

DANIIL CHARMS' "OLD WOMAN" CLIMBS HER FAMILY TREE:  
"STARUCHA" AND THE RUSSIAN LITERARY PAST

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— Старуха! — закричал он в ужасе.<sup>1</sup>

Он верил, что мертвая графиня могла  
иметь вредное влияние на его жизнь...<sup>2</sup>

Необыкновенное сходство поразило его...<sup>3</sup>

In 1928, in the *Obèriu* Manifesto, a small circle of Soviet writers, members of the *Obèriu* group ("Объединение реального искусства", "the Association for Real Art") announced its aesthetic principles to the cultural world.<sup>4</sup> Conceived primarily by Nikolaj Zabolockij and Daniil Charms, the manifesto placed a high premium on the innovative aspects of *Obèriu* art.

"ОБЭРИУ ныне выступает, как новый отряд левого революционного искусства" ("*Obèriu* now comes forward as a new section of leftist revolutionary art"), vigorously declare the *Obèriuty*.<sup>5</sup> "Обэриу <...> ищет органически нового мироощущения и подхода к вещам" ("*Obèriu* <...> seeks an organically new concept of life and approach to things"), they continue.<sup>6</sup> "ОБЭРИУ революционно именно в силу <...> своего метода" ("*Obèriu* is revolutionary precisely by virtue of <...> [its] method"), the group bluntly states.<sup>7</sup> "Мы — поэты нового мироощущения и нового искусства. Мы <...> создатели нового ощущения жизни и ее предметов" ("We are poets of a new world view and of a new art. We are <...> founders of a new feeling for life and its objects").<sup>8</sup>

These brief passages excerpted from the first few pages of the manifesto ring out the message loud and clear. The *Obèriu* emphasis is upon a *new* art.

Readers of *Obèriu* creations have readily concurred that innovation is what marks the *Obèriu* group's distinctive contribution to the history of Soviet culture.

George Gibian, in his informative introduction to Charms' and Vvedenskij's selective writings; Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, in the first full-length book to appear on Charms and Vvedenskij; and others sing the praises of the experimental, modernist nature of Obëriu art.<sup>9</sup> An article I wrote on Charms and Čechov demonstrated some of the uses and misuses Charms made of certain innovative short story techniques that roam Čechov's literary universe.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, one has only to open a Charms literary work to almost any page to find ample evidence for the claim that Charms is an advocate of creative novelty. Ordinarily, a reader expects a work of art to build one detail, fact, segment of plot upon another so that by the time we have finished the work, we have more than what we had at the beginning. A picture has been painted; a mood, constructed; and/or a story, told. Charms' "Golubaja tetrad' No.10" ("Blue Notebook No.10") does away with ordinary preassumptions. We are left with less, by the end, than we had at the beginning of the story. Let me illustrate, by including this short story, or rather, anti-story, here:

Был один рыжий человек, у которого не было глаз и ушей. У него не было и волос, так что рыжим его назвали условно.

Говорить он не мог, так как у него не было рта. Носа тоже у него не было.

У него не было даже рук и ног.

И живота у него не было, и спины у него не было, и хребета у него не было, и никаких внутренностей у него не было. Ничего у него не было! Так что не понятно, о ком идет речь.

Уж лучше мы о нем не будем больше говорить.<sup>11</sup>

(There was once a red-haired man who had no eyes and no ears. He also had no hair, so he was called red-haired only in a manner of speaking.

He wasn't able to talk, because he didn't have a mouth. He had no nose, either.

He didn't even have any arms or legs. He also didn't have a stomach, and he didn't have a back, and he didn't have a spine, and he also didn't have any other insides. He didn't have anything. So it's hard to understand whom we're talking about.

So we'd better not talk about him any more.)

The theme of the short play, "Neudačnyj spektakl'" ("An Unsuccessful Show"), although not all that pleasant, a characteristic shared by much of Charms' literature, does take an innovative approach to the writing of a theatrical piece. A series of six characters, in quick succession, comes before the audience and begins to vomit and/or to leave the stage.

It is true that much attention has been devoted to innovative elements in the creations of Daniil Charms and his fellow Obëriuty. However, an analysis of Charms' works would, I believe, remain incomplete without an investigation of the important relationship his writings had with the literary past. It is significant that in the very same Obëriu Manifesto in which novelty is exalted as a superior value in art, Charms himself is described as

... поэт и драматург, внимание которого сосредоточено не на статической фигуре, но на столкновении ряда предметов, на их взаимоотношениях. <...> Действие, перелицованное на новый лад, хранит в себе 'классический отпечаток' [Italics are mine - E.V.C.] и в то же время - представляет широкий размах обëриутского мироощущения.<sup>12</sup>

(... a poet and dramatist, whose attention is concentrated not on a static figure, but on the collision of a number of objects, on their interrelationships. <...> The action, turned inside out, in its new appearance still keeps a classical touch [Italics are mine - E.V.C.] and at the same time represents a broad sweep of the Obëriu world view.)

Some preliminary evidence is already at hand in the realm of establishing Charms' indebtedness to the Russian literary tradition. Samuil Maršak was convinced that Charms was a man "... s absoljutnym vkusom i sluchom i s kakoj-to - mozet byt', podsozmatelnoj - klassičeskoj osnovoj"<sup>13</sup> ("... with absolute taste and a perfect ear and with some - perhaps subconscious - classical foundation").

Gibian speaks of the piece of paper over Charms' piano inscribed with these Gogolesque words: "Here are read Gogol', Hamsun, Glinka, and especially Bach".<sup>14</sup> An equally Gogolian touch is found in the section of Veniamin Kaverin's memoirs that is devoted to Charms. Kaverin reminisces that Charms once came into his room, looked around at the order, and asked, "Skažite, požalujsta, čto vy stali by delat', esli by na vašem škafu vyros nos?"<sup>15</sup> (Tell me, please, what would you start doing if a nose were to grow on your cupboard?")

Alice Stone Nakhimovsky's stimulating discussion of Charms' play *Elizaveta Bam* points out the great variety of styles and language "types" embedded in the text. She writes, "There are examples of blank verse and rhymed verse, iambic pentameter with a marked nineteenth-century vocabulary, and fragments of prose speech ranging from uneducated to highly literary".<sup>16</sup> Within the play the genre of one scene radically differs from that of another. We rapidly travel through "realistic melodrama" territory to the "realistically comedic" to "radix"<sup>17</sup> scenes to "classical pathos", "ballad pathos", "physiological pathos", to the end of the opera.<sup>18</sup>

Still other authors also left their mark on Charms. At the end of her book, Alice Stone Nakhimovsky devotes a few paragraphs to Charms' indebtedness to Gogol', Koz'ma Prutkov, and Chlebnikov.<sup>19</sup>

In a 1980 piece on Charms material located in the Manuscript Division of the Soviet Academy of Sciences' Puškinskij dom, A. Aleksandrov affirms Charms' love of Puškin. Charms sees the great nineteenth-century author as a magician, an enchanter. Among the Puškinskij dom materials, remarks Aleksandrov, is a manuscript, written in December 1936, of a biographical sketch on Puškin's childhood years. It has been determined that Charms was one of the collaborators on an unsigned essay on Puškin, focussing on his childhood and lycee years, which appeared in *Čiž*, a children's magazine, in 1937. Aleksandrov postulates that Charms may have written his irreverent, parodistic "Anekdoty iz žizni Puškina" ("Anecdotes about Puškin's Life")<sup>20</sup> at the same time that he was evolving his more serious essay on Puškin.<sup>21</sup>

The work I have done on Čechov and Charms, although emphasizing the *innovative* aspects of Charms' art, analyzed Chekhovian techniques which peppered the Obėriu writer's literature. The superfluous details, zero endings, the device of having children write about children, the floating conversations, the characters' non-sequitur comments, the nonplots - all of these features weave a Čechov-like pattern in the Soviet absurdist's creations.<sup>22</sup> In that same article, I also mentioned ways in which Charms drew upon typically Dostoevskian traits for the composition of his own literature. Thus, Charms' short story "Svjaz'" ("The Connection") reproduces a major theme of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*. As in Dostoevskij's novel, everything is connected to everything. Unlike the nineteenth-century novel, Charms does not fasten the connections to a larger philosophical, metaphysical, religious message. The connections

remain dangling connections, not fitting into a larger framework.<sup>23</sup>

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The goal of this article will be to demonstrate, through an examination of the short story "Starucha" ("The Old Woman"), the way in which Charms incorporates the Russian literary past into his literary constructs. The echoes of the classics of Russian literature in this story are many.

To be sure, among the most striking are the gentle and not so gentle reverberations of Puškin's short story "Pikovaja dama" ("Queen of Spades"). The structures of the two short stories share many common features. The title of each contains a nonspecific word referring to a woman, although, of course, Puškin's title designates a playing card. Each of the works begins with an epigraph whose effect is to impart the strange, the mysterious, the out of the ordinary. In Puškin's case, the quoted author states outright that the queen of spades signifies mysterious malevolence: "Pikovaja dama označae tajnuju nedobroželatel'nost".<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the source of the quotation is a fortune-telling book.

When we turn to Charms' epigraph, we notice that the words themselves of the epigraph are not particularly mysterious: "... I meždu nimi proischodil sledujuščij razgovor" ("And the following conversation took place between them").<sup>25</sup> Rather, Charms' use of a sentence by the Norwegian author Knut Hamsun, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1920, might conjure up in readers' minds the strange, demonic, neo-Romantic, otherworldly atmosphere which hangs heavy over Hamsun's fictitious world.<sup>26</sup>

The shape of the opening paragraphs of the Puškin and Charms short stories under discussion are similar. In each there is a brief introductory paragraph followed by a dialogue. In each we learn the time of day and the season of the year. In each we are made aware of a central image of the story. One major theme in Charms' piece is that time is out of joint. That motif is already alive in the second paragraph of the story. The narrator sees that the old woman is holding a wall clock with no hands - and that she can tell time by it. The central axis around which Puškin's narrative journey will revolve, the card game, is introduced to the reader in the first sentence of "Pikovaja dama".

Time plays a central role in both stories. Throughout each, there is a heightened awareness of time. By

the end of the second sentence, Puškin's narrator has informed us that it is between four and five o'clock in the morning. Thereafter, he often uses time in order to intensify the suspense. As Germann waits for the countess to come home, we can almost hear the silence, except for the slow ticking of the clock and the beating of Germann's heart. Piercing the silence, each clock in the house strikes twelve. Then silence once again reigns.

Charms also makes the reader aware of time. The first sentence of "Starucha" reads, "Na dvore stoit starucha i deržit v rukach stennye časy"<sup>27</sup> ("An old woman is standing in the courtyard and holding a wall clock in her hands"). Next comes the scene, which I have already described, where she tells the narrator the time, although the clock she is looking at has no hands. This sequence sets the stage for Charms' use of time in the rest of the story: time is out of kilter. In a shop window, the narrator recalls, he had seen a clock whose hands resembled a knife and fork. The sequence of time is mixed up. The old woman crawls around on the floor *after* her death. She causes problems for the narrator after her death, not usually the time when people move around!

In each story dreams do not come true. Hopes are dashed. Within the first few pages of "Starucha", the narrator begins to write a story about a miracle-worker who can work miracles, but chooses not to. Near the end of "Starucha", as the train passes through Novaja Derevnja, the narrator spots the sparkling golden top of a Buddhist pagoda. His last words, a few paragraphs later, are a prayer: "Vo imja Otca i Syna, i Svjatogo Duha, nyne i prisno i vo veky vekov. Amin'..."<sup>28</sup> ("In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, now and forever and forever and ever, amen"). We, the readers, do not know whether the narrator will be arrested, for his suitcase, containing the old woman's corpse, had been stolen on the train.

Although this ending *is* open, given the pessimistic tone of the rest of the story, it seems pretty likely that a miracle will not take place. The old woman had appeared, for no apparent reason, to torment the narrator. The nice lady whom he meets in the store has no major role in his life. He does not know her name. One day, he catches sight of her in the distance. She disappears, though, before he has had a chance to catch up with her. The food he shares with his friend, Sakerdon Michajlovič, makes him ill. In the narrator's life, as in his story, miracles are not forthcoming.

Puškin's Germann has his hopes dashed as well. With-

in the first few pages, we learn of the alleged miracle/secret of the cards which had helped the countess win large amounts of money. Just as Charms' narrator catches sight of the golden top of the Buddhist pagoda, Germann spots, in his mind's eye, gold and gold coins as the answer to his dreams. Charms' narrator then gets his suitcase stolen from him. With the disappearance of the suitcase goes the possibility of liberating himself from the old woman's corpse. Germann's fate is similar. At first he, too, believes that by obtaining the secret of the cards, he will realize his dream of gold. By the end, he, too, has lost out. Miracle workers have worked no miracles. Significantly, in each of the two stories, the death scene of the old woman directly follows the part having to do with the miracle/secret.

Stylistically, too, the Puškin and the Charms stories occupy the same ground. Straightforward narration, a direct, matter-of-fact tone combined with an air of mystery, of the irrational, characterize both. Short, clipped sentences are a distinguishing feature of both.

In "Pikovaja dama" and "Starucha", there are two main characters, an old woman who dies and a man. In each there is also a younger, kind woman (Lizaveta Ivanovna and the woman in the bakery) and a male friend (Tomskij and Sakerdon Michajlovič) of the main protagonist's. Puškin's old woman dies while she and Germann are alone in her room. Charms' old woman dies while she and the narrator were alone in his room. Neither male protagonist wanted the old woman to die. Both notice the old woman's eyes. In the passages where the death scenes occur, the main protagonist goes down on his knees before the old woman. At the time of the countess' and the old woman's death, neither Germann nor Charms' narrator realizes, at first, what has happened. Neither attributes the lack of mobility to death. Each hero is "blessed" with a vivid imagination. Both Germann and Charms' narrator are in agitated states. One night Germann wakes up at 2:45 AM; Charms' story begins as the narrator asks the old woman what time it is. She replies that it is 2:45 (PM, presumably). The old women in both stories seem to be alive *after* they have died. At the funeral, Germann believes that the countess winked at him. Charms' "Starucha" includes a scene where the corpse crawls toward the narrator on all fours.

The similarities between "Pikovaja dama" and "Starucha" are too many to ignore. I am convinced, that a Pushkinian thread weaves its way through the Charms short story. Puškin, I believe, was not the only classical

Russian author whose influence is felt in this work. To look at "Starucha" through the lens of previous Russian literature is like snapping a camera's shutter, time and again, without advancing the film. The result is an overexposed photograph with many different scenes layered, one on top of the other.

Besides the Puškin layer, I discern a Dostoevskij layer, too. Specifically, I have in mind the *Crime and Punishment*-like details which are present throughout the story. Of course, here the layering becomes even more complicated because Puškin's "Pikovaja dama" had a direct influence upon *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. A.L. Bem's article on Puškin and Dostoevskij, for example, sets out to prove, with many parallel passages from Puškin's short story and Dostoevskij's novel, exactly that point.<sup>29</sup> Bem acquaints his readers with the mirror schematics of the two works. "Pikovaja dama" involves the cluster of the countess, Lizaveta Ivanovna, and Germann. *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* duplicates that cluster with the old pawnbroker, Lizaveta Ivanovna, and Raskol'nikov.<sup>30</sup> We have already taken note of the very same sort of constellation in Charms' story with the old woman, the younger woman, and the narrator.

Turning to the specifics of "Starucha" and the imprints which I believe Dostoevskij's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* made on the story, I must refer to parallels I mentioned in another context. What we find is that both works take place in the same city (Petersburg/Leningrad). Charms reproduces well the rhythm of Raskol'nikov's turbulent moods. Charms' narrator often seems to be aping Raskol'nikov as he flits from one unfinished thought to another. The Charms narrator, like Raskol'nikov, spends time wandering aimlessly through the city after the death of the old woman. The public's reaction to each is uneasy. Charms' protagonist, like Raskol'nikov, lies down in his room and has a dream. The reader is uncertain where reality stops and the dream world takes over. Dostoevskian words and images surface in "Starucha". "Vdrug" is one example. The description of the old woman as a "mertvaja lošad'" is another. "The bright sunshine irritates his [the narrator's] eyes. Someone in his apartment building is holding some kind of rag. He and a friend discuss the existence of God. He meets a kind woman who helps him. In an epilogue-like section, the narrator declares that he is only temporarily ending his manuscript. When he gets beyond the confines of the city into the purity of the countryside, he prays".<sup>31</sup>

And perhaps another Dostoevskian layer is revealed as we examine "Starucha" in relation to *Zapiski iz pod-*

*pol'ja* (Notes from Underground). Each contains a narrator whose mission seems to be to prove that he is a victim. Each forces himself into an uncomfortable situation. The underground man brought about his own humiliation by going to the party for Zverkov. The narrator of "Starucha" did not kill the old woman, yet he insists on treating himself like a guilt-ridden murderer. The endings of the two works are remarkably similar. Each narrator declares, in the final paragraph, that the manuscript does not end here, yet each narrator decides to stop.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, one of the major themes of *Brat'ja Karamazovy* is reproduced, in a somewhat altered state, in "Starucha". Ivan had been plagued by pangs of conscience. He feels guilty of his father's murder even though he did not commit the murder. In Charms' story, the narrator feels like a criminal although he had not killed the old woman.

Gogol's influence, too, can be traced in the Charms story although not, I believe, as strongly as Puškin's and Dostoevskij's. The short story "Nos" ("The Nose") shares some general contours with the Charms story under discussion. Both basic situations, having to do with a human body (or a part of one, in Gogol's case), are absurd. In "Starucha", the dead body does strange things. In "Nos", the nose does strange things. A corpse on all fours chasing a man is as ridiculous as a man seeing his own nose enter a church. In "Nos", the main character, Collegiate Assessor Kovalev, searches for his own nose for the whole story. In "Starucha", the main character attempts to escape the pursuit of a dead woman. The barber, Ivan Jakovlevič, is afraid that the police will punish him for having possession of someone else's nose. Charms' narrator is frightened of police repercussions if he should be discovered with the old woman's body.

One more episode links the two literary works. While in the cathedral in pursuit of his nose, Gogol's Kovalev glimpses a beautiful slender woman. Intending to make her acquaintance, he suddenly jumps back in horror as he remembers the blank, flat spot on his face which has replaced the nose. After Charms' narrator has met the nice woman (in a bakery, not a cathedral), he invites her to his room. He, too, must revise his original plans as he becomes aware of the impossibility of having a guest while the old woman's body is still in the room.

One more Gogolian touch in "Starucha" is the device of having a dead "soul" as an important part of the action. Čičikov, in *Mertvye duši* (Dead Souls), tries

to acquire dead souls; the main protagonist of Charms' short story attempts to dispose of one.

And, of course, if one thinks of "Šinel'" ("The Overcoat"), we see a pattern which will be repeated in "Starucha". In the former story, Akakij Akakievič, a character who thinks of himself as a victim, has lost something, his overcoat. He thinks about how to find it. In the latter story, the main protagonist, who, like Akakij Akakievič, considers himself a victim, finds something - or rather, someone - in his room. She dies, and he then thinks about how to "lose" the body. It is also worth mentioning that in each of these two stories, the "thing" lost and found or found and lost is stolen.

At the end of "Šinel'", the scene switches to the realm of the fantastic. There is a happy ending, as Akakij Akakievič's ghost takes revenge on the Very Important Person. The concluding scene of "Starucha" is more problematic. The narrator prays, but we are not certain whether he, having had the corpse-filled valise stolen, will be arrested.

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Throughout our analysis of "Starucha", we have observed the multiple layers of motifs and structural patterns reflecting earlier works of Russian literature. In attempting to describe the overall effect, several images come to mind. It is as if Charms were creating an onion. The reader must keep peeling layer upon layer, only to get to the core - and to begin to cry. Or, as I noted earlier in the article, the effect can be thought of as analogous to a pile of photographs, one on top of another. Each photograph represents one particular earlier work of Russian literature brought into the pile which, as a whole, represents "Starucha". One might feel as if the total effect is as if water had been poured over the photographs and one photograph merges into another to produce a senseless, irrational whole - or lack thereof.

Now that we have seen the intricate interweaving of some of the classics of Russian literature into the fabric of "Starucha", it is appropriate for us to ask ourselves this question: why would Charms utilize such a complex structure?

A partial answer is provided by a consideration of other Charms creations. The message is frequently one of gloom, pessimism, and nothingness. There is no beauty. Even if beauty does exist, some phenomenon will be certain to destroy it or soil it. Dreams are dashed

against the rocks. People do not live happily ever after. Death, ugliness, hopelessness, and destruction abound.

Against this general backdrop, a reexamination of "Starucha" yields the same dismal message. In his story of the Soviet reality of the late 1930s, Charms introduces the past into the present in the form of resonances from the nineteenth-century masters of Russian prose. He introduces the past into the present by inserting the character of the dead old woman into the life of the main protagonist. What we must conclude is that the narrator cannot escape the dead past. He cannot escape the old woman, dead or alive. The story cannot escape the past either - in terms of the literary reverberations here. Looking at the past, we see, does not provide an answer. There is no rational continuity. Past and present, coexisting in "Starucha", end up in a senseless dead-end of the Stalinist society of 1938 and 1939: will he be arrested, the narrator wonders, for an act that he had not committed? He had not killed the old woman, and yet he is obsessed, throughout the story, that the authorities will find out that her body is in his room.

Almost everything, we see in this short story, is bad.<sup>33</sup> Past, present, and future are equally ugly. The past, in the form of the old woman's corpse, pursues the narrator. The narrator asks his friend, Sakerdon Michajlovič, which he thinks are worse, dead people or children. Dead people, we read, barge into people's lives.

We also read, "- Pokojnik - ob"jasnjali mne moi sobstvennye mysli - narod nevažnyj. Ich zrja nazývajúť pokojniki, oni skoree bespokojniki. Za nimi nado sledit' i sledit'".<sup>34</sup> ("Dead people are not very nice. We say, 'Rest in peace', but they give us no rest and peace. One must watch them and watch them".)

At several junctures, we observe that the man of the present, the narrator, does not think much of the children, the generation representing the future. As he rests in his room, he hears the sounds made by children playing outside. He thinks up various methods of doing away with them. His favorite method would be tetanus paralysis to bring their movements to a temporary halt. As they recover, he would inflict the same disease on them a second time in order to kill them off once and for all.

More than once, from the very first pages of "Starucha", we come across the cluster of boys (the future), the narrator (the present), the old woman (the past), and time. Thus, the theme of the hopelessness of any

time - future, present, or past -, repeated with the insertion of references to past literature into the narration of the present, is reinforced by constellations of these individual images.

Here, in the world of Charms' "Starucha", the past provides no answer. And what happens to the past in the present is that it is perceived as being a burden. The old woman's corpse is a burden. The dead past of literature is of no help in dealing with life. The present, too, contains an abyss. The present-day reality is scary. (One has merely to bear in mind that this story was written in 1939, during Stalin's reign of terror, to know that the narrator's fears of being arrested are an everyday reality in life as well as in literature.) In this topsy-turvy world, what the present wants for the future is poisoned. The narrator wishes to infect children with a terminal illness. He and Sakerdon Michajlovič detest dead people and children.

The hopes of the final pages - the gleaming, sparkling, golden top of the Buddhist pagoda, Novaja Derevnja, and the prayer - do not guarantee a "they lived happily ever after" conclusion. In fact, the narrator's fears of being arrested echo the thought, near the beginning of the story, that the miracle-worker *could* work miracles and chose not to. Such a conclusion is quite natural, given the doom-filled mood of the rest of the story, and given the gloom and doom-filled pages of other Charms' works.

As in "Golubaja tetrad' No.10" ("Blue Notebook No. 10"), we end up with the possibility of nothingness. Puškin's words, "'Starucha!' zakričal on [Germann] v užase"<sup>35</sup> ("The old woman!' he cried out in horror") echo, reecho, and send waves of horror into the entire Charms story. By the end, it seems as though all there is to cling to is the "užas" ("horror, terror").

Or, to quote the words of another giant of the Russian literary past, Anton Čechov, "Cholodno, cholodno, cholodno. Pusto, пусто, пусто. Strašno, strašno, strašno"<sup>36</sup> ("It is cold, cold, cold... It is deserted, deserted, deserted... It is terrifying, terrifying, terrifying...").

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## NOTES

1. "'The old woman!' he cried out in horror". A.S.Puškin, "Pikovaja dama", in: *Sobranie sočinenij v desjati tomach*, t.V (Moskva 1975), 219.
2. "He believed that the dead countess could exert a harmful influence on his life...". *Ibid.*, 214.
3. "The extraordinary resemblance struck him...". *Ibid.*, 219.
4. An English translation of the manifesto comprises the appendix of George Gibian's edition, *Russia's Lost Literature of the Absurd. A Literary Discovery. Selected Works of Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky*, trans. and ed. George Gibian (New York 1974), 193-202. The Russian version, which originally appeared in *Afiši doma pečati*, No.2, January 1928, 11-13, is reprinted in Gibian's Russian edition of selections of Charms' works: Daniil Charms, *Izbrannoe* (Würzburg 1974), 285-298. For additional helpful background information, see R.R. Milner-Gulland, "'Left Art' in Leningrad: The OBERIU Declaration", *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, III (1970), 65-75.
5. Daniil Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 288; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 194.
6. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 288-289; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 194.
7. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 289; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 195.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, "Introduction, 3-38; Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, *Laughter in the Void. An Introduction to the Writings of Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedenskii*, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, Sonderband 5 (1982).
10. Ellen Chances, "Čexov and Xarms: Story/Antistory", *Russian Language Journal*, vol.36, Nos.123-124 (1982), 181-192.
11. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 47; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 53. I discuss "Golubaja tetrad' No.10" in connection with the development of the short story in Čechov and Charms. See Chances, "Čexov and Xarms", 189.
12. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 292-293; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 198.
13. In a 1963 letter to A.V.Makedonov, in: Samuil Maršak, *Sobranie sočinenij* (Moskva 1972), VIII, 509.
14. Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 7.
15. V.Kaverin, *Sobesednik. Vospominanija i portrety* (Moskva 1973), 71.
16. Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, *Laughter*, 38.
17. The Obëriuty invented this word to refer to their theatre experiments.
18. "Elizaveta Bam", in: Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 172-205.
19. Nakhimovsky, *Laughter*, 168.
20. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 110-112; Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 66-67.
21. A.A.Aleksandrov, "Materialy D.I.Charmsa v rukopisnom otdele Puškinskogo doma", *Ežegodnik rukopisnogo otdela Puškinskogo*

- doma na 1978 god (Leningrad 1980), 78-79. Aleksandrov's article, 64-79, contains a mine of useful information for Charms scholars.
22. Chances, "Čexov and Xarms".
  23. *Ibid.*, 185-186.
  24. Puškin, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 195.
  25. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 129; Kharms, "The Old Woman", in Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 86.
  26. Nagel, the major protagonist of Hamsun's novel *Mysterier* (*Mysteries*), was Charms' favorite literary hero: Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 7. Nakhimovsky writes that *Mysterier* was one of Charms' favorite books: Nakhimovsky, *Laughter*, 168.
  27. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 129; Kharms, "The Old Woman", in Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 86.
  28. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 165; Kharms, "The Old Woman", in Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 115.
  29. A.L.Bem, "'Pikovaja dama' v tvorčestve Dostoevskogo", in: A.L. Bem, ed. *O Dostoevskom* (Praga 1936), III, 37-81. Especially germane are pages 46-62.
  30. *Ibid.*, 47.
  31. Chances, "Čexov and Xarms", 181.
  32. "Vpročem, zdes' ešče ne končajutsja 'zapiski' ètogo paradoksalista. On ne vyderžal i prodolžal dalee. No nam tože kažetsja, čto zdes' možno i ostanovit'sja" - F.M.Dostoevskij, *Zapiski iz podpol'ja*, in: *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v tridcati tomach* (Moskva 1973), t.V, 179. ("This is not the end, however, of the 'Notes' of this paradoxical writer. He could not help going on. But to us too it seems that this will be a good place to stop" - F.Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*, in: *Notes from Underground. The Double*, trans. Jessie Coulson [Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England 1981], 123).  
 "Na ètom ja vremenno zakančivaju svoju rukopis', sčitaja čto ona i tak uže dostatočno zatjanulas'", Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 165. ("I temporarily end my manuscript here, since I think that even now it is already sufficiently drawn out", Kharms: "The Old Woman", in Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 115.
  33. The reader is referred to a different, more optimistic interpretation of "Starucha" in Chapter Five, "The Ordinary, the Sacred, and the Grotesque", of Nakhimovsky's book, *Laughter*, 87-103. She sees the prayer the narrator utters as a confirmation of the existence of God, miracle, and spirituality.
  34. Charms, *Izbrannoe*, 153; Kharms, "The Old Woman", in Gibian, *Russia's Lost Literature*, 105.
  35. Puškin, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 219.
  36. A.P.Čechov, "Čajka", in *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij i pisem v tridcati tomach* (Moskva 1978), XIII, 13; Anton Chehov [sic], "The Seagull", in *Plays*, trans. Elisaveta Fen (Baltimore, Maryland 1960), 129.