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THE IDIOMATICS OF DRAMA  
AND THE DRAMATIZATION OF PROSE WITHIN THE  
THEATRICAL REFORMS OF THE 20th CENTURY:  
THE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE AND CZECHIA

**Анотація / Abstract**

Перехід від акторського до режисерського театру паралельно з виникненням кінематографу позначився у драматичному тексті на ідіоматичному тлумаченні реплік, а в інсценізації прозаїчних творів – на розкритті ейдетичних властивостей оповіді. Актуалізація проблем ідіоматики пов'язана з можливостями непрямого, перифрастичного

позначення явищ, та відсиланням до цілого за вказівкою частковостей (синекдоха). Співвіднесення ідіомів на відстані стає чинником розкриття замкненості внутрішнього світу тексту та його багатомірності на кону. Зокрема, риси гіперреалізму в наративах побутової прози та наукової фантастики на кону уможливають міфотворче тлумачення текстів. Сценічна демонстрація поточного мовлення, з одного боку, та витворення символічних театральних конвенцій, з іншого, пов'язані з риторичним засобом парцеляції тексту та переосмисленням відособлених висловів, які утворюють самостійну семантичну мережу.

**Ключові слова:** ідіома, колоквіалізм, перспектива тексту, ейдетичний зміст, синекдоха, семантична мережа.

The transition from actors' theatre to the producer's one together with the rise of cinema has exerted an impact upon dramatic text in the idiomatic interpretation of cues, and upon the staging of prosaic works in the display of the eidetic properties of a narration. The problem of idioms is gaining actuality due to the opportunities of oblique and periphrastic designations of phenomena together with the reference towards the whole from the indication of particulars (synecdoche). The distanced reference of idioms becomes the force favoring the exposure of textual inner world's closeness and its multidimensionality while being staged. In particular, the traits of hyperrealism promote the myth-making interpretation of science fiction and daily life prosaic narratives. The scenic demonstration of colloquial speech at one side, and the creation of symbolic theatrical conventions at another side are both tied with the rhetoric devices of textual parcellation and the reconsideration of separate utterances those build up an autonomous semantic net.

**Keywords:** idiom, colloquialism, textual perspective, eidetic contents, synecdoche, semantic net.

**Introduction.** The similarity between the developmental trends in the Ukrainian and Czech literatures in the realm of science fiction has been discovered for the first time by the Ukrainian researcher A. R. Volkov. These were the first samples of science fiction and utopian novels, V. Vynnychenko's "The Solar Machine" and K. Čapek's "Krakatite", that have appeared simultaneously (in 1924) and marked the emergence of new trends in Ukrainian and Bohemian literatures respectively. Both works, according to the author, deal with "philosophical and artistic polemics" where

“the theme of a genial invention comes back still to the mediaeval epoch”, and one can add, to the folklore images of wonder (as in the idea of a wonderful weapon, Germ. Wunderwaffe). In both works the anarchistic and nihilistic conspiracy carries out the struggle and in the Czech case this force is depicted as those “able to destruct humanity in the same degree as the militarists” [2, p. 83–85] as far as the dramatis persona introduced with the name of Daimon is concerned.

In V. Vynnychenko’s work noteworthy the dramatic and especially cinematic properties were stressed already by M. Zerov who defined the novel as a kind of “outstretched to 800 pages remark of a cinematic script writer” (*розволоклої, на 800 сторінок, ремарки кінодраматурга*) [3, p. 444]. While developing this idea H. Syvachenko has pointed to the special role of the old rhetoric means of ecphrasis where the reality is taken for some picturesque image to be described with verbal means so that “the picture generates still one degree of mediation, alienation of artistic reality” [7, p. 8]. One can add here that ecphrasis in its turn builds up a particular case of amplification as the universal device of generating prosaic text. It goes about iconic properties that verbal signs are endowed in these prosaic passages.

It is this device that deserves special investigation as regards scenic properties of the mentioned works (V. Vynnychenko’s “quasi-dramatic type of narration” being already admitted [5, p. 27], not to mention soliloquy and the source of the stream of consciousness [8]). In this respect the idioms with iconic properties that arise within such passages get special importance as far as the theatrical contents are concerned. The nature of idioms from the contemporary viewpoint would take too many place, therefore it would suffice here to point to their irreducibility to usual tropes. In particular the aptness to overlay different semantic load plays definitive role in idiomatic coinage (in opposite to tropes with their semantic transition). The predisposition for aspectual transformations when a name of some partiality gets an emphatic

stress and becomes an actual predicate (rheme) to designate generality of predicative features instead of things becomes of special importance. It was L. Kurbas who has elaborated the doctrine on aspect as the crucial moment in scenic interpretation of a text [6]. Such is the transformation of details that get outlook of symptoms pointing to some generalities, and the cases of such symptomatic reinterpretation of details are widespread in folklore especially in the omens of daily life [12]. In these cases details become concepts and not tropes.

Meanwhile while coining concepts with imparting predicative properties to details these semantic shifts point to the relativity of the meaning. It was already O. Potebnia who underlined such relativity while taking predication for a variable quality that stretches from substantivated forms to actual rhemes and can be characterized with different ranges. Relativistic approach towards semantic load comes back still to the classical statement of G. W. Leibniz who was the first to pay attention to the dialectics of the absolute and the relative as regards verbal meanings: “There is no term so absolute or distanced that wouldn’t include relations and which perfect analysis conduct to other things ... the relative terms expressively mark the relation that they contain” (*il n’ya point de terme si absolu ou si detaché qu’il n’enferme de relations et dont la parfaite analyse ne mène d’autres choses ... le termes relatifs marquent expressivement le rapport qu’ils contiennent*) [11, p. 180–181]. This justification of relativistic approach in regard to semantic procedures gives grounds for conceiving concepts as the nodal points of relations between details and classes meant with them so that these details become the classes’ symptoms and not only synecdoche of some whole. Therefore to disclose the properties of prosaic works apt for staging or screening one ought to take into consideration such symptomatic interpretation of details.

**Main body.** The comparability of both chosen works is obvious despite the overt difference of their trends, the philanthropic at V. Vynnychenko and the antimilitaristic at K. Čapek. There has

been already stressed V. Vynnychenko's social criticism and the lack of the solution of dramatic conflict [4, p. 121]. Both novels have similar axial lines of action that unites them with a typical fairy tale about the hero and his examinations. Both are marked with the interrelations between this hero and the fabulous Princess: Rudolf Stor and Princess Elise in the Ukrainian novel and Prokop with Princess Wille in the Czech one. These fabulous features give already rise for amplifications as the tool of coining idioms apt for turning verbal stuff into scenic iconic signs. The scrutiny of such prosaic passages shows the multidimensionality of contents that displays the broad and complicated semantic net of motifs and concepts very distant from the plot.

To begin with, one could point to the concept of the very wondrous invention in V. Vynnychenko's novel that is conceived by the author as a kind of allegory of a hearth at home. Within this approach the interrelation of LIGHT and DARKNESS gains the decisive place in the allocation of narrative motifs. In particular a very demonstrative confrontation of LAMP and SHADOW is to be found in the description of Rudolf Stor's laboratory in the initial scene: "The big green lamp-shade drives tenderly a greenish shadow towards the ceiling and the walls of laboratory, and downwards, at the table it diffuses dazzling bright light" (*Великий зелений абажур ніжно гонить зеленкувату тінь до стелі й стін лабораторії, а вниз, на стіл – сліпуче біле світло*) [1, p. 120]. Lamp is here taken for a deputy of the sun. Noteworthy the meaning of the green color is here perfectly reconsidered: while being combined with lamp this color usually bears the symbolic meaning either of bureaucracy or of papers connected with gambling adventures, whereas here it refers to the green world of vegetation.

A very demonstrative evidence is to be found in the scene with the antagonist whose feelings show the relations between the Machine and hearth: "Frederick Mertens, with the smile of his bulging eyes, bent to the stove, plunges into listening to soft whisper, and a flame murmur contentedly, this beloved, from the

cave and childhood near and dear for the human race” (*Фрідріх Мертенс із усміхом банькатих очей, схилившись до грубки, слухає тихий шепіт, а вогник задоволено муркотить собі, пещерний, любий, рідний від дитинства людськості*) [1, p. 471]. Thus a referential semantic net arises where such detail as a stove becomes the symptom of the whole mood of life.

As an antagonistic subject the concept of dimness is taken that becomes represented with the comparison to soot as a product of burning substance. This motif is insistently repeated in the novel: “No wind. The darkness, thick, black as soot, is rustling rainy around the bushes” (*Вітру немає. Густа, чорна, як сажа, тьма шелестить дощиком по кущах*) [1, p. 427]. It appears again in the description of Berlin’s streets: “The darkness showers Berlin with dense, impenetrable soot” (*Темрява густою, непроглядною сажею засипає Берлін*) [1, p. 487]. In this case SOOT doesn’t turn into symbol; it represents conceptualization of detail through comparison with DARKNESS as something opposite to flame, as a kind of dead flame.

It is still to point to another concept belonging to those counterpoised to the Machine: it goes about SNOW with its various outlooks. “And white flies do monotonously, persistently, incessantly settle upon roofs, trees, streets” (*А білі мухи монотонно, вперто, безупинно обсідають дахи, дерева, вулиці*) [1, p. 500]. Such is the initial line of the episode coming to the solution of the dramatic conflict, and this motif does repeatedly arise again in other places [1, p. 491], in particular in the image of ICE: “Morning. Puddles are tightened with angular glassy scars” (*Ранок. Калюжки затягнені гранчастими скляними шрамами*) [1, p. 475]. Details of winter aren’t here only synecdoche; they become rhemes and therefore concepts of antagonistic world.

One could take as an example of conceptualization an utterance from “The Solar Machine” where a trope seems to be recognized: “Noiselessly and joyously does the count’s elderly manor smile with all its old teeth” (*Безгучно радісно сміється всіма своїми*

*старими зубами старенький графський будинок*) [1, p. 537]. The metaphors of “teeth-showing smiling thing” belong to a widely spread kind of commonplaces, meanwhile here it refers to the world of protagonists supporting the invention so it acquires the meaning of stability and vitality.

That the author doesn't use commonplaces with their conventional meanings could be demonstrated with the vision of Princess Elise who was first to admit the invasion of enemies' air forces: “A strange cloud moves forward towards the sky from the horizon ... it is a giant wide cone with its spire at its front side ... this monster looks like being covered with husks” (*Із-за обрїю в небо сунеться чудна хмара ... це – велетенський широкий конус шпилем уперед ... страховище немовби вкриті лускою*) [1, p. 552]. Such image evidently comes back to fabulous flying dragons, and at the same time it gets the outlook of cone attesting its technical origin. Such HUSKY MONSTER gives answer as to the doubts about the author's sympathy: in spite of the seeming triumph of the Solar Machine's partisans this concept bears evidences as to their antihuman essence.

This reconsideration of the well known habitual details in view of their textual relativity turns to be observed in amplifications due to minuteness and precision of the described circumstances. A very eloquent concept has been introduced and persistently repeated in the scene of hesitation at the transactions between Stor and Mertens, that of ELUSIVE GLANCES (*уникливі погляди*) [1, p. 571]. This detail turns into the symptom pointing to the state of mind to be found among the ruling strata of society.

The discourse of science fiction intermingled with fairy tale enables producing aphoristic utterances that would become generalizations of the author's viewpoint. This can be exemplified with the sentence: “Prohibition is for ages the best propaganda of the prohibited” (*Заборона – споконвіку найкраща пропаганда забороненого*) [1, p. 318]. Such generalizations grow from details of discussion and sum up the previously presented – in this case the

rumors associated with the invention. Particulars of such rumors are to be summarized in the statement. Aphoristic storage of then novel deserves special scrutiny.

As to the idioms in K. Čapek's work, the way of details' symptomatic interpretation can be displayed here especially vividly due to the existence of screened version produced in 1948 by the Czech filmmaker Otakar Vavra. It is already the initial cadre where the ill inventor Prokop encounters his rival Tomeš, where the eloquent detail appears that is absent in the novel: the hero leans upon a pillar in the street, and this gesture stresses the state of his health. Pillar becomes a symptom apt at indicating the jeopardy, and such transformation of details into concepts is to be found both in the novel and in its cinematic script.

This motif of pillar appears in script making up an arch with the similar motif preceding the final episode. After the catastrophic explosion the hero finds again a pillar in dimness, but in this case it is found to be broken and turns to be a crucifix: "Amidst the field he has found something light; he felt it by touch, and it was the fallen cross. With heavy respiration has he seated upon the empty basement" (*Uprostřed poli našel něco světleho; hmatal ne to, byl to poražený kříž*) [9, p. 232]. Here a whole action is to be seen, and it is also reproduced in cinema: first of all, the concept of FALLEN CROSS arises that refers overtly to the devilish essence of the events; then, of eloquent meaning becomes the replacement of this sacred thing with the hero seated on the pedestal. Instead of aid from the street pillar (as in the film) here the desperation encounters Prokop. Thus habitual details of nocturnal promenades grow to the scope of conceptual generalities: broken pole and empty base becomes the indication of the Savior's absence. This gives motivation for the final episodes of the novel where the hero meets a car with the old driver resembling his father as for an attempt of returning to God.

A very demonstrative episode as to the development of motifs can be cited in the chapter XXL where the hero's attempts to

escape from the enclosed manor are presented. At the same time they give pretext for closer relations with the Princess Wille. To begin with, the hero tries to overcome the fence: “Prokop grasped the hanging branches of a tree to get downwards with their aid; but they are broken with loud crackle under his corpulent body, as if somebody shoots from a pistol, and Prokop falls with heavy thunder in some rubbish heap” (*Prokop se chytil převislych větví, aby se po nich spustil dolů; ale pod jeho solidní tihou větve se zlomily s ostrým třeskem, jako když z pistole střeli, a Prokop dopadl s těžkým žuchnutím na jakési smetiště*) [9, p. 110]. Not to say of the comic contents of such situation, one would take into consideration the motif of the broken branch that accompanies the event and is to be confronted with the mentioned motif of the broken crucifix. Then the hero tries to fight with the warder, gets again “in mud” (*do blata*), and then this warder indulges in cleaning his clothes “with awfully dirty handkerchief” (*ohromně špinavým kapesníkem*). At last at his return home he encounters the Princess: “Prokop wanted to simulate him as if not to be himself ..., hurried upwards as a monument of dirt” (*Prokop se chtěl tvařit, jako by to nebyl on ... a hnal se nahoru jako monument z blata*) [9, p. 111]. Thus the detail of dirt grows to be a mark of identity’s loss. The concept DIRT arises that gains meaningfulness and returns in crucial episodes of narration.

Another sample of conceptual transformation within the framework of amplification is to be seen in episode with the hero’s failure of attempt to ride in the presence of Princess (chapter XXVII). A decisive detail is stressed in this passage: “Prokop has fallen heavily in the saddle and squeezed his knees with all his strength ... Prokop compressed his knees as pincers” (*Prokop těžce dopadl do sedla a sevřel kolena vši silou ... Prokop svíral kolena jako kleště*) [9, p. 118– 119]. This motif of COMPRESSED KNEES is associated with a broad collection of somatic idioms aiming at sensuality in visual images. In the preceding chapter the Princess appears riding on the horse with such rider’s tool as whip, and it is

this tool that accompanies her communication with Prokop: “The Princess has waved up the whip as if she wanted to lash upon his hand ... The whip began to whistle promisingly through the air” (*Princezna zdvihla bičik jako by ho chtěla švihnout přes ruku ... bičik mnohoslibně zasvištěl vzduchem*) [9, p.114–115]. Thus a series of motifs appears referring to the relations between the Hero and the Princess.

The development of such conceptualized details results in the episode where Prokop achieves acknowledgement of his attitude towards the Princess (chapter XLV). In this episode the previous motif returns: “They kept on vigil with pressing themselves together ... He seated with embracing the knees” (*Bděli přimknuti k sobě ... Posadil se objímají si kolena*) [9, p. 197]. Not to say of the return to the mentioned attempt with riding the motif of compression introduces the ideas of touchable contact as cognition. And still further this idea returns in chapter L where the hero finds himself in the new apartments: “Prokop has run round all cabin with groping about walls and windows ... Prokop sticks his hands in the pockets ...” (*Prokop oběhl celý domek hmataje po stěnách a oknech ... Prokop jel rukou do kapsy*) [9, p. 221]. To recollect the past means for the hero to grope and touch things with own hands.

All such details come as the particulars referring to the concept of PALPABILITY that would integrate sensual experience of the hero. That such conceptualization is intentional can be attested with the author’s aphoristic declaration summing up the episode with the Princess (chapter XLV): “Creative, laborious weakness, in Thou all good and honest has its commencement” (*Tvořiva, pilna slabosti lidska, z tebe je všechno dobře a poctive dilo*) [9, p. 198]. The author means obviously contemplative attitude where the suggested concept of WEAKNESS gives motivational grounds for the hero’s transfiguration and resignation in the final chapters after the catastrophe.

This overt statement is a rare case. More often K. Čapek refrains from utterances of the kind that could be ascribed to a narrator’s

voice. Meanwhile he readdresses reflections of the kind to the reported speech of the hero. Such are, in particular, the reflections from one of the last chapters: “Prokop has pulled the seat towards the buzzing stove and occupied himself with observing flame; he didn’t even take a glimpse at her [the girl – I.Y-R.]. He heard her hesitatingly walk across the room on tiptoes, turn away and return somehow, she doesn’t already know, she stands and keeps silence – The power of flame and pouring water is charming: a person falls in contemplation, loses oneself, becomes stiffened; one does not think more neither recollect but, and anyhow all that had happened to be vital, to be vital, it all becomes active in oneself, without image and time” (*Prokop si přitahl židli k hučícím kamnům a zadíval se do plamene; ani se po ni ne ohledl. Slyšel ji, jak vahavě, po špičkách přechází po pokoji, zamyka a něco rovna; neví už co, stojí a mlčí – Divná je moc plamene a plynoucích vod; člověk se zahledí, omami, zastaví; nemyslí už, neví a nevzpomína, ale děje se v něm všechno, co kdy žil, co kdy žil, bez tvaru a bez času*) [9, p. 225]. The presence of the hero’s reported speech is here marked even with punctuation. Of special importance is here to observe how the detail stove (*kamna*) turns into the concept of the natural element of flame (*plamen*) in the hero’s thoughts. Moreover, this element diverts the hero from another person and becomes a powerful force.

Thus motivational factors arise within the arising semantic nets that impart relativistic meaning to separate details. The minuteness in amplification turns as the source of forces for action’s support. For instance, one can see that the conceptualization of details is to be traced also in the hero’s relations with his first sweetheart. For him then (in chapter XIII) “every flower scintillates as an eye” (*každý květ jiskří jako oči*) [9, p. 56], and then the reflection on this parable follows. Amplification becomes the source for additional lateral lines of action that procure grounds for multidimensional vision of the events.

Meanwhile there is still another sample to be involved as a kind of the third part for comparison. It goes about the Czech novel

“The Adventures of the Brave Soldier Šveik during the World War” (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Šveika za světové války*) written by J. Hašek and appeared in the same year 1924. It is absurdity that unites the mentioned works despite the outer features of a travelogue inherent for the last of them in opposite to science fiction in the novels of V. Vynnychenko and K. Čapek. Šveik is also an utopian vision in the sense that it gives the portrayal of an “impossible” world “upside down” from carnival rites of unreasonable and at the same time quite ubiquitous habitual situations. In opposite to the discussed novels J. Hašek doesn’t almost use amplifications in the author’s narration: all passages of the kind are distributed among the dramatic personae’s cues and acquire an outlook of inserted stories. Only some places are reserved for the author’s remarks focusing the reader’s attention towards very singular objects of the lowest stylistic layers.

It would be convenient to cite various samples of amplification to show idiomatic peculiarities of the authors. In J. Hašek’s novel (part 2, chapter 5) one of the dramatic personae, the scribe Vanek discusses the importance of military magazine (STORE, in the meaning of a storehouse) that turns into some magic place: “I know the magazine better than Mr. higher lieutenant” (*Ja znám magacin lepší než pan obrlajtnant*) [10, p. 499], and it follows the narration on the properties of this concept. Quite another concept WAY appears in K. Čapek’s narration at the beginning of the chapter LII: “Wondrously do the ways of world interweave. If one reckoned all anybody’s steps and paths, what a complicated image would be delineated?” (*Divně se točí drahy světa. Kdybys sčítl všechny sve kroky a cesty, jakou složitou podobu by to nakreslilo?*) [9, p. 229]. In this case the concept of path refers to destinies and to the fatal wanderings that build up the contents of the hero’s life. Details of human movement and circumstances of a landscape (steps, paths, ways) come in manifold relations and turn into predicative features determining the flow of events. Primarily mere objects’ names as they were, their contents due to

these relations become conceptual units enabling the production of vivid images.

**Conclusions.** The relational structure of idioms can be traced within at least two different planes, those of aspectual and referential (or projective) levels. The first delineates the overlapping of subjective name and predicative feature (rheme), objective and attributive meanings. The second concerns motivational tissue and follows across the immediate observable textual frontiers transcending the contents' limitation towards conjectures on the epoch's essence.

Thus the concept DIRT (with its variants such as DUSTBIN, ROT) becomes rheme that marks the hero's life with its metamorphoses in K. Čapek's work. It becomes the projection of destructive forces presupposed to whirl beyond the depicted and immediately observable events. The concept of PALPABILITY does not only designate the aspectual transition to a new situation, it refers also towards the forces of vitality and enlivens human sensibility of the hero beyond the speculative limitations of his mission. J. Hašek's predilection for the lower existential layers points to the chaotic worldview coming back still to the mediaeval estimation of vanity. There arise antonymous relations between idiomatic details transformed into concepts that produce dramatic collisions as the vehicle of lateral action interlacing with that of plot. In V. Vynnychenko's work it is LIGHT vs DARKNESS that grow to the range of macroscopic predicates determining the flow of events. Such lateral tissue of motivational ties between the motifs is traceable in all discussed works.

Being condensed in amplifications these idiomatic means impart eidetic properties to narration and procure thus opportunities for its transformation into the scenery of dramatic action. Relativistic approach towards idioms proves to be useful at disclosing their contribution in making up a script.

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