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A Linguistic Exploration of Literary Text and Cultural Stage Activity in Drama

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ABSTRACT

It is already known that the poetic literary text has led to the stage respectively the theater. Indeed, it has accustomed us to the birth of the theater. However, the theater has significantly defined the nature of the dramatic literary work that has been performed on the stage. A dramatic work on stage is associated with and equated to some arts: the art of word and figurative art, the art of music, the artists' game (actors), pantomime, and dance; hereupon it takes on a wide and profound cultural character. The literary text staging, requires the recognition and enforcement of certain rules that constrain its full implementation, and in the meantime, the direct impact of communication and influence on the audience. The very nature of a literary text, the way of elaboration, and the expressive poetic system condition: the director utilizes a certain modality to put a relevant text on the scene and a different method for another text's nature. He/she often adapts the text of a dramatic work according to the intended scenic concept, depending on the circumstances and the cultural and social contexts when that dramatic work appears. This ongoing interaction between the literary text and its theatrical presentation reflects the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of drama, which continuously adapts to the needs of its audience.

Keywords: Dramatic Text; Poetry; Performance; Communication; Expression; Theater; Genres; Evolution

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1. Introduction

Dramatic works, specifically poetic literary texts written to be performed on stage, best demonstrate the complexity of literature as the art of words, with the genres and forms through which it exists. Likewise, dramatic works give literature an extraordinary breadth and significance as a spiritual and intellectual creation, and they testify to the multifaceted importance of human poetic communication and existence. This vast world of the art of words has been the guiding path of the stage. However, bringing such a text to life had to be accomplished in accordance with the rules of drama, which over time became standardized. This communication between the artistic, poetic text and the art of words, up to its realization on stage, has been viewed as a historical outline through various scholars and their perspectives.

2. Methodology

For the preparation of this research paper, we have primarily used the analytical (of analysis), research, and comparative (of comparison) methods.

The first method – the analytical method – was used to illuminate the important phenomena of the written poetic text and the spoken poetic text on stage; their functioning.

The second method – the research method – was used to find and utilize literature on the nature and peculiarities of the poetic text and the poetic text performed on stage.

The third method – the comparative method – was used to compare and observe the differences within the written poetic text and the spoken poetic text on stage, the communication methods, and the possibilities of aesthetic influence.

3. On Literary Dramatic Works

Dramatic literary works, as expressive linguistic structures, justify the main genres of the art of words: poetry, prose, and drama (playwriting). In the past, they were called dramatic poetry because their text was primarily written in respective metric verses, expressed through numerous and diverse characters. Speaking about the balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Thomas Eliot writes: "In this scene, Shakespeare achieves a perfection of verse,

which, being perfect, neither he nor anyone else surpassed – for this particular purpose. The constraint, artificiality, and poetic embellishment of his early verses finally gave way to a simplicity, to the language of natural speech, and this conversational language was again elevated to great poetry, which at its core is dramatic: because the scene has a structure in which every line is an essential part"^[1].

There have been (and still are) cases where a dramatic text has been written in prose, meaning the dialogues and monologues are expressed in prose form. However, there have also been works of drama that have combined both literary forms within them: poetry and prose.

Precisely the diversity of texts used in dramatic works – dialogue, monologue, and their interweaving in verse and prose – greatly challenges the issue of categorizing and definitively classifying works of the art of words into literary genres and types. This is also supported by the thought of Horkheimer and Adorno, expressed in their study *Dialektik der Aufklärung (Dialectic of Enlightenment)*, published in 1944 (Los Angeles): "Classification is a condition for recognition; it is not recognition itself, while recognition eliminates classification."

Similarly, the distinguished scholar Cvetan Todorov points out the following: "The issue of genres is one of the oldest issues in poetics, and from Antiquity to the present day, the definition of genres, their number, and their reciprocal relations have never ceased to be a subject of discussion. Today, this problem is generally considered to stem from the structural typology of discourses, of which literary discourse is just one special case. Since, however, this typology – in its entirety – has been relatively little elaborated, it is preferable to approach its study indirectly through literary genres.

First, we must discard the false problem and cease identifying genres with the names of genres. Some labels remain overly popularized ("tragedy," "comedy," "sonnet," "elegy," etc.). It is nonetheless evident that if the concept of genre is to play a role in the theory of literary discourse, it cannot be defined solely based on names: some genres have never been named, and others are grouped under a single name despite differences in their characteristics. The study of genres must be conducted based on their structural characteristics and not on their names.

4. The Issue of Genres in Literature

Further clarifying the issue of genres in literature, Todorov states: "Within every period, genres form a system; they can only be defined in their reciprocal relationships. There will no longer be a unique genre called 'tragedy': tragedy will be redefined, at every moment in literary history, in relation to other coexisting genres. Here, general poetics is abandoned to delve into the history of literature [...] A (partial) transgression of genre is almost inevitable: otherwise, the work would lack the minimum necessary originality (this requirement has varied greatly depending on the era). The violation of genre rules does not deeply affect the literary system^[2]. Poetic literary texts, whether lyrical, epic, or dramatic, share the same main component: poetic language, figurative expression, the potential for multidimensional artistic communication, and the (likewise multidimensional) aesthetic impact on the recipient. Thus, the text of a dramatic work intended for stage performance differs from other poetic texts due to certain components, especially the mode of communication, reception, and impact.

When we read a literary text, we "speak" to ourselves with "our own voice" (read: and with our silence). In contrast, on stage, the messages come to us through the voice of another, the artist, who recites the text - thus "speaking" to us with their voice. From this, poetic messages arise from the respective text.

Speaking about his experience as a playwright and the process of bringing a dramatic work to life on stage, Eliot states: "The first thing I discovered, which has any significance, was that a writer who has worked for years and achieved some success in writing other types of poetry must approach writing drama in verse with a different state of mind than the one he is accustomed to in his previous work. When writing other types of verse, I imagine one writes, so to speak, in terms of one's own voice: the text is how it sounds when you read it to yourself. Because you are the one speaking. The issue of communication, of what the reader will derive from it, is not the most important thing: if your poem satisfies you, you can hope that, eventually, readers will come to accept it as well"^[1].

Written dramatic works, as has happened with certain other genres and forms, have their roots in theater and oral theatrical pieces, which existed long before the invention of writing and before texts were legitimized through written

signs. In a distant past, oral theatrical pieces were not written (and therefore not read) but were only performed as oral improvisations on stage. On the other hand, written dramatic texts were both read and performed on stage.

Thus, it can be said that written dramatic works have lived a dual life: they have been read like any written poetic work but have also been performed on stage, communicating through this medium. This "dual life" has given written dramatic works great importance in terms of communication and influence, as occurred, for example, in ancient Greece, where dramatic activity - particularly tragedy - experienced an extraordinary flourishing. The influence of these works is reflected in the creations of later authors not only in Greece but also across Europe and beyond.

Within the oral literary tradition, dramatic texts have been constructed based on the particularities of other types of texts that were legitimized through specific models. In essence, they were born out of improvisation or the "school of the listening," as happened with some types, such as laments, wailing, or epic creations. These forms (and some others) were improvised in specific situations and circumstances, and they were never finished, fixed texts. Naturally, in oral theatrical texts, essential elements such as repetition and formulaic expressions were used, as they are a general characteristic of oral literature.

Oral theatrical texts are particularly connected to ritual songs, which in the past were widespread among every people (some of them still exist today or are reconstructed and renewed in various forms). These texts were passed down from generation to generation through two main forms: when an individual sang or recited a text during the execution of a specific ritual, and others listened, or when several people sang it (oral narration did not happen in this case), also within the ritual process, where others listened, and there was a possibility that even the audience (those present) participated actively in some way.

Written and staged dramatic works are different from the oral theatrical texts mentioned. Firstly, the written dramatic text is created differently; it undergoes a different process of work and construction and has always aimed to be as original and unique as possible, to be distinct from the texts created by predecessors - nothing is left to improvisation.

To achieve such an undertaking: writing a dramatic work and bringing it to the stage, professional theaters were

built, and various people such as directors, scenographers, choreographers, etc., were involved, making it a collective effort, carefully thought out and conceptualized. All this was done with the aim of presenting the work in the most appropriate and complete way possible before the audience, allowing them to experience it in the deepest possible manner and be strongly influenced by it.

The dramatic work presented on stage aims to establish direct communication with the audience through the portrayal of phenomena, providing enjoyment, comfort, or spiritual disturbance. It seeks to evoke, as ancient Greek philosophers claimed, a spiritual catharsis.

5. Drama - The Notion and Development

The term “drama” comes from the Greek word “*dráma*” (δράμα), meaning “action.” In short, drama is the poetic text created to be presented on stage, in the theater. For this reason, when the writer embarks on its creation, there are certain rules that were honored and strictly followed in ancient times (such as plot, location, and time), and the adherence to these often determined the success of the work both as a text and in its theatrical presentation. “For ancient poetics, dramatic poetry was an imitation of human actions, portrayed by people who act and speak”^[3].

It is said that in 534 BC, Thespis wrote lyrical and epic texts and organized dithyrambic performances in villages, which consisted of dances and choral songs. These were a type of lyrical drama, with subjects drawn from mythology and, occasionally, from history. Since this form of drama (dithyramb) originated from the cult of Dionysus, theatrical performances began to take place in areas of the Temple of Dionysus^[4]. The Athenians organized the grand spring festival, known as the Greater or City Dionysia, which stemmed from older local festivities celebrating the fermentation of the new wine. At the foot of the Temple of Dionysus, a space was cleared for performances (the orchestra = dance space), and the entire area was named the “theatron” - a place of performances or a viewing area^[5].

In the 5th century BC, three of the most distinguished writers of tragedies were Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, while later (between the 5th and 4th centuries BC) the playwright Aristophanes emerged. Through their works,

which adhered to specific rules, these authors elevated theatrical activity to the highest level of its existence in ancient Greece.

In the 4th century BCE, the buildings where tragedies and dramas were performed underwent changes, which had a significant impact on the further development of dramaturgy and theater^[6].

Writers in later periods distanced themselves from rigid rules and wrote their dramatic literary works in a freer form, giving greater emphasis to poetic elements, the multiplicity of messages, and the broader possibilities for communication and impact on the audience.

Dramatic works, as with works in other literary genres, became the subject of artistic treatment of various phenomena from everyday life, especially from the past, historical events or personalities, major life ideas that contained human drama, love stories, philosophical phenomena, tragedies, and similar topics. The dramatic work has expressed life through action, leaving a lasting impression of concrete action on stage, even when dealing with events from the distant past or mythology. In these works, various conflicts of life are often expressed in the form of confrontation and opposition, as this way the differences are more visible, and a deeper insight is achieved into the essence and mysteries of life and phenomena.

The rich and diverse themes of dramatic works have led to discussions about various types of drama, including historical, social, psychological, philosophical, and more.

The uniqueness of dramatic works (drama, tragedy, or comedy) lies in the expression of phenomena through verse or prose, dialogue between two or more characters, or through monologues. These two forms constitute the essence of the respective works, although there are instances where they are intertwined.

6. The Peculiarity of Poetic Language on Stage

As mentioned earlier, a poetic literary work, regardless of its type, is a distinct and intricate expressive linguistic structure where poetic language and the multitude of thoughts constitute its value and essence. This is directly related to the process of reception and the aesthetic impact on the audience. Writers deeply believe that “[...] what is commonly referred

to as the content or subject of a poem is not of primary importance, but rather the elusive, imaginative, and magical effects it conveys through that content or subject”^[7].

This aspect is particularly expressed in poetic literary texts performed on stage. Aristotle had already emphasized this in his theoretical work *Poetics*, stating that “his theory of drama has remained to this day the starting point for all discussions about theater”^[8].

The uniqueness of a dramatic text on stage also determines the uniqueness of the language spoken and pronounced by the artist. In reality, spoken text on stage differs from the written text on paper. If the choice of words and poetic expression in a conventional literary text justifies its mystery and musicality, then on stage, these elements take on a broader quality and dimension^[9, 10].

The spoken text is distinguished by the tone of the artist’s voice, its resonance, facial expressions, and movements on stage. The artist’s ability to captivate and strongly influence the audience through a combination of performance elements makes the poetic text on stage a dynamic phenomenon that enables a vivid communication with the audience. Thus, the same text, when spoken on stage by different performers, can have varying effects on the audience.

Drama, and specifically its text, derives its deepest meaning from the fact that it unfolds before the audience without intermediaries. This is why the tragedy of drama (or tragedy itself) is experienced directly. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (p. 390), Hegel wrote:

“As it enters into content, language in form is no longer merely narrative, just as content itself is no longer merely imagined content. The hero is the one who speaks (not the one who is described), while the performance presents the audience—who are both listeners and viewers—with self-conscious individuals who know and can articulate their truth, purpose, power, and determined will. Artists do not express their outward decisions and actions unconsciously, naturally, and naively, as language conveys ordinary actions in real life. Instead, they manifest the inner essence, argue for the justice of their actions, and consciously defend the pathos to which they belong, expressing it in a defined manner through their individu-

ality, free from accidental circumstances and personal peculiarities. In the end, they are real people who embody the stability of these characters, personify the heroes, and present them through their real speech.”^[11]

Since dramatic performance is seen rather than read, the eye enables a more complex and complete experience of the atmosphere than words alone can convey. Thus, drama has a more profound, total impact on the audience. A single gesture, an actor’s movement, or thousands of visual details that only the eye can capture create a richer and fuller image of the event, situation, and atmosphere.

Words are merely signs connected to or approximating a thought, emotion, or concept. These signs are complemented by movements, gestures, tone, facial expressions, and the life unfolding before us. This has a stronger, more immersive effect, engaging the audience entirely. Consequently, visual communication exerts an influential and sometimes even shocking impact. For example, in ancient drama, freedom was expressed so powerfully that a flesh-and-blood person could stand before us and boldly speak against rulers, calling them drunkards, vagabonds, and criminals, courageously advocating for their principles against the demands of kings and gods. Even today, people feel that they have the right to this expression and to voice their truths^[11].

This all happens due to the fact that speaking on stage is shaped during the actual process of speaking, as spoken expression always manifests within the specific situation, which in turn influences the way language functions within the message itself^[12].

As such, the text of a dramatic work fosters and justifies a dynamic and multidimensional communication and influence - not only on different audiences but also on the same audience when the same text is performed by different artists in different circumstances^[13].

This is similar to oral literature, where fixed texts, once published, lose certain characteristics they previously possessed when transmitted and performed orally. These include a) the musical function of sung poetry and the spoken function of storytelling (oral prose) and b) the variability of versions. In oral poetry, for example, syncretism is justified: voice, text, and dance. Therefore, the study of song in this three-dimensionality is natural, just as it is natural to study it as an ethnomusicological phenomenon. Similarly, oral

storytelling contains extra linguistic elements such as facial expressions and gestures, which the storyteller uses as an extension of speech or as a substitute for articulated words.

Referring to the book by Danko Gërliq, “Estetika: Historia e problemeve filozofike”, Hegel wrote about this matter:

“In my opinion, no drama should be published, but rather handed over as a manuscript to the theater repertoire, as was done in ancient times. Tragedy must stir and ignite our entire being. In tragedy, as Lessing said, it is not a fly that burns but an entire person—and through them, all of humanity. Tragedy is not a series of random scenes; it cannot tolerate episodes. It is a serious and grand event, not a narration of the past or about someone else, but a matter concerning us. Therefore, the tightly connected and unique dynamic of the plot must be so powerful that as we delve into it as a present reality, we must change ourselves, transform, and become something else. The immediacy of present time allows us to experience this in tragedy as our own time (so that we all become Creon and Antigone, Oedipus and Hamlet). This is why events that took place two thousand years ago have not truly passed, because the past and the distant future never belonged to us so intimately.”^[6]

The action unfolds before us, here and now, always speaking directly to us.

The uniqueness of poetic speech on stage is also characterized by silence, which serves as an extra textual element. Sometimes, silence has a more powerful impact than the text itself. This occurs because the artist, as a subject with special abilities, establishes a direct and visible communication and influence on the audience.

7. The Stage Performance

The events on stage, regardless of the time they belong to or the personalities they portray, relate to and express, as mentioned earlier, the concrete reality - the real world. This happens because the text of the dramatic work on stage is received through “living” speech. As Eliot says, “[...] poetry must justify itself dramatically, not just be beautiful

poetry given a dramatic form. From this it follows that no drama, for which prose is adequate from a dramatic point of view, should be written in verse. And again, from this it follows that the audience, as long as they are drawn to the dramatic action, as long as the emotions are stirred by the situations between characters, must be deeply immersed in the drama to be fully conscious of the medium [...] In those dramas that exist, are read, and staged by later generations, the prose in which the characters speak, in most cases, is just as distant from our ordinary speech—through clumsiness, constant use of approximation, and unfinished sentences—as poetry. Like poetry, it is written and rewritten. Two of our greatest stylists in dramatic prose—besides Shakespeare and other Elizabethans who blended prose and poetry in the same drama—are, I believe, Congreve and Bernard Shaw. The speech of a character by Congreve or Shaw—though it may differentiate the characters clearly—has a personal, unmistakable rhythm that is characteristic of a prose style, something only the most skilled speakers—who often happen to be monologists—show traces of in their speech. We’ve all heard (quite often!) of Molière’s character, who expressed surprise when told he was speaking in prose. But Monsieur Jourdain was right, not his mentor or creator: he had not spoken in prose—he had simply spoken. I intend to draw a threefold distinction: between prose and verse, and our everyday speech, which is mostly below the level of both verse and prose. Thus, when you look at it this way, you will find that on stage, prose is as artificial as verse, or conversely, that verse can be just as natural as prose. But as long as the sensitive member of the audience appreciates the beautiful prose they hear spoken in a drama as something better than ordinary conversation, they do not consider it a completely different language from the one they themselves speak, for such a distinction would create a barrier between themselves and the imagined characters on stage [...] I would not want to conclude without trying to present, even if only in general terms, the ideal that poetic drama should strive for. It is an unattainable ideal: that’s precisely why it interests me, because it encourages experimentation and further exploration, regardless of whether the goal is achievable [...] Still, before my eyes is a vision of the perfection of drama in verse, which would be a projection of human action and words, such that it would present simultaneously both the dramatic and musical aspects. It seems to me that Shakespeare achieved this at

least in some scenes—beautifully early, as in the balcony scene of “Romeo and Juliet”—and he aimed for it in his later plays [...]. In a verse drama, you would certainly need to find words for characters who differ greatly from one another in terms of their circumstances, temperament, education, and intelligence. It’s not worth identifying one of these characters with the self, and have them say (or say it) all “the poetry.” Poetry (I mean, the language in those moments when it reaches intensity) must have such a distribution that it allows characterization, and to some of your characters, when they have something to say that is poetry and not just verses, you must give them lines that suit them. When poetry arrives, the character on stage should not leave the impression that they are simply speaking the author’s lines”^[1]. It is now well known that the poetic literary text preceded the stage, the theater. In fact, it conditioned the birth of theater. However, theater, in turn, has significantly defined the nature of the literary dramatic text that appears on stage. Therefore, the presentation of a literary text on stage required the recognition and application of certain rules, which conditioned its full realization, while also enabling communication and impact on the audience. The very nature of the literary text, the way it is developed, and its poetic expressive system have influenced the uniqueness of its staging: the director uses one approach for staging a specific text and another for a text of a different nature. Often, the director adapts the text of a dramatic work according to the envisioned stage concept; they may omit parts, shorten scenes, or edit dialogues.

A literary dramatic work, if not staged, can be read and communicated in another form, which justifies its existence and value: through reading. For the realization of the dramatic work on stage, however, the text is indispensable.

A dramatic work on stage is interconnected and unified with several arts: the art of words, figurative art, the art of music, the performance of artists (actors), pantomime, and dance.

Regarding the nature of dramatic literature and theater, there are two opposing views. According to the first view, the dramatic element of some texts is an intrinsic quality; they express and shape the drama of life, with the stage merely assisting and highlighting the dramatic qualities of life’s events. According to the second view, all the qualities of the dramatic text are a product of the conceptualization of the text to be staged, where it must bring life to a truthful form and

demonstrate its true qualities. In other words, the dramatic element as a quality of texts arises from the needs dictated by their stage presentation^[14]. In simple terms, the stage is defined by time, place, and space; it is limited and does not allow for the fulfillment of the imagination of certain literary works or their limitless space. The stage is a concrete space, the character’s act concretely, and the audience is a living organism, as it is with the recipient of verbal literary works^[6]. The audience participates in what is being narrated: in life’s dilemmas and the great turning points that influence the course of human life. The audience follows not only the expression, perception, and manner in which the main event is presented.

The relationship between the dramatic text presented on stage, the artists, and the audience has always been of great importance; it has, in most cases, conditioned the success or failure of a dramatic work, and has stimulated a variety of perspectives and studies to illuminate the peculiarities of these three components that are closely interconnected in bringing a dramatic text to life on stage.

Naturally, over time, from its early stages until today (though we can only imagine them from evidence), dramatic works, and their texts, have evolved: from simple forms, created through oral traditions, to more developed forms, such as those known from the activity of Thespis (around 534 BC), the tragedies of ancient Greek authors, Roman theater, works of the Renaissance, Baroque, and beyond. They have adapted according to periods, tastes, circumstances of the time, generations, cultures, and the specific contexts they belong to. Therefore, seeking a single, unified system of dramatic works is a futile task.

8. Conclusions

Dramatic texts are primarily written to be performed on stage, and their true grandeur is validated precisely in the process of live execution—when they are delivered by the mouth of an artist and enriched by the vision of a great director. However, they can also be read by any reader, experiencing them within the “stage” of their subjective mind and abilities. Therefore, they adhere to entirely different rules that define the inner world of each individual. The text spoken on stage, with the uniqueness of the artist’s voice, with its intonation, warmth, emphasis, gestures, and the performance

the artist delivers (on stage), depending on their ability to align with the nature of the text and the multiple meanings it can convey, becomes both unique and unrepeatable. Thus, the poetic text on stage becomes “other,” transforming into a vibrant phenomenon that conditions direct communication and has the greatest aesthetic impact on the audience.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, L.B. and S.B.; methodology, L.B.; validation, L.B. and S.B.; formal analysis, L.B.; resources L.B. and S.B.; data curation, L.B.; writing—original draft preparation, L.B.; writing—review and editing L.B. and S.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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