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The Phenomenon of Familiarity in the Scientific Heritage of M. M. Bakhtin

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Abstract

The paper considers the phenomenon of familiarity in the context of the carnival theory of the outstanding Russian scientist M. M. Bakhtin, whose work influenced the development of humanitarian thought in Russia and the west of the 20th century. The author of the article investigates the formation of this concept and its influence on the formation and development of the novel genre as one of the components of the folk-laughter culture. Familiarity is a free and unofficial communication without any distance or etiquette norms. Free communication allows you to retreat from the hierarchical and official relations between people. At the same time, the familiar areal speech, through which familiar communication is built, has got its own special characteristics. The speech includes curses, oath, false vows, and obscenities. Therefore, this speech is ambivalent, it is isolated and completed. They are the source of such a phenomenon as familiarity. In this case, familiarity as a category has several levels. The semantic level is associated with informality and the rejection of normativity. The verbal level consists of the specific familiar-square forms and genres, and therefore it contributes to the formation of a special unofficial language. These two levels create a collective, in which familiar treatment is possible. This collective becomes a fair, a carnival crowd. In addition, over time, forms of familiarity have become a kind of protest against the official ideological system.

Keywords: M. Bakhtin, Phenomenon of familiarity, Literary theory, Laughter, Carnival.

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Introduction

The analysis of the known set of literary devices, frequently used by one or another poet, novelist, or play-writer at the present time allows us to identify a sustained tendency towards the realization of the phenomenon which M. M. Bakhtin characterized as *familiarity*. Moreover, with each new historical and literary stage, the author's desire to destroy the distance between himself and the reader (addressee), the reader and the text (addressee and the text), to "degrade" the generally accepted norms, sometimes to relinquish them, is becoming more noticeable, and by the end of the twentieth century – with the final formation of a new literary context of the era – without any exaggeration, is becoming one of the fundamental methods for the development that can be roughly described as the literary canon of sociocultural consciousness in the long transition from its classical type to the non-classical one.

The most principal place in the scientific heritage of M. M. Bakhtin (and not only in his concept of laughter and carnival culture) is taken by the category of familiarity, which, one way or another, was considered by the scientist actually for the whole twenty years (1940-50-ies) in the context of the very different phenomena – from the direct influence of this phenomenon on the formation of the novel genre to a seamless element of folk-laughter culture and an integral component of the carnival world perception.

Scrutinizing the formation of the novel genre, the "romanization" of literature in the work "Epic and Novel (Towards a methodology of the Study of the Novel)" (1941), M. M. Bakhtin assigns a special place to the category of familiarity. He believes that folklore and laughter novel resources play an important role in the destruction process of "the epic distance", while the first and highly significant stage of a novel formation was "laughter familiarization of a person image. Laughter <...> has begun to explore an individual freely and familiarly: to turn him inside out, to expose the divergence between appearance and the bellyfeel, between the possibility and its realization" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 227). The hierarchical distance (and familiarization is nothing more, but its deliberate destruction) during the development of the novel genre didn't play any role; according to the researcher, "a novel was being formed in the process of the epic distance destruction, in the process of laughter familiarization of the world and a man, decline of the artwork object to the level of unprepared and fluid current realities" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 230).

Materials and methods

With the help of the comparative-historical method and the method of holistic analysis of literary works, the specificity of the phenomenon of familiarity interpretation in M. M. Bakhtin's scientific research has been investigated. The works of M. M. Bakhtin, his concept of laughter, carnival culture, the idea of carnival, were the methodological basis for the entire humanitarian consciousness of the second half of the twentieth century, and stimulated the emergence of the numerous studies in linguistics, cultural studies, and literary studies based on various material.

Literature Review

The theoretical underpinning of the phenomenon of familiarity shows that its study in the second half of the century follows the footsteps of M. M. Bakhtin's ideas. At the same time, we are considering not only literary works, but also linguistic ones, in which familiarity is recognized through the analysis of the human behavior in the society, including both the speech behavior and the value-

normative aspect. The works of A. A. Guseynov (1985) and L. A. Popov (1998) consider this matter as well. The expression of familiarity through violations of the communicative and ethical norms of behavior in a status-marked situation is presented in the studies of V. I. Karasik (1992), L. P. Krysin (1994), O. A. Leontovich (2007), A. K. Mikhal'skaya (1996), I. A. Sternin (2001), A.V. Fedorov (1977), and N. I. Formanovskaya (2007). At the same time, most of the scientists rely on Bakhtin's methodology and his understanding of the phenomenon of familiarity.

Results and Discussion

Scooping the material for examples mainly from the ancient literary context and the part of the literature texts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (which is quite consistent with his scientific interests of the late 1930s), Bakhtin analyzes the role of laughter as the defining factor in the process of familiarization (which amounts to violation of the hierarchical rules and conventions, the "nudity", the exposure of the subject), emphasizing that laughter with a certain set of tools (rudeness, liberties, abusive language, and battery) allows you to introduce one or the other thing "from distant plan" into the zone of "familiar contact", depreciating its true value, where "it can be familiarly felt from all sides, flipped, turned inside out, looked from above and below, broken from its outer shell, looked into the inside <...>, uncovered and exposed <...>" (Menippean satire and Socratic laughter are the most illustratory in this respect) (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 214). The familiar contact has a certain impact on the spatial and temporal relationships between the characters and the author: he lets the images of works - because of violations of the distance between them - to be in the same "image field", in addition, familiarized relationships between the author and the characters, putting them into one value-time frame that makes the free movement of the creator within the depicted world, allowing it to oppose the concept of "familiar contact" to "distant plan" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 139). The conceptual interconnection of "Epic and Novel" can be traced to the fragments, entitled "Towards the Theory of the Novel", "Towards the Theory of Laughter", and also to a sketch of the article which considers the work of Mayakovsky (early 1940s): the complex of scientific topics was developed there, related primarily to laughter, in particular, to the familiar sources of the novel genre. Despite the fact that this text doesn't attempt to consistently solve the issues raised, it is interesting for us as a reflection of one of the stages of the formation of the novel and the humorous scientist's concept exactly in the plan of outlined problems. First of all, the concept of "profanity" appears here, which has a double interpretation in Bakhtin's work: on the one hand, it is included in the semantic series of categories of "violation of the norm", "oddity", "falling out from the system of necessity and significance"; on the other hand, profanity is nothing more but one thing from the laughter, familiar principles of the novel. "The story-telling involves the essential point of profanity. The violation of taboos, norms, prohibition, crimeы, mistakeы etc. – these are objects of narration. <...> a novelistic story line of prose <...> was born in the informal-laughter and familiar language layers, where the laudatory-abusive nickname <...> is leading" (Bakhtin, 1997, pp. 48-49). The ideas about the unofficial nature of laughter, which creates "<...> familiar festive collective, beyond the all official life seriousness" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 50), are also very indicative in the text, as well as the role of ambivalent tone and "descending street images", images of "lower stratum", abusive language in the process of familiarization of the world (the researcher is limited to examples from Mayakovsky's works, whose position is similar to the Rabelaisian vision of the world, and modernism, where self-consciousness refuses conventions and norms, assimilating the street tone), the detailed development of which is carried out in its entirety in the book about Rabelais.

In the monograph "Francois Rabelais and folk culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance" Bakhtin ascribes familiarity and its verbal expression - familiar-obscene speech - to one of the forms of folk-laughter culture (along with the ritual and entertainment forms and verbal-laughter works), believing that it reflects the united "laughing aspect of the world" (we consciously do not stop to consider the phenomenon of carnival or laughter culture in Bakhtin's body of work, because they, although directly related to the problems analyzed by us, nevertheless, have been repeatedly investigated by many Bakhtin experts (Averincev, 1988; Dubrovskaya, 2019, pp. 157-162; Grojs, 1997, pp. 76-80, Makhlin, 1991, pp. 156-211, Turbin, 1990, pp. 6-29; Simons, 1996; Zagibalova, 2008, pp. 180-188)). Familiarity implies a fairly freewheeling, recognizing neither any distance, free communication outside the norms of etiquette, nor the hierarchical relations between people and decency. Describing the familiar-obscene speech in detail, the researcher identifies a number of its main forms and genres, displaced from the official speech spheres as violation of their norms, characterized by isolation, completeness and intrinsic value, and having an ambivalent character: curses - "abusive or swear expressions, sometimes quite long and complicated", which are "grammatically and semantically isolated in the context of speech and are perceived as a complete unit, like sayings" (Bakhtin, 1990, pp. 22-23), swearing or oaths, various kinds of indecency (depiction of slaughter, the act of childbirth, obscene gestures in Rabelais). As an integral part of the carnival worldview, perceiving a laughable "tone", familiar-obscene speech "became some kind of a reservoir where various speech phenomena were accumulated, forbidden and forced out of the official speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 23). Emphasizing that the folk culture of laughter in the Middle ages was developing outside the official literature and ideology, characterized primarily by "one-sided seriousness of the tone", Bakhtin notes not only the displacement of exhilaration, laughter, and jokes, but also the creation of a parallel unofficial (non-hierarchical) culture. It is exactly in laughter, in reducing the power of the ambivalent lower stratum, where the "second truth about the world" expressed as well in informal familiar speech, imbued with the same "elements of material-corporal lower world" (obscenity, profanity, travesty walking sacred texts, oaths, and swearing), was born - everything that "appeared in this speech, had to obey descending and renewing power of the ambivalent lower stratum" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 101). Analyzing the "obscene word" in detail both in grotesque realism and in Rabelais novel, Bakhtin points to the extremely significant role in the "walking descending expressions of familiar speech" images of excrements, and blended with them images of monsters and underworld: "<...> this is matter and corporeality, ridiculous for the most part; this is the most suitable matter for descending the corporality of all sublime" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 168). Such identification shows convincingly the connection of familiarity just as with the images of the material and corporal lower stratum, so with the semantic descent of the official tone, the obscene informality and freedom. In general, genres and forms of familiar communication, according to Bakhtin, are part of the folk-festival literary and entertaining genres, playing a "leading stylistic role" in them (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 169).

Identifying familiarity with the atmosphere of freedom and frankness, the scientist emphasizes its relation to the unofficial folklife culture and its implementation in the obscene as the center of all unofficial, and forming on the basis of familiar speech actually a "special" language, impossible in other places and eligibly different from the official language: it did not require "speech hierarchy and conventions" and enjoyed the "privileges of exploring the characteristics of the obscene words in the prologue to the "Pantagruel", the scientist pays considerable attention to the "physical topography",

where the ambivalent images of the material and corporal lower stratum are matched with the genres of familiar-obscene speech - condemnations and obscenities, and these condemnations and obscenities are the "unduly devastating", ultimate in a natural transition to "excessive obscene praise," which is their "downside". It is impossible to draw a clear line between them, in obscene speech they are "referred as if to the whole, but two-formed body, which is praised by scolding and scolded by praising" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 183), that is why in the familiar-obscene speech obscenities are pronounced in "affectionate and laudatory sense", which in general indicates its ambivalent nature (analysis of ambivalence of the familiar-obscene speech and familiar-speech abusive language and curses, which organize the dynamics and define the style of the narrative, is conducted by Bakhtin on the material of the prologue to "Gargantua", which, in his opinion, "is unfolding in the form of a familiar-obscene conversation, full of festival images, elements of a folk comedy, a word-play, slips of the tongue, and verbal travesties, with the listener" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 189)).

The study of semantics and artistic-ideological functions of curses, swearing and all sorts of obscenities as informal and, therefore, familiar elements of speech, leads the scientist to consider them not only as "a deliberate violation of the accepted norms of the speech communication, as a deliberate refusal to comply with speech conventions <...>" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 206), but also - with the contextual influence (speech translation beyond conventions in other normative, more precisely, in the non-normative plan) - as a way of formation of the special language, which is free from hierarchy and prohibitions of the official language. Naturally, the formation of such non-official, familiar speech entails the creation of a "special collective" - a team of "privies to familiar communication" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 207). The category of familiarity is, thus, considered by M. M. Bakhtin on several levels: at the semantic level it is identified with informality, the conscious rejection of normativity; at the verbal level familiarity it finds its expression in special familiar-obscene forms and genres, contributing to the formation of a kind of informal language (jargon in relation to the official language), and finally, because of it, creates a collective of familiar treatment, that is, a collective of "the frank and free ones in speech" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 227) – that is a fair, carnival crowd, devoid of hierarchical barriers and having a real familiar contact within themselves. In addition, the familiar speech elements marked not just a violation of the official worldview system, but also a kind of protest against it.

Examining the specific of the carnival images structure in the novel of Rabelais in details, Bakhtin pays considerable attention to "auditory impression" of the variegated Parisian crowds of the sixteenth century, in which an important place belongs to oaths (and the main content of them - "anatomization of a human body" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 212)), combined with the certain familiar gestures (e.g. spilling urine over a crowd), which ultimately contributes to the creation of not just a "very free" parody travesty and allusions, but also to the carnival atmosphere of "vulgar freedom and familiar frankness". In Rabelais work familiar-obscene elements (cries, abusive words, swearing, curses) are the most important style-forming factors, creating "the absolutely hilarious, fearless, free and frank speech, which Rabelais needs for taken by him an assault of "Gothic darkness" (Bakhtin, 1990, pp. 215-216). Noting that most of the images of the Rabelaisian novel are grotesque, Bakhtin analyzes the images of the body and corporal life (first of all, the grotesque image of a face, the most important components of which are a wide open mouth and nose "as a substitute for a fall"), as well as the images of a womb and a fall), linking them with abuse and laughter in the informal familiar speech. It is exactly in the unofficial familiar speech where the images of a grotesque body

appear in almost all expressions: "this body is fertilizing – fertilized and bearing – parturient, gobbling – gobbled, drinking, defecating, sore, dying <...>. <...> here, where people laugh and swear in terms of familiar communication, their speech is full of the images of the grotesque body - the body which is copulating, defecating, gorging; the speech is being flooded with productive organs, stomachs, feces, urine, sick noses and mouths, the body torn apart. <...> A strongly pronounced grotesque image of the body lies at the heart of the universal fund of familiar abusive gesture" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 216).

A significant place in Bakhtin's study belongs to the consideration of the determining influence of folk-festival forms on the most important scenes of the Rabelaisian novel - the depiction of battles, battery, prophecies, imbued with festive themes and associated with "a notorious freedom" and familiarity, violation of ordinary, generally accepted norms (the custom of wedding beating, manhandling of a sneak, etc.). In addition, as Bakhtin notes, an integral component of carnival freedom and familiarity is obscenity (the image of the slaughter and the act of childbirth, obscene gestures in Rabelais), which has a worldview character.

Solving the problem of the special functions of folk-festival forms in the Rabelais novel, Bakhtin refers to the comparative analysis of the ancient French comic drama ("the Play of the Bower" by de la Halle) and Rabelaisian works, highlighting the topic of stupidity and "a hopeless fool" as one of the essential themes." Despite the fact that the researcher does not use the term familiarity, yet it would be at least inappropriate to deny its implicit presence in the theoretical research of the scientist concerning the phenomenon of stupidity: thus, the emphasized ambivalent nature of stupidity and its definition as "impudent festive wisdom, free from all the norms and restraints of the official world, as well as from its concerns and seriousness" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 353-354), as though it implies the presence of elements of familiarity and familiar communication, more than once identified by Bakhtin with the lack of normativity and liberation from formality.

A number of historic-literary and cultural ideas that are in a close connection with the problems, solved in the monograph on Rabelais (including familiarity, familiarization), and with the involvement of the material from Shakespeare's texts, is presented in the text "Additions and Changes to "Rabelais" (1944). Not only some stages in the research of carnivalization of the world in the literature are outlined, which takes place, according to the researcher, in the process when the world appeals to the familiar forms of speech, thought and gesture, but also organized moments of the process of familiarization are specified: violation of social hierarchy (mixing upper and lower strata), the abusive language, crowning, de-crowning, the grotesque body, the transformation of names in the nickname, the game, the festive violation of hierarchy (Bakhtin, 2000). One of the necessary moments of familiarity is physical contact, "bodies contact", ambivalent by nature – all sides of an object get unfold there ("and face and butt", gut and appearance), while familiarization includes bipolar, reciprocal actions (embrace, laceration, "introduction" to one's own body or an opportunity of "absorption" by the other body etc.).

It is significant that, unlike the book about Rabelais, in the "Additions" Bakhtin considers the category of familiarity not only in the historical and literary sense, but also in the philosophico-historical context, noting the possibility of the full disclosure of the phenomenon and the person only in the process of familiarization: "folk-festival familiarizing forms <...> give the right to look at the world outside the admitted truth, outside the sacred; festivities sanctify profanity <...>. In the era of the

great turns and revaluations <...> the boundaries of the official world are narrowing, <...> borders of obscenity are expanding, its atmosphere is beginning to penetrate everywhere (in these eras there is even the extreme enlarged usage of speech and gesticulating forms: familiar "you" in second person singular, abusive expressions, weakening of any etiquette, more familiar children's treatment of their parents <...>)" (Bakhtin, 2000, pp. 267-268). Apparently, in the revised version of the book about Rabelais, the scientist wanted to give the familiarizing aspect a sufficiently large place in connection with its obvious importance in the process of becoming a laughing culture, as evidenced by the following remark: "The role of the familiarization, the destruction of distance, the transfer of images into the laughing zone of contact, the premise of fearlessness - all this in conclusion; in the same place there is the discovery of modernity by laughter and the familiar destruction of distance" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 269).

In the framework of the features analysis of the Ukrainian literature of the eighteenth century, among which the main one is the release of "familiarizing energies" of the Ukrainian language, which is becoming low, non-official in relation to the official Russian, the problem of familiarization of the speech element is outlined, which will later be reflected in the text "the Problem of Speech Genres": "It is a characteristic tendency of the familiar speech element to etymologize every proper name <...> and, thus, turn it into a nickname" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 283), there is a sharp decline in the sonorous style, the destruction of traditions, the pursuance of the "abusive" and ambivalent.

In "Toward a Philosophical Fundamentals of the Humanities" (early 1940s), the researcher, within the framework of his own concept of the laughter culture, emphasizes a mask as a means of «entrance» in the "familiar communication", in which there are no rules, prohibitions, and distances, (derivatives of it - profanity, the loss of norms), emphasizing its non-hierarchy (it was "familiar "you" in the masquerade").

In the short text "On Flaubert" (1944-45) there is a Rabelaisian element, which, of course, led to the mention of familiarity: there are the elements outlined by the scientist that require further development - "a world without distances", "the familiar-obscene speech as the whole axiological unity." "The familiar-obscene element of speech as the main source. The intermediate crystallization of the same forms in curses and jurons" (Bakhtin, 2000, pp. 293-294).

In the work "the Problem of Speech Genres" (1952-53) the matter of familiarity and familiar styles is solved by the scientist within the framework of his own philosophy of language. Bakhtin believes that the diversity of speech genres is largely determined by their situational and social differences, as well as personal relationships between the participants of communication, in connection with which the parallel existence of both their official and familiar (unofficial) forms is possible. In addition, the scientist notes the possible "mock-ironic re-accentuation" of genres, that is the transfer (and sometimes blending) of genre forms from the official sphere to the familiar sphere (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 182). Stylistic nuances in familiar speech genres are defined as well "a certain feeling and understanding of a recipient (your utterance) by a speaker" and "speaker's anticipation of their active-responding understanding", as the nature and the degree of the personal proximity of a recipient towards a speaker", and a recipient is placed as though outside of social conventions or the social hierarchy that in the end generates a peculiar frankness of speech, amounting at times to cynicism: "In the familiar speech, thanks to the deflection of the speech prohibitions and conventions, a special, informal, free approach to reality is possible" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 202-203). The most

essential signs of the familiar style are the naming things by their own names, the "obscene loud frankness". Bakhtin notes that familiar genres played an important role in the Renaissance and other periods, contributing not only to the destruction of "official traditional styles and worldviews, dead and conventional" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 203), but also to the opening an access to the language layers, which were previously under the speech prohibition.

Conclusion

Summarizing the above, the category of familiarity took an important place in Bakhtin's heritage: even in the 1960s, he continued to consider it in the monograph "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics". What extremely significant about this case is that Bakhtin addressed the problem of the genesis of the dialogical line of the novel prose and included in it a thorough analysis of the "Socratic dialogue", "Menippean satire" and associated with them "carnival folklore", which was a direct consequence of the scientist's research in the field of the novel theory, folk-laughter culture, and carnival (especially Rabelais' work). Considering non-hierarchy, familiarity and "familiar contact" as the special carnival category, Bakhtin generally repeated the ideas reflected in the book about Rabelais, highlighting, however, other categories of the carnival attitude - eccentricity and carnival mesalliance, which are in the direct connection with it (in addition to profanity): "Behavior, gesture, and word of a person are released from the power of any hierarchical position <...>, which entirely determined them in the non-carnival life, and, therefore, becomes eccentric <...>. Eccentricity is a special category of carnival attitude, organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it allows the underlying sides of human nature to be revealed and expressed - in a concrete-sensual form. The third category of the carnival attitude – carnival mesalliance - is also connected with familiarization. The free familiar attitude covers everything: all values, thoughts, phenomena, and things" (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 142). In addition, familiarization, according to the scientist, influenced the "verbal style" of literature and the organization of the plot, it also determined the "special familiarity of the author's position in relation to the characters" (Bakhtin, 1979, pp. 142-143). Analyzing the genre and plot-compositional features of Dostoevsky's works in the context of carnival and folk-laughter culture, the scientist reveals the direct interconnection between the polyphonic novel and the "carnival-mysterious" literature, emphasizing that a significant role in Dostoevsky's texts is played by the elements of carnivalization, the most important of which - familiarity - is perceived as a style-forming factor (along with oxymoron combinations, profanity, mesalliance, descents, and naturalism) of the carnivalized "Menippean satire" and "Socratic dialogue".

Thus, M. M. Bakhtin had been considering the category of familiarity throughout his career - from the works of the 1940s to the revised book about Dostoevsky in the 1960s. The scientist defined familiarity and studied its role in the formation and development not only of carnival culture in Western Europe, but also in the formation of a polyphonic novel, which appearance was prepared precisely by the carnival-laughing, "familiarizing" line of the development of the European literature.

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