The Poetics of Skaz also develops Bakhtin's notion of double-directed (parodic) and single-directed (stylised) *skaz*.[63] Single-directed *skaz* is where the narrator and the author are in sympathy, and double-directed *skaz* as where the author and narrator are at odds. Viacheslav Shishkov's "The Tartar Way" is seen as as an example of single-directed *skaz*. Zoshchenko's "A Classy Lady" is seen as an example of double-directed *skaz* in the distance between the narrator's indig-nation and the author's ironic attitude to it. Nevertheless, the authors of *The Poetics of Skaz* argue that all *skaz* introduces a narrator who has some distance from the voice of the author. As a result, a voice with ultimate, all-knowing authority is absent from both types of *skaz*.

This distinction enables the authors of *The Poetics of Skaz* to highlight the contrasts between *skaz* and other related forms. Hence the absence of an authoritative voice distinguishes *skaz* from the first person narrative or *Ich-Erzählung*, in which the narrator recounts the story from a distance of many years. Moreover, whereas in *skaz* the narrator and author tend to be distinct, in *Ich-Erzählung*, the narrator and author tend to merge. This is illustrated by reference to Pushkin's *Belkin Tales*, in which the narrator introduces certain literary references and Latin quotations inconsistent with Belkin's education.

A further respect in which *skaz* differs from *Ich-Erzählung* is that in *skaz*, unlike in *Ich-Erzählung*, it is not the individuality of the narrator that is important, but his social type. The narrator is a representative of a group:

> behind a narrator who is devoid of any individual characteristics, one can always discern the collective. The narrator appears as the representative of a whole group of people like him: the suggestion is that he sees and evaluates the surrounding world in the same way as many people like him see and evaluate it.[64]

Moreover, the authors of *The Poetics of Skaz* argue that *skaz* creates the illusion that it is being told orally, to a live audience, that is either directly addressed or implied in some way. The narrator assumes support or agreement on the part of his audience. This also creates the sense of the narrator as a representative of a collective.

Unfortunately, the notion of *skaz* which *The Poetics of Skaz* espouses, namely as a democratic tendency in literature linked with *narodnost;,* is not integrated with its analysis of double-directed *skaz*. In describing double-directed *skaz* and in noting the contrast between the evaluations of the narrator and those of the author, they have described a parodic or ironic form. Surely, if the language of the people is being introduced for a parodic (double-directed) purpose, then the democratisation is illusory or at least not straightforward. The author is at least distancing himself from, if not in fact ridiculing the language

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63. See below, Chapter III.

64. Mushchenko *et al*., *The Poetics of Skaz*, p. 29.

or the mindset of the people. This shortcoming is significant. The interplay between the introduction of popular language on one hand and the parodic distance adopted to it on the other is the very nub of the problem of *skaz*.

Narration by a Socially Other Character

Levin achieves a synthesis of these two positions, stressing that the *skaz* narrator uses the language of a different social class, socially other speech. This for Levin logically follows from the *skaz* narrator's use of the language of the character, since he argues that this tends to mean the introduction of a narrator who is not an individual character, but a social type.[65]

Levin defines the 'classic' narrative norm as one that uses language written by and for educated society. This language was defined as the literary norm. This normative form of narration by its very nature is incapable of incorporating those elements of the conversational language that are specific to the oral form of expression. Levin is not very explicit, but we could employ Titunik's list of the features that distinguish the language of the characters from that of the narrator here.[66] The normative literary narrator cannot use such elements of speech, because his language is generalising and performs the rôle of representing. The speech of the characters, however, can. As a result the normative narrator's language sets him above social class and character: 'his social identity appears as a kind of normative principle and is not intended to concretise him as a person'.[67]

However, Levin attempts to go further than Titunik. He argues that where classic Russian writers of the 19th century introduced colloquial speech, many elements of orality, particularly syntactical elements, were deliberately removed.

Skaz as such is the introduction of speech that differs from the narrative norm of the 19th century. In particular, it is the introduction of socially characteristic language. It is also the creation of the illusion of oral speech through the use of oral speech intonations. In *skaz* the authorial voice is itself defined, it expresses itself directly, in contrast to the literary norm. By so doing, the authorial

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65. The focus of Levin's article is Bely, Remizov and Rozanov, who are not attempting to bring in a narrator with a socially other extra-literary language, but to revolutionise literary language with the introduction of elements of the oral. They are contrasted with the lang-uage of *skaz*, particularly that of Leskov and Gogol, who are seen as reacting to classical prose style, rather than, like these writers, attempting to create a new style. Levin, '"Neklassicheskie" tipy povestvovaniia'.

66. He is more explicit in an earlier work: V.D. Levin, 'Literaturnyi iazyk i khudozhestvennoe povestvovanie', in *Voprosy iazyka sovremennoi russkoi literatury*, ed. by V.D. Levin (Moscow, Nauka, 1971), pp. 9–96.

67. Levin, '"Neklassicheskie" tipy povestvovaniia', p. 248.

voice itself becomes a social type. In other words it becomes a character, and is no longer above the fictional world. It is made a character by its use of a socially marked language as opposed to the unmarked, generalising one. This, according to Levin, distinguishes *skaz* such as that of Zoshchenko and Leskov from that of Remizov and Bely. With the latter, it is not a different social language that in-terests them, but the enlivening of and transformation of the norm language of the author in prose through the introduction of oral intonations.

Levin's analysis of *skaz* cleverly combines two tendencies in the interpretation of Bakhtin's definition of the term: on the one hand the idea that the character performs the rôle of the narrator, a definition given its clearest expression in the work of Titunik, and on the other the idea that it introduces the language of the people. These two definitions need not be in conflict. However they do seem often to have taken different paths.

Natal'ia Kozhevnikova also sees *skaz* as a striving towards characterisation.[68] She describes this in Bakhtin's terms of *hu'aq reh;*, another person's speech, and *hu'aq tohka zreniiq*, another person's point of view.[69] She stresses that the Eikhenbaum–Vinogradov definition is not necessarily in contradiction with Bakhtin's.[70] Moreover, like Levin, she also stresses both parts of Bakhtin's analysis: *hu'aq reh;* is the speech of a narrator whose point of view is not the author's and whose evaluations are not those of the author. Though she sees narration by a character who uses 'non-literary' language as '*skaz* proper', Kozhevnikova does allow as *skaz* narratives where the point of view is not that of the author, but which employ the standard literary language. This is *Ich-Erzählung* in our terms. Moreover, she argues that the further a narrator's speech is from the literary language, the further the narrator can be assumed to be from the author's sympathies.[71] Apart from categorising as *skaz* works that gain nothing from being so identified, such an understanding of *skaz* is misleading because it demands that we identify an implicit literary norm with the implicit point of view of the author. As we shall see, the author–narrator relation in *skaz* cannot be assumed to be so simple.

This notion of *skaz* as being narrated by a character seems extremely fruitful.

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68. Like Levin and Natal'ia Kozhevnikova, Belaia also stresses the use of the language of the people in *skaz* and the dominance of the character over objective authorial narration. She links this phenomenon to the revolution: 'After the revolution it became impossible to write in the old way; the people had become not only the object but it was as if they were the subject of narration too' – Belaia, *Zakonomernosti stilevogo razvitiia*, p 10.

69. Natal'ia Kozhevnikova, 'O tipakh povestvovaniia v sovetskoi proze', in *Voprosy iazyka sovremennoi russkoi literatury*, pp. 97–163 (p. 98).

70. *Ibid*., p. 99.

71. *Ibid*., p. 101.

It is no accident that so many of the more rigorous accounts of the form gravitate towards this definition, since it seems to be the definition that describes the form best. However, if we accept that *skaz* is a narration performed by a character, or at least by a narrator whose language displays the features typically associated with a character, and its main distinctive feature is his use of the language of the people, we are faced with new questions. What is the writer's purpose in introducing such a narrator? Is that language being introduced for its own sake, as a way of democratising the language of literature or for an ulterior, ironic or parodic motive? Is it the language that the author wants or the mentality ex-pressed in that language? The third part of Bakhtin's analysis of *skaz* initiates discussion of this question.

Skaz as an Ironic System

Bakhtin defined *skaz* as a form in which, along with the intention and voice of the author, a second language, *hu'aq reh;,* and hence a second voice was present. He did not stop there, however, but broke down the interrelation of the author's intention and the character-narrator's language into stylised (single-directed) and parodic (double-directed) forms.[72] This is a categorisation according to the author's intentions in introducing *skaz*. With stylised *skaz*, the intention of the author coincides with that of the style, it is a sympathetic recreation of the given style by an author who sees it as inherently valuable.[73] Stylisation differs from imitation, according to Bakhtin, by retaining a distance between the writer recreating the style and the style itself: in imitation there is no such distance. In practice, though, the two can be hard to distinguish.[74] As we have seen, a number of analyses of *skaz* have assumed all *skaz* is sympathetic stylisation. However, this is not so: with parodic *skaz*, the author's intentions are opposite to those of the style itself. The intention therefore is one of unsympa-thetic exaggeration and parody of the original style. This dual aspect of Bakh-tin's analysis has often been ignored or distorted. Many critics have assumed that the *skaz* narrator was always introduced because the author valued and admired the language of the people. Others have assumed that *skaz* is intrinsically a form of parody. Bakhtin's achievement in distinguishing these two possibilities needs to be stressed.

An example of one-sided interpretation of Bakhtin's analysis of *skaz* is

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72. Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, p. 87. Bakhtin sees stylised *skaz* as the most common form, sometimes referring to it as simple *skaz*.

73. Stylisation may be likened to sympathetic pastiche.

74. Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, p. 82.

Zsuzsa Hetényi.[75] This critic stresses the socially other nature of the language of *skaz*, but underestimates the rôle of parody and ironic distance. She quotes Bakhtin's definition of stylisation as if it is the only way in which two voices can be present in one utterance.

A recent example of an interpretation that is based on Bakhtin's analysis of *skaz*, but ignores the possibility of stylised *skaz*, is Michael S. Gorham's article on the *Rabsel'kor* (worker and rural correspondent) movement:

> *skaz* is a parodic device that depends precisely on the undermining of narrative authority, mainly by creating discursive distance between narrator and implied author. It does so in part by invoking the speech of the 'other', the 'not-author'.[76]

Natal'ia Kozhevnikova appears to avoid such an imbalance in her account and notes both types of *skaz*. She expands on Bakhtin's distinction between single-directed (stylised *skaz*) and double-directed (parodic *skaz*) variants of *skaz* by examining the relation of the narrator's evaluations to the author's. In single-directed *skaz* the narrator's and the author's evaluations and opinions are very close to each other or coincide:

> in the first case, the discourse of the narrator is immediately directed towards the object [*predmet*] and is not subjected to clear expressive reevaluation. The evaluations of the author and the narrator lie on the same plane or adjoin each other.[77]

In double-directed *skaz* the evaluations of the author and the narrator do not coincide, but are directly at odds. This disparity creates an effect of irony:

> In the second case the evaluations of the author and the narrator lie on different planes, and do not coincide. This noncoincidence always creates an ironic effect. The discourse of the narrator shifts the contours of the objective world so that it is as if the true meaning of what is narrated does not come into focus and is not directly presented in the story, but can be inferred beyond it. The literary effect is based upon the presence of two planes, on the fact that the author and the narrator are not identical. The author's face is hidden, and the relation between the author

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75. Zsuzsa Hetényi, '"Chto moi glaza sobstvennoruchno videli..." Osobennosti skazovykh tekstov v "Konarmii" I. Babelia', *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientarium Hungaricae*, XXXVIII, N° 1–2 (1993), pp. 95–101.

76. Michael S. Gorham, 'Tongue-Tied Writers: The *Rabsel'kor* Movement and the Voice of the "New Intelligentsia" in Early Soviet Russia', *Russian Review*, LV (1996), pp. 412–29 (p. 425). I have assumed that Gorham here is using parody broadly in the sense of ridicule. It should be noted, however, that the word is now applied to textual practices Bakhtin would have termed 'stylisation'. Linda Hutcheon uses it in this sense – see her *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York, Methuen, 1985). See also Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern* (Cam-bridge, Cambridge U.P., 1993). I have been using the term parody in the negative sense in which Bakhtin uses it, as burlesque.

77. Kozhevnikova, 'O tipakh povestvovaniia v sovetskoi proze', p. 101.

> and the narrator develops out of what he says about himself and how he says it.[78]

Though Bakhtin called this type of *skaz* parodic, Kozhevnikova is justified in calling it ironic, since she is drawing attention to the contrast in point of view and ways of evaluating rather than contrasts of style and language. This distinction between language and ideological point of view is an important one, and is an amelioration of Bakhtin that will be pertinent to our analysis of *skaz*.[79]

Her fruitful development of Bakhtin's categories nothwithstanding, Kozhevnikova proceeds to argue that where the language of the narrator is extra-literary, the evaluations of the author and the narrator will not coincide, and where the language of the narrator is literary, the narrator's and the author's evaluations will coincide. Although she does admit that this is not necessarily so, she tends to see any use of a non-standard language as necessarily parodic-ironic. This seems to be a result of the notion of the literary norm that, at least in her earlier articles, she shares with Levin. This position is a serious underestimation of the possibilities for the sincere stylisation of the non-literary language. The fact that she revised it later is probably indicative of its weakness:

> Evaluations, just like speech, correspond to the 'normal' perception of the world which is either immediately present in the text or can be inferred beyond it. The attitude to the evaluations recorded in the represented discourse varies between mer-ging with them and ironic distancing from them, or even outright rejection of them. This depends on the degree of social and psychological proximity of the author to the character, on the nature of the evaluations themselves, and on the content of the speech.[80]

This formulation is highly nuanced, but still equates a social distance between narrator and author with ideological distance and lack of sympathy. While this may cover the majority of cases, surely it is possible to express one's own views in a language not one's own, and to be ironic in one's own language or dialect. In a situation in which language and social class were undergoing profound chan-ges, it may be very difficult to tell the ironic from the sincere, and social class or language are likely to be untrustworthy indicators of someone's way of thinking.

Though it may be proper to credit Bakhtin for first making a clear distinction between the parodic and stylised forms of *skaz*, both Eikhenbaum and Vinogradov already perceived that *skaz* introduced colloquial or extra-literary

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78. *Ibid*., p. 101. She further develops this exploration of the relations between the author and narrator's evaluations in her *Tipy povestvovaniia v russkoi literature XIX–XX vekov* (Moscow, Institut russkogo iazyka, Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1994), p. 7.

79. Nevertheless, the relation of parody and irony is complex and will be dealt with at greater length below.

80. *Ibid*., p. 7.

language for a variety of different reasons. Eikhenbaum noted that the use of language that deviated from the literary norm often produced a comic effect:

> very often (but not always) *skaz* has a comic character, in the context of the canon-ised literary language, it is perceived as its deformation, as defective, 'incorrect' language.[81]

Similarly, Vinogradov saw the interactions of two levels in the text as producing the comic effects of *skaz*. These two levels are those of the reception of the text. The first is the 'subjective' level: the way that *skaz* pretends that it is received by familiar people of a close circle such as the other inhabitants of Mirgorod in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka*. The second level is the 'object-ive' sense in which it was really meant for consumption by a completely un-known reader. Vinogradov argues that the discrepancy between these two levels creates comic effects: 'this lack of correspondence, this non-coincidence of two planes of perception, – the conceived [*zadannyj*] and the given [*dannyj*], – serves as the basis for some poignant comic effects'.[82] Both of these accounts also assume that the discrepancies between the fictional situation and the actual situation of the story, or between a substandard usage and the norm are intended solely to have a comic effect. It is misleading to assume this, since disparities may also have a tragic effect, and to do so could lead to us perceiving the comic when a work was not comic in intent.[83]

Léna Szilárd further elaborates Vinogradov's account of the two levels of *skaz*.[84] Szilárd sees *skaz* as an 'exposure and demonstration' of the discrepancy not only between two 'addressers' and two 'addressees', but also between the two corresponding layers of language. Vinogradov's positing of a distinction be-tween the subjective and objective addressers and addressees of *skaz* serves as the basis for the development of a model which theorises the distinctions between what Szilárd terms the factual and formal encoders and decoders:

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81. Eikhenbaum,'Leskov i sovremennaia proza', p. 230. He argues that the comic is produced when a work focuses our attention on expression rather than meaning. This is a refinement of 'Kak sdelana "Shinel'" Gogolia', where such a shift of attention was seen as charac-teristic of Gogol's comic *skaz*.

82. Vinogradov, 'Problema skaza v stilistike', p. 194.

83. There have been readings of Rudyi Pan'ko's introduction that cogently argue it to be a sincere stylisation. See A.V. Samyshkina 'K probleme gogolevskogo fol'klorizma (Dva tipa skaza i literaturnaia polemika v "Vecherakh na khutore bliz Dikan'ki")', *Russkaia literatura*, XX, Nº 3 (1979), pp. 61–80. This article is discussed below (Chapter III) in relation to Gogol.

84 Léna Szilárd, '*Skaz* as a Form of Narration in Russian and Czech Literature', in *Fiction, texte, narratologie, genre*, ed. by Jean Bessière (New York, Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 181–90.

FACTUAL ENCODER The author and his world-view objectivated in the work of art		**FACTUAL DECODER** The reader
	COMMUNICATION hero, event, theme	
FORMAL ENCODER The narrator		**FORMAL DECODER** The audience of the *skaz*.[85]

These levels also correspond to the literary or written on one hand and the subcultural or spoken on the other.[86] The interaction of these two disparate levels is either a 'zealous reproduction of "non-Gutenbergian" linguistic forms', and the factual level effaces itself before the formal, or it is 'grotesque-ironic', and the two levels are in sharp opposition.[87] The former is typified by writers such as Remizov, the latter by writers such as Zoshchenko and Zamiatin. Szilárd concentrates on the second, grotesque-ironic form of *skaz*, in which the presence of the two distinct levels is most clearly signalled. She argues that the chief means of indicating the distance between the two levels in grotesque-ironic *skaz* is 'linguistic discrediting', where the narrator uses the language incorrectly, showing himself to be incompetent and untrustworthy as a narrator. Zoshchenko and Zamiatin are seen as typical of such *skaz*.[88]

Szilárd's description of the two levels at work in *skaz* is clear and workable. Moreover, it skilfully incorporates Vinogradov's vision of the intermixing of oral and written codes with an insight drawn from Bakhtin as to the author–narrator relations. However, this development of Vinogradov's analysis of *skaz* suffers from the same defect as its progenitor, in seeing the linguistic norm as a faithful index of a text's ideological norm, namely the author's intention. Hence it too readily assumes that linguistic incompetence discredits the narrator. It seems that Vinogradov, Szilárd, Natal'ia Kozhevnikova and Levin fall into the trap of trying to find an exclusively textual, linguistic formula for irony and parody. Bakhtin is not guilty of this because he is interested in these forms precisely because they are not linguistically definable, but dependent for their

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85. *Ibid*., p. 185.
86. Christopher English also refers to the 'double-focus' of *skaz*. He sees this as the contradiction between the illusion of oral delivery and the actually highly literary nature of the form – see his '"Schalk Lourens and Ivan Flyagin"', p. 160.
87. Szilárd, '*Skaz* as a Form of Narration in Russian and Czech Literature', p. 185.
88. However, Szilárd takes no account of the fact that Zoshchenko was writing at a time of social and hence linguistic upheaval, for an audience who often saw his narrator's non-standard language as evidence of his trustworthiness rather than his untrustworthiness.

meaning on the context.

As we have seen, a number of critics have been attentive to the parodic or ironic potential in *skaz*. Generally, it seems that a critic stresses either the parodic-ironic or the stylised aspect of *skaz*, and very rarely both. None of them countenances the possibility of a mixture of motives in a single work. One critic however, A. Bocharov, does express an awareness as to these two contradictory possibilites inherent in the form:

> in enabling the democratisation of literature, *skaz* also conceals a potential danger (which quite often materialises) of giving rise to a certain condescension towards this character with his simple joys, unsophisticated incidents, and his lovable pretentions to the significance of his fate. Even the popular speech [*prostorehie*] with which *skaz* is usually scattered, on the one hand, aids the democratisation, and vitalisation of the literary language, and on the other hand is often intended solely to be 'exotic' and unusual. Is this not the reason why it often turns from a means of activising language into a means of literary stylisation?![89]

Bocharov is using the word stylisation, where here we would use the word parody. He is clearly intolerant of any distance being taken towards the language of the people. It would seem that this is because the people are the agent of universal salvation, and an attitude of parody (or even stylisation) ill befits such an object of veneration. This hostility to the *skaz* form's inherent possibility of parody and irony, which we have already witnessed in many Soviet critics such as Rybakov and Fed', seems to have hindered investigation into the subject after the 1920s until the work of Levin, Kozhevnikova and others in the 1970s.

It seems to me that we can further deepen our understanding of the interaction of parodic and stylised *skaz* by comparing our findings about *skaz* with more general theoretical treatments of parody and irony.

Skaz, Irony and Parody

the trembling equipoise between jest and earnest [90]

The terms parody and irony have cropped up in our discussion of *skaz* without yet being subjected to rigorous analysis. It would seem that parody and irony often seem to compete for the same territory: we found the same phenomenon Bakhtin introduced as parodic *skaz* referred to as ironic by Natal'ia Kozhevnikova. This is not just a consequence of the terms' shared territory, but also of Bakhtin's vision of language as inextricable from world-view or ideology. Normally parody is said to be the ridicule through imitation of another author,

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89. A. Bocharov, *Literatura i vremia: iz tvorcheskogo opyta prozy 60–80-kh godov* (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), p. 281.

90. J.A.K. Thomson, *Irony: An Historical Introduction* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1926), p. 163.

literary style or manner of speech. Bakhtin allows the term for the ridicule through imitation of another's point of view, which would more commonly be termed irony.[91] Though Bakhtin sees them as combined, and they evidently share common ground, it is possible to differentiate them, albeit as contrasting tendencies: parody targets language and style, whereas irony targets mentality and opinions. As Kozhevnikova implied, in relation to *skaz*, it makes more sense to talk of irony than of parody, because *skaz* is always by definition a deviation from an author's most natural style, and so is always a form of either parody or stylisation. The point however is which, and whether its target is solely a style or also the opinions of a typical user of that style. Moreover, in Bakhtin's defin-ition, parodic *skaz* differs from stylised *skaz* in the author's intention in using it. This reference to authorial intention is a question far more widely discussed in relation to irony than to parody. For these reasons here we examine irony so as to help us understand the uses of *skaz*.

In *Problems of Doestoevsky's Creative Art*, Bakhtin claimed that the parodic form of *skaz* was where what the narrator says stands in direct opposition to the author's own evaluation, in other words to what the author gives us to understand. On the face of it this conforms to the most common definition of verbal irony as a form of antiphrasis. This was also known as 'rhetorical irony':

> Although in rhetorical irony the intention of the speaker is contrary to what he actually says, rules insure that we actually understand the intended meaning. This irony is based on complete agreement, perfect understanding between speaker and listener, and an absolute notion of truth.[92]

The assumptions required to reach such an understanding are clearly huge and open to question. Wayne C. Booth's attempts to set up firmer guidelines for reconstituting the meaning of ironic utterances are a recent refinement of this view of irony. Booth sees irony as a process whereby the reader rejects one construction, the apparent meaning, and reconstructs a second ironic meaning, though not necessarily the opposite one. This version of irony, which he also

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91. Examples abound of the definition of irony as targetting the meaning or coherence of the quoted point of view or opinion. Muecke, for example, argues that traditional irony is 'saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary' – D.C. Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, 2nd edn. rev. (London, Methuen, 1982), p. 31. Similarly Ivan Volkov: 'In its simplest form irony is a method of allegory [*inoskazanie*], where the object or one of its characteristics is designated by a word or words of a directly contrary meaning for the purpose of the comic description of the object's real meaning' – see his *Teoriia literatury*, p. 126. Boris Tomashevskii also sees irony like this: 'use of the opposite meaning of words for ridicule' – see his *Stilistika i stikhoslozhnenie: kurs lektsii* (Leningra, Gosu-darstvennoe uchebno-pedag.-oe izd. ministerstva prosveshcheniia RSFSR, 1959), p. 240.

92. Ernst Behler, *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity* (Seattle, Washington U.P., 1990), p. 81.

calls stable irony may be seen as normative, since it contends that we must break down an illusory ambiguity to arrive at a single vision in order to understand a work.[93]

From the Romantic period onwards, there has been a tendency to stress the obstacles in the path from the ironic statement to the intended meaning. After all, the meaning is not stated. Irony's most basic operation is to undermine the sense of the surface meaning of a text without offering a clear alternative in its place. It may be an end in itself and if not checked becomes endless subtraction, infinite undermining of meaning. Søren Kierkegaard took a similar view of irony by making it a mode of existence in which the apparent order was questioned, thereby opening the way for belief in a more real, divine order of being.[94] Both Kierkegaard and Booth demand that we tear down an apparent mask in order to arrive at the final, unified sense. By contrast, Lilian Furst occupies a position significantly different from both the Romantic view (Kierke-gaard) and the rhetorical view (Booth). She argues that even in traditional irony the apparent meaning of what the speaker says and the intended ironic meaning form two alternative or even alternate senses: the intended ironic meaning does not completely cancel out the apparent meaning. This results in a 'double meaning' or 'dual vision':

> Traditionally the ironist has a dual vision, for he sees a latent reality divergent from the masking appearance on the surface. While recognising the incongruities of a situation, he seems to accept things at their face value. But at the same time, by one means or another, he lets his other view shimmer through, so that the reader too becomes aware of the alternative. In the reader's agreeing comprehension of the double meaning there is a tacit communication of the ironic perspective from the narrator to the reader.[95]

Furst's account can aid us in our understanding of Bakhtin's concept of *skaz* as a double-voiced discourse. Bakhtin expresses his vision of the indivisible duality in parody through the image of a dialogue between authorial intention and text: parody is composed of two voices, and cannot be resolved to a single point of view. By classifying parodic *skaz* as a form of double-directed double-voiced discourse, Bakhtin is arguing that there are two voices that converse or compete. Indeed, the very notion of parody is attractive to Bakhtin because it

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93. Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, IL, Chicago U.P., 1974), pp. 71–72.

94. Kierkegaard sees irony as a disparity between the essence and the phenomenon: 'the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence. When I am speaking, the thought, the meaning, is the essence, and the word is the phenomenon'. Yet 'through a negation of the immediate phenomenon, the essence becomes identical with the phenomenon' – Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, trans. by H.V. & E.H. Hong (Princeton, NJ, Princeton U.P., 1989), pp. 247–48.

95. Lilian Furst, *The Contours of European Romanticism* (London, Macmillan, 1975), p. 19.

demands two voices: the parodied and parodying voices. These are in a kind of dialogue where the parodying intention does not cancel out the apparent meaning: 'The word becomes the arena for a struggle of two intentions'.[96]

Investigations of irony commonly address the problem of recognising something as ironic. This question is of great relevance to that of parodic *skaz*, since *skaz*, like irony, adopts a standpoint that is not properly the author's. Booth, who like Bakhtin sees parody and irony as identical, argues that a speaker's departure from his natural style is one indicator of irony: 'If a speaker's style departs notably from whatever the reader considers the normal way for this speaker, the reader may suspect irony'.[97] Yet this is the case in *skaz* universally, whether it is stylised or parodic-ironic *skaz*, since effectively we know that the author is in fact a literate and a literary person and has deliberately used a language which is not his own most natural style. *Skaz* creates the mask of a character-narrator through the use of a given style.[98] Though all *skaz* creates a verbal mask, only parodic-ironic *skaz* forces us to see behind it and detect the face of the author, or the intention of the ironist that lies behind this mask in order to understand it. The mask of the person who stylises is not one that needs to be torn away so that we can understand the work. The person who stylises effaces himself before the style. The problem is recognising parodic-ironic *skaz*.

In attempting to tell parodic-ironic *skaz* from stylised *skaz*, the reader must decide how to go about the task. The problem for the reader of *skaz* is what evidence is admissible in determining whether or not the work is parodic-ironic. Essentially the choice is whether to limit investigation to the text itself or whether to admit, in addition to the text itself, evidence such as the author's statements as to his intention in employing *skaz*, or his general views as to what is good and what is bad literary style.

Bakhtin and Booth give us grounds to follow the latter path. In Bakhtin's des-cription of parody the author introduces a second intention into the other's style.[99] Parody for Bakhtin is an intentional act of the author. Similarly, in Booth's account of the recognition of irony, he argues that an ironic text demands that the reader make a judgement against the overt proposition, and

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96. Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, p. 86.

97. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 70.

98. The term irony in Greece originates with the *eiron*, the ironist or dissembler, a character in comedy who turns out to be far less of a fool than he appears. The character takes on an existence independent from the drama with the accusation that Socrates is an *eiron* in *The Republic*. Subsequently it becomes a rhetorical figure. Usage of the term expands greatly in the Romantic period. See Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*; see also Thomson, *Irony: An Historical Introduction*.

99. Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, p. 86.

agree with the author's implied judgements. Essentially this means that we can infer the intention of a work of art, usually deciding not to trust its narrator, and form an image of what he called 'the implied author'. Booth allows the reader to check this against knowledge of the author's views on art and literature.[100] Booth is confronting a major trend in post-war criticism, the notion of the 'intentional fallacy', which in the Anglo-American tradition was initially formulated as 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a literary work of art'.[101] This came to be developed in these critics' own work into the notion that intention is irrelevant to the mean-ing of a text,[102] and on mainland Europe reached its most spectacular formul-ation in Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author".[103] Such approaches demand that we exclude any consideration of or reference to authorial intention. Though excluding references to the author does not rule out extra-textual reference altogether, the disqualification of authorial intention is usually linked to the disbarring of contextual evidence outright.[104] This is because the argument is typically posited upon the idea that the text is written in language, a public code in which the meaning of any given usage is not dependent upon any single user such as a writer. Instead we are enjoined to depend entirely on textual evidence for our interpretations.

Yet surely the recognition of irony and parody demands extra-textual evidence, since a sincere or an ironic statement may differ in no semantically discernable way from each other. Meaning here is not textual. Rather, it is the nature of irony that the apparent meaning of the text is belied by its actual mean-ing. A good example of this is the statement 'What lovely weather' pronounced a) in the middle of a downpour, b) on the first sunny day in Spring, or c) in the middle of the Sahara desert. In each case the statement is the same semantically. Only reference to the context permits us to reconstitute an ironic

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100. This concept is defined in particular in his earlier work: Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, IL, Chicago U.P., 1961), pp. 156–58.

101. W.K. Wimsatt & M.C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky, Kentucky U.P., 1954), pp. 3–30 (p. 3); repr. in *On Literary Intention*, ed. by David Newton de Molina (Edinburgh, Edinburgh U.P., 1976), pp. 1–13 (p. 1).

102. See Frank Cioffi's perceptive examination of the above-mentioned article in his 'Intention and Interpretation', in *On Literary Intention*, pp. 55–73.

103. 'The Death of the Author', in Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London, Fontana, 1977), pp. 142–48.

104. This is not universally the case: David Shepherd is an example of a critic who permits or rather insists on reference to context, but who criticises reference to authorial intention as fostering ultimately oppressive myths of the artist's personality and genius – see his *Beyond Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet Literature* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 191–203.

or a sincere in-tention.[105]

In a recent book about Russian satire, Karen Ryan-Hayes pleads for a special dispensation to refer to authorial intent in questions of satire and parody, though she is anxious not to be seen to challenge the 'intentional fallacy' in general:

> While we must certainly avoid the so-called intentional fallacy, it seems that satire presents a special case in which it is virtually impossible to proceed without making inferences about authorial intention. The reader must decode the encoded intent and assign what Morson calls 'semantic authority' correctly, i.e. to the second voice. We must understand with whom we are to agree in order for the parody to be effective.[106]

A contemporary philosopher, Colin Lyas, makes a far more forceful case for the relevance of knowledge of the artist's intention as a vital aspect of the context relevant for appreciation of a work of art. Like Ryan-Hayes and Booth, he sees irony as a particularly significant demonstration of this case:

> The full and relevant critical description of a text can only be offered with the aid of a knowledge of its surroundings, where this knowledge may include a know-ledge of the intention with which it is offered. The clearest case is presented by ironic writings.[107]

Lyas also sees the example of the character-narrator as another good example of his thesis and, like Booth, argues that a distinction between the judgements of the work's narrator and those of its author is necessary to an appreciation of it.[108] Lyas argues that statements by artists about their intentions may not be reliable, uniquely or even especially authoritative but they are relevant and must restrain the otherwise infinite freedom of the reader to interpret. In order not to become meaningless, our freedom must likewise be circumscribed by reference to the text's manifestation of what the author intended:

> artists show themselves in those works which it is the task of critics to characterize and judge. This fact, in a sense, does indeed put a restriction on the

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105. This example has been slightly adapted from Dan Sperber & Deirdre Wilson, 'Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction', in *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics*, ed. by P. Cole (New York, Academic Press, 1981), pp. 295–318; repr. in *Pragmatics: A Reader*, ed. by Steven Davis (Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1991), pp. 550–63 (p. 553).

106. Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study* (Cambridge, Cam-bridge U.P., 1995), p. 8.

107. Colin Lyas, *Aesthetics* (London, University College London Press, 1997), p. 145. Also see his 'Wittgensteinian Intentions', in *Intention and Interpretation*, ed. by Gary Iseming-er (Philadelphia, PA, Temple U.P., 1992), pp. 132–51. This whole book provides articles from various perspectives in the debate.

108. Booth made this point in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (pp. 6–7) with an example drawn from Ring Lardner's *Haircut*, which is usually considered amongst the best Western examples of *skaz*.

> critic. For if critics are properly to characterize works they cannot say whatever they want.[109]
>
> To characterize the work according to the dictates of the elements in it is to say what is true about it. The fact that we must be true to the work does not constitute an illegitimate circumscription of our freedom. How could it? What worthwhile freedom is it that would require us to shut our eyes to the truth about a thing? (...) if my freedom is not improperly circumscribed by a recognition of such elements as words notes and colours, which shape my response to the work, it is not illegitimately circumscribed by the recognition that the elements of the work include qualities that the author displays in it.[110]

In order to discern parodic *skaz* (an instance of irony) from stylised *skaz*, we have to infer the authorial intention, and if necessary employ extra-textual evidence to this end. Booth uses the example of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (which may be broadly considered parodic *skaz*): 'Mark Twain knew that *you* would know that *he* would know his speaker is talking non-sense here'.[111] This is straightforward where there exists a community of values, a sense of a shared but unspoken norm between author and reader. For example, it is easy to see the irony in Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, because cannibalism is an almost universal taboo. However, in conditions where any stable community of values has collapsed, such as in the aftermath of a revolution, it becomes very difficult to detect irony reliably:

> we are often dependent on the assumption that in that time and in that place, this author most probably knew or believed or intended such-and-such, in contrast to what the surface says.[112]

Such assumptions might be built on the basis of knowledge of the general tendency of the publication in which the text appears, or on the reputation of the author who signed it. Parody may present similar problems: how can we tell that an author admires or despises a given style, particularly in a period of instabil-ity? In this vein, Booth writes of parody:

> We can be sure of ourselves only when we have good reason to believe that the au-thor's conception of how to write would exclude his speaker's way of writing.[113]

Yet such indicators are rendered still less reliable where censorship forbids the author from expressing his opinions overtly, as in the case of the so-called

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109. Lyas, *Aesthetics*, pp. 154–55.
110. *Ibid*., p. 155.
111. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 57.
112. *Ibid*., p. 125.
113. *Ibid*., p. 73. As we shall see, Zoshchenko presents particular problems here since he claims both that his narrator's manner of writing is the most appropriate to the epoch and that he is parodying the narrator.

Aesopian language.[114] Moreover, both Booth and Thomson stress that the greater the geographical, ideological or temporal distance between the position of the critic and that of the author of a given work, the greater the possibility of mistakes being made.[115] Prejudice too can impair the reader's capacity to detect irony, especially if the object of irony is a belief that he holds: a reader who really thought black people inferior to white and slavery justified or justifiable might have missed much of the irony in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Such considerations surely inform us of the need to work hard to establish the context in which a work of *skaz* was written, and this context includes the author's intentions where these are available and seem relevant. A significant part of this context permitting us to recognise irony are the specifically written indicators such as the place of publication and the reputation of the author. As Ong has shown, written culture institutes and print culture progressively increases the distance between the writer and the reader:

> After the invention of writing, and much more after the invention of print, the question of who is saying what to whom becomes confusingly and sometimes devastatingly complicated.[116]

This distance enhances the potential for irony immensely: 'The ironic heritage of literacy (...) was strengthened immeasurably in the Renaissance after the appearance of print'.[117] By contrast 'oral performance cannot readily achieve the distance from life which complex irony demands. Oral cultures want participation, not questions'.[118]

In view of this it is not surprising that *skaz*, a form in which written and oral modes meet, in which written culture reflects upon oral culture, should generally seem to be a structure in which the author, a representative of the written mode of communication, adopts an ironic stance to the often naïve, apparently oral narrator of the story. The comic tradition also tends to make an educated reader expect he can look down upon and laugh at a character and even a nar-

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114. For a discussion of the effects of Soviet censorship upon literary style, see Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian literature* (Munich, Otto Sagner, 1984).

115. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 222. 'What sounds ironic to us may have been quite plainly meant' – J.A.K. Thomson, *Irony: An Historical Introduction*, p.112. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin stresses the other alternative, that there is much more irony in the culture of the past than we suspect – Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1968), p. 135.

116. Ong *Interfaces of the Word*, p. 283.

117. *Ibid*., p. 291

118. *Ibid*., p. 289.

rator employing the popular language.[119] Yet this need not be the case. In spite of the expectation of irony, in *skaz* the author can attempt to efface himself and strive towards the simplicity of the oral. The use of *skaz* may be entirely or overwhelmingly serious in intent. Here we rejoin the question of the distinction between irony and parody, since it is possible for an author to reproduce the language of a different social class, or of someone less educated than himself, but do so sympathetically. The language reproduced may just seem comic to an educated reader on account of its deviations from the standard language, but it may have been reproduced because the author admires it, or a mentality that typically expresses itself in such a language. The distinction between irony and parody is necessary in order to show quite how serious certain uses of *skaz* can be. The complex interactions of parody and irony in *skaz* may even be such that we are invited to admire a language but not the mentality of a user, or the other way round.

It now remains for us to examine the interrelation of parody and stylisation, of irony and sincerity, in *skaz*, building on Bakhtin's insights.

A Double-Voiced Discourse of Equals

Hohne's analysis of *skaz* also uses Bakhtin's interpretation of the term.[120] One interesting argument that she makes is that although there are two voices present in parody, these two voices are not equal, but instead, one language is used to 'devoice' the other. She cites Zoshchenko as an example of parody in which the two voices are not equal, and his stories present simple moral lessons. *Skaz* is distinct from parody in her reading:

> What is different about the dialect story [skaz] is that there the other's speech acts on and influences the author's intention, a key concept, since in this relationship of author/other, the author is the one with the power.[121]

Though this seems to me to be an inadequate appreciation of Zoshchenko's work, as well as of parody, Hohne is attempting to overcome a shortcoming in Bakhtin's account of *skaz*, namely that it ignores the possibility of a given example of *skaz* being both stylised and parodic. The Russian critic fails to envisage cases where the author has an ambivalent relation, where he is both in and out of sympathy with the narrator or where his sympathies shift. Though Bakhtin discovers such an interaction of a number of equally legitimate stand-

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119 See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. with an introd. by Malcom Heath (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1996), p. lxii. This aspect of the comic tradition is discussed at greater length below in Chapter V.

120. Hohne, '*Skaz* and Babel''s "Konarmija"'.

121. Karen Ann Hohne,'Dialects of Power: The Two Faced Narrative', in *The Text and Beyond: Essays in Literary Linguistics*, ed. by Cythia Goldin Bernstein (Tuscaloosa, Alabama U.P., 1994), pp. 227–38 (p. 228).

points in the polyphonic novels of Dostoevsky and later in the novel in general, in *skaz*, however, there is either parody or stylisation, and not both.

So as to redress the perceived imbalance, Hohne focuses on the interaction of two languages and furnishes a clear reformulation of Bakhtin's concept of double-voicedness in relation to *skaz*:

> The *skaz* author speaks in another person's language, but he does not act as a tape recorder; the other's speech is refracted through the author. Thus, *skaz* contains 'two semantic intentions, two voices' in one utterance.[122]
>
> there is a more or less equal and ongoing clash between the worlds of the author and that of the other, between two sets of ideologies, a clash that results in both sets of words being deformed, changed.[123]

These two sets of views in *skaz* are the literary and the extra-literary. This clash is also seen as one between the literary and the oral:

> There is something like a clash between written and oral, which come together even in the same sentence: there is a real mixing of languages, a clash between them. And the result of this clash is ambiguity.[124]

Hohne argues that *skaz* assumes a literary reader on the same plane as the author, set against the narrator.[125] When both author and reader are familiar with the world described in *skaz*, then it is 'the literature of the people'. Though the terms that she establishes are interesting and could be productive, they soon become reduced in suggestiveness to official and unofficial ideology:

> Written and oral language appear in the work and intersect with each other to produce a new meaning. Since we are speaking of literature, these two categories may be designated as literary and extraliterary, but working on the basis of language as ideology, these categories may be broadened to official and unofficial res-pectively.[126]

The problem with Hohne's interpretation is that ultimately she treats languages in literature simply as discourses of power. Oral and literary, indeed all voices are reduced to their support for or opposition to power. The possibility of ambiguity that she offered is lacking from her own analyses of Babel'. Moreover, Hohne's definiton of *skaz* is extremely normative: anything that does not conform to her over-ideologised conception of the term is rejected. While this definition may help to account for certain aspects of the explicitly political struggles in Babel''s *Red Cavalry*, it is of little use for the description of most other examples of *skaz*.

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122. *Idem*, '*Skaz* and Babel''s "Konarmija"', p. 26.
123. *Ibid*., p. 28.
124. *Ibid*., p. 34.
125. Kreps also assumes this: Michael Boris [Mikhail] Kreps, 'Mixail Zos"c"enko as Humorist and Satirist: A Structural Approach', p. 96.
126. Hohne, '*Skaz* and Babel''s "Konarmija"', p. 39.

The Relation of *Skaz* to Other Forms

Before proceeding to examine the historical manifestations of *skaz*, we shall here briefly consider the relation of *skaz* to other related narrative forms.

Though sometimes narrated by a narrator who is not a character, *skaz* is very often related by a character-narrator. Sometimes this character-narrator is a participant in the stories, sometimes it is an observer. Where the narrator is a character, *skaz* is effectively a variant of the *Ich-Erzählung*.[127] What distinguishes *skaz* from *Ich-Erzählung* is that its language is substandard, that of the people, and not that of the literary norm. Its lack of a distinct linguistic identity tends to result in the narrator in *Ich-Erzählung* losing his or her distinct identity, and ending up indistinguishable from an impersonal narrator.[128] Deviation from the literary norm, usually by adopting the language of the people, is the most fundamental characteristic of *skaz*. It overshadows the question of whether the story is narrated by a character or not, i.e. whether it is personalised or impersonal (overwhelmingly in the first or third person). Indeed, we can see any deviation from the neutral literary norm as being a nascent form of characterisation (Titunik, Levin). Gogol's garrulous narrator in "Overcoat" is already half-way to becoming a character and the impersonal narrator of Leskov's "The Left-Handed Craftsman" is more than half-way. Hence *skaz* tends towards narration by a character. The furthest development of *skaz* is nevertheless its narration by a character-narrator who is a participant in the story he or she narrates. Such a form of *skaz* is typical of the 1920s short stories of Zoshchenko, and explains why he is so often thought of as the quintessential *skaz* writer.

This suggests the question as to how far a narration needs to deviate from the norm before it becomes *skaz*. This is clearly a question of degree and is not a clear-cut matter at all. There are clear cases, where the narrator is clearly not educated and the narrator's language is highly colloquial and deviates from the literary norm in almost every respect. The more difficult cases are where the deviations from the literary norm are minimal. There can be no hard and fast rules as to what constitutes *skaz* and what does not, since the literary language, the conversational language and the popular language are always in flux.

Another borderline case is that of Free Indirect Discourse. This is where the narrator is speaking, but the language is that of a character. Clearly if one character's colloquial idiom dominates the narrator's language throughout the course of a story, or indeed a novel, then this starts to look like *skaz*, rather than

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127. This is also called subjectivised prose: Kveta Kozhevnikova, 'Sub"ektivizatsiia i ee otnoshenie k stiliu sovremennoi epicheskoi prozy', *C"eskoslovenská rusistika*, XIII, N° 4 (1968), pp. 236–42.

128. The authors of *The Poetics of Skaz* make this point well – Mushchenko *et al*., *The Poetics of Skaz*, p. 42.

Free Indirect Discourse, which would normally incorporate the language and in particular the perspective of more than one character. Free Indirect Discourse is much freer than *skaz*, since it does not have to be limited to the language of the people. Nor need it be limited by the consciousness or vocabulary of one charac-ter, and never employs a character-narrator. Much of what is called 'ornament-alism' or 'ornamental *skaz*' is like this: it may be seen as an extremely free type of *skaz*, or as a restricted variant of Free Indirect Discourse. It differs from *skaz* in its use of a language that not only differs from the literary norm, but is also too rich and too poeticised to be that of the spoken language of the people. This does not disqualify it from being *skaz*, but makes it a peculiar and far less re-stricted type of *skaz*.

Conclusions

Though my aim in picking through the competing senses that *skaz* has been given was one of clarification, and I deliberately set out to avoid tailoring a definition to suit a given writer, this book is at the same time a study of *skaz* in Zosh-chenko's short stories of the 1920s. Consequently, my analysis has at times slewed towards definitions that help to explain his work, and away from defin-itions that do not. I cannot, for example, accept the definition of *skaz* solely as folklore, and consider that I have advanced convincing arguments in support of my case, yet one of the reasons that I reject it is that I am unwilling to accept definitions that accord the works of Bazhov the utmost place in the pantheon at the expense of of Babel', Zamiatin and Zoshchenko, whose works are marginal-ised by the definition of *skaz* as folklore. Moreover, the political imperatives informing such a definition seem to me even more questionable than the thread-bare logic that underpins it.

The definitions of *skaz* that seem both coherent and productive are:

i) *Skaz* enacts a confrontation between the literary and oral modes of communication.

ii) *Skaz* is narrated in the popular language rather than the language of the literary norm. This tends to create the illusion that it is being narrated by a character.

iii) *Skaz* is a form that comprises two levels: the oral and popular narrator, and implicit comment upon it by an authorial presence. Whilst it tends towards parody and irony, the author may attempt to efface himself completely so as to create a sincere stylisation.

iv) The interaction between these two levels may be complex. In any given work, the author may alternate between or straddle irony and sincerity.

Before setting to work on Mikhail Zoshchenko with the analytical tools fashioned here, we must first examine some of the previous uses of *skaz*. Con-

sequently, in the next chapter I draw on these insights into *skaz* for an understanding of its use by Russian writers prior to Zoshchenko.