

*Garachkovska O.,**Doctor of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Professor of the Department of PR and Journalism
Kiev National University of Culture and Arts*

THE GENRE OF COMEDY IN UKRAINIAN LITERARY DISCOURSE OF 20–30^S OF XX CENTURY

Summary. The article is dedicated to the coverage of the artistic features of the comedy genre in literary discourse of 20–30^s of XX century. Under review is the update of repertoire and innovative forms of theatrical interpretation of “Molodyi Teatr” headed by Les Kurbas (it became the theater, which began fighting traditionalism in several directions at once; first, it was a complete upgrade of the stage repertoire, secondly, a completely new form of theatrical interpretation) and “Berezil” theater – was established – being the only living “organism” of Kurbas’ supporters and associates. L. Kurbas involves talented young artists – A. Petrytsyi and B. Meller to work in the theater.

Through the prism of specifics of the genre the sideshow of “Viy” play “Ukrainisation” by Ostap Vyshnia, “Mina Mazaylo” and “The People’s Malakhii” play by M. Kulish and “In the steppes of Ukraine” comedy by O. Korniychuk, and also works of other Ukrainian playwrights are analyzed. Branded as nationalistic “mixed with counterrevolutionary Trotskyism”, “Mina Mazaylo” and “The People’s Malachii” plays were banned in Ukraine up to 90 years of XX century. M. Kulish still remains unsurpassed Ukrainian comedy dramatist 20–30-ies of XX century, which, together with L. Kurbas made a revolution in the practice and theory of drama. Attaching dynamism to the plays’ composition, comedy dramatist tried to reform the form, fill it with still not fully used music’s, rhythm, color, associations, overtones. Korniychuk entered literature with clearly defined principles of publicness of art, which gained chimerical meaning of “partisanship” in the culture of socialist realism.

The Modern epochue comprehend time and space in the genre of comedy in a special way. Deformed reality mythologized consciousness, the idea of the world as crazy house, thinking by categories of absurd, theatricality of life, violation of ethical and aesthetic principles that seemed inviolable, and carnivalization as one of the action-creating means – are the main features of the genre of modern Ukrainian comedy of 20–30-ies of XX century.

Key words: genre, dramatic art, sideshow, comedy, tragicomedy, vaudeville, performance, kitsch, plot, comedy dramatist.

Statement of the problem. The dramatic art in general and the comedy genre in particular occupy the significant place in the Ukrainian humor and satire of the 20–30^s of XX century. By the weapons of laughter playwrights fought against the remnants of bourgeois psychology, against everything old that in their opinion interfered with the construction of a new society.

However modern literary criticism does not have specific works on Ukrainian comediography of “Executed Renaissance” period in its arsenal.

Analysis of recent researches and publications which contain solutions of the designated problem. The dramatic art activities

of such comedy playwrights as I. Kocherga, M. Kulish, O. Korniychuk and some others have repeatedly been within the field of scientific researches. Thus, N. Kuzyakina initiated the conception of Soviet realities satirical description in dramas by M. Kulish [4; 5]. The researchers G. Kostiuk [3] and M. Kodak [2] dedicated their studies to understanding tragic and comic features in M. Kulish’s play “Pathetical Sonata” [2]. O. Gudzenko investigated romantic elements of Ukrainian drama of 20^s of XX century. T. Sverbilova examined dramatic works by I. Mikitenko and O. Korniychuk in terms of mass culture of 30s of XXth century [6; 7]. Though up till now in literature studies, there have been no special works, which would have covered the specifics of the comedy genre in Ukrainian literary process of the 20–30-ies of XX century.

Thus, the actuality of the article is caused by acute need to fill in the gaps in the study of Ukrainian comediography’s art features of “Executed Renaissance” period and also by the absence of literary critical works on the problem.

The aim of study is to analyze the specific genre of comedy in Ukrainian literary discourse of 20–30-ies of XX century.

The main material of the research. In the first two decades after the October Revolution in Petrograd (1917) in Ukrainian comediography a few age categories of writers were represented. The older generation writers – E. Krotevych, Y. Mamontov V. Tal’ (Tovstonis) – mostly directed satire against bourgeois life and its remnants in their contemporary time, but ridiculing bourgeois ladies “marriageable daughters”, etc. (“Sentimental devil” by E. Krotevych, “Pink web” by Y. Mammoth) did not go beyond everyday life satire.

Being in exile, Olexander Oles’ also wrote “Inspector of Kame-netz” theatrical comedy for four acts, “People’s Court” tragic comedy, “Bourgeois” farce – that was the reaction of the individual author’s consciousness and collective perception of the characters, unreal “bourgeois” of October revolution in Russia and the coming of new most advanced party – the “cannibals” to power. Also a series of vaudevilles and grotesques (“For Muller”, “The Patriot”, “The next concert” and others).

Of course, not all of plays written by Oles’ are perfect, not all survived, such as the “The Last patience” play on the Zaporizh’ska Sich destruction (amateur artist, author played one of the secondary parts in it). Nevertheless poetic theater of O. Oles, highly spiced with Ukrainian humor and satire – is substantially groundbreaking phenomenon of not only Ukrainian drama.

Many comic plays of 20^s were dedicated to antireligious issues. Ostap Vyshnia, the representative of the younger generation of writers severely ridiculed religious prejudices in his “grotesques” (“God’s Work’s Got Confused” 1924, “Heaven’s Issues” 1924 etc.). This issue takes the significant place in the works of D. Bedzyk

(“In my grandmother’s arms”, “Behind the scenes of the church” and so on).

Some works were dedicated to the Ukrainianization topic. Thus, in a sideshow for “Viy”, “Ukrainization” play Ostap Vyshnia depicts Underyud or “Soviet madam”, a female city dweller who does not know what “villagers” are (“Though, it’s not so important” – notes the head of Commission). The logic way of thinking of the madam is extremely limited. In her opinion, the Ukrainianization “is held to keep all in their positions, because if the Ukrainianization didn’t take place, they would have to drive everything out”. The history of Ukraine and its people for that person is associated only with borshch (beetroot soup) and galushky (Ukrainian dumplings).

In the late 20-ies of XX century in Ukraine there were 74 professional theaters. The rapid development of theatrical art led to the search for unique art forms and the variety of genres.

“Molodyi Teatr” was a conspicuous phenomenon in the Ukrainian drama of the 1920s. Headed by Les Kurbas, it became the theater, which began fighting traditionalism in several directions at once; first, it was a complete upgrade of the stage repertoire, secondly, a completely new form of theatrical interpretation.

In January 1922 “Berezil” theater was established – being the only living “organism” of Les Kurbas’ supporters and associates. There was a training studio for directors, stage-painting studio that trained Anatoliy Petrytskyi and Vadym Meller, a dramaturgic group, also the first in Ukraine theater museum was arranged, its own magazine was published.

The real “Berezil” climax was associated with the L. Kurbas – M. Kulish – B. Meller (director – playwright – artist) triumvirate. Performances staged by them such as “The People’s Malakhiiy”, “Myna Mazaylo” by Mykhola Kulish, confirmed the fact of birth the philosophical theater in Ukrainian stage, the fact of the final overcoming of the crisis, Ukrainian theatrical art’s provinciality. Les Kurbas’ dream – to bring Ukrainian Theatre on the European level was carried out.

Les Kurbas was entranced by directing ideas of G. Craig, G. Fucs and M. Reinkhardt, was interested in the T. Pavlikovskyi’s practice and work of the Viennese theaters of 1907–1911⁸⁵. Yet G. Craig’s thoughts appeared to be the most consonant to Les Kurbas’ ideas. The director finds in his ideas the same primitive everyday life objection in the theater, which, in his view, distorts the essence of performing arts.

This postulate also calls denial of literary work literal adherence. G. Craig concludes that the interpretation of the play should be the director’s own achievement. This is how a cult of a new director’s vision on stage is formed – a part instead of the whole. The form in the theater is created by movement, its first principle is flexibility and mobility of design. That is what innovation of “Molodyi Teatr” consisted of – L. Kurbas involves talented young artists – A. Petrytsyi and B. Meller to work in the theater.

L. Kurbas finds like-minded person in the figure of Mykola Kulish (1892–1937) the playwright, and theater greets him as its founder. Each satirical play by M. Kulish – “The People’s Malakhiiy”, “Myna Mazaylo” – instantly became the epicenter of literary and artistic debate, which fell into the view field of not only the author but also critics, theater. Those passionate discussions immediately gained political nature.

Extremely complex innovative play by Mykola Kulish – “The People’s Malakhiiy” tragicomedy (1927) was carefully concealed over sixty years.

Every part of it, every phrase of the work was very difficult to create for the playwright. After all, everything had been revealed for the first time, starting with problematics – ruthless criticism of totalitarianism – ending with unusual compositional organization and creation of unique characters-images. Having translated from the Hebrew Malakhiiy in Ukrainian means “My Herald”; in other words “Messenger of God”.

Biblical Malakhiiy not only mercilessly exposes those priests who went wrong, declined from faith, in fact, betrayed it, but, speaking contemporarily, predicts, foresees the glory of the second temple – the coming of the Messiah; predicts persistent and just Judgment for all faith and goodness apostates.

The author of tragicomedy claimed that he had intended to depict Malakhiiy as a person who perceives form not a content of revolution, and to his mind he had succeeded to do it. What does a newly-brought to light “messiah” proposes “for a higher purpose”? Which implementation methods of his “reforms” he applies? Malakhiiy promises the patients of Saburovka to fulfill all their whims. It was at this very moment when the “Ukrainian delegate” comes up with a brilliant “idea” of the “second decree”; “Attention, attention, attention <...> to remove immediately all portfolios and folders. And when officials will ask where they put statements and complaints, please answer: from now on all singular people’s complaints, applications and request to carry: 1) in a head; 2) in heart sacs-neither in portfolios nor in folders. “Malakhiiy Small-glass sincerely believes that his “reforms” immediately improve the man’s inner world (“the Urgence of man’s reform <...>”).

The nature of the “reformer” is ambiguous. Complex and contradictory. Deeply philosophical. “Rooted” in ancient times (this name the thirteen of the Old Testament low prophets had). Malakhiiy is eternal and at the same time clearly individualized. M. Kulish hyperbolically generalize his image using metaphors, elements of symbolism, and above all – language’s plasticity, scintillating replicas of the characters, the organic unity of word and gesture.

In April of 1929 the world saw a new masterpiece by M. Kulish – language-masterly comedy “Myna Mazaylo”. Based on skillful selecting of words, folk humor vividness play was a great success. Incomparable vision of space by Vadym Meller theatre artist organized the space in such a way that the scenery emphasized but not occupied it; the furniture served only as conventional lines on the stage. Actor in “Myna Mazaylo” play got the complete freedom of speech, procreating the actorish masterpiece (Yoseph Hirnyak as the main lead).

The plot arises very popular in the 20 years issue in Ukraine – change of surname by denationalized commoners like the protagonist of the play. Ukrainian-born Mina Mazaylo strongly opposed Ukrainianization as he hated his belonging to the “second-class” people enslaved for centuries, so that he could not get a promotion at work.

Y. Sherekh was the first who drew attention to the typological similarity of the “Myna Mazaylo” play by M. Kulish with “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme” by Moliere. Similarly to Mr. Jourdain, Myna Mazaylo strongly seeks to enter the “higher society”, hires a teacher of “correct pronunciations”. All the characters of the comedy without exceptions are concerned only in mode of life that is characteristic for the philistine.

The tragedy of the epochue became its comedy. Ukrainianization, Russification, philological aspect comprised a certain helplessness of the authorities in resolving of urgent social problems,

attempts of simply not noticing it. Even nowadays the “Myna Mazaylo” play by M. Kulish remains topical on this point.

Branded as nationalistic “mixed with counterrevolutionary Trotskyism”, “Mina Mazaylo” and “The People’s Malachiy” plays were banned in Ukraine up to 90 years of XX century.

M. Kulish still remains unsurpassed Ukrainian comedy dramatist 20–30-ies of XX c., which, together with L. Kurbas made a revolution in the practice and theory of drama. Attaching dynamism to the plays’ composition, comedy dramatist tried to reform the form, fill it with still not fully used musics, rhythm, color, associations, overtones.

The satirical comedy named “Katia’s Love or Construction Propaganda” (1928) was written by Mychailo Yalovyi (alias – Yulian Shpol, 1895–1937).

O. Ushkalov believes that the only dramatic work by Yulian Shpol thematically and stylistically reminds the language-virtuosal comedy by Mykhola Kulish called “Myna Mazaylo”, published also in 1928. Firstly, in both works the primary topic is “Ukrainization” and secondly, both authors display the issues in the absurd-comic light. The play by M. Yalovyi was weak in artistic terms, especially in comparison with the comedy by Kulish, thus it was not shown on the stage, and after collapse of “Ukrainization” there was no chance left for its stage production.

The dramatic works by Olexandr Korniyuchuk (1905–1972), one of the apologists of socialist realism in Ukrainian literature, need new revisions and significant correlations now. Life and creative career of the odious playwright-nominee, same as Ivan Mykytenko’s and Leonid Pervomaiskyi’s, emerged from the ranks of the “Molodnyak” and VUSSP Komsomol workers’ literary groups represents great interest in terms of scientific understanding of the Ukrainian Soviet-style culture – a phenomenon still being objectively studied in mass culture discourse. This Ukrainian author with his impeccable sense of theatre managed to create a reference type of socialist realism dramaturgy. It will be remembered that that plays by O. Korniyuchuk were not only on the main stages of Kyiv and Moscow, but also in almost all theaters of the former Soviet Union. Each play of the playwright became all-Union “hit”. Korniyuchuk entered literature with clearly defined principles of publicness of art, which gained chimerical meaning of “partisanship” in the culture of socialist realism. There is no wonder that his first artwork was a story about Lenin “He was great” (1925).

However, the substitution of artistic and aesthetic factors by imperial demagoguery adversely affected the value of art works.

The real “professionally made kitsch” [7, p. 46] about the “Happy Ukrainian village was a comedy by O. Korniyuchuk named “At the steppes of Ukraine”” (1940). One of the fundamental characteristics of kitsch, as known, is intertextuality, focus on the areas of plastic models, styles, genres, creating later versions, targeted at undemanding tastes of people without sufficient cultural education. Comedy and vaudeville, including comedy by O. Korniyuchuk called “At the steppes of Ukraine” often became such genres in the 1930’.

By bitter irony of fate the article named “A Work of Great Truth of Life” on the play by O. Korniyuchuk “At the steppes of Ukraine” was published in the main Moscow newspaper “Pravda: in June 22, 1941, the day of the beginning of the most tragic war for Ukraine.

Conclusions. So, under the conditions of thematic and also stylistic literary practice unification the choice of life-based material for artistic implementation for writers was small. However, in literary discourse of 20–30’ of XX century humorous-satirical work of Ukrainian writers was a unique phenomenon, which expanded

the theme and genre range of national literature. In general, the genre modifications palette of comedy of 20–30-ies of XX century was quite varied: language and virtuoso comedy (“Myna Mazaylo” by M. Kulish), tragicomedy (“The People’s Malachiy” by M. Kulish), satirical comedy (“Katya’s Love or Construction Propaganda” by Y. Shpol, “Republic on Wheels” by I. Mamontov, “Flute Solo”, “Days of Youth”, “Girls of Our Country” by I. Mikitenko) kitsch (“At the steppes of Ukraine” by O. Korniyuchuk) and others.

The Modern epochue comprehend time and space in the genre of comedy in a special way. Deformed reality mythologized consciousness, the idea of the world as crazy house, thinking by categories of absurd, theatricality of life, violation of ethical and aesthetic principles that seemed inviolable, and carnivalization as one of the action-creating means – are the main features of the genre of modern Ukrainian comedy of 20–30-ies of XX century.

References:

1. Gudzenko O. Romantic Basics of Ukrainian Drama of 20^s of XX Century: Synopsis : Dis. ... Candidate of Philology Sciences: 10.01.01. Kiev, 2002. 20 p.
2. Kodak M. Dramatic Art of Mykola Kulish (“Pathetique Sonata”). Lutsk : LDPE “Tverdnyia”, 2011. 112 p.
3. Kostyuk H. The Fourth Heroic Act of A. Tairov (By the 26th Anniversary of “Pathetique Sonata” Play by M. Kulish in the Chamber Theater). *H. Kostyuk Literary and Artistic Crossroads (Parallels)*. Washington ; Kyiv, 2002. P. 345–349.
4. Kuzyakina N. Plays by Mykola Kulish: Literary and Theatrical History. Kiev : Soviet Writer, 1970. 234 p.
5. Kuzyakina N. Archive Pages ... Kiev : National Association of Ukrainian Studies, 1992. 186 p.
6. Sverbilova T. Ivan Mykytenko (1887–1937) as a Mirror of Ukrainian Kitsch. *Word and time*. 2007. № 9. P. 35–47.
7. Sverbilova T. Plays by Alexander Korniyuchuk of the 30’s in the Mass Culture Perspective (“The Death of Squadron”, “Platon Krechet” and “At the steppes of Ukraine”). *Word and time*. 2007. № 12. P. 34–47.

Гарачковська О. О. Жанр комедії в українському літературному дискурсі 20–30-х років ХХ століття

Анотація. Стаття присвячена висвітленню художніх особливостей жанру комедії в літературному дискурсі 20–30-х років ХХ століття. Розглядається оновлення репертуару та новаторські форми сценічної інтерпретації в «Молодому театрі» на чолі з Лесем Курбасом (він став тим театром, у якому розпочалась боротьба із традиціоналізмом одразу в декількох напрямках: по-перше, ішлося про цілковите оновлення сценічного репертуару; по-друге, про абсолютно нові форми сценічної інтерпретації) та в театрі «Березіль» – єдиному живому «організмі» прихильників, однодумців Л. Курбаса. Л. Курбас залучає до роботи в театрі молодих талановитих художників – А. Петрицького та В. Меллера.

Крізь призму жанрової специфіки аналізуються інтермедія до п’єси «Вій» «Українізація» Остапа Вишні, п’єси М. Куліша «Мина Мазайло» та «Народний Малахій», комедія О. Корнійчука «В степах України», твори інших українських драматургів. Затавровані як націоналістичні «з домішкою контрреволюційного троцькізму» вистави «Мина Мазайло» та «Народний Малахій» були заборонені до показу в Україні аж до 90-х років ХХ століття. М. Куліш до сьогодні залишається неперевершеним українським комедіографом 20–30-х років ХХ століття, який разом із Л. Курбасом здійснив переворот у практиці і теорії драматичного мистецтва. Надавши динамізму композиції п’єс, комедіограф намагався реформувати форму, наповнити

її досі не використовуваними вповні музикою, ритмом, кольорами, асоціаціями, підтекстом. О. Корнійчук увійшов у літературу із чітко окресленими принципами суспільності мистецтва, які в культурі соціалістичного реалізму набули химерного значення «партійності».

Доба модерну осмислювала час і простір у жанрі комедії в особливий спосіб. Деформована реальність, міфологізована свідомість, уявлення про світ як божевільню,

мислення категоріями абсурду, театралізація буття, порушення етичних і естетичних принципів, що здавалися недоторканими, гра та карнавалізація як один із засобів творення дії – основні ознаки жанру модерної української комедії 20–30-х років ХХ століття.

Ключові слова: жанр, драматургія, інтермедія, комедія, трагікомедія, водевіль, вистава, кітч, сюжет, комедіограф.