

Title: Shklovsky Discovers the Eighteenth Century
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As far as scholarship of the literary history of the eighteenth century is concerned, Viktor Shklovsky's reputation rests on his groundbreaking observations on the novelistic technique of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. However, Shklovsky's engagement with eighteenth-century literature goes well beyond this early interest in Sterne. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when formalist theories of literature came increasingly under attack, Shklovsky wrote two studies, partly influenced by the then influential Soviet historian M. N. Pokrovsky,-- *Matvei Komarov: zhitel' goroda Moskvy* (Leningrad 1929) and *Chulkov i Levshin* (Leningrad, 1933). Characteristically, given his earlier interests in detective fiction and film as popular forms, and unlike Boris Eikhenbaum and Iurii Tynianov who also dealt with the same historical period but preferred to dwell on canonical figures, Shklovsky chose to write on little-known writers who nevertheless played an important role in the nascent literary marketplace of Russia. Ostensibly, both books were also to tackle the weighty question of the origins of the Russian novel but Shklovsky never abandoned his essayistic and whimsical style and the two studies have been either criticized or ignored ever since Grigorii Gukovskii's devastating review of *Matvei Komarov* in the journal *Zvezda*.

Yet despite his failure as a literary historian, Shklovsky did make a number of very interesting points about the rise of the Russian novel and its interaction with contemporary Western European literature. A close reading of the first two chapters of *Chulkov i Levshin* will set Shklovsky's immediate intellectual influences in context for a reassessment of his project.

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