

Title: “Я Бог но с топором!!”: Daniil Kharms as Author of Violence
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Daniil Kharms’s post-OBERIU writings – often written in private journals, sometimes featuring the author’s acquaintances, and frequently autodiegetic – tend to blur the line between literary work and autobiographical sketch. Reflecting on this line is especially vital in this case since these texts notoriously abound in misanthropic sentiment and arbitrary violence. Generally, scholars have tended either to classify these violent acts and affects as an entirely aesthetic experiment or to place them under the biographical rubric of reflecting the “absurdity of life under Stalin.” Yet, neither approach provides an adequate framework for handling these late narratives, in which, as Kharms’s friend and early interpreter Ia.S. Druskin (1991) puts it, the “horror...goes beyond the limits of art” (25). The present paper reframes this problem by focusing on how the reader experiences these so-called “limits of art.” To do so, I will be evoking Susan Lanser’s narratological concept of “equivocal attachment.” Lanser (2005) suggests that readers routinely vacillate in ascribing opinions and emotions voiced by a literary character to the text’s author, and that certain formal characteristics determine the likelihood of “attaching” a segment of text to the authorial voice. Both thematically and formally, Kharms’s late writings alternately bait and undermine such an experience of authorial presence (and sanction) behind the textual violence. While the claims of this paper will be general, my discussion will focus on illustrations from “The Old Woman” and “Rehabilitation.”

- Druskin, Iakov. “On Daniil Kharms.” *Daniil Kharms and the Poetics of the Absurd*. Ed. Neil Cornwell. New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1991. 22–31.
- Lanser, Susan S. “The ‘I’ of the Beholder: Equivocal Attachments and the Limits of Structuralist Narratology.” *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Ed. James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz. Malden: Blackwell, 2005: 206–219.

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