Ideology and the absurd in literature

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1 Since the epoch of classical poetics, a distinction between fiction and reality has relied on the implication that the world of art is molded after tenets of truth and verisimilitude. Hence, the essence of art, and literature as well, is to be sought in mimesis, or an imitation of reality. Therefore, a literary piece ought to concern itself with portraying a true sense of reality, adhering to the principles of probability and necessity. In the world of fiction, events can be presented in a causal order and not merely a chronological one. Thus, a literary piece fashioned after the norms and laws governing empirical reality can be designated as real, universal and typical.

2 Apart from realist fiction, the history of literature has witnessed the appearance of creations that neglected empirical reality. These include the mythological or religious parable, the fable, the fairy tale, and, broadly speaking, the fantastic. However, this list should be expanded to encompass the grotesque, allegory or satire, genres which, owing to the presence of supernatural or fantastic elements, convey a tendentious interpretation of reality. Indeed, it can be claimed that the relationship of objective, external reality and its artistic images reflects a particular artistic idea or ideological position. Thus, as a rule, a faithful rendition of reality amounts to either its apologia or affirmation, while its disruptive image amounts to its negation. Furthermore, it ought to be stressed that the interrelation between literature and reality in the creative process does not necessarily have to be unidirectional. Occasionally, these two domains switch positions, so that instead of reality, art becomes the object of emulation. Paradoxically, under such circumstances, the literary world seems more real and authentic than the environing reality.

3 The artistic reality which defies laws of nature, but at the same time gives the impression of truthfulness, has been affirmed in the creations of many European writers. On several occasions it has been emphasized that fiction, especially works written at the end of the 19th and throughout the entire 20th century, grew out of the absurd. The absurd is characterized by absence of logic, the occurrence of incongruous and contradictory
events, and the rendition of fantasy as reality; it is inhabited by strange heroes of unusual appearance and odd behavior. In such a world, there is nothing to marvel at since everything is possible: laws of causality are nonexistent, while moral principles governing the order and interaction between people are ignored.

4 Resting on the logical paradox, absurdity in literature expresses the unison of incongruous events. The resulting effect, as a rule achieved by means of grotesque, could be described as an emotional pendulum swinging between despair and laughter. Indeed, the entire history of literature evolving from a distortion of logic or the ludicrous has been intertwined with paradox, not only pertaining to meaning and the experiential, but also at the linguistic level. Such a tendency can be discerned in Aristophanes' comedies, especially in the parabasis mode in which the chorus's song disturbs the illusion of theatrical play, and current events are commented upon in a satirical manner or through parody. The issue in question is the specific utilization of formal, expressive and stylistic means for political and ideological purposes. Such solutions gave way to theatrical innovations which emerged in the 20th century, especially in modern drama or the theatre of the absurd found in the plays of A. Adamov, S. Beckett or E. Ionesco.

5 Similar trends can be identified in the development of the narrative. This has been discussed in a number of studies, especially after Bakhtin's ideas became popular in the West. Here we refer not only to Bakhtin's concept of dialogism as the foundation for shaping the intertwined reflective and aesthetic aspects of a literary work, but also the understanding of the usage of various types of words or sounds within a unique artistic entity. In that regard, we should place special emphasis on Bakhtin's interpretation of the Menippean satire (although founded on assumptions, and not on the textual material) as a paradigmatic genre which through a combination of philosophical content and comical form becomes the foundation for the creation and development of novelistic discourse. Mention should also be made of Northrop Frye's interpretation dating from a later period, in which the genre of Menippean/Varronian satire was likened to his conception of anatomy and involved parodist displays of erudition. It is not particularly difficult to establish that Roman novels dating from 1st century AD known on the basis of the surviving fragments from Petronius's Satyricon or Apuleius's Golden Ass owe a great deal to the antidogmatic form of Menippean satire. Also, it is possible to establish a parallel between the Renaissance novels of Rabelais and Cervantes, the English satirical novel of L. Sterne and Fielding, and the parodying and absurd narrative discourses of Gogol, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Flaubert in the 19th, or Kafka, Kharms, Camus and numerous others in the 20th century.

6 On the other hand, it can be noted that the absurd in drama and novel is expressed through a unique dialogic form in which the twisting of logic establishes a specific ideological norm. Devices utilized to shape the world from the absurd primarily include language use and genre innovations. Therefore, it could be assumed that there are mutual connections between absurd discourse and literary forms whose repetitiveness and constancy guarantee the creation of specific genres, such as various parodies of heroic romances or adventure novels, satirical novels, dystopia or anti-novels. The assumption about the formal and semantic link between language and genre is the starting point of this study. The absurd in speech will be analyzed in texts written by N. Gogol and D. Kharms, while absurd genres will be tackled on the basis of the narratives of Dostoevsky, Camus and Sabato.
The absurd found in the literary creations of Gogol and Kharms contains some elements of external reality: the language of communication imbued with multiple meanings. Moreover, speech (language) becomes the basis for the construction of a new, different realm. Hence, an artistic piece adjusts not to the empirical and causal, but rather to the inner regularities of language, following its own logic, and disregarding possible discrepancies. Thus, the method of imitation has been preserved, but its components may seem unreal. More precisely, new relations between segments of an artistic text do not conform to the relations observable in the external reality. It is for this reason that the resulting literary realm seems absurd, fantastic, or simply humorous.

Our analysis of similarities between the two writers will be primarily directed at establishing analogous procedures employed by them. Understandably, this does not exclusively entail the younger writer’s propensity to rely on the texts of the older one (investigation of citation and other intertextual links), but rather focuses on methods and devices utilized to construct related fictional realities.

Aside from more or less overt resonance of Gogol, Harms tends to give his stories Gogol-style endings (e.g. by parodied final formulas: “ПОЭТТОМУЯКАКУЧИНИЩЕННОКОМНЮЧЯЮНЯШУ”), to emulate his style, to vary some typical themes, or even to adapt Gogol’s plots or plot components. With that regard, the story ПАКИН И РАКУКИН can be read as an absurd version of ПОВЕСТЬ О ТОМ, КАК ПОСОРИЛИСЬ ИВАН ИВАНОВИЧ С ИВАНОМ НИКИФОРОВИЧЕМ. In both narratives, the names of the main characters are created by resorting to word play (matching and reiterative sound units). They deal with a pointless quarrel of two similar protagonists, and abound in offensive expressions (e.g. “МОРДА”, “КУРИЦА”, “ГУСАК”, “ЧОРТ” and a sodomy kiss). The only discernable difference is that Gogol refers to the motive for the quarrel, which is absent in Kharms’s story. On the other hand, the open ending of the story about two gentlemen from Myrgorod, Pakin and Rakunin, is resolved in the scene in which even the Angel of Death does not succeed in stifling the malice of a petty-minded spirit (“РАКУКИНСКАЯ ДУША БЕЖАЛА ЗА АНГЕЛОМ СМЕРТИ, ПОМИНУТО ЗЛОВНО ОГЛЯДЫВАясь. Но ВОТ АНГЕЛ СМЕРТИ ПОДДАЛ ХОДУ, И РАКУКИНСКАЯ ДУША, ПОДПРЫГИВАЯ И СПОТЫКАЯСЬ, ИСЧЕЗЛА ВДАЛИ ЗА ПОВОРОТОМ”).

Some parts in the account НЕОЖИДАННАЯ ПОПОЙКА, especially the portrayal of a naked Antonina Alexeyevna, hiding in trunks, showering her husband with small pieces of paper and flirting with the mustached foreman while naked, can be claimed to be adapted from Gogol’s Overcoat. Paper balls are also heaped on Akaky Akakiyevich, insulting his masculinity in this manner. Suppressed shame is again activated when he, going to a party in a new overcoat, covered with snow flakes resembling tiny pieces of paper, content, gazes at a photograph in a shop window: “ГДЕ ИЗОБРАЖЕНА КРАСИВАЯ ЖЕНЩИНА, КОТОРАЯ СКИДАЛА С СЕБЯ БАШМАК, ОБНАЖИВШИ, ТАКИМ ОБРАЗОМ, ВСЮ НОГУ, ОЧЕНЬ НЕДУРНУЮ; А ЗА СПИНОЙ ЕЕ, ИЗ ДВЕРЕЙ ДРУГОЙ КОМНАТЫ, ВЫСТАВИЛ ГОЛОВУ КАКОЙ-ТО МУШЧИНА С БАКЕНБАРДАМИ”. Careful reading of Gogol’s story reveals the connection between these two passages. Akaky Akakiyevich Bashmatchkin is exposed to corporal humiliation: his landlady is old and beats him, while the young beauty takes off his very person (БАШМАЧОК). In both instances “snow” falls on his head, while his adversary, a petty clerk, or a man behind the opened door, is laughing at him mockingly. Kharms echoes some of these details in isolation and gives them a different twist. The woman, Antonina Alexeevna, whose initials are identical to those of Gogol’s hero, did not
only expose her leg, but her entire body. The man with a moustache peeking behind the
door left ajar might have blended with Gogol’s old woman to become the building’s
janitor. “Paper snow” remained the same, but the object of humiliation is slightly
relegated to the background. Instead of Bashmatchkin, of undefined gender and age, the
young Peter Leonidovich makes appearance. He has experienced beating in reality: his
wife has hit him with an official seal. This is not the only reversed parallel: in Gogol’s
work, events take place in the public arena (office, street), while in Kharm’s creation they
evolve in private chambers (bedrooms, dining room); instead of clerks who have
surrounded the unfortunate man, tenants from the communal apartment make their
appearance and beat the hero. If we accept some interpretations of Gogol’s work, that his
writings contain a hidden representation of the world of the dead, then it would be
possible to assert that instead of the horrors of hell, Daniil Kharms depicted the horrors
of a nightmare.

In the story СУДБА ЖЕНЫ ПРОФЕССОРА (The Fate of Professor’s Wife), Kharms fuses the plots
of the Nose and Notes of a Madman (ЗАПИСКИ СУМАШЕДШЕГО). A woman suddenly loses her
husband, a professor. All that remains of him is a jar of ashes, appearing out of the blue in
the apartment where they used to live. The plot, provided that it is possible to speak of
one, begins to evolve when she decides to bury her husband, or to destroy all evidence of
his existence. When she attempts to bury the jar with his ashes in the ground, a local
policeman suddenly appears. This scene, as well as the woman’s conversation with the
police officer, immediately calls to mind the meeting of Ivan Yakovlevich, the barber,
with a guard on duty. He is caught red-handed, trying to get rid of the handkerchief with
Kovalyov’s nose (“ПОТИХОНЬКУ ШВЫРНУЛ ТРЯПКУ С НОСОМ”) that miraculously turned
up in his pocket that very morning. Other similarities are also noticeable: the jar is
wrapped in newspaper, the nose in a handkerchief. They are surrounded by floating
water, as if coming from the underworld. Gogol’s river teems with fish, indicating that
they might devour the nose, while Kharms’s jar with the professor’s ashes attracts frogs.
In both instances, the reader confronts the literary atmosphere emerging from a mixture
of the horrific and humorous, and, accordingly with this, an absurd, nightmarish
situation, which seems quite natural and expected. The continuation of the story contains
more overt hints at the possible conversion from the real to the onyric. Thus, for
instance, the image of Leo Tolstoy, who appears with a night pot in his hand in the
dreams of the professor’s wife, is transformed into a “shed with hens”. Hence, the return
of the nameless heroine from the world of dreams into reality is not accompanied by a
changed atmosphere or a relief: instead in her bed, she wakes up in a mad house (like
Gogol’s Aksentiy Ivanovich Poprishchin from the Notes of a Madman).

Hence, Gogol’s and Kharm’s heroes experience a mixture of reality and nightmare,
surrounded by policemen and unexpected incidents intruding on their privacy. But
indifferent and edifying conclusions logically following from the described scenes are not
ascribed to the grotesque protagonists, but to the narrator. Taken out of context, the
remark “this world is full of the unhappy who do not take the place they are supposed to
take in life” (“МНОГО В ЖИЗНИ НЕСЧАТНЫХ, КОТОРЫЕ ЗАНИМАЮТ В ЖИЗНИ НЕ ТО
МЕСТО, КОТОРОЕ ИМ ЗАНИМАТЬ СЛЕДУЕТ”) bears resemblance to a sentimental dictum
applicable to the outer world. When uttered by the insane Aksentiy Ivanovich, or when
emerging as an illogical conclusion following from absurd and irrational literary events,
its pathos and truthfulness are relativized. Therefore, instead of a constrained feeling, a
comic effect is achieved.
It could be claimed that this literary realm is constructed beyond reality. In more precise words, by imitating tendencies of external reality, artistic reality eradicates its inhabitants. Thus, the emulation of the surrounding world is not based on mirror reflection, providing for the comprehensive, unselective empirical image of the observed. Instead, the artist makes use of a distorting glass, so that the reflection of the outer world becomes contorted. In this fashion, literary reality becomes a double of empirical reality, existing in parallel with it. The duplication of the artistic world is accomplished thanks to the radical alteration of relations between objects and characters: time and space are inverted, as well as their relative positions, proportions, dimensions, and all links connecting them. The emulation of reality does not rest on a strict adherence to empirical laws, but on the understanding of its worldview. This procedure models the absurd world, occasionally creating an impression of the horrific, occasionally humorous and comical, but primarily reflecting the daily reality from which it has sprung.

Let us examine more thoroughly some fragments from Gogol’s and Kharms’s prose. It is obvious that different objects, elements and details (clothes, buildings, food, fruit, vegetables, body parts, animal world, etc) are frequently presented in either augmented or diminished proportions. In addition, both writers tend to bring in connection incompatible objects and concepts. A telling instance of this is the description of the nail of the tailor Petrovich in the *Overcoat*, which was “large, thick and as strong as the skull of a turtle” (“большой, толстой и крепкий, как у черепахи череп”), or the fist of the thief who has snatched the overcoat from Akakiy Akakiyevich, described as being as large as a clerk’s head (“кулак величиную в чиновничью голову”). In these examples, traditional and formalist poetics point to hyperbole and the grotesque, making up a specific fantastic world, resembling a nightmare (psychological interpretation).

Kharm’s interpretation is literal and direct. If someone’s fist looks unnaturally large, then it is an “optical illusion”. His hero Semyon Semyonovich (whose name, like the names of a number of Gogol’s heroes, is fashioned through word play) also sees a man with a large fist, but only when he puts on his glasses (“надевочки, смотрит на сосну и видит: насос сидит мужики, показывает ему кулак”). Without glasses, he cannot see anything, and for this reason he wants to believe that the issue in question is an “optical illusion” (“не желает верить в это явление и считает это явление оптическим обманом”).

In the construction of the fictional world, parts of objective reality have been utilized. However, their logical and semantic links have been replaced either by the logic of speech (the inherent logic of proverbs, metaphors or other tropes), or the logic of absurd scenes. Thus, inverted reality acquires an artistic format. The inverted (or upside-down) world requires corresponding or inverted semantics. Furthermore, it requires the reversal of spatial positions, especially along the upward /downward axis. This issue has been formerly touched upon in the passage dealing with the transference of Gogol’s and Kharms’s heroes to the underworld. In the same manner in which the frontier between the real and the fictional becomes blurred, the transition between this world and the underworld remains unmarked. When, for instance, Chichikov purchases dead souls as if they were living beings, then Sobakjevich, Manyilov and Plyuschkin refer to them as if they still existed. In Kharms’s work, the omnipresence of death, and especially the lightness and swiftness of passing away, open up a quandary about the difference between life and death.
It has previously been noted that death closely follows on the heels of Gogol’s and Harm’s heroes. Its frequent cause is food. Orlov had too many green peas and died (случай); Natasha ate five candies, sang and sang away and died (отецъдочь); the ticket collector’s father-in-law stuffed himself with green peas and died (связь). Food can bring about death in various ways: Tikakiyev hits Kortigin on the head with a large cucumber, causing Kortigin’s death (чтотеперьпродаютвмагазинах). In addition, both Harms and Gogol make use of food, food consumption and cooking methods to characterize heroes and situations. Take, for instance, the lunch scenes at Sobakyevich’s in Dead Souls, the description of Akakiy Akakiyevich’s dining table, and the kitchen in which Petrovich’s wise wife fries fish, conjure up the host’s, and also the protagonists’ moods. In Kharms’s works, these descriptions occur when he actually depicts the absence of meals in reality. In several stories he describes the (futile) search for food, or long lines in front of stores. Thus, in the story потери Andrey Andreyevich Mjasov (whose name contains a semantic and sound pun) spends a whole day looking for food, queuing up in lines, and losing all his purchases in the end.

A similar situation is presented in the story What is Sold in Groceries Nowadays (что теперь продают в магазинах). Tikakyev returns from the shop burdened with groceries (sugar, meat and cucumbers) to find Kortigin waiting for him in the corridor, at the door of his apartment. Their conversation is completely senseless ending in an unexpected quarrel in which Tikakiev takes the largest cucumber out of the shopping bag, hits Kortigin on the head, and the latter falls down and dies. From the realist position, and, it can be claimed, empirical reality, the described situation is absurd. The reason for the quarrel ending in a murder was Kortigin’s exclamation: “Don’t lie”. It cannot be maintained that cause and effect are in accordance with the generally accepted causal and moral orders. Apart from that, no matter how large a cucumber, it is an unlikely murder weapon. Nevertheless, the scene seems authentic. Why?

The exhausting and everlasting search for food is real. Inhuman and ill-mannered communication between strangers is also real. One can possibly die of food, or lack of it. The only fallacy is exposed in the concluding paragraph of the story: “You see what kinds of cucumbers are sold in groceries in present day” (воткакиеогурцыпродаютсятеперьвмагазине). Such a conclusion opens up several possible interpretations. First of all, a large and mighty cucumber is a clear indicator of the wealth of contemporary society. It justifies long lines in front of food stores. In addition, its supernatural powers absolve the murderer from guilt. As a matter of fact, a realistic situation here appears absurd, in the same manner that illusion may seem real.

The insane world opening up before the reader is also a world devoid of logic and ethics, with the prevailing atmosphere of discomfort and fear. In this system, the characters are divided into pursuers and the pursued. Hence, in Gogol’s and Kharm’s creations, relations between the police, court and ordinary people play an important part in plot formation. Guards, inspectors, traffic wardens, agents, caretakers and police informers seem to be lying in ambush throughout. They appear suddenly and unexpectedly, plunging out of most improbable places: a bush, river or stream, a graveyard, a wardrobe or a chest, windows on the third or fourth floors, etc. Moreover, it appears everyone can easily become a policeman, informer or any type of pursuer. As in Kafka’s world, it is not known who is guilty and why. The narrative situation does not clearly disclose a logical, valid connection between crime and punishment, between criminals and the accused.
In sum, Kharms’s literary reality reveals an absurd world which bears a close resemblance to daily life. In this world, the virtual gradually replaces the empirical, thus relativizing not only sensory and action spheres and their consequences, but real events as well. The relativization of the external also distorts ethical, inner norms that formerly governed communication between people. Imitating current reality, Gogol, Kharms and like-minded artists only transposed the distorted reality of their times into literary creations. This gave rise to an absurd, fictional world, frequently seeming more real than the actual surroundings. Consequently, their art appears more genuine than the illusion of reality in totalitarian and repressive societies.

The reality of modern times and all aspects of its artistic representations altered the form and ideology of the traditional narrative. The vanguard narrative discourse interprets reality; it does not depict or describe it. The authorial distance previously achieved by means of meta-textual comments is now produced through the help of irony and cynicism, the absurd, the impossible and the fantastic (Kafka, Belyj, Bulgakov, and Latin American Magic Realism). Innovative novelistic forms are frequently achieved by means of parody, which, as a rule, makes use of various fiction genres (including dystopia, science fiction and mysteries) as its hypotext (Y. Zamyatin, A. Camus, A. Huxley, G. Orwell, H. G. Wells). The creation of a new narrative strategy is also evident, so that the destruction of narration, the fragmentation of reality or meta-textual discourse, simultaneously undermine and accept the traditional novel.

Having grown out of a specific manner of viewing and experiencing reality, frequently bordering on despair, senselessness and anthropological pessimism, such a narrative selects specific literary characters that are overwhelmed with passions, fixations, oblivious of others, and solely focused on themselves. The identity of such a literary hero does not rest on natural cultural or historical givens. Rather, it reflects what man does with these givens, or, as stated by Jan Kott, “it does not matter what has been done to us, what matters is what we have done with what has been done to us”\(^\text{10}\). In that sense, the issues of choice, decision and freedom represent essential problems dealt by the creators of dystopian forms. In their narratives, plot and descriptions are neglected, and the main emphasis is placed exclusively on problems of morality and decisions made under given circumstances, most frequently hovering on the borderline between life and death.

Hence, in Camus’s *Stranger*, or in *The Tunnel* and *On Heroes and Tombs* written by Sabato, the issue of individual guilt is raised at the very beginning. The heroes, Meursault and Juan Pablo Castel, who, in a way, resemble Kafka’s Josef K. or Zamyatin’s I-303 or D-503, are represented as sinners or heretics. More precisely, like many of Dostoevsky’s heroes, they have been formed by means of implied guilt, following Markhel’s maxim from *The Brothers Karamazov* that “every man is guilty before everyone and for everything”. This presumption of inner, inborn guilt has to a great extent emerged from the belief that evil resides in man, which, on its part, evolved from the medieval Manichaeism into modern atheism, or anthropological pessimism. The problem of guilt and evil-doing is not exclusively ethical. It does not only amount to the recognition of the “moral law inside us”, but also raises the issue of Otherness, our own perspective of the Other. The awareness of the Other has always been positioned through opposing subjectivities, or, as Lacan suggests, it is impregnated with the awareness of oneself. In that, the reciprocity of individual feeling implies a desire to possess the Other\(^\text{11}\). Such desire galvanizes the will of Dmitri Karamazov, Rogozhin or Castel, the hero of Sabato’s *The Tunnel*. The main difference between these characters does not lie in realized or frustrated desires,
bringing the characters respective joy or frustration, but in the fact that some of them, like Dostoevsky's heroes, manage to overcome the sin committed, and to repent and redeem. Modern, avant-garde heroes remain imprisoned in their emotional universe, feeling that everything is meaningless and hopeless, and they are completely indifferent to the consequences of their deeds.

In this case, the ignorance of the Other also implies not looking into self and one's inner world. The absence of the bad-good hero polarization contributes to their impersonality and shallowness. Moreover, the dual characters that in Bakhtin's opinion emerged in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, have now merged into a unique mask of evil and indifference. For instance, many literary heroes created by Camus and Sabato find their doubles in Dostoevsky's novel: Meursault's doubles are Kirilov and Shatov, Castel's is Rogozhin, Raymond's - Svidrigailov and Luzhin, but it is hard to talk about their alter egos within a personal, closed circle. It should be noted, however, that the depersonalization of plot is frequently covered by the presence of the first person narrator, and the narration is presented as a sincere and completely exposed, but unconvincing confession. The analysis of the event outlined from the hero's position becomes transformed into an indifferent questioning of one's own sin, the vivisection of wisdom and deed, without genuine self-knowledge and awareness of one's own guilt. Thus sin, as well as man, remains an eternal mystery, which is something Meursault comments on in Camus' Stranger before his own execution.

Does the absurd narrative focus on the dilemma of whether it is possible to avoid inevitable end by abandoning all hope, as is written on the door of Dante's Inferno? This is the most essential question in nearly all these novels, and the response to it, with some variations, is chiefly the same and rather pessimistic: there is no way out. More than making sense of man's sin and the inevitability of the end, the creators of the vanguard novel are interested in an experimental study of man's activity. Placed in different repressive and oppressive situations, man either makes an effort to ignore adversity and obstacles, or attempts to predict what inevitably follows from such actions. This clinical analysis of human nature and actions has acquired a specific expression in dystopias which depict the worst possible political and social systems, chiefly determined by absurdity. Although the origin of the genre can be traced to Y. Zamyatin and his novel We, it ought to be noted that a close inspection of the consequences brought about by repressive rule and all projects aimed at bringing about happiness and harmony can be clearly discerned in the legend of The Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov. Dostoevsky, along with Zamyatin and many of his followers such as Orwell, Huxley, Camus, José Saramago, and Tatyana Tolstoy at the end of the 20th century, project that a negative society may possibly develop, having in mind that ambitions to achieve happiness and equality for all individuals does not rest on the empirical experience but on imaginary ideas. Describing attempts of the state to completely destroy individuality, also characterizing utopias, the dystopian narrative builds the plot by confronting the rebellious individual protesting against the government and its depersonalized subjects. Dystopia, and all other modes of the discourse of absurdity, are founded on an inner paradox: they primarily investigate negative characteristics displayed by man in times of crisis, but at the same time warn that there will always be people who will not accept subjugation, either to God, the ruling class or family. It follows from this that every instance of absurdity, while pointing to the repressive character of religion and society...
instead of anthropological pessimism, offers a utopian vision of the inevitable success of man’s rebellion.

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NOTES

1. Бахтин, М., РАБИЕ И НАРОДНАЯ КУЛЬТУРА СРЕДНИЕВОКИЯ И РЕНЕССАНСА, Москва, 1990 (1965); Kayser, W., Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung, Oldenberg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1957.
4. Бахтин, М. М., ВОПРОСЫ ЛІТЕРАТУРНИ І ЭСТЕТИКИ, Москва, 1975.
7. This has become a commonplace in literary reviews. Its origin can be identified in Eichenbaum’s study on Gogol’s Overcoat, Эйхенбаум, Б. М., «КАК СДЕЛАНА ’ШИНЕЛЬ’ ГОГОЛЯ», О ПРОЗЕ, О ПОЭЗИИ, ЛЕНИНГРАД, 1986, 45-64; Nabokov, V., Gogol, New York, 1944; Манн, Ю., ПОЭТИКА ГОГОЛЯ, Москва, 1996.

ABSTRACTS

The assumption about the formal and semantic link between language and genre is the starting point of this study. The absurd in speech is analyzed in texts written by N. Gogol and D. Kharms, while absurd genres are tackled on the basis of the narratives of Dostoevsky, Camus and Sabato. The reality of modern times and all aspects of its artistic representations have altered the form and ideology of the traditional narrative. Vanguard narrative discourse interprets reality; it does not depict or describe it. The authorial distance previously achieved by means of metatextual comments is now realized through irony and cynicism, the absurd, the impossible and the fantastic.

Le point de départ de cette étude est l’hypothèse d’un lien formel et sémantique entre le langage et le genre. L’absurde dans le discours est analysé dans les textes de N. Gogol et D. Kharms, tandis que les genres absurdes sont abordés à partir des récits de Dostoïevski, Camus et Sabato. La réalité des temps modernes et tous les aspects de ses représentations artistiques modifient la forme et l’idéologie du récit traditionnel. Le discours avant-gardiste du récit interprète la réalité ; il ne la dépeint pas ni ne la décrit. La distance auctoriale, auparavant réalisée au moyen de
commentaires métatextuels, est à présent créée à l’aide de l’ironie et du cynisme, de l’absurde, de l’impossible et du fantastique.

El punto de partida de este estudio es la hipótesis de un vínculo formal y semántico entre el lenguaje y el género. Se analiza lo absurdo en el discurso en textos de N. Mogol y D. Kharms, mientras que los géneros del absurdo son examinados a partir de narraciones de Dostoyevski, Camus y Sábato. La realidad de los tiempos modernos y de todos los aspectos de sus representaciones artísticas modifican la forma y la ideología del relato tradicional. El discurso vanguardista interpreta la realidad en lugar de retratarla o describirla. La distancia autorial conseguida previamente por medio de comentarios metatextuales, se realiza ahora con la ayuda de la ironía y el cinismo, del absurdo, lo imposible y lo fantástico.

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