Discovering the functional architecture of play texts
PATRICE QUAMMIE-WALLEN
5 July 2018, 28ESFLC2018 Presentation, Pavia Italy

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The best playwright is a dead playwright

Unknown
OVERVIEW

- Theatre traditions
- European Theatre
- Drama and Theatre Theory
- Structure of the play
- Stage directions
- Theatre Phases
- SFL and Transitivity
- Texts- the functional picture

- <Opera stage scene jpg>
WHERE IN THE WORLD...? Theatre traditions

- Seven global theatre pics:
  - <Peking opera jpg>
  - <Noh Characters jpg>
  - <African Theatre Masks jpg>
  - <Kabuki characters jpg>
  - <048Dancers-flowerHoops3 jpg>
  - <African Theatre jpg>
  - <Classic Oedipus the king theatrical scene jpg>
Greek tragedies
High ranking officials

Control from inception to performance
Medieval church ban on profession

Prevalence of performing troupes
Commedia dell’arte
Stock characters, limited plot situations, standard gags

Use of theatre by Church after Dark Ages
Elizabethan plays on rotation, churned out weekly and utilised available sets, basic directions

Writing for profit - stock everything
Gutenberg’s press C15th...and margin notes

No consultation with playwright
Poor playwriting produces spectacle/ spectacle producing poor playwriting (C19th late)

Rise of the director - actor-managers, producers held rights, playwright as word processor
PRAGUE SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DRAMA 1926-1948

Functionalism
Structuralism
The signifier, signified, referent
Investigating interaction of the various theatre codes
Elements of a drama for analysis
e.g. material, immaterial, audience

“... it is very difficult... to conceive of an adequate semiotics of theatre which takes no account of dramatic canons, action structure, discourse functions and the rhetoric of the dialogue, just as a poetics of the drama which makes no reference to the conditions and principles of the performance has little chance of being more than an eccentric annexe of literary semiotics. ” Elam 2002

Mukarovsky, 1931. An Attempted Structural Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Actor.
THE MOTHER (to the Manager, in anguish). In the name of these two little children, I beg you.... (She grows faint and is about to fall). Oh God!
THE FATHER (coming forward to support her as do some of the actors). Quick a chair, a chair for this poor widow!
THE ACTORS. Is it true? Has she really fainted?
THE MANAGER. Quick, a chair! Here!
(One of the actors brings a chair, the others proffer assistance. The Mother tries to prevent the Father from lifting the veil which covers her face).
THE FATHER. Look at her! Look at her!
THE MOTHER. No, no; stop it please!
THE FATHER (raising her veil). Let them see you!
THE MOTHER (rising and covering her face with her hands, in desperation). I beg you, sir, to prevent this man from carrying out his plan which is loathsome to me.
### PARTS OF A PLAY - Roman Ingarden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HAUPTTEXT</strong></th>
<th><strong>NEBENTEXT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main text</td>
<td>Side Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Stage directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story - things actors say</td>
<td>Location, time, actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserved in performance</td>
<td>Translated to other semiotic modes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage directions are an essential part of the literary dramatic text. The concept of "sub-text" and Aristotle's prioritizing of plot, character, and thought over diction indicate that dialogue is only a skeletal form, not the entire play (Suchy 73) [Esslin, Veltrusky, Ingarden, Zich]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>INTRA-DIALOGIC</th>
<th>EXTRA-DIALOGIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification/ description at first entrance</td>
<td>Ev 209 DEATH: Everyman, stand still! Wither art thou going/ thus gaily?</td>
<td>LA 239 Enter SIR MICHAEL AUDLEY, a grey-headed gentleman of 70, arm in arm with LADY AUDLEY, supposed to be about 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>OK 177 OEDIPUS: For the love of god, don’t turn away,/ not if you know something. We beg you/... on our knees</td>
<td>En 51 CLOV halts, without turning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb show</td>
<td>OK 159 OEDIPUS: Oh my children, new blood of ancient Thebes/ why are you here? Huddling at my altar,/praying before me, your branches wound in wool.</td>
<td>LA 239 Enter VILLAGE, followed by MORRIS DANCERS, C., who perform a dance and exeunt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THREE PHASES OF THEATRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECTS</th>
<th>FIRST PHASE</th>
<th>SECOND PHASE</th>
<th>THIRD PHASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>6BC- 1500s/1600s:</td>
<td>1500/1600s - present</td>
<td>1900s - onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theatre Type</strong></td>
<td>Civic institutionalisation of drama in Athens to the development of the European open air theatres</td>
<td>Initiated by the private theatres of the late Renaissance</td>
<td>Stage practice of Meyerhold and Piscator and Brecht in 1920s and 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>Community Attendance</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial and thus class-delimited audience</td>
<td>General audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Religious dimension/ didactic</td>
<td>Secular orientation</td>
<td>Social/ political/ didactic; pleasure + instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>Conventionalism</td>
<td>Illusion</td>
<td>Contestation of illusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THREE PHASES OF THEATRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Component</th>
<th>Poetic and densely layered text</th>
<th>Non-poetic language - the analogous representation of every day speech</th>
<th>Non-poetic language - the analogous representation of every day speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance conventions</td>
<td>Functionalistic performance conventions - e.g. masks to denote gender and status on the Greek stage and use of torches to signal the night in Elizabethan playhouses.</td>
<td>Naturalism - representing real life on stage with photographic exactitude. Fourth wall convention and artificial lighting technology to make a clear boundary between performance space and audience space.</td>
<td>Anti-illusionistic; reveals theatre as theatre by drawing attention to the means of representation. Creates distance between spectator and performance (similar to first phase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Actor as actor - clear demarcation between actor and role; a symbol</td>
<td>Actor and role/character are one and the same (actor training)</td>
<td>Actor is not emotionally tied to character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THREE PHASES OF THEATRE

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<tr>
<th>Spectator</th>
<th>Active spectator - he perceives a real actor. he has to use the text and performance conventions and the symbolism of the actor to imagine, in creative collusion, a more complete realisation of the text, which includes the imaginary character.</th>
<th>Passive spectator; voyeur – he identifies with the actor/character and is drawn into the fictional world, gaining pleasure from a 'willing suspension of belief' Coleridge, 1907.</th>
<th>Active spectator; performance is just performance so no emotional identification with actor/character; focuses outward from enactment to the social reality instructed within.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>Classic text</td>
<td>Bourgeois text</td>
<td>Radical text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage directions</td>
<td>Nebentext</td>
<td>Haupttext and Nebentext</td>
<td>Haupttext and Nebentext</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage directions traits</td>
<td>Stage directions in the dialogue and is straightforward</td>
<td>Diverse referents still exist in haupttext and supplement Nebentext</td>
<td>Directions work to bring attention to the stage as theatricality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and technical elements</td>
<td>Pieced together from convention and historical source material</td>
<td>More varied and more natural detail with the increase of technology</td>
<td>More varied and more detailed with the increase of technology, with the tendency to subvert or foreground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SFL AND TRANSITIVITY

Processes, Participants and Circumstances

- One of the functions of clause is to represent experience: to describe the events and states of the real and unreal world.
- In the SFL model, a representation of experience consists of:
  1. Processes: what kind of event/state is being described?
  2. Participants: the entities involved in the process, e.g., Actor and Sender.
  3. Circumstances: specifying the when, where, why and how of the process.
THE PLAYS

Oedipus the King
(429 BC)

Lady Audley’s Secret
(1889)

Sei Personaggi in cerca d’autore
(1921)
Scene. — The Line Tree Walk; an ancient Hall, R.; the lime trees form an avenue up to the hall which is seen in the distance.

Enter PHOEBE MARKS, followed by LUKE her cousin, from R.; he is dressed in velveteen coat, flowered waistcoat, and cord breeches and gaiters, and has a rough dissipated appearance.

Phoebe. I tell you, Marks, you mustn’t come here.
PRIEST:
Oh Oedipus, king of the land, our greatest power!
You see us before you now, men of all ages
clinging to your altars. Here are boys,
still too weak to fly from the nest,
20 and here the old, bowed down with the years,
the holy ones—a priest of Zeus myself—and here
the picked, unmarried men, the young hope of Thebes.
And all the rest, your great family gathers now,
branches wreathed, massing in the squares,
25 kneeling before the two temples of queen Athena
or the river-shrine where the embers glow and die
and Apollo sees the future in the ashes.
Finally, the Manager enters and goes to the table prepared for him: His secretary brings him his mail, through which he glances. The prompter takes his seat, turns on a light, and opens the "book."

THE MANAGER (throwing a letter down on the table). I can't see (to Property Man). Let's have a little light, please! PROPERTY MAN. Yes sir, yes, at once (a light comes down on to the stage).

THE MANAGER (clapping his hands). Come along! Come along!

Second act of "Mixing it Up" (sits down).
Bibliography


Thank you!

<Cast bows Carmen opera production jpg>
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