



الكلية: الآداب

القسم او الفرع: اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الرابع

أستاذ المادة: أ.د محمد فليح حسن

اسم المادة باللغة العربية: النقد الادبي

اسم المادة باللغة الإنكليزية: **Literary Criticism**

اسم المحاضرة الخامسة باللغة العربية: المدرسة الشكلية الروسية

اسم المحاضرة الخامسة باللغة الإنكليزية: **Russian Formalism**

## Russian Formalism

Russian Formalism was a literary movement that emerged in Russia in the early 20th century. It focused on the study of literary devices and techniques, such as plot, character, and point of view, and emphasized the importance of language in the creation and interpretation of literary works.

The founders of Russian Formalism, including Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, and Boris Eichenbaum, believed that literary language was fundamentally different from everyday language and that it had its own internal structure and rules. They argued that literary works should be studied as self-contained objects, independent of their social, historical, and biographical contexts.

Russian Formalists also developed a number of analytical techniques to study literary works, such as defamiliarization, which involves making the familiar seem unfamiliar in order to draw attention to the language itself, and the concept of the literary "device," which refers to a specific technique or element that contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

Russian Formalism had a major influence on literary theory and criticism, both in Russia and abroad, and paved the way for other schools of thought, such as Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.

### **Assumptions of Russian formalism**

Russian Formalism was based on a number of key assumptions about literature and language, including:

1. The idea that literature is a unique form of language that should be studied in its own right, independent of social or historical context.
2. The belief that literary language is different from everyday language and has its own internal structure and rules.
3. The emphasis on the importance of literary devices and techniques, such as plot, character, and point of view, in the creation and interpretation of literary works.

4. The notion that literary works should be studied as self-contained objects, with a focus on the relationships between the various elements that make up the work.
5. The use of analytical techniques such as defamiliarization and the identification of literary devices to understand how literary works create meaning.
6. The rejection of traditional literary criticism, which focused on the author's biography, social or historical context, or the moral or philosophical themes of the work.

These assumptions shaped the way that Russian Formalists approached the study of literature and had a significant impact on literary theory and criticism.

### **Historical Development of Russian Formalism**

Russian Formalism emerged as a literary movement in Russia in the early 20th century, during a time of great cultural and intellectual ferment. It was influenced by a number of intellectual currents, including Symbolism, Futurism, and Marxism.

The movement was founded by a group of scholars and writers, including Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, and Boris Eichenbaum, who were interested in the study of literary language and its formal properties. They sought to develop a systematic approach to the analysis of literary works that would focus on the relationships between the various elements that make up a work, such as plot, character, and point of view.

Russian Formalism was initially centered around the Moscow Linguistic Circle, a group of scholars and writers who met regularly to discuss literary theory and criticism. The circle's members included some of the most important figures in Russian Formalism, including Shklovsky, Jakobson, and Eichenbaum.

In the years following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russian Formalism faced increasing criticism from Marxist critics who argued that its formalist approach was elitist and divorced from the social and political realities of the time. Despite this criticism, Russian Formalism continued to exert a major influence on literary theory and criticism both in Russia and abroad.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many Russian Formalists were forced into exile or imprisoned by the Soviet government, which viewed their work as politically suspect. Despite this persecution, the ideas and analytical techniques developed

by Russian Formalism continued to be influential, and were taken up by other schools of thought, such as Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. Today, Russian Formalism is considered one of the most important intellectual movements of the 20th century and its ideas continue to be studied and debated by literary scholars and theorists.

### **Methodology of Russian formalism**

Russian Formalism was a literary theory and method of literary analysis that emerged in Russia in the early 20th century. It aimed to study the formal aspects of literature, such as structure, style, and language, rather than focusing on the content or the author's intentions.

The methodology of Russian Formalism can be summarized as follows:

1. **Defamiliarization:** Russian Formalists believed that literary language should "defamiliarize" or estrange the reader from the everyday language they were accustomed to. By disrupting the reader's habitual ways of thinking and seeing, literature could reveal new ways of perceiving reality.
2. **Plot Analysis:** Formalists paid close attention to the structure of literary texts, including plot, character, and setting. They believed that literary texts could be understood as a set of devices or techniques used to achieve specific effects on the reader.
3. **Literary Evolution:** Formalists saw literary history as a series of transformations in form and style. They believed that literature evolved through a process of innovation and adaptation, in which authors and readers experimented with new techniques and forms.
4. **Close Reading:** Russian Formalists advocated for a close reading of literary texts, paying attention to details such as word choice, imagery, and syntax. They believed that these details could reveal the underlying structure and meaning of a text.
5. **Emphasis on Literature:** Russian Formalism emphasized the study of literature as an autonomous art form, separate from social, political, or historical contexts. They believed that literature should be studied on its own terms, without reference to external factors.

Overall, the methodology of Russian Formalism focused on the formal aspects of literature, such as language, structure, and style, and aimed to understand how these elements worked together to create meaning and effect.

## Sample Reading

### **A formalistic reading of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"**

A formalistic reading of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" would focus on the poem's structure, language, and imagery to understand how they contribute to the overall meaning and effect of the poem.

The poem is composed of eight stanzas of ten lines each, with a rhyme scheme of ABABCDECDE. The formal structure of the poem is symmetrical, with the first and last stanzas mirroring each other in content and tone. The use of a regular meter and rhyme scheme creates a musical quality to the poem that echoes the nightingale's song.

The language in the poem is rich with sensory imagery, with the nightingale's song described in vivid detail. The use of figurative language, such as metaphors and personification, is also prominent. For example, in the first stanza, the nightingale is described as a "light-winged Dryad of the trees," giving the bird a mystical quality that elevates it to the realm of the divine.

The poem also employs a number of contrasts and oppositions, such as the contrast between the "weariness, the fever, and the fret" of human life and the "full-throated ease" of the nightingale's song. This contrast underscores the speaker's desire to escape the limitations of the human condition and join the nightingale in its realm of pure sensation and emotion.

Finally, the use of repetition throughout the poem, such as the repeated use of the word "forlorn" in the third stanza, creates a sense of rhythm and pattern that reinforces the poem's themes of mortality and transience.

In sum, a formalistic reading of "Ode to a Nightingale" would focus on the poem's structure, language, and imagery to explore how they contribute to the poem's themes and meanings. Through this approach, the poem can be understood not only as a lyrical celebration of the nightingale's song but also as a meditation on the human condition and the desire for transcendence.