

Title: The Word as Body and the Body of the Word: Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's
"Avtobiografia trupa"

Author: Stephen Tullock, Harvard University

Abstract:

My paper investigates and elucidates the connection between the resurrected dead body and the aesthetics of Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, particularly in his story "Avtobiografia trupa" found in his collection *Chem liudi mertvy*. The building blocks of Krzhizhanovsky's philosophical and fantastical worlds are letters and words, in that these elements play more than just a compositional role. Language is often emptied of representational content and words are free to roam around—sometimes quite literally—as walking corpses, the metaphorical body without the soul. This theme is played out on multiple levels in the story "Avtobiografia trupa." The eponymous corpse experiences a phenomenon he labels "psychorrhea" and is spiritually dead long before he commits suicide. His autobiography, then, is a type of afterlife and resurrection (a three day account, by no coincidence), where the character-reader performs the revival through the process of reading. Throughout the narrative the author-corpse compares his emptied out body with the shells of the words he uses to compose his story, establishing an identity between the two.

My goal here is to analyze Krzhizhanovsky's use and understanding of the word and its quasi-religious and philosophical connection to the body, the incarnation, and the resurrection. While I will focus mainly on the European tradition of philosophical hermeneutics that draw upon the Christian doctrine of the Logos becoming Flesh, I will also contextualize Krzhizhanovsky's religiously-tinged word/body/resurrection metaphor with other Russian avant-garde theories of language.