

ՀԱՄԱՇԽԱՐՀԱՅԻՆ ԳՐԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԵՎ ՏԵՍՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

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THE PERCEPTION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABSURD IN ARMENIAN AND WORLD DRAMATURGY

Keywords: philosophy of the absurd, Jean-Paul Sartre, drama of the absurd, Beckett, Ionescu, Antonin Artaud, Perch Zeytuntsyan.

This study aims to examine the theoretical inquiries of the *Drama of the Absurd*, which directly intersects with the fundamental principles of Existentialism, within the framework of the *Philosophy of the Absurd*. The Literature of the Absurd is a unique response to the philosophy of Existentialism, finding its expression in the late 1940s when the French theatrical life witnessed the emergence of a groundbreaking movement known as the Theater of the Absurd, closely associated with the Drama of the Absurd. There was paramount concern for human existence, and the intellectual's vital position, philosophical and aesthetic orientation on this issue was one: to show the mindlessness of human existence. The focus was an *absurd person* alienated from society, outside moral and legal standards. That pessimistic mood created a worldview where standards and values were reviewed and re-evaluated. However, the ideas and perspectives proposed by the Absurd did not align with the ideology of the Soviet Government, resulting in its classification as forbidden literature within the context of Soviet Armenian reality for an extended period. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, the material being analyzed in the context of mutual connections and relationships between Philosophy and Literary Studies.

*Բանասիրական գիտությունների թեկնածու,
ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Մ. Աբեղյանի անվան գրականության ինստիտուտ*

ԱՐՄՈՒՐԴԻ ՓԻԼՍՈՓԱՅՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԸՆԿԱՆՈՒՄԸ ՀԱՅ ԵՎ ՀԱՄԱՇԵՆԱՐՀԱՅԻՆ ԴՐԱՄԱՏՈՐԳԻԱՅՈՒՄ

Բանալի բառեր: արսուրդի փիլիսոփայություն, Ժան-Պոլ Սարտր, արսուրդի դրամա, Բեքեթ, Իոնեսկո, Անտոնեն Արտո, Պերց Չեյտունյան:

Այս վերլուծությունը նպատակ ունի *արսուրդի փիլիսոփայության* համատեքստում քննել *արսուրդի դրամայի* տեսական հարցադրումները, որոնք անմիջական աղերսներ ունեն երգիստենցիալիզմի որոշ հիմնադրույթների հետ (գոյության անմտություն, անհատի դատապարտվածություն, մարդու անդեմացում):

Արսուրդի գրականությունը որպես փիլիսոփայական հասկացություն ուսումնասիրել ենք՝ հիմք ընդունելով երգիստենցիալիզմի փիլիսոփայության մեջ *արսուրդ թատրոնի* ստեղծման փաստը, որը ուղղակիորեն կապվում է *արսուրդի դրամային*: Տրվել են նաև *սպասման անհեթեթություն* կամ *դրամատուրգիական վակուում*, *արսուրդի դրամա* կամ *անտիդրամա* հասկացությունների սահմանումները: Համեմատական մեթոդի միջոցով անդրադարձ է կատարվել ինչպես հայ, այնպես էլ համաշխարհային (մասնավորապես, ֆրանսիական) դրամատուրգիային, որոնք ունեն արսուրդի հատկանիշներ:

Հոդվածում ընդգրկված հեղինակների ստեղծագործություններում արսուրդը դիտարկվել է որպես փիլիսոփայական մեկնակետ:

Ուսումնասիրությունը միջգիտակարգային է: Նյութը վերլուծվել է փիլիսոփայության, գրականագիտության և մարդաբանության միջև փոխադարձ կապերի և առնչությունների համատեքստում: Հետազոտությունը չունի նախադեպ:

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ВОСПРИЯТИЕ ФИЛОСОФИИ АБСУРДА В АРМЯНСКОЙ И МИРОВОЙ ДРАМАТУРГИИ

Ключевые слова: философия абсурда, Жан-Поль Сартр, драма абсурда, Беккет, Ионеску, Антонен Арто, Перц Зейтунцян.

Это исследование направлено на изучение теоретических изысканий Драмы Абсурда, которые непосредственно пересекаются с фундаментальными принципами экзистенциализма, в рамках Философии Абсурда. «Литература абсурда» — это уникальный ответ на философию экзистенциализма, нашедший свое выражение в конце 1940-х годов, когда во французской театральной жизни возникло новаторское движение, известное как «Театр абсурда», тесно связанное с «Драмой абсурда». . Первостепенной была забота о человеческом бытии, и жизненная позиция интеллигента, философско-эстетическая установка в этом вопросе была одна: показать бессмысленность человеческого существования. В центре внимания была нелепая личность, отчужденная от общества, вне нравственных и правовых норм. Это пессимистическое настроение создало мировоззрение, в котором стандарты и ценности были пересмотрены и переоценены. Однако идеи и взгляды, предложенные «Абсурдом», не соответствовали идеологии советского правительства, что привело к его классификации как запрещенной литературы в контексте советско-армянской действительности на длительный период. В исследовании используется междисциплинарный подход, материал анализируется в контексте взаимных связей и отношений между философией и литературоведением.

Introduction

The term *absurd* emerged and found its expression following the initial performances of plays in Paris, such as “The Bald Soprano” (1950) by Romanian-French playwright Eugène Ionescu and “Waiting for Godot” (1953) by Irish writer Samuel Beckett. It is about an absurd person who is alienated from society and detached from moral and legal standards.

In the late 1940s, French theatrical life was marked by the emergence of a new groundbreaking movement known as *Theatre of the Absurd*.¹ In 1953, the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett’s play “Waiting for Godot” (Beckett, 2010) was performed in Paris. This drama revolves around two main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who find themselves lost in an unfriendly and alienated world, waiting for the arrival of Godot. For

¹ Theater of the Absurd or Drama of the Absurd, Avant-Garde Drama (Latin: absurdus “absurd, meaningless”), an absurdist direction and avant-garde phenomenon of Western European theater and drama in the 50s and 60s of the 20th century (Ackerley & Gontarski, 2004).

these homeless, starving, and nearly wrecked people, Godot is of vital importance, a power of faith that they need to continue their existence. Every morning, they meet at a designated place, and return in the evening stubbornly clinging to the thought that Godot will definitely turn up the next day. They are even uncertain about whether they are in the right place and are unaware of the exact day of the week Godot promised to arrive. However, Godot never turns up, leaving Vladimir and Estragon unaware of his *identity*. Questions emerge, that remain unanswered, and their existence in such circumstances, rendered in a desperate state of endless *anticipation*, becomes meaningless and senseless, which suggests that the life they lead is absurd.

The English theater critic Kenneth Tynan describes this type of absurd situation as a “dramaturgical vacuum” (Tynan 1969, p. 62). This vacuum keeps the readers in suspense, shifting the action and conflict into the characters’ inner world. Indeed, Beckett’s drama was not the first instance of the drama of the absurd. However, it is noteworthy that his work exhibited prominent characteristics that served as a basis for considering it as the drama of the absurd or antidrama. Beckett’s play, however, was not the first example of the drama of the absurd. It exhibited prominent features that made it a representative work of an *absurd drama* or *antidrama*.

Prior to Beckett, in 1947, Arthur Adamov, a playwright of Armenian origin, presented his play “The Parody” (1950), which was filled with absurd elements and was published in 1950. In the same year Eugène Ionesco also wrote the antidrama “The Chairs” (1990, pp. 45-83). Furthermore, literary theorists are often prone to attribute the origins of the drama of the absurd to William Saroyan’s dramaturgy.

Commenting on Saroyan’s dramaturgy, the renowned Soviet literary theorist A. Romm (1978), noted, “His luminous, enlightened optimism and unrestrained altruistic pathos, combined with the turmoil of humanistic perceptions during the “red decade,” were intensified by wartime heroism. Consequently, he produced plays with entirely distinct structures, rightfully termed anti-plays” (p. 82).

Antonin Artaud contributed significantly to the drama of the absurd. In the study “Theatre of Cruelty” published in the 1930s, he writes: “Rejecting the expression of the portrayal of human psychology,

characters, and overtly elevated emotions, the theater will appeal to the comprehensive man and not to the law-abiding social one hindered by the constraints of religious doctrines and societal compulsions" (Artaud, 2000, pp. 86-125). It is about an absurd individual alienated from society, detached from moral and legal norms. Such was the antidrama hero of the 50s. The theoretical inquiries of the drama of the absurd also bear affinities with certain existentialist principles, such as mindlessness of existence, condemnation of the individual and depersonalization of the self. These perspectives find their roots in the post-war reality following the period of 1940-45. The end of the Second World War with two nuclear explosions shattered the belief in a promising future, created anxiety regarding the fleeting nature of human life. That pessimistic atmosphere gave rise to a reevaluation and reassessment of societal standards and values. The question of human existence took center stage, and the intellectual's vital position, philosophical and aesthetic orientation on this issue was one: to expose the meaninglessness of human existence.

Philosophical Manifestations of the Absurd as a Transformation of Reality

In his *philosophy of the absurd* Jean-Paul Sartre highlights the "alienation" and "hostility" of the world to man, because, according to him, the world exists outside of man. In other words, an individual randomly appeared in the world and acts according to its laws whether he wants it or not. The contingency of existence excluded the social causes of an individual's alienation, relegating the absurd to the realm of philosophy. These philosophical concepts find expression in Sartre's novel "Nausea" (1969). The contingent nature of existence excludes social causes as explanations for individual alienation, relegating the absurd to the realm of philosophy. On one occasion, Sartre writes: "The word absurd is born under my pen. I realized that I had found the key to existence, to my heart, to my own life. Indeed, what I was later able to understand leads to fundamental absurdity" (Sartre, 2009, pp. 61-82).

Hence, the literature of the absurd can be seen as a response to

existentialist philosophy. The main pioneers of the drama of the absurd were Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco and Albert Camus. However, the ideas and perspectives put forward by the absurd did not align with the ideology of the Soviet government resulting in the banning of such literature in Soviet-Armenian reality for a prolonged period. Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the finest plays by these authors, along with others, were translated into Armenian and published (Pashayan, 1983, 1986), and it can be stated that the connection with European dramaturgy took place, thus conditioning the development of dramaturgy as well, but already Soviet dramaturgy, albeit during a time of order collapse.

Levon Mutafyan notes that the absurd is almost dead in European drama, he tries to look at modern Armenian drama from a different perspective (which is missing in his article), because he believes that the presence of the methodological and aesthetic principles of *the drama of the absurd* causes modern Armenian drama to decline (*Literary Newspaper*, 2005, №. 5, pp. 2-3). Such an approach existed even decades ago: "Absurdity exhausted itself at the end of the 60s" (Boyadzhiev, 1977, p. 28).

However, Ionesco's approach-interpretation to the philosophy of the absurd and the phenomenon in general is still domineering today and has methodological significance not only in Armenian, but also in world dramaturgy: "At times the world seems meaningless to me, and reality itself seems unreal. I sought to express that feeling of unreality through my heroes, who are drowning in chaos, having nothing in their hearts except fear, remorse... and a profound awareness of the utter emptiness that permeates their lives" (Boyadzhiev, 1977, p. 28). In other words, this notion dismisses any notion of regression, as mentioned by Mutafyan, and the drama of the absurd still exists in contemporary dramaturgy, and this finds legitimacy in the sense that Ionesco elucidates.

While the literature of the absurd derives from existentialism, it somewhat forges its distinct path within the inner philosophical realm. The philosophy of existentialism puts forward diverse viewpoints and approaches to the perception and interpretation of life, and within this framework, the concept of the absurd emerges as a distinct and multifaceted manifestation of its biophilosophical perceptions. The drama of the absurd also shares a close affinity with "intellectual dramaturgy",

and its foundation is intrinsically linked to Jean Giraudoux's pioneering work.

The "Theater of Giraudoux" emerged as a distinct phenomenon within the realm of world drama, setting itself apart from the panoply of "well-made" primitive household plays. Notably, theater critics widely acknowledged the revival of poetry on the French stage through Giraudoux's works. Renowned director of the 30s Louis Joue regarded Giraudoux as a master of the stage, adept at uncovering captivating "dramatic themes" and forging a unique dramatic language (Yakimovich, 1968, p. 155). In other words, the development of the drama of the absurd evolved through the convergence of existential circumstances and intellectual outbursts. It brought forth new and timely issues, resonating with the prevailing sentiments and moods of the era.

Beckett clearly objectifies the idea of *alienation of the individual, absolute impossibility of mutual understanding between humans*, which was the defining characteristic of his creative pursuit (Pashayan, 1986, p. 560). This innovative approach earned Beckett recognition through the Nobel Prize, which established the drama of the absurd. The Swedish report on the Nobel Prize reads: "Beckett portrayed the suffering of modern individuals through new dramatic and literary forms. His creation emerges on our barren earth as as a plea for compassion for the sake of humanity, offering freedom to the afflicted and consolation to the despaired through the melancholic resonance of his voice" (Yakimovich, 1973, p. 65).

Ionesco further expanded upon the innovation introduced by Beckett, adding various nuances to the forms of construction of the dramaturgy. Drawing upon Kafka's *idea of metamorphosis*, he gave it a fresh interpretation, and in the Beckettian problem of the *clash between the individual and the crowd*, he focused on the transformation of the crowd rather than the individual, as well as the identification of diverse faces and essences (Ionesco, 1994).

Ionesco's philosophy leads to the realization of the futility of human endeavors: "People hold strikes, riots, revolutions in order to achieve very specific results. In an outburst of passion, they can bypass these goals and achieve tyranny, the imposition of dogmatic ignorance, or even organized acts of collective violence. One gets the impression that

at a certain moment they lose self-control and descend into madness... Revolutions transform into regressions, liberation gives way to alienation, justice turns into sadism and so on" (Kulnikova, 1980, pp. 193-194).

The adherents of the absurd set themselves the primary objective of perceiving the reality through a different lens. Ionesco himself provides a formula for this altered perception: "Realism, whatever it may be, exists outside the realm of true reality. It narrows, discolors, distorts the reality. In perspective, it portrays an individual as diminished and alienated. *The truth resides in our dreams, in our imagination... The real exists only in the myth...*" (Kulnikova, 1980, pp. 193-194).

The search for the meaning of life places an individual in an absurd situation. Hence, the philosophy of the absurd, and the main, central thing in that philosophy is that life and all human thinking and activity, along with the entire world, are absurd and meaningless. Within this perspective, notions of good and evil, morality, being and meaning dissolve. Only existence itself remains, representing the sole tangible aspect amidst the surrounding unreal world, and the transformations that take place in the individual's subconsciousness. "The absurd can be perceived as the relentless pursuit of irrationality and clarity, resonating in the far depth of the human soul. Absurdity depends equally on man and the world" (Camus, 1995, p. 30). Albert Camus identifies two distinct manifestations of the absurd: *inference* and *starting point*. This is very important and deserves special attention when examining the drama of the absurd. The first manifestation involves the revelation of the mindlessness of existence and the denouement of the logical course of life. The second manifestation relates to the condition of an individual who is already immersed in this existence and experiences the impossibility of establishing a meaningful connection with the world.

Transformations of the Absurd in Modern Armenian Dramaturgy

In general, modern Armenian drama encompasses a wide range of plays, making it challenging to categorize them as dramas of the absurd. This difficulty arises from the fact that various absurd elements have permeated different genres. In order not to get too detailed and complicated (which is inevitable), let's just mention that dramas of the

absurd are those dramatic works whose content is based on the absurd, which have appropriate formal constructions, absurd developments of events and an absurd ending. These features, separately or partially, can be found in different dramas, but they cannot be called dramas of the absurd.

The drama of the absurd is characterized by various elements, including objectification, partialization of an individual, or a partial personification and generalization of a phenomenon. For example: Man, Woman, Cook, Psychologist, Cleaner, Bearded, Cloaked, Bespectacled, etc. The followers of the absurd embrace this particular worldview due to the devaluation and disappearance of the modern individual. Individuality gives way to profession, social status, gender difference, etc. Becoming dematerialized, individuals are reduced to mere visible patterns. Plays like Gurgen Khanjyan's "The Express in the Dark", Rafael Nahapetyan's "The Pit", Emil Petrosyan's "Empathy", and Arthur Ter-Danielyants' "My Death" are built upon Camusian absurd starting point and inference. The first two plays of the so-called middle and younger generation writers are not at all on equal planes in terms of their implications, generalizations, structure and inclusion of experience. But they all share an approach to life and man rooted in the absurd, and the semantic inference is also the absurd.

Gurgen Khanjyan's "The Express in the Dark" has no individual personages, the latter are rather personified phenomena: the train is the chaotic world with its disorder, life and people jump out of the train due to their absurd actions, end up in a desolate, dark and cold unknown place, other people appear in their place on the train and start doing the same things their predecessors did (Khanjyan, 2008).

In Rafael Nahapetyan's play "The Pit" the absurdity reaches comism. Everything is turned upside down in this play: the colonel submits to the lower-ranking sergeant, the janitor participates in high-level officials' meeting, the reforms are presented as absurd: "...the brain of a first-grader attending school is fresher, more energetic, longing for learning than a tenth-grader who is tired of lessons, learning, knowledge, school: Therefore, 2nd Deputy Director proposes to teach advanced subjects such as Higher Mathematics, Narekatsi's and Charents' poetry in the first grade, and basic knowledge like the

multiplication table and the alphabet - in the tenth grade. What is wrong with this?" (Nahapetyan, 2003, p. 83).

The extraordinary and absurd developments of the events make Nahapetyan's heroes realize that an individual finds himself in some kind of pit, an empty place, where they have nothing to do, but get drunk and cut off from the world.

The plays by young playwrights, namely "Empathy" by Emil Petrosyan and "My Death" by Arthur Ter-Danielyants deserve special attention. Emil Petrosyan tried to create a drama of the absurd, realizing and at least being aware of what the philosophy of the absurd is and what the drama of the absurd is. The very choice of the personages proves this: Mej (Inside), Arants (Without), Its1 (From1), Its2 (From2), Pokharen (Instead), Vra (On), Mot (Near), etc. (Petrosyan, 2001, pp. 128-133).

Appreciating E. Petrosyan's courage, it is important to acknowledge the presence and significance of Mej, the main character. It is as much illogical as it is conscious, thus, the starting point of the absurd is preserved. Thus, with this Mej expresses his being inside himself, the inner world and the subconsciousness of an individual, while the rest of the characters are not established until the end, they are not outlined, and some of them could not have existed at all. Here is the conventionality and the antylogic of the absurd, and the author tries to place these actors around Mej, when the opposite should have been the case.

Arants, Its1, Its2 and others had to create the external environment that contrasted with Mej's inner world and the subconscious and provided drama so that the conflict would not be obvious. Overall, E. Petrosyan's "Empathy" presents an interesting and original idea. However, the lack of experience leads to certain weaknesses in the play. Particularly, the conclusion appears disconnected from the internal logic established within the play itself. What Petrosyan initiates in the first and second acts remains unresolved, resulting in an unfinished ending, if not unrelated to the beginning, at least unconvincing. To our firm belief, it would be beneficial to introduce a transitional section that would effectively bridge the gap between the beginning and the

denouement. The play “My Death” by Arthur Ter-Danielyants is captivating from the perspectives of conception and structure (Ter-Danielyants, 2004, pp. 192-197). Through the deliberate choice of a confined physical space and a brief timeframe, the author attempts to convey a wide range of ideas. In order to achieve this, the author employs various literary devices, though at times they may appear unjustified. Thus, the inclusion of a 3x5-meter coffin lid and 2-meter shoes in the drama, which, however, are self-serving details and do not have characteristic, condensed features, are disconnected from the play’s ideological foundation and lack clear justification.

Ter-Danielyantz writes: “My work is not a drama of the absurd” (Ter-Danielyants, 2004, p. 198). However, in terms of both formal and substantive constructions, the opposite impression is created. Let’s consider the characters: Dying, Widow, Son, Daughter, Priest, Messenger, two bald old men, 16 identical crying people of different genders. The characters both exist and do not exist. They do not exist in the sense that they are not particular people and can be perceived conventionally. This is certainly a characteristic of the manifestation of the absurd, which is the bearer of absurd people and situations in the environment. There is also an element of absurdity in the conversation between two old men, where one’s mind is on one issue, the other’s - on another, and they are simply streams of individual, personal perceptions and approaches.

“OLD MAN 1 – I’m already thinking.

OLD MAN 2 - They are very comfortable.

OLD MAN 1 – The smart, far-sighted, wise and clever man.

OLD MAN 2 - They are soft.

OLD MAN 1 - He should always think that...

OLD MAN 2 - They are too strong...” (Ter-Danielyants, 2004, p. 193).

According to Camus, stubbornly not deviating from one’s own thoughts and reflections and living absolutely by what one knows is a characteristic of an absurd person (Camus, 1995, p. 65). In addition, the stream of consciousness of the dying person at a time when consciousness and reason are not needed, his absurd, but normal, rational thinking evolves: “If you promise to mourn my death, I will die” (Ter-Danielyants, 2004, p. 194), also contains an element of the absurd.

However, Ter-Danielyants is somewhat right not to consider this drama as absurd, because it is very difficult to determine what it really is. The drama "My Death" is not absurd also because there is no development of absurd situations, absurd environment, the situation is limited to being just a situation, and the environment is endlessly the same. Absurdity is manifested as a point of departure in Karine Khodikyan's play "How the Wife Ran Away from Home" (2004) and "The White Snake" co-authored by Armine Abrahamyan and Mikayel Vatinyan (2000, pp. 82-90).

In Karine Khodikyan's drama, the rebellion of a contented woman, who has a loving husband and an orderly life against the happy days of her life, and her sudden escape from home is already an element of absurdity and is a point of departure of the drama. "It all starts with a feeling of boredom. 'Getting started' is important. Boredom is the culmination of mechanical life, and at the same time the driving force of consciousness" (Camus, 1995, p. 20). The absurd progression of events has a logical ending, and the woman finds herself drawn back to her family.

Gevorg Shahinyan's "Bullfight" (2000) and Samvel Kosyan's "Devil's Women" (2004) are also absurd dramas with inference, despite the logical, natural progression of events.

In "Bullfight" the fight between Corrido and Bull ends with the destruction of both, in fact, everything was in vain, because everything is predetermined from above, everything is in the hands of *fate*. Both Corrido and Taurus accept fate by resisting its temptations. Camus attributes coming to terms with fate to being conscious of the absurd, that is, when the absurd is certain, to go against the trials of fate, after all, means coming to terms with fate itself.

The content sublayer of Samvel Kosyan's drama "Devil's Women" is the denial of the philosophy of love. What is Evil? Who is the Devil? and What is Love if Devil also loves and wants to be a father? There is only one reality: there is nothing, there is life where people are born and die. Perhaps the most successful works of the drama of the absurd are Perch Zeytuntsyan's "Don't Look into the Mirror" (2006), Davit Muradyan's "Show [Me] Your Ticket" (2004) and Gurgen Khanjyan's plays "Hide and Seek" (2007).

The Diversity of Manifestations of the Philosophy of the Absurd in Armenian Dramaturgy

Perch Zeytuntsyan's drama "Don't Look into the Mirror" is actually a comedy. The entire storyline is structured by a series of humorous incidents. What adds to the comic charm is the fact that the protagonist, Vigen, a socially secure bank worker, takes these events seriously, which in its turn creates even more amusing situations. The drama has a violent and unexpected beginning. The most important thing is that the plot develops along with the dialogue: *"While carefully listening to radio receiver, Vigen approaches the mirror to shave... only to find a stranger standing in his reflection:*

STRANGER: *Who are you?*

VIGEN: *Instead of me asking, are you asking?*

STRANGER: *Tell me who you are.*

VIGEN: *Me?... I am Vigen Astvatsatryan?*

STRANGER: *But I am both Vigen and Astvatsatryan. Why did you take my name and surname?"* (Zeytuntsyan, 2006, p. 5).

Vigen's character enters the realm of the drama by encountering his own reflection in the mirror, that symbolizes the physical self, akin to Oscar Wilde's portrayal of Dorian Gray, unveils the inner depths of a person, serving as a bearer of the soul. Vigen's character undergoes transformation influenced by the mirror, ultimately leading to his downfall. In truth, Vigen feared his own nature and attempted to escape from himself. Hence, he embarks on a fervent quest to find his reflection. The play explores the intricate relationship between the physical existence of an individual and their inner, spiritual realm. Any disturbance in one aspect resonates in the other, leaving its imprint. Additionally, the play explores the challenges posed by the diversity of one's inner world, the coexistence of different selves.

Following all this, the story takes an amusing turn. Initially, Vigen believes he might be going insane, a reasonable person seeks a psychiatrist's help. This scene unfolds as the most humorous and the most dynamic part of the drama, employing lively acting and unexpected elements. Vigen and the psychiatrist engage in the treatment sitting on the branches of a cherry tree, from which 5000-dram bills are hanging

with clothespins, and throughout the session the doctor incessantly tells the patient to eat mulberries. The conversation between them is also very humorous, with Vigen dwelling on his predicament while the doctor avoids addressing it altogether, diverting the discussion to various unrelated topics. The protagonist further complicates the matter by seeking the help of the police in his search. The policeman also responds with a statement: "...I don't like that person. He doesn't deserve you. It is better to stay away from him" (Zeytuntsyan, 2006, p. 5).

There are a number of Khachiks in the drama, rather all of them are Khachiks except Vigen. In this way, the author raises the problem of robotization of modern man. A person has lost his individuality, has become an attachment to someone or something. He must act according to the plan, the plan that will be dictated "from above". It is not accidental that there is only one object personage in the drama - the radio receiver. It actively intervenes in the events of the hero's life, talks with him, lives like he does. This circumstance perhaps symbolizes the penetration of modern advanced technologies into the nature of people. In the novel of the same name (the development of which is the drama), there is no radio receiver, instead it is the monologue of the hero, Vigen. In fact, the use of the radio receiver is first of all a means of making the character complete, in addition, it is a loud echo of the hero's conscience and introspection. It turns out that Vigen will have to become Khachik in order to find his reflection. He must become his own object, lose his own self. Here, the author raises the issue of depersonalization and loss of individuality:

"VIGEN: I... I'm lost Mister Major. I am not here. Help me find myself.

POLICE OFFICER: You were lucky. My career started in the lost property department..." (Zeytuntsyan, 2006, p. 11).

The readings of funny facts from various newspapers on the radio are not accidental.¹ They define the current atmosphere and situation of reality (life). The denouement of the drama is profound and gives rise to various interpretations. Vigen unwillingly becomes Khachik, after which the counterparts disappear from the mirror altogether,

¹ The author mentions the names and numbers of the papers, so they are real citations and not made up ones.

emptiness remains. Afterwards he gets into the mirror and reflects someone else. In the final scene of the play, instead of Vigen, a stranger sees Vigen as his reflection, which reflects the life cycle. This is a new beginning that will have the same end as birth and death.

Perch Zeytuntsyan (2006) has captured certain issues in the life of a 21st-century man, artificially complicating and devaluing life, and he has a mocking attitude towards them: “New Armenians are young, there were no new Armenians in your time, they were all old”, “In Yerevan, first of all, fresh air is available only on Wednesdays, by the decision of the National Assembly...” (p. 7) or “I can’t treat patients for nothing and thus hurt their self-esteem” (p. 8).

This general atmosphere makes Vigen, a man who once led a carefree life, lose his self-control. Vigen feels the loss of *self* with all its weight. Everything inside him is mixed up. It is the indifferent reality and crippled society that have driven Vigen to this state: “VIGEN: (shouting into the mirror). Where, oh, where... have you set a trap against me here? You provoke me against myself, you want to drive me into conflict with myself... But mark my words, one day, Vigen will reclaim this mirror as its sole possessor...” (Zeytuntsyan, 2006, p. 18).

Perch Zeytuntsyan makes deliberate distortions in this drama and seems to be trying to destroy and expand the boundaries of conventionality of the theater, he removes the barrier between reality and artistic space, and suddenly the hero realizes the fictitiousness of this whole thing: “But in the novel of the same name, *“Don’t Look into the Mirror”*, there are no similar lines. You must be asleep now, here, see page 24...” (Zeytuntsyan, 2006, p. 12). And maybe both our reality and we are fictitious, a product of some writer’s imagination. The author took the epigraph of the play from Hermann Hesse’s novel “*Steppenwolf*” (1974).

At the end of the play, during the meeting between Vigen and Major Khachik, Vigen utters the words of the epigraph, Khachik slams his hand on the table, countering: “But this is already written in the program of this performance, as an epigraph. Say something novel...”. With this, in fact, the boundaries of the theater transcend the confines of the stage, intertwining the essence of the play with that of life itself. Perch Zeytuntsyan’s play “*Don’t Look into the Mirror*” is a vivid drama of the absurd, with the musings and emotional scenes expressed in it,

while raising philosophical inquiries about the predetermined fate of human existence.

Davit Muradyan's anti-drama "Show [Me] Your Ticket" (2004) has a distinctive structure, and the author describes it as a "theatrical novel involving six images" (p. 3). In fact, the play is divided into two parts, each comprising a sequence of images: I-III-V and II-IV-VI. The first part takes place on a train. It doesn't matter what actions they are because they serve as conventional representations. Notably these same actions occur concurrently in the parallel part of the play, set at the station. The passengers on the train persistently forge ahead, symbolizing the flow of life.

At the station, the same people are in perpetual anticipation. The train is delayed. Within this part of the drama, one can detect the influence of Beckett's drama "Waiting for Godot" (Beckett, 2010). However, in contrast to Beckett's drama, in Davit Muradyan's play the train eventually arrives, and the actors of images I-III-V arrive at the station where they board the train (the logical development of images II-IV-VI). This mentality implies a new repetition of I-III-V images, which subsequently shape the course of II-IV-VI images, forming an ongoing cycle.

A merry-go-round of life is created, wherein the same cycle repeats unceasingly. If Gurgen Khanjyan's drama "The Express in the Dark" (2001) shares a similar atmosphere, where the passengers of the train are constantly changing, Davit Muradyan takes the phenomenon even further highlighting the inevitability of each individual's involvement in the eternal cycle of life. In other words, life unfolds in an incessant loop and proceeds adhering to the predetermined plan (Sartre, 2009), rendering human endeavors to alter this process futile and devoid of meaning.

In the opening of the play "Hide and Seek", Gurgen Khanjyan (2007) himself provides a staging solution: "The action takes place in the building and its front yard. It is desirable that the building should have several floors. The front wall of the building is missing, we can see the inside of the apartments. The apartments are dark, the apartment in which the action starts is lit up" (p. 86). This shows Gurgen Khanjyan's ability to feel the stage deeply. However, the

author has no desire to force the director and adds at the end: "Of course, other solutions are also possible" (2007 p. 87).

Being a small play, "Hide and Seek" is vibrant and dynamic, with a duration of 20-25 minutes. Its versatility allows it to be performed in various settings, including teletheater productions, as a graduation thesis for theater institute graduates, or as a theatrical performance during events. It can even be adapted as a quick game during intermissions, whether inside or outside the theater hall. Surprisingly, this unique model has yet to be embraced by Armenian theaters. Despite having a considerable repertoire of small plays, they often remain on paper, lacking the staging solutions they deserve.

"Hide and Seek", as an antiplay, possesses a mystical nature. Everything is conventional, starting from the outer layer of the stage and ending with the personages, who symbolize the phenomenon, and are not character personalities (Man, Woman, Priest, Cloaked, etc.). In recent years, this character creation technique in Armenian dramaturgy has been inappropriately exploited. In this play Khanjyan directly demonstrates the art of "placing" the character symbolizing the phenomenon within the action, at the same time making it meaningful.

In the outer layer of the play, the Khanjyan construction is reminiscent of the children's game of "Hide and Seek". The character, representing humanity in this play, knocks on apartment doors in search of Manvel. The underlying implication becomes clear: the building symbolizes the world, while Manvel or Emmanuel embodies the son of God, representing goodness. What adds intrigue to the narrative is the seeker's lack of knowledge regarding the purpose or identity of his search, yet he searches and searches:

"MILITARYMAN: Who are you, why? Shun! Report!

MAN: It's me. I am looking for Manvel.

MILITARYMAN - Who is it, why don't I know?

MAN: I am not entirely sure either, but I have to" (Khanjyan, 2007, p. 87).

Thus, an individual today has found himself amidst a reality that tends towards destruction and unwittingly seeks the goodness in order

to cling to it and be saved. However, Gurgen Khanjyan's, perspective, as one of a writer, definitely does not provide a solution to this situation. He considers evil and good on the same level, in totality. The existence of one inevitably imposes the presence of the other.

In one of the scenes, a Man knocks on an elderly woman's door seeking information about Manvel, only to be told that Manvel is her late Husband. This unexpected twist takes the narrative in a different direction. "...Listen, I'm so absent-minded, my husband's name was not Manvel, it was Samvel, yes, Samvel. I must be going insane! Anyhow, does it really matter: Manvel, Samvel...?" (Khanjyan, 2007, p. 88).

Samvel is the biblical Samuel (Samael), the antichrist, the false christ and the embodiment of evil. It is no coincidence that Khanjyan portrays the general environment in extremely dark colors, full of filth. Serious sins follow each other. The military shoot, trying to kill, young women engage in acts of adultery, the priests unnecessarily exploit the name of God and the power of the cross, homosexuals spread perversion. This is the image of a sinful world ruled by the Cloaked One, Devil.

The ending has a rather philosophical basis:

"MAN: I'm looking for Manvel.

SMOKER: I know. I'm Manvel. Don't you believe? You do not believe. Well, you are Manvel..." (Khanjyan, 2007, p. 88).

Again, the author does not offer a definite solution, leaving it open for interpretation by the readers (Hambardzumyan, 2013, pp. 56-68). We think that the denouement of this work emphasizes the pervasive nature of evil while highlighting that goodness resides within oneself. The key lies in the desire to seek and discover goodness, otherwise it can never be found. Ultimately, individuals have the power to choose their own path and shape their destiny.

The variety of manifestations of absurd philosophy in modern Armenian dramaturgy may be attributed to the unpredictable nature of life and the absence of clear perspectives in the ever-changing rhythms of existence. We firmly believe that Armenian dramaturgy will continue to captivate attention and demonstrate innovative qualities, and the latest insights into world philosophy will be further emphasized and harmonized.

Conclusion

The theoretical inquiries within the drama of the absurd also derive from the philosophy of existentialism (Alber Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre), which makes the drama of the absurd the main part of reality: the meaninglessness of existence, the condemnation of the individual, the depersonalization of the self. Due to the crisis faced by the public, it is deprived of its internal meaning and causal relationships.

The origins of the emergence of an absurd mentality can also be traced to the post-war reality of the period after 1940-45. Within these plays, the world is portrayed through a lens of meaninglessness, illogical occurrences, full of pessimistic actions, destinies and worldviews. In this context, established standards and values are dismantled and subjected to reevaluation. The central concern becomes the existential dilemma of human existence, and intellectuals, driven by philosophical and aesthetic considerations, converge on a singular objective: to expose the inherent senselessness of human life.

The main features of the drama of the absurd were vividly expressed through a portrayal of the hollowness and senselessness inherent in external forms (also linguistic ones) achieved through grotesque comic means, in which an ordinary man maintains his mundane existence. It is through them, that he tries to detach himself from the hopeless tragedy of human destiny, as well as from the metaphorical representations of such states of anguish arising from the awareness of the meaninglessness of life deleting in the face of death and cruelty. In this context, in his *philosophy of the absurd*, Jean-Paul Sartre highlights the *estrangement* and *antagonism* between the world and humanity, asserting that the world exists outside of man. In other words, individuals randomly appear in the world and are compelled to abide by its laws, irrespective of their desires. The arbitrary nature of existence precluded the social causes of individual alienation, relegating the absurd to the realm of philosophy.

Noteworthy, authors who have contributed to the drama of the absurd include Jean Genet, Boris Vian, Artur Adamov to some extent, Dino Buzzatti, Harold Pinter, and Bernard Shaw (Baker & Ross, 2005).

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Արմեն Ավանեսյան - Գիտական հետաքրքրությունները հայ և համաշխարհային նորագույն, ինչպես նաև սփյուռքի և արդի գրականության հիմնախնդիրներն են: Հեղինակ է հինգ մենագրության և յոթ տասնյակից ավելի հոդվածների: ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Մ. Աբեղյանի անվան գրականության ինստիտուտի Սփյուռքահայ գրականության ուսումնասիրման բաժնի վարիչն է:

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