

Title: The Ideology Of Reception And The Violence Of Domestication In The Case Of Daniil Kharms

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In the popular imagination Daniil Kharms (1905-1941) is becoming assimilated as a yet another artist as victim of Soviet totalitarianism. The trend of positioning Kharms as a counter-cultural prose writer battling dark forces and dark times with Absurdist humor is widely evident in scholarly works, student and amateur theatrical productions, informal commentary on internet book-sites and blogs, in book reviews, and even in the very title of the first American publication to showcase Kharms in translation, *The Man in the Black Coat*. "It is the environment in which [Kharms] wrote, that is the most striking thing of all," claims the British translator Neil Cornwell.

The power of the victim trope has often forced Kharms's writing into paradigms of political literature. His stories, poems, even his children's writing are often read as parables of totalitarianism or comments on the violence and absurdity of Soviet life. By examining the reception in the West of the writing of Daniil Kharms, this paper attempts to reveal the ideological frame-work implicit in contemporary readings of Kharms. Through a close reading of texts by Kharms, this paper shows how the pervasive reading of Kharms's work as a direct response to Stalin's regime takes away from our deeper understanding of the author. The paper also discusses the ways that comparisons of Kharms's writing with the European Theatre of the Absurd has played a large role in domesticating this writer, and takes up larger issues of how history and ideology affect readings of Russian avant-garde writing.