

Title: Dostoevsky in Tynianov and Bakhtin: From Parody to Genre

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This paper returns to deceptively familiar ground – the question of Gogol’s influence on Dostoevsky – with quite different purposes to those associated with literary histories of the Russian nineteenth century. It seeks first to examine Iurii Tynianov’s utilization of Dostoevsky as an unacknowledged point of embarkation for his later theory of literary genre (evolution), contextualized against relative Formalist neglect of Dostoevsky. Tynianov takes Dostoevsky’s relationship to Gogol as the focal point of the theory of parody outlined in his first published work, ‘Dostoevskii i Gogol (k teorii parodii)’ (1921); by the time of Tynianov’s last overtly theoretical work, ‘O parodii’ (written 1929, published 1977), Dostoevsky has been displaced by verse material from the early-mid nineteenth century, and the parodic function contextualised against the theory of genre Tynianov has developed in the intervening period (in ‘Literatunyi fakt’, 1924 and ‘O literaturnoi evoliutsii’, 1927). The paper’s primary objective is to show that Tynianov’s identification of parody and stylization as different forms of ambivalent doubling in Dostoevsky is significant not only for his later theory of parody, but for the theory of genre it informs and by which it is constrained. Then, as a counterweight to the ‘canonized’ relationship of influence between Gogol and Dostoevsky, the paper seeks to establish the extent to which Dostoevsky can be characterised as a bridge between the respective theories of genre of Tynianov and Mikhail Bakhtin, whose 1929 book on Dostoevsky has been seen both as an anti-dote to Formalist neglect of Dostoevsky, and as an anti-dote to literary Formalism as such. In conclusion, it will be argued that Tynianov’s thought implies a modified alternative to the dialectical reasoning with which it has been associated, pursuing a model of thinking that is in fact more closely related to what later emerged as Bakhtinian dialogics.