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Research article

Zero and the Machine: The Metaphysics of the Mechanical Voice in the Russian Avant-Garde

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Abstract

This article offers a novel reading of the legacies of Kazimir Malevich and Daniil Kharms through the lens of Jacques Derrida's philosophy of the voice. The focus shifts from a traditional analysis of plastic and poetic forms to an investigation of their fundamental project to deconstruct and reinvent the very act of utterance. We argue that a central problem for both artists was that of the mechanical voice – a voice alienated from the living presence of the speaker, a voice as technique. In his work *Ulysses Gramophone*, Derrida demonstrates how recording devices radically separate the voice from its source, turning speech into a quotation, an archival trace. Malevich and Kharms, however, do not lament this loss of authenticity but see in it a liberating and creative potential. The analysis begins with Malevich, whose *Black Square* is interpreted not only as a “zero of forms” but also as a voice-zero – the final result of an operation of economy that reduces utterance to its suprematist minimum. The futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun*, in whose creation Malevich participated as an artist and co-author of the libretto, is understood as the triumph of this new, machine-like, and dehumanized sonic landscape over the logocentric voice of classical culture. Daniil Kharms develops and complicates this program in the field of literature. His poetics of dysgraphia, malfunction, and absurdity constitutes a systematic sabotage of routineized speech machines – the printing press, the gramophone, and logical syntax. In his texts, the voice splinters, becoming a set of mechanical signals and autonomous phonemes, which finds its culminating expression in the enigmatic ritual poem “On the Death of Kazimir Malevich.” The theoretical depth of the study is ensured by drawing on key concepts from media archaeology and the philosophy of technology: the media-archaeological approach of Friedrich Kittler and Valery Savchuk allows us to consider the voice as a product of material carriers; Steven Connor's ideas on ventriloquism shed light on the phenomenon of the alienated voice; Boris Groys's analysis helps place the avant-garde's quest within the ideological context of the era. Ultimately, the project of Malevich and Kharms appears not as a technocratic utopia but as a radical metaphysical and medial program for the creation of a new auditory episteme – a program whose prophetic power is revealed in the age of artificial intelligence and synthetic speech.

Keywords: Philosophy of the voice; Media archaeology; Russian avant-garde; Suprematism; OBERIU; Technique; Gramophone; Kazimir Malevich; Daniil Kharms; Jacques Derrida

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Научная статья

Ноль и машина: Метафизика механического голоса в русском авангарде

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Аннотация

Статья предлагает новое прочтение наследия Казимира Малевича и Даниила Хармса через призму философии голоса Жака Деррида. Фокус смещается с традиционного анализа пластических и поэтических форм к исследованию их фундаментального проекта по деконструкции и переизобретению самого акта высказывания. Мы утверждаем, что центральной для обоих художников была проблема механического голоса – голоса, отчужденного от живого присутствия говорящего, голоса как техники. Деррида в работе “Улисс-Граммфон” показывает, как записывающие устройства радикально разделяют голос и его источник, превращая речь в цитату, в архивный след. Малевич и Хармс, однако, не оплакивают эту утрату аутентичности, а видят в ней освободительный и созидательный потенциал. Анализ начинается с Малевича, чей «Черный квадрат» интерпретируется не только как “нуль форм”, но и как голос-нуль – конечный результат операции экономии, сводящей высказывание к его супрематическому минимуму. Опера «Победа над Солнцем», в создании которой Малевич принимал участие как художник и соавтор либретто, понимается как триумф этого нового, машинного и дегуманизированного звукового ландшафта над логоцентрическим голосом классической культуры. Даниил Хармс развивает эту программу в поле литературы. Его поэтика дисграфии, сбоя и абсурда представляет собой систематический саботаж рутинизированных машин речи – печатного станка, граммофона, логического синтаксиса. В его текстах голос расщепляется, становясь набором механических сигналов и автономных фонем, что находит кульминационное выражение в загадочном стихотворении-ритуале “На смерть Казимира Малевича”. Теоретическая глубина исследования обеспечивается привлечением ключевых концепций медиаархеологии и философии техники: медиаархеологический подход Фридриха Киттлера и Валерия Савчука позволяет рассмотреть голос как продукт материальных носителей; идеи Стивена Коннора о чревоуещании проливают свет на феномен отчужденного голоса; анализ Бориса Гройса помогает поместить поиски авангарда в идеологический контекст эпохи. В итоге проект Малевича и Хармса предстает не как утопия технократии, а как радикальная метафизическая и медиальная программа по созданию новой аудиальной эпистемы – программы, чья провидческая сила раскрывается в эпоху искусственного интеллекта и синтетической речи.

Ключевые слова: Философия голоса; Медиаархеология; Русский авангард; Супрематизм; Обэриуты; Техника; Граммфон; Казимир Малевич; Даниил Хармс

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INTRODUCTION: BEYOND THE HORIZON OF FORM

The narrative of the Russian avant-garde has traditionally been dominated by an optic of vision: the explosion of color, the geometry of form, the revolution of the plane. Yet, concealed behind this plastic upheaval lay a transformation no less radical and still inadequately comprehended – a transformation of the very principle of utterance, the problem of voice. Within the avant-garde, voice ceases to be an organic extension of the subject, a direct vessel for meaning or emotion; it becomes a technical problem, a raw material, an autonomous machine. This article proposes to investigate this "metaphysics of the mechanical voice" through the prism of a creative dialogue between two pivotal figures: Kazimir Malevich, who proclaimed the end of the objective world, and Daniil Kharms, who pursued the logic of absurdity to the point of a rigorous ontological system. We argue that what united them was not merely a formal quest, but a fundamental project to deconstruct and reassemble the very act of speech, framed within a *zaum* intermedial dialogue (Markov, 2025). Central to understanding this project is the conception of Jacques Derrida, who, in his work *Ulysses Gramophone*, revealed how technical mediation – here, the gramophone – radically cleaves voice from the moment of its live production, turning speech into a quotation, an archival trace, a “specter” (Derrida, 1988). However, whereas for Derrida this schism constitutes the paradoxical condition for the very possibility of writing and memory, Malevich and Kharms discerned within it not a tragedy of lost presence, but a liberating and generative opportunity. Their aim was the pursuit of an "absolute voice" – a kind of pre-human, zero vibration that could be disclosed solely through strategies of ultimate economy, systematic sabotage, and conscious mediation by the logic of technology. This pursuit was realized through the transmutation of voice into machine: for Malevich – via suprematist reduction to a sign; for Kharms – through the hacking and reprogramming of linguistic automatons.

PART 1. MALEVICH: ECONOMY AS VOICE AND THE DEHUMANIZATION OF SOUND

To apprehend the specificity of voice in Malevich, one must commence with the radical silence of his forms – or rather, with his famed formula of the “zero” as the starting point for a new art. Suprematism was not simply a new style but a total endeavor of ontological reboot, a reduction of the visible world to elementary, impersonal primal elements, to a pure act of energy. The black square upon a white ground is not an image but a manifesto for a new mode of world-perception and, crucially for our inquiry, a new mode of hearing, with a particular regime of corporeality (Sosnovskaia & Markov, 2025). Yet what does this manifesto proclaim on the level of sound? Jean-Philippe Jaccard, analyzing the philosophical system of Kharms that traces back to Malevich, identifies the “zero” as a key category – not emptiness, but a point of compression for all potentiality, a "negative showing" of the infinite (Jaccard, 1994). The *Black Square*, therefore, can be regarded as the visual equivalent of a voice-zero – an utterance brought to an absolute minimum, to a pure tone stripped of individual overtones, to a fundamental vibration antecedent to formed meaning. Malevich conceived this minimalism in terms of



economy, which Cornelia Ichin defines for him as the fifth, metaphysical dimension of art, rather than a utilitarian principle of thrift (Ichin, 2019). In the manifesto "On New Systems in Art," he explicitly calls the suprematist square "the economic plane of perfection of contemporaneity" (Malevich, 1995, p. 153). Economy here is a surgical operation of distillation, the elimination of all superfluity, including the "tremor of the hand," individual handwriting, psychological subtext, and ultimately, human timbre. Malevich deliberately employed rulers and airbrushes not for filigree execution, but for depersonalizing the artistic gesture, for creating a voice-object, a voice-sign. This sign does not demand interpretation because it is itself a fundamental, impersonal given, an architectonic element of a new reality, whose communicative power resides not in narrative, but in the very fact of its manifest, economical presence.

The culmination of this dehumanization of voice was the futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun* (1913), a key object for a media-archaeological reading. Here the metaphorical logocentric voice – the Sun as a symbol of reason, classical harmony, sanctified traditional order, and broadly, Western European culture founded on principles of visibility and clarity – is literally cast down into the abyss. Its defeat is not a triumph of darkness, but a liberation of space for an alternative mode of perception and sonority. The place of the harmonious choir is usurped by an organized cacophony – industrial noise, *zaum* speech, the roar of mechanisms, declamation deliberately stripped of melodic and semantic fluidity. The sonic sequence ceases to be an expression of an inner world and becomes raw material upon which complex montage operations are performed, anticipating the practices of twentieth-century *musique concrète*. This is not the voice of man, but the voice of an emergent post-human, machinic world, where subjectivity is dissolved in the energy of processes. In this context, the idea of Natalia Mazur regarding the specificity of Russian technicism becomes productive. Analyzing the image of the tram among the futurists, she describes it not as an instrument for altering sensibility (in the Italian model), but as an apparatus for "slicing the auditory," for orienting and assembling a new reality from fragments of experience (Mazur, 2023, manuscript). In *Victory Over the Sun*, Malevich and his collaborators create precisely such an "acoustic tram" – a machine that does not express but dissects the habitual soundscape, slicing from its wreckage a new, hitherto unheard composition. His project is the construction of a new auditory episteme from pure, depersonalized elements, where noise and *zaum* become not chaos, but a new order, a new grammar.

This radical rupture with the past acquires even sharper contours when juxtaposed with a concurrent, yet fundamentally distinct artistic search within Russian culture of the same years. Investigating Boris Pasternak's poem "Venice" (1913), Natalia Mazur uncovers a different strategy for engaging with the crisis of the old myth and the quest for a new language (Mazur, 2024). Pasternak, in Mazur's view, polemicizes against the Wagnerian idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (all-encompassing work of art) – the total musical myth which in the early twentieth-century context often converged with nationalist and antisemitic narratives. Against Wagner's monolithic myth, Pasternak advances the principle of "*concordia discors*" – "harmonious discord," a harmony born from the unity of opposites. His "Venice" is not an operating theatre for dissecting the old voice, as in Malevich, but a laboratory for synthesizing a new one. Pasternak's sonic



stream is a "stream of consciousness," within which heterogeneous impressions, shreds of meaning, visual and auditory images coalesce, striving not for destruction but for a complex, dialectical unity. If Malevich, in *Victory Over the Sun*, performs a deconstruction of the sun-logos through machinic noise and *zaum*, then Pasternak in "Venice" seeks to find a replacement for the disintegrating myth within the very fabric of the stream of consciousness, in continuous becoming, where contradictions do not negate but enrich one another. Thus, Malevich's project appears in exceptionally stark, polarized light: he consciously chooses the path not of synthesis but of purification, not "*concordia discors*," but radical "*discors*" – discord driven to an absolute break with the entire prior auditory and semantic tradition. His mechanical voice is a voice after catastrophe, a voice beginning from zero in a world where the sun of traditional harmony has already been extinguished, and the sole source of light and sound is the energy of the very gesture of negation and construction from bare elements. This gesture, devoid of Pasternak's lyric subjectivity, becomes the foundation for the new, non-objective and impersonal acoustics of Suprematism.

PART 2. KHARMS: SABOTAGE OF THE LANGUAGE MACHINE AND VOICE AS A "SOARING" OBJECT

If Malevich, like an engineer, built a machine of voice "from scratch" using abstract elements, then Daniil Kharms, a technician-adjuster, worked with already existing, yet far from ideal, mechanisms of speech and writing. His laboratory was the page, infected with the noise of quotidian communication, ideological clichés, and banality. The philosophy of Kharms, as Olga Burénina rightly notes, is profoundly anarchic: it is aimed at unsettling all hierarchies, and foremost – the hierarchy of meaningful, logical utterance over nonsense (Burénina, 2006). His method is not the creation of a new purity, but systematic sabotage and readjustment. The key instrument of this sabotage becomes dysgraphia – deliberately "bad," erroneous writing. Misprints, grammatical malfunctions, the incoherence of characters are not carelessness but a precise technology. In an era when the printing press and gramophone standardized voice, turning it into a smooth, mass-reproducible commodity, Kharms introduced the virus of interference into the text. He restores to written speech its materiality, its "rasp," its glitch. This device can be understood through the media theory of Friedrich Kittler (Kotomina, 2014), for whom technical carriers (the printing press, the phonograph) determine the very structure of discourse, filtering and channeling information (Kittler, 1999). By confronting the impersonal standard of print with the personal "malfunction" of writing, Kharms exposes the operation of this filter. His text is a recording of a glitch in the system, of a gramophone needle stuck in a groove, producing not the expected word but an obsessive, absurd sonic gesture.

Kharms expounded the metaphysics explaining this poetics in the text "Objects and Figures Discovered by Daniil Ivanovich Kharms" (1927). He distinguishes five meanings of an object, where the fifth, highest, is its existential meaning, when an object exists "outside man," in a state of free soaring, or "hovers" (Kharms, 1999, p. 306). This resonates directly with Malevich's «zero» and "black square" as non-objective essences.



Voice within such a system is no longer an attribute of a character but just such a "soaring" object, an autonomous entity. Kharm's characters speak in fragmented phrases, clichés, illogical replies; their voices are mechanical signals, akin to indicator lights on a control panel, devoid of psychological depth. The disappearance of a character, a frequent plot device, is not a drama but merely the cessation of a signal, a break in the circuit. It is apt here to turn to Steven Connor's study *Dumbstruck*, where he traces the long cultural history of ventriloquism as a phantasm of the divided, alienated voice (Connor, 2000). Kharm's characters are essentially ventriloquist's dummies, but dummies without a concealed ventriloquist; their voices "hover" on their own, like autonomous, alienated objects in the empty space of the text. Voice is finally severed from the illusion of an integral personality, becoming a function of an impersonal textual machine.

PART 3. RITUAL AS MONTAGE: "ON THE DEATH OF KAZIMIR MALEVICH" AND THE AUTONOMY OF THE SPEECH MODULE

The most concentrated and enigmatic specimen of Kharm's work with the mechanical voice is the poem "On the Death of Kazimir Malevich," recited at the artist's coffin on May 17, 1935. This text is not an elegy in the traditional sense but a complex ritual action, a magical act of reassignment and assembly. As Natalia Zlydneva demonstrates, the poem contains elements of Malevich's cosmological utopia and archaic sacrifice (Zlydneva, 2016). However, for our theme, its "vocal" structure is paramount. The very first line – "Pamiati razorvav struiu" ["Having ruptured the stream of memory"] – performs a violence upon the natural, fluent flow of speech-memory. The voice must not be poured forth but torn out, constructed anew. Then appear strange lexeme-hieroglyphs: "Pe," "Trrr," "Agallon." These are not words in the ordinary sense but sonic supremes, analogues of the black square, circle, and cross. "Pe" – perhaps a cluster of writing (from "*pero*" [pen], "*pepel'*" [ash]); "Trrr" – a pure mechanical sound, vibration, noise. Zlydneva deciphers the anagram "Pe-Trrr" as "Petr" – a reference to the "city of Peter" and, possibly, to the artist himself (Zlydneva, 2016). These elements are the building blocks of a new, machinic voice, which Kharm assembles upon the ruins of the human ("*gordost'iu sokrushiv litso*" ["having shattered the face with pride"]). The funeral ritual becomes a laboratory for the production of a post-humanist vocabulary.

A striking fact, noted by Robin Milner-Gulland and Olga Soboleva, lends this construction an even more "machinic" character: an almost identical text was written by Kharm ten days earlier and was titled "Message to Nikolai" (the addressee likely being Nikolai Oleinikov) (Milner-Gulland & Soboleva, 2016). Thus, Kharm utilized a ready-made speech module, reassigning it from a living addressee to a deceased one. This constitutes the highest degree of mechanization and autonomization of the poetic voice: the text functions as a program, an algorithm that can be executed for different communicative tasks by changing the variable "addressee." Voice definitively becomes a depersonalized instrument, a "surplus element" (using Malevich's own terminology), freely circulating and inserting itself into different contexts. This gesture anticipates the logic of modern digital templates and algorithmically generated content, where the uniqueness of utterance is subordinated to the recombination of standard modules.



PART 4. THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK: DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION AND THE DIVIDED VOICE

The fundamental philosophical key to reading the project of Malevich and Kharms is the work of Jacques Derrida, particularly his reflections on the gramophone in the essay *Ulysses Gramophone*. Derrida's primary analytical function in our study lies in diagnosing the foundational condition of the mechanical voice: the necessary split between sound and its source. In Joyce, as Derrida demonstrates, the technique of writing splits and multiplies voices within the text, creating a polyphony of traces. Derrida investigates how the technical device of recording radically transforms the very nature of voice and memory. The gramophone, by fixing the voice, separates it from the moment of its emanation, from the "living presence" of the speaking body. The recorded voice becomes a quotation of itself, an archival trace, capable of infinite, yet spectral, reproduction. Derrida writes of the gramophone as a machine that "makes the ghost return" (Derrida, 1988, p. 34), implying that reproduced sound is always the return of an absent entity, a simulacrum of the original, whose authenticity is forever lost at the moment of recording. This perspective describes the tragedy of technical reproduction: the death of the unique, "warm" voice in the cold mechanism of repetition. Yet it is precisely here that our essential divergence from a passive-melancholic interpretation begins. As we have shown, Malevich and Kharms did not merely acknowledge this split but actively, even aggressively, built their aesthetics upon it. They accepted "spectrality" as the initial condition for a new art. The Derridean gramophone, for them, is not the grave of voice but its liberator. The separation of sound from source is simultaneously the liberation of sound from the dictate of intention, psychology, biography. Malevich, reducing voice to the zero of form and an economical sign, and Kharms, hacking voice through dysgraphia, were essentially working with this "spectral," alienated state as primary material. Their "mechanical voice" is precisely the voice that is always already recorded, always already separated, always already a quotation, even at the moment of its (illusorily) first utterance.

Deepening the Derridean logic, one might say that Malevich and Kharms anticipated Derrida's later conclusion that the very possibility of repetition, iterability, is inherent in any sign from the outset. If for traditional metaphysics voice is the symbol of the immediate self-presence of consciousness (phonocentrism), then Derrida demonstrates that it inherently contains a rupture, the possibility of its technical doubling and, consequently, alteration. The avant-garde project can be viewed as a radical practical realization of this theoretical premise. They take voice not as a given but as a construct subject to deconstruction and assembly on new foundations. *Victory Over the Sun* is an operation of deconstructing the logocentric voice-Sun, disassembling it into constituent noises and *zaum* elements. Kharms's texts are laboratory experiments demonstrating iterability and malfunction at the very heart of the language machine. Thus, Derrida provides us with a philosophical language to describe what Malevich and Kharms accomplished intuitively and artistically: they exposed the myth of the natural, integral



voice and began to work with voice as a technique of writing and reproduction, whose essence lies in dividedness, deferral, and the possibility of mechanical repetition.

However, while Derrida emphasizes the spectrality and secondariness of such recorded voice, focusing on its relation to an absent original, Malevich and Kharms draw a radical creative, almost positivist conclusion from this division. They are not fixated on loss; they look forward, toward the active construction of new vocal formations based on this accepted split. Their project could be termed a positive, productive deconstruction. The *Black Square* is not mourning for a lost image but a manifesto for a new visuality built upon its negation. Similarly, the mechanical voice is not an elegy for a living timbre but a program for a new auditory order. Derrida uncovers the condition of possibility for their art – technical mediation and division – while the artists themselves are concerned with the condition of realization: how to create a new force, a new type of utterance from this condition? Therefore, their dialogue with Derrida is one not of imitation but of development: from acknowledging the split to the heroics of construction upon its ruins.

In light of this Derridean reading, Malevich's central motif of economy acquires additional significance. Economy is not mere thrift but a strategy for attaining essence through the elimination of all that is accidental, personal, "noisy." In the context of voice, economy signifies the removal of everything that binds sound to the illusion of live, unique presence: timbre, emotional modulation, narrative fluidity. What remains is a bare framework, a scheme, a pure signal. This process correlates directly with the operation of the gramophone or of writing, which likewise filter out the "noise" of immediacy, leaving only a reproducible trace. By proclaiming economy as the fifth dimension, Malevich essentially makes this technical operation the core of his artistic method. He creates not a "recorded" voice, but a voice that is conceived from the outset as a recording, as pure reproducibility, lacking an original. Kharms, for his part, economizes differently: he economizes on coherence, meaning, grammar, exposing the very mechanism of language production, its glitches and conventions. Both, therefore, operate within the field opened by Derridean deconstruction of phonocentrism, yet move within it toward the construction of a new, consciously "technical" phonics, where voice finally acknowledges its machinic nature.

PART 5. MEDIA THEORY: THE MATERIALITY OF THE CARRIER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AUDITORY

If Derrida provides a philosophical diagnosis of the condition of the mechanical voice, media theory offers the analytical toolkit for examining its material and historical specificities. Here, the media-archaeological approach of Friedrich Kittler proves invaluable, effecting a decisive turn from meaning to carrier, from message to the channel of its transmission. For Kittler, "media determine our situation" (Kittler, 1999, p. xxxix), meaning that the very technical systems of recording, storage, and data processing – the phonograph, film camera, typewriter – filter, shape, and ultimately produce what we perceive as reality, thought, or art. The voice of Malevich and Kharms is a voice that has realized and internalized its medial determination. The suprematist square is an utterance that has reflected upon its plane as a carrier; Kharms's dysgraphic text is a writing that



demonstrates the materiality and conventionality of typographic font and the paper page. Their art can be termed "metamedial": it works not through a medium but with the medium itself, displaying its properties as the primary content.

Developing this materialist perspective, Jonathan Sterne's theory of sound in *The Audible Past* allows us to reconceptualize the very notion of the "mechanical voice." Sterne shows how sound recording technologies (the phonograph, gramophone) did not merely fix pre-existing sounds but actively constructed the very category of the "audible," creating new forms of listening, new notions of fidelity in reproduction, new social practices (Sterne, 2003). Technology was not a neutral mediator; it was an agent shaping auditory culture. In this light, Malevich's *Victory Over the Sun* appears not as a futurist fantasy but as an artistic modeling of a new auditory landscape born of the industrial and media explosion of the early century. Its cacophony is not chaos but a map of a new sonic space, constructed by machines. And Kharms's poetics is an investigation of how writing as a medium (and print is also a technology of reproduction) forms, distorts, and generates certain types of speech acts and subjects. Through Sterne's lens, their work reads as a prescient reflection on how media alter the very fabric of human experience, including the experience of speaking and listening.

Additional depth to this analysis is provided by Lisa Gitelman's concept of "new" media, articulated in her work *Always Already New*. Gitelman argues that each new medium, at the moment of its emergence, provokes a crisis and a redefinition of concepts of authenticity, reality, and the document (Gitelman, 2006). It is always perceived through the prism of old media and cultural forms, yet simultaneously proposes new protocols, new ways of being "in reality." The project of Malevich and Kharms can be regarded as an artistic response to such a media crisis. Their "mechanical voice" is an attempt to develop new protocols for speech and sound in an era when the old ones (lyric poetry, figurative painting, melodic music) were perceived by them as having lost their connection with a new, technically mediated reality. They did not attempt to adapt the old to new carriers; they sought to invent a voice immanent to these carriers, a voice that would be "always already new" – that is, conceivable only within the logic of technical reproducibility and medial rupture.

An important contribution comes from the original Russian media-philosophical school, represented by the works of Valery Savchuk, whose function in our argument is to provide meta-level concepts. Savchuk and his school (Konstantin Ocheretyany, Oksana Shtayn, and others), developing ideas of media archaeology, speak of a "topological turn" and "metamediality," emphasizing that contemporary (and avant-garde) art works not with images of things but with the very states and boundaries of media (Savchuk, 2013; Savchuk & Ocheretyany, 2021; Ocheretyany & Savchuk, 2022) or with media transformations of the body (Shtayn, 2010; Shtayn, 2011; Markov & Shtayn, 2025). This idea has been tested on digital media, leading to a conception of the metamediality of computer games and other cybernetic media (Ocheretyany & Pogrebnyak, 2024; Ocheretyany, 2024; Ocheretyany, 2025) but is also applicable to the medial turn of the avant-garde. The suprematist square and Kharms's dysgraphic text are precisely such "metamedial" objects: they display their own being-as-medium. They do not depict voice; they are its technical scheme, its architectonics. In this sense, they anticipate the digital



era, where code and interface become primary reality. This analysis, in turn, allows the placement of the avant-garde's quest within a broader ideological context, as undertaken by Boris Groys in *The Total Art of Stalinism*. Groys shows how the avant-garde, striving to create a new world, effectively developed the language and aesthetic procedures for a future total politicized aestheticization of life (Groys, 1992). The project of the mechanical voice can be viewed as a utopian (or, from today's perspective, dystopian) program for creating a new, purified of accidentality, almost technocratic language for the collective body – a language whose power lies in its reproducibility, standardization, and detachment from individual psychology. Thus, the synthesis of media theory – from Kittler and Sterne to Savchuk and Groys – allows us to perceive in the metaphysics of the mechanical voice not only an aesthetic but also a profoundly historical, technological, and political project for reprogramming the very mode of being-in-the-world through reinventing its primary instrument: the voice.

CONCLUSION: THE ECHO OF THE MECHANICAL VOICE

The metaphysics of the mechanical voice, understood as the slicing of the auditory and the systematic sabotage of language machines, exposes a different political perspective within the avant-garde project, one left in the shadows by Groys's analysis. The key question is this: does the "mechanical voice" necessarily serve the total aestheticization of life described by Groys, or can it function as a tool of resistance against any totalizing order? Our analysis of Malevich and Kharm's strongly suggests the latter. Groys has compellingly demonstrated that the avant-garde aspiration to transform the entirety of reality into an artwork was later appropriated and instrumentalized by the totalitarian state, which turned art into a form of political theurgy. This logic, however, relies on the principle of synthesis and construction – the assembly of a unified, monolithic language-myth, a new *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The strategies of Malevich and Kharm's, in contrast, are driven by an opposite impulse: analysis, decomposition, and sabotage. If totalitarian aesthetics produces a seamless surface of meaning – a harmonious, unified voice of the collective body – the "mechanical voice" of the avant-garde systematically introduces rupture, interference, and glitches into this surface.

This anti-totalizing function operates on several levels. First, on the level of the sign: Malevich's suprematist economy does not build a new cathedral of forms but reduces utterance to a "zero," a bare signal, which, by virtue of its semantic emptiness, resists any definitive ideological appropriation. The Black Square can be read as a radical refusal to speak the language of power, a retreat into a non-signifying, purely energetic presence. Second, on the level of language: Kharm's poetics of dysgraphia, absurdity, and autonomous phonemes ("Pe," "Trrr") work to dismantle the grammatical, syntactical, and narrative structures upon which any normative, authoritative discourse depends. His texts do not propose a counter-ideology; they corrode the very machinery of ideological utterance from within, demonstrating its conventionality, fragility, and latent absurdity. Third, on the level of media: their metamedial gestures expose the carrier, the frame, the channel of transmission, thereby demystifying the claim to immediacy and naturalness upon which totalitarian rhetoric (with its cult of the "living voice" of the leader) so heavily



relies. The mechanical voice announces its own artificiality, and in doing so, subverts the fiction of an organic, unified national or class subject. Thus, the "technique of resistance" we identify in Malevich and Kharm's is not a positive political program but a set of immanent operations – reduction, malfunction, metamedial exposure – that prevent language and sound from solidifying into a new dogma. Their anarchic charge, of which Olga Burénina has written in relation to Kharm's (Burénina, 2006), is preserved precisely in this perpetual destabilization. The mechanical voice is a voice of permanent revolt against the finality of any form.

The project of the mechanical voice in the Russian avant-garde, embodied in the dialogue between Kazimir Malevich and Daniil Kharm's, therefore emerges not as a narrowly aesthetic experiment but as a vast metaphysical and medial program. It was a search for the "zero degree" of utterance – a voice purified of psychologism, individuation, and direct subordination to meaning, a voice understood as a fundamental technology. What unites them is a fundamental refusal of nostalgia for the "living" voice in the spirit of Derridean critique of the metaphysics of presence. Instead, they consciously immerse themselves in the very heart of technical alienation, seeing in the gramophone, the printing press, the very matter of the sign not enemies of the human but allies in the task of constructing a new reality. This metaphysics of the mechanical voice acquires an ominous and fruitful relevance today, in the era of voice assistants, deepfake audio, synthesized vocaloids, and algorithmic poetry. The Russian avant-garde offers us not ready-made answers, but an effective diagnostic tool and a profound aesthetic challenge. It reminds us that behind the eternal question "What did the author intend to say?" there always lurks a more fundamental question: "What machine – and in what medium – allowed this utterance to come into being?" In this sense, the echo of the mechanical voice of Malevich and Kharm's resounds within our digital realities louder than ever before.

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