

ФГБОУ ВО «Курганский государственный университет»

Индивидуальный конкурс эссе

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking  
World.  
Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

**Мир театра в работах русских и британских писателей.**

**“Театральный код как способ репрезентации мира театра в произведениях XX века (на материале романа Г.К. Честертон «Человек, который был Четвергом» и повести С. Д. Кржижановского «Воспоминания о будущем» ”**



**Выполнила: Курылева Ксения Владимировна**

Студент 3 курса

**Руководитель: Бочегова Наталья Николаевна  
д.ф.н., профессор кафедры «ЗФЛиПИЯ»**

2022

Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education  
“Kurgan State University”

Individual essay contest

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking  
World.**

**Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Research work (essay)

**The world of theatre in the works of Russian and British writers.**

**“Theatrical code as a way of representation of the world of  
theatre in the literary works of XX century (based on the novel  
by G. K. Chesterton «The Man Who Was Thursday» and the  
story by S. D. Krzhizhanovsky «Memories of the Future»”**



Written by: **Kuryleva Kseniya Vladimirovna**

A third-year student

Supervisor: **Bochegova Natalya Nickolaevna,**  
**PhD, professor of the department**  
**“The Romance –Germanic Philology”**

## **Thesis plan**

### Prologue

Every person has very many roles to play in real life. You can be a student, a sister, a brother, a teacher, a politician, etc. The world becomes a theatrical space but we don't notice it in reality. But in writers' minds it becomes an instrument of representation of the role principle of human behaviour forming the basis of understanding the very nature of the human being. Multidimensionality of a personality which can be revealed through the metaphor "the inner roles" is presented in a lot of literary works of XX century. The authors create the world of theatre in literary works correlating it with life to provide a contrast.

Shakespeare's metaphor "all the world's a stage" was reconsidered by the writers of XX century and got the representation through theatrical code, theatricalization and theatricality. Theatrical code is realized through two aspects: formal (at the praxeological level) manifested through the characters' actions, reactions, descriptions of portraits and surroundings, and conceptual (at the ontological level) – through the peculiarities of the perception of life by the characters.

The British writer Gilbert Keith Chesterton and the Russian writer Sigizmund Dominikovich Krzhizhanovsky create the world of theatre in their literary works to express their own attitudes to life and to philosophical concepts.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, take your seats and enjoy the performance.

## Act 1

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.  
William Shakespeare «As You Like It»<sup>1</sup>*

“All the world's a stage” is Shakespeare’s metaphor drawing the analogy between people’s life and playing of the actors. Besides, it may be said that every person plays several parts in any given situation according to the life script. But if people have the right to be actors and directors of their lives then in the literary space the role of the director is taken by the author and the novel becomes theatre, the world of a story – a stage and the characters become actors. The authors create the world of theatre in literary works relating it to life so that to provide a contrast, giving certain special qualities to their characters and tearing off their masks. The authors seek to place their characters in the situations of conflict, showing the acting through theatrical methods, through the composition and the structure of the plot.

In literature this method of organization of the text and representation of the characters is called “theatricalization”. Theatricalization is the object of close research in literary study. It is explained by the cultural consciousness of XX century. This idea is being elaborated not only in the aesthetic and social key, but in philosophical and ontological ones as well. The idea of Homo Ludens was introduced by J. Huizinga<sup>2</sup> and the role principle of human behaviour formed the basis of understanding the very nature of the human being. However, theatricalization has not got the clear terminological basis yet.

According to O.O. Legg, theatricalization is the action strictly designed by “a wise *choreg* (Gr. “to lead, command”) knowingly distributing the roles”. It is

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy As You Like It, spoken by the melancholy Jaques in Act II Scene VII Line 139

<sup>2</sup> Huizinga, J. (1949). Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element of Culture. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

creative freedom of an artist-demiurge, consciously modelling the artistic reality.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, it is important to distinguish it from the other idea (relevant specifically for characters) that of “theatricality”, i.e. “the intention to structure the principles of behaviour according to theatrical performance”.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Y. Lotman defines theatricality as specific man’s play behaviour in any given life situation.<sup>5</sup>

The term “theatrical code” combines these two ideas: theatricalization and theatricality. Theatrical code is one of the ideas of semasiology used in Lotman’s works along with the general idea of the cultural code. Theatrical code is realized through two aspects: formal (at the praxeological level) manifested through the characters’ actions, reactions, descriptions of portraits and surroundings, and conceptual (at the ontological level) – through the peculiarities of the perception of life by the characters.

Multidimensionality of a personality which can be revealed through the metaphor “the inner roles” is presented in a lot of literary works of XX century. The masks, the position, the form of phenomenon prove to be more significant for the author than its real subject-matter. Moreover, the subject-matter is subordinated to them transforming the notion of the phenomenon into its appearance.

Before the analysis of the literary works of XX century reflecting the ideas of “theatricalization”, “theatricality” and “theatrical code” the notion of the literary tradition should be mentioned.

In the English literary tradition the principle of theatricalization of the text was used in “Vanity Fair” by W. M. Thackeray, “The Portrait of Dorian Gray” by O. Wilde and “Theatre” by W.S. Maugham. These novels can be considered most representative through the ideological-artistic transformation of the

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<sup>3</sup> Легг О. О. Театральность как тип художественного мировосприятия в английской литературе XIX-XX вв., 2004 г

<sup>4</sup> Легг О. О. Театральность как тип художественного мировосприятия в английской литературе XIX-XX вв., 2004 г

<sup>5</sup> Лотман Ю. М. Театр и театральность в строе культуры начала XIX века // Лотман Ю. М. Избр. ст. : в 3 т. Т. 1 : Статьи по семиотике и типологии культуры. Таллин, 1992

“theatrical code” in the structure of the novel genre in the English literature of XIX and XX century.

The end of XIX and the beginning of XX century is one of the most exciting and peculiar periods in the history of the Russian literature. At that period the power of theatricality was an important feature of ethical and aesthetic concept of the art of the Silver century, penetrating the creative process of writers of that period (A. Belyj, A. Block, N. Gumilev and others).

## **Act 2**

*As the manager of the Performance sits before the curtain on the boards and looks into the Fair, a feeling of profound melancholy comes over him in his survey of the bustling place.*

*W.M. Thackeray “Vanity Fair”*

The curtain is raised.

The performance begins.

Let us consider the world of theatre in the literary works of the English writer Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) “The Man Who Was Thursday” (1908) and the Russian writer Sigizmund Dominikovich Krzhizhanovsky (1887-1950) “Memories of the Future” (1989).

G. K. Chesterton was interested in the philosophy. He was one of the first writers and philosophers of his time, who understood that the philosophical concepts and ideas were increasingly governing real human life and affecting the solution of social and political problems. This was reflected in the author’s novels through the conventional forms such as acting and theatricalization, fantasy and grotesque, symbol and allegory. Chesterton’s address to theatrical aesthetics was caused by his deep personal attitude to the theatre. The puppet theatre was an essential part of Chesterton’s childhood.

As Y. M. Lotman writes, “the theatrical space is characterized by the high sign density; everything taking place on the stage gets the tendency to be saturated by additional significance in comparison to the directly objective

function of a certain thing or phenomenon” (*translated by K. Kuryleva*).<sup>6</sup> This very effect of the theatrical convention (“the high sign density”) is close to the artistic aims of Chesterton. The author creates the theatrical performance within a non-dramatic text, organizes the literary space of the novel as the theatre where the characters with certain ideas are acting and the landscape, the interior serve as the scenery.

Representing Saffron park in the novel “The Man Who Was Thursday” Chesterton creates the atmosphere of the performance where the houses, the nature and people have “artistic appearance” as they have something special and theatrical inside. The description of the place where next events will happen ends by words: “A man who stepped into its social atmosphere felt as if he had stepped into a written comedy”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Chesterton prepares the readers to the narration of events of the conventional “theatrical” kind appealing to their imagination.

The period of radical changes in the political and social system of 1920-1930s became the ground for creating of an image of the world as theatre on the basis of theatrical code. It had an impact on Krzhizhanovsky’s writing of fiction and drama. Sigizmund Dominikovich was a playwright as well. He created not only the world of theatre within the literary space but also his own theatre in it. The phenomenon “theatre of thought” appeared as a certain component of theatrical code, realized through the figurative comprehension of the world of theatre, a play of associations with ideas, the revival of the literal meaning of metaphors and set expressions, a game transformation of time and space.

The transformation of time and space according to the theatre of thought is shown in the story «Memories of The Future”. The main character Max Shterer is a young scientist dreaming about the development of the apparatus

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<sup>6</sup> Лотман Ю.М. Семиотика сцены // Лотман Ю. Об искусстве. СПб., 1998. С. 583–603.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter I. G.K. Chesterton // The Man Who Was Thursday

“time cutter” for the time travel. The dream about the control of time becomes the goal and the meaning of all his life. In his childhood he claimed that he would make time “dance in circles”. The idea of discontinuity of time pushes Max to make “a time cutter”. In Shterer’s philosophical consciousness life and time are discontinuous and because of penetrating into these “gaps” it is possible to move in time and, therefore, to control it. The artistic images are the personified cognitive processes which play in theatre of thought.

Chesterton used the principle of theatricalization through the formal aspect of theatrical code and Krzhizhanovsky – through the ideological-informative one. Both writers used the world of theatre for expressing their own attitudes to life and philosophical concepts. It is important to mention that S. D. Krzhizhanovsky produced the performance based on Chesterton’s novel “The Man Who Was Thursday”. These two authors supported the idea “All the world's a stage”.

### **Act 3**

*You don't know the difference between truth and make-believe.*

*You never stop acting. It's second nature to you.*

*You act when there's a party here.*

*You act to the servants, you act to father, you act to me.*

*W.S. Maugham “Theatre”*

The curtain falls.

Thus, the edge of XX century brought about the phenomena of theatrical code, theatricalization and theatricality. The blurring of the borders of these concepts and the presence of theatrical code in real life puts the question of the functions of theatricality in the literary space, of the forms and the ways of theatricalization of the non-dramatic prosaic text in a new light. The representation of the world of theatre at the level prose through theatrical code has been developing up to the present day.



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