

Title: The Pre-History of New Formalism
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Recent formalist work in literary studies, while coalescing around the designations “New Formalism” or “Neo-Formalism,” is perhaps too diffuse to characterize as a theoretical school. Critics invested in this return to form have tended, however, to emphasize a disciplinary trajectory that privileges the characterization of form associated with Anglo-American New Criticism. Both detractors and more neutral observers have noted that Russian Formalism has been relatively absent from these discussions even when it would seem to be an obvious (and quite useful) critical interlocutor. This paper will begin to suggest what a consideration of Russian Formalism (and, especially, discussions around Medvedev/Bakhtin's *The Formal Method*) can offer to our ongoing negotiation of the relationship between formal and historical literary theory.