

Techniques and methods of creating satirical images in the poetry of Nikolai Oleynikov

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ABSTRACT

The article highlights the artistic and visual features of the poetry of the avant-garde poet Nikolai Oleynikov, in particular parody and "total irony", erasing the line between creativity and reality.

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To create the image of an aestheticizing hero or the mask of a pompous philistine in the "love" lyrics of the second half of the 1920s - first half of the 1930s, Nikolai Oleynikov widely uses the technique of deliberate error, expressed through a system of dissonances. A number of love poems-messages during this period were written by the poet "for the occasion", in connection with which they all have an ironic, playful character. These are such texts as "Love" (1927), "Mura Schwartz" (1927), "Mura Schwartz" (1928), "Dedication" (1928), "A Short Declaration of Love" (1928), "To Henrietta Davydovna" (1928), "For Grunya's Birthday" (1928), "Lyubochka Brazelio" (1928), "To the Typist..." (1929), "Natasha" (1929), "The Manager" (1930), "The Maiden" (1930), "Valya Schwartz" (1930), "The Burden of Sexual Excesses..." (1930), "T.N. Glebova" (1931), "Lydia" (1931), "Shurochka" (1931), "Message to the Artist..." (1932), "Message..." (1932), "Message (O.M.)" (1932), "Shura Lyubarskaya" (1932), "Gluttony" (1932), "Lida" (1932), "Fly" (1934). Themes of love and gender relations are also found in other poems by the poet, no longer written in the first person.

Many contemporaries and researchers talk about the everyday roots of Oleynikov's poetics. Ya. Druskin, who knew the poet well, noted in his memoirs that the unusualness of Oleynikov's style of communication was manifested in the ability to say "vulgarity", that is, words and expressions of a hackneyed, frivolous nature, using "brilliant intonation" that was impossible to convey, so that "it was very funny and a little scary" [1, p. 214]. Poems "for the occasion" turned into a poetic experiment, a special kind of performance, the playful nature of which was most often facilitated by the presence of an object of love and praise or even a humorous rival during the author's reading.

A striking example of all of the above is the poetic message "To Henrietta Davydovna" (1928). Like many examples of the poet's humorous love lyrics, the poem was written impromptu at one of the meetings of representatives of the literary and editorial life of Leningrad. The message was intended for the employee of Detgiz Henrietta Davydovna Levitina and was read aloud in the presence of the addressee, and, according to the recollections of witnesses, the reading was supplemented by characteristic gestures and an intonation of feigned resentment in the voice. In the process of reading, Oleynikov changed intonation, glanced now at Levitina, now at E. Schwartz, who acted as the author's opponent in this humorous text. Naturally, such a performance caused laughter in the audience, which was what it was intended for.

In order to identify the technique of poetic error in Oleynikov's lyrics, it is necessary first of all to consider the specifics of his use of traditional stylistic figures and syntactic devices, which consists of a deliberate violation of their use. Thus, in the use of parallelisms, semantic and poetic tautology can be traced:

I am in love with Henrietta Davydovna,
But she, it seems, is not in love with me –
She gave Schwartz a receipt,
I don't think I have a receipt¹ [5, p. 70].

There is a grammatical inaccuracy in the use of the emphatic pronoun in the line "For whom she suffers". The comparison in the line "She wants to get married, like a fish" contradicts logic. The epithets with which the poet calls his rival are ordinary curses: "I hate the damned Schwartz... / For him, for his poor mind" [5, Ibid.].

The motif of "hatred" towards E. Schwartz, who acts as the antagonist of the lyrical hero, is found in several of Oleynikov's texts:

...Here you are sitting in a pretty dress
And dozing in it, and thinking about Him,
About the one who will pay for you -
He is a scoundrel and a boor (we will call him Schwartz in brackets) [5, p. 72].
("On Grunya's Birthday", 1928)

...I must die, I am a genius,
But Schwartz Evgeny will also die! [5, p. 201].
("And here we are with you, Henrietta, again...", 1929)

The playful situation of the "love triangle" (Oleynikov, G. Levitina, E. Schwartz) could have been both a starting point, a reason for creating a poem ("To Henrietta Davydovna" (1928)), and an auxiliary motive, a jab at the rival, as is done in the two excerpts quoted above. The deliberate error in the given lines (the transition from "you" to "you"), as well as the combination of synonyms with different stylistic coloring (to die - will perish), attracts attention.

The stylistic cacophony of N. Oleynikov's poems, which was noted earlier in the work, is invariably present in all of his "love" farcical lyrics. The peculiarity of this technique is the extreme degree of stylistic polyphony, combining various and sometimes unexpected linguistic masks within the framework of one text. An example of this can be found in the same poem "To Henrietta Davydovna". The first stanza, quoted above, is sustained in an official tone. It is replaced in the second stanza by a colloquial, almost folkloric intonation ("for whom she suffers", "for him, for his poor mind ..."). The line of the third stanza, traditional for a gypsy romance ("Dear, beautiful Grunya ...") is interrupted by colloquial phrases ("Stop loving him, the boar", "in his crop not ... / Does not take your breath away ..."). The next five lines are sustained in the style of an urban romance:

He is a scoundrel, a seducer, a bastard -
He only wants to love women...
And Oleynikov, a modest handsome man,
Continues to be in disfavor.

I am handsome, I am squeamish, I am impudent... [5, p. 70].

The sophistication of the accusatory epithets and the illogicality of self-definitions in the poem come across examples of graphomaniac lines with a clearly expressed neologism:

I have no scorch marks in my thoughts,
As this Indian has them! [5, Ibid.].

¹ Here and below, interlinear translations of poetic texts are given.

The lack of unity in styles (the presence of bureaucratic officialdom, familiar and colloquial expressions within one text, the absence of a single line of arguments and clarity of argumentation), and consequently in language masks (the features of a petitioner are revealed (the first stanza together with the final couplet "Love me, love me! / Stop loving him, stop loving him!")), then a savior, a timid admirer and an accuser, ending with a confident conqueror) speaks of the established method of creating poems. The parody of all these techniques is obvious, they serve the playful modulation of the situation of the lover's struggle for his beloved and the elimination of a competitor. This goal is served by various poetic means that discredit high culture, "corrupt" words and "false values" (terms of L. Ginzburg), hyperbolization of characteristic feelings and gestures. Hiding behind the sham of the "high and beautiful", the poet keeps a certain calculation in mind, his entire poetics turns into pragmatics. At the same time, speaking about the technique of deliberate error, to which the poet actively turns in the poem "To Henrietta Davydovna", it is worth noting that these are not traditional poetic "deviations from the usual norms" [9, p. 70], represented by ellipsis, pleonasm and anacoluth. The entire system of dissonances in Oleynikov's lines, including rhetorical inconsistencies, stylistic failures and shifts into absurdity, works differently. N. Oleynikov's "errors" are more subtle – they do not tear, but corrode the form of the verse" [4, p. 102].

The poet's heightened attention to verbal rubbish and linguistic clichés results in the poetic device of ironic reduction. The logic of this device presupposes a shift in the lyrical hero's consciousness "from the high to the low, from the complex to the elementary, from the word to the gesture, from the gesture to the reflex" [4, Ibid.]. In the poem examined above, the reduction is expressed in the reduction of its first five stanzas to the final couplet, which contains the entire meaning of the message ("Love me, love me! / Stop loving him, stop loving him!").

It is especially worth mentioning that N. Oleynikov's desire for parody and ridicule originated in everyday life. According to close acquaintances, the object of his mockery was often the widespread newspeak; the poet boldly subjected the realities of Soviet life to mocking estrangement. Here are a few characteristic sketches of Oleynikov's style of communication: "He usually greeted people like this: "Allow me to greet in your person, perhaps, the emerging public." He jokingly suggested that artists paint a picture of "Death in a Jacket," advised architects to defend their diplomas on the topic of "Plywood and Marble" or "Instead of Iron with Roofing felt," and recommended that scientists write a treatise on "How to Put Two Matches Next to Each Other" [3, p. 96].

And here is an example of ironic reduction in verse on the topic of collectivization of agriculture, which was relevant in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s:

Kolkhoz movement,
How I love you!
I feel a burning sensation,
But I still endure [6, p. 230].

This quatrain can be clearly divided into two parts. The first two lines are sustained in a pseudo-elevated tone. Their ironic meaning becomes clear thanks to the second part, which leaves no doubt about the poet's true attitude to the transformations taking place in the country.

It should be said that N. Oleynikov's natural inclination to parody and ridicule often took the form of evil irony. This was especially evident in relation to colleagues and friends in the editorial and writing profession. Thus, in 1929, N. Oleynikov created two parody poems on the works of Korney Chukovsky.

The first of them, entitled "To K. I. Chukovsky from the Author" (1929), is a parody of the famous "Fly-Tsokotukha". Maintained in dark ironic tones, the poem contains a familiar story to everyone from childhood about a fly that fell into the clutches of an old spider. The transitions of ironic reduction characteristic of Oleynikov are observed here from the first lines:

A fly lived in the forest,
A fly drank dew,

A fly sniffed flowers
(You sniffed them too!).
Taking advantage of the general love,
A fly fed on blood [5, p. 199].

The harmless and seemingly naive beginning of the story about the fly is sharply crossed out by the “unchildish” phrase “the fly fed on blood”, presented in conjunction with a lulling line about the loving attitude of those around it.

The tone of a children's fairy tale, continuing after the story about a spider that caught a fly, is suddenly interrupted by a short refrain that sounds both philosophical and mocking (“... Life is short, short, / But before death it is sweet...” [5, Ibid.]), after which it resumes again. Before dying, the fly remembers a forest full of beauty and wonders, inhabited by beetles and toads, in which (in full compliance with the style of a children's text) “dry grass is falling”.

The general mocking nature of the poem is also consistent with its architectonics. The refrain, cited twice, is separated into an independent stanza in the conclusion; in addition, the text has an outwardly illogical division of lines into stanzas, with only one fragmentary phrase being singled out as a separate stanza, implying something left unsaid (“... And dying”).

However, the main emphasis in Oleynikov's parody is placed precisely on the death of the fly, so that there is not the slightest hint of a happy ending contained in the object of the parody. The key stanza already sounds like an undisguised mockery of the poet:

The spider finishes off the fly.
He has 18 arms.
She has not a single arm,
She has not a single leg [5, p. 200].

Continuing to methodically string parallelisms onto the skeleton of the text together with internal and external anaphoras and epiphoras, the poet thickens the tragicomic colors to the limit:

The spider ate the legs,
The spider ate the hands.
Fluff remains from the fly.
Here the fly gives up its spirit [5, p. 200].

A similar illogicality of meanings in the given stanza (at the beginning it says “The spider finishes off the fly...”, but at the end it is emphasized “...The fly gives up its spirit here”) is repeatedly encountered in the structure of Oleynikov's texts.²

In the humorous poem “Flew into our quiet forests...” (1929) there is also a reference to the work of Chukovsky, in particular to the fairy tale “Doctor Aibolit”. It tells the story of a striped mustachioed wasp that first bit a hippopotamus and then caused a stir among the employees of the Detgiz:

And the wasp is already circling in the editorial office,
It has stuck its sting into Marshak's buttock.
And Oleynikov screams in horror,
It doesn't let Schwartz run away to Nevsky [5, p. 203].

² See my article on this topic: Vakhitov Yu. S., INSECT CODE IN THE POETRY OF N. OLEINIKOV (Based on the Poem “Cockroach”), GALAXY INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL (GIIRJ) ISSN (E): 2347-6915. Vol. 12, Issue 7 July (2024). C. 91-95

Perhaps the most striking example of Oleynikov's evil irony, performed in the form of literary parody, is the poem "We Lived in an Apartment..." (1930). This text can rightly be called a response written in defiance of S. Marshak and D. Kharms, respectively the head and employee of the Leningrad children's publishing house, with whom Oleynikov had a contradictory relationship. In the memoirs of the writer I. Rakhtanovsam, the fact of the parody's appearance is presented as a joke played by Oleynikov: "For the first issue of "Chizh", Marshak and Kharms wrote a song about cheerful siskins. It was dedicated to the Sixth Leningrad Orphanage..." [7, p. 166]. The author of the memoirs then describes a meeting between Harms and Oleynikov at the editorial office, during which the latter read his parody, which, according to I. Rakhtanov, caused a negative reaction in the listener:

They lived in an apartment
Forty-four
Forty-four
Frail siskins:

Alcoholic siskin,
Paranoid siskin,
Schizophrenic siskin,
Simulant siskin.
Paralytic siskin,
Syphilitic siskin,
Marasmatic siskin,
Idiot siskin [5, p. 204].

The main technique used by N. Oleynikov in this ambiguous parody is the deliberate replacement of all the epithets of the word "siskin" in the original text with obscene vocabulary. Thus, the definition "cheerful" from the first stanza of the song gave way to the word "frail", and a number of positive applications describing the assembled company are correspondingly replaced by a whole range of asocial and unhealthy types, deliberately discrediting the object of the parody.

It is important to note that N. Oleynikov's deconstructive style was recognized by his closest acquaintances, including D. Kharms: "...N.M. (Oleynikov) possesses some special destructive talent to sense unmistakably where something is fragile, and in one word to make it clear to everyone" [8, p. 392]. Zhukova's remark about the nature of Oleynikov's literary parody is also interesting: "He parodied not forms, styles and genres, as it seems to some researchers today, but life itself, its essence" [2, p. 164-165].

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