

## A SKEPTIC AT THE CRADLE OF THEORY

Gustav Shpet's Reflections on Literature

This chapter takes the discussion of the different regimes of relevance and valorization of literature begun in Chapter 1 into a new territory. I am interested in revealing how a milder version of the traditional regime of relevance, which insisted on the wider social commitment and cultural significance of literature, facilitated during the 1920s an interpretation of literature not through the prism of literary theory—which would have entailed an insistence on the uniqueness of literature grounded in the specific way it uses language (the condition *sine qua non* for modern literary theory after its inception in the 1910s)—but rather through the less radical screen of aesthetics and philosophy of art. The reader would recall the Introduction to this book, in which I advanced the hypothesis that the gradual emancipation from philosophy was a central condition for the emergence of literary theory around World War I. Gustav Shpet (1879–1937) is very much a thinker who participated in this process, but his place in it remained contradictory and inconclusive: while foreshadowing some important tenets of Structuralism, as we shall see later, his ultimate loyalty tended to be with a philosophical and aesthetic approach to literature and the arts, rather than with a perspective that would have required recognition of their discursive autonomy and specificity. He rejected Russian Formalism (and thus also literary theory at its inception), and the Formalists repaid him in kind; a comparison with Bakhtin, later in this chapter, finds Shpet defending views on literature (especially the novel) that initially he and Bakhtin shared, but from which Bakhtin distanced himself

in later years, leaving Shpet as a proudly staunch supporter of what were, by then, past approaches to literature. Neither a Marxist nor a religious thinker (despite some residual presence of these discourses in his writings), neither a Formalist nor a Bakhtinian, Shpet's life and work must be examined closely if we are to appreciate the fluctuation of positions and the intersection of different ways of understanding literature and its regimes of relevance in the Soviet 1920s.

In Russia, Shpet has by now entered the domestic canon of philosophy as the most significant Russian philosopher to emerge during the interwar period. The principal promoter of Husserlian phenomenology, while at the same time creatively modifying Husserl and departing from him on some essential points, Shpet was also an early advocate of modern hermeneutics. He left behind seminal work spanning psychology, philosophy, aesthetics, literary and theater studies, and the history of Russian thought. Notwithstanding his intellectual significance, Shpet's contributions are yet to be appropriated in the West, where familiarity with his work hardly goes beyond a relatively narrow circle of Slavists and an even smaller number of committed phenomenologists. This chapter therefore begins by furnishing a "thick" description of Shpet's involvement with literature, the theater, and the practice of literary translation, embedded in an outline of the main stages of his life and intellectual evolution, along with an account of the principal areas of his work. Once the larger context of his multifaceted intellectual endeavors has been established, the latter part of the chapter assesses the precarious balance between innovation and regression that marks his contribution to the study of literature and theater in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and at the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (GAKhN); I am particularly interested in locating Shpet's place in a force field shaped by the work of his contemporaries: the Russian Formalists and Mikhail Bakhtin.

### Shpet's Life and Intellectual Career

In the absence of a serious book-length biography, piecing together Shpet's life and sketching his intellectual trajectory is not an easy task. One can identify four major periods in Shpet's career. The first one begins in 1903, when Shpet published his first scholarly reviews, and ends with his turn to phenomenology in 1912–13. The second period, Shpet's most creative and fruitful, runs from

1912–13 to 1923. The third period, marked by Shpet's close involvement in the work of GAKhN, begins in 1923–24 (Shpet was elected vice-president of GAKhN in 1924) and ends in 1930 with his forced retirement from the Academy. The fourth and final period comprises the years between 1930 and his death in 1937.

Born on 7 April 1879 in Kiev to a Polish mother (who never learned to write in Russian)<sup>1</sup> and a Hungarian father who had disappeared before his son's birth, Shpet finished classical high school in Kiev and then registered in 1898 as a student at Kiev University, initially in the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics (inasmuch as he was classed as an illegitimate child, tsarist legislation prevented him from enrolling at university until he was formally adopted—less than a year before his enrolment—by his mother's brother). In 1899, Shpet was expelled for participating in Social Democratic activities and exiled to Kherson for some five months.<sup>2</sup> His knowledge of Marxism dates from this time (he read Engels, Kautsky, and Plekhanov in Kherson); although a sympathizer in his youth, he rejected it soon afterward, but continued to read Marx into the latter half of the 1910s (along with the writings of anarchists and reformist socialists). On being readmitted to the university in 1901, Shpet enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philology and began to attend the famous psychology seminars of Professor G. I. Chelpanov (later a patron and promoter of Shpet's career). Shpet followed Chelpanov to Moscow in 1907, becoming a *Privat-Dozent* and undertaking teaching at Moscow University and in the Higher Women's Courses. In 1910, he traveled to Germany to expand his knowledge of philosophy and psychology.

This period of Shpet's life and work is marked by the formative influence of European Enlightenment philosophy. Of particular importance in these early years were Hume and Kant, in whose orbit his thought moved for about ten years after 1903. The first mature works Shpet wrote were on the problem of causality in Hume and Kant, and on Hume's skepticism and Kant's response to it. In this early period, Shpet feverishly reviewed and translated works of and on philosophy and psychology.

Shpet's second, and most creative, period can be said to have commenced with his intermittent stays at Göttingen in 1912–14. It was there, in the autumn of 1912, that he met Husserl, an event of enormous significance for Shpet's evolution as a thinker. Shpet's embrace of phenomenology, but also his departure from Husserl in certain key aspects, are documented in his first major work, *Iavlenie i smysl* (1914; Appearance and Sense). Despite Lev Shestov's advice

that Shpet arrange for a German translation of the book, this was not done; an English translation appeared only in 1991.

On his return from Germany, Shpet worked on the philosophy of history and the methodology of the historical sciences and on a book on hermeneutics, *Hermeneutics and Its Problems*, published in Russian only in 1989–92, which was an attempt at a synthesis of phenomenology and hermeneutics, moving gradually closer to the latter. At the same time Shpet remained interested in psychology and metaphysics, his essay “Consciousness and Its Owner” appearing in Russian in 1916.

On 1 October 1918, the new regime abolished all academic degrees and titles and replaced them by the single title of professor. Following this decree, 175 *privat-dotsenty* at Moscow University, including Shpet, received the title of professor.<sup>3</sup> The years immediately preceding and following the October Revolution of 1917 represent the peak of Shpet’s creativity, generating the ideas that would inform his later works. The important article “The Subject and Tasks of Ethnic Psychology,” for example, written in 1917–18, later became the nucleus of his *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology*, while the book on hermeneutics, mentioned above, bore on his later book *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* (1927; *The Inner Form of the Word*). It is in this period that Shpet wrote his most significant work on aesthetics and literary theory, “Esteticheskie fragmenty” (*Aesthetic Fragments*), the three parts of which took less than a month to complete (26 January–19 February 1922). Finally, during this period of his life, he published important articles on theater, the philosophy of art, and the methodology of art history, and offered his own interpretation of the early stages of the evolution of Russian philosophy, as well as seminal studies of two important Russian thinkers, Herzen and Lavrov. His *Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* (1922), of which only part 1 was published, provoked both enthusiasm (Koyré) and skepticism (Florovsky).<sup>4</sup>

The years 1922–23 saw the end of this extraordinarily fruitful stage in Shpet’s career and ushered in a period that was increasingly marked by diversity under duress. The propitious volatility of the first postrevolutionary decade, still tolerant and conducive to creativity, was about to be supplanted by a climate of ideological control and suppression, the brutality of which could not fail to leave its stamp on Shpet’s later fortunes. Generally skeptical of both Marxism and religious philosophy, the last—and at the same time the most pronounced and most persistent—Westernizer in the history of twentieth-century Russian thought, Shpet cut an ever-lonelier figure in the Soviet context. The Berlin-

based émigré newspaper *Rul'* reported in early September 1922 that Shpet had been arrested in Moscow on the night of 16 August, together with the "entire Berdiaev Circle" (no other source has so far verified this information, nor was Shpet known as an exponent of Berdiaev's philosophy).<sup>5</sup> The closure of the Philosophy Department at Moscow University a year earlier had left him deprived of an institutional base, an academic without students or colleagues. With seemingly endless opportunities in sight, there appeared not to be a single worthwhile aim that could mobilize his energy. Shpet's attention was now frequently claimed by more projects than he could have reasonably hoped to bring to fruition. The promised sequel to the first part of his *Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* was never completed, nor was the continuation of his *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology*. Shpet was engaged in theater discussions, in literary disputes, in the work of various professional societies (some of them of a trade-union nature), and in prize juries (in 1926, for example, he was on the jury in a competition for the best translation of Boileau's *Art poétique*).<sup>6</sup> At the same time he was closely involved with several educational and research institutions, most importantly with the Institute of Scientific Philosophy, where he served as founding director (1921–23), and—over a considerably longer period of time—with the above-mentioned GAKhN.<sup>7</sup> But even GAKhN, increasingly isolated and under growing ideological pressure by 1927, was doomed to fall under Party control in 1929. In October 1929, Shpet was discharged from his duties as vice-president of GAKhN; in January 1930, his membership was terminated and he was forced into retirement. His personal library, at the time totaling five thousand volumes, freely accessible to his GAKhN colleagues, was broken up.<sup>8</sup> None of this, however, could spare him the humiliation of a Party-led purge, to which he, along with twenty-four other members of GAKhN, was subjected in the summer of 1930. According to the resolution of the Commission for the Purge issued on 16 July 1930, he was banned from scholarly work and was only allowed to undertake translations if "proper ideological guidance is guaranteed."<sup>9</sup>

All of this explains why between 1924 and 1929 Shpet was unable to produce much that was of substance and originality. His two important books of the third period, *Vvedenie v etnicheskuiu psikhologiiu* (1926; *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology*)<sup>10</sup> and *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* (1927), revisited ideas formulated, as we have seen, in the late 1910s. In fact, after 1927 Shpet appears to have produced no more than an updated version of his short article "Literature" (on which more later) and an unfinished text on the philosophical sources of

Chernyshevsky's dissertation; Shpet abandoned this unfinished text in 1929, the year of his deposition as vice-president of GAKhN.

The final period of Shpet's life and intellectual career, from his forced retirement from GAKhN in January 1930 until his execution in 1937, was marked by constant insecurity. Although he was actively involved in translation and work for the theater, notably in the preparation of the prestigious eight-volume Academia edition of Shakespeare's works, his belief in the meaningfulness of philosophy and scholarship had been irreversibly destroyed. He undertook adaptations, editorial work, and internal reviewing; his most significant accomplishment after 1930 was the translation of an imposing body of literature, mainly from the English Romantic and realist canon, as well as philosophical works by Berkeley and Hegel, most importantly the latter's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (small portions of which he had translated in his youth as a private exercise in translation).<sup>11</sup> Much of this work was done in Yeniseysk and Tomsk in Siberia, where Shpet was exiled following his arrest and trial in 1935, when he was accused of anti-communist bias at GAKhN and of participating in editorial work on the "fascist" German-Russian Dictionary.<sup>12</sup> He was rearrested in Tomsk in October 1937 and shot there on 16 November. The precise date of his death remained unknown until 1989.

### Shpet's Literary and Theatre Affiliations: Institutions and Networks

Having briefly sketched Shpet's intellectual biography, I must now turn to a detailed reconstruction of his participation in Russian and Soviet literature and theatre; a comprehensive account of this involvement would assist us in understanding his precarious position between different approaches to literature and different regimes of its valorization during the 1920s and the 1930s. I draw here on previously unheeded published and unpublished sources, bringing together strains of research that have so far remained unconnected, in order to establish the most significant aspects of Shpet's involvement with Russian and Soviet culture, with a focus on the most relevant areas: literature, translation, and the theater.

### Among the Symbolists

Shpet's literary and theater affiliations commenced in earnest after his move to Moscow in 1907. In Kiev, where he studied at the St. Vladimir University, he had published brief newspaper notes under the pseudonym "Lord Genry,"<sup>13</sup> but Moscow, and Russian Symbolism, were the ground of his first serious association with a major literary and artistic circle, "The Society of Free Aesthetics," also known simply as "Aesthetics." "Aesthetics" was founded under the informal leadership of Valery Briusov; other distinguished participants included Andrei Belyi, Mikhail Gershenzon, and the artist Valentin Serov, the literary scholars Sakulin and Dzhivelegov, and the philosophers Fedor Stepun and Boris Vysheslavtsev, to name but a few. Shpet befriended several fellow participants, notably Symbolist poet Iurgis Baltrushaitis, who was to become a life-long friend, and the brothers Emilii and Nikolai Metner. A couple of years later, Shpet joined the group around the Musaget publishing house, dominated by Emilii Metner, Belyi, and Lev Kobylinskii (Ellis), the latter also a friend of Shpet's.

In this environment, Shpet's most important interlocutor seems to have been Andrei Belyi. Although Belyi regarded Shpet as a latecomer, he evidently had considerable respect for Shpet's taste and valued his background in philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Shpet sarcastically warned Belyi on numerous occasions against playing with, or "parading," philosophy in his poems; in Belyi's words—reporting Shpet's—in order to be a truly philosophical poet, one didn't need to wear "a shabby tailcoat borrowed from [Heinrich] Rickert's wardrobe."<sup>15</sup> Belyi confessed to being "in love" with Shpet's "subtle and sophisticated mind" and regarded him as a potential contributor to the journal who could write on Johann Gottlieb Fichte and on Polish philosophy and culture (Shpet read Belyi the poetry of Słowacki and Mickiewicz in Polish).<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, a year later, in October 1910, Shpet's outspokenness led Belyi to write to Metner that Shpet was "brilliant, but apparently hostile to us."<sup>17</sup> Despite this early difference, Shpet and Belyi worked together once again after the revolution. Belyi chaired the council of the Moscow branch of the Free Philosophical Association, established in September 1921; Shpet was elected one of his deputies. A few years later, in 1927, Belyi wrote to Ivanov-Razumnik that his gradual estrangement from Shpet had to do with the latter's attraction to alcohol, which Belyi did not wish to share.<sup>18</sup> Belyi briefly resumed the acquaintance in 1933, about a year before his death.<sup>19</sup>

Shpet was not the only philosopher to participate in the activities around the Musaget publishing house; Vladimir Ern, Sergei Bulgakov, Sergei Gessen,

Nikolai Berdiaev and Mikhail Gershenzon were also frequently seen there. From 1910 to 1914, Musaget published the Russian version of *Logos*, the international journal of philosophy, edited by Fedor Stepun and Sergei Gessen. Within Musaget, there was a clear divide between those who were in favor of the line represented by *Logos* and those who opposed it as being too neo-Kantian and not sufficiently heeding other currents in contemporary philosophy. Shpet, Ern, and Bulgakov were in the camp of the opponents; in Shpet's case, this was no doubt motivated by a rejection of neo-Kantianism in favor of phenomenology.

Among the Symbolists, Shpet became more intimately acquainted not only with Belyi, Baltrushaitis, Ellis (and Nikolai Feofilaktov, the principal illustrator of *Vesy*), but also with Viacheslav Ivanov. Their contacts are yet to be studied in detail, but it would appear from the scattered evidence available that over time the relationship grew from Shpet's respect for and interest in Ivanov the poet and thinker into a friendship in which Ivanov gradually came to acknowledge Shpet's seriousness as philosopher and commentator on literature. Lev Shestov mentions captivating discussions with his guests Ivanov, Shpet, and Berdiaev at his home on the evening of 8 December 1914.<sup>20</sup> Shpet's letters to his second wife, Nataliia Guchkova-Shpet, reveal that in the summer of 1915 he and Lev Shestov often visited Ivanov to hear him read from his poetry, sometimes in the company of Bal'mont, Baltrushaitis, and A. M. Remizov (Shpet later received a brief mention in Remizov's *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'* [Whirlwind Russia]), at others in Mikhail Gershenzon's.<sup>21</sup> Shpet described Ivanov's poems read on one such occasion (7 June 1915) as "superb." Ivanov was apparently an authority in Shpet's eyes, not just as a poet, but also as a mentor inculcating in Shpet relentless work discipline.<sup>22</sup> Shpet presented Ivanov with three of his publications, with a personal inscription on each occasion.<sup>23</sup> Later, during Ivanov's first years in Italy, Shpet was apparently instrumental in GAKhN electing Ivanov as one of its "member-candidates" in December 1926.<sup>24</sup> Shpet endeavored to assist Ivanov by offering to buy his Moscow library on behalf of GAKhN.<sup>25</sup> For his part Ivanov wanted to entrust Shpet with overseeing the final stage of publication, including the proofreading, of his translation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy (the publication of which by GAKhN in the end did not materialize),<sup>26</sup> thinking that this demanded so much knowledge and organizational talent that only Shpet could do it.<sup>27</sup>

Behind these personal ties to some of the major poets of Russian Symbolism, we have to see (and here only briefly refer to) the larger picture: Symbolism left its crucial imprint on Shpet's subsequent aesthetic theory, contributing to



the formation of his overall conservative platform.<sup>28</sup> Shpet was shaped by the aesthetic values and preferences of Russia's Silver Age, and this determined his rather mixed reception of the avant-garde. His appreciation of "seriousness" and his fight against "emptiness, utilitarian attitudes [*utilitarnosti*], [and] barbarism" found support in the philosophical ambition, gravitas, and decorum of Symbolism, whose praise he continued to sing into the 1920s in his "Esteticheskie fragmenty," while at the same time rejecting Futurism.<sup>29</sup>

#### Involvement in the Literary Periodicals of the 1920s and in Translation

Shpet's contribution to Russian culture—and his own embeddedness in it, which facilitated his reflection on literature and the theater—should not just be measured by the scope and the quality of his original work. He was an indefatigable promoter of Western philosophy, whose translations span an impressive range of authors from Berkeley to Hegel and Rickert. His single most important translation of a philosophical text, that of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is a major accomplishment and the result of selfless work and perseverance during the last two years of his life (the translation did not appear until 1959). Here, however, I want to focus on Shpet's multiple contributions as participant, sometimes also driving force, behind a number of literary periodicals, and as a translator of verse and prose, an aspect of his career that has remained largely unexplored. The added value of such research is threefold: it helps to reveal Shpet's extensive network of contacts with a number of both significant and lesser-known twentieth-century Russian poets active as translators, notably Mikhail Kuzmin, as well as the (often leading) part he played in a string of journals and almanacs in the 1920s; even more important, Shpet's work as translator after his expulsion from GAKhN assists us in grasping the practice of literary translation as an instrument of ideological power and a site of competing valorizations of literature during the 1930s; finally, research into Shpet's work as translator of prose and poetry allows an insight into the mechanisms of canon formation and the theory of literary translation in the Soviet 1930s.

Shpet's first known translations of verse were a distich by Plato and a fragment from Alcaeus, published in the third issue (September 1923) of the obscure typewritten literary journal *Hermes*.<sup>30</sup> The journal was launched in the summer of 1922 by a group of young men, most of them aspiring poets and philologists. The person behind the first two issues was Boris Gornung, a member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle in its later years. He formed an

editorial board that included, among others, his brother Lev Gornung, the promising philologist Maksim Kenigsberg—to whose memory Shpet's book *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* is dedicated—and Kenigsberg's friend (later his wife) Nina Vol'kenau.<sup>31</sup> The last two issues (out of four) saw a change in the editorial board, which was now chaired by Kenigsberg and was joined by Aleksei Buslaev (another member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and its chairman at the time the first issue of *Hermes* was published) and Viktor Mozalevskii. Kenigsberg's untimely death in 1924 meant that only the first part of the fourth issue was prepared, already without Boris Gornung's participation as a member of the editorial board.<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of 1924 a "scholarly-artistic" advisory board was formed, chaired by Shpet and including some of his GAKhN colleagues, notably Aleksandr Gabrichesvkii, Mikhail Petrovskii, and Aleksandr Chelpanov. Shpet and his colleagues had great plans for the second part of the fourth issue, which was supposed to contain a number of scholarly articles; instead, these were all published some three years later, long after the journal had ceased to exist. Shpet's article on Humboldt evolved into a book, *Vnutrenniaia forma slova*; the articles that were to be written by Petrovskii, Zhinkin, Guber, and Volkov<sup>33</sup> appeared in GAKhN's 1927 collective volume *Khudozhestvennaia forma* (Artistic Form).<sup>34</sup>

Shpet's close involvement with these young literati continued over the next few years, until around 1926–27. Along with Nikolai Berner and Aleksandr Romm,<sup>35</sup> Boris Gornung conceived the typewritten literary almanac *Mnemosyne* (1924); he confirmed in a letter to Mikhail Kuzmin of September 1924 that Shpet had been the driving force behind the formation of the new group that launched it.<sup>36</sup> Another almanac, *Hyperborean*, which saw the light of day in Moscow toward the end of 1926, was the result of collaboration, under Shpet's guidance, between the Gornung brothers and several GAKhN scholars, including Nikolai Volkov and Boris Griftsov. A second issue of *Hyperborean* was in preparation in 1927 but was banned by the GPU.<sup>37</sup> Shpet's translation of Plato's distich was reprinted in the *Mnemosyne*, and *Hyperborean* brought out his article "Literature," the 1929 manuscript version of which was eventually published in Tartu in 1982.<sup>38</sup> Since *Hermes* and *Hyperborean* were produced in just twelve copies each,<sup>39</sup> the likely impact of Shpet's contributions there was probably rather limited, although Boris Gornung did insist that these periodicals were read by hundreds of people in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kazan, and Nizhnii Novgorod.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1920s, Shpet was still translating sporadically, and mostly for pleasure; not

so in the 1930s, when after his removal from GAKhN translating became his principal way of earning a living. Shpet was no doubt handsomely equipped for a career as a professional translator. He stated in a declaration to the Prosecution, written in 1937, that he had command of thirteen foreign languages: English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Latin, and Greek; the number of languages he could translate from was even larger—seventeen.<sup>41</sup> Shpet undertook editorial work on translations from English, Polish, German, and the Scandinavian languages; he also acted as evaluator of translations for various publishers, most frequently for Academia.<sup>42</sup>

More often than not, Shpet translated prose, Dickens being at the center of his work after 1930. Both *Hard Times* and *Bleak House* (the latter abridged for children and adolescents) appeared in 1933 in Shpet's translation. His translation of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* was rejected, however, and Shpet had to resign himself to being allowed to compile a volume of commentaries published in 1934.<sup>43</sup> Shpet was also considering a multivolume edition of Dickens, and even a Dickens Encyclopedia.<sup>44</sup> While in exile, he tried unsuccessfully to get Academia to commission him to translate *David Copperfield* and to edit what was meant to be the first complete Russian translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*;<sup>45</sup> he also translated Oliver Goldsmith's play *She Stoops to Conquer*.<sup>46</sup> Earlier on, he had served as the editor of a two-volume translation of Thackeray's writings, for which he wrote the notes to *Vanity Fair* (1933–34), and had prepared a partial translation of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.<sup>47</sup>

Schiller's letters to Goethe, on which Shpet worked in 1935–37, are his only known translation of German prose; Goethe's letters to Schiller were entrusted to Mikhail Petrovskii (1887–1937), a literary scholar and Shpet's former colleague at GAKhN, later an exile in Tomsk where he worked as a scholar-bibliographer at the University Library before being rearrested and shot. The translation published in 1937 (with an introduction by György Lukács) did not carry the name of either Shpet or Petrovskii.<sup>48</sup>

It is, however, Shpet's work as translator of verse in the 1930s that gives us access to the intricate politics of translation and the continuous debates over how to bestow relevance on literature under Stalinism. The 1930s saw the most sustained and energetic campaign to bring the works of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European canon to Soviet readers. The idea was initially Gorky's, but his pet project (for which the publishing house World Literature was founded) lost momentum after he left the country in the autumn of 1921. It is not by accident that the idea was revived precisely in the 1930s.<sup>49</sup> Establishing

a new canon of widely read classic works was part of Stalin's cultural politics designed to produce a sentiment of unity and a picture of public consensus built around the supposedly shared aesthetic (read, ideological) values embodied in the Russian and Western literary tradition of the past two centuries. This new canon was more inclusive of works previously stigmatized as representative of the "abstract" bourgeois humanism that Party-minded art had been encouraged to fight and leave behind. From the mid-1930s on, bourgeois realism was in fashion once again, protected by attempts to unite around a shared anti-fascist ideological platform. The new line did for a while soften the perception of rigidity that Stalin's cultural policies produced abroad. In 1935, Ehrenburg, Babel, and Pasternak were able to participate in the Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture on an equal footing with their Western colleagues. Pasternak's reluctance there to assign art that clearly defined political tasks was indicative of this freshly licensed humanistic outlook.

At home, the subscription to the new canon was meant to conceal the deep rifts and the contest between the irreconcilably different national perspectives within the multinational, multicultural Soviet society; it also aimed at obliterating the differences between social strata: workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia were now exposed to the same canon that was projecting the same swath of values. To attain this goal, translation had to be a closely monitored activity,<sup>50</sup> and it also had to be proactive and "practice-orientated," that is, delivering not just samples of great literary style and craftsmanship but above all versions of the classics that would have a purchase on the everyday lives of their Soviet readers. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the practice of literary translation in the 1930s was marked by a serious discord between the principles of faithfulness (to the original) and usefulness (to the target audience). The former principle was eventually condemned as "literalism" and had to give way to a culture of translation based on lower artistic expectations and higher political returns. The political war over the principles of translation—ultimately, over the ways in which literature is valorized—was plain to see in the polemics surrounding two of the most ambitious projects of the 1930s: the multivolume editions of Goethe's and Shakespeare's works. The first two volumes of the Goethe edition, in the organization of which Shpet's former GAKhN colleague Aleksandr Gabrichevskii was closely involved, were met with protests at the allegedly low use-value of the translations, which failed to provide the Soviet readership with much needed "current phrases" that could be of help to propagandists, philosophers, and scholars.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the Academia edition of Shakespeare's works

was attacked (notably by Chukovskii and Mirskii) for the misleading “precision” of some of the translations, which allegedly made the access of the Soviet reader to Shakespeare more difficult by obscuring rather than revealing his genius.

Shpet brought to his work as translator of verse his baggage of unconditional professionalism and rigor that also marked his style of philosophizing. Small wonder then that he would often be reproached for siding with the “literalists.” Sometimes this was justified by his occasionally excessive faithfulness to the original; at others, he was simply the victim of an overarching ideological imperative—the “democratization” of the classics—which he felt unable to heed.

Shpet’s translations of verse in the 1930s included Byron’s dramatic poems “Manfred,” “Cain,” and “Heaven and Earth,” as well as “Age of Bronze,”<sup>52</sup> and Tennyson’s “Enoch Arden,” the latter translated in September–October 1935 and first published sixty years later.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, given the polemics on the philosophy of translation outlined above, his translations of Byron’s poems were met with some hostility. Anna Radlova, the wife of stage director Sergei Radlov and a poet in her own right, wrote to Lev Kamenev<sup>54</sup> (in response to Shpet’s critical remarks on her translations of *Othello* and *Macbeth*) that she was not prepared to accept Shpet’s taste and translation techniques, demonstrated in his own rendition of Byron.<sup>55</sup> Radlova meant by this Shpet’s unbending insistence on precision, which on occasion favored the literal over the creative. Shpet defended himself by responding to Kamenev that eminent poets such as Kuzmin and Pasternak had praised his translation.<sup>56</sup> Accusations of “literalism” were also leveled by Chukovskii and Shklovsky. In February 1934, in a letter to Tynianov, Shklovsky ridiculed Shpet’s explanatory notes: “it seems that Shpet glossed the word ‘crocodile’ in Byron by adding a note giving the Latin for it.”<sup>57</sup> For once, Shklovsky was neither exaggerating nor making things up.<sup>58</sup>

When considering Shpet’s career as translator of verse, one has to give prominence to his work on the prestigious eight-volume Shakespeare edition published by Academia in 1936–49, under the general editorship of Sergei Dinamov (himself a victim of Stalin’s purges, shot in April 1939) and Aleksandr Smirnov, a prominent literary scholar, the author of *Shakespeare’s Work* (1934), and in 1946 one of the three official evaluators of Mikhail Bakhtin’s dissertation “Rabelais in the History of Realism.” At the early preparatory stages of the edition, Shpet was confirmed as member of the editorial committee, alongside Bukharin, Lunacharskii, M. Rozanov, and Smirnov.<sup>59</sup> In a letter to Stalin written in November 1935 in Yeniseysk (probably never sent), Shpet took pride in his role as a member of the working group preparing the edition and pleaded that he

be allowed to resume his editorial duties. Before his arrest, he had read a number of draft translations by “experienced translators such as Mikhail Kuzmin and Osip Rumer” and had “subjected these to brutal correction,” although he knew that not everybody would agree with his demand for “super-philological exactitude.”<sup>60</sup> In the same letter, Shpet cited Smirnov and the poets Mikhail Kuzmin,<sup>61</sup> Boris Pasternak,<sup>62</sup> and Pavel Antokol’skii as potential guarantors of the quality of his work.

Shpet’s defensive mention of “super-philological exactitude” in this letter is an unmistakable response to those of his critics who favored the utilitarian principles of translation over precision and philological soundness. The tension between these two attitudes came to be felt acutely as work on the Shakespeare edition progressed. Over time, Smirnov and Shpet had established a smooth and efficient cooperation, with Shpet meticulously editing the translations of several key plays, including *Macbeth* (in this case his contribution amounted in effect to co-translating the play) and *King Lear*.<sup>63</sup> The balance was disturbed when D. S. Mirskii was appointed a consultant to the edition, thus strengthening the positions of the utilitarian wing around Kornei Chukovskii. In his letters to Shpet, Smirnov objected to this appointment and to Mirskii’s written evaluation of the work that had been done so far. He even contemplated abandoning his editorial duties but was dissuaded by Kamenev. The situation turned truly unpleasant when Smirnov revealed to Shpet that Chukovskii was plotting to oust the philosopher from the edition.<sup>64</sup> Diminished in stature and authority after the purges at GAKhN, Shpet was no longer able to defend himself. Shpet’s article-length response to Mirskii’s criticisms of Sergei Solov’ev and Shpet’s translation of *Macbeth* remained unpublished at the time; Shpet had to content himself with a letter seeking Kamenev’s understanding and support.<sup>65</sup> The depressing irony in this otherwise banal story of ideological and personal rivalry is that Mirskii himself was soon to become an outcast; he perished two years after Shpet, another victim of Stalinism.

#### Shpet and the Theater: Affiliations and Ideas

Aleksandr Tairov, later the founder of the famous Kamerny [Chamber] Theater, acknowledged Shpet’s beneficial influence on his formative time and first steps in the theater, so Shpet must have been moving in theater circles as early as 1905, while still in Kiev.<sup>66</sup> Shpet, Tairov, and his spouse, the actress Alisa Koonen, preserved their friendship in later years; Shpet published his impor-

tant essay “Teatr kak iskusstvo” (Theater as Art) in the Kamerny Theater’s journal, *Masterstvo teatra* (The Craft of Theater).<sup>67</sup>

Shpet’s pronounced preference for realism as an aesthetic foundation of the modern theater led him to a closer association with Stanislavsky’s Moscow Art Theater, at a time when its innovative force had admittedly been on the wane for a number of years. On 24 January 1928, the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment approved the artistic council of Stanislavsky’s theater; since he was (still) at the time the holder of a high office at GAKhN, Shpet was appointed a member of the council from the “public organizations” quota (the renowned expert on Marx and Marxism David Riazanov and the prominent literary critics Viacheslav Polonskii and Aleksandr Voronskii were elected from the same quota).<sup>68</sup> Shpet’s comments in this capacity are preserved in the minutes of the council’s discussions in 1928 on Leonid Leonov’s play *Untilovsk* and Valentin Kataev’s *The Embezzlers*, a stage adaptation of his better-known novel by the same title.<sup>69</sup> At Stanislavsky’s invitation, in 1932, Shpet became professor and deputy rector at the Actors’ Academy.<sup>70</sup> In 1933, he was one of the initiators of a small working group that read and commented on a book manuscript of Stanislavsky’s, eventually completed in 1935 and published the following year in English translation in the United States as *An Actor Prepares*.<sup>71</sup> Shpet was also one of the organizers of the nationwide discussion of Stanislavsky’s bestseller *My Life in Art*.<sup>72</sup> As late as 1938, unaware of his death, Shpet’s wife wrote to Stalin to ask for a favorable intervention on his behalf, referring, among other plans, to her husband’s projected nine-volume history of the Moscow Art Theater.<sup>73</sup>

Shpet’s immediate knowledge of the Russian theater scene also included an acquaintance with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, whose memoirs Shpet read while already in exile.<sup>74</sup> These high-profile contacts in the Moscow Art Theater, but above all his friendship with Vasilii Kachalov and Ol’ga Knipper-Chekhova, two of its most famous actors, meant that Shpet was able to depend on the voluble concern of the theatrical profession when he was arrested in 1935. Kachalov and Knipper-Chekhova were among the signatories of petitions asking for Shpet’s relocation from Yeniseysk to Tomsk, a university town with a library and better conditions for scholarly and literary work, and for permission for his family to continue to reside in Moscow after he had been exiled.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, not knowing that Shpet had already been shot, Kachalov alone wrote a letter to Stalin asking for his full rehabilitation.<sup>76</sup>

In 1936, already an exile in Tomsk, Shpet renewed his acquaintance, dating back to the GAKhN years, with the playwright Nikolai Erdman (1902–70) who

had been involved in the early stages of his career with the Imagists. Erdman, too, was exiled and living in Tomsk at the time, working in the local theater as a dramatist from September 1935 to the end of October 1936. Shpet familiarly addressed Erdman as “Mandat,”<sup>77</sup> the Russian title of Erdman’s most successful comedy, staged by Meyerhold in 1925. Erdman introduced Shpet to a younger stage director who wanted to do *Othello* for the Tomsk theater and who sought Shpet’s advice on the interpretation of the play. Having written copious commentaries on several of Shakespeare’s plays for the Academia edition, Shpet was undoubtedly well equipped to help, but the production failed to materialize—as did a plan to have Shpet appointed to Erdman’s position in the Tomsk theater after the latter’s departure.<sup>78</sup>

These rich affiliations with the theater of the 1920s, marked by Shpet’s pronounced interest in, and support for, the classical and realist repertoire, are the bedrock on which his views on theater and drama took shape. After the October Revolution, a theater department was established within the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment to regulate the work of theaters throughout the country. At its foundation in 1918, this consisted of four sections, administering, supervising, and studying: (1) theater history; (2) the organization and management of the existing theaters and circuses; (3) the repertoire; and (4) theatrical education. A section dealing predominantly with questions of theory was later added, then dissolved, and reestablished early in 1921, when the writer and critic Andrei Belyi, the philosopher Fedor Stepun, and Shpet himself were appointed as its only members.<sup>79</sup> In 1921, discharging his duty of promoting the study of theatrical theory and disseminating the results, Shpet published a highly interesting and controversial short piece on the process of the differentiation of labor in modern theater.<sup>80</sup> Historically, Shpet argued, the playwright and the actor were identical; the first step in the process of differentiation was the separation of the actor from the author. The next step meant that the author also lost the actual function of staging the play: the director and the set designer were born. Finally, Shpet insisted, the time had now arrived for the role of interpreting the meaning of the play to be entrusted to an independent agent—neither the author, nor the director, nor the actors should be entitled to impose their interpretations, which are in any case often, and quite naturally, in conflict with one another. The hermeneutic role is a difficult one to perform, Shpet claims; it requires a degree of specialization, education, and skills that neither the actor nor the director necessarily possess. Without a professional interpreter, the “intellectual sense of the play” (204) would be



lost, and the actors would try to compensate for this by emphasizing the bodily techniques of the spectacle instead (note here the simplistic opposition between body and intellect).

Shpet's attention to the process of differentiation within the stage performance has been compared to Tynianov's pronouncement in his 1923 article "Illustrations": "We live in the age of differentiation of activities."<sup>81</sup> This appears to be an unfounded comparison, given the fact that, quite unlike Tynianov, Shpet posited the process of differentiation as a way of revealing what he called the "intellectual sense of the play." In addition to the controversial ideological implications of this insistence on a single interpreter, and, by extension, a single correct interpretation, there is here also a hint of skepticism about avant-garde theater (cf. the protest against emphasizing the bodily techniques of the spectacle), not inconsistent with Shpet's attack a little later on Futurism and the avant-garde in his "Esteticheskie fragmenty."

Shpet's reservations toward the theater of the avant-garde became much more prominent in his main contribution to theatrical theory, the article "Theater as Art," completed in September 1922. Published in December of the same year in an issue of *Masterstvo teatra* that celebrated the Kamerny Theater's eighth anniversary, and preceded there by an article by Tairov, Shpet's piece was an uneasy attempt at a compromise between, but also a critique of, the two wings of the avant-garde theory of theater (seeing theatre as independent vs. seeing it as fully merging with life). He distanced himself from Tairov's radical insistence that theater be regarded as completely detached from the task of dialectically comprehending the world that exists outside art; at the same time, Shpet also sought to resist the demand that theater and life be completely fused. The very title of Shpet's article, "Theater as Art," signaled his insistence on theater being and remaining art, *pace* all activist aspirations at the time (regardless of their political provenance) that sought to erase the boundary between life and art. In the same article, Shpet criticized Wagner's thesis of the synthetic nature of theater,<sup>82</sup> which later theorists had taken up and consolidated into one of the cornerstones of avant-garde performance practice (Tairov, as is well known, wanted to rename his Kamerny [Chamber] Theater "Synthetic Theater," an idea that completely contradicted Shpet's theoretical platform). Liubov' Gurevich, one of Shpet's GAKhN associates, noted that in his theatrical theory, rather than following Wagner and the avant-garde, Shpet was still a captive of Denis Diderot's "paradoxe sur le comédien" (paradox of the actor—the contention that actors don't themselves experience the emotions they depict);

unlike Shpet, Tairov, she noted, in his *Zapiski rezhissera* (1921; translated as *Notes of a Director*) had rejected Diderot's arguments.<sup>83</sup>

Shpet's opposition to the synthesis of the different arts, which also reverberates strongly in his "Esteticheskie fragmenty," involved him in battles on more than one front: it implied an attack not only on the avant-garde, but also, obliquely, on the religious notion of theater as an extension and modification of church ritual, an approach that had entered the scene of theater theory through Pavel Florenskii's essay "Khramovoe deistvo kak sintez iskusstv" (1918; Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts).

In the end, when it comes to theater theory, Shpet's career was marked by a tormenting discrepancy: when he wrote on theater (in the very early 1920s), he wasn't working *in* the theater; when, in the 1930s, he began working for the stage (both as translator and advisor), he had stopped writing on theater. Thus, the two streams—writing on theater and working for the theater—were never brought together in his career. Another salient paradox in Shpet's theater affiliations—not so surprising when his theoretical stance is taken into account—is the fact that while he maintained close contact with two of the greatest innovators in the history of Russian theater, Tairov and Meyerhold, he never got involved in an avant-garde theater production. On the contrary, when Meyerhold decided to stage Alexandre Dumas's *The Lady of the Camellias* (premiered on 19 March 1934), Shpet not only took on the translation (Meyerhold's wife Zinaida Raikh and Mikhail Tsarev were listed in the program notes as Shpet's co-translators),<sup>84</sup> but also played an active role in directing the rehearsals, achieving a "miracle," according to one of the actors: the inveterate theatrical experimenter Meyerhold staged the play in a realistic spirit<sup>85</sup> that favored historical verisimilitude over experimentation.

### Shpet and the Study of Literature in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and at GAKhN

Thinking in broad philosophical terms about literature and the theater was clearly one of Shpet's major preoccupations throughout the 1920s. His reflections on literature were shaped in no small measure by his early affinity for the culture of Russia's Silver Age (especially Russian Symbolism), which, as we have seen, was perceived by Shpet as an antidote to the experimental work of the avant-garde (above all, the Futurists). The opposition between a serious, content-driven approach to drama versus the avant-garde emphases on inces-

sant technical innovation remains very much alive in Shpet's juxtaposition of the gravity of Symbolism and its philosophical baggage with the perceived civic disengagement (nay, frivolity) of modern art.

The institutional centers of Shpet's work on literature (and to some extent also on theater) were the Moscow Linguistic Circle and GAKhN; we thus must embed the study of his work on literature in a more detailed account of his involvement with these two institutions, whose fortunes became entwined after 1921. Shpet was elected a member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle on 14 March 1920,<sup>86</sup> following his presentation of a paper entitled "Aesthetic Features in the Structure of the Word," in the discussion of which Osip Brik took part.<sup>87</sup> Although Shpet attended only one more meeting of the circle (on 4 April 1920), he influenced its work in no small measure through his younger disciples. In an article on the history of the Moscow Linguistic Circle written in November 1976 for the Soviet *Short Literary Encyclopedia* (but only published twenty years later), Roman Jakobson noted that Shpet's phenomenology of language left "an evident mark on the evolution of the circle in the concluding phase of its life";<sup>88</sup> elsewhere, he praised Shpet's important role as an "outstanding philosopher of Husserl's school,"<sup>89</sup> whom Husserl himself considered "one of his most remarkable students."<sup>90</sup> In 1928–29, Jakobson would write to Shpet from Prague, inviting his collaboration in the journal *Slavische Rundschau*, and even declaring proximity to Shpet's views on folklore.<sup>91</sup>

After Jakobson's departure for Estonia and then Prague, Shpet's (and through him GAKhN's) influence on the Moscow Linguistic Circle had become so overpowering that it eventually led to its split in mid-1922.<sup>92</sup> In the final stages of the circle's existence, several of its younger members—Gornung, Buslaev, and Zhinkin—joined GAKhN; the circle's library was also transferred to GAKhN.<sup>93</sup>

Shpet's impact on the work of the Moscow Linguistic Circle flowed above all from the publication of his "Esteticheskie fragmenty," which proved of immense importance to a group of younger scholars and literati in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and later at GAKhN, although his influence was visible even earlier. On 4 April 1920, Shpet had participated in a discussion on plot, where he and Petr Bogatyrev sided with Grigorii Vinokur's insistence on the essentially verbal nature of plot, against Osip Brik's insistence that in painting and sculpture plots of a nonverbal character are possible.<sup>94</sup> This discussion bears early testimony to Shpet's belief in language as the provider of a universal semiotic code that enables the processes of translation and expression between different sign systems (literature, painting, sculpture, etc.). Shpet's approach is outlined

most comprehensively in his article “Literatura,” which displays the cohabitation of Shpet’s insight into language as a universal semiotic matrix with his belief in the importance of literature as the “cultural [self-]consciousness of the people.”<sup>95</sup> For Shpet, these two modalities of significance are organically linked, even if this link enfeebls the suggested universality of literature: literature is valorized semiotically, as a universal encoder; this allows it to serve as shared “cultural consciousness” for those steeped in the same cultural conventions that permit its proper “decoding.” The envisaged community of decoders coincides, for Shpet, with the nation.

At a meeting of the Moscow Linguistic Circle on 21 March 1922, it was proposed that Shpet be invited to become a member of the editorial board of the linguistic section of its future publishing house (in his capacity as philosopher)—an idea that, after long discussions, the membership failed to approve (the publishing house did not materialize either).<sup>96</sup> With the appearance of his “Esteticheskie fragmenty” (1922–23; *Aesthetic Fragments*), however, Shpet’s influence on the Moscow Linguistic Circle became much more pronounced. I wish to single out three moments of particular significance. To begin with, in the second installment of “Esteticheskie fragmenty,” Shpet offered, as has been noted before by others (probably most forcefully by the late Maksim Shapir), the first Russian definition of poetics as grammar: “Poetics in the broad sense is *the grammar of poetic language and poetic thought*” (my translation; emphasis in the original).<sup>97</sup> This initially somewhat metaphoric use of “grammar” was later taken up by Roman Jakobson in the 1960s in his well-known program for the study of the “poetry of grammar and [the] grammar of poetry,”<sup>98</sup> where “grammar,” purified of Shpet’s reference to “poetic thought,” evolved from a metaphor into a term with distinct scope and content. Significantly, Shpet also speaks here for the first time of the “poetic” (rather than simply aesthetic) “function of the word,” thus foreshadowing Jakobson’s later authoritative emphasis on the poetic function of language.

The second of Shpet’s vital contributions in “Esteticheskie fragmenty” is his definition of the structure of the word and its differentiation from the notion of system, the latter applied by Shpet mostly to discourse in its entirety (the use of “structure” in Shpet vacillates between referring to isolated words or to whole sequences of words, the boundary between the two being blurred on occasion by the Russian *slovo*, which can mean either). Again in the second installment, Shpet writes:

What is meant by “structure” of the word is not the morphological, syntac-

tic, or stylistic construction—in short, not the arrangement of linguistic units “on the plane” [*ploskostnoe*], but on the contrary—the organic, depth-wise arrangement of the word, from the sensually conceivable [wording] to the formal-ideal (eidetic) object, at all levels of the relations located between these two terms. The structure is a concrete construction whose individual parts can vary in “size” and even in quality, but not a single part of the whole *in potentia* can be removed without destroying this whole.<sup>99</sup>

The system, on the other hand, is a set of structures where each structure preserves its own particularity. The biological organism—Shpet’s example—is precisely such “a system of structures,” where each structure (bones, nerves, blood vessels, etc.) remains concrete and distinct. This differentiation between structure and system was welcomed by some linguists in the 1920s, notably by Viktor Vinogradov, who read into Shpet’s argument a privileging of the notion of structure (depth) over that of system (horizontality), and—by extension—of the paradigmatic approach over the syntagmatic.<sup>100</sup> Crucially, in their 1928 theses on research in literature and language, Tynianov and Jakobson developed the notion of a correlation between literature and the other historical series, which they called, echoing but also departing from Shpet, a “system of systems”; it was the “structural laws” of this correlation that they believed must be comprehended by the literary historian.<sup>101</sup>

In this context, we must refer to Shpet’s awareness of Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale*. Shpet encountered Saussure’s text around the end of June 1922, when he received the unpublished translation of the first part prepared by Aleksandr Romm.<sup>102</sup> But we need to keep in mind that Shpet’s understanding of structure was also shaped by Wilhelm Dilthey’s notion of the structured nature of the world of cultural objectifications. As Nikolai Plotnikov argues, in the course of the reception of Shpet’s thought, this hermeneutic dimension was submerged by the later (dominant and more technical) version of the concept elaborated and asserted by Structuralism (Plotnikov, “Kapitel,” 201). This dual genealogy is important to note if we are to understand that Shpet’s interpretation of what was to become a key Structuralist term was still very much rooted—much as it engendered a proto-Structuralist differentiation between system and structure—in a nineteenth-century hermeneutic paradigm of approaching and bestowing value on literature. Defining structure became for Shpet a battleground between an older, more traditional, and a modern framework; their struggle mirrors his own position as a harbinger *sui generis* of modern literary theory, whose work still remains, in large measure, arrested

within a humanistic appreciation of literature and culture as manifestations of national consciousness.

Finally, Shpet's "Esteticheskie fragmenty" should be credited with anticipating the trend of detecting in scientific discourse traces of figurativeness and metaphoricity, a feature that brings the discourses of science and literature closer to one another than was customarily accepted. "Figurativeness is not only a trait of 'poetry' . . . it is a general property of language, which belongs to scientific discourse as well."<sup>103</sup> This statement questioned Husserl's certainty that the discourse of science can be strictly differentiated from everyday discourse and offered an approach that—although not pursued further by Shpet himself—was revived in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>104</sup>

But we can also see from this statement why Shpet was perceived as a foe by the Petrograd Formalists (especially Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum), and as insufficiently radical by Jakobson, who otherwise, as we have seen, fully acknowledged his significance. Despite the pioneering suggestion of a difference between the poetic and the aesthetic function of language, Shpet remained interested mainly in the latter. And although both in "Esteticheskie fragmenty" and in the *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology* he resolutely opposed—like the Russian Formalists—the psychological interpretation of the image (as practiced by Potebnia),<sup>105</sup> Shpet nonetheless sought to assert—unlike the Russian Formalists—the importance of the image as hovering between an object and the respective idea, and to clarify its relation to the "inner form" of the word. Last but not least, he was also receptive to the subjective-biographical aspects of the literary work of art, singling out the importance of the individual authorial voice.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately—and here lies the crucial difference between Shpet and Formalism—literature was for him not a self-sufficient system to be explained with reference to the specifically poetic function of language; literature for Shpet—even when all his semiotic inclinations are taken into account—is primarily just one of the spheres of creativity appropriated by what he calls "aesthetic consciousness." As a phenomenologist, Shpet's prime concern was to understand under what conditions an utterance becomes the object of aesthetic experience. This question is inextricably linked to the question of sense, so consistently ignored by the Formalists: "How should one express a given sense, so that its perception is an *aesthetic* one?"<sup>107</sup> Equally, it presupposes attention to form in its necessary relation to *content*, as both Shpet's "Esteticheskie fragmenty" and his article "Literatura" demonstrate. "Esteticheskie fragmenty" inspired some representatives of the younger generation of the Moscow Linguistic

Circle to seek an alliance between a milder (diluted) version of Formalism and a more traditional philosophical aesthetics, an attempt resulting in the launch within GAKhN of the so-called formal-philosophical school, which was most successful in its work on art (especially with the volume *Iskusstvo portreta* [1928; The Art of the Portrait]), but far less convincing and original in its theoretical interpretation of literature. As witnessed by Boris Gornung, Shpet's young followers in the formal-philosophical school distanced themselves emphatically from the "radical" Jakobson, Brik, and Shklovsky.<sup>108</sup> In turn, the formal-philosophical school was insufficiently consistent for the Formalists; they saw in it no more than a weak compromise between their own theoretical creed and the traditional approach to literature as conveyor of ideas. To them, the formal-philosophical school nurtured and mentored by Shpet failed to recognize literature's discursive uniqueness and autonomy.<sup>109</sup>

Small wonder, then, that the Formalists were largely hostile to Shpet's "Esteticheskie fragmenty" and to the outputs of his younger followers in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and at GAKhN, who were perceived as traitors to Formalism and to the original linguistic fundamentalism of the Moscow Circle. Eikhenbaum wrote on 30 June 1924 to Grigorii Vinokur (who was very sympathetic to Shpet's ideas, favorably reviewed "Esteticheskie fragmenty," and openly acknowledged Shpet's influence on his own work)<sup>110</sup> that in the end he "doesn't believe in Shpet, [ . . . ] it's [all] empty rhetoric."<sup>111</sup> Shklovsky, too, maintained a highly skeptical and ironic attitude, as is clear from his reaction to Shpet's work as translator of verse. Jakobson, while acknowledging Shpet's role as a mediator between Husserlian phenomenology and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, thought Shpet insufficiently radical and incapable of fully embracing the nonnegotiable principles of linguistic fundamentalism that informed Jakobson's own approach to literature.

The value of "Esteticheskie fragmenty" is thus twofold. First, while on several counts Shpet presaged important developments in Structuralism and semiotics, his book also presented the most philosophically sophisticated and substantive, if at times oblique, polemic with Formalism, preceding both Engel'gardt's and Medvedev's later critiques.<sup>112</sup> Second, and even more important, it offered a positive program for the study of the verbal work of art from the positions of phenomenological aesthetics (Shpet's departures from Husserl notwithstanding), cross-bred with hermeneutics.

Shpet's crucial concept of "inner form" (formulated as early as 1917 in his essay "Wisdom or Reason?") is of particular significance here. Harking back to

Wilhelm von Humboldt's philosophy of language, it was sharpened in Shpet's work on the history and current state of hermeneutics. It occupied center stage in both "Esteticheskie fragmenty" and the *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology*, not to mention Shpet's 1927 monograph *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* (The Inner Form of the Word). Conveying the notion of deeper semantic stability, and thus positing a horizon of dependable interpretation, "inner form" was also an important theoretical instrument in the research of Shpet's younger colleagues at GAKhN. In 1923, Shpet gave a paper on "The Concept of Inner Form in Wilhelm Humboldt" at GAKhN, followed in 1924 by papers from Buslaev ("The Concept of Inner Form in Steinthal and Potebnia") and Kenigsberg ("The Concept of Inner Form in Anton Marty"). This direction was followed up in the afore-mentioned collective volume *Artistic Form* (1927), where Shpet's disciples offered an exploration of form from the perspectives of aesthetics and semantics. Equidistant from both Marxism and Formalism, the volume was ultimate proof that this younger generation of scholars had little time or regard for either, a position that placed them, their mentor, and GAKhN itself in a very difficult position as Stalinism gradually tightened its grip on intellectual life.

Shpet's emphasis on "inner form" would also help us make sense of his extensive notes on the novel from 1924, a document of his theoretical preoccupations that brings into sharp relief the differences between his and Bakhtin's approaches. The notes, which remained unpublished until 2007, were perhaps part of Shpet's larger (also unpublished) work titled "Literary Studies," announced in 1925 as one of GAKhN's ongoing projects.<sup>113</sup>

Shpet here relies to a great extent on authors who also later feature prominently (explicitly or implicitly) in Bakhtin's discussion of the novel, notably Hegel, Lukács, and Erwin Rohde. Shpet borrows the conceptual framework that juxtaposes epic and novel from Hegel and Lukács, as does Bakhtin (Shpet, *Iskusstvo*, 57–58).<sup>114</sup> But while Bakhtin overturns Lukács's scheme and emancipates the novel, transforming it from an underdog of literary history into a celebrated *écriture* that transcends the restrictions of a mere genre, Shpet abides by the old opposition and validates the role of the novel as a "negative" genre. For Shpet, the novel is marked by a string of fatal absences. It lacks "composition," "plan," and "inner form" (57), which makes Shpet doubt its capacity to produce serious, nonarbitrary versions of reality. The lack of "inner form" stands, more broadly, for a lack of necessity and compelling direction in the work of art. The novel is thus no more than a "degradation" of the epic (63): the epic offers access to an *idea* (in Plato's sense), whereas the novel furnishes only *doxa* (66). The



novel, with its arbitrary inventions, is the result of the disintegration of myth (84). It therefore has no "plot in the strict sense of the word," only a "theme" which deals not with the "construction of an idea" (what plot should really do, according to Shpet), but simply with the "empiric commonality of the motif" (79). Lagging behind not just the epic, but also Greek tragedy, the novel knows no catastrophe, only irresolvable conflict, antinomy (67). In accord with his condescending evaluation of Russian philosophy, Shpet interprets the whole of Russian literature as a "novel," for there has been, for him, no sense of epic reality in it (79); even *War and Peace* is called not an epic, but an ironic, and therefore, "romantic" novel, "romantic" being the damning label attached to any narrative permeated by arbitrariness. We thus begin to understand why in "Esteticheskie fragmenty," as well as in his notes on the novel, Shpet gestures toward the novel as a mere "rhetorical" form: the epic is about an "organic embodiment of the idea," the novel is all about "an analysis of opportunities" (81), about the multitude of equally valid free wills and the choices the individual faces after leaving the epic cosmos. The novel is not about *incarnatio*, it is only about *inventio* and *elocutio* (81), the skills involved in unfolding and charting the ephemeral and accidental private world of opportunities without conclusion, of journeys without destiny.

It is against this background that Bakhtin's utter dissatisfaction with Shpet's denigration of the novel becomes clear.<sup>115</sup> Bakhtin, too, begins from the premise of negativity: the novel does not have a canon of its own, it is possessed of no constant features that would generate the stability and cohesion marking most other genres. He reinterprets this negativity, however, as strength: the novel knows no ossification, its energy of self-fashioning and reinvention is unlimited, its versatility accommodates and processes vast masses of previously submerged and neglected discourses. In brief, the novel is anything but a merely "rhetorical form" in the pejorative sense Shpet gives this term in "Esteticheskie fragmenty," in his notes on the novel, and in *Vnutrenniaia forma slova*. For Shpet, the novel signals impasse; it holds no prospect: "When a genuine flourishing of art occurs, the novel has no future" (84). Unlike poetry, for Shpet (let us recall the formative impact of the Russian Silver Age on his understanding of literature as serious, solemnly elevated, almost elitist business), the novel is a genre for the masses, corresponding to their "average moral aspirations" (88). Bakhtin, in contrast, extolled the democratic charge of the novel and dreamed of a literature colonized by the novelistic.

## A Backward Journey to Aesthetics: Shpet's Position in the Context of the 1920s

The comparison between Bakhtin's and Shpet's interpretations of the novel takes us to the heart of the question of Shpet's position vis-à-vis the different modalities of reflecting on literature in Russia during the 1920s, a time when impulses derived from the works of Russian theorists signaled innovation across the Continent and led the way in establishing literary theory as a specific and autonomous field (and mode) of enquiry. The parallel with Bakhtin suggests that, despite a number of seminal advances, Shpet's intervention in the realm of literary theory was bound to be perceived by many of his contemporaries as somewhat jaded and perhaps belated. His neo-Humboldtianism, in contrast to the radicalism of the Russian Formalists, earned him the reputation of a thinker who made a virtue of arriving on the intellectual scene late rather than never. Vinogradov reports that the young supporters of Formalism at the State Institute of Art History in Leningrad hoisted a banner with the words "Luchshe Shpet, chem nikogda" (literally, "Better Shpet than never") to signal their sarcasm and distance from Shpet.<sup>116</sup> The irony was not lost on those who knew that Shpet was a follower of *German* thought; the banner punned on Shpet's surname and its German homophone *spät* (late) in the German saying "Besser spät als nie" ("Better late than never"). This was even incorporated into the "Anthem of the Formalists":

Years and water flow by,  
But we stand firm as a wall,  
After all better Shpet than never,  
And better never than Nazarenko.<sup>117</sup>

If a recent attribution is to be trusted, Demian Bedny savaged Shpet with a version of the same pun:

I'll sigh to myself for a certain  
GAKhN, where some suspicious  
Shpet *zu spät* [too late] was exposed as an alcoholic  
and a clown.<sup>118</sup>

This sense of belatedness could be accounted for in terms of Shpet's philosophical baggage and the specific constellation of theoretical paradigms in Soviet literary studies in the 1920s. Steeped in phenomenology and in a version of

hermeneutics and philosophy of language that increasingly built on the work of nineteenth-century thinkers, Humboldt and Lazarus foremost among them, Shpet's views on literature (and also theater) moved in the orbit of aesthetics, refusing to embrace the agenda of a Formalist approach interested in literariness as an intrinsic feature of the verbal work of art. Soviet literary studies in the 1920s were dominated by sociological, Formalist, and psychoanalytic approaches, with some vestiges of a more traditional historical poetics and morphology of literature. Shpet's work did not belong to any of these paradigms; it was clearly dictated by philosophical concerns and, if anything, called for a return to aesthetics as the proper home of literary studies. Thus Shpet, along with his colleagues and disciples at GAKhN, appeared to swim against the current, denying literary theory the right to exist outside the realm of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Shpet might even be seen as seeking to abort the imminent launch of modern literary theory as an autonomous discipline, attempting to steer it back into the fold of aesthetics and a neo-Humboldtian philosophy of language. These aspirations were seen by many of his contemporaries as regressive, preserving as they did a tradition of well-tempered philosophizing about literature and the arts that was in the process of being supplanted by the radicalism of Formalism (and, to different effect, of Marxism). In the end, Shpet's role was to encourage a move away from Formalism and address the central question of form from a phenomenological and hermeneutical perspective that enabled a return to the question of content and the significance of the text for the reader.

At the same time, we need to be aware of the fact that Shpet's proposed deradicalization (or deformatization) of literary theory and its attendant re-incorporation into the realm of aesthetics and the philosophy of art evolved only gradually in the course of the 1920s. In "Esteticheskie fragmenty," where this trend is already strong and results in an unmistakable polemic with the Formalists, Shpet still foreshadows some important developments in Structuralist literary theory and semiotics. It is only with *Vnutrenniaia forma slova* that these innovations finally appear to be abandoned and Shpet reverts to an understanding of literature that harks back to aesthetics and a philosophy of language and art shaped increasingly by nineteenth-century concerns (despite his effort to update these with the help of Marty and others).

Bakhtin emerges once again as a relevant point of reference at this juncture. In the early 1920s, Shpet's preference for discussing the verbal work of art in the framework of aesthetics parallels Bakhtin's interest in categories such as form,

author, hero, and dialogue from the point of view of aesthetics, rather than from a perspective grounded specifically in literary theory. In the latter half of the 1920s, however, Shpet continues to discuss literature in a fashion informed by, and committed to, aesthetics and a neo-Humboldtian philosophy of language, whereas Bakhtin's theoretical discourse gradually breaks away from aesthetics and evolves toward a philosophy of culture. It was from this vantage point in the 1930s that Bakhtin addressed various aspects of genre theory and historical poetics, two areas that remained alien to Shpet, as his notes on the novel reveal. Throughout the 1930s, Bakhtin writes as a philosopher of culture rather than as a thinker drawing his agenda from aesthetics. His entire conceptual apparatus during that time stands under the auspicious sign of grand narratives about the inner dynamics of cultural evolution, of which the novel proves a confident and forceful agent (and epitome).

Ultimately, however, Shpet and Bakhtin do share significant common ground through their dissent from literary theory as an autonomous, self-sufficient field—and mode—of enquiry: Shpet performed—and encouraged in others—a return to aesthetics; Bakhtin, on the other hand, set out on a journey forward that would bypass literary theory and take him to the ill-defined but enormously exciting realm of cultural theory and the philosophy of cultural forms.

Shpet's reflections on literature thus come into view as a complex amalgam of innovation and regression, a stirring mixture that embodies the turns of intellectual history at its most attractive and challenging. To sum up, while remaining critical of the Formalists, he presaged important tenets of semiotics and Structuralism. At the same time, his embeddedness in aesthetics and philosophy of art, as well as his distinct distrust of historical poetics,<sup>119</sup> meant that his work was in the end deeply skeptical of the self-assertion of modern literary theory in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

copy of his *Arkhaisty i novatory* (1929; Archaists and Innovators); see Iurii Medvedev, "Na puti," 32.

74. Litauer, "Formalizm i istoriia literatury," 120; throughout the text, citations of Litauer's article are to the reprint in *Bakhtinskii sbornik*, vol. 4 (2000), in my translation; page references are given in parentheses in the text.

75. Brik, "So-Called Formal Method," 91.

76. Ironically, Medvedev lived long enough to see himself compelled by the growing inclemency of Stalin's regime to alter the original design of his 1928 study by omitting or revising some sections and adding a new chapter that traced the concluding stages of Formalism and subjected these to a critique that was as vehement as it was primitive. The result of these enforced changes was Medvedev's book *Formalizm i formalisty* (1934; Formalism and the Formalists).

77. See Arvatov, *Iskusstvo i proizvodstvo* (1926; for an English translation, see Arvatov, *Art and Production*) and Arvatov, "O formal'no-sotsiologicheskoi metode."

78. Subsequent references are given to this edition in parentheses in the text. I have occasionally emended the English translation to bring it closer to the original.

79. Unsurprisingly, the Formalists, notably Eikhenbaum, were equally unimpressed by the mechanical, perfunctory attempts of the *forsotsy* to bring together Russian Formalism and the sociological study of literature.

80. Although perfectly correct, the phrase "of an amicable division" does not convey the ironic overtones of the stronger Russian *poliubovnogo razdela*.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Cf. Mikhail Polivanov, "Ocherk," 10.

2. Shchedrina, "Khronika," 406.

3. Pavlov, "Filosofia v Moskovskom universitete," 102.

4. See Tihanov, "Gustav Shpet in Florovsky's Mirror."

5. Cf. the report in Artizov, ed., "*Ochistim Rossiia nadolgo*," 589–90. There is, however, confirmation of Shpet's arrest, for unknown reasons, in early November 1920; he was released on 8 November (Shchedrina, "Khronika," 426).

6. On Shpet's membership of the jury, see Shapir's notes in Iarkho, *Metodologiia*, 676–77.

7. For a wide-ranging selection of the works of GAKhN's members and associates on aesthetics, literature, art, music, theatre, and film, see vol. 2 of Plotnikov and Podzemskaiia, eds., *Iskusstvo kak iazyk*. For a shorter selection in English, see the special issue of *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture* 3 (1997), guest-edited by Nicoletta Misler.

8. Cf. Misler, "Citadel," 30. In the winter of 1922, Harvard University Library considered purchasing Shpet's collection of Russian philosophical works (some 1,000 volumes); see Archibald Coolidge's letter to Shpet of 14 February 1922, in Shpet, *Filosof v kul'ture*, 31–32. According to Nikolai Serebrennikov, Shpet's library, comprising more than 30,000 volumes, is today at the University of Tbilisi (Serebrennikov, ed., *Shpet i Sibir'*, 88).

9. For an English translation of the resolution, see Bowlt, "RAKhN on Trial," here p. 305; for a detailed chronology of the purges at GAKhN, see Iakimenko, "Iz istorii."

10. The year of publication is established in Petritskii, "K tvorcheskoi biografii," 25.

11. See Iakovich, ed., *Doch' filosafo Shpeta*, 173.

12. *Bol'shoi nemetsko-russkii slovar'*, vol. 1: A–K, ed. E. A. Meier [Elisabeth Meyer], et al. (Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1934). Meyer and five members of her ten-strong editorial team (including Shpet) were arrested in connection with the dictionary; the second volume never appeared.

13. Mikhail Polivanov, "Ocherk," 15.

14. Belyi, *Nachalo*, 175.

15. Belyi, *Mezhdru*, 307.

16. Belyi, *Vospominaniia*, 559–60.

17. Quoted in Shchedrina, "Ia pishu kak ekho drugogo," 56.

18. See Lavrov and Malmstad, eds., *Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik*, 463.

19. Cf. his two letters to Shpet of April and August 1933 in *Nachala* 1(1992): 64–65.

20. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova*, 130.

21. Cf. Shchedrina, ed., *Gustav Shpet: Zhizn' v pis'makh*, 225, 248, 258.

22. Serebrennikov et al., eds., *Shpet v Sibiri*, 228.

23. See the evidence in Obatnin, "Materialy," 323–24.

24. Cf. Bird, "Viacheslav Ivanov," 320; Kondiurina et al., eds., "Perepiska," 238n3.

25. Kondiurina et al., eds., "Perepiska," 373.

26. *Ibid.*, 235, 239, 240n5.

27. Bird, "Viacheslav Ivanov," 331n110.

28. Cf. also Nikolaev, "M. M. Bakhtin," 265–67.

29. Shpet, "Esteticheskie fragmenty," 357–59 (praise for Symbolism), 361–63 (critique of Futurism).

30. See Levinton and Ustinov, "Ukazatel," 194; the two texts are reproduced in Lev Gornung, *Moi*, 178–79. See Levinton, "Gustav Shpet" for more on *Hermes*.

31. For short biographies of the Gornung brothers, see Kliuev, "Semeinaia," 268–73; on Kenigsberg, see Chicherin, *Sila*, 239–50, and Shapir, "M. M. Kenigsberg"; on Vol'kenau, see Konstantin Polivanov, "Mashinopisnye," 47n12.

32. Boris Gornung, "O zhurnale 'Germes,'" 188; Lev Gornung reports that Shpet was asked to write a brief note on Tiutchev for the fourth issue of *Hermes* (Lev Gornung, *Moi*, 183–84), but he does not appear to have done so.

33. Like Shpet, Volkov was involved in translation. His partial translation (1927) of Hegel's *Aesthetics* was amended, edited, and supplied with notes by Shpet, but remained unpublished (the translation is preserved in the Russian State Library in Moscow, f. 718, k. 8, ed. khr. 4 and 5).

34. Boris Gornung, "O zhurnale 'Germes,'" 188.

35. On Berner, see Andrei Ustinov, "Dve zhizni." Romm was the elder brother of the well-known film director Mikhail Romm; he was a philologist, poet, and translator of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (the translation remained unfinished); on this, see Toddess and Chudakova, "Pervyi."

36. See Levinton and Ustinov, "K istorii," 209. Kuzmin and Sofia Parnok were the only better-known poets to publish in *Mnemosyne*.

37. See Vorob'eva, "Neizvestnyi," 178.

38. Cf. Shpet, "Literatura"; a slightly different version under the same title, closely related to the text of Shpet's entry for the unpublished "Dictionary of Artistic Terms" ("Slovar' khudozhestvennykh terminov") that GAKhN was preparing in 1923–29, was first published by Igor' Chubarov in Shpet, *Istoriia*, 1133–36. Further references in this chapter are to the publication in Shpet, *Istoriia*.

39. Cf. Boris Gornung, "O zhurnale 'Germes,'" 186, and Vorob'eva, "Neizvestnyi," 179. Unlike his brother, Lev Gornung asserts that *Hermes* was produced in three copies only (Lev Gornung, *Moi*, 175).

40. Boris Gornung, *Pokhod*, 349.

41. Serebrennikov et al., eds., *Shpet v Sibiri*, 190; Shpet, "<Pis'mo Stalinu>," 587.

42. Some of these evaluations can be found in Shpet, *Filosof v kul'ture*.

43. An abridged translation of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, jointly edited by Shpet and A. G. Gornfel'd, was published as *Posmertnye zapiski pikvickского kluba (sokrashchennyi perevod s angliiskogo)*, ed. A. G. and G. Sh. (*sic!*) (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1932). In the absence of any indication of the translators' names, one may assume that the translation was undertaken by the two co-editors.

44. See his respective book proposals, both written in 1933 (RGB, f. 718, k. 17, ed. khr. 4). Shpet also proposed the publication of a Shakespeare encyclopedia (k. 20, ed. khr. 16). The genre was apparently attracting growing attention at the time; in addition to the two projects just mentioned, Academia also attempted the publication of Pushkin and Heine encyclopedias (Ostroï, "Izdatel'stvo 'Academia,'" 171).

45. In 1930–32, Shpet himself translated chapters 1–9 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (the text is preserved in RGB, f. 718, k. 12, ed. khr. 6). Poe appears to be the only other American author on whom Shpet worked; at different times, he corrected Piast's partial translation of Poe's only play, *Politian*, and submitted a proposal to Academia for the publication of Poe's writings (cf. RGB, f. 718, k. 12, ed. khr. 4 and k. 21, ed. khr. 13, respectively).

46. "Nochnye nedorazumeniia," in Shpet's 1937 translation (the translation, apparently unpublished at the time, is preserved in RGB, f. 718, k. 11, ed. khr. 10 and 11).

47. Shpet's 1934 translation ("Zhizn' i mneniia Tristrama Shendi," bk. 1, chaps. 1–25, and bk. 2, chaps. 1–2), is preserved in RGB, f. 718, k. 12, ed. khr. 5.

48. Goethe and Schiller, *Perepiska (1794–1805) v dvukh tomakh. Tom pervyi. Vstupitel'naia stat'ia Georga Lukacha*, per. A. G. Gornfel'da i I. G. Smidovich (Moscow and Leningrad: Academia, 1937 (the second volume did not appear).

49. The extent to which the political elite was involved in the realization of this idea can be judged by the fact that the Academia edition of Shakespeare's works was initially supervised by Bukharin. On 11 February 1933, Shpet was summoned to a meeting on the preparation of the edition on 17 February in Bukharin's office (Shpet, *Filosof v kul'ture*, 259).

50. Control was made easier by setting up a translation sector within the Writers' Union; the first conference of Soviet translators met in Moscow in January 1935.

51. See Marietta Shaginian's criticism in "Gete v iubileinom izdanii," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 23 October 1933.

52. "Manfred," "Cain," and "Heaven and Earth" were published in 1933, "Age of Bronze" in 1935.

53. Cf. Serebrennikov et al., eds., *Shpet v Sibiri*, 17–38, 321.

54. Kamenev was a former member of the Politburo and for a time a deputy prime minister, later twice excluded and twice restored in the Party. At that time, he still headed the Academia publishing house. He was removed early in 1935, sentenced to prison for alleged involvement in Kirov's assassination, and shot in 1936.

55. See Kuzmin, *Dnevnik*, 228–29.

56. *Ibid.*, 229.

57. Quoted in Panchenko, "Iz perepiski," 204.

58. See Shpet's gloss in Bairon, *Misterii*, 406. Shklovsky was no doubt delighted to be able to "punish" Shpet in this way. Shpet and his younger *Hermes* associates were distinctly anti-Formalist in their methodology, a stance that was particularly prominent in the collective volume *Khudozhestvennaia forma* (Moscow: GAKhN, 1927), which irritated Boris Eikhenbaum; see his letter to Shklovsky of 22 March 1927 in Kertis, *Boris Eikhenbaum*, 303, where Eikhenbaum singles out Shpet's role as mentor of the young authors represented in the volume and refers scornfully to the older GAKhN associates as "Shory, Shpety i Petrovskie."

59. See the minutes of the meeting at Academia that took place on 15 June 1933 (Shchedrina, ed., *Gustav Shpet i shekspirovskii krug*, 201–4).

60. All quotations are from Shpet, "<Pis'mo Stalinu>," 592.

61. Shpet's use of Kuzmin's name in 1934 and in 1935 requires some explanation of the background. Kuzmin and Shpet met for the first time on 11 May 1924 in the circle of young literati around *Hermes* in Moscow (Timofeev, "Esche raz," 160). Earlier, it seems that Kuzmin had spoken skeptically and derisively about Shpet's "Esteticheskie fragmenty" (Boris Gornung, "Iz vospominanii," 178), but apparently this did not affect the tone of their first meeting. Kuzmin and Shpet were later involved in the Shakespeare edition, for which Kuzmin translated eight plays from 1930 to 1935, seven of which were published posthumously (his translation of *The Tempest* remained unpublished; Shchepkina-Kupernik's translation was published instead in the Academia edition). Kuzmin's translation of *King Lear* was corrected and edited by Shpet (Kuzmin, *Dnevnik*, 224n16). In 1934, Shpet was keen to have Stanislavsky stage Kuzmin's translation of *Much Ado about Nothing* (Kuzmin, *Dnevnik*, 99).

62. Pasternak mentions Shpet in *Okhrannaia gramota*. In the spring semester of 1909–10, he attended Shpet's seminar on Hume at Moscow University and wrote an essay for Shpet entitled "Hume's Psychological Skepticism." The next year he took Shpet's course on the Logic of the Historical Sciences; Fleishman et al., *Boris Pasternaks Lehrjahre*, 1: 16, 208, 230–35. On Shpet's significance for Pasternak's intellectual formation, see *ibid.*, 128–32.

63. Shpet's experience with translating Shakespeare dated back to 1924 when he produced a stage version of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (preserved in RGB, f. 718, k. 13,



ed. khr. 5) for the Malyi theater; early in the 1920s he had begun (but never finished) an adaptation of Schiller's *Die Räuber* (RGB, f. 718, k. 17, ed. khr. 7), again for the Malyi.

64. Smirnov to Shpet, 31 January 1935 (now in Shchedrina, ed., *Gustav Shpet i shek-spirovskii krug*, 186–88).

65. For Shpet's article-length response see *ibid.*, 218–56 (the letter to Kamenev of 29 October 1934 is also there, 165–68).

66. Tairov, *Zapiski*, 68.

67. Shpet, "Teatr kak iskusstvo," *Masterstvo teatra: Vremennik Kamernogo teatra*, nos. 1–2 (1922–23): 31–55; quoted here from the 2000 reprint (Shpet, "Teatr," 111–34), where the text is dated 24 September 1922.

68. Trabskii, ed., *Sovetskii teatr*, 186.

69. See the minutes in Markov, *V Khudozhestvennom*, 562–63, 566–67.

70. See Poleva, "Osnovnye daty," 13.

71. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie*, 345, 366. The notes to Stanislavsky's letters wrongly assume that the manuscript was that of the first part of *Rabota aktera nad soboi* published in Russian in 1938, shortly after Stanislavsky's death. The Russian version had been revised by Stanislavsky and differed from the American one; Shpet played no part in these revisions, since they took place while he was already in exile.

72. See Shchedrina, "Ia pishu kak ekho drugogo," 258. The fourth printing of the first Russian version of the memoirs in January 1934 had apparently placed Stanislavsky third in popularity among readers in the Soviet Union (Pushkin was first), with the whole print run selling out in just three days (Stanislavskii, *Sobranie*, 381, 569).

73. Serebrennikov et al., eds., *Shpet v Sibiri*, 287–88.

74. *Ibid.*, 202.

75. *Ibid.*, 256–57.

76. *Ibid.*, 283–84.

77. *Ibid.*, 237.

78. *Ibid.*, 242.

79. See Iufit, ed., *Sovetskii teatr*, 72. For a comparison of Shpet's and Belyi's views on theater, see Surina, *Andrei Belyi i Gustav Shpet*.

80. See Shpet, "Differentsiatsiia"; page numbers are in parentheses in the text.

81. Tynianov, *Poetika*, 318. For an interpretation aligning Shpet with Tynianov, see S. V. Stakhorskii's commentaries in Stakhorskii, ed., *Iz istorii*, 218. On Shpet's and GAKhN's theatre theory, see also Schmid, "Gustav Špets Theatertheorie"; Eismann, "Theater"; and Gudkova, "Semantik."

82. See Shpet, "Teatr," 112; English translation: "Theatre as Art," trans. Michel Vale, *Soviet Studies in Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (Winter 1989–90): 61–88.

83. See Gurevich, *Tvorchestvo*, 22–23. Diderot's "Paradoxe sur le comédien" (written in the 1770s and posthumously published in 1830) appeared in Russian translation in the same year as Shpet's article "Theatre as Art" (1922). Gurevich's slender book was completed in April 1926 (Gurevich, *Tvorchestvo*, 62) and appeared at the end of that year (but with the year 1927 on the cover page) as a GAKhN imprint; until the 1980s, it remained the only published reaction to Shpet's writings on theater.

84. Cf. Sitkovetskaia, ed., *Meierkhol'd*, 2: 55.
85. See Mitiushin, "Commentary," 89.
86. The Moscow Linguistic Circle (MLC) existed formally from March 1915 to November 1924.
87. Cf. Krusanov, *Russkii avangard*, 461.
88. Jakobson, "Moskovskii," 367.
89. Jakobson, "Example," 534.
90. Jakobson, "Retrospect," 713.
91. Cf. Jakobson's letters in Shchedrina, ed., *Gustav Shpet: Zhizn'*, 502–6.
92. Nikolaev, "M. M. Bakhtin," 228.
93. Toman, *Magic*, 66.
94. Shapir, Maksim, "Kommentarii," 299–300.
95. In Russian, variously, *kul'turnoe soznanie*, *kul'turnoe samosoznanie*, and *soznanie narodom svoei narodnosti* (Shpet, *Istoriia*, 1136).
96. Cf. Toddes and Chudakova. "Pervyi," 240–41.
97. Shpet, "Esteticheskie fragmenty," 408.
98. Jakobson's well-known article "Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry" took its shape between 1960 and 1968; see Jakobson, "Poetry of Grammar," 37.
99. Shpet, "Esteticheskie fragmenty," 382; my translation.
100. Vinogradov, "Iz istorii," 265. Vinogradov appropriated Shpet's differentiation between system and structure from the latter's "Esteticheskie fragmenty," but also through personal communication with him; in 1926, Vinogradov twice presented papers in GAKhN at Shpet's invitation (Nikolaev, "M. M. Bakhtin," 269).
101. Tynianov and Jakobson, "Problems," 50.
102. Cf. Toddes and Chudakova, "Pervyi," 235; more recently on this translation, see Reznik, "Long Rendezvous." Shpet's understanding of structure was also shaped by Wilhelm Dilthey's notion of the structured nature of the world of cultural objectifications. As Nikolai Plotnikov argues, in the course of the reception of Shpet's thought, this hermeneutic dimension was submerged by the later (dominant and more technical) version of the concept elaborated and asserted by Structuralism (Plotnikov, "Kapitel," 201).
103. Shpet, "Esteticheskie," 443.
104. For more on this see Steiner, "*Tropos*"; he refers in this context to Derrida and Hayden White.
105. Because of that the *Introduction to Ethnic Psychology* earned Shpet Jakobson's conditional praise; see Jakobson's letter to Shpet of 24 November 1929 in Shchedrina, ed., *Gustav Shpet: Zhizn'*, 505–506.
106. Shpet, "Esteticheskie fragmenty," 464–71.
107. Ibid., 448; emphasis in the original.
108. Boris Gornung, *Pokhod*, 372–73.
109. On the formal-philosophical school, from a different perspective, see Hansen-Löve, "Synthetische Avantgarde'-Akmeismus."
110. Vinokur, "Slovarnaia," 106.

111. Quoted in Chudakova and Toddes, "Nasledie i put' Eikhenbauma," in Eikhenbaum, *O literature*, 17.

112. Shpet's "Esteticheskie fragmenty" received sympathetic references in Engel'gardt's *Formal'nyi metod v istorii literatury* (1925); see Engel'gardt, *Izbrannye*, 80–89.

113. See Tat'iana Shchedrina's comments on "O granitsakh nauchnogo literaturovedeniia (konspekt doklada)," in Shpet, *Iskusstvo*, 507.

114. All subsequent references are to this edition, with page numbers in parentheses in the text, and in my translation.

115. See Bakhtin's essay "Discourse in the Novel," in Bakhtin, *Dialogical Imagination*, here 268.

116. Cf. Vinogradov, "Iz istorii," 265.

117. Yakov Nazarenko wrote on nineteenth-century Russian literature and was an inveterate supporter of the sociological school in literary studies. For the full text of the "Anthem," see "Gimn formalistov," ed. Kseniia Kumpan and Al'bin Konechnyi, in Baiburin and Ospovat, eds., *Natales*, 266–94. The authorship of the stanza quoted here has been attributed to Tynianov or Lidia Ginzburg (cf. Novikov, "Luchshe Shpet," 422).

118. The epigram is attributed to Demian Bedny in Shevchenko, "Zhizn'," 199; I was unable to locate the text in the editions of his poetry, but the epigram may well have been attested solely in oral form. By 1930, Shpet's alcohol intake—clearly a response to the vitriolic public campaign against him—was perceived as a problem even by helpful and benevolent friends; a worried Baltrushaitis dedicated a poem, "Netrezvomu Shpetu," to Shpet (for the text of the poem, dated 9 April 1930, see Shchedrina, "Ta pishu kak echo drugogo," 70).

119. See Shpet's remark, "'Historical poetics' is sham history, its interest is the immutable in the mutable," in Shpet, *Iskusstvo*, 47.

## CHAPTER 3

1. The early version of *Rabelais and His World*, submitted as a dissertation in 1940, and a plethora of related materials have been published, accompanied by extensive apparatus, in Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 4 (1).

2. On the changes introduced when "Discourse in the Novel" (conceived and written by Bakhtin as a book) was published in the 1970s, see Pan'kov, "Roman," which reveals that initially Bakhtin gave the essay currently known as "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" the same title as the 1934–36 book manuscript, "Discourse in the Novel" (90); the essay now known as "Epic and Novel" was titled "The Novel as Literary Genre" (88). For more on the genesis and the textology of the preserved fragments on the bildungsroman, see Pan'kov, "M. M. Bakhtin," and, in the same issue of *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, his publication of parts of the 1937 book prospectus. The texts mentioned here, on occasion expanded with further material from Bakhtin's archive and accompanied by extended commentary, are now included in Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 3.

3. Quoted here from the English translation; subsequent citations of this work appear in parentheses in the text. In the new Russian edition of Bakhtin's works, the title