

Elements of the Speech Absurd in the Novel “The Meerkat House” By A. Zhaksylykov

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Abstract

In the theoretical part of the article, a literary review of the study of the category of the absurd in world and Russian literature is provided. Works by S.A. Kharlamova, V.Yu. Charskaya-Boiko, G.M. Krushkov, W. Tigges, O.D. Burenina, and L.V. Safronova are considered. The practical part of the article describes elements of speech absurd in the novel “The Meerkat House” by A. Zhaksylykov. During the analysis of the verbal elements of the work, homogeneous enumerations are highlighted as elements of verbal absurdity that reach absurd proportions in the text. One important aspect of the work is the use of the “poetics of error” creating an effect of absurdity and unexpectedness in the text, contributing to the sense of the absurd. A technique of absurdity in the verbal organization of the work is the use of a large number of authorial neologisms in the characters’ speech, which are conditionally divided into several categories in the article. Additionally, the technique of “lexical hybridization” is considered in a comparative aspect in the novel’s text. Apart from identifying absurdity in the verbal organization of the novel, the absurdity of the novel’s characters, space and others are examined. The analysis reveals absurd metaphors and expressions, abbreviations understood only within the context of this novel and a large number of phrases with words like “corn”, “jugarn” and “jubuy”. A. Zhaksylykov employs a classic technique of absurdity, blurring the line between dream and reality, where events in dreams are almost indistinguishable from reality. The novel not only blends the dreams of the narrator but also simultaneously describes the protagonist’s past, his childhood spent in the village, his life in various transformations and more.

Keywords: *Absurd, Speech Absurd, Schizophrenic Discourse, Right Hemispheric Thinking, Author's Neologisms.*

Introduction

In the world of literature, the theoretical challenge of researching the literature of the absurd is quite well developed (A. Kamu, M.M. Bakhtin, M. Esslin, E.N. Stroganova, A.A. Kobrinsky, O.L. Chernoriskaya, D.V. Tokarev, O.D. Burenina, M. Virolam, etc.) Initially, in literary studies explored the problem of literary absurdity was studied on the material of English literature in conjunction with the work of Lewis Carroll and the pan-European traditions of the development of absurd literature (N. Malcolm, J. Farrel, J. Flescher, E. Guiliano, G. Willis, L. Schweitzer, M. Heyman, E. Tarantino, S.A. Kharlamova, V.Y. Charska-Boiko). In post-Soviet philology, the most common concept is the study of speech absurd L. Shcherba (L.V. Safronova, Z.R. Dokhova, R.H. Urusov, D.A. Samarin, E.L. Trachinin and etc.) and concepts related to the psychoanalytic method of studying the literary absurd in the modern Russian literature (M.P. Marusenkov, L.V. Safronova, O.N. Zyryanov), as well as the concept of the general theoretical character of studying the literature of the absurd (N. Cornwell, W. Tigges).

S.A. Kharlamova (Kharlamova, 2019) and V.Yu. Charskaya-Boiko (Charskaya-Boiko, 2009) investigates the same difficulties and analyzes the distinctions between the ideas of “nonsense” and “absurd”. S.A. Kharlamova points out that D. Lennon's writings feature an excess of tragic circumstances and senseless brutality, making them impossible to categorize as nonsense. However, the author also observes a parallel

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between Lennon's works and D. Harms' inventiveness, in which characters perform harsh and absurd deeds.

According to G.M. Kruzhkov, as referenced by S.A. Kharlamova in her research, nonsense is seen as a bright and joyful play whereas absurdity points to the meaninglessness of life and the world with traces of a "resemblance to the avant-garde of the 20th century" in absurdity (Xarlamova, 2019,167), (Safronova, 2006).

W. Tigges clearly stated the same idea: "in nonsense, language creates reality, in absurdity, language presents a senseless reality" (Tigges, 1988, 128). Researchers distinguish between nonsense and absurdity: in nonsense, language generates reality by experimenting with lexical units and their atypical usage to produce nonsense in the text. In contrast to nonsense, language in absurdity offers a senseless reality, demonstrating the absence of logic and meaning in the world represented in works, which contributes to the function of absurdity in producing the impact of absurdity and contradiction.

S.A. Kharlamova also highlights the variances in the structure and genre of D. Lennon's prose, with some pieces leaning toward gibberish and others toward absurdity. She observes the employment of "poetics of error" and "erroneous narrative structure" in absurdist literature. The author adds that these "errors" should be viewed as creative strategies and systems that serve expressive roles in the text (Xarlamova, 2019). The "poetics of error" and "erroneous narrative structure" in the philosophy of the absurd refer to particular tactics and creative practices employed to produce meaninglessness, inconsistencies, and disruptions in logical sequence in the text.

One essential feature of "poetics of error" is the use of linguistic and structural errors to generate a feeling of absurdity and unexpectedness in the text. This might include improper syntax, twisted syntactic structure, wordplay and onomatopoeia. S.A. Kharlamova (Xarlamova, 2019), along with W. Tigges (Tigges, 1988) and G.M. Kruzhkov (Kruzhkov, 2005), investigates how these mistakes and distortions contribute to the formation of a sense of absurdity and evoke amusement from the reader.

"Erroneous narrative structure" is connected with violation of usual literary schemes and expectations of the reader regarding the plot and chronology, including unexpected transitions between scenes, nonlinear structure of the narrative, fragmented and unrelated chronological order of events. The studied erroneous structures help to emphasize the unpredictability and contradiction of the world, which is characteristic of the absurd (Safronova, 2006).

The work of O.D. Burenina "Symbolist Absurd and its traditions in Russian literature of the first half of the 20th century" is dedicated to theoretical and philosophical modeling of the absurd in literature and art. According to the author, the absurd is understood as a phenomenon that arises against the backdrop of critical moments in human history. By using the absurd in literature and art, there is a transformation and transition from the old reality to a completely new and unfamiliar sphere. O.D. Burenina believes that "in its universal essence, the absurd is the result of a creative act aimed at 'supersynthesis', at combining in the artistic text disparate discursive elements, as well as irreconcilable aspects of the depicted reality" (Burenina, 2006, 15).

The researcher also discusses the "index of discord" in her work which are borderline conditions postulated by existentialists as a result of people's fight with existence. According to the study, the surrounding environment aims to depersonalize each personality, transforming it into a component of the larger depersonalized being. According to Camus, this is why man feels like a "outsider" in a world full of objects and people that don't care about him. In the author's research, absurdity is identified as a notion associated with experimentation and unconventional approaches to art and literature. The concept of absurdity, according to O.D. Burenina, is transferred to mathematical logic where it denotes the inconsistency of actions or reasoning with their results, "leading to absurdity" which consists in the search for contradictions in basic statements or conclusions (Burenina, 2006, 15).

Absurdity in literature may be classified into several forms and variations, including absurdity of linguistic constructs, insanity of narrative, and absurdity of symbols. Each sort of absurdity has its own unique characteristics and is used in literature and art to generate a certain impact. The approach to comprehending and identifying absurdity in literature is determined by the researcher's literary school or the writer's literary style.

Materials and Methods

The study uses methods of psychoanalytical and cognitive literary studies, comparative analysis and hermeneutic method.

The materials for the study were A. Zhaksylykov's novel "The Meerkat House".

Results and Discussion

The cycle of the Kazakhstani writer Aslan Zhaksylykov entitled "Dreams of the Damned" can be called one of the most studied and analyzed works in modern contemporary Kazakhstani literature. It includes several novels, starting with "The Singing Stones" (written in 1987, but not published until 1997) and parts of "Dreams of the Damned" (2005) and "Another Ocean" (2005). Subsequently, sequels of the series were released - "Meerkat House" (2008) and "Return" (2011). These works not only caused a significant resonance in the literary environment of Kazakhstan, but also became a real literary and intellectual sensation.

The cycle "Dreams of the Damned" began as a mournful epitaph to the circumstances surrounding the termination of testing at the Semipalatinsk test site. In 1987, after visiting the Semipalatinsk area orphanage and meeting with deformed children who had been the victims of these experiments, Aslan Zhaksylykov pledged to produce a series of fairy tale novels. Semipalatinsk polygon-Aydakhar became an important location for the trilogy, and children from the orphanage became heroes in the novel "The Dreams of the Damned". The book cycle includes both literary achievements and a complex social setting. Zhaksylykov's works not only leave an indelible mark on Kazakhstani literary history but they also pose significant concerns about human destiny, tragedy and hope.

*Analyzing the speech organization of the characters in A. Zhaksylykov's novel "The Meerkat House", we can highlight one of the absurdity techniques - "homogeneous enumeration". A similar picture can be found in A. Kim's work "The Joys of Paradise". If in the work of A. Kim the so-called associative (eastern) right-hemisphere thinking, expressed in enumerative constructions, occurs quite often, then in the novel "The Meerkat House" it literally permeates the entire work and reaches absurd proportions (a whole page). *"They will guess, they will perk up, they will be illuminated and close, they will cling to the cracks, pores, openings of the earth, the cracks of the daytime concrete vault, they will recognize, see and rejoice. They will penetrate, burst into the womb of the soil, greedy, irrepensible, into the quiet... Countless, innumerable, unstoppable, primeval, they will come running, they will fall. They will bug, touch with tentacles, suction cups, wet roots and cuddle and cuddle..."* (Zhaksylykov, 2008, 122). According to E. Torrence, right-hemisphere thinking is driven by emotions, intuition and imagery, demonstrating its lack of rationality.

One important aspect of the "poetics of error" is the use of linguistic and structural irregularities to create the effect of incongruity and surprise in a text, which may include incorrect grammar, distorted syntactic structure, wordplay and onomatopoeia. S.A. Kharlamova (Kharlamova, 2019), along with W. Tigges (Tigges, 1988) and G.M. Kruzikov (Kruzikov, 2005), explores how these errors and distortions contribute to the creation of a sense of absurdity.

A technique used in the organization of speech in A. Zhaksylykov's novel involves the use of a large number of the author's neologisms by the characters. These neologisms can be divided into several categories. The first category includes words with the prefix "JU-ДЖУ", such as "jusoy-джусой", "jubuy-дjubуйный", "juhíppos-джугомoty", "jumurs-джумуры", "jumonkeys-дjubезьяны" and "jugar chimeras- джугарные

химеры”. The second category consists of words formed with the prefix “ZU”, for example, “zurogs-zurogi”, “zulons-zulony”, and “zubuffalos-zubuyvolny”, among others. The final group includes words borrowed from the Kazakh language and the author’s neologisms, such as “rabbit stylish-по-кояньски” and “крысо-паук-rat spider”, among others.

The use of neologisms in psycholinguistics began to be studied in the twentieth century; this phenomenon was investigated in the works of English scientists in the field of psychiatry S. Baltax, E. Chaika, V. Fraser, T. Mancirik, S. Rochester and others. The Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary describes the term neologism as a word or phrase created by a patient with schizophrenic disorders. The patient either uses a pre-existing word in a different context that only he or she understands or invents completely new words. In literature, neologisms are often the word of characters that have certain mental deviations as a result of traumas of various etiologies.

A. Zhaksylykov in his work uses the technique of lexical hybridization, since the following were subjected to an inhumane experiment: animals + plants (jubu creatures, zubuffalos, zulons, jumurs, jumonkeys, jupirs); people + animals (man-meerkat, woman-deer), people + plants (jubu wars in the jungle), there is also a crossing of animal and insect (bulldog-ants) and even a hybrid of plant, animal and fungus (jusoya). “Then it turns out that this is some kind of Program. Perhaps you have long been a full-fledged element of a long-standing symbiosis, and you have a partner - a bush or grass. And are you under the influence of the narcotic intoxication of your tenant, who is preparing for the act of fertilization?” (Zhaksylykov, 2008). You can learn about cloned people, animals, plants and fungi in the Baby Duckling Registry. The book even gives descriptions and characteristics of the above-mentioned creatures. A similar technique of language cloning (crossing) was used in their work by representatives of the postmodernist absurdist trend A. Kim “Village of Centaurs” and V. Sorokin “Blue Lard”.

One of the rather strange and incomprehensible phenomena of A. Zhaksylykov’s novel images is the creature “Baby House”. Maya and other children call this creature their home, it looks like an “ugly child” and is described in the novel text by the hero-narrator as a ghost (boggart). The appearance of this character in history also presents quite strange events. The hero-narrator describes it as follows: “*The freak was born before our eyes by the internal emptiness of the house; whether Providence entrusted him to us was, of course, unknown*” (Zhaksylykov, 2008, 62).

This creature appears in different images several times in the novel text, first as a baby house. When he cried, tears flowed from his eyes; they crawled out of his ears in the form of cockroaches, ground beetles, woodlice: “... *the baby’s armpits were strangely showered with shadows, stratified by silhouettes, these cave niches seemed densely populated with all sorts of undead... The dwarf seemed to be thoroughly populated with all sorts of things, creatures and ghosts... So small, but so many things have grown on it. Poor thing*” (Zhaksylykov, 2008, 63). When the baby was happy, butterflies flew out. In the end, the baby house went off into the cornfield, disappointed in the people. The next image found in a cornfield was that of a scarecrow that looked like the deer woman’s ex-husband which is why he had to be taken home. Various insects also fell out of it, despite the fact that the hero-narrator constantly cleaned it but somehow they always appeared in it again. “*Imagine my triumph when I saw with my own eyes how the Jugur people with noticeable signs of martyrdom on their faces fell from the field purusha onto the newspapers, namely ticks, moths and moths, ants and cockroaches, grasshoppers and crickets, mantises and ground beetles, musicians, bees and bumblebees, larvae, spiders, lizards*” (Zhaksylykov, 2008, 40).

Another feature of the novel’s speech organization is an absurdist technique, commonly employed by postmodernist writers such as V. Sorokin and A. Kim. Some examples of this technique include absurdist metaphors and expressions, such as “the beautiful eyes of the swallowtail butterfly and its antennae tickled somewhere in the center of the cardiac plexus”, “a hybrid of soybeans and corn”, “a jubuy male with fiery eyes and branched horns of heavenly freedom”, “a soft-veined owl”, “a late migratory quail summer”, “the wind-samum howling as an ash hyena over the wrinkles of a blinding accursed bald”, “rabbit jump-jump” and “rat syntax”. The novel also incorporates abbreviations that are only understandable within the context of the story, such as “AZ” for weird zone, “CB” for chip built into the brain, and “SS” for special services. Additionally, there is frequent use of phrases containing the word “corn”, including “jugur”, “jubuy”, “corn

children”, “corn field”, “corn tears”, “corn bastards”, “corn teenagers”, “corn thinker”, “jugar world”, “jubuy creatures”, “juso bushes”, “jusoy family”, “jugar Neanderthals”, and so on.

The author himself calls his techniques as “the entrance to the labyrinth of jugar repetitions-transformations” (Zhaksy`ly`kov, 2008, 10). Transformation is one of the main techniques in myth and hallucinatory images in schizophrenia. The novel also contains oxymoronic expressions that go back to schizophrenic schizoids, conveying the internal states of the characters: “... insurance, deposits and unprecedented dividends in cane banks on the edge of a corn field at the foot of a luxurious soybean villa with a bottomless pool, the best, inhabited only by sharks and piranhas, centipedes and moray eels. And they believed, they perked up, flew, laughing with cuckoo tears...” (Zhaksy`ly`kov, 2008, 93).

In describing the image of the hero-narrator in the novel “The Meerkat House”, the main technique of absurdist literature-transformation is especially often used. Several heroes of the work are the same character, that is, the main character of the novel. Among them: the meerkat man “*If you tried to kill the meerkat man, that is, you made an attempt to eliminate half of your essence...*” (Zhaksy`ly`kov, 2008, 306), “*Whatever you have been in recent years, Jean, journalist, Wanderer, Snony warrior, intelligence agent, knight Yagur*” (Zhaksy`ly`kov, 2008, 377), a village boy, a meerkat, a Baby Duckling, perhaps the images of the Interlocutor and the Editor are also his reflection (since he hears their voices in his head because inserted chip into the narrator’s brain). Split personality, voices in the head, paranoid thoughts – all these are also classic symptoms of schizophrenia. A. Zhaksylykov’s novel shows how inhumane experiments traumatize not only the physical state, but also the psyche of the characters.

Anatoly Kim uses this strategy in his novels “Squirrel” and “The Joys of Paradise”. In his book “The Mythology of the Greeks and Romans” A.F. Losev discusses the nature of werewolves, writing, “An individual person did not isolate himself either from his group or from nature. He saw himself as the embodiment of the energy of this society and environment. And because he is the bearer of not only his own abilities, but also of everything else to some degree or another, in some magnitude or another, this implies that he might believe of himself as the bearer of his powers while being enslaved to the illusions of such reincarnation, or werewolfism” (Losev, 1996, 17).

An example of the use of nanochips embedded in the characters’ brains is also found in V. Sorokin’s work “Manaraga”. If the hero of A. Zhaksylykov uses a chip to talk with mentors inside the quantum universe (matrix 154), then Sorokin’s heroes use the chip as a means of increasing knowledge and skills, depending on the quality and novelty of the versions of the inserted chips.

One of the key techniques of absurdist writing is the blurring of the boundaries between dreams and reality. This technique creates an atmosphere of disorientation, absurdity and uncertainty. This technique emphasizes the meaninglessness and chaos in human experience, and also plays with traditional ideas about reality and imagination. Blurring the boundaries between reality and sleep makes the reader perceive what is happening in the text as unpredictable and absurd. The reader, like the hero, begins to doubt what is happening and is faced with the uncertainty of what is real and what is just fantasy. The interweaving of reality and sleep blurs logical boundaries, which is characteristic of absurdist writing. The characters and the reader find themselves in a state where the boundaries between the real world and the world of dreams are blurred which causes a feeling of loss and bewilderment.

The influence of the unconscious on a person’s dreams was considered by the Austrian neuropathologist and psychiatrist Z. Freud (Frejd, 2017), and then the theory of dreams was further developed by K.G. Yung (Yung, 2022). In literature, the technique of absurdity associated with dreams was first used by L. Carroll in his fairy tales “Alice in the Wonderland” and “Alice Through the Looking Glass.” It is believed that this technique of a literary dream is used by authors to relieve themselves of responsibility to the reader; the author thereby says: “this is a dream and anything can happen in a dream”.

A. Zhaksylykov in his novel “The Meerkat House” blurs the boundaries between dreams and reality; all events that occur in a dream are practically indistinguishable from reality. The novel mixes not only the dreams of the hero-narrator but also, in parallel with the main plot, describes the past of the main character,

his childhood spent in the village, and his acquaintance with Maya, his life in various transformations and even the childhood of Maya - the beloved woman of the meerkat man and etc.

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Conclusion

Thus, among the absurdist techniques used by the Kazakhstani author A. Zhaksylykov, we can note: the predominance of homogeneous enumerations in the text, reaching absurd scale; a large number of author's neologisms, abbreviations, word combinations, absurd metaphors, oxymoron and absurd expressions of different order. The novel's chronotope is also permeated with the techniques of absurdist prose: these are quantum leaps in time and space, the erasure of the boundary between reality and dream. The description of the character series is also subject to the techniques of absurdity, and they include: transformations of the hero-narrator; cloning of animals, people, plants and mushrooms, absurd images of the "Little House", meerkat man and others. Thus, the novel "The Meerkat House" follows the traditions of absurdist writing, the author uses various techniques to create an unusual and confusing literary reality that raises questions about the nature of the meaning of human life.

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