comments on the architectonics of Dostoevsky's novel resulting from the sudden encroachment of capitalism into Russia's historically backward social structure (BAKHTIN, 1929). Once the study gets into full swing the old static analysis begins to dominate as the search for a general (dia)logic behind Dostoevsky's work and the author-hero modality asserts itself at the expense of any

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[2] The idea of the 'inner form' of the work had been brought to the attention of Russian literary scholars by the German literary scholar Oskar Walzel (1864–1944), who maintained a close relationship with both Viktor Zhirmunskii and a leading advocate of "sociological poetics" Pavel Sakulin (1868–1930), and who visited Russia at the end of the 1920s. Walzel's 1918 essay on the question appeared in Russian translation in 1928 (VAL´TSEL´,1928).

[3] Compare Nikolai Bakhtin's characterization of the two "capital sins" of art: didacticism and decadence in Bachtin (1963, pp.26–7).

[4] On this project see Brandist (2008).

Editor's Note: also see Shepherd and the Medvedevs' contribution to the current collection.

systematic treatment of plot structure, which is treated merely as a more or less arbitrarily employed means for generating intersubjective interaction in discursive form, what Bakhtin calls dialogue. Bakhtin's sociological reorientation did allow his friends to facilitate the publication of his book in the same series of ILIaZV monographs as their own works on the question. We simply have no information about the extent to which Bakhtin attended research seminars at ILIaZV. Attendance at such events was not recorded and so cannot be found in the archives, but it seems certain that he received verbal reports from Voloshinov and Medvedev, and most likely followed the work carried out there as it was published in the Institute's journal *Iazyk i literatura* (*Language and Literature*) and elsewhere.

## 3 Aleksandr Veselovskii: Between Positivism and Romanticism

Yet it is only in the late 1930s that the impact of the main historical work carried out at ILIaZV begins to be felt in Bakhtin's work, when questions of dialogue begin to give way to a more historical type of literary scholarship in which plot construction comes to the fore. The high point of this trend comes in about 1938, the centenary of the birth of Aleksandr Veselovskii (1838–1906), when the Soviet literary press was filled with appreciations of the scholar after whom the ILIaZV Institute was initially named. Among the centenary appreciations was a piece by Vasilii Desnitskii (1878–1958), Voloshinov's supervisor at ILIaZV, who bemoaned the premature closure of ILIaZV in 1933 for "depriving young historians of literature training in the spirit of Veselovskii, through its atmosphere of the international nature of literature, the multiple connections between national literatures and the close connections between language and literature" (DESNITSKII, 1938, p.71). The historical studies of literature at ILIaZV were seen to be attempts to update Veselovskii's approach according to a new sociological agenda, particularly according to the rising theories of successive social formations that were being developed in Soviet historiography and sociology.[5]

Veselovskii had argued that literary and linguistic forms arose together in ancient syncretism, which he defined as "the combination of rhythmical, orchestrated movement with song-music and elements of the word" (VESELOVSKII, 2004 [1899],

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[5] For an excellent overview see Podol´, 2008.

p.201). Veselovskii developed this idea from German Romanticism and *Volkerpsychologie*, especially from the work of the Romantic poet Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862), but he also drew upon ideas of communal living that he found in sources such as the American anthropologist Lewis Morgan (1818–1881), the Russian sociologist Maksim Kovalevskii (1851–1916) and the Swiss Jurist and anthropologist Johann Bachofen (1815–1887). Drawing on the then popular thesis developed in *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (1896) by the German economist and musicologist Karl Bücher (1847–1930), Veselovskii argued that the appearance of "song-games" answered the need for the release of "accumulated physical and psychical energy by means of rhythmically organized sounds and movements" (VESELOVSKII, 2004 [1899], p.201).[6] This rhythmic organization of choral singing arose in the play and dancing that embodied what Veselovskii called a "psychophysical catharsis." At this time the verbal element was incidental and almost without content since emotional factors predominated. There followed a gradual disintegration of the choral mass, with the emergence of a soloist and the development of a dialogue between soloist and chorus. Thus poetry arose and simultaneously a more elaborate language, since the differentiation of social relations and material interests, which raised the importance of the content of words, demanded clearly defined word meanings and a sophisticated form of syntax (VESELOVSKII, 2004 [1899], pp.130–53).[7]

If the influence of romanticism is fairly uncontroversial in Bakhtin studies[8] - and Bakhtin's idea of carnival as syncretic pageantry that becomes a structuring feature of literature almost certainly derives from Veselovskii - the influence of positivism is not. Indeed, it was *de rigueur* to abuse positivism in the USSR, where it was treated as something akin to a fetish for collecting facts for their own sake and imposing a vulgarized natural determinism on social phenomena. Yet positivism was much more complex, and its influence in the area we are discussing here much more important than is generally recognized. Auguste Comte's (1798–1857) account of the three-stage evolution of understandings of nature and society from early "fetishistic" explanations,

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[6] A Russian translation of Bücher's book appeared in 1899 and again in 1923 (BIUKHER, 1923). For recent discussions of the relevance of Bücher's work today see Backhaus, 2000 and Meyer-Kalkus, 2007.
[7] See also Engel´Gardt, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovskii*, pp.130–53. Compare also Herbert Spencer's discussion of the initial unity of rhythm in speech sound and motion from which distinct forms emerge in the process of evolution, Spencer, 1867.
[8] See, for instance, Tihanov, 1997.

based on a few facts linked by theological and mystical causes, through metaphysical explanations where more facts are linked by personified abstractions, to the isolation of the positive laws governing phenomena pervaded pre-Soviet and early Soviet thought (COMTE, 1973 [1855]).[9] Furthermore, it is now well recognized that Bakhtin was heavily influenced by Marburg neo-Kantianism. But it was a constant refrain of sociologists who came from the rival Baden school of neo-Kantians that the Marburgers were translating the positivist schema into the terms of critical idealism through their "search for a general logic for the exact or historical sciences" (ROSE, 1981, pp.21–22). As I have argued elsewhere (BRANDIST, 2000), this lay behind Bakhtin's discussion of the mono-logic and dia-logic that underlies each realm of science respectively. The difference from "classical" positivism was that in the Marburg scheme of things the very possibility of knowledge of the empirical world needed to be given up in favour of a new metaphysics, according to which the known world was a product of the indwelling categories of thought. Thus, the meeting of Bakhtin's ideas with positivism in the guise of evolutionary cultural theory is not so difficult to imagine, and in the USSR in the 1930s, this involved the incorporation of important features taken from the work of the British philosopher of social evolution Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and the evolutionary anthropologist Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917), the psychic unity of all peoples, and the so-called "doctrine of survivals," according to which analysis of surviving cultural forms or relics from the past could help to reconstruct the development of the mind and culture of mankind. [10]

Veselovskii was the most important pre-Revolutionary conduit for the ideas of the British positivist social anthropologists in the humanities in Russia. This influence derived from the way he employed the comparative method in the study of world literature with an unrivalled thoroughness and breadth, employing great erudition and sublety.[11] He sought to study series of literary facts, establish consecutive relations between those facts, deduce conformities to regular principles, consider whether such principles are causal and through accumulated verifications lead the "generalizations

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[9] See also Schmaus, 1982.
[10] The doctrine was originally proposed in Tylor (1871), which appeared in Russian translation the following year. On the development of this doctrine and method see Hodgen, 1931 and 1933 and Stocking, 1987, pp.164–79 et passim.
[11] See his characterization of the comparative method Veselovskii, 2004 [1870], p.47. See also Engel´Gardt, 1924, pp.52–64; Zhirmunskii, 1938; Zhirmunskii, 1939.

formulated" to "approach the exactitude of a law" (VESELOVSKII, 2004 [1870], p.47). Closely following the work of the British folklorist Andrew Lang (1844–1912), Veselovskii viewed Tylor's doctrine of survivals as the basis for a kind of evolutionary sequence of genres from mythology through folklore to developed literary formations (STOCKING, 1995, p.52).[12] In this way, Veselovskii diverged from the Indo-Europeanists who limited the comparative method to the study of peoples whose common descent was suspected, in order to uncover common ancestors who spoke a proto-language and partook of a shared mythology. Instead he adopted Lang's dictum that "similar conditions of mind produce similar practices, apart from identity of race, or borrowing of ideas and manners" (LANG, 1904 [1884], p.22). This was to exert a powerful influence on linguistic and literary scholarship after 1917. Genres and plot lines were in this way traced back until they become the objects of general ethnography, which Veselovskii, like Tylor and Lang, saw as arising in various places as a result of similar conditions. As the occasional member of the Bakhtin Circle, Boris Engel´gardt (1887–1942), argued in his 1924 study of the work of Veselovskii, that his "elimination of literary influences," i.e., diffusion, was a "necessary precondition for the analysis of literary facts from the point of view of their organicity" (ENGEL´GARDT, 1924, p.131). For Veselovskii, as for Lang, "[h]olding that myth is a product of the early human fancy, working on the most rudimentary knowledge of the outer world, the student of folklore thinks that differences of race do not much affect the early mythopoetic faculty" (LANG 1904 [1884], p.23). If Lang represented the most powerful and dogged opposition to the racially exclusive work of Indo-Europeanist philology in Britain, especially directed against the work of philologist and orientalist Max Müller (1823–1900), Veselovskii took that mantle in Russia.[13]

## 4 Semantic Palaeontology

The reception of Veselovskii's work at ILIaZV was pervasive and thoroughgoing, for some of the leading members of faculty had been Veselovskii's

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[12] See also Montenyohl, 1988. Veselovskii was particularly influenced by the chapter on "The Method of Folklore" in Lang, 1904 [1884], pp.10–28, and his two-volume work (1899). On this see Zhirmunskii, 1938, pp.52–53.

[13] On the struggle between the evolutionists and mythologists, exemplified in the work of Müller and Lang see Dorson, 1968.

students, including Viktor Zhirmunskii (1891–1917), Vladimir Shishmarev (1875–1957) and Nikolai Marr (1864/5–1934).[14] All these figures adopted the comparative-historical method, but towards the end of the decade, it was the version developed by Marr that became particularly influential. Notoriously, Marr developed the comparative method into the study of what he called the "single glottogonic process." According to Marr, all languages develop from plurality to unity, the stages of which correspond to certain stages in the development of the collective consciousness and in the development of the forces and relations of production.[15] Fundamental to Marr's thinking about the earliest, "diffuse" stage of language and thought was the idea of mythical thought as defined by another positivist thinker - indeed, a disciple of Comte himself - Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939). In his 1910 book *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, Lévy-Bruhl argued that early forms of thought were indifferent to logical contradiction and that, instead, social thought was governed by the so-called "law of participation" in which shared conceptions are governed by feeling and bodily activity.[16] The new narrative was now of humans liberating themselves from the hold of mythical thinking through the development of new forms of social organization and logical reasoning, which, in turn, gave rise to characteristic forms of what Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) had called "collective representations." In Marr's work, this involved the rise of more adequate semantic units and syntactic structures from the "diffuse" forms of primitive societies.

Marr assimilated these ideas into an evolutionary framework principally shaped by the work of Herbert Spencer, whom Marr regarded as perhaps the most important

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[14] Late in life, Bakhtin claimed to have known Shishmarev, for whom he clearly had considerable respect. On this subject see Duvakin, 1996, pp.62-3. The influence of Shishmarev on Bakhtin's later work has never been subject to systematic study, though the question of Bakhtin's knowledge of Shishmarev's work on Rabelais has been discussed by Popova, 2006, pp.98-9. Medvedev and Voloshinov certainly worked closely with Shishmarev at ILIaZV in the late 1920s (TsGALI 288/1/39/7ob; 288/1/29/92). Medvedev regarded Zhirmunskii as one of the thinkers closest to his own approach to literature, on which see Medvedev, 1992, p.92. On the complex relationship between the ideas of Voloshinov and Marr see Lähteenmäki and Vasil´ev, 2005. On Bakhtin's attitude toward Marr see Bakhtin, 1999, p.89; but the extent to which Bakhtin was actually familiar with Marr's own work, rather than those Marrists who studied literature is unclear.

[15] This characterizes Marr's ideas from around 1923. There is a huge amount of secondary material on Marr's ideas, especially in Russian. Among the most reliable and readily available are Thomas, 1957; Alpatov, 2004; Seriot, 2005; and Velmezova, 2007.

[16] On Lévy-Bruhl's debt to Comte see Schmaus, 1996. Lévy-Bruhl's book was translated into English (1926) and into Russian, with Marr's introduction (LEVI-BRIUL´, 1930)

influence on his intellectual development (MARR, 1935, p.127).[17] In Spencer's voluminous *System of Philosophy*, most particularly his *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* (1862) and *Principles of Sociology* (1874–75; enlarged 1876, 1885), one already finds several features that would become part of Marr's later conceptions, such as the primitive "indefiniteness" of early language and its correlation with the forms of thought Lévy-Bruhl was to consider characteristically "mythical," and the relationship between the development of language, thought and the evolution of social functions.[18] Linking these ideas to the doctrine of survivals, Marr held that the researcher could subject linguistic phenomena to paleontological analysis and uncover the earlier stages of language and thought, ultimately reaching back to the names of primordial totems. Whatever one might think about Marr's linguistic work, the fact is that the method itself developed from evolutionary studies into the semantics of myth and folklore, so when literary scholars began to adopt Marrist categories in literary analysis, they often proved to be quite productive.

Foremost in this development was Izrail´ Frank-Kamenetskii (1880–1937), a specialist in ancient Egyptian religion and the poetics of the Bible who led the "group for the study of myths and literary plots" at the Japhetic Institute (*Jafeticheskii institut* 1921–1929; subsequently N.Ia. Marr Institute of Language and Thinking, *Institut iazyka i myshleniia im. N.Ia. Marra* 1929–1950) and the "group for the paleontology of literary devices and plots" at ILIaZV. Frank-Kamenetskii had studied the philosophy and history of the ancient world in Germany under, among others, Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), Karl Bücher and Eduard Meyer (1855–1930), before moving on to study ancient Egyptian, Arabic and Hebrew with, among others, the founder of German critical studies of the Bible, Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918).[19] From Wellhausen, Frank-Kamenetskii adopted an approach to biblical studies that was uncompromisingly scientific and textologically meticulous. This led Wellhausen to contend that the Torah or Pentateuch had its origins in four originally independent texts dating from several

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[17] There is unfortunately no sustained analysis of Spencer's influence on Marr, but there are some pertinent observations by Desnitskaia, 1951, pp.48–50, and Velmezova, 2007, pp.205–11. In the same autobiographical sketch, Marr mentions as the other main influence on his career the Scottish reformer Samuel Smiles (1812–1904), who wrote books extolling the virtues of self help.

[18] See, for instance Spencer, 1904, vol.1, pp.335–41, pp.354–9, p.430.

[19] Biographical information based on materials in Frank-Kamenetskii's personal file in the archive of the Institute of Language and Thinking (PFA RAN, f.77, op.5, d.142ll., pp.13–15) and documents held in the same fond (PFA RAN (SPb) 77/1 (1937) /22).

centuries after the time of Moses, their traditional author, and which had been edited together.[20] Instead of a unitary text, Wellhausen revealed not only a montage structure, but that layers which had later been fused together as religious doctrine and evolved from animism through polytheism to monotheism. This encouraged Frank-Kamenetskii to develop an approach that treated the heroes of Biblical stories not as historical personages, but personifications and instantiations of universal cosmic forces. This determination to place the Bible within a wider perspective was encouraged by Meyer, who held that the "universal religions" which "claim to be world religions" are "so intertwined in their development... that only an overall consideration that holds each in equal regard allows a full understanding of their history" (quoted in TENBRUCH, 1987, p.244). For Meyer, as for Frank-Kamenetskii, such a study leads to a "theory of general forms of human life and human development" (quoted in TENBRUCH, 1987, p.245).

When Frank-Kamenetskii encountered Marrism in 1922, he saw in it a basis for the generalization of critical Biblical studies that could lead to a general theory of the development of religion and of narrative literature in general. In retrospect he argued that "Marr's theory of the single glottogonic process" posed a new task for those studying metaphor and plot: "the problem of the derivation and transformation of folkloric motifs from the shifts of successive stages of development of society and worldview" (PFA RAN, 77/1 (1934) /21/64). One of the earliest attempts to prove the thesis was Frank-Kamenetskii's 1925 article published in the journal of Marr's Japhetic Institute, in which the same plot motifs were revealed in an ancient Egyptian story and in a Georgian folktale (FRANK-KAMENETSKII, 1925). Here, he systematically excluded the possibility of what he called "mechanical borrowing" and discerned a common substratum of mythical conceptions from which the plots had emerged. While the specificities of a national culture should be recognized, they were now to be viewed as the result of historical development, with each culture "passing through the same stages, but complicated in each particular region by the specific conditions of space and time and authentically completed through interactions and influences" (FRANK-KAMENETSKII, 1935, p.113). Frank-Kamenetskii's training in critical Biblical studies

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[20] See especially Wellhausen, 1883, English translation (1885). The Russian translation was by N.M Nikol´skii (1877–1959), perhaps the founder of critical Biblical scholarship in Russia (VEL´GAUZEN, 1909). Among the appreciations of Wellhausen's work see Irwin, 1944; Wikgren, 1944; Momigliano, 1982.

inoculated him against the extravagances of Marr's frequently fantastic extrapolations from often very perceptive intuitions, and the former's focus on narrative forms rather than lexical units tended to provide more fruitful material for considerations of psychic unity. Already in the late 1920s, some fascinating works uncovering the presence of pervasive parallels of plot and metaphor in widely dispersed literary phenomena were appearing, culminating, in 1932, in the collective analysis of the feudal romance *Tristan and Isolde,* in which a series of researchers from ILIaZV and the Institute of Language and Thought isolated and analyzed parallels of plot and metaphor between the feudal romance and a large variety of earlier myths and folklore from the classical world, the Caucasus and the ancient east (MARR, 1932).

Frank-Kamenetskii's work often appears to be an attempt to provide an alternative explanation of mythopoesis (*mifotvorchestvo*) and the subsequent development of metaphors to that of Max Müller. In an article of 1929, Frank-Kamenetskii argued that Müller had been on the right track to argue the close connection between language and myth, but had inverted the primary and secondary factors by viewing myth as a disease of language rather than seeking the origins of language in the categories of mythical thinking.[21] Müller and Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) were among the theorists of myth whose works were subjected to systematic study by the "group for the study of myths and literary plots" at the Japhetic Institute from January 1926.[22] Frank-Kamenetskii's thought is closely related to the positivist stadial narrative that governs the approach of his evolutionist predecessors like Lang, but, as the above project suggests, it was more closely tied to semantics than almost any theorist of myth since Müller. For Frank-Kamenetskii, mythopoesis was a direct result of primitive man's perception, which divided the world into three realms: the heavens, the earth, and the transitional space in between. Shared spatio-temporal connections give rise to named binary oppositions such as light and darkness, up and down, left and right. This perception was initially governed by syncretism or diffuseness, the law of the identity of the part and whole, which allowed the substitution of the whole and any of its parts, and led to the development of fantastic modes of consciousness. This is

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[21] Interestingly, the claim that Müller and his colleagues had reversed the primary and secondary element in their analysis was made by Spencer, 1904, pp.818–37.
[22] The group involved, *inter alia*, Frank-Kamenetskii, Ivan Meshchaninov (1883–1967) and Shishmarev (PFA RAN 77/1/35/5).

because the isolation of notions and concrete features, the separation of the existent and non-existent, and the very cognition of the features themselves were impossible for primitive man who remained passive in the face of natural forces. These capacities developed in connection with the process of the organization of human labour according to a single rhythm, which leads to the formation of a single, regulated stream of impressions.[23] This provided the precondition for the isolation and cognition of the phenomena of internal and external experience. The further isolation of distinct phenomena progresses along with the development of material culture, which the researcher should connect with the development of linguistic categories.

In 1929, Frank-Kamenetskii published a long article in which he argued that, operating on different materials, but adhering to a common developmental paradigm, Japhetic theory and Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* bolstered each other in providing an account of how language and thought liberate themselves from the primordial myth in which they were originally entwined (FRANK-KAMENETSKII, 1929). Where Cassirer, as an idealist, attempted to provide a complete characterization of mythical thinking, Frank-Kamenetskii argued that Japhetic theory remained rooted in the analysis of linguistic data, material culture and specific texts. In the next years Frank-Kamenetskii, Ol´ga Freidenberg (1890–1955) and others published some significant achievements in literary studies through returning Marr's semantic paleontology to its anthropological roots but now correlating stadial theory with the successive social formations rooted in economic development which was coming to dominate Soviet sociology and history. Among the most important achievements, one should mention Frank-Kamenetskii's long 1935 article (FRANK-KAMENETSKII, 1935b) on the development of poetic metaphor and Freidenberg's 1936 book *The Poetics of Plot and Genre* (FREIDENBERG, 1936) in which theoretical conclusions for narrative theory were drawn.[24] We know that Bakhtin was familiar with this source.[25] But by this point, the new historical poetics was even being adopted by the former

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[23] This idea derived from Ludwig Noiré's (1829–89) labour theory of the origin of language, which had been championed by Georgii Plekhanov (1856–1918) and Aleksandr Bogdanov (1873–1928) before the Revolution, and was enthusiastically incorporated into Marrism in the 1920s. The most important text is Noiré (1880), translated into Russian as Nuare (1925). Translated extracts were also published in Plotnikov, 1925. In English, see Noiré, 1917.

[24] I.G. Frank-Kamenetskii, "K voprosu o razvitii poeticheskoi metafory," *Sovetskoe iazykoznanie* 1, 1935, pp.5–145; O.M. Freidenberg, *Poetika siuzheta i zhanra. Period antichnoi literatury* (LENINGRAD GIZ, 1936).

[25] On Bakhtin and Freidenberg see Moss,1984, pp.150–91; Osovskii, 2000; Perlina, 2002, pp.249–62.

fellow-traveller of the Formalists Zhirmunskii, who argued that Marr's teaching about the unity of the glottogonic process was "one of the most significant achievements of Soviet scientific thought" (ZHIRMUNSKII, 1936, p.383). It shows that literary scholarship must rise above national exclusiveness and postulate the unity of literary processes.

The comparative method, understood not as a separate methodology but as a method of research, will occupy a very important place in general history and in the history of art. Comparison should serve as a device for ascertaining the regularity of literary phenomena which correspond to certain stages of social development. (ZHIRMUNSKII, 1936, p.390)

The methodological conclusions were that similarities of a more general order— those of genres, styles, aesthetic principles, and ideological trends—could be due to identical socio-historical conditions. In any case, all influences are organic and socially conditioned, since for a feature to become influential, there had to be a prior demand for an ideological import, a pre-existence of analogous trends. All literary influence implied the more or less consistent adaptation of the model to local peculiarities of social development and local demands of the relevant social class in its social practice.

This brief survey of the development of historical poetics among Leningrad literary scholars of the 1920s and 1930s provides us with some important pointers as to how Bakhtin's work of the later 1930s developed, and one of the reasons why it remains distinct from the perspectives developed by Moscow-based literary theorists, such as Georg Lukács (1885–1971).[26] Bakhtin came to the developing Hegelian-Marxist theory of the novel with a certain amount of conceptual baggage, not only from German philosophy and literary theory, but from Leningrad literary scholarship. And it is this convergence that gave rise to such works as the essay on the chronotope (1975 [1981]; 1981 [1938]), the book on Rabelais (1965; 1984 [1965]) and the essay on the epic and the novel (1975 [1940]; 1981 [1940). What Bakhtin does now is apply the modes of analyzing plot structures and metaphors that had hitherto been applied to myths, folklore and ancient literature (including, in Freidenberg's (1930) work, the ancient Greek novel) to the modern European novel, drawing out structural phenomena which transcend national literatures, but which appear at different times and in specific forms

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[26] See, above all, Tihanov, 2000.

according to corresponding, or at least analogous, social formations. Thus, Dante and Dostoevsky present analogous spatio-temporal structures, giving rise to the same binary oppositions of space and time that result in the chronotopes as the road, the threshold, the staircase, and so on, which structure plots at various points throughout the history of narrative literature.

This trend in Soviet thought, therefore, constitutes one little-discussed and weakly evaluated trend that contributed to the synthesis that was Bakhtin's work.[27] The narrative of gradual liberation from mythical thinking towards science, punctuated by qualitative transformations is a specifically positivist narrative, amended, enriched and revised in accordance with the concerns of a particular trend in Soviet thought about the place of literature in the "becoming" of culture. Yet Bakhtin's work maintains its connection with Romanticism in that for him we not only have a gradual liberation from myth, but the notion that myth itself can be revisited in the cause of enlightenment. The Romantics had argued that early man had been in harmony with himself, nature and others, but that this primal harmony had been natural and did not depend on man's own efforts. The same feature of unity in myth pervades Marrist cultural theory. In the Romantic schema, this harmony had been torn apart by civilization, with man alienated from others as a result of the competition of civil society, and divided within himself as a result of the division of labour. Man had been estranged from nature after science had demystified it, making it an object to be dominated. In the Marrist schema this destruction of social and ideological unity is correlated with the rise of certain forms of economy that underlie social formations. For both the Romantics and the Marrists the task of modern man is to recreate on a self-conscious and rational level that unity which had once been given to early man and nature on a naïve and intuitive level. Now, for Bakhtin, the periodic revisiting of primal semantic clusters and mythical unity in the novel can inspire the creation of a self-conscious and rational unity.

What is missing from Bakhtin's account, however, is any consideration of what produces new contexts beyond the work of literature, and of how cultural forms are embedded in, while irreducible to, other social and, ultimately, natural structures. Indeed, such analyses are ruled out a priori by Bakhtin's adherence to the principles of

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[27] It is perhaps more precise to see Bakhtin's work as oscillating between a successful synthesis of pre-existing intellectual trends and an intriguing syncresis at which points the incompatibility of such trends is revealed.

neo-Kantianism, which required cultural forms to be treated as *sui generis* phenomena. Instead of searching analyses of the complex, multifaceted and dynamic relationships between literary and wider social forms, mediated by, *inter alia*, the institutional forms within which literature is produced and received, we have only gestures towards superficial correspondences, such as that between the rigid hierarchy of the tsarist state and the synchronic architectonics of Dostoevsky's novel. What is missing is economics, a sense that the form of production that predominates in a society constitutes a "general illumination that bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity" (MARX, 1973, p.107). Thus, Bakhtin drew upon the work of scholars like Frank-Kamenetskii, whose work presumed an inseparable bond (*uviazka*) between early forms of verbal and material culture, but then detached such observations from their roots in materialist anthropology.[28] This allowed the transposition of certain categories to facilitate analyses of the modern era, but at such a level of abstraction that concepts such as carnival and the chronotope have lost much of their critical force through their openness to quite arbitrary application. These categories need to be re-grounded and carefully circumscribed if they are to be proven as potent analytical tools. But it also needs to be recognized that transposition to analysis of the cultural phenomena of modern times requires a careful consideration of the institutional forms through which they are produced and received. This means understanding the assumptions upon which Bakhtin's categories were based and, if we wish to utilize them in work on modern cultural phenomena, moving beyond them, revising and developing them according to the social and economic preconditions of those phenomena.

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[28] Frank-Kamenetskii even drew up a research programme with Freidenberg and others at IIaM to establish a distinct field called "desmotics" (*desmotika*, from the Greek *desmo*, meaning "bond" or "chain") that would take the bond between speech and material culture as its object (PFA RAN 853/1/86/16–17). One of the few published results is Frank-Kamenetskii, 1935c, but one may safely regard Megrelidze's, 2007 [1938] as a product of the same trend.

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