

REVERSIBILITY OF THE EPIC AND DRAMATIC IN THE RUSSIAN DRAMATIC ART OF THE LATE XX – EARLY XXI CENTURIES

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Abstract :The article deals with the study of the phenomenon of epization of modern «new drama» at the turn of XX – XXI centuries. This issue was turned to in the works by V.E. Golovchiner, T.V.Zhurcheva, D. Khakimova, who tried to offer an explanation for this phenomenon. The investigation carried out keeps seeking for the specialists in the study of literature in this field and develops the existing conceptual messages. In the course of the work the authors view the reasons of emerging epization in “new drama”, and also put forward their own hypothesis of the mentioned process. The article provides an analysis of the form of representation of the strategy of narrativization of the dramatic text, marks their variability. It is proved that the goal sets of the strategy of narrativization in “new drama” are the development of a new ethics and the solution of the problem of self-identification. The primary results of the survey are the conclusions that the originality of “new drama” of the turn of XX – XXI centuries is determined by just the reversibility of the epic and dramatic, and the explication of the process of dedramatization, emphasizing on it turn out to be the way of destruction of the mechanism of the sense of global consciousness, devaluation of the very foundations of self-identification. To counterbalance this, the performative character «Me-Narrative» and modelling new ethics are constructed by means of lacunas, appearing at the intersection of a dramatic component, and for account of the strategy of narrativization.

Keywords: modern Russian dramatic art, “new drama” of the turn of XX – XXI centuries, epization, narrativization, self-identification, Me-Narrative.

1 Introduction

One of the specific features of “new drama” of the turn of XX – XXI centuries, which is invariably emphasized in the studies of literature, is a tendency of epization of dramatic text. As it is known, the process of epization of drama, frequent variants of manifestation of which can be seen in dramatic art of different epochs, in the literature of the 20th century it acquires an extremely extensive if not a total character. The majority of researchers associate it with a world outlook progress that happened at the turn of XIX – XX centuries and took manifested itself, according to V.E. Golovnicher, in “trying of many artists to find a dramatic form being able in an organic way to incarnate a new developing reality, to conceive it in a variety of manifestations, contradiction and complexity (Golovnicher,2007). It is “this situation in which there revived, actualized, transformed, in modern conditions, the epic attitude to the reality being inherent in ancient folk consciousness, epic mentality – mentality, which is determined by an interest <...> to co-being of many and different, equally important persons” (Golovnicher,2007).

The result of this world outlook progress is the activation of a “substantive” conflict (V.E. Golovnicher), the basis of which is the problematization of the position of a man in a contradictory world order. The artistic representation of the conflict provoked the extension of “intergeneric diffusion”, the examples of which are easy to find out in “new drama” of the end of XIX – the beginning of XX centuries and in the experiments of art of the middle and the second half of XX century.

Moreover, epization of drama is determined by the change of the angle of perception of a new developing reality. “The end of heroic individualism” (P. Pavis) supposes giving prominence to everyday discourse with “a common man” included in it, which inevitably leads to relaxation of dramatic tension. This thesis is developed by T.V. Zhurcheva, noting, that “trying to show the

course of everyday life puts up drama to epic devices, to “de-dramatization”, relaxation of dramatic tension for greater insight into details and particulars of being of “shallow person” (Zhurcheva,2015).

2 Methods

In the main, the methodology of literary study of the dramatic text used in the analysis of the material is analogous to the one used by the colleagues from Kazan Federal University worked on the dramatical pieces (Lisenko,2016; Lisenko et al, 2016; Prokhorova et al, 2016 ; Zavyalova et al, 2016 ; Zueva,2016; Zueva,2016).The case in point is that in the first place the structural and semantic analysis that enables to analyze the text as the system of mutually dependent elements. At the same time, we used the elements of the narrative analysis, since, as we will note further, one of the subjects of investigation is the strategy of narrativization.

3 Results and Discussions

The process of epization of drama at the contemporary stage, as regarding the previous turn of the centuries, is determined by the whole complex of reasons. But in contrast with external similarity the qualitative change of the very process of life, its conversion, according to A. Strindberg, into “fast, hysterical” time loses the position of governing factor. There is no doubt that epization as a form of finding an adequate language of fast changing and regenerating reality is completely applicable, for example, to the technique verbatim, but does not utterly exhaust the all variety of “new drama”.

Not groundlessly the scholars mention the change of the type of thinking of the moderns as one more factor. Thus, D. Khakimova motivates the emergence of discreteness as one of the determining features of “new drama” by the type of consciousness of the modern man, governed, on the one hand, by the influence of new means of communication, on the other hand, the totality of visual and clip thinking. In the first case, the researcher ties up the endlessness of the process of innovations with the tendency to “single consumption”, the adequate cultural expression of which is easiness, brightness and visibility of perception. In the second case one draws a straight parallel between clip thinking and “assembly” language of “new drama” (Khakimova,2009).

Notwithstanding the correctness of such statements one should note that the explanations from the point of view of functionality only are not evidently enough. In our opinion, the process of epization is no longer an exceptionally artistic reaction to the change of the nature of life/ time/ history and at the same time does not become the total sum of functional signs of new artistic language. It is as essential attribute of the changed dramatic nature of the text; in this case it seems to be more justified to speak not on the process of epization, but on the strategy of narrativization.

When the researchers say about the process of epization, in most cases they highlight either its formal expression, for example, pointing to the spatial «dispersion» of the «extending Universe» by Chekhov (B. Zingerman); or semantic change. So, E.L. Fink, characterizing the problem of epic character of Russian drama, notes that: “epic outset in drama is the tendency to overcoming the limitation of time and space of dramatic act, extension of the circles, the events of everyday life, psychological motivations” (Fink,2001).

But in the case of “new drama” of the turn of XX – XXI centuries neither of the aspects are topping. It is no accident that in literary studies, covering this problem, rather often one can encounter the definition of dialogue prose, for example, as

applied to the plays of E. Grishkovets. Thus, E.Y. Lazareva, illustrating the thesis about non-standard feature of “new drama” basing on the plays of E. Grishkovets notes that “on the principle of “the stream of consciousness” the author transforms a dramaturgic act into a reproduction of the stories about life attaching at the same time a particular importance to details <...> The action in such plays, as a rule, “blurred”, it is motivated not by a deed, but a word <the author’s cursive – A.A., T.V., O.O.>” (Lazareva, 2012).

An evidence of correlation of the changed dramatic nature and strategy of narrativization are prose experiments of “new” dramatists. Here at least one could say about two striking illustrations: it is an adaptation to the novel stage by E. Grishkovets («Asphalt», «Shirt») and by brothers Presnyakovs (remixes «Playing the Victim» and «Europe – Asia»). Fictionality of the novel form is in both cases provided by the projection of narrative strategies of drama texts of the authors already into another generic and genre form. So, the narrative structure of «Asphalt» and «Shirt» practically reproduce the similar structure of E. Grishkovets’s monodramas in full. The structure of «Playing the Victim» by brothers Presnyakovs is a simple succession of dramatized fragments the number of which has a principally variation character. An accented staging of the remix novel «Europe – Asia» also becomes a sequel to the strategies of the original play.

In certain cases the strategy of narrativization in «new drama» is pedaled by minus-technique, the basis of which is imitation of the conflict of drama. A telling illustration is the play by brothers Presnyakovs “Playing the Victim”, where the Hamlet code fixes two drama conflicts at once, each of which is partially explicated in the play. The first conflict is the generation gap, potentially arranged in a substantial key; the second – the Hamlet conflict, preserving formally the same substantial grounds. But they both prove to the same extent to be profane, by means of narrative techniques (style travestition of the Shakespearean text), and in the view of drama proper. In the first case it comes to light in culmination of the fictitious conflict of generations, its function is performed by the monologue of captain, the topic of which is infantilization of “children”. In the second case the revealing of the fictitious nature of conflict is an imitating character of Valya’s “serious” monologues.

At the same time the drama conflict is decoded not only by means of the Hamlet code, manifesting but not problematizing the aggregate of the substantial problems, but a peculiar correlation between the physiological and ideological in the plays of «new drama». A.G. Dugin, appealing to the theoretical constructions of Gilbert Durand and Michel Maffesoli, considers the process of demolishing the logos in post-modern, its converging to logistics with its further destructing: “In this way the transition from logistics to logeme occurs. Logeme in sociological sense is the splitting up of logistic rationality into more minor, subindividual level. The object of regulating for a logeme is the individual’s body, psyche and the objects closely adjacent to them – clothes, foodstuff, minute emotions, emotional experiences, feelings. The structures of logeme operates with are so tiny that are at the last level of the logical and in danger of slipping off into nothing, that is, into unconsciousness, into myth, into nocturne. <...> Nocturne has never been admitted to the society directly, preliminarily it was necessarily exposed to exorcism. But when the society self-destructs in favour of the post-society, nocturne has no longer restrictions, and it can finally stand where could not before. There are two obvious signs of nocturne arising in post-modern – food industry and sex industry. <...> Post-modern, liquidating the society, liquidates the grounds for censoring nocturne» (Dugin, 2017). The result of dissemination of “nocturne of mytheme” is euphemisation of the existence, the presentation of which are mythemes of food and sex, including in their anormative manifestations.

From this point of view any emotional monologue in «new drama» is initially fictional, fixing already lost coordinate system

of personal self-identification. It is no accident that the same monologue of the captain ends with the request for food, and Valya’s «mousetrap» turns into family dinner. And if “nocturne mythemes” describe the changed character of the contemporaneity or modern aesthetic forms (these two aspects are realized in different creative systems) with the greatest succession, the character of expression of the mythemes is the strategy of narrativization, representing the performative aesthetics of “new drama”.

The forms of representation of the strategy of narrativization in “new drama” are extremely variable: these are the explication of the narrator being characteristic for Vyrypaev drama, and the emphasis of the narrative nature on genre level, which is inherent in drama of V. Levanov (“brand play”) in “Beata Ksenia from Petersburg in Existence”, the life story in “True Life History of Bloody Lady of the Manor Daria Saltykova” “political information” в “Love for a Russian Bast Sandal”, unearthed de-dramatization in “Sense of Beard” of K. Dragunskaya and so on.

But the variation of representations is combined with sufficiently distinct and extremely rather narrow conceptual basis of the strategy of narrativization. In all cases this strategy is oriented towards the realization of the performative nature of «new drama», acting out mainly two problem blocks: the formation of new ethics and the problem of subjectivity. The both problem blocks are closely connected with the dominant situation of post-modern, being not only a new art paradigm, but qualitative change of the mind and self-identification of man of the turn of 20th-21st centuries.

The character of research reception of post-modern is rather varied, starting from its alignment «in the predicted progressive model, which supposes indisputability of the linear vector path from modern man to the post-modern man following him and then the post-post-modern, therefore post- here is mainly construed only in time, and not post in a qualitative sense» (Zueva, 2016) and ending with the statement of his true self, which is expressed already in the nominations «alter modern» and “trans modern”. O.A. Mitroshenkov characterizing the epoch of post modern points to its attributive features such as virtualization of space of social interactions; creation of technomages being original attractors of social interactions; “glocalization” of communities within the frames of globalization and transsentimentalism (Mitroshenkov, 2017).

Each of these features is easy to be projected into space of culture determining the picture of modern literature as well. Such projection is especially evident in relation to, being, according to the scholar, a meaningful aspect of post-modernism and becoming a basis for «new sentimentality» (if to use M. Epstein’s terminology). The forms of realization of this conception are ultimately variative, beginning with sentimentalist discourse, “new biographism”, domination of fairy-tale strategy and ending with performative nature of «new drama». At the same time the uniting basis is an axiological function of the conception of “new sincerity”.

Respectively, one of the targets of the strategy of narrativization in “new drama” is exactly the formation of new ethics. E. Kurant, studying the functioning of the narrator in plays of I. Vyrypaev, notes that the «level of performativeness and visualization of his dramatical pieces allows <...> to consider them just as the text, a kind of the score for reading from stage <...> In so doing, the utterance is oriented towards the very act of the utterance, not identical with the presentation of the act or visualization of the interaction. <...> using in his dramatics the narrative strategies of the epic texts, Vyrypaev seeks for ideological conception for allegorical plan, turning to the problems of human existence and limiting sense <...> depicting the cyclic iterations and isomorphism of the closed space, the order and firmness of the bounds of which are confirmed» (Kurant, 2012).

The second variant of goal-setting of the strategy of narrativization is the decision of the problem of self-identification, like in the first case, pretty much determined by the situation of post-modern. If the substantial conflict of the first border-line fixed the relations between man and life as a philosophical category, and now «virtualisation of the space of social interactions» practically annihilate it in full. Self-identification is reduced to finding «the self», including the physical in an extremely virtualized world. At the same time the problem field of the process of self-identification in de-dramatized «new drama» is connected with the inner antagonism of devaluated and discredited word, on the one hand, and verbally arranged reflection as the only way of self-identification, on the other hand. The very obvious variant of solution of this contradiction is the construction of “Me-Narrative” in dramatics of E. Grishkovets. In other cases “Me-Narrative” is designed more indirectly.

4 Summary

In this way, the activation and extension of the epic dominant in «new drama» are not quite placed in the logics of the epization tendency, characteristic for dramatic art of the 20th century on the whole. The originality of the last half century is determined by the very reversibility of the epic and dramatic; explication of the process of dedramatization, accentuation of attention at it proves to be the way of destroying the traditional mechanism of the world perception, devaluation of the very principles of self-identification. In contrast to it, the performative nature of “Me-Narrative” and modelling new ethics are constructed by means of both the lacunas occurring at breaking a dramatic component, and the strategy of narrativization.

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