

8. *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York, 1967), 246-47.
 9. *Ibid.*, 248.
 10. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, 1966), 56.
 11. Quoted in René Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, 1963), 59.
 12. *Ibid.*, 56.
 13. (Chicago, 1961), 155, italics ours.
 14. *Op. cit.*, 54-55.
 15. *Ibid.*, 53.
 16. *Op. cit.*, 249, italics ours.
 17. Hugh McLean, "On the Style of a Leskovian *Skaz*," *Harvard Slavic Studies*, II (Cambridge, 1956), 316.
 18. *Ibid.*, 299.
 19. *Idem.*
 20. *Ibid.*, 300 (Note.)
 21. *Ibid.*, 299-300.
 22. "Leskov i sovremennaja proza" in *Literatura: Teoria, Kritika, Polemika* (L. 1927), 210-211.
 23. *Ibid.*, 214.
 24. "Problema skaza v stilistike," 33.
 25. *Ibid.*, 36, italics ours.
 26. "Introduction" in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Scenes from the Bathhouse and Other Stories of Communist Russia* (Ann Arbor, 1962), vii, italics ours.
 27. In the chapter entitled "The Technique of *Skaz* in the Serapion Brothers' Works" (The Hague, 1966), 77-90.
 28. "Notes on the Uses of Monologue in Artistic Prose," *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, I/II (The Hague, 1959), 244. See too Erlich's "Some Uses of Monologue in Prose Fiction: Narrative Manner and World-View," *Stil- und Formprobleme in der Literatur: Vorträge des VII. Kongresses der Internationalen Vereinigung für moderne Sprachen und Literaturen in Heidelberg*, ed. by Paul Bockmann (Heidelberg, 1959), 371-78.
 29. Quoted in René Wellek and Austin Warren, *The Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1956), 228. Compare: "E. S. Dallas . . . finds three basic kinds of poetry, 'Play, tale, and song.' . . . He translates: drama—second person, present time; epic—third person, past time; and lyric—first person, singular, future." *Idem.*
 30. Scholes and Kellogg, 72.
 31. (Berkeley, 1968), 164.
 32. (Stockholm, 1962), 118.
 33. *Ibid.*, 131, italics ours.
 34. (New York, 1928), 1.
 35. In *Let the Band Play Dixie and Other Stories* (New York, 1934), 33.
 36. We cannot concur with Shane's assumption that a third person *skaz* narration becomes unfeasible in a non-provincial setting: "The use of *skaz* narrative with the presence of an implicit third person narrator had been motivated by the theme and setting of Zamiatin's early works, but the same style would hardly have been suitable for the depiction of London, Petersburg, or a great city of the future" ("Zamiatin's Prose Fiction," *Slavic and East European Journal*, [Spring, 1963], 21, italics ours.) We believe that Shane does not simply mean "style" but form as well, for he continues: "Consequently, local, dialectal, and substandard words were abandoned and the presence of a narrator other than the author was not felt" (*Idem.*, italics ours). It seems that the existence of Gogol's "Overcoat" would refute this implication that a third-person/non-substandard language *skaz* is not feasible.

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Martin P. Rice

ON "SKAZ"

Today, in spite of its growing international acceptance,¹ the literary term "skaz" is for all practical purposes a useless one. In Russian criticism the word "skaz" may have one of two meanings: a tale related orally or a written work having the character of a tale related orally. Outside of Russia, the term is used even less precisely. If we accept Eikhenbaum's implicit definition that, for the literary critic, it is a written work that creates the *illusion* of an authentic, oral tale, the question immediately arises: *What is a written illusion of an oral tale?* Efforts to elaborate on this simple definition have proved as frustrating as have efforts to define a "Novelle." Nevertheless, when we speak of "skaz" as a literary term, we are dealing with a narrative form, the exact identification and definition of which will be of enormous value in the continued study of oral narrative and its role in literature—if and only if "skaz" as a literary term represents a unique narrative form; if, and only if "skaz" is not a synonym for other recognized modes of narration. It is our belief that Eikhenbaum did indeed isolate a particular narrative structure, one that had not been previously defined, one that he did not adequately define, and one that has not been

adequately defined since

Unfortunately, after reading most existing discussions on "skaz," from within Russia as well as from without, one receives the overall impression of scholarly confusion. The definitions are in conflict, mutually exclusive, or at best, highly conditioned to meet the purposes of the given discussion (while at the same time they often concede the possibility of other definitions). To mention some of the most glaring examples: Vinogradov writes that "hardly anyone would call. . . Andrei Bely's prologue to *St. Petersburg*. . . a form of 'skaz',"² while V. Gofman cites precisely this prologue when he states that: ". . . an imitation of oratorical speech often serves as a convenient means for the introduction of the oral speech element and consequently creates the opportunity for 'skaz'. . ."³ The contradiction in this case arises from Vinogradov's having excluded oratorical speech, even though oral, from his classification of the type of monologue most suitable to serve for a "skaz" presentation. We see even more clearly how confused the use of the term has become when we read the following in Bakhtin: "Both the narrated story and even the pure 'skaz' can lose all their conditionality and become the direct authorial word, directly expressing the author's intention. This is almost always the case with 'skaz' in Turgenev."⁴ Thus Bakhtin refers to "Turgenev's 'skaz,'" while Eikhenbaum, Vinogradov, and Gofman use the Turgenev technique as an illustration of what "skaz" is not.⁵

We suggest that the confusion over "skaz" results to a significant degree from its having been approached almost exclusively from a standpoint of style rather than of form. Vinogradov says of Eikhenbaum's "How Gogol's *Overcoat* is Made," that "without giving a clearer exposition of the general notion of 'skaz,' he elaborates on the *stylistic definition* of one of the types of comic 'skaz'."⁶ The same might be said about much of Vinogradov's article, as well as about a considerable part of other existing works on the subject. Gofman tries to avoid the problem by saying, unhappily, that "the stylistic system is the structural principle of a 'skaz'."⁷ This, of course, is the logical extension of Eikhenbaum's thesis that in some stories style, as opposed to plot, becomes the main organizing principle of the story's structure. But many works having the stylistic peculiarities of "skaz" do not qualify as such in other respects and "skaz" therefore runs the danger, as Vinogradov correctly points out,

of becoming "a synonym for oral speech"; by itself, this organizing principle becomes too broad to serve as an adequate means for a generic identification. Without a clearer "general notion of 'skaz,'" without even a classification of those "types" referred to by Vinogradov, there can be no unified understanding of the term, and consequently, no further meaningful investigation of its most essential feature—its purpose. On the basis of most existing investigations, any story found to contain the stylistic attributes or criteria posited by a given critic can qualify as a "skaz." "Skaz," then, in this sense, is not a genre but a style of writing and we should not speak of "a 'skaz,'" but of "skazality," or "skaz" style."

There is, of course, a sound foundation for the association of spoken speech—which becomes a stylistic aspect of written literature—with generic definitions. As Northrop Frye points out: "The basis of generic distinctions in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. . . We have to speak of the *radical* of presentation if the distinctions of acted, spoken, and written word are to mean anything in the age of the printing press."⁸ Then Frye uses the term *epos* to stand for works in which the "radical of presentation is oral address." Finally he refers specifically to "the genre of the spoken word and the listener. . ."⁹ But even "real" (not printed, mimetic) oral narrative has formal characteristics beyond the existence of the speaker and his audience,¹⁰ and if "skaz" is indeed a unique narrative form, one which attempts to create the illusion of a "real," oral narrative, then its definition must be as concerned with the description of its form as it is with its style. It is the delimitation of form that has been generally lacking in critical dialogue thus far. One reason may be that the Russian Formalists would have agreed whole-heartedly with I. A. Richards' contention that the "close cooperation of the form as Rene Wellek points out, " 'Form' for the Russians, became a slogan so all-inclusive that it meant simply everything that makes a work of art."¹² The present confusion over the question of "skaz" illustrates the difficulties inherent in this extreme position. It will be the purpose of this essay to attempt to unravel some of the confusion and to form a tentative definition of "skaz"; one that will more precisely define the structural features of the genre and one, it is hoped, that will provide a firmer foundation for future investigation.

The essence of the "skaz" structure is to be found in a unique formal relationship between the narrator and his narrative. This relationship has been implicitly recognized and defined by Wayne C. Booth in his award-winning work, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, when he insists upon the distinction being made between "self-conscious narrators aware of themselves as writers (*Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Balfechester Towers*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *Dr. Faustus*), and narrators or observers who rarely if ever discuss their writing chores (*Huckleberry Finn*) or who seem *unaware* that they are writing, thinking, speaking, or 'reflecting' a literary work (Camus' *The Stranger*, Lardner's "Haircut," Bellow's *The Victim*)."¹³ It is within this latter group of "unaware" narrators that the "skaz" narrator is to be found. The "skaz" narrator is truly unaware that he is *reflecting a literary work*; he is also a speaking narrator. This is why it is Lardner's "Haircut" rather than Camus' *The Stranger* or Bellow's *The Victim* that qualifies as "skaz."

It would appear that the truly "unaware," speaking narrator—in terms of reflecting a literary work—must be come upon in the telling (as the narrator of "Haircut" indeed is); for if the illusion of his "palpable" presence is to be preserved, there can be no author to set the stage or introduce the narrator (as is, to the contrary, the case in frame stories). Consequently, our knowledge of the teller and the setting must come from within the tale itself. The objection might be voiced that even though the frame story is traditionally considered a written genre, there are cases where both the frame and the story within it are highly oral and where the illusion of the narrator's presence in the frame is preserved. The answer to this is that the frame itself destroys the *total* illusion essential for an oral narrative, namely that there can be a teller but no author. As Scholes and Kellogg point out in their discussion of "The Oral Heritage of Written Narrative," "those narratives which were not written by authors are in most cases distinguished from narratives composed by an author in writing by their failure to present a created narrator as a presence distinct from some higher creator."¹⁴ Thus, once a frame is set there is an added element, that is, the setter of the frame, the "created narrator," someone imitating or representing "a teller, his story, and an implied audience";¹⁵ consequently, the fundamental structural situation of "those narratives which were not written by authors" is no longer present. Although we will never be deceived into

believing that we are hearing a . . . "skaz" will strive to avoid any device that disturbs the illusion it is trying to create. Once there is a voice setting the frame for the story that follows, the story moves further in the direction of written narrative; the distance between the teller and his audience becomes more pronounced by the heightened presence of the implied author; and the greater this distance the less the chance for a successful reproduction of an oral tale. As Frye notes, in oral narration the "rhapsode or minstrel. . . speaks as [not 'for'] the poet, not as a character in the poem."¹⁶ The result is the greatest possible reduction in distance between implied author and narrator, precisely that after which a "skaz" strives. This observation also provides us with our first formal criterion for a "skaz," namely that the narrator speak as the creator-teller, not as a character.

Hugh McLean tells us that even in "Polunoshchniki," the work of a writer so orally oriented as Leskov, "in terms of percentage. . . the frequency of orally colored words [is] about twice as great in the 'skaz' [that is, the story within the frame] as it is in the frame, while the frequency of 'bookish' words is about the same."¹⁷ Therefore in this frame story, and in frame stories in general, one is dealing with two distinct voices, the voice of the frame setter and the voice of the internal narrator. Although each of these taken individually might constitute a "skaz," there is nothing unique in the situation.

It should be pointed out here that McLean's stimulating article does not purport to give a final definition, but is rather—as the title says—"On the Style of a Leskovian 'Skaz'." The problem is that the word "skaz" is ambiguous here as a literary term. "Skaz," according to McLean, "is familiar enough in English literature from the *Canterbury Tales* onwards."¹⁸ This is only so, however, if one accepts his definition of "skaz" as: "A stylis-
tically individualized inner narrative placed in the mouth of a fictional character and designed to produce the illusion of oral speech."¹⁹ This is an example of one of the highly conditioned "skaz" definitions referred to above, for, after noting certain valid objections to his definition, he continues: ". . . but I think the term "skaz," at least for the purposes of this article, is best limited to the combination of oral language with inner narrative by "inner narrative" he means the narrative within the [frame]."²⁰ So although the definition is adequate for his par-

ficular article, it is not adequate for a general understanding of "skaz." The individual criteria noted by McLean, as for example, "a stylistically individualized. . . narrative" and "the illusion of oral speech" are certainly necessary for a definition of "skaz," but alone they are not sufficient. Since we are aiming at a definition that would establish "skaz" as a unique narrative form, a frame story—even if it contains "both these two basic ingredients of 'orality' and 'individualization'"²¹ cannot qualify as a "skaz" because this is a stylistic description of a traditional literary genre.

By the same token, in one of Eikhenbaum's most painstaking explanations of what he means by "skaz," he too fails to distinguish between form and style. In his article, "Leskov and Contemporary Prose," Eikhenbaum states that the question of "narrative form can serve as a point of departure for the development of a theory of prose. If one proceeds from the problem of narrative form, then the degree to which a narration approximates oral story telling acquires fundamental importance. . . . Finally. . . the entire short story is then constructed with the aid of a particular narrator, who may be specially motivated by the author or who may appear without any motivation."²² But orality in itself is not a generic term, it pertains to style; consequently it can not be used to identify form—whereas, on the other hand, a narrator "specially motivated by the author, or who may appear without any motivation is a formal rather than a stylistic question. Eikhenbaum continues, now on the basis of this mixing of form and style:

By "skaz" I mean that form of narrative prose which, in vocabulary, syntax, and choice of speech rhythms, displays an orientation toward the narrator's oral speech. At the same time we are not considering various forms of authorial narration which are constructed according to other principles, which do not attempt to give the illusion of oral speech, even if the author addresses his readers, enters into conversation with them, and so forth. . . . I am concerned only with that type of narrative form which departs in principle from the written language and makes the narrator as such into a real figure.²³

Once again, merely departing from the written language does not make "the narrator as such into a real figure." In order to create this almost physically perceptible narrator as a unique

narrative medium, all ties with traditional written genre must be avoided (as far as this is possible, of course). Eikhenbaum's error here is in assuming that it is "vocabulary, syntax, and choice of speech rhythms" alone that create the illusion of orality, and consequently, the illusion of a tale being told orally. As we shall see below, this is not the case.

Vinogradov's definition of "skaz" is much more precise:

"Skaz" is a self-willed literary, artistic orientation toward an oral monologue of the narrative type; it is an artistic imitation of monological speech which contains a narrative plot and is constructed, as it were, as if it were being directly spoken.²⁴

From this point on, throughout his lengthy discussion of the various components of "skaz," Vinogradov continues to add qualifications to his original statement:

But one may also conceive of "skaz" forms in which the artist does not need to imitate the peculiarities of oral-monological construction, but only to employ in an esthetic way the notions which accompany speaking. In other words, what the writer requires is not the linguistic structure of "skaz," but only its atmosphere. . . . "Skaz" strives to give the illusion that it is merging with the oral narrative monologue, while the oral monologue moves in the opposite direction [that is, toward the literary language because of the continual introduction of literary linguistic aspects into the colloquial language]. The 'signals' by which "skaz" is recognized therefore do not have to be included in the author's 'remarks,' but may be put directly into its linguistic structure.²⁵

Here too, by differentiation between types of orality and "skaz signals" we depart from a generic definition and go over to a stylistic discussion. But we also begin to understand why the question of form invariably becomes confused with the question of style when discussing "skaz." It is not that "the stylistic system is the form," as Gofman claims, rather it is that (the form must be accompanied by a definite stylistic system). But first the form must be exclusively established, and Vinogradov has made the second step by his selection of "narrative monologue" as the basis. (The first step was our having determined that the narrator does not speak as a character.)

Even more illuminating is Sidney Monas's definition:

Zoshchenko's technique is that of the "skaz," the oral tale. The tale is supposed to have a moral, instructional point, to illustrate something; that is the excuse for telling and listening. But the point gets lost on the way: the storyteller is caught up in the story itself or simply succumbs to the delight of having an audience. It is himself he expresses, and not the moral. In Russian literature it was Leskov who first developed this technique, derived from popular storytelling. *The narrator is himself a character whom we come to understand through the words and expressions he uses and misuses, his repetitions, digressions, the things he chooses to talk about, and the things we know are there between the lines but which he is clearly incapable of expressing.*²⁶

The italicized passage does not negate our contention that the narrator does not speak as a character; actually it reinforces it by explaining that our perception of the narrator is not created by what he does, but rather by how he does nothing overtly. We should note particularly that Monas does not include something to the effect that we come to understand the narrator as a character "through what he actually tells us about himself." In other words, we may infer that a "skaz" does not have to be a first-person narrative just as Lardner's "Haircut"—cited by Monas as a most successful example of "skaz"—is not a first-person narrative.

It seems to us that the question concerning the use of the first person in "skaz" is a fundamental one; one, too, which has not been closely examined. Most discussions of "skaz" either implicitly assume the first person as the narrative persona or explicitly call for it. For example, Hongor Oulanoff, discussing "skaz" in his book, *The Serapion Brothers*, takes almost all his illustrations from Zoshchenko's *Stories of Nazar Illich Mr. Sinebryukhov*—a first person narrative replete with dialectal deviations from the literary language.²⁷ Victor Erlich requires that monologue (that is, the basic ingredient of "skaz") be defined as "a mode of discourse or narration. . . which is marked by the frequent use of the first-person pronoun."²⁸ With a definition containing these criteria in mind, there can be no doubt that a work such as Zoshchenko's is indeed "skaz" narrative. When we remember, however, that neither Gogol's "Overcoat"—which we may call the first identified "skaz"—nor Leskov's "Left-handed Craftsman," called a "skaz" by the author himself, is "marked by the frequent use of the first-person pronoun," we see an obvious contradiction.

This contradiction creates the necessity for a definition of "skaz" that, in part, contrasts it to the first-person narrative. (We will refer in what follows to a first-person narrative genre by the generally accepted German term *Icherzahlung*.)

If we are to avoid calling every *Icherzahlung* that displays orality a "skaz," we must ask the following questions: where does the ordinary *Icherzahlung* end and a "skaz" in the first person begin? How much must we infer about the narrator from the way he tells his story as opposed to what he tells us about himself? At what point does the first-person narrator emerge from his primary role as the transmitter of a story into the role of "skaz" narrator and begin "expressing himself?" These are most elusive lines. Traditionally, a professional, oral tale teller does not talk about himself, he relates a story. Consequently, any information that the narrator explicitly provides concerning himself, which in turn helps to create a feeling about him on the part of the reader, is only incidental to a particular type of *Icherzahlung* and does not make the *Icherzahlung* a "skaz."

It is not only the fact that "The Overcoat" and Leskov's "The Left-handed Craftsman" are third person tales, however, that suggests this person as the legitimate narrative medium for "skaz." Generically speaking, "skaz" belongs to the epic or "tale form" and traditionally, as pointed out by Roman Jakobson, among others, "the epic is third person, past tense (the "I" of the epic teller is really looked at from the side as a third person—*dieses objektivierte Ich*)."²⁹ This conception would indicate the following approach to the problem of differentiating between first-person narration of *written* genre ("in early literature. . . generally associated with such loose and personal forms as the epistle and the memoir"³⁰) and "skaz": a "skaz" is delivered in the third person. When one or two uses of the first person pronoun do appear in a "skaz" (as it happens in "The Overcoat" and in Bely's *St. Petersburg*), this is not enough to make the "skaz" a first-person narrative, but rather serves as one of the devices used to heighten the presence of the oral narrator. These qualifications are not arbitrary. If "skaz" is a distinct literary form it must be distinguished from established forms, in this case specifically from the *Icherzahlung*, which is so often accompanied by orality (*The Catcher in the Rye* would be one excellent example from among innumerable others). These same qualifications assume an even more fundamental significance if we accept the following proposi-

tions supported by this essay: first, that "skaz" attempts to create the illusion of a tale being told orally and second, that a traditional tale teller does not use himself for the object of his tale. In accordance with the first proposition, we must, as we do in an ordinary speaker-listener situation, receive a clearly defined picture of the narrator, we must be able to make judgments concerning his place of origin, his politics, religion, ethnic background, education, mentality, and so on. This is self-understood in a narrative where the narrator is a main participant and where he uses the first person to introduce himself, and even to describe his own past and present activities. On the other hand, if the reader receives this clearly defined picture without the narrator's supplying any specific information about himself, then we have come as close as possible to actually creating the illusion of a tale told orally. In accordance with the second proposition, and following logically from the first, the "I" of a "skaz" narration can not be a central figure in the plot.

As far as we can determine, Alex Shane in his book, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin*, taking his cue from the Soviet critic, S. Kastorsky, is the only American critic to distinguish between a "third-person skaz" and a "first-person skaz" when he refers to "'skaz' with an explicit narrator" and "'skaz' with an implicit narrator."³¹ The former is understood to be written in the first person and the latter in the third person. Unfortunately, when we make this distinction we are entering the realm of the *Icherzahlung* per se, and the so-called "first-person 'skaz'" is nothing more than a stylistic description of a particular *Icherzahlung*. Specifically, if we think of an *Icherzahlung* written in the "skaz" style we are involved in the question of artistic distance within the first-person form. As Bertil Romberg points out in his *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First Person Novel*: "Another sort of information that [the first person] gives about himself is the indirect sort, the sort that is usually unconscious. This is the type of information that is concealed—though often easily discovered—behind the narrator's reactions, his choices, his view over the action and his presentation of it."³² This is much closer to the "skaz" narrator, but, as stated above and as clear from the context, this is a narrative situation in a particular type of *Icherzahlung*. Romberg does recognize the true "skaz" situation when he states:

By taking a number of representative examples we have dealt the author's possibilities of letting the narrator characterize himself both consciously and unconsciously, directly and indirectly. This information about facts may turn into indirect information about the narrator; the narrator's key position as communicator of narrative does not always mean that he has himself that sovereign view over everything which he communicates to his readers. But in a single rejoinder and in a lengthy expose or monologue in direct first person and this applies to a third-person novel as well as to a novel of the first person—the speaker must not only supply information but also in a larger or smaller extent draw a character portrait of himself: his evaluations, his style and choice of words.³³

Of course, since his work deals with the first-person novel, Romberg did not continue with an examination of this indirect characterization by the narrator in a third-person tale. This, however, is what "skaz" is all about.

At this point we have touched upon all the basic elements of the "skaz" structure (excluding style in a generic sense) and would do well to recapitulate by presenting our tentative definition:

A "skaz" is a written narrative that attempts to imitate an oral tale. The basis of its structure is a narrative monologue rendered in the third person. It avoids the characteristics of specifically literary genres, traditionally recognized as well as epistolary novels, memoirs, diaries, notes and so forth, or associated with literary genres, for example, the frame story of the *Icherzahlung*. Since there is only one absolute precondition for an orally related narrative, namely a narrator to relate orally, the more successful the illusory presence of an oral narrator, the more successful the "skaz." The "skaz's" primary formal function is not to reproduce orality, but to create the illusion of a "real oral narrative," and, concomitantly, the illusion of its narrator's presence. When we listen to someone tell a story we not only hear him, we see him as well, we are not only affected by what he says, but by how he says it, we not only believe what he says based upon the story's probability, but we believe what he says based upon our estimation of his reliability. If we do not personally know the story teller—as is the case in a "skaz"—we estimate his reliability according to criteria as varied as his appearance, the sound of his voice, his choice of vocabulary, his grammar, the logic of his sentences, his irony, and so forth. All of

criteria, except appearance, will be conveyed in a "skaz" without authorial comment or first person self-description.

Since there are stylistic implications inherent in this definition, and since we have suggested above that the "skaz" form must be accompanied by a definite stylistic system, it would appear that some discussion concerning style is now in order.

With the exception of Eikhenbaum's article on "The Overcoat," all other detailed stylistic investigations of "skaz" have examined works containing such unmistakable signs of orality as dialectal speech and deficient grammar; Eikhenbaum's own discussion of Leskov, McLean's treatment of "Polunoshchniki," and Oulanoff's investigation of *Nazar Illich Mr. Sinebryukhov* are cases in point. Although, according to our definition, all these stories are not "skaz," but either *Icherzahlungen* or frame-stories written in the "skaz" style, a pure "skaz" bearing this particular linguistic-stylistic stamp is relatively easy to find. Picking up Roark Bradford's *Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys* and his *Ol' Man Adam an' his Chillun* (better known by its stage and film title of "The Green Pastures"), one will find fifty-seven examples of "skaz" using dialect and deficient grammar. The first story in the latter book, called "Eve and That Snake," begins:

Well, a long time ago things was diffrent. Hit wa'n't nothin' on de yearth 'cause hit wa'n't no yearth. And hit wa'n't nothin' nowheres and ev'y day was Sunday. Wid de Lawd r'ared back preachin' all day long ev'y day. 'Ceptin' on Sadday, and den ev'y body went to de fish fry.³⁴

There can be no doubt that this passage was written with the intention of creating the illusion of an orally related tale. (Most likely, anyone who speaks in this manner is illiterate.) Who is the narrator? Where does he come from? What is happening? Why is he telling us this? Does he know what he is talking about? Can we trust him? By the time we have read the tale through, we are really able to answer these questions without one word either from the narrator about himself or from the implied author (commenting on the narrator). This is an example of a pure "skaz." It might be argued, however, that this is simply a story in dialect and as such is one of numberless similar tales. The point is granted. However, we may also see that "skaz" as a *generic* term is quite useful when we contrast "Eve and That Snake" to another story

by the same author, "Child of God," which, although containing the same type of dialectal speech, is obviously a written story with heavily emphasized dialogue:

When Willie told the preacher that morning that "ev'ything is all O.K., Revund," he meant it from the bottom of his heart. The hawking of the rain-crow from the limb of the dead cottonwood sounded like the song of a mockingbird. The monotonous patter of rain on the tin roof lulled him into gentle restfulness. The damp, dirty stench that floated up from the dark closeness of the cells below him was like a sedative. Even the lyelike coffee served to remind him that the jailer was his friend.

"Cap'n Archie tole me I could have ev'ything I wanted fer brekfus'," he explained as he caught the minister sniffing and eyeing the scant remains of the meal. "An' I tole him I b'lieve I'd take some po'k chops an' cawfee, ef'n hit wuz all right. An' hyar it is."

"You mean dar hit wuz," admonished the preacher. "Now yo' flesh is fed, Willie, whut 'bout yo' soul?"

Willie beamed a broad, knowing smile. . . .³⁵

The narrative, descriptive passages are written in pure, literary language, and, in these terms, the narrator is indistinguishable from the implied author. Thus we see that "skaz" is more than simply the reproduction of the sound of oral speech; and two works of one author, although both containing the same type of orality, can be readily distinguished one from the other by their respective forms. There is one fundamental point distinguishing "Eve and That Snake" from "Child of God": in the former, the narrator was individualized to such an extent as to remove any possibility of identifying him with the implied author; this combination of orality and individualized narrator, as noted by McLean, provides the *basis* for the "skaz." But this basis is formally reinforced and the tale is turned into a pure "skaz" by the absence of any specifically written conventions whatsoever: neither is there any reference to its having been written, nor is it in a traditional written form of a frame-story or *Icherzahlung*.

The above comments have been purposely brief. It was not our intention to present a detailed formal and stylistic analysis of a linguistically sub-standard "skaz," but rather to indicate how our distinctions might be useful in the study of stories possessing obviously oral tone. The concept of "skaz," however, is of much greater significance when the term is applied to stories not having

the evident oral signals of dialect or faulty grammar.⁵⁰

Obviously some people do speak in a manner more akin to books than to peasants. Certainly a tale related by the son of a university professor will sound differently than that of the narrator of "Eve and That Snake." On the other hand, we will nevertheless still somehow have to be able to distinguish between the language of the narrator and what we may safely assume the language of the implied author to be. In other words, even though the language of the narrator is that of the literary language (our university professor's son), there are other devices that emphasize the narrator's orality and presence (what Vinogradov has called "notions which accompany speaking" and the "atmosphere" of an oral tale) and that, at the same time, distinguish his language and personality from that of the implied author. This creates the necessity of dividing "skaz" narrations into types based upon the respective signals or devices they contain. For this purpose, we may use the definition of a "skaz" signal formulated by Vinogradov—that is, some element within a text by means of which the notion of speech will be excited in the reader, not under conditions of writing but of recitation. In addition, this definition should be broadened to include those elements within a text that excite in the reader the illusion of the narrator's presence and that help to identify his background. In other words, there would seem to be two basic types of "skaz" signals; those that are oriented toward creating the illusion of live, oral speech (something contained in non-"skaz" stories as well) and those that serve the purpose of establishing the illusion of the narrator's physical presence (therefore automatically creating the illusion of his speech) and of identifying his personality and social background. On the basis of this division, the following classification offers itself:

"Skaz" Signals—Group A
(illusion of live speech)

1. Sub-standard language
2. Dialect
3. Faulty grammar
4. Unusual syntax
5. Folk etymology

"Skaz" Signals—Group B
(illusion of presence and speech)

1. Pathological language
2. Repetition
3. Stuttering and incoherent sounds
4. Gestures
5. Rhythmic prose
6. Digressions

Obviously the line between these groups is not as clearly defined as the above lists would suggest. A given signal may be found in either category, although, according to our observations, the signals of each group tend to cluster together in a given story. A narrative that utilizes exclusively the signals of Group B is artistically more interesting and subtle, requires a greater degree of craftsmanship on the part of the author, and is considerably more rare than one belonging to Group A owing to the inherent difficulties in its composition.

We have attempted to give a short explication of the concept of "skaz" as we understand it. We are convinced that the emphasis placed by this fusing of formal and stylistic devices in a unique type of narrator has been largely overlooked in Western criticism. The "skaz" narrator obscures the objective events through his excessive presence, a feat he accomplishes by making himself felt "physically" through his orality rather than through his participation. Thus, our attention having been directed toward him, he makes us more ready for and aware of those "signals" that are our clues for identifying him and often his purpose as well. We might not have understood this purpose, which the author perhaps would not want to acknowledge as being his own, had we, as we normally are, been carried along by an unadulterated account of the events, which in themselves are often trivial!

NOTES

1. The term is included in B. v Wilpert's *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1964), 650. It will also be included in the forthcoming *Dictionnaire Internationale des termes littéraires* to be published by The International Comparative Literature Association.
2. "Problema skaza v stilistike" in *Poetika: Sbornik statei*. (Vremennik otdela slovesnykh isskustv, 1.) (L. 1926), 28. (Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 46. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.)
3. "Dal's Folkloric Skaz" [*Fol'klornyj skaz Dalja*], in *Russkaia Proza*, ed. by B. Eikhenbaum and Yu. Tynianov (L. 1926), 235. (Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 43. The Hague: Mouton, 1963.)
4. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Tr. H. W. Røtsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), 108.
5. "The Illusion of Skaz" "The Problem of Skaz in Stylistics," "Dal's Folkloric Skaz"
6. "Problema skaza v stilistike," 26, italics ours.
J. Op. cit. 237