

## Article

# The Musicalization of Prose and Poetry in the Oeuvre of Daniil Kharms

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**Abstract:** The term ‘musicalization’ comes from Aldous Huxley’s novel *Point Counter Point* where it denotes the use of music-derived models in fiction. The oeuvre of Russian writer Daniil Kharms (1905–1942) provides telling examples of such an approach to constructing both prose and poetry, as in his works, the conventional features of art prose and art poetry are, as a rule, considerably reduced. Kharms’s pieces, typically, consist of discrete ‘incidents’, which can be compared to musical motifs or themes; their organization into finished works is often based upon principles that have their recognizable counterparts in art music of different epochs. Some of Kharms’s texts quoted and commented on in the article show affinities with compositional ideas by major twentieth-century composers such as Alban Berg, Witold Lutosławski, Morton Feldman, Gérard Grisey, and Sofia Gubaydulina.

**Keywords:** Daniil Kharms; Aldous Huxley; musicalization of fiction; Incidents; fugato; symphony; passacaglia; motet; Mahler Fourth trick



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The most famous member of the OBERIU literary group,<sup>1</sup> Daniil Kharms (1905–1942), had musical abilities, loved classical music, attended concerts, and played the harmonium. This aspect of his personality is reflected in his own writings (letters, notebooks, and diaries) and has been described in Kharms-related literature<sup>2</sup>; I will not discuss it here. I will also skip the topic of possible relations between Kharms’ poetics and the oeuvre of young Shostakovich (Cf.: [Hakobian 2017](#), pp. 63–69; [Hakobian 2018](#)) (and, by extension, of the Russian musical avant-garde of the 1920s), as well as the music by a number of composers, both Russian and foreign, written to Kharms’ words. Instead, the focus of this article will be on the intrinsic musicality of Kharms’ prose and poetry. This issue has already received its share of scholarly attention, in particular, in valuable articles by musicologists Svetlana Nadler ([Nadler 2023](#)) and Larisa Gerver ([Gerver 2023](#)).<sup>3</sup> Svetlana Nadler’s interest is centered mainly on more or less explicit parallels between Kharms’ texts and some musical genres and musical works; Larisa Gerver develops Kharms’ own ideas on the nature of music, especially on the expansion of music in time. I will approach the topic of Kharms’ musicality from a different perspective, suggested by a passage from Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* (1928), in which one of the characters, a professional writer and the author’s alter ego, remarks in his notebook:

The musicalization of fiction. Not in the symbolist way, by subordinating sense to sound. < . . . > But on a large scale, in the construction. Meditate on Beethoven. The changes of moods, the abrupt transitions. < . . . > Comedy suddenly hinting at prodigious and tragic solemnities < . . . >. More interesting still the modulations, not merely from one key to another, but from mood to mood. A theme is stated, then developed, pushed out of shape, imperceptibly deformed, until, though still recognizably the same, it has become quite different. In sets of variations the process is carried a step further. Those incredible Diabelli variations, for example. The whole range of thought and feeling, yet all in organic relation to a ridiculous little waltz tune. Get this into a novel. How? The abrupt transitions are easy

enough. All you need is a sufficiency of characters and parallel, contrapuntal plots. <...> You alternate the themes. More interesting, the modulations and variations are also more difficult. A novelist modulates by reduplicating situations and characters. He shows several people falling in love, or dying, or praying in different ways—dissimilars solving the same problem. Or, *vice versa*, similar people confronted with dissimilar problems. In this way you can modulate through all the aspects of your theme, you can write variations in any number of different moods. (Huxley 1965)

Aside from the particulars related to the music of Beethoven (which has a symbolic role in the novel), here, the question is of a common constructive basis for works representing different art forms—in this case, literature and music. I will try to show that, in some of his texts, Kharmis, in his own ways, solves the very problem of musicalization put forward by Huxley. Kharmis achieves this goal all the more effectively and convincingly as, in his stories and verses, the traditional attributes of art prose and poetry are considerably reduced. For prose, such attributes, in the most general terms, include captivating and coherent storylines, elaborated characters, and psychological nuances, while, for poetry, catchy rhymes, alliterations, and wealth of associations. All of this is rather alien to Kharmis' oeuvre. In his prose, the prevalent technique is the fixation of discrete events; its poetics is essentially a poetics of *incidents*. No wonder that Kharmis' central prose collection is titled *Incidents*, and it is also the title of one of the pieces included in it:

Once Orlov ate too many ground peas and died. And Krilov found out about it and died too. And Spiridonov died all by himself. And Spiridonov's wife fell off the cupboard and also died. And Spiridonov's children drowned in the pond. And Spiridonov's grandmother took to drink and hit the road. And Mikhaylov stopped combing his hair and caught a mange. And Kruglov drew a picture of a lady with a whip in her hand and lost his mind. And Perekhrestov was sent four hundred roubles by telegram and put on such airs that they fired him at the office.

Fine folk, but they don't know how to take themselves in hand.<sup>4</sup>

Actually, a number of Kharmis' other pieces might be called similarly—for instance, the following one, entitled *The Old Women Tumbling Out*, from the same collection:

An old woman, from an excess of curiosity, tumbled out of the window, fell, and broke into pieces.

A second old woman stuck her head out of the window and began staring at the broken one, but from an excess of curiosity she also tumbled out, fell, and broke into pieces.

Then a third old woman tumbled out of the window, then a fourth one and then a fifth.

When it came to the sixth one, I got bored looking at them and set off for the Maltsevskiy Market where, I heard, a blind man had been given a knitted shawl.<sup>5</sup>

If, following Huxley, we agree that literary texts may be considered through the prism of regularities pertaining to music composition, then we can easily perceive the former of these pieces as a cycle of variations, in which the theme is 'developed, until, though still recognizably the same', and becomes 'quite different'. As in a typical classical variation cycle, the theme ('Once Orlov ate too many ground peas and died') is no more than a 'ridiculous little' statement setting the initial tone. As is customary in classical music, the first variation ('And Krilov found out about it and died too') introduces a degree of contrast, still retaining relatively strong association with the theme<sup>6</sup> (rhymed surnames and identical endings). Every next variation, in full accordance with the conventions of the genre, brings new shades to the initial idea, increasingly drifting apart from the theme in terms of material—that is, in this case, in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and the outcome of particular incidents. The variation immediately preceding the final statement, again

in accordance with the tradition of the genre, is the largest and syntactically the most complex of all. The last sentence, estranged from the chain of variations, functions as a summarizing coda.

As regards the latter piece, it is analogous to a sketch of fugato. The first and second statements ('And old woman. . .' and 'A second old woman. . .') may be compared to *dux* (subject) and *comes* (answer) forming the exposition of a fugue-like musical piece. The statements describing what happened with other old women ('Then a third old woman tumbled out of the window, then a fourth one and then a fifth') are compressed in time like the entries of a fugue subject in *stretto*, while the last sentence—a kind of coda—modulates to a new theme.

Hence, both pieces have in them something musical in the very sense put forward by Huxley: not 'by subordinating sense to sound' (or, in other words, not by imparting superficial musicality to the prose) but 'in the construction'. Their artistic value is largely conditioned by their quasi-musical constructive models. Due to the structural idea showing a specific musical connotation, the enumeration of absurd incidents rises to the level of a miniature work of art.

Kharms' pieces with explicitly musical titles or subtitles include *Variations* ('Among the guests, in just a shirt, Petrov was standing thoughtfully'<sup>7</sup>), *Passacaglia* (unrelated to the respective musical form), and two very different *Symphonies*. The first one (from the *Incidents*) is titled *The Beginning of a Beautiful Summer Day*:

The rooster had hardly crowed when Timofey jumped out of his window onto the roof and frightened every pedestrian on the street at that hour. Khariton the peasant stopped, picked up a stone and threw it at Timofey. Timofey disappeared. 'Very smart!' cried the human herd and someone named Zubov ran full speed and rammed his head into a wall. 'Oh!' exclaimed a woman with a swollen cheek. But Komarov gave her a quick slap and the woman ran howling to the doorway. Fetelyushin walked past and laughed. Komarov went up to him, said 'You, ball of fat!' and hit Fetelyushin in the stomach. Fetelyushin leaned against the wall and started to hiccup. Romashkin tried to spit from the balcony on Fetelushin's head. A few doors down, a big-nosed woman was beating her kid with a trough. And a young plump mother was rubbing her pretty little girl's face against a brick wall. A pretty little dog, which had broken its thin leg, was lying on the pavement. A little boy was eating some filth from a spittoon. At the grocery, there was a long line for sugar. The women yelled and hit one another with bags. The peasant Khariton, having drunk some denatured alcohol, stood in front of the women, his trousers undone, and said bad words.

Thus began a beautiful summer day.<sup>8</sup>

The label *Symphony* faithfully reflects the piece's essence—if only we comprehend this musical term not as a designation of a certain musical genre but, rather, as a synonym for agreement of sound or *consonance* ( $=\sigma\nu\mu-\phi\omega\nu\iota\alpha$ ), which is its original meaning. The latter is referred to, in particular, in the title of Igor Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* in memory of Claude Debussy (1920)—a ten-minute sequence of variegated segments, periodically recurring with minor variations to provide the consistency of the musical tissue. Kharms' *Symphony*, though belonging to an utterly different world, deserves its title on the same grounds. The discrete episodes enumerated in Kharms' text, though consistently repulsive, create a peculiar  $\sigma\nu\mu\phi\omega\nu\iota\alpha$  of a typically Soviet Russian 'beautiful summer day', with each particular incident adding a particular touch to this consonance. And the coda, as in so many other miniatures by Kharms, is estranged from the piece's main part, rounding the narrative off with a rather unexpected conclusion—both ironic and grave, 'suddenly hinting' at some 'tragic solemnities'.

As regards the second of Kharms' *Symphonies*, I would compare it with a real symphonic form, more precisely, with a specific symphonic work by a composer who was hardly aware of Kharms' existence. I mean the *Livre pour orchestre* by the twentieth-century Polish classic Witold Lutosławski, completed and premièred in 1968.<sup>9</sup> The twenty-minute-

long work includes three concise *chapitres*, differing in terms of their thematic content and development methods, and a relatively large *Chapitre final*. The chapters are separated from each other by thematically related short *intermèdes*. In the final chapter, the thematic content of the previous ones is summarized and, towards the close, an entirely new material is introduced. Kharm's *Sinfonia No. 2* (note the spelling) is based essentially on the same formal idea:

Anton Mikhaylovich spat, said 'yuck', spat again, said 'yuck' again, spat again, said 'yuck' again, and went away. And to hell with him. Let me tell about Il'ya Pavlovich. [The first chapter with the last sentence functioning as a kind of interlude]

Il'ya Pavlovich was born in 1893 in Constantinople. When he was still a small boy, he was taken to Petersburg, and here he graduated from the German school on Kirochnaya Street. Then he worked in some shop, then he did some other things, and at the beginning of the revolution he emigrated abroad. Well, and to hell with him. Let me tell about Anna Ignat'yevna. [The second chapter, again with an interlude, which is thematically related to the interlude preceding this chapter]

But to tell about Anna Ignat'yevna is not that simple. Firstly, I know almost nothing about her, and, secondly, I've just fallen off my chair and have forgotten what I was about to tell you. So, let me tell you about myself. [The third chapter, again with an interlude at the end]

I am tall and not unintelligent, I dress prudently and with taste, I don't drink, I don't bet on horses. But I do like ladies. And the ladies don't avoid me. They even like when I go out with them. Serafima Izmaylovna has more than once invited me to her place, and Zinaida Yakovlevna also used to say that she was always happy to see me. But there was a funny incident between me and Marina Petrovna, about which I would like to tell you. The incident was fairly ordinary, but all the same funny, since because of me Marina Petrovna turned completely bald, like the flat of one's hand. It happened like this: one day I went over to visit Marina Petrovna, and—bang!—she turned bald. And that was that.<sup>10</sup> [Final chapter, the largest, most detailed, substantial, and dramatic of all—just as in Lutosławski. Not unlike the finale of *Livre pour orchestre*, it develops crescendo towards a highpoint of the intrigue—. . .there was a funny incident between me and Marina Petrovna, about which I would like to tell you'—and ends with a coda based on a new, unexpected material]

Let me continue with other pieces by Kharm's, based on quasi-musical structural models—or, to put it more carefully, relying on patterns that have their established counterparts in the art of music composition. The following text from Kharm's *Blue Notebook*—it could also have been titled *Incidents*—suggests analogies with a form with mirror-like recapitulation, where each subject is noticeably varied without losing its identity:

A certain Pantelei struck Ivan with his heel.

A certain Ivan struck Natalia with a wheel.

A certain Natalia struck Semyon with a muzzle.

A certain Semyon struck Selifan with a trough.

A certain Selifan struck Nikita with a coat.

A certain Nikita struck Roman with a plank.

A certain Roman struck Tatiana with a spade.

A certain Tatiana struck Elena with a jug.

And then the fight began.

Helena beat Tatiana with the fence.

Tatiana beat Roman with the mattress.

Roman beat Nikita with the suitcase.  
 Nikita beat Selifan with the tray.  
 Selifan beat Semyon with bare hands.  
 Semyon spit in Natalia's ears.  
 Natalia bit Ivan on the finger.  
 Ivan kicked Pantelei with his heel.  
 Ekh, we thought, what fine folk are fighting.  
 (Kharms 2013, p. 479)

Mirror-like formal schemes of similar kind were sometimes used by masters of baroque polyphony and, more characteristically, by the twentieth-century composers of Arnold Schoenberg's circle obsessed with the idea of symmetry. One of them was Alban Berg, whose opera *Lulu* (1929–1935) is built as a giant musical and dramaturgical palindrome, in which the sequence of events constituting the work's first half has its symmetrical counterpart in the second half. Leaving aside the difference in scale, Kharms' formal idea is actually not too far from Berg's. The rhythm-breaking sentence in the middle is equivalent to a short stop preceding the next stage of musical development (in the very middle of *Lulu*, there is also a short stop, after which the events move in reverse, so to speak), while the final sentence plays the role of a generalizing coda. In the latter, just as in the above-quoted *Incidents* ('Once Orlov ate too many ground peas. . .'), the motif of 'fine folk' is introduced. This, as is usual for Kharms, can be read not only as an ironic comment to the events but also as a sudden hint at the realm of higher human values ('at prodigious and tragic solemnities'), opposed to the world of hatred and violence. Another parallel with *Lulu* does not seem out of place: though the opera is permeated with aggression and violence, and its music, accordingly, is for the most part intensely dissonant, it contains islands of serene euphony conveying some idealistic message. One such excerpt is the opera's ending—a peculiar hymn to beauty sung by a mortally wounded character against the background of misery, dirt, and dead corpses.

Svetlana Nadler's article mentioned above contains the following remarkable observation: 'In Kharms's absurdist miniatures, you can quite often feel with amazement something resembling a catharsis'. Another piece from the same *Blue Notebook* may serve as a good example:

One young girl said: 'gva.'  
 Another young girl said: 'khfy.'  
 A third young girl said: 'mbu.'  
 While Yermakov crunched and crunched cabbage from under the fence.  
 Clearly evening had already begun.  
 Motka finished playing with shit and went home.  
 It was drizzling.  
 Pigs were eating peas.  
 Ragozin took a look into the women's bathhouse.  
 Sen'ka was riding Man'ka like a horse.  
 Man'ka had already begun to doze.  
 The sky darkened. Stars began to twinkle.  
 Rats gnawed at a mouse beneath the floors.  
 Sleep, my child, and fear not stupid dreams.  
 Stupid dreams are from the stomach. (Kharms 2013, p. 480)

The enumeration of disgusting, frighteningly grotesque incidents ends with a kind of lullaby ('Sleep, my child, and fear not stupid dreams. . .')—a sudden shift towards pure lyricism, untainted by the monstrosities of everyday life; the hint at them in the last line



resembles a dissonance that keeps the ending from getting unambiguously idyllic. A parallel may be drawn with such musical works as Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* (1971) or, even more appropriately, with *Trois chants pour franchir le seuil* ('Three Chants to Cross the Threshold') by Gérard Grisey (1997–1998). In both scores, the music at the very end becomes discouragingly simple; in Grisey, the final section is an actual lullaby, which, as in Kharm's, introduces an unanticipated lyric modulation at the end of a work abounding in diverse contrasting events. Another perhaps even closer parallel is with Luciano Berio's *Laborintus II* (1965), largely inspired by Dante's *Inferno* but ending with a serene image of children talking in their sleep.

One of Kharm's short poems brings to mind the term 'Mahler Fourth trick', coined by the British music writer Ian MacDonald (MacDonald 1990). The term refers to Dmitri Shostakovich's favorite device to begin a large-scale composition in a light, innocuous scherzo-like vein only to make the development increasingly dramatic, with a powerful climax around the point of the golden section, after which the music returns to its initial mood—just like in the first movement of Gustav Mahler's Fourth Symphony. Both in Mahler and, even to a greater degree, in Shostakovich, this 'trick' serves to unveil a hidden grim and severe reverse side beneath a deceptively light surface. In Kharm's untitled short poem about the three wise men, a similar effect is reproduced, bringing to mind once more Huxley's notion of 'comedy suddenly hinting at prodigious and tragic solemnities'. The unexpectedly dramatic culmination falls on the golden section zone (the third stanza), followed by a stop on an imaginary dominant harmony preceding the zone of relaxation (the caesura between the third and fourth stanzas), a short digression (the beginning of the fourth stanza), and the return to the original key:

Khaldeyev, Naldeyev, and Peppermaldeyev  
 One day were seen walking out deep in the woods:  
 Khaldeyev had a top hat, Naldeyev had gloves on,  
 and Peppermaldeyev wore a key on his nose.  
 A falcon above them did skate through the air  
 in a small squeaky cart with large lofty arc.  
 Khaldeyev was laughing, Naldeyev was scratching  
 While Peppermaldeyev kicked the dirt with his heel.  
 But all of the sudden the air swelled and bulged  
 and took off for the heavens in a huff and a puff.  
 Khaldeyev jumped up while Naldeyev bowed down,  
 while Peppermaldeyev grabbed hold of his key.  
 But should they be fearful? Well, think for yourselves!  
 Let's dance, we the wise men, let's dance on the grass:  
 Khaldeyev with a hatbox, Naldeyev with a watch, and  
 Peppermaldeyev with a whip up his sleeve.  
 And once they got started, long did they play there,  
 until the red roosters awoke in the woods,  
 Khaldeyev, Naldeyev, and Peppermaldeyev  
 laughed—ha-ha! laughed—ho-ho! laughed—he-he-he!<sup>11</sup>

Finally, I would like to quote two other short poems by Kharm's. One of them, *A Romance*, in terms of form, is analogous to the thirteenth-century three-part motet, with a separate text for each of the parts (the term 'part' pointing here to a single voice in polyphonic texture). To make this analogy more evident, let us imagine the poem printed not from top to bottom, as is customary, but on an album format page with stanzas arranged from left to right:

He looks at me with a madman's eyes—  
 It's your house and porch I know so well.  
 He gives me a kiss with his crimson lips—  
 Our ancestors had gone to war in scales of steel.  
 He brought me a bouquet of crimson carnations—  
 It's your austere face I know so well.  
 He asked in return for a single kiss—  
 Our ancestors had gone to war in scales of steel.  
 He touched me with his finger bearing a dark ring—  
 It is your dark ring I know so well.  
 Together we tumbled down on a Turkish divan—  
 Our ancestors had gone to war in scales of steel.  
 He looks at me with a madman's eyes—  
 Dwindle away, o you stars, and fade, o you moon!  
 He gives me a kiss with his crimson lips—  
 Our ancestors had gone to war in scales of steel.<sup>12</sup>

One of the imaginary parts—the fourth line of each stanza—functions as an immutable *cantus firmus*. The odd lines, which constitute a developing erotic storyline, correspond to one of the parts moving above the *cantus firmus*, while the sequence of lines positioned between them forms, to use Huxley's expression, a 'contrapuntal plot', equivalent to another part of the polyphonic whole. Though the neighboring lines, as in the motet, are largely independent from each other as regards their content, their deliberate heterogeneity is quite consistent with the integrity of the whole piece, which is supported by the *cantus firmus*, as well as by the irregular repetitions in the upper parts.

The second of the poems, *The Constancy of Merriment and Dirt*, suggests parallels with the archetype of passacaglia: set of variations against the background of a supporting *ostinato* subject (here, too, the parallel will appear more apparent if the stanzas are arranged on the page from left to right rather than from top to bottom).<sup>13</sup>

Cool water gurgles in the river  
 and the mountains' shadow lies on the fields  
 and light fades in the sky. And birds  
 are already flying in dreams.  
 And the yardman with the black moustache  
 stands all night by the gate  
 and under his dirty hat he scratches  
 the back of his head with dirty hands.  
 And through the window come merry shouts,  
 the stamping of feet and the ring of bottles.  
 A day goes by, then a week,  
 and then the years go by  
 and people vanish  
 in neat ranks into their graves.  
 While the yardman with the black moustache  
 stands for years by the gate  
 and under his dirty hat he scratches  
 the back of his head with dirty hands.

And through the window come merry shouts,  
 the stamping of feet and the ring of bottles.  
 The moon and the sun have paled,  
 constellations have changed shape,  
 motion has become sticky  
 and time has become like sand.  
 While the yardman with the black moustache  
 stands again by the gate  
 and under his dirty hat he scratches  
 the back of his head with dirty hands.  
 And through the window come merry shouts,  
 the stamping of feet and the ring of bottles.<sup>14</sup>

The *ostinato* subject is represented by the essentially unchanging six lower lines of each stanza, treating of ‘the constancy of merriment and dirt’, while the quatrains above them may be compared to a sequence of same-size variations in which, as in *passacaglia*, the initial thematic idea gradually loses its identity. In this respect, it serves as one more example illustrating my principal point: some of Kharm’s representative works, in terms of their structure, are strikingly isomorphous to formal schemes and compositional solutions that have been historically established in European art music or were conceived by some major modernist and avant-garde composers of the last century.

At the same time, the latter poem is ‘musical’, perhaps, in a more profound sense than most of the works cited earlier in this article. As often happens with Kharm’s, the outwardly bizarre narration conveys an important ontological concept. What is the poem’s main point, if not a clear and vivid embodiment of, arguably, the most principal dialectics of the whole art of music, as formulated by the great contemporary composer Sofiya Gubaydulina: the interaction of the eternal divine sense and the irreversibly flowing time (Cf.: [Kholopova and Restagno 1996](#); [Hakobian 2017](#), op. cit., pp. 276–77)? In Kharm’s, the eternal divine sense is labelled ‘the constancy of merriment and dirt’, and this should not be perceived as profanity. What is music if not the most compelling evidence that ‘merriment and dirt’—or, to put it less vulgarly, the archetypes of human existence providing its fullness and diversity—are constant, even though time flows irreversibly, modifying and distorting, mutilating and annihilating the particular forms of this existence? Kharm translates this ontology in his idiosyncratic way, as if responding to Huxley’s concept of musicalization ‘in the construction’, with ‘parallel, contrapuntal plots’ forming a unique *συμφωνία* of variegated motifs and incidents.

While looking for structural isomorphisms between musical compositions and literary works, it is necessary to be careful to avoid ill-founded parallels. For example, the sonata *allegro* features in Thomas Mann’s novella *Tonio Kröger* are sufficiently explicit and provable (Cf.: [Basilius 1944](#)), while it would be rather futile to try to substantiate Shostakovich’s impression that Anton Chekhov’s short story *The Black Monk* is written in the sonata form ([Shostakovich 1960](#))<sup>15</sup>. According to an essay on the methodology of studies dealing with correspondences between literature and music, ‘the question of musical specificity’ in a literary text ‘must, ultimately, be subordinated to the underlying concerns that motivate’ the writer’s use of musical structures and devices ([Prieto 2002](#)). This reasoning applies to cases when the writer’s intention to shape his text after a particular musical prototype is more or less obvious—as, for instance, in the fugue-like ‘Sirens’ from James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (which is discussed in the passage just quoted), or in *Tonio Kröger*, or in *Point Counter Point*, or else in Paul Celan’s famous *Todesfuge*. The case of Kharm seems to be different. Nothing is known for sure about his motivations and intentions to structure his prose and poetry musically, as well as about the musical prototypes to which he refers in his pieces—even in those with musical titles. In Kharm’s, the ‘musical specificity’ emerges



spontaneously as the underlying meaning of a piece rather than as a consciously elaborated artistic device. Its presence can be detected analytically on condition that the text is read as a kind of musical score rather than as a series of sentences forming a narrative (one might assume that Shostakovich read *The Black Monk* just in that way and, therefore, could grasp its underlying musical structure that eludes common readers). Not all of Kharms' masterpieces are endowed with this special musical quality but, if it is there, it suggests meaningful analogies with compositional patterns and methods used in art music.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> On this alliance of Leningrad non-conformist writers, for the most part repressed in the 1930s and early 1940s, cf., in particular: (Roberts 1997). Cf. also: (Ostashevsky 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. some of Kharms's texts reproduced in: (Kharms 2013). Cf. also: (Nakhimovsky 1982; Shubinsky 2015).
- <sup>3</sup> The topic 'Kharms and music' is also touched upon in the articles by philologist Vladimir Feshchenko (Feshchenko 2005, 2006).
- <sup>4</sup> The translation by George Gibian is reproduced after: (Gibian 1971), with minor modifications drawing the piece's English version closer to the original.
- <sup>5</sup> Translated by Alice S. Nakhimovsky (Nakhimovsky 1982, p. 68).
- <sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, this does not apply to the *Diabelli Variations* mentioned by Huxley—a unique work, in more than one respect deviating from classical conventions.
- <sup>7</sup> *Variations* was set to music by the Saint Petersburg composer Leonid Desyatnikov (b. 1955) in his vocal cycle *Life and Love of a Poet* (1989). The form of passacaglia used by Desyatnikov is quite adequate to the idea of Kharms's poem.
- <sup>8</sup> Translated by Katie Farris and Ilya Kaminsky: Issue 24—Spring 2013—Daniil Kharms—freeversethejournal (<https://freeversethejournal.org/issue-24-spring-2013-daniil-kharms/>, accessed 28 September 2023). Reproduced with minor modifications.
- <sup>9</sup> To be more precise: Kharms's piece, dating from early June 1941, was first published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* ('Literary Newspaper') on 13 November 1968 (see Kharms 1999) while the first performance of *Livre pour orchestre* took place five days later.
- <sup>10</sup> Translated by Katie Farris and Ilya Kaminsky: Issue 24—Spring 2013—Daniil Kharms—freeversethejournal (<https://freeversethejournal.org/issue-24-spring-2013-daniil-kharms/>, accessed 28 September 2023). Reproduced with some modifications drawing the piece's English version closer to the original.
- <sup>11</sup> Translated by Bradley Jordan: Daniil Kharms. Khaldeyev, Naldeyev, and Peppermaldeyev... (ruverses.com) (<https://ruverses.com/daniil-kharms/khaldeyev-naldeyev/>, accessed 28 September 2023).
- <sup>12</sup> A Romance by Daniil Ivanovich Kharms—Famous poems, famous poets.—All Poetry (<https://allpoetry.com/A-Romance>, accessed 28 September 2023).
- <sup>13</sup> This text was also set to music by Leonid Desyatnikov as one of the parts of the vocal cycle mentioned above: a rather simple romance with illustrative effects and repetitions of words.
- <sup>14</sup> The Constancy of Merriment and Dirt. Translated by Robert Chandler (ruverses.com) (<https://ruverses.com/daniil-kharms/the-constancy-of-merriment-and-dirt/2453/>, accessed 28 September 2023).
- <sup>15</sup> Shostakovich's views on *The Black Monk* and the attempts of some writers to interpret his insights in musicological terms are discussed in (Digonskaya 2006).

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