

RUSSIAN VERBATIM AS A THEATRE OF CRUELTY

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Abstract: The article presents a research of artistic features of the Russian documentary theatre, or verbatim theatre. The main characteristics of this theatre poetics are: documentary basis of action, monologism, narrative interview, reflection of the personage identity crisis and perception of the personage as another, marginality of the verbatim drama personage. The sources of the Russian verbatim theatre are studied, which are connected with development of this form in the English theatre in the second half of the 20th century. The research novelty consists in studying the sources and meaning of cruelty in verbatim drama. The problem of cruelty is considered to be the projection of aesthetics of a personality revolt against the social realities and death, time, narrowness of thinking as philosophical categories. In this aspect, the artistic parallel with A. Artaud's theory of theater of cruelty is traced.

Keywords: verbatim, drama, theatre of cruelty, documentary theatre, new drama, director, playwright.

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern Russian drama at the verge of the 20th and 21st centuries is a complex and diverse area in the contemporary theatrical art. In the Russian literature this period is defined as the epoch of post-modernism marked by various terms such as avant-garde and post-avant-garde, modernism and surrealism, impressionism, neosentimentalism, metarealism, soc-art, conceptualism, and specific for its literature process. In the 20th century, alongside with the literature areas, the artistic trends come to life "which tend to forming the areas but for various reasons fail to crystallize into a historical-literature system. They either turn into a kind of a line of force, to be more precise, an artistic trend which nourishes search of many further literature trends and schools (this, in particular, is the destiny of acmeism, whose influence on further development of the Russian literature became apparent at the end of the century); or, interlaced for a very short time into systems resembling literature areas, these trends untwist again into a bundle of threads which charge the literature trends, streams, and schools with creative energy."ⁱ

The settled conceptions of theoretical foundations of the literature process are ruined. There is a shift towards "split" culture. This thesis should not be considered from the viewpoint of customary moral-ethical traditions. The new culture elaborates its own style and poetics, creates seemingly unusual combinations of genres. Each kind of literature possesses an extensive system of genres, in which various levels can be distinguished. At the verge of the 20th and 21st centuries, the genre dynamics of contemporary drama is a comprehensive and diverse process. In this regard, undoubtedly interesting are the studies of the contemporary theatrical process as "dramatic Platonism" by M. Puchnerⁱⁱ or a form of "an

interactive dialogue with a spectator” in the Soviet and post-Soviet theatre by T.G. Prokhorova and V.B. Shanina.ⁱⁱⁱ According to S.I. Timina, “attempts to schematize the literary process of the 1990-s with habitual methodologies: by genre, by style, by trend, etc. – yield such an approximate, and sometimes distorted picture, that conclusions suggest themselves both about the imperfection of old methodologies, and about the literature material resisting all efforts to “shove” a writer’s individuality into a group, a trend, a school, etc.”^{iv}

However, in the 2000-s we observed a graduate transition from post-modernism to realism. Prose is moving towards a diary, an epistle, a reportage, a travel or portrait sketch, a treatise, or their combination”, i.e. turning to non-fiction literature.^v This is true not only for prose, but also to drama. It is no coincidence that “the new dramaturgy” and even “the new dramaturgy” became a catchword in the end of the 20th century, but these terms are to a large extent conditional, as researchers say. S.Ya. Goncharova-Grabovskaya distinguishes the main trends in the dramaturgy of the studied period: traditional dramaturgy (realism, hyperrealism); non-traditional dramaturgy (modernism, post-modernism, and experimental trends).^{vi}

Numerous phenomena of the new dramaturgy in Russia are supplemented by appearance of a special kind of theatre termed “documental”. “I do not know why verbatim attracts people so much. It is just a technique of creating a play, one of the many in contemporary theatre, and this technique is intricate, peculiar, not very promising and convenient: the play is composed of the actors’ interviews with real people, literally deciphered by a playwright and precisely reproduced on a stage. But after a small seminar of the Royal Court Theatre in Moscow in autumn 1999, verbatim became the symbol of the new in the Russian dramaturgy and the theatre of a new play”, writes A. Rodionov.^{vii}

The documental theatre is based on a “verbatim” technique (from Latin “literally, word-by-word”). One of the first examples of the verbatim technique is the works by an English playwright E. Bond: a play “Saved” of 1965 and others.^{viii} A little later Peter Cheeseman, Chris Honer, David Thacker, Ron Rose came out as production directors of the “verbatim theatre” or “documental theatre” in Chester, Lancaster and Sheffield in 1970-1980-s. At the very beginning of its development, this theatre emphatically rejected the metropolis sets, flaunting their intention to “never stage in London”. In the United States, such theatre is called “a regional theatre”. However, the regional trend rapidly spread around the capital stages. In 1982, the famous Royal Court Theatre staged a play by Louise Page “Falkland Sound”, embodying the conception of such a theatre. The documental materials used in the play were the letters of soldiers who were killed during the war for Falkland Islands.

The fundamental conception of verbatim theatre is not only interaction with the public but also opportunity for the actors to contribute to the theatrical performance so that they are not only interpreters but creators of the play on the scene. “Documental theatre is a theatre of reportage. Records, documents, letters, statistics, market reports, statements by banks and companies, government statements, speeches, interviews, statements by well-known personalities, newspaper and broadcast reports, photos, documentary films and other contemporary documents are the basis of the performance.”^{ix}

The verbatim technique continued to be used in the 1980-s in the Royal Court Theatre in the form of a reportage performance on social problems. One of the brightest events at that verbatim theatre is a 1987 play “Serious Money” by Caryl Churchill and Max Stafford-Clark staged at the Royal Court Theatre. Caryl Churchill created plays like theatrical provocations: “Top Girls”, “Seven Jewish Children”; “Owners” (1972) at the Royal Court Theatre.^x All her works are marked by shocking character and social context. For example, the play “Seven Jewish Children” was written for Gaza, as was defined in the subtitle. This play does not feature the personages of children; the text is pronounced by the relatives of the Jewish children, who try to protect them from the sounds of explosions, from artillery fire and reminiscences of the holocaust, try to calm down their conscience awakened by the news of the

Arab children killed during the war.^{xi} In is not accidental that a British writer, playwright and script writer Steve Gooch called the English verbatim theatre an equivalent of the Russian samizdat (self-published literature) – “Samizdat of the West”.^{xii} Seemingly, the main idea in such theatre is a document, creating the literature or the drama of fact.

“However, there is a small technical aspect in verbatim, which makes it new, existing never before. It is marked by the very name “verbatim” – Latin for “word-for-word”. A documentary unit in verbatim is not a fact, but a word. A playwright assembles other people’s discourses without editing the monologues or adding anything. Verbatim play is like sliding on radio waves. You hear the alternating voices saying something logical and queer, clear and incomprehensible, calm and affected, but there is cogency and truth in each voice: on its wave, it is a part of a logical story; in your radio receiver it is a part of a puzzle, detached from another – and yet self-sufficing.”^{xiii} Among the scenic performances of the Russian verbatim theatre one may name such as “A Brief Story of the Russian Dissent”, “150 Reasons not to Defend Motherland” (E. Gremina), “24 Plus”, “Adults on the Outside” (M. Ugarov), “The First Man” (E. Isayeva), “Transpolar truth” (Yu. Klavdiyev and G. Zhenov).

The ideas of this trend in the Russian drama were embodied by Mikhail Ugarov and Elena Gremina, who opened “Theatre.doc”. “Doc’ was different, imitating nothing and following nobody. It was followed, it was borrowed from – plays, authors, stage directors, actors, while ‘Doc’ always created the new, which is the task of art.”^{xiv} Creation of this theatre was directly influenced by seminars on verbatim which were held in Moscow in 1999 by stage directors Stephen Daldry and James MacDonald, and a dramaturgist and organizer Eliz Dodgeson from the London Royal Court Theatre.

Turning to the poetics of Theatre.doc, one may speak not so much about elaborating a new scenic language or genre specificity, but about the changed picture of the world. While the dramaturgy after Vampilov tended to searching the universal values, the new drama, according to M.I. Gromova, manifested the trend towards a “shock-theatre”, one of the brightest metaphors of which is “perceiving the world as a mental asylum, ‘a stupid life’”.^{xv} Analyzing the moral issues of the plays by M. Ugarov, M. Arbatova, A. Seplyarskiy, E. Gremina, A. Zheleztsov and O. Yuryev, who united into a “Club-laboratory of a new play”, E. Ernandes revealed the “specificity of self-perception of a person of the Russian culture” the critic marks that the plays by the above authors can be called “the literature of the end of the world”, “written by people who intend to survive.”^{xvi}

In this regard, of interest are the metamorphoses which occurred in the works by Elena Gremina, one of the ideologists of the new trend. One may distinguish two periods in her creative development. Her first plays were devoted to the historical themes (“Case of cornet O-v”, “Sakhalin wife”, etc.). The second period is connected with Theatre.doc. She writes the plays “September.doc”, “One hour and eighteen minutes”, “Two in your house”, “150 Reasons not to Defend Motherland” and others. For example, in the latter she turns to the remote historical events related to the fall of Constantinople. However, Khan Mekhmet’s campaign against Constantinople is just an external side of the play. The past ideologems fail. Each character develops his/her own outlook at the ongoing events. The actors speak of the ancient city, ponder about whether it is worth defending it sacrificing oneself, or they should throw themselves on the mercy of the winners. In the play, one may easily trace parallels with the modern Russia, for example, one of the characters says: “For the West we are Barbarians praying in some incomprehensible language, and for the East we are wimps. What must I defend? This two-headed bird? Has anyone asked me if I like this coat of arms?”. Dimitry answers: “Yes! This is our coat of arms! It used to be on the banner of heroes, our ancestors, who have added their names to history!” To this Nikifor answers: “As for me, I do not want to die like a hero! And there are no two-headed birds! And there were, that would have been monsters, abnormality of nature!”^{xvii}

On the one hand, the very issue of defending Motherland is to some extent provocative, as the notions of honor, Motherland, defending one's country are within the mentality of any Russian. But is it worth giving one's life not for Motherland but for a state or territory which wallowed in corruption and government infantilism, though claiming to be a great empire? E. Gremina insinuates that the modern picture of the world is complex and diverse, that a state and people are separated by a wall. Showing the events from the viewpoints of opposing forces (the Turks, the Byzantines, the Europeans) and formatting everything as monologues in the verbatim style, the dramaturgist, as she said, tried to find that point of no return in history, when everything comes to an end and never will be as it used to be. The verbatim theatre tradition was developing, and in 2005 a "Practice" theatre was founded under the direction of E.V. Boyakov, which began staging the Russian plays written in this style. Since 2013, the creative director of this theatre was I. Vyrypayev, who in 2016 announced his leaving the theatre to engage in his own projects.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials representing the whole gamut and diversity of the Russian verbatim theatre are the creative searches of many modern dramaturgists. The most significant among them are, in our opinion, Ivan Vyrypayev, V. and M. Durnenkovs, and E. Grishkovets. One of the bright representatives of the Russian verbatim is Ivan Vyrypayev (born in Irkutsk). He is the author of such plays as "Dreams" (1999), "Oxygen" (2002), "Genesis-2" (2004), "Illusions" (2011), "UFO" (2012) and others. Ivan Vyrypayev is the laureate of "Triumph" and "Hope of the Russian dramaturgy" awards, and an award of International festival of modern dramaturgy in Heidelberg (Germany). The performance by the play "Oxygen" was awarded with grand prix of International festival "Contact" (Poland), awards of festivals "New Drama" and "Golden Mask". The play "Genesis-2" was awarded with grand prix of a festival "New Drama". A film "Euphoria" by Ivan Vyrypayev was awarded with a special jury's diploma of a "Kinotavr" festival and a "Small Golden Lion" award of an independent youth jury of International film festival in Venice. The performance "Illusions" was titled as the best at the 18th "International festival of pleasant and unpleasant art" in Łódź (Poland). A film "Oxygen" got an award at a "Kinotavr" festival in the nomination "The best film director" and an award of the Guild of the Russian film experts and critics "White Elephant".

Vyacheslav Durnenkov (born in Larba settlement, Amurskaya oblast) often writes his works in co-authorship with his brother Mikhail. One of their plays – "Subtraction of earth" – is devoted to the theme of industry in the city of Togliatti. "Three parts – three acts – three dramaturgical novels are devoted to the three elements – fire, air, and water. Only the element of earth is absent in the text. The specific aura of the sunken city Stavropol-on-Volga, immersed in the Zhiguli Sea, seems to completely exclude the presence of earth. The terra firma becomes alien, foreign, unnecessary. The central idea of the Durnenkovs' play is the idea of freedom."^{xviii} In September 2002, the premiere of the play took place at the documental theatre seminar in Gorki Leninskiye; the play was staged by a V. Levanov, a stage director from Togliatti. In the following year, the play was staged in Theatre.doc by a stage director I. Kornienko took part in a festival of young dramaturgists. In 2009, a play by the Durnenkovs brothers "Drunks" was staged in the Royal Shakespeare's Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon. V. Durnenkov is the author of over 20 plays, among which "Three acts for four pictures", "Anti-cafe", "Against all: antipolitics and schizophrenia"; his co-authors are Ilmira Bolotyan, Timur Khakimov and others.

Evgeniy Grishkovets (born in Kemerovo) is a writer, a playwright, and a stage director. He is the author of plays "How I ate up a dog" (1998), "Winter" (2005), "Dreadnoughts" (2008), "Simultaneously" (2009), "Satisfaction" (2010), "Weekend" (2014), "Scales and other plays" (2018). In 2000, he got a Russian National theatre award "Golden Mask" in the

category of “Drama” in the nomination “Innovation” and “The Critics’ Award” in the same festival for the mono-performance “How I ate up a dog”. Mono-performances are the dramaturgist’s “trademark”; he performs his plays himself (“How I ate up a dog”, “SimUltAneously”, “Dreadnoughts”, “+1”, “Farewell to paper”, “Whisper of heart”, “Foreword”). The writer calls himself a successor of the traditions of the Russian humanistic literature.

The causes of the great academic interest in this kind of dramaturgy are: first, “...opposition to artistic drama which, in the opinion of the documentalism proponents, was unable to influence the audience much, due to its remoteness from the real life. A documental drama relies on the facts and documents, substitutes the imaginary plot with actual events, thus making history the co-author of the documental theatrical performance”. Second, documental theatre “allows building a model of actual events from the fragments of reality”. Third, “the object of a documental drama ... is not events and phenomena but the participants of those events, who act themselves on a stage.”^{xix} Finally, documental theatre either “uses the very text of the sources, selected in compliance with the tasks of the dramaturgist”, or “a document does not become a structure- or genre-forming factor but is just a starting point for the author’s pondering over the urgent or eternal issues.”^{xx}

The main technique of creating verbatim-plays is creating a narrative space. In sociology, there is a technique of narrative interview, which allows obtaining information about the most typical biographic processes characteristic for a specific group of people, from the viewpoint of the narrators. “However, in addition to that, the experience represented by art should tell something about life in general, whereas not every piece of verbatim is able to do that. One of the problems in this case is discreteness, plotlessness. ... But to photograph does not mean to formulate the problem, while literature lives on posing problem questions. That is why some authors proposed dramaturgical experiences, for which verbatim appeared to be not an end in itself but a springboard, allowing to construct the plot and to drive it to the dramaturgical turning point. At that, the author’s basis does not disappear from the text, but, on the contrary, is present there, eliminating the discreteness, creating the unity and determining the direction of conflict development.”^{xxi}

I.M. Bolotyán distinguishes the following common features of verbatim-plays: the presence of documental base, processed to a certain extent (artistic processing in the text and scenic in the performance); generalized characters (often they are nameless, typical); monologism; compositional-speech “seams”; speech authentic for personages; loose story lines.^{xxii} Verbatim-dramaturgy offers to view a special dramatic “image of identity crisis”, which determines the peculiarity of the character and the conflict of this type of dramaturgy. The “New Drama” dramaturgy represents the crisis conditions of the four types of personality identification: the essential, the social, the cultural, and the spiritual. Identification is carried out exclusively via Another (even if the Another is myself). This determines the four main movement strategies: clashing with oneself as with Another (“How I ate up a dog” by E. Grishkovets); clashing with the social Others (“Plasticine” by V. Sigarev); conflicting with oneself as a cultural Another and/or Others as cultural artifacts and/or carriers of “other”, “alien” values (“Three acts for four pictures” by V. Durnenkov); conflicting with Another as an “alien” (with the Divine Principle, or God, as the “alien”) (“Oxygen” by I. Vyrypayev).^{xxiii}

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the face of it, a play at verbatim theatre is conflictless as, for instance, endless monologues of E. Grishkovets’s characters. The monological stylistics and narrative strategy of the texts are determined by a protagonist’s dominating in the narration which substitutes action. In the text of the play, the character and the author are universal, indistinguishable, as this is Theatre.doc; one may agree with I.M. Bolotyán that the action creates a model of

internal conflict: individual, axiological, spiritual. These features of the artistic world of such drama change the system of perception, too.

In the prologue of the play “Three acts for four pictures” by V. Durnenkov, descriptions of four pictures by an artist Andrey Pavlovich Brashinskiy are read. In the following three acts of the drama, the pictures are revived, provoking the author of the text like melodies which are not recalled but keep clinging to one’s memory. The final part of the play contains a musical theme too, “a strange rhythmical melody.”^{xxiv} The elliptical composition of the action refers to the effect of emotional perception influencing not only the spectator, but the author too, of which the latter confesses. In this very manner the drama “Oxygen” by I. Vyrypayev is perceived, but during immersing into the sense field of the text, its special characteristic is built: the text is constructed as a sound field and causes emotional reception, makes one “live it through”. This effect is close to anti-catharsis, as a spectator is most often offered some repulsive, startling performance. Strange as it may seem, but documental theatre, striving to reconstruct the reality of actual life and the image of an ordinary person, refers to the aesthetics of the theatre of cruelty (A. Artaud), which urged to destroy all stereotypes of reality on the scene.

Brashinskiy’s pictures in the play by V. Durnenkov appear to be citations from the real life of a student who lived in Saint Petersburg in the 19th century. The first picture is entitled “A Poem”. It depicts a boy in a nightshirt, whom his parents made stand on a stool, apparently to listen to him recite a poem. The second picture “Young debaters” depicts three young men briskly talking, watched by a nihilist girl dressed in black and a middle-aged gentleman. The next picture is again situational and has a didactic title “Live as long as I and see”. On the embankment of the Neva river, an elderly gentleman and a consumptive student in an old shabby overcoat are sitting on a bench. The last picture – “On a roundabout way” – which the dramaturgist likes most of all, depicts the character’s death, while the very scene of death is provocative and startling. The contradiction with the image on the picture, where a young man is lying comfortably on a cart going along a rural road, reveals the problem of a break between the image and the actual psychological motif urging an artist to create that image. Profanation of the idea of creativity as reflection of an artist’s spiritual world is created by means of a cruel pastiche, a parody, unsparing of the spectators’ feelings.

“It is interesting, however, that cruelty – specifically as “cruauté”, a non-everyday notion – is now included into the actual, seemingly socially committed, theatre – but this time through dramaturgy. The plots of documental verbatim-plays and the rest of new dramaturgy are filled with unmotivated violence and insanity; they demand maximal openness and involvement of the actors.”^{xxv} The term “theatre of cruelty” is a loan translation of the French phrase “le théâtre de la cruauté” by Antonin Artaud.

A. Artaud, a theoretician and practitioner of the avant-garde theatre, in his essays “Direction and metaphysics”, “On Balinese Theatre”, “Alchemical Theatre” and others, formulates the conception of renewal of the ancient theatrical art. A. Artaud’s doctrine got the title of “the theatre of cruelty”. A. Artaud connects the notion of catharsis with the idea of a double, “a monkeying student”, profaning the tragedy of theatrical performance. The double effect is connected with the perception sphere as a “sensual affect”, as well as with the very characteristic of action in drama, which must be neither tragic nor comic, but both at one and the same time. The aesthetics of avant-garde as a kind of art has only one uniting quality: by refuting and breaking down the existing tradition, avant-garde resorts to a parody, a pastiche, to “reversing” all meanings and forms. Striving for the parody character of a piece of art leads to the double negation effect: the author’s effort to startle the perceiver and the response of rejection on the part of the latter. This effect is aimed at breaking, destroying the stereotypes of reality perception by responding to the emotionally shocking spectacle (“The Theatre and Its Double” by A. Artaud, 1935-1938).^{xxvi}

A bright example of such a spectacle is “Oxygen” by I. Vyrypayev, which was also screened; it offers a profaned, parody reality mixing fantasy and actual life. The author’s monologue, read by the actors as a recitative, is permeated with Biblical citations. The text of the verbatim-play consists of ten “compositions”, perceived as a song: there are couplets and a refrain. The motifs of the singing, sounding verbatim are: life as a dance of breath – the lungs are filled with oxygen; death of another person’s hands as a cessation of love; love as necessity of oxygen for life – all set a plan of implicit citation in the text, connecting the philosophical meanings of the “eternal questions” and profaning their high content by the startling picture of the modern reality.

In this context, the theme of cruelty acquires more of the Artaudian interpretation: the character pronouncing the text – a killer, a lover, a breathing and searching person – is cruel to oneself. Cruelty of the author towards a spectator, who is forced to see his vices and his dark ways in the mirror of the text, refers to the ritual of a sermon, but as a proof by contradiction. The conceptions of the English verbatim theatre also imply a complex technique of a search by the actors and the director: communication with the audience on a primitive, subconscious level, by means of symbols, gestures, movements, and sound. John Arden – a scion of the Royal Court Theatre, one of the most significant British playwrights of the 1950-s – experimented with various theatrical techniques and methods. Stephen Daldry – one of the representatives of the Royal Court Theatre, a stage director and a film director (“Clock”, “Billy Elliot”, “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close”) – offered the verbatim technique as a contact with the cruel marginal reality.^{xxvii} The theme of insanity, developed in the first composition of the play “Oxygen” when the character named Sanek dances and hears nothing but music in his walkman, is connected with the description of a murder committed by him. Even his friends, “bandits like himself”, are terrified by seeing the consequences of this “dance of death”.

In his article “Theatre and Cruelty”, A. Artaud reveals the meaning of the very notion of cruelty in a theatre. “We would like to create from a theatre the reality in which one could actually believe, – the reality which would intrude into the heart and feelings as that truthful and painful burn which any true sensation brings with it.”^{xxviii} This initiating power of a theatre appears only when it “bears an imprint of horror and cruelty.”^{xxix} Cruelty permeates not only the sphere of perception in a theatre; it must become its object, its theme. Thus, appears the idea of a crime, which looks as something far more repulsive on a stage than in real life. The ambivalent character of laughter as a reaction to the awful brings the object of the Artaudian theatre close to the semantics of ritual laughter. But in the modern theatre that laughter loses its realistic filling, as the ritual nature of the theatrical performance is conditional. It means that a spectator laughs not at a victim of the bloody massacre – the crime, which would have been sadism, not art, but at the image of a crime as it is, destroying their fear of it.

However, an action, by A. Artaud, should destroy the humanistic essence of a theatre. Indeed, if it is the theatre of abstraction, metaphysics, where speech is like a magic spell, then a person would have introduced the topics of definite psychological or ethical problems, denying the very idea of avant-garde theatre: “...this reality (theatrical performance) bears nothing human, it is inhuman, and it should be said that a human with his customs or his temper means very little here.”^{xxx}

The difference between A. Artaud’s aesthetics and the artistic principles of documental theatre is that verbatim theatre, on the contrary, attempts to restore a human being in all revelations, to “return” the author into drama by making them speak, even by refuting oneself, like the character of the play “How I ate up a dog” by E. Grishkovets.^{xxxi} In this play, the author, as a character, speaks of his military service in the Far East, in the Pacific Fleet. When, at last, it is time to return home, he realizes that there is no home, as he turned into another person and there is no boy leaving to the service, nor there is a brave Pacific Fleet sailor. In

the last scene, finishing his monologue, the actor collects the implements symbolizing the marine service, and leaves. The formal paradox constructs the philosophical antithesis which proves the reverse through its refutation: one may be oneself only now and here; the ability to remember the past does not cancel the irreversible changes in the present.

The artistic features of the Russian verbatim are connected, first of all, with the counter-cultural paradigm of its poetics. Just as the Russian post-modernism in prose (V. Pelevin) was based on critique of the social reality and on the problem of spiritual and intellectual emptiness, verbatim-drama does not avoid these topics: "SHE: And when she was going barefoot along the parapet of a monument to Griboyedov, in her linen dress, and when she saw a fellow in a sweater tucked into his pants, she thought: there is an abyss between us. And then her guess was confirmed, as the abyss between them was as huge as the difference between a skyscraper and an airplane piercing it throughout.

HE: And when he saw her smoking marijuana from foil, he thought that, although their lives are different, but their goals are the same. Just as the goal is the same of a pilot directing his plane to the Trade Center Building and a fireman suffocating in the smoke of a huge explosion. As both seek for oxygen for their lungs, one not to suffocate in smoke and the other not to suffocate in the injustice ruling the world."^{xxxii} This is the end of the fourth composition of the play "Oxygen" by I. Vyrypayev. Apparently, the issue of "oxygen necessary for breathing" acquires a broadened connotation of struggling for the living space and that of the clash of cultures. Interpretation of this topic in the style of parody understanding finalizes the picture, as the author denies the opportunity for a human being to influence the situation and change the destiny of the world. Vyrypayev's characters – Sasha-Sanek (a man) and Sasha – a woman with a male name – can be free only in love.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Russian new drama of the 21st century is a significant artistic phenomenon of modern theatre. One of the directions of its development – verbatim theatre – acquired its own way, its own problematic and thematic specificity in the Russian theatrical tradition. The social subject area in the Russian verbatim-dramas goes beyond the documental theatre, introducing the philosophical and symbolic, sometimes fantastic interpretation of the modern realities. This feature is justified by the desire of a playwright to introduce the image of the author into a play, the desire not only to show the social subject area, but also to explain and express the drama of a modern human being. Undoubtedly, the verbatim theatre development was influenced by the English theatre, which formed the verbatim style as a form of social protest. But the Russian verbatim reflected and used all the features of the West European avant-garde theatre, including the theatre of cruelty (A. Artaud) and the theatre of absurd (P. Brook). Cruelty is manifested in verbatim theatre as an anti-aesthetic form, demonstrating the unattractive predilections of the speaker or revealing the elements of the author's reflection, as cruelty to oneself, first of all. Another aspect of the theatre of cruelty is that the typology of characters in verbatim-drama often consists of marginal persons, which becomes a means of social protest for the author and reveals the bright counter-cultural subject matter of the drama. The artistic stylistics of such drama refers to the phenomena of avant-garde theatre of the beginning of the 20th century. Giving up realistic decorations, creating a scenic image by purely theatrical means: sound, light, plastique, symbolism; the text laconism and the open finale juxtapose the Russian verbatim with the phenomena of absurd theatre from the formal viewpoint. In his First Manifesto, A. Artaud wrote about the character of dramaturgy material to be presented in such a theatre: "PLAYS: We are not going to play literature plays, we will try to stage directly the well-known plots, events and pieces. The character and the very position of the theatre auditorium require a spectacle, and there can be no closed theme for us, no matter how broad it is."^{xxxiii} The function and the artistic

value of a word in drama are not refuted in the theatre of cruelty. A word is attributed another role – the expression of another reality from a dream in the aesthetics of surrealism. But a word is also capable of rendering the shades of meaning. The rhythm, the intonation, the sound semantics create the effect of plasticity of word-expression, which makes the monologue speech of verbatim a composite of the author-character's internal reality. Saturation of verbatim monologues with absurdisms, author's word-creating experiments, and obscene vocabulary breaks, paradoxical as it may seem, the realistic perception of the scenic space, creating the precedent of a bright emotional perception by the second party – a spectator or a reader. Paradoxical also is the fact that the monologue drama, although epical, is rather a theatrical phenomenon than a literature one. A director's work over verbatim texts is a necessary condition for reading them under complete immersion into meaning. We should remind that it was avant-garde theatre that created a director as an artist of stage. In the Russian theatrical culture, verbatim theatre holds the place of innovatory experience in modern drama. The dramaturgy of documental theatre and the verbatim technique are still an area of dispute for a modern philologist, a literature critic, or a culture expert.

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