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Theatre and literature: an ontological aspect of their relationship

Teatro e literatura: uma perspectiva ontológica de sua relação

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Abstract

The analysis of a dramatic work is generally characterized by two approaches, which are frequently counter-posed to each other: The approach based on theatre studies tends to narrow down a dramatic text to a script, while the approach based on literary studies tends to see the above text without regard to its theatrical implementation. In our essay, we assume that these two approaches are intertwined: A dramatic work is meant for theatrical performance, which makes it different from other forms of literature. The theatrical nature of dramatic works leaves an imprint on their literary characteristics. We offer a new way of looking at the relationship between the performance text and the dramatic text from the ontological, semiotic, and communicative perspective.

Keywords

Literature. Post-drama. Bertolt Brecht. Hans-Thies Lehmann. Ontology.

Resumo

No estudo da produção dramática destacam-se duas abordagens principais, muitas vezes opostas uma da outra: a teatral, na qual o texto literário do drama de fato é reduzido a um roteiro, e a literária, na qual se procura estudar o texto de forma independente de sua vinculação teatral. Em nosso ensaio, partimos do pressuposto de que essas duas abordagens estão conectadas: o trabalho dramático se destina à produção teatral, e esse fato o diferencia de outros gêneros da literatura. A natureza teatral do drama deixa marcas nas suas características literárias. A novidade no artigo é a consideração da relação entre o texto teatral da encenação e o texto literário do drama, nas perspectivas ontológica, semiótica e comunicativa.

Palavras-chave

Literatura. Pós-drama. Bertholt Brecht. Hans-Thies Lehmann. Ontologia.

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Introduction

Before we delve into discussion of specific features of a dramatic text, we should draw a distinction between two interrelated notions: The literary text of drama (hereinafter referred to as the dramatic text) and the theatrical text of performance (hereinafter referred to as the performance text). In the context of the cultural and semiotic approach we are going to adhere to in our essay, we, following the leading scholar in the semiotics of theatre Erika Fischer-Lichte and the expert in the semiotics of culture M. Lotman, define a theatre performance as a special text. Besides being a semiotic system formed by heterogeneous theatrical signs, it has text-inherent constitutive characteristics: Explicitness, limitedness and structure.

The present-day 'turn toward reality' implies that the text should be perceived as a specific reality. Our aim is to study the relationship between two types of the text in their ontological uniqueness and distinction. Therefore, they should be viewed as conditional realities. The conditional status of realities of literary texts and art texts (including texts of dramatic art) is hardly disputable. In the meantime, the characteristics of their conditionalities are poorly studied, though they are of paramount importance. The specific nature of the boundaries of conditionality, their penetrability/impenetrability (characterizing the openness or closeness of realities) makes it possible to study functions of these two types of texts and to identify the nature of their relationship.

In addition to differences, the realities are characterized by unity manifested and expressed through an individual as a subject of communication. Therefore, in our study we place special emphasis on the communicative aspect of the interaction between two types of texts. It has priority significance, as it makes it possible to study the text at the pragmatic level, in correlation with communication participants, as opposed to the linguo-centric and text-centric approaches seeing the text as an autonomous structural and semantic entity.

In our article, we use as reference works of three renowned German scholars: Bertolt Brecht, Hans-Thies Lehmann, and Erika Fischer-Lichte.

The performance text and dramatic text

The performance text is both implementation and manifestation of the dramatic text. As commonly agreed, drama fills the performance with content, while the stage brings this content to objective definiteness and subjective clearness.

Raszewski defined this relationship as the relationship between the musical score and its manifestation, Jansen referred to it as the invariable and variables; Pagnini – as the deep and surface structures; Kowzan – as the signifier and the signified; Ubersfeld – as two sets of signs and the intersection of the two sets, and later – as the relationship between two different *phenotexts* (drama and performance) and the coded genotext (*genotexte code*) (FISCHER-LICHTE, 2004, p. 77-78).

Here, we can observe the long-time conflict between two tendencies: The tendency toward the 'literate' stage with the prevailing concept of the theatre as a *textual* phenomenon rather than a social institution or independent art, and the tendency stemmed from the intention of the fledging theatre studies to break from bonds of literary studies and gain their own distinctive nature. The first tendency remained prevalent till the end of the 19th century, though the budding signs of the second one can be found in Goethe's *On Truth and Probability in Works of Art* (1798) and Richard Wagner's *The Artwork of the Future* (1849) developing Goethe's ideas. Leading theater critics argued the need to create a new separate discipline in the arts – theatre studies – arguing that theater as a specific art is not constituted by literature, but by performance. For example, Max Herrmann, founder of theatre studies in Berlin, was not content with simply shifting the key elements of literature to performance. On the contrary, he put forward the thesis of the fundamental difference between them, which ultimately excludes a harmonious union of the two: "I am convinced that [...] theatre and drama [...] are originally oppositional, [...] the symptoms of this opposition consistently reveal themselves: drama is the textual creation of an individual, theatre is the achievement of the audience and its servants" (quoted by FISCHER-LICHTE, 2008, p. 30).

The situation was aggravated by the lack of clearness regarding the concept of theatre, which partially can be explained by its abundant metaphoric and extensive usage. Even the initiators of theatre studies were not satisfied with the narrow view of the theatre limited by the space of a theatre building; they looked for overlapping forms of theatrics: Rituals, carnivals, masquerade balls, sports competitions, political campaigns, etc. Today, when we witness blurring the lines between different arts and aesthetic transformations experienced by post-avant-garde and post-dramatic theatres, this approach took on a new dimension. The polyvalence of the concept is well-grounded; however, the narrowly defined concept is justified methodologically. "The theatrical situation, reduced to minimum, is that A impersonate B while C looks

on” (BENTLEY, 1964. p. 150). The concise formula of the theatre offers a steadfast definition, which we are going to refine and expand further in our discussion.

Post-dramatic theatre

Most commonly, a dramatic work is intended for a theatrical production; however, does it mean that we can assume that it takes a back seat to its theatrical manifestation, in which it gains its full-featured artistic presence? This approach to the relationship of two types of texts was harshly criticized by L. Tolstoy who resented dilution of the drama literariness through Wagner’s concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the total work of art).¹

This approach is more fundamentally debunked by actual practice. We are referring to the so-called ‘plays for reading’ (*Lesedrama*, *Buchdrama*), which are frequently seen as ‘deviations from the norm’ and are opposed to the ‘true drama’. This also refers to the so-called ‘postdramatic’ theatre that, according to its theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann, came into existence in Western Europe in the last quarter of the 20th century. Lehmann explains its emergence by the escalating crisis of traditional ‘dramatic’ theatre. Yet, Lehmann insists on retaining the root word ‘drama’ in the term ‘postdramatic’. As Lehmann’s book translator writes:

‘post’ here is to be understood neither as an epochal category, nor simply as a chronological ‘after’ drama, a ‘forgetting’ of the dramatic ‘past’, but rather as a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and are in many ways an analysis and ‘anamnesis’ of drama. To call theatre ‘postdramatic’ involves subjecting the traditional relationship of theatre to drama to deconstruction and takes account of the numerous ways in which this relationship has been refigured in contemporary practice since the 1970s (JÜRS-MUNBY, 2006, p. 2).

The postdramatic theatre refuses to follow the laws of the verbal text and invents its own composition techniques. This resonates with the demise of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. According to McLuhan, *the narrative principle* of the printed media, which arrange events in a linear and temporal succession where the order is structured by causal (or logical) dependence and by the hierarchy of material and immaterial, is replaced by the *mosaic and resonant principle*. Mass media displace the formerly leading linear-successive perception, pushing it back to the periphery and replacing it

¹ “Many are officially content with a literary and intellectual theatre definition, or to maintain Wagner’s theory that the theatre should be a synthesis of all the arts. A very useful formula! It allows one to respect the text, that inviolable basic element, and furthermore it provokes no conflict with the literary and the philological milieu” (GROTOWSKI, 1968/2002, p. 31).

with a simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving. “A more superficial yet simultaneously more comprehensive perception is taking the place of the centred, deeper one whose primary model was the reading of literary texts” (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 16). Marking the end of the Gutenberg period, the theatre stops being textual and textocentric.

It is demonstrated by appearance of “the stylistic traits of postdramatic theatre or, to be more precise, of the ways it uses theatrical signifiers” (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 82):

The ‘style’ or rather the palette of stylistic traits of postdramatic theatre demonstrates the following characteristic traits: parataxis [the de-hierarchization of theatrical means], simultaneity, play with the density of signs [an aesthetic intention to make space for a dialectic of plethora and deprivation, plenitude and emptiness], musicalization, visual dramaturgy [does not mean an exclusively visually organized dramaturgy but rather one that is not subordinated to the text], physicality [the body is absolutized; all social issues have to adopt the form of a physical issue], irruption of the real, situation/event (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 86).

In Lehmann’s opinion, the postdramatic theatre is an implementation of the dream of such renowned theorists and practitioners of the theatre of the 20th century as Jerzy Marian Grotowski and Antonin Artaud who were taken with the idea of the theatre’s independence and freedom from the influence of literature. At the same time, Grotowski did not intend to separate them fundamentally. Moreover, he believed that

A man who has unfulfilled political tendencies, for instance, often becomes a producer and enjoys the feeling of power such a position gives him. This has more than once led to perverse interpretations, and producers possessing such an extreme need for power have staged plays which polemize against the authorities: hence numerous ‘rebellious’ performances. Of course a producer wants to be creative. He therefore – more or less consciously - advocates an autonomous theatre, independent of literature which he merely considers as a pretext (GROTOWSKI, 1968/2002, p. 31).

It does not mean that the postdramatic theatre completely rejects the text, [but post-dramatic theatre] “does redirect our attention, from the dramatic text to theatrical performance as an ephemeral, a performative experience. As a result, the performance is no longer to be understood as a work, but as a process, as an experience, which is marked by the signs of transience, fleetingness, unrepeatability, and singularity” (HAMBURGER; WILLIAMS, 2008, p. 379). In this case, we see that the phenomenon of post-dramatic theater reflects the current situation in text studies. Contemporary scholars, both in criticism and in art, give priority to the process of text

creation over its outcome, to the open and incomplete text over the closed and complete text, to the initiative of the reader/spectator/interpreter over the intention of the author.

[Thus] the postdramatic theatre is not simply a new kind of text of staging – and even less a new type of theatre text, but rather a type of sign usage in the theatre that turns both of these [the linguistic text, the text of the staging and mise en scene] levels of theatre upside down through the structurally changed quality of the performance text: it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 85).

The theatre is also breaking free of its eurocentrism and is bonding with Asian forms of performing arts. To a certain extent, this process indicates that the theatre is moving back to its roots (rituals and mystery plays). This approach to the theatre shows that the contemporary art and world got tired of perceiving themselves as conforming, proper, conventional, and well-organized.

Ontology of dramatic and performance texts

The existence of the postdramatic theatre puts the relationship between the dramatic and performance texts on the front burner. To what extent are they autonomous and mutually indispensable?

We are dealing with the dialectic relationship of two types of the text. Methodologically, this relationship should be studied from an ontological perspective. This approach is not new. Since ancient times any study of texts has started with their classification based on their relation toward reality. Texts were not conceivable without or outside this relation.

The definition given to art (and literature) in Aristotle's Poetics where it is seen as mimesis or imitation of reality has become a classical formula. "Epic and tragic composition, and indeed comedy, dithyrambic composition, and most sorts of music for wind and stringed instruments are all, [considered] as a whole, representation [mimesis]. They differ from one another in three ways, by using for representation (i) different media, (ii) different objects, or (iii) a manner that is different and not the same" (ARISTOTLE, 1987, p. 1).

However, the theory of mimesis is limited by the boundaries of traditional metaphysics, which states (similarly to the common belief) that the reality equals to actual existence. The present-day philosophers put forward the idea of polyonticity,

which assumes that realities, by default, are diverse and multiple. Unlike the concept of actuality, the concept of reality is not overly concerned about existence of any reality or rather about the certainty and unconditionality of this existence. “Reality comes into play when the question is asked not so much about the existence of a certain world (artistic, religious or esoteric) as about this world’s distinctive features that make it different from other worlds” (ROZIN, 2000, p. 65). Lotman writes: “Art is the most developed domain of conditional reality” (LOTMAN, 2010, p. 43).

The question of drawing the ontological line between the actuality and the conditionality, which is defined by ontological, semiotic or psychological boundaries separating realities from each other is the question of an individual’s self-position toward his/her own being. *The self-position* is the way an individual exists in relation to the reality or rather it is his/her awareness of this existence and his/her attitude toward himself/herself and others: The ‘I’ statement and ‘I’ of the statement are subjective forms of autorepresentation of the self (‘I’ of the speaker) in the text and language. An individual can act as *himself/herself* toward the conditional world only as an Observer, in a rather detached way. “The actual reality becomes real if we are involved in it as a Participant directly participating in events or directly (i.e. by ourselves, personally, not remotely or indirectly (by using communication media)) are watching them” (GILYAZOVA, 2019, p. 198).

In this sense, the modality of passivity should not be equated with the position of the Observer; likewise, the modality of activity should not be equated with the position of the Participant. Like no other, the theatre gives opportunity for developing such unusual positions of the spectator as an active Observer or a passive Participant. These positions are especially well-demonstrated in performances staged by experimental theatres of Brecht, Artaud or Grotowski and, to some extent, by Peter Brook (for all of their differences). Relying on his director’s experience, Grotowski comes to the conclusion that, at first glance, may look absurd: Putting the spectator at a distance, in the position of a passive Observer, means giving him/her the opportunity to participate, allowing him/her to discover the spectator’s ancient vocation – to be a witness.

The function of the true witness is to keep his/her distance. It does not mean to intervene with one’s own little role, with one’s self-demonstrative ‘me, too’, but to be a witness, that is to not forget. One must not forget”. [At the other extreme], “if we want to immerse the spectator in the theatrical action, in the rigorous – if we may say so – acting score, if we want to give the spectators a feeling of being distanced,

'detached' from the actors, or even better – if we want to force this feeling on them, then they should be mixed up with the actors (GROTOWSKI, 1968/2012, p. 21).

Grotowski warns against the temptation to achieve spectators' direct involvement, which is very trendy among directors of experimental theatres, in a fast and easy way: By turning to instincts of the inferior format, in much the same way as dumbing down shows do (boxing matches, bullfights, trite shows).

Yet, any traditional forms of the theatre allow the spectator to play with his/her self-identity. The self-position depends on *which side* of the reality the subject 'is located' on: inside or outside its ontological dimension marked by respective boundaries. Thus, we can specify the purpose of the boundaries: They serve as an ontological identifier demarcating and separating two worlds – actual and conditional. Boundaries function as an ontological criterion, for *the conditional world* is within them. *The actual world* has no boundaries. The ontological boundaries often do not belong to the world outside them, as they constitute an integral part of the reality they separate from.² The ontological boundaries of the events are not always clear or contextually understood. Take as an example the shout 'Fire!' in a theatre. Is it a line from the stage play (conditionality) or a warning about the existing threat (actual reality)?

By now playing with the real has become a widespread practice of new theatre – most of the time not as an immediately political provocation but as a theatrical thematization of theatre – and thereby the role of ethics within it. When fish are dying on stage, or frogs are (seemingly) squashed, or when it deliberately remains uncertain whether an actor is really being tortured with electric shocks in front of the audience (as was the case in Fabre's *Who Speaks My Thoughts?*), the audience possibly reacts to it as to a real, morally unacceptable incident (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 103).

Fischer-Lichte gives her own illustration of play with the reality, though in her example an artist puts herself (not anyone else) to physical torture. "Throughout her performance, Abramović created a situation wherein the audience was suspended between the norms and rules of art and everyday life, between aesthetic and ethical imperatives" (FISCHER-LICHTE, 2008, p. 12). While the ontological boundaries make it physically impossible for an individual to get involved (at least, hypothetically) in

² The status of the boundaries is not obvious: While Hegel perceives them as the boundary not only separating two worlds, but also connecting them, Kant emphasized their impassibility and formal setting, which makes it possible to bring the text out of the actuality and elevates the work to the ideal quintessence of reality. According to Schapiro, "the frame belongs then to the space of the observer rather than of the illusory, three-dimensional world disclosed within and behind... It is a finding and focusing device placed between the observer and the image" (SCHAPIRO, 1972, p. 141).

reality events in the physical-sensory dimension of this reality, the functional boundaries make it impossible (and wrongful) for an individual to have any direct interference in reality events or, even more, any participation in constituting its events.

Overlapping of the ontological openness being characterized by absence of boundaries with the functional openness is indicative of actual reality. If ontological and/or functional dimensions are closed, we deal with the conditional reality; if both dimensions are closed, we speak about the *closed* conditional reality; if only one of the dimensions is closed, while the other remains open, we deal with the *open* conditional, but not actual, reality. The functional openness brings about the feedback effect and (in case of the actual, not designed, addressee) two-way communication, even though its participants are separated from each other through video-audio mediation and are located at different sides of the ontological boundary.

The functional conditionality creates a fundamentally new pattern of interaction with reality: Being interactive, it opens the ontological boundaries without their elimination; alternatively, it closes the ontologically open realities, thus helping an individual to distance himself/herself from the event. The openness of the functional boundaries is of essential importance, as allows even intrinsically conditional realities to be seen as open (though, not ontologically, in contrast to the actual reality). In this context, closed conditional realities may refer to realities of movies, pictures, and books. Examples of open realities include realities of mental activity, namely, those that are outside the everyday life routine: borderline mental states, altered states of mind, realities of games, pranks, and shows. 'In-between' realities are represented by virtual realities of computer games, communication through social media, live television broadcast including a dialogue with the audience (any forms of interactive cinema). Ontologically, they belong to closed conditional realities, though functionally, they can be characterized as open realities, as the feedback allows the audience to interfere in the events and to 'penetrate' the reality, which frequently results in direct constituting of events in the above reality.

At the same time, while being ontologically open, the game reality of sports or circus shows as well as the stage reality of the classic theatre tend to be functionally closed, as they do not allow any interference (intentional or unintentional) of the audience, for it is seen as (artistically) wrongful. At the theatre, the audience's response should create an atmosphere of the auditorium and should not spill over to stage events not to *disrupt* the action. On the other hand, a different approach is

demonstrated by “the development of theatrical art from the performance culture of the 1960s to various interpretations of the ‘ritual theatre’ (Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba)” (FISCHER-LICHTE, 2004, p. 66).

Here, we can make an intermediate conclusion regarding the ontological difference between the dramatic text as an ontologically and functionally closed conditional reality and the performance text, which is open ontologically, while being closed functionally. The dramatic text as a conditional reality is open while the author is writing it, and it closes up when the author finishes its writing. This view of the closed reality corresponds to Fischer-Lichte’s concept of an artifact of the work of art.

The artist, subject 1, creates a distinct, fixed, and transferable artifact that exists independently of its creator. This condition allows the beholder, subject 2, to make it the object of their perception and interpretation. The fixed and transferable artifact, i.e. the nature of the work of art as an object, ensures that the beholder can examine it repeatedly, continuously discover new structural elements, and attribute different meanings to it (FISCHER-LICHTE, 2008, p. 17).

As for the performance text, its intrinsic openness results from its dynamic nature, uniqueness, unpredictability, non-reproducibility (the performance recorded on tape or any other physical media turns immediately into a closed text). “Here, the creative work and perception happen at the same time; the integrity of the performance disappears when it is over so that tomorrow it could re-emerge, though in a different capacity, and move into ‘its other’ (Hegel)” (PRAZDNIKOV, 2011, p. 19).

S. Eisenstein remarked on the ontological weakness of ontologically closed realities (in this case, of the cinematic text) as compared to the ontologically open performance text:

In cinematography, we deal with the *image* of an event, rather than with an *event*. The event captured from a certain angle will always remain the *image* of this event, rather than its *experience* that can generate emotional involvement. At the theatre, though in a conditional and relative way, the audience is ‘actually’ watching a physically actual event. And these are still people, not their shadows. The voices are the actors’ voices pretending to be voices of the presented acting characters. The actions are actions. It’s not like in a movie where everything is not a physical reality, but a gray shadow of its reflection (EISENSTEIN, 2002, p. 135).

In this case, S. Eisenstein actually narrows down the conditionality to its ontological version. In the meantime, the stage reality of the theater is a spectacular and ontologically paradoxical example demonstrating that the physically existing reality of the events is not an actual reality: The physically real event is played out into an

artistically conditional narrative of the event. On stage, the actuality of things and people is used as an expression plane, which is secondary to the conditionality of the content reality, thus being almost equal to the physical and sensory substance of expression of truly conditional realities of books, paintings, and motion pictures.

Even people (actors) are only signs of signs, for

the actor cannot identify himself totally with Hamlet, because he does not know precisely who Hamlet is. He must always remain partly himself, which means that his body, his feelings, and his mind function as an analogue, enabling him to represent what he is not. This duality makes it possible for him to offer a particular embodiment of what Hamlet might be. In order to produce the determinate form of an unreal character, the actor must allow his own reality to fade out (ISER, 2001, p. 210).

On the other hand, performative theories assume that the person on stage should 'be' (be himself), rather than 'signify' (be the sign of a character). This similarity between the performance and the theatrical work causes the theatre to lose its distinctiveness as an art, which represents conditional reality. However, N. Pesochinsky rightly notes that: "Tomorrow it may turn out that the borderline between the theatre and non-theatre merges with the line between art and non-art" (PESPOCHINSKY, 2011, p. 108).

Dissimilarities between the physical reality of theatre or film events and the actual reality add clearness to the concept of self³, which means self-representation rather than representation of a character (when 'I' of the speaker signifies 'I' of the speech (of the character), and not the other way around, as in ordinary speech). It constitutes an intrinsic difference between the theatrical (conditional) reality and a show (gladiator games, bullfights, circus performance, etc.), where the content is always natural and never conditional. The show does not perform a sign function, as it represents only itself; even if it is an 'image', it is the image of itself. The spectator has natural, not conditional, feelings about natural events of the show. His position is that of the passive Observer, as the spectator with all his/her emotions (the intensity of which increases with the risk of the action) is never able and eager to influence the action taking place in the arena.

³ It is clear that as *yourself* you can be only the *Observer* in a text (especially, in a closed text), but as the *subject* you can be the *Participant* in the text, though *not ontologically*, but *functionally* (in virtual realities) or *artistically*. The subject (not self) presence can be illustrated by the example when a person "places himself" in a conditional reality, like Diego Velazquez in *Las Meninas* or the author of a literary work acts as the Storyteller or, even better, as a Character (not just as the depersonalized Narrator).

As for the theatre, what is taking place on its stage only *depicts and represents* a certain action, but it is not the action. “Theatrical signs can function as *signs of signs*: The phrase said by the actor A means the phrase said by the character X; the actor A’s gestures denote the character X’s gestures; A’s garments signify X’s garments”. (FISCHER-LICHTE, 2004, p. 68). Even in Chekhov’s or Stanislavsky’s theatre focused on ‘naturalness’, the acting representing daily life behavior does not copy it. The theatre has to exaggerate life not to be mistaken for it, which sometimes happens to children or to unprepared people or even to experienced people, when the theatre moves outside the theatre building. It can explain why playacting and pranks are so effective. The impermeability of the stage is not of ontological nature; it is functional and has artistic significance (which is achieved by the commonly used conventions that need further studying).

Even if theatre has a number of conventionalized disruptions of its closure (asides, direct audience address), the play on stage is understood as diegesis of a separated and ‘framed’ reality governed by its own laws and by an internal coherence of its elements and which is marked off against its environment as a separate ‘made up’ reality. [...] It was not unique to Lessing’s times that the spectators took the maxims pronounced on stage to be instructive precepts addressed to themselves. Nevertheless the artistic task consisted in integrating all this into the fictive cosmos as inconspicuously as possible, so that addressing the real audience and speaking outside the play would not be noticeable as a disturbing element. In this respect, one can draw a parallel between the drama in theatre and the ‘frame’ of a picture that closes the picture off to the outside and at the same time creates an internal cohesion. The categorical difference, however – and with it the systematic virtuality of the rupture of the frame in theatre – resides in the fact that the latter, unlike the framed picture (or the finished film or the written story), takes place in actu (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 100).

As the stage reality, unlike other realities (literature, movies, virtual reality), has no ontological boundaries, it lays emphasis on artistic boundaries. These boundaries are frequently manifested as a continuous game involving setting and removing functional boundaries: Artistry functionally closes the ontologically open reality, thus causing the transition of the physically objective reality into the artistically conditional reality. We can observe this process at the theatre. The same process differentiates the theatre reality from externally similar and genetically preceding realities of shows, games, mystery and ritual actions, the ontology of which is quite homogeneous and has no dialectic duality of the theatrical conditionality-actuality.

This artistic conditionality entails not just a position of ‘outsideness’ (like the standard functional conditionality), but *involved outsideness* in relation to what is

happening in reality and/ or in a person himself/herself and to his/her actions. This involved outsidership constitutes, according to M. Bakhtin, the essence of artistry, while involved disinterestedness, according to I. Kant, forms appreciation of the object of perception.

Epic theatre of Brecht

Brecht, a leading campaigner against naturalistic (Aristotelian) theatre, had the courage to break the illusion that a theatrical performance is more realistic than it actually is, which is achieved by *emphasized* demonstration of the self-discrepancy between the actor and the character: The actor does not pretend to be the person he is not. “At no moment must he go so far as to be wholly transformed into the character played” (BRECHT, 1949/1964, p. 193)

In Brecht’s opinion, the theatre that is no longer ashamed of its conditionality can only benefit from this. Brecht uses the so-called alienation effect. The alienation does not disguise the conditionality of the theatrical performance; more than that, it intentionally emphasizes it through different formal (technical) and substantive methods: By making the familiar strange or by choosing a conventional place of action⁴, set change in front of the audience, etc. All the above, along with ‘naive’ laconism of the scenic design and stage-setting, was intended to keep the audience from becoming emotionally involved in the performance, to focus their attention on the hidden agenda rather than on unravelling of the plot.

The power of the stage reality is released when there are no attempts to pretend that the performance is real life caught in the act and can be used, according to Brecht, to achieve more pressing goals. “The object of the A-effect is to alienate the social gest underlying every incident. By social gest is meant the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships prevailing between people of a given period” (BRECHT, 1951/1964, p. 139)

V. Shklovsky’s concept of estrangement is similar to the successive concept of alienation effect. To avoid confusion we should differentiate between two interrelated meanings of the term ‘estrangement’: the narrow one defining it as a specific artistic *device* of deviation from the semantic pattern, and the broad one where it is understood as a universal, underlying artistic *principle*. We can say that the estrangement principle

⁴ ‘a fairytale country’ like China in *The Good Person of Szechwan*, or India in *Man Equals Man*, also *A Man's A Man*.

(and its narrowing down to devices of estrangement/ alienation) is an embodiment of the subject position of the Observer whose estranging (alienating) approach to reality transforms it into conditional reality. By turning glasses (conditionality) from a tool of reality perception into an object of examination, this principle adds clarity to the conditionality (sign and social conventionality) between us and the reality (of the text or actual life).

The function of the estrangement concept is described by B. Paramonov:

Let me note that estrangement, as defined by Shklovsky who coined it, is the device of shifting of semantic planes or, in other words, meanings of the object: The object is seen not in its cultural function, but from the angle of its physical composition. The semiotics terminology defines it as elimination of the sign. There is downgrading, i.e. reducing something in value and importance. For example, the ballet performance is described not as a meaningful theatrical performance, but as a sequence of incomprehensible body movements of men and women in gaudy costumes. That was the way Natasha Rostova perceived the ballet performance she was attending in *War and Peace* (PARAMONOV, 1997, p. 76).

Thus, despite their similarity, the estrangement concept works in two ways: Through intensifying and intentional exposure of conditionality of the events, and through elimination of the semiotic component, when its function is revealed by intended (or innocently unintended) elimination of conditionality: The events taking place on the stage lose their sense without it. To some extent, the second approach brings to mind the work with a sign at the so-called concrete theatre.

One should speak here of concrete theatre. Just as Theo van Doesburg and Kandinsky preferred the term 'concrete painting' or 'concrete art' over the commonly used term 'abstract art' because it positively emphasizes the immediately perceivable concreteness of colour, line and surface instead of (negatively) referring to its non-representational nature, in the same way the non-mimetic but formal structure or formalist aspects of postdramatic theatre are to be interpreted as 'concrete theatre'. For here theatre exposes itself as an art in space, in time, with human bodies and in general with all the means included in the entire art work, just as much as in painting colour, surface, tactile structure and materiality could become autonomous objects of aesthetic experience (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 98).

In both cases we deal with the excessive emphasis on only one component of the sign: either on the content – and then we have to deal with displacement toward conditionality, or on the form – thus entailing displacement toward meaningless, asemiotic 'lifelikeness' making us see spots in pictures and texts or meaningless gestures and body movements in theatre performances, which further leads to elimination of the sign as such. Yet, no matter how the sign (or more correctly, the

system of signifiers and signified) is handled by these two approaches, they have the same goal and the same outcome: Estrangement does not reduce lifelikeness to conditionality; on the opposite, it revives phenomena and things reduced by our automated perception. “The ‘A-effect’ consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one’s attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. What is obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend” (BRECHT, 1951/1964, p. 143-144).

Estrangement through exposure of conventional attitudes of the daily language revives the word by intensifying its initial image-bearing capacity. By altering and distorting the perception we can reveal non-obviousness of the perceived as well as multidimensionality and multi-worldness of the existing world. When not exaggerated and deformed, the customary (and the constituent conditional) is so natural that it looks real and true, calling for attention only after it has been distorted to become unusual and more visible – just like we pay attention to our breathing only when we have a problem with it.

Similar to the involvement effect underlying the virtual or immersion reality effectiveness, alienation/ estrangement effects are built on inversion or elimination of the dichotomies of meaningful/ meaningless. From the perspective of the ‘natural attitude’ compliant with the everyday practical approach to the world, these dichotomies place apart the pressing actual reality and the conditional reality. Such inversion of the dichotomies of meaningful/ meaningless is well illustrated by the homemakers who care more about twists and turns in soap operas than about problems they have in their own life, not to mention those for whom spending time in virtual reality has turned into addiction.

We deal with the effects, which by using the inherently non-actual conditionality of a text, are able to create their own ‘actuality’, not inferior, but frequently superior in its effect to our daily life, not only and not so much by using deceptive, illusionary methods, but, on the contrary, by combating any chance of their appearance. These effects making it possible for the text to acquire ‘semiotic non-transparency’, in which the sign turns from the agent into the object, into “*what is looked at*” rather than “*what is looked through*” (RICOEUR, 1990, p. 446), help the conditional reality of the text turn into a self-sufficient *metaphoric* world.

Although alienation/ estrangement effects are consonant with the involvement effect when we speak about interest encouragement, their purpose is different: Involvement helps *accept* the events *as they are*; it generates trust frequently growing into self-deception; alienation, on the contrary, is intended to expose, challenge, criticize and finally combat and alter the events or rather the obsolete perception of them. In a way, these effects constitute a semiotic manifestation of functional conditionality.

Estrangement/ alienation effects are consistent with *functional closeness*, which allows the subject to take the position of 'outsideness' in relation to the events – the position that makes it possible to unveil and expose the conditional nature of the existing social and political actual reality, its mythological nature (following Barthes' theory). While traditional myths of the primitive society, as shown by C. Lévi-Strauss and E. Meletinskii, developed fundamental oppositions of culture to resolve the contradictions produced by it, contemporary myths, on the contrary, are intended not to eliminate them, but to naturalize them. Therefore, the central goal of Brecht's epic theatre, for which he invented all his innovative techniques, is not only to distance the audience from the events that were happening on stage so that they could think about them critically, but also to teach them to question the world they live in. More than that, they should be encouraged to participate actively in real life, for the theatre, according to Brecht (here he applies K. Marx' thought of the purpose of philosophy to the theatre) is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.

The involvement effect corresponds to *functional openness*; it is intended to place us into the conditional reality of the text and to make us sympathize with it as is it were the real life reality, while retaining the intrinsically conditional (ontologically or artistically) nature of the events. The main promoter and theorist of the involvement effect at the theatre was K. Stanislavski, whose concept of the 'psychological' theatre (the theatre of empathy) was based on Diderot's opposition between the art of empathy and the art of representation. K. Stanislavski and his followers required from actors complete experiencing of the role, mental and physical integration with the created image. Brecht's epic theatre is based on the denial of the involvement effect.

Brecht delivered to a student theater in Stockholm in May 1939:

If the intercourse between stage and public were to occur on the basis of sympathetic understanding, then at any given moment the spectator could have seen only as much as the hero saw with whom he was joined in sympathetic understanding. And

towards particular situations on the stage opposite him he could only have such emotional responses as the 'mood' on stage permitted. The observations, emotions, and perceptions of the spectators were the same as those which brought the characters on stage into line (BRECHT, 1961, p. 12).

Brecht used Shakespeare's King Lear to demonstrate ambiguity and manipulativity of the involvement effect: A talented actor unfailingly made the audience feel the emotions experienced by the character he was representing. Are such emotions always righteous, right and justified? Brecht asked: "Shall the spectator of our time share Lear's wrath and approve of it, while in essence sympathizing with the thrashing of the servant, carried out on Lear's orders?" (BRECHT, 1961, p. 13). In Brecht's opinion, only the alienation method makes it possible for the audience to get free of the involvement charm and to take an unbiased look at the emotions, feelings and actions of the characters.

On the other hand, Brecht, as a director, readily used Stanislavski's methods⁵, seeing the main difference in the ideological intentions, in the 'super-objective', for which the performance is staged. This task inspired him to introduce the concept of alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*). He also offered to break the 'fourth wall' (which functions as the ontological boundary absent at the theatre); he tried to overcome the confrontation between epic poetry and tragedy, which can be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Following the enlighteners (J.W. Goethe and F. Schiller (*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*), G. Lessing (*Hamburg Dramaturgy*), to a certain extent, D. Diderot (*Paradox of the Actor*), who assumed that epic and drama could be combined, he believed it was necessary to overcome the radicalness of Aristotle's position based on the assumption of their fundamental difference⁶ (See Table1).

⁵ On the other hand, Stanislavski, as a practitioner, departed from the extremes of his position, as "One cannot 'represent' *truthfully* without experiencing anything. However, one cannot experience *expressively* without 'representing' anything" (Zakhava, 2008).

⁶ Works by M. Bulgakov, A. Chekhov, L. Frank and other writers show how difficult it is to maintain the "purity" of literature genres: They are still epic writers even in drama (see E. Ponomareva, 2012, 77).

Table 1 - Relationship between the epic and drama as literature genres⁷

	Epic Theatre	Dramatic Theatre
Material	Word Statement	Action The word turns into an action; the line can change the course of action Exception: plays by Chekhov
Basis	Narration <i>epic</i> ('informing') <i>narrative</i>	Staginess <i>On-stage representation</i> performed from the perspective of the character
Speech structures	<i>Invariance of the speech structure as a combination of the representing speech (the so-called 'author's speech' of the narrator or story-teller) and the represented speech</i>	Statements are <i>generally the represented</i> ('object') speech of characters
Relationship between the outside and inside	Access to the inner world of characters is open within the focalization zero boundaries, when the narrative is given from the perspective of the all-knowing author, and within the focalization interne, when narrative is given from the perspective of a character (see: GENETTE, 1983, p. 189-206). The <i>focalisation externe</i> , when the narrative is given from the perspective of the impartial narrator who has no access to the character's mind and due to his/her extreme impartiality results in prevalence of the drama in the text	Prevalence of the <i>external</i> over the internal and the <i>standard</i> (repeated forms of behavior) over the one-of-the-kind. The inner world of characters is manifested through external actions, while their thoughts are expressed through words. Hence, the established conditionality: aside lines supposedly not heard by other characters, but heard by the audience
Unfolding of the story	<i>Retardation is of primary importance</i> Exceptions: detective plays the thrilling nature of which requires considerable dramatization and theatricalization	Cross-cutting suspense and, consequently, the final climax. Exception: <i>Hamlet</i> by Shakespeare
Essence of conflict	The conflict stems not from the confrontation between world forces, but from the human positions resulting from the individual's self-definition in relation to the existing world forces.	The conflict is caused by the clash of the characters' positions resulting from their self-definition in relation to the confronting world forces of Chaos and Order

⁷ The table is based on the book: TAMARCHENKO, N.; TYUPA, V.; BROITMAIN, S. Theory of Artistic Discourse. In: *Theoretical Poetics Theory of Literature*: Student book: 2 V. Vol. 1. Eds. by N. Tamarchenko. Moscow: Akademia, 2004.

The table is rather sketchy. Exceptions prove it.

Time	Existence of the time distance between the event that is told about and the event of the narrative: conditional time of perception of the story by the listener-reader is always <i>after</i> the time of the event that takes place in the real life of the character	Both events and both realities – of the character and the reader-spectator – coincide in the present ('present empathy') of the dramatic action and empathy: the point of their convergence is the catastrophe of the drama and its catharsis
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Brecht also shared Schiller's and Goethe's ideas about the need to attenuate the emotional impact of tragedy/drama, which, according to Aristotle, was essential for achieving catharsis. Only attenuation will help achieve balanced, rational, intellectual, and, therefore, critical perception of the events happening on stage. The theatre must persuade rather than make believe.

Later on, he moved from the idea of an epic dramatic work to the idea of an epic theatre. The following methods were used: The author's involvement in the play, "continuous vibration between the first and third person" (BARBOY, 1988, p. 110-111), using of music and songs to interpret and evaluate the action (similar to an ancient choir), rejection of catharsis, and by working with the performance time overcoming its ontologically determined 'realisticity' through the "distinctive distance between the time of the playwright, characters and spectators" (MALYUTINA, 2012, p. 33). The name of his theatre (which, however, began to embarrass him by its inaccuracy) captures the idea to combine the epic narrative with the dramatic action.

The theory of the epic theatre had a profound effect on many directors-innovators of the 1940s – 1970s, including G. Strehler, P. Brook, Yu. Lyubimov, etc. It inspired development of new theatre theories and directing systems. The two trends acquired clearness - the trend toward synthesis or polarization of the theatre and life, the performance and empathy, the body and mind, literalness and symbolism, abstract and concrete, casualness and phantasmagoria, spiritual practice of religion and physical practice of theatre (see Brook's experiments), the epic and drama, literature and theatre. The confrontation between opposite trends in reflection and practice of the theatre became more distinct and intense: between the 'Rich' and 'Poor' theatre (see Grotowski), naivety and sophistication, naturalness and artificiality; clearness and absurd (Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Sławomir Mrożek, Tom Stoppard, and Friedrich Dürrenmatt); the idea of the performance-text and the idea of

the theatre-action; alienation (Brecht) and spontaneity of the 'powerful' gesture, 'ruthless' experience (Artaud).

Lehmann justly thinks that post-drama is a natural stage of development of Brecht's anti-Aristotle idea. He builds his concept of post-drama on the theatre practice and theoretical thoughts of Brecht and Müller, Artaud and Grotowski, Kantor. The connection between the dramatic text and the performance text is jeopardized. But it is not for nothing that "Sarrazac strives to highlight that the drama is renewing thanks to the disunion of the drama and the stage: the emancipating of the *mise en scène* from the dramatic form⁸ provides a new life to the latter" (BOUKO, 2009, p. 26).

Theatricality is losing the distinctiveness of its contours in the contemporary reflection and theatre practices after Peter Stein, Jerzy Marian Grotowski, Heiner Müller and Robert Wilson. Yet, modern dramaturgy does not lose its ground. Quite a few of its representatives (for example, Sigarev, Kolyada, Vyrypaev (Russia) and Joël Pommerat (France) are actively engaged in stage direction; therefore, it is too soon to speak of the lost connection between literature and theatre.

Even the postdramatic theory, contrary to Jean-Pierre Sarrazac's radical view, is not a 'putting to death' of drama, but is a reflection of a natural transformation of drama, which does not want to be confined within the boundaries, set by Aristotle. Rather, it might opens up new horizons for drama. But we have yet to explore the possibilities of the development of drama in the future.

Conclusion

In our article, we tried to show the difference between literary text of drama and theatrical text of performance. Texts of performances are richer and more diverse in regard to semiotics, communicativeness and ontology than the verbal texts of drama. They are synthetic, multilingual, and "all players in the theatrical line of communication (director, actor, viewer) are more active than in that of literary works" (PESOCHINSKY, 2011, p. 74). Communication in theater also has a reputation for being more intensive than reading, which helps amplify the performance's effect. However, the esthetic influence of theatrical performance on its viewers robs them of the freedom to explore

⁸ Based on Peter Szondi's theory, Jean-Pierre Sarrazac identifies such features of the dramatic form crisis: the crisis of a 'fable'; the crisis of the character, which is replaced by the Figure, the recite, the voice; the crisis of a dialogue; the crisis of the stage-audience relationship, which calls into question the textocentrism, as well as the text itself (SARRAZAC, 2012, p. 214).

the imagery and ideas in drama. Classical theater directors cut through the boundaries of imagination, association and second-guessing, instead imposing their own interpretation of the work. In this sense, the text of a classical performance is more closed, artistically, than that of literary works since it has considerably fewer readings. This “occasionally causes people who are sensitive to verbal creativity to become mistrustful of the theater” (KHALIZEV, 1988, p. 22).

We can therefore state, contrary to Hans-Thies Lehmann’s opinion, that the confrontation between literary texts of drama and theatrical texts of performance have deep roots and stems from the fact that they belong to the conditional realities of different ontological statuses. But, in addition to their confrontation, we can also see their proclivity for convergence. The inherent congruence of dramatic literature with playfulness and action helps it overcome its closed ontological state.

A new phenomenon in theatrical practices is the reverse process, namely, the tendency of texts of performance to overcome its artistically closed nature to approach that of artistically open literary texts of drama. In this case, the sketchiness of dramatic literature, which might seem like a drawback when compared to the detail of epic literature, leaves a wider scope not only for the imagination, but also for viewers to think about the author’s position.

The text of performance aspires to reach that same wide scope, including by acquiring functional openness. It is in these *functionally* open conditional realities that the play on statuses of the Observer and the Participant becomes possible, as, for example, in the experiments of J.M. Grotowski, A. Artaud and their successors, who challenged the traditional concept of the theater actor and viewer. However, this is a topic for later research.

One can observe modern theatrical practices, in their struggle with the literariness as “the ‘principles of narration and figuration’ and the order of a ‘fable’ (story)” (LEHMANN, 2006, p. 18). But at the same time they unwittingly revive literariness as text’s artistic openness due to their desire to become an artistically open reality. Literature will long remain a necessary component in the theater precisely because of its artistic potential.

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