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The Problem of Understanding in the Works of D. Kharms (Based on the Collection "Incidents")

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The article presents the experience in describing inter-historical communication between the author and the reader. The main difficulty of the study of "understanding" as a special form of communication is the lack of a consistent approach to solve this problem, "understanding" of the author and the text can be studied in the framework of different scientific fields. The results of our study suggest that often the author deliberately violates a communicative act due to external (the political situation) or internal causes. In order to overcome misunderstanding, it is necessary to take into consideration the writer's work along with the facts of his personal life, which helps to create "general repertoire" for decoding the message implicitly addressed to the reader. The material used in the study was the collection "Incidents" by Kharms, whose analyzed works made it possible to compose the typology of plots.

Keywords: Kharms, literature of nonsense, understanding, inter-historical communication, anti-tradition.

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Research area: philology.

Traditionalism as a phenomenon of artistic literature has been discussed for centuries. A new milestone in the development of this phenomenon can be dated to the 60s of the 20th century. Since this period the problem of traditionalism, a return to the sources of national culture became especially urgent. More value was attributed to the terms "tradition", "traditionalism", into which "proactive and creative inheritance of the cultural experience" was transformed (Likhachev, 1985, 52). In the 80s the situation did not change. According to V.V. Aver'ianov, the basic idea of the time was "the understanding of tradition as internal communication between humanity and its past as a kind of meeting place of man with himself, as overcoming the historical gap in values" (Aver'ianov, 2000, 70). However, as any phenomenon, tradition gives rise to anti-tradition, when inevitable changes occur in the historical process, a person learns to live in the new world. As part of anti-tradition we would like to refer to the work of D. Kharms, one of the brightest representatives of literature of absurdism, to the problem of the perception of his works by modern

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readers. As H.R. Jauss notes if the reader wants to enter a dialogue with the literary tradition, he should "get in the game as an interpreter" (Jauss, 1944, 98). In order to understand the literature of absurd, it is necessary to consider it as part of the historical context in which it developed.

1937 went down in history of Russia as the year of "Stalin's repressions". "Blue Notebook No. 10" by Kharms describes the average person of that era: he did not see anything (he had no eyes), did not hear anything (he had no ears), besides, he could not speak and breathe as well (did not have a mouth and a nose). He could not change anything (he had no hands). It is noteworthy that the hero of the story did not have "a stomach" as a symbol of life (D'iachenko, 1899, 184). In March of the same year D. Kharms wrote the poem "Out of a House Walked a Man…". The authorities accepted the text as an allusion to the events happening around, though, according to M. Malich, the poem was only the artist's desire to escape from what was going on (Kobrin, 2008, 381). After the publication of the text the author was no longer published.

The texts of the "Blue Notebook No. 10" are united by the theme of "deprivation". The hero is gradually amputated parts of the body, he ceases to exist. The character of the poem "Out of a House Walked a Man …" "did not sleep, did not drink, did not drink, did not sleep, did not sleep, did not drink, did not eat," and finally, "One day at dawn, he went into the dark forest. And since then, and since then, and since then has disappeared "(Kobrin, 2008, 381). Based on the words of M. Malich, the texts can be seen not only as works of art, but also as a personal record of the author, a reflection of his thoughts, as saying that he wanted to convey to future readers.

1. Historical Miniatures

This group consists of three miniatures, the first of which, "Pushkin and Gogol," was written in 1934. In his diaries Kharms wrote: "If we discard the old, whom I can not judge, there will be only five true geniuses, and two of them will be Russians. These five geniuses-poets are Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Pushkin and Gogol" (Kharms, 1991, 118). However, according to A.A. Kobrinskii, "Kharms could not put up with pathos and talks about greatness" (Kobrinskii, 2008, 375). Like other characters from the collection "Incidents", the poet Pushkin and the writer Gogol, the miniature heroes, are caricatures of people. Their images are deprived of historical features. The heroes are endowed with "conventional" names that could have been, for example, "Vasia" and "Kolia", rather than "Pushkin" and "Gogol". The choice of names contains a jest about society created a cult of Russian writers (Kovtun, 2014, 69-95), parodies historical and literary comparison between A.S. Pushkin and N.V. Gogol as artists as well as juxtaposition of their creative principles, in connection with what the terms "Gogol's direction" and "Pushkin's direction" get ahistorical features. In addition, the interest in Pushkin became so huge against the backdrop of the approaching centenary of the poet's death.

In 1939 D. Kharms again returns to Pushkin and makes him a character of the miniatures "Anecdotes from the Life of Pushkin", although it is hardly possible to call this "cycle in the cycle" a miniature. The genre of joke is given another interpretation by Kharms. According to V. Glotser, by means of one letter "G" in the title of the miniature Kharms "as if hints at the unconventional use of the known genre <...> one this letter at once, and in its own way, lights ridiculous cases "of Pushkin's life" and prepares the reader to the fact that they are not jokes, but something like them" (Glotser, 1993, 241). There are different opinions about what was the source for writing "anecdotes". O. Lekmanov believes Kharms was interested

in the excerpts from the book by V.V. Veresaev "Pushkin in life: A systematic set of authentic testimonies of contemporaries" (Lekmanov, 2000). S. Gorbushkin and E. Obukhov were convinced that "these stories are not reduced to a literal parody of officialdom" but are designed to destroy the Veresaev's myth about Pushkin-idiot (Gorbushkin, Obukhov, 2013).

In 1939 for the same reason of excessive pathos (namely, the appearance of the opera by M. Glinka "Life for the Tsar" in 1936) Kharms creates a miniature "A historical episode," which ridicules the image of the "historical" character of Ivan Susanin. The writer twice repeats the phrase "a historical person who put his life for the Tsar, and was later sung by the opera of Glinka" (Kharms, 2000, 352). A mention of historical figures in the collection can be considered as another manifestation of the author's personality, demonstration of the attitude to society through the prism of this society's idols.

2. "Children's" miniatures

Kharms is best known as a children's writer, but it is assumed that he did not like children. The article "The Kharms Case, or Optical Illusion" by A. Zlobina cites the following words of the writer about children to prove this assertion: "I know that ... they must be annihilated. For this, I would dig a pit in the city center and throw children there. And so that the pit will not give off the stench of decomposition, it could be filled with lime every week" (Zlobin, 1999). Three miniatures of the collection ("Incidents", "A Sonnet" and "The Start of a Very Nice Summer's Day") demonstrate the motive of child abuse.

In "Incidents", written in 1936, "the children of Spiridonov drowned in the pond" (Kharms, 2000, 330), in "A Sonnet" the heroes "could have debated for a long time, but fortunately some kid there fell off the bench and broke both of his jaws" (Sazhin, 2000, 332). In the twenty-ninth work of the collection "The Start of a Very Nice Summer's Day," "a long-nosed woman beat her child with a trough, while a young and plump mother rubbed a pretty girl's face against a brick wall" (Sazhin, 2000, 358-359). The repeat of the motive of child abuse is a purposeful communicative act that must break the stereotype that the work of the author is basically aimed at children's audience, but in the end, the given examples can shock a person unfamiliar with the elements of Kharms' personal life, as well as cause outrage; the reader's expectation will not be satisfied, and therefore communication will not reach its goal, because for most people Kharms is a children's writer.

3. "Oneiric" miniatures

The motive of sleep occurs in four works of Kharms: "A Case with Petrakov", "The Dream", "Losses", "Sleep Teases a Man"; it is one of the most common (Sazhin, 1999, 9). F.V. Kuvshinov and E.N. Ostroukhova say that "Dream and reality in Kharms's works are two kinds of existence, but in fact, they do not differ from each other. The reality in his works is based on the logic of a dream, so it is often impossible to set the boundary between them accurately" (Kuvshinov, Ostroukhova, 2003). The sleep in the analyzed works can be seen as an attempt to escape from the "unreal reality", from the occurring events. Three of the four characters fell asleep after a long torment: Kalugin, Petrakov and Markov, and the theme of deprivation is related to them. It is closely intertwined with the narrative canvas, which means, in order to "escape", the hero is obliged to experience suffering in the art "reality" created by the author.

If the texts are considered in isolation, it develops into a narrative, devoid of logic, and if you conduct an analysis in the order they appear, then a detailed fabric of the life of the "hero" emerges. In 1934 ("Losses") Andrei Andreevich loses a wick, yogurt, Poltava sausage and breaks

his glasses. In this case the hero somehow interacts with the outside world, goes shopping, stands in line, comes up to the newspaperman, returns home "very angry" and immediately goes to bed. The logical continuation of this text is a chronologically following miniature "A Case with Petrakov" written on August 21, 1936: "Petrakov tosses from side to side and can not sleep at all" (Sazhin, 2000, 336). On August 22, 1936 Kharms wrote a miniature "The Dream", whose hero fell asleep, i.e. ran away from the reality, which is indicated in the story "Losses", "slept for four days and four nights together, and on the fifth day woke up so skinny that had to tie his boots to feet with a rope," and further: "In the bakery where Kalugin had always bought wheat bread, they did not recognize him and sold him half-black bread" (Sazhin, 2000, 338). The hero returns to the outside world, where he again suffered privations, which as a result end with the situation in which "Kalugin was folded in half and thrown as rubbish" (Sazhin, 2000, 338).

That is how it would be possible to finish a single event, mentioned above, but in the period of 1936-1938 Kharms wrote another miniature "Sleep Teases a Man", which, like a miniature "The Dream" may be a continuation of the events described in the first two ones. The main character, Markov, "long suffered, without understanding what to do: to sleep or stay awake? <...> and went outside, where the fresh breeze calmed him down" (Sazhin, 2000, 350). The hero can not sleep, despite all efforts. Once again after "sleep instantly disappeared", the character "in a rage, bareheaded and without an overcoat, rushed towards the Tauride Garden" (Sazhin, 2000, 350). It is noteworthy that the author sends the hero to the garden, which in its main value embodies the image of the paradise, separated from the "sinful", unfriendly world. Thus the texts, which are originally perceived as absurd and disparate, after a careful consideration appear to be the message addressed to modern readers by the author. Before us is a single text.

4. Miniatures of violence

For the first time in the collection the element of fight is found in "An Encounter" miniature, written in 1934. Of all the works of the group the text is the shortest and the most obscure. The plot is simple: two men met by chance, one of them held a Polish loaf in his hand. Loaf, translated from French, means "stick, rod". Theoretically, the characters could easily come into conflict, but they did not. And the next work in this group "The Story of the Fighting Men", written on March 15, 1936, is a response to the question by contraries: "What would have happened if the characters had had a fight?". "The Story of the Fighting Men" tells about a conflict that went on the stage of fight. The "story" has no introduction and no ending, only the culmination that allows making a conclusion that "An Encounter" is a complication of a single text about the fighting men, "The Story of the Fighting Men" is the culmination of this text, and its logical continuation is the miniature "What They Sell in the Shops These Days", which tells how "Koratygin came to Tikakeev and did not find him at home. At this time A. Tikakeev was in the store and bought sugar, meat and cucumbers there" (Sazhin, 2000, 348). This text can be called an ending of a single story about the fighting, the final of which is the work "Mashkin killed Koshkin", written in the period of 1936-1938. Chronologically, the text continues one another, for the names of heroes, devoid of substantial pathos, are irrelevant. Once again we obtain a single text composed of multiple miniatures.

5. Miniatures of death

We can highlight the third text, composed of nine miniatures, which chronologically continue each other. The first miniature, so-called complication of the text, is "Four Illustration

of That How a New Idea Strikes a Person Unprepared for It", written on April 13, 1933. The heroes of the work are four representatives of intelligentsia: a writer, a painter, a composer and a scholar. The choice of characters is not accidental. The fall of 1933 was famous for the case of "Slavists", thundered around the entire territory of the USSR in which the well-known fine art experts (B.G. Kryzhanovskii), academic chemists and geologists (G.A. Razuvaev, I.A. Andreevskii, B.L. Lichkov), linguists and philologists (A.M. Selishchev, V.V. Vinogradov, N.N. Durnovo, V.V. Trubetskaia) were accused of counter-revolutionary activities and sentenced to exile. Some were shot (Goncharov, 1998, 180-183).

In 1934, the miniature "The Hunters" was written, in which "six people went hunting, and only four returned". The key phrase of the miniature is the words "you, brother, do not worry, we will choke you to death now" (Sazhin, 2000, 350-352). The third work, finalizing the introduction of the general text, is the miniature "Lynch Law", whose characters are a certain Petrov, a man from the government, the crowd and "a man of medium growth", dared to ask Petrov questions and in the end killed by the hands of the crowd for being too proactive. In the image of "a man of medium growth" we can identify a portrait of the people who did not agree with the new political system and were not afraid to talk about it. The common theme of "the beginning of persecution" can combine those texts. Then goes a peripheral miniature "Incidents" written on August 22, 1936, which describes the "accidental" deaths of both individuals and the whole family. The accumulation of many deaths is an allusion to historical events, when in the course of repressions without charge or trial, the government eliminated the whole families.

In the miniature "The Dream" the motive of fear appears. In the book "Path of the Upright" a rabbi M.Ch. Luzzatto said that in Russia, "the fear was imposed by the state <...> pressed on the personality, disfigured it <...> pulled down; it did not improve the individual but caused its degradation" (Kurganov, 2005, 42). The hero of the miniatures constantly dreams about "a policeman", the dream holds the hero hard, exhausts him and in the end his fear is justified, "Sanitary Commission found him unsanitary and worthless, and ordered HLCS to throw Kalugin together with litter" (Sazhin, 2000, 338).

The rest of the miniatures were written in the period between 1937-1939, when a political pressure on the citizens of the USSR was the most high. The motive of perjury, denunciation appears in the texts, and then results in the motive of "Falling Old Ladies", whose heroines were so curious that "accidentally" fell out of the windows. The culmination of a single text can be a work of "Mashkin killed Koshkin", written in 1936-1939. The main thing in the text is that Mashkin kills Koshkin without any reason. Just because "Comrade Koshkin danced around Comrade Mashkin" (Sazhin, 2000, 349). The last text both in a chronological and a thematic order is the work "Pakin and Rakukin" which clearly shows the attempt of one person to "change" the other. The finale is filled with imperatives: "do not yap", "do not blink", "sit up straight", and as a result "Rakukin died" of the constant oppression and the lack of freedom (Sazhin, 2000, 360).

Thus, the analyzed collection is not a free set of separate, unrelated "cases", but is "a coded story" of the author about his experiences and observations. That is how an attempt to express a personal attitude to current issues and themes is realized: the image of the future, the situation of children in the new world, the attitude of contemporaries to the historical figures and to each other. Just one question still has to be answered: "Why did D. Kharms order the miniatures in a free manner?". To do this, we

need to turn to an early miniature of the collection "The Mathematician and Andrei Semyonovich" written on April 11, 1933, built with the help of Kharms' favorite method of repeat.

It seems to us, the key to understanding the collection is the figure of the "mathematician". According to A.A. Kobrinskii: "Kharms was always interested in mathematics and mathematical apparatus, periodically he tried to use it in his quasi-philosophical and quasi-logical constructions, which rather belonged to the field of parody than to science <...> Perhaps, that is the reason of Kharms's love for conjuries (a variety of memoirs tell that he liked to conjure everywhere), to a violation of expectedness (he carried the most unusual things in his pocket, taking them out unexpectedly and thereby shocking people), to completely illogical and strange games" (Kobrinskii, 2008, 397). Kharms's addiction to code records was noted by A.T. Nikitaev, who restored the cryptographic alphabet invented by the poet (Shatov, 2011, 438). Mystifying the reader, creating "coded" texts, Kharms passed the message, in which he reflected the strange and terrible signs of modernity, on to future generations.

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Проблема понимания в творчестве Д. Хармса (на материале сборника «Случаи»)

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В статье представлен опыт описания межисторической коммуникации между автором и читателем. Главная проблема изучения «понимания» как особого вида коммуникации заключается в отсутствии единого подхода для решения данной задачи, «понимание» автора и его текста можно рассматривать в рамках разных научных направлений. Результаты проведенного нами исследования позволяют сделать вывод о том, что зачастую автор сознательно идет на нарушение коммуникативного акта в силу внешних (политическая обстановка) или внутренних причин. Для того чтобы преодолеть непонимание, необходимо рассматривать творчество писателя вкупе с фактами его личной жизни, что помогает создать «общий репертуар», с помощью которого расшифровывается послание, имплицитно адресованное читателю. Материалом исследования послужил сборник Д. Хармса «Случаи», анализ произведений которого позволил составить типологию сюжетов.

Ключевые слова: Хармс, литература абсурда, понимание, межисторическая коммуникация, антитрадиция.

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