

work is a work of art, the text has to be stylized in accordance with literary rules, though the stylization must not impair its theatricality (*Ibid.*: 382–387). We can read a dramatic text, but in order to understand it we must imagine actors performing it on a stage. Apart from stage directors, and to some extent also actors, few readers do this; in any event, imagined acting on an imagined stage is merely an inferior substitute for a performance (*Ibid.*: 19–22 and 81–83). While it is true that certain plays were written only to be read, they are not dramatic texts properly so called but merely very much like them (*Ibid.*: 24). Only theatre, in the sense of performance, can be dramatic. Hence there exist only two literary genres: the lyric and the narrative, and plays intended for reading belong to the narrative genre (*Ibid.*: 74).

The manifestly paradoxical character of this reasoning must not blind us to the magnitude of the underlying intellectual effort to reintegrate the text conceptually in a theatre at last recognized for what it is and has always been: an autonomous art, distinct from all the other arts. In retrospect, it is not easy to imagine the obstacles – made up of preconceptions – that stood in the way of such an enterprise. But we can get some notion of them if we recall the strange arguments that Allardyce Nicoll, another scholar strongly influenced by Herrmann, put forward around the same time in order to construct his theory of drama as at once a work of literature and an integral part of theatre. To begin with, while acknowledging that a drama is a work of literature, he asserts that it may never be taken to exist in a merely literary, written or printed form; hence it follows that drama has to be interpreted on a stage, by actors, before an audience. Therefore, although theatre is distinct from drama, it includes drama. Then, in order to appreciate a play as we read it, we must imagine it being performed by actors, in a playhouse, with scenery; few readers are able to do this. And, since many great dramatists have written for a particular actor or troupe, in reading *Hamlet*, for instance, we must transport ourselves in imagination to the Globe theatre and create for ourselves the image of the Elizabethan actor Burbage. Lastly, plays that are weak from a “poetic” point of view may yet possess great theatrical qualities, while others, lamentably lacking in almost every theatrical requirement, may contain the most glorious poetry in the world (Nicoll s.a. 31 and 60–64).

In short, the paradox that mars the arguments Zich constructed in order to restore the text to its place in the theatrical structure is equalled only by the

proposal to exclude the text from the analysis of theatre. Both manifestly represent the price that had to be paid if the theory of theatre was to be extricated from the impasse into which the literary conception had led it.

Zich's attempt to deny the text's literary character proved ephemeral; none of the theoreticians belonging to the Circle followed him in this direction. However, the break did not occur immediately; for several years – long years, if we bear in mind the extremely rapid intellectual evolution that was taking place during that period – Zich's theories continued to gain acceptance without being explicitly reaffirmed. Thus in an article published in the late 1930s, Mukařovský still uses the term “drama” when referring to theatre and treats it as an autonomous art on the same footing as narrative and film; the concept of drama as a literary genre is completely absent (Mukařovský 1937–38/1966). Another example: in 1937 the Circle's journal published an article by Olga Srbová, stemming from Mukařovský's seminar, under the title “The Character in Modern Drama”; this study, focussed entirely on certain devices of avant-garde theatre, makes no mention whatsoever of dramatic literature (Srbová 1937).

On the other hand, Zich's reincorporation of the verbal component into the theatrical structure placed the Prague School in a privileged position, so to speak. Henceforth, all aspects of theatre, including its relationship with literature and literature's contribution to it, could be tackled without any preconceptions or theoretical postulates.

2.2 Relations between theatre and literature

The fact that there is a link between theatre and literature is simply a matter of observation, since theatre owes one of its components to language, which is the material of literature. The link itself is complex and takes many, often contradictory, forms. Far from being preordained, its nature is constantly called into question. In certain forms of theatre, the text dominates so strongly that all the other components are severely restricted. But there are also forms in which the contrary is true. There the verbal component holds such a lowly place that it is devoid of any artistic quality at all; its only link with literature is that they both use language (Mukařovský 1941b). A great many opera librettos and *commedia dell'arte* scenarios illustrate the point, and so do certain kinds

of puppet plays (though others aim on the contrary to preserve the integrity of the literary work from the interference to which a performance by live actors would expose it). Many of the texts written for the theatre lean towards this pole, without going quite so far. Thus Zeami thought that the essence of the Nô lies in the dancing and the singing, while the text serves as a mere support for them; no more is required of it than that it obey certain rules of composition (Sieffert 1960: 13). Moreover, theatre can do without any verbal component at all, and yet not sever its link with literature completely: it may still draw on it for its subject-matter and plot-construction; and language, even when physically absent, may imprint its own principles on the way the actors' physical gestures and movements are shaped (Veltruský 1981c).

The relationship between theatre and literature is particularly complicated, given that it concerns not just the dramatic genre but literature as a whole. When theatre people look for a text that will suit the structure they intend to create, they do not limit their search to dramatic literature. Throughout history, there have been many instances of narrative or lyric works being staged. Examples of the former include the Kathakali, the *Râmlilâ* and many other traditional forms of Asian theatre, as well as the production of *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik* by Piscator, that of Tolstoj's *Resurrection* by Nemirovič-Dančenko, Janáček's opera *From the House of the Dead*, etc. The dramatization of novels, which according to Mukařovský (1941b) serves as an intermediary between narrative and theatre, is in my opinion a more complicated matter. Everything depends on the degree of adaptation. In certain cases it can produce a truly dramatic text; it is hard to see, for instance, how Zola's own dramatization of his novel *Therèse Raquin* differs from his original plays. Mukařovský (1941b) cites what is perhaps the most striking instance of the verbal component of a theatrical performance consisting of lyric poetry: Mary's laments in the medieval religious drama. Many other examples can be found in the ritual theatre of a wide range of civilizations and in folk theatre; in an appendix to his book on the Czech and Slovak folk theatre, Bogatyrev (1940: 187–205) reproduces a remarkable Christmas play which is made up entirely of lyrical pieces.²

The fact remains that theatre does seem to draw on dramatic texts more often than on narrative or lyric works. Mukařovský (1941b) says that if theatre people most often choose drama, it is because drama is the literature of dialogue

and dialogue is action expressed through language: in the theatre, the speeches that make up the dialogue turn into a chain of actions and reactions. Support for this thesis can be found in the abiding attraction that many non-dramatic texts written in the form of dialogue, such as *La Celestina*, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, or Paul Valéry's philosophical dialogues, have for theatre. However, theatre's undeniable preference for dialogue remains to be explained in its turn.

The thesis also seems to me to suffer from oversimplification. After all, it is quite easy to convert many narrative or lyric works into dialogue, without subjecting them to the more radical recasting called dramatization, simply because of the way they use language; Mukařovský himself (1940c) examined a case in point. And many more texts can be converted into dialogue provided that certain passages of descriptive or narrative monologue, not representing the utterances of any particular character, are allowed to remain. We know that such monologic passages fit perfectly well into the most varied forms of theatre and that they can even be found in drama, first and foremost in the choruses of Greek tragedy. The reason why theatre more often opts for drama is, I believe, that drama tends to impose on acting, and on the performance as a whole, a broad range of norms arising from its own structure (Veltruský 1941b). When narrative or lyric texts are staged, they do not produce such an effect, at least not to the same extent. What is at issue here is a factor of great importance for the art of theatre in general and acting in particular: one of the constant features of any theatrical structure involving a dramatic text is a dialectical opposition between the requirements of this text and certain features intrinsic to acting (Veltruský 1941b, 1976b and 1991); and this opposition tends to prevent acting from carrying the theatre beyond the domain of art. This point will be examined later. At all events, Mukařovský's thesis – put forward, as it happens, in an article surveying the contemporary state of theatrical studies – clearly shows how determined the theoreticians of the Prague Circle were to tackle the relations between theatre and literature within the widest possible frame of reference, in order to avoid any preconceptions. The task of investigating these relations in more detail fell to separate empirical analyses.