

Flesh Made Strange: *Ostranenie* of the Human Body in Anglophone Fiction

A hundred years ago, the Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky published “Art as Device,” in which he coined the concept of *ostranenie*. Our perception, he writes, is deadened when body and the embodied mind are exposed to routine: “And so, what we call art exists in order to give back the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony. The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the method of art is the ‘*ostranenie*’ of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged” (translation by Alexandra Berlina).

The paper will begin by arguing that formalism as practiced by Shklovsky had much in common with approaches that are often construed as its opposite, ranging from reader-response studies to sociocultural, evolutionary and, above all, cognitive frameworks. Far from dealing with texts in a vacuum, Shklovsky constantly speaks about the mind and the body; contemporary psychological and neurological research has much in common with his ideas.

Having delineated this context, the paper will proceed to discuss the *ostranenie* of the human body in Anglophone literary texts ranging from Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and Brontë’s *Villette* to Vonnegut’s *Breakfast of Champions* and Amis’ *Other People*.

Bio: Alexandra Berlina is the author of *Brodsky Translating Brodsky: Poetry in Self-Translation* (2014), the editor and translator of the forthcoming *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader* (2016) and the laureate of several translation awards. Born in Moscow, she studied in London, taught American literature in Essen and is currently holding a post-doc position in literary studies at the University of Erfurt. She is working on a book on *ostranenie* and cognition.