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Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding

CULTURE AS VIEWED BY A COSMOPOLITAN: THE PROBLEM OF A DIALOGUE IN THE WORKS BY ILYA ZDANEVICH

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Abstract

The paper explores the features of dialogism of one of the representatives of the Russian and European artistic avant-garde Ilya Zdanevich. The very concept of dialogism is interpreted in the spirit of classical works by M. Bakhtin and the modern research by O. Astafyeva. An extensive literary legacy of I. Zdanevich, which is investigated in the context of the avant-garde movements of the beginning of the XX century, is used as material. The author analyzes expansion of the dialogical paradigm and transfer from dialogue to polylogue in aesthetics and various artistic practices of the writer – from the most radical, experimentally focused, completely abstruse texts to texts, in which abstrusity is present only in certain parts or absent. For the first time, the concept of a polylogue of cultures is applied to the works by I. Zdanevich and the peculiarities of its implementation through interaction with diverse symbolic systems and types of art. Due to inclusion of “alien” languages and styles, I. Zdanevich’s texts acquire such features as multimodality and polyglotism. Ilyazd turns the characters and plots of his works into an experimental platform for an aesthetic and intellectual game, as a consequence, the narrative takes on the features of meta-narrative; the fables and plots form a meta-plot of his works – a carnivalized story about the history of avant-garde and his life in art.

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1. Introduction

The problem of dialogue is one of the urgent problems of modern humanitarian studies. Our article explores the features of dialogism of one of the representatives of the Russian and European artistic avant-garde Ilya Zdanevich (Ilyazd), who occupies a special place in Russian and world literature and culture. Various dialogue options are being studied – from interpersonal (“human”) relationships to peculiar art forms, which allow us to determine the nature of this phenomenon in the case of such an extraordinary figure as Ilya Zdanevich.

2. Problem Statement

In the present paper we rely on the concepts of dialogue and dialogism by Bakhtin (1979), according to which ideas cannot exist in an isolated individual consciousness of a person – they arise, develop, clothe themselves in verbal form, change, generate new ideas only in interaction with other ideas in the “Ego” and the “Other” dialogue. Any knowledge, including artistic, is based on dialogical relationships; and this means that the processes of cognition and understanding that follows cognition cannot exist without a dialogue. The concepts of a dialogue and mutual influence should be distinguished: a dialogue is based on equal communication between the “Ego” and the “Other,” while in the absence of equality there is mutual influence. Thus, the culture of dialogue in the traditional sense is based on equality of ideas included in a communicative situation, on equality of participants in a dialogue (“Ego” and the “Other”) (Shevchenko & Shevchenko, 2019).

3. Research Questions

The sociocultural changes that we presently observe determine the necessity to correct the concepts that have already become traditional and to expand the dialogical paradigm. A whole series of modern philosophers, sociologists, philologists, and culturologists work in this direction. Among the most significant for our study are the works by Astafieva and Zubanova (2019), who introduced a new concept of the “polylogue” of cultures into scientific thesaurus. Taking into consideration the modern situation, she views the phenomenon of the polylogue of cultures as an extension of the dialogical paradigm in the context of globalization, which results in transnationalization of the cultural space. We believe that transnationalization of cultural space in itself is not the prerogative of modern culture. Its exceptional property is, rather, a comprehensive one due to the processes of globalization. The sources of transnationalization of cultural space should be sought in the transgressive phenomena of avant-garde art practices of the early 20th century, which at that time did not have such a large-scale character, although they were conceived by the avant-garde as worldwide, universal practices (Berman, 2017; Grossman, 2020). Transgression manifested itself in avant-garde art through violation of all possible boundaries, a decisive rejection of any manifestation of isolation – ideas, languages, cultures etc. Dialogue in avant-garde conditions has taken on radical forms, which have never existed before (Shevchenko, 2019). And in the works by Ilya Zdanevich we find a rich arsenal of transgressive artistic practices violating all the possible boundaries that existed in art of his time.

4. Purpose of the Study

Most of I. Zdanevich's life was spent in exile in Paris. He did not get on well with the Russian diaspora, as his contemporary Svyatopolk-Mirsky wrote: "Living in Paris, but never mixing with the white army emigration, he found himself in an almost complete literary isolation" (as cited in Efimov & Dmitrieva, 2019, p. 161). In our opinion, the critic deliberately thickened his paints in order to draw attention to "The Rapture" novel by I. Zdanevich. The Russian diaspora strove to defend "their Russia" from the metropole, preserve it in memory and reconstruct it in their works.

I. Zdanevich was far from such aspirations to limit his own experience to one language, consciousness and culture, especially since he himself was brought up in a different – heterogeneous, motley – cultural and linguistic environment. He saw Paris through the eyes of a cosmopolitan – half Georgian, half Polish, who grew up in Georgia, in Tiflis, studied in St. Petersburg and wrote in Russian (and subsequently in French). Multilingualism, the "polylogue of cultures" were absolutely natural phenomena to him. The purpose of the research is to identify the features of dialogism and polylogue of cultures as ways to overcome cultural isolation in the works by I. Zdanevich.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the research was intermedial analysis and semiotics (Hansen-Löve, 2016; Harder & Tylén, 2019; Hutchings, 2004; Méchoulan, 2003). The intermedial approach made it possible to identify and investigate mediation practices, the permeability of borders in avant-garde art by I. Zdanevich; the semiotic approach helped to establish the essence and meaning of these phenomena.

6. Findings

We argue that *vsochestvo* (allness) and orchestral art, into which I. Zdanevich was involved, should be interpreted as manifestations of the principle of dialogism. We shall study these aesthetic concepts in more detail to determine the nature of a dialogue in them.

Ilyazd's friends and comrades, who joined his "left-bank" futurism ("allness", "Futurist Syndicate" and the "41°" group) called him "Sobinov of Russian Futurism", pointing to his significance in the history of the movement. A poet, a playwright, a writer, an artist, an art critic, a historian of Byzantine art and an avant-garde theorist – this list of I. Zdanevich's creative interests is far from being complete. Among the most significant texts by Ilyazd, one should mention the abstruse pentalogy "aslaablIchya pitYOrka dEystf" (Shapes of a Donkey Five Plays) (1916-1923), "Letters to Morgan Philips Price" (1929) as well as the novels "parizhAchii" (Belonging to Paris) (1922-1923), "The Rapture" (1927), "Philosophy" (1930) and the unfinished novel "Posthumous Works" (1928).

In the case of I. Zdanevich and the line in art that he adhered to, one should speak of the original forms of a dialogue and polylogue, which had an innovative character. The original character of these forms was already indicated in the early works by Ilyazd since about 1913 during the years of acquaintance and close contacts with the avant-garde artists of M. Larionov's circle and with M. Le Dantu. Speaking about the special nature of the dialogical relations that arise in the texts by Ilyazd, we mean his affiliation with allness, the basic aesthetic principles of which were offered by his friend and colleague M. Le Dentu. It

was an avant-garde movement that was born out of “denial of negation”: the rejection of the forms, directions and styles of previous eras, which was characteristic of avant-garde, including futurism, transformed into their acceptance in allness. The aesthetic “pantophagy” led vsyokov (allers) to paradoxical conclusions, for example, to recognition that talent in contemporary art is not necessary, and that a desire for originality can lead the creator to closure in his own world, making it impossible to go beyond his own personality. From the point of view of allness, this is much more dangerous for an artist than dissolving his own talent in “other people’s” ideas. Thus, in allness of I. Zdanevich the idea of a dialogue of “everything with everything” is realized. By means of allness a dialogue is associated with such an acceptance of the “alien”, in which there is no conflict of ideas, on the contrary, they all get on within the format of the work (one text or one picture). Allness considers the creative process as a dialogue of equal-sized ideas, while the personality of an author can be leveled up to a complete dissolution in “alien” ideas, almost disappearance. Where, then, should the author be sought? In what and how does his creative energy manifest itself? It manifests itself in a combination of “alien” ideas, in organization of their interaction, in a game with “alien” elements in the process of creating your own artistic whole from these elements. The author controls a kaleidoscope of “alien” ideas, building meanings on their borders. Zdanevich’s dialogue of ideas obeys the game principle and resembles a peculiar carnival of ideas. In this dialogue of “alien” ideas, the freedom that is characteristic of a carnival is manifested. A carnival, a kaleidoscope – all these metaphors that we resort to in order to determine the nature of a dialogue in the works by I. Zdanevich revolve around the concept of game. The game is a key characteristic of Ilyazd’s dialogue.

Literature has always been a mental game for I. Zdanevich. In his texts I. Zdanevich, referring even to the present, abstracts from the specifics of space and time, extracting meanings from the mental game using styles and forms. The mixture of styles led to the establishment of orchestral art forms – orchestral poetry and orchestral painting, which were widely used in the avant-garde circles in 1917-1918. This concept itself was proposed by A. Kruchenykh to denote the synthesis of various art forms. A theorist and practitioner of orchestral painting was the artist K. Zdanevich, a brother of I. Zdanevich. In literature, orchestration was a combination of languages and styles on an abstruse basis. The abstruse theater as a variation of orchestral art received theoretical justification in the book by A. Kruchenykh “Phonetics of Theater” (1923). The “aslaablIchya pitYOrka dEystf” (Shapes of a Donkey Five Plays) cycle implements orchestral principles in new drama and theater.

In “aslaablIchya pitYOrka dEystf” Ilyazd elevated the orchestral principle to the rank of absolute, so that its action is found in each of the five plays, and the dialogue in this dramatic cycle (we mean different levels of dialogue – from dialogue of characters to dialogue of aesthetic ideas) sounds like a carnival orchestra. I. Zdanevich represents the dialogue with tradition in the spirit of allness as a carnival of ideas. Instead of the old theater, Ilyazd constructs a new theater building – an abstruse theater with absurd heroes and an absurd dramatic action, in which a significant part of the semantic load is transferred on the phonetic level and on the level of graphic design of the text. In the abstruse theater of I. Zdanevich a polylogue of cultures and cultural traditions is constructed. We shall outline the main ones. Firstly, the texts of abstruse plays by Ilyazd resonate with a dramatic, theatrical and musical parody (a comic playwright by V. Solovyov and plays by Kozma Prutkov, an opera-parody “Vampuka, the African Bride”, theater-cabaret parodies by N. Evreinov etc.). Secondly, in the orchestral principle of abstruse dramas by I. Zdanevich such principles

of symbolist art as musicality and symphonism (“Symphonies” by A. Bely) were reflected, since they reminded abstruse futurist I. Zdanevich of donkey roar. Thirdly, the orchestral principle and abstrusity in Ilyazd’s pentalogy correlate with the principle of multilingualism of *commedia dell’arte*, which became the basis of Italian dialectal theaters. Abstrusity in the cycle has different guises: phonetic writing is combined with onomatopoeia and a baby talk, forming a “yvonniy (ывонный) language” with such combinations of sounds, which are completely uncharacteristic of Russian speech (“YAnko krul albAnskay” (Yanko the King of Albania), “Asel naprakat” (Donkey for Rent), “zgA Yakaba” (Alleged zgA)); abstrusity is based on the models of the Russian and Polynesian languages (“Ostraf pAskhi” (Easter Island)); abstrusity is represented as music scores and as an iconic sign (“YAnko krul albAnskay” (Yanko the King of Albania), “lidantYu fAram”). The orchestral principle presupposes designing and subsequent reading a text in the form of music scores (in “Yanko” the characters pronounce phrases like “sabOram” (together) and “saglAsna” (I agree)). The iconic principle presupposes designing and reading a text as a picture. Such texts, called “isoverbal” by Sakhno (Sakhno, 2017, p. 146), have a dialogical nature in Zdanevich’s works. All this also indicates that the dialogue in “aslaablIchya pitYorka dEystf” turns into a carnival of ideas and multilingualism principle is used to implement it to the full. In the final play of the “lidantYu fAram” cycle, the new art wins, because it has messianic goals (M. Le Dantu and P. Picasso act as messiahs). It is in *avant-garde*, where, according to Ilyazd, resurrection of art and world takes place.

Although Zdanevich contributed to the popularization of Italian futurism in Russia, his relations with Russian futurists were quite complicated: sometimes getting closer to *luchism* (beamness) movement, allness, the “41” group, he opposed the “Gileans” and competed with Mayakovsky (Efimov, Dmitrieva, 2019; Livak, 2018; Magarotto, 2013). However, in emigration, the balance of power changed, and rivalry with Mayakovsky gave way to cooperation. I. Zdanevich participated in organizing a banquet on the occasion of V. Mayakovsky’s visit to Paris on November 24, 1922, and then in creating the “Cherez” (Through) group, which brought together young poets and artists of Russian Paris to maintain contacts with artistic *avant-garde* of the metropole represented by V. Mayakovsky and his “LEF” (Left-wing front of art), on the one hand, and the French *avant-garde*, on the other. However, this attempt to establish personal contacts with a congenial environment failed. At the evening of “The Bearded Heart”, organized on July 6, 1923 by I. Zdanevich and T. Tzara with the aim of a joint performance of the Russian *avant-garde* group “Cherez” and the French Dadaists, a scandal broke out among the latter, leading to the breakup of both groups and serving as a starting point for surrealism. Throughout his life in exile Ilyazd had many other more successful and fruitful creative contacts with representatives of the Russian and European *avant-garde*, including artists P. Picasso, L. Survage, G. Braque, A. Giacometti, H. Matisse, F. Léger, J. Miró and others (Hammill & Hussey, 2016). The book in the style of *livre d’artiste* (artist’s book) became a meeting place for a creative dialogue between a poet and an artist and I. Zdanevich as a publisher contributed to this creative dialogue.

In his works I. Zdanevich manifested one of the most characteristic features of artistic thinking of the modernism and *avant-garde* era – neomythologism. Ilyazd mythologizes the facts and events of everyday life, the cultural life of the era, and finally, his own life in art and ideological polemics with opponents; he reinterprets ancient myths and creates its own ones. In “aslaablIchya”, “Iliazda” and “Rapture” Ilyazd argues with different movements and styles (from realism to futurism). In “lidantU

farAm” the plot is directed against the mimetic forms of representing reality, which were obsolete for I. Zdanevich as an avant-garde representative. The final play of the cycle represents a radical advance of the avant-garde on creative practices, which were alien to it: the conflict in the play unfolds in the form of an aesthetic polemic of new forms with the old ones and is expressed on the level of characters in the confrontation between artists of two formations – an avant-garde representative (Ilyazd) and a realist (Peredvizhnik – Peredvizhnik, painter of the 19th-century Russian realist school). It is noteworthy that the Peredvizhnik (a representative of the branch of realism that adhered to populist ideals and contrasted itself with the academic school of painting) is the opponent of the avant-garde representative. However, even this version of mimetic art is rejected by I. Zdanevich. The competition between the avant-garde artist and the peredvizhnik that unfolds in the play ends with the victory of the avant-garde artist. Both artists paint their pictures from nature, and, as expected, the peredvizhnik creates a portrait “as if it were alive” and the avant-garde artist creates “a different one”. With the grotesque play of the living and the dead, Ilyazd brings the realistic principle of authenticity to absurd. The painting of the peredvizhnik turns out to be a lie, since a woman, who looks “as if she were alive” (the main compliment to the realist artist), was actually “dead”. It is no coincidence that the peredvizhnik’s “as if she were alive” image breaks away from its creator and, gaining freedom, tells him to “durYOh durAch» (play the fool with fools)” (Zdanevich, 2008, p. 654). I. Zdanevich depicts flirting with life, which is characteristic of realistic art and expressed in the desire to become similar to it, as a betrayal of creativity and fooling the public. The dialogue between the new and the old is carnivalized and takes a form of a circus performance or a sports competition. However, this event has a serious, sacred meaning. Creating a myth about new art, I. Zdanevich tests its ability to resurrect. Ilyazd envelops the victory of allness and Dadaism (the play was written during the period of collaboration with the Dadaists) into neo-mythological and biblical forms. By analogy with “The Revelation of St. John the Evangelist”, the play contains the scenes resembling the biblical Judgement Day and the Second Coming. New art has messianic goals and dead Le Dantou and living Picasso, who resurrect art and peace, appear as messiahs. These points allow us to interpret “Ilyazd farAm” as “The Revelation of Ilyazd” and the whole cycle as the “The Avant-garde New Testament”.

According to I. Zdanevich, the world appears to be volatile, plastic, prone to deformations and metamorphoses. The human being is as flexible and changeable as the world around him. These aspects affect the nature of the bonds that arise between the world and the individual, make them fleeting and unstable, multiple. Hence, the dialogic connections lose their fullness, resembling short-term clutch-collisions. They do not line up, but occur simultaneously. The successive connections and interactions between a man and the world are replaced by the simultaneous ones.

The deformation of the world and the human being discovered by Ilyazd leads to a loss of identity. To adapt to a changing world, a person is forced to mimic. Self-construction and self-destruction of oneself, like constructing and destroying the world, constructing and destroying creativity are different sides of the same process. The loss of an individual’s understanding of clear boundaries of his own personality leads the artist to constant reincarnations into the “Other”, to a strange polylogue between “Ego” and “not-Ego”, to transgression into the territory of the “alien” worlds and the transformation of “Ego” into the “Other”. In Zdanevich’s works these transitions take place constantly, which results in the fluidity of the personality, the elusiveness of its features, the transformation of the male into female and even donkey. “Ego” is able

to include anything in itself, while none of the traits can dominate others. The construction of any hierarchical structures within such a person is impossible. The structure of the personality loses its internal hierarchy, it is impossible to conceive a person in traditional value coordinates: he flows into the zone of uncertainty and appears as a conglomerate of heterogeneous properties, establishing some new connections lacking stability and certainty. The dialogue of a person with himself, other people and the world is spontaneous. All hierarchical structures are temporary, the positions in them are arbitrary, and the periphery seeks to substitute the center.

Polemic plots associated with the history of avant-garde become the object of aesthetic play in I. Zdanevich's works. A dialogue with opponents is conducted on the territory of art, and in a number of works ("aslaablIchya pitYOrka dEystf", "Iliazda", "Rapture") I. Zdanevich mythologizes his own polemic with cubo-futurists ("Gilea"). The history of the Russian futurism is visible through the plot of his novel "The Rapture" and the opponent of I. Zdanevich – V. Mayakovsky – acts as the main character of Lavrenty. In other works, this controversy does not affect the entire text as a whole, but only its individual sections. Thus, for example, in description of the title character of the play "Yanko krul albAnskay" ("yanko ano v bryukah s chyuzhova plichya abuta novym vremenim" – yanko itself in somebody's trousers wears new time) (Zdanevich, 2008, p. 481), the author introduces two polemical plots that receive an exhaustive explanation in "Iliazda" – a story with a shoe and a story, in which trousers are shortened. The idea of a shoe, which was formed on the basis of his enthusiasm for Italian futurism, is transformed into "shoe" philosophy.

I. Zdanevich paraphrases the shocking statement of F.T. Marinetti "a car is more beautiful than Nike of Samothrace", claiming: "a shoe is more beautiful than Venus de Milo". Having first voiced this idea in "Futurism of Marinetti" report ("The Target" exhibition, Polytechnic Museum, March 1913), he goes further and in the report "Adoration of the Shoe" ("Stray Dog", March 1914) declares himself to be a "shoe cleaner". The carnivalized ideas of shortening trousers and the idea of a shoe served to express contempt for the earth and desire to break away from it. Both of them are associated by I. Zdanevich with a carnivalized idea of a donkey as well as with metamorphosis of the human and the donkey: the "crupper" of the character, naked due to constant shortening of his trousers, is as beautiful as the crupper of a donkey ("Iliazda"). The aesthetic metatextual play by I. Zdanevich resonates with the ideas of V. Mayakovsky and

A. Kruchenykh about the new era as the onset of masculinity (Steiner, 2016). However, Ilyazd realized it in a polemic sense with respect to cubo-futurists. The affirmation of the masculine and the expulsion of the feminine, characteristic of the cubo-futurists, in his works turned into an endless game of masculine, feminine and donkey (the "transsexual" plot). Metamorphoses and transformations of this kind affect not only the plots of the works by I. Zdanevich, but also his individual style. Like Apuleius ("Metamorphoses, or the Golden Donkey"), Ilyazd masters a multitude of "alien" languages and styles, and his texts, primarily completely abstruse or with elements of abstrusity (Pranjić, 2018), acquire such properties as multimodality and polyglotism. One of the indispensable conditions for a dialogue is conventionality, which implies an agreement between various parties involved. I. Zdanevich's "parizhAchii" (Belonging to Paris) novel poses the problem of conventionality at all levels – from verbal-figurative and plot-compositional to reader's reception. The title of the novel contains an occasional word that immediately confuses the reader and makes him look for a way out of the existing word-formation

collapse: the reader can determine what part of the speech this word (possessive adjective) refers to, build a series of cognate words (Paris, Parisian), but it is impossible to name the producing word, since it does not exist in Russian. The chain of traditional conventions is thus violated, but due to this violation it is possible to conduct a creative search for new possibilities that would allow the author and the reader to agree on a new word and its potential meanings as well as to determine its origin. The author demonstrates the reader the difficult path from the impossible to the probable: the reader guesses the producing word (“parizhak” – Parisian), simultaneously noting that this word is absent in the common Russian language, but at the same time he knows many other words created by means of this word-formation model (vozhak, durak, chudak, prostak – leader, fool, crank, simpleton). The dialogue with the reader is constructed by Zdanevich as a search and establishment of new agreements on top of existing ones. The difficulty of understanding arises from the author’s desire to point out the creative possibilities of the language. In I. Zdanevich’s novel “parizhAchii” (Belonging to Paris) we find the phenomenon of the avant-garde language, which the linguists Zykova and Sokolova associate with the “aim of idiomatization” characteristic of the avant-garde (Zykova & Sokolova, 2019, p. 7). The small number of the novel characters (8 in total), their attachment to a strictly defined time (between 11.51 and 14.09) and space (between the 16th district of Paris and le bois de Boulogne), clear geometry and arithmetic of human relations (4 married couples) – these are the features that distinguish “parizhAchii”.

I. Zdanevich changes the traditional novel form, minimizing the narrative and expanding the novel as a dialogue of characters mainly. The characters collide with each other, change places and roles, betraying their husbands and wives with friends and girlfriends. As in a closed vessel, they rush about between each other’s houses in the 16th district of Paris and le bois de Boulogne as an expected meeting place for brunch, where, they suppose, all the riddles will be solved and suspicions that tormented them will dissipate. However, their expectations are not met, the novel almost ends with a series of duels. This does not happen only because the duel will not solve anything in their conflicts with each other. The characters realize helplessness of the novel form for solution of their problems and seriously think how to complete the novel. From this point on, the novel becomes a poetical one. It all ends with a brunch in le bois de Boulogne – Last Supper. The conditional resolution of a novel intrigue by translating the temporary into the eternal in “parizhAchii” resembles a necessity to complete the novel in some way. I. Zdanevich exacerbates the problem of conventionality in art.

7. Conclusion

The ambiguity, polysemy, and the abstruse character of his texts manifested at all levels (including “parizhAchii” novel) make it possible to detect a lack of agreement both in life and in art as well as an attempt of new art, having revealed false connections, to problematize the search for new ones.

The carnival element allowed Ilyazd to maintain the freedom that always accompanied his work. The carnivalized dialogue of Ilyazd possessed multivalent properties, representing the same phenomenon through exaltation and overthrow in an aura of holiness and blasphemous mockery.

I. Zdanevich’s dialogue always tends to turn into a polylogue. The aspiration of I. Zdanevich to polyphony is noteworthy: he hears different voices and languages, feels the potential for their deployment in many semantic planes, due to which polyphony and polylogue of languages and cultures appear in his

texts. Ilyazd's proximity to allness led to his radical versions of the polylogue – from an acute perception of the boundaries of various phenomena to their full leveling or overcoming when a dialogue becomes virtually impossible, when everything becomes “familiar”, when there is no distinction between “Ego” and the “Other” – an extremity, which is opposite to isolation.

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