



doi <https://doi.org/10.58256/rjah.v4i2.1234>



Research Article

Section: Literature, Linguistics & Criticism



Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023



Article Information

Submitted: 21st June 2023

Accepted: 30th July 2023

Published: 22nd August 2023

Additional information is available at the end of the article

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,
please scan this QR code



How to Cite:

Bortnik, Z. . (2023). Liminal strategies and the development of contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.58256/rjah.v4i2.1234>

Liminal strategies and the development of contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy

Zhanna Bortnik*

Department of Theory of Literature and Foreign Literature, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, Ukraine

* Correspondence: bortnikzhanna@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/000-0002-3461-791X>

Abstract

This research article explores the potential integration of liminal strategies into literary studies focusing on the stages of development in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy. The purpose of this study is to examine how the application of liminal strategies can enhance literary studies research, specifically within the context of contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy. The methodology employed involves an analysis of various works and critical perspectives in the field, with a particular emphasis on identifying and understanding the liminal aspects and transitions present in the development of Ukrainian drama. The accent is made on the conceptual framework of “rites of passage” by A. van Gennep and V. Turner, any innovations in an individual’s life and society require the navigation of three stages of transition – separation, liminality, and incorporation. Findings from this research indicate that integrating liminal strategies into literary studies research offers valuable insights and a richer understanding of the dynamics and transformations within contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy. By examining the liminal phases of separation and incorporation in the works of Ukrainian playwrights, this study sheds light on the intricate processes of transition and the social and cultural implications associated with them. The practical implications of this research lie in the potential for scholars and researchers to employ liminal strategies as a conceptual framework for studying other literary traditions and exploring the transformative nature of artistic expression. This study contributes to expanding the methodological toolkit in literary studies, encouraging a deeper engagement with the liminal dimensions of literary works and their socio-cultural significance.

Keywords: liminality, rites of passage, communitas, contemporary drama, dramaturgy, playwright



© 2023 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

Public Interest Statement

Using the stages of development in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy as a case study, the study aims to investigate the possibilities of incorporating liminal strategies into literary studies research. This research aims to shed light on the complex dynamics and transformative potential of literature within the context of Ukrainian society and culture by analyzing the liminal aspects and transitional phases within literary texts. By demonstrating the value and usefulness of liminal strategies in comprehending and interpreting literary works, we hope to further the field of literary studies through this analysis.

Introduction

Literary studies have always been a dynamic field, continuously adapting to the changing landscape of literary production and cultural developments (Mensah, 2019). As scholars seek new methodologies and approaches to explore and interpret literary works, the concept of liminality emerges as a promising lens through which to examine the complexities and transformations within literary texts and their socio-cultural contexts.

Derived from the anthropological theories of Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1977), liminality refers to the state of being “betwixt and between” existing social structures, where individuals and societies undergo profound transitions and transformations. Liminality is characterized by ambiguity, fluidity, and the suspension of norms and boundaries, offering a fertile ground for exploration and analysis within the realm of literary studies.

The purpose of the study is to explore the possibilities of incorporating liminal strategies into literary studies research, using the stages of development in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy as a case study. By examining the liminal aspects and transitional phases within literary texts, this study seeks to shed light on the intricate dynamics and transformative potential of literature within the context of Ukrainian society and culture. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to the broader field of literary studies by showcasing the relevance and applicability of liminal strategies in understanding and interpreting literary works.

Through the examination of key works and the application of theoretical frameworks, we will explore how liminal strategies can deepen our understanding and appreciation of Ukrainian dramatic literature. Furthermore, this research endeavors to contribute to the broader discourse on the significance of liminality in literary studies and its potential for enriching scholarship across various literary traditions.

By delving into the intricacies of liminality in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy, the task of the study is to highlight the liminal spaces, transitional stages, and transformative experiences portrayed within these works. It not only delves into the textual analysis but also examines the socio-cultural and historical contexts that influence the development and reception of Ukrainian dramatic literature. The incorporation of liminal strategies in literary studies research provides a unique vantage point to explore the intertwining aspects of literature, culture, and society. Through the lens of liminality, we can uncover hidden connections, tensions, and transformative processes within literary texts, offering new insights into the complexities of contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy.

Theoretical Framework

The Latin word “limen” meaning “threshold,” and in a broader sense, “entrance,” “door,” etc., bears similarities to “limes,” which translates to “border” (Spariosu, 2015). In Greek and Hebrew, “limen” refers to a harbor or a meeting place between land and sea (Kraft, 2021).

Arnold van Gennep (1908) introduced the concept of “liminality” in his work “Rites de Passage” to describe the transitional rituals that accompany a change in location, status, or social position. Liminality thus represents the period between the initial defined state and the subsequent acceptance of a new status, involving separation or alienation from the former status (separation) and the incorporation or merging into the new status (incorporation). Transition rituals are associated with the changes that individuals and societies undergo in which liminality serves as a form of initiation, necessitating certain trials to confirm readiness for the next stage. Liminality denotes a state of uncertainty after the loss of the previous status, during which the new status has not yet been attained.

According to van Gennep (1960), transition rituals are characterized by three main phases:

- 1) Separation (alienation, detachment, relinquishing of previous stability);
- 2) Limen (margin);
- 3) Reincorporation (reaggregation) (van Gennep, 1960).

Thus, van Gennep presented an invariant matrix that can be applied to various forms of rituals in culture, society, and individual life during times of change. “Rites of passage” facilitate transformative processes. The liminal phase, where individuals experience “transitiveness” and uncertainty while partially retaining certain characteristics of both the previous and subsequent stages, appears particularly intriguing to researchers (van Gennep, 1960).

Victor Turner’s research focused on the rituals of passage and their symbolism, specifically examining the Ndembu tribes in Africa. He extensively explored the liminal phase, thereby expanding the anthropological context by incorporating elements of a phenomenological approach. Turner analyzed the relationship between myth and ritual and provided a characterization of ritual genres, comparing them to folkloric genres. He demonstrated the potential for transforming ritual models into unique cultural phenomena (Turner, 1977, p. 94).

Turner (1977) regarded “rites of passage” as an interconnected unity of the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phases. He emphasized that van Gennep originally defined rites of passage as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age” (p. 94). To highlight the contrast between the stable “state” and the transitional phase, Turner (1977) utilized the term “state” in a more comprehensive sense, encompassing van Gennep’s other terms. This term incorporates any type of culturally recognized stable or recurring condition, extending beyond the concepts of “status” or “office” (Turner, 1977, p. 94).

Turner (1977) provided a characterization of “liminal individuals” or “threshold people” as follows: “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon” (Turner, 1977, p. 95). According to these characteristics, researchers in myth studies and religious studies consider liminal beings to possess dual nature, existing in two natural worlds and encompassing both the living and the dead (Morrison, 2002). Examples of such beings include boundary deities, figures associated with liminal spaces, and tricksters (Ingwersen, 2017). In ancient Greek mythology, these include Hermes, Hecate, and centaurs (Johnston, 1996). In Roman mythology, Janus, Mercury, Cardea (the goddess of thresholds and health), and Portunus (the god of keys and doors) fulfill such roles (Turcan, 2001). These deities of boundaries, thresholds, and keys were involved in conducting rites of passage and initiation in the myths of many cultures.

Liminal spaces, referred to as “liminal sites,” correspondingly designate the places where

transitional, boundary states of uncertainty occur, between life and death (before rebirth or acquiring a new status), including the concept of Purgatory within Catholic doctrine (Turner, 1977, p. 95).

V. Turner's characterization of liminal entities or "threshold people" includes the following attributes, drawing from the context of initiates in initiation rituals: they lack property, status, possessions, and distinguishing markers; their attire is non-secular, often consisting of rags or nudity; they demonstrate complete obedience to mentors and instructions; liminal symbols accompany the initiation process; and they maintain egalitarian relationships among themselves within the liminal state (Turner, 1977, p. 95-96). Turner introduces the concept of "communitas" into scholarly discourse to describe the model of human relationships during liminality. In this model, individuals form a community of equals, submitting to the authority of elders. Turner contrasts communitas with another societal model characterized by hierarchical structures and differentiation of individuals based on varying assessments (Turner, 1977, p. 97).

The distinction between the sacred and the secular gains particular significance in the characterization of communitas and structure. Positions or roles within the hierarchical structure, often associated with sacred qualities, acquire this sacredness through the ritual of transition. The ritual serves as a transformative process, allowing individuals to attain a new status while reminding them of the hardships endured during the liminal phase. Turner asserts that individuals and groups experience a dialectical process of alternating between high and low, communitas and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, as well as equality and inequality (Turner, 1977, p. 97). Therefore, structure and communitas depend on each other and mutually shape one another, contributing to personal and societal transformations.

Researcher Spariosu (2013) noted, "Thus, liminality in its broadest sense refers to the 'transit' or 'gray' spaces in-between organized systems and reference-frames, whether they are physical, geographical, or cognitive (such as the gray areas at the interface of disciplines, where the present project equally situates itself). We hypothesize that this notion can become an important conceptual tool in understanding not only how cultural (and cognitive) transformations may occur but also how they may be shaped into a peaceful mode" (Spariosu, 2013, p. 111). Furthermore, Spariosu emphasized the significance of the liminal position for the subject who exists outside established structures or stable systems: "A liminal position, outside the established structures (be they social, political, or cognitive), allows the observer to see the limits/limitations of any such structure so that s/he can begin to work toward remapping them or transcending them altogether. In other words, liminal spaces can also be transit points to new reference frames and systems, whether sociopolitical or cognitive" (Spariosu, 2013, p. 112).

Methods

In order to investigate the application of liminal strategies in literary studies research, a comprehensive methodology is employed. Drawing upon the theoretical framework established by scholars such as Arnold van Gennep (1908) and Victor Turner (1966), this research utilizes a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses fields such as anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, and religious studies. In scholarly discourse, researchers actively employ concepts such as "boundary," "border," "liminality," "transgression," "frontier," and "heterotopia" to characterize contemporary artistic phenomena. Additionally, terms like "post" (post-postmodernism, post-documentary), "meta" (metamodernism), and "neo" (neosentimentalism) are added to accentuate the properties of the contemporary literary process. These terminological additions testify to the recognition of a state that exemplifies phenomena of boundary and transition.

Liminality can be regarded as a phase that accompanies a change of place, status, or social position. Thus, liminality becomes a transitional period between initial definition, subsequent rejection of it (separation and alienation), and the choice and acceptance of a new status (incorporation and integration). Victor Turner considers the presence of liminal beings and “communitas” as a significant characteristic of the liminal phase – a model of human relationships where individuals are equal (Turner, 1977). This is in contrast to the hierarchical structure that operates in stable societal models. The concept of liminality proves fruitful for researchers, particularly literary scholars, whose research interests lie in the study of the process of tradition renewal and the observation of artistic explorations of new forms and alternative reference points that go beyond conservative systems and require updates and transformations in accordance with contemporary issues.

Liminal literary strategies can be implemented in various research areas, including the study of literary development epochs and transitional periods. They can also be utilized in comparative and postcolonial studies, as well as in the exploration of national literary histories that reflect the societal and cultural dynamics with their liminal phases. These strategies are particularly relevant for investigating the separation from the influences of literature from other countries, the examination of postcolonial literature from states that have separated from their colonial centers, and the intensification of intermediality during boundary periods characterized by active intercultural diffusion.

Furthermore, liminal strategies can be applied to the analysis of the formation of an author’s individual style, which often involves stages of uncertainty and exploration. They can also be used to study interdisciplinary or hybrid genre creations, the embodiment of liminal characters in literary texts, the cultural and historical background of transitional epochs in artistic works, and the application of artistic techniques that exhibit transitional qualities in relation to other techniques.

The concept of liminality allows for a more vivid and sensory representation of the distinct characteristics of contemporary Ukrainian drama and its specific strategies. Since 2013, Ukrainian dramaturgy has experienced stages of separation and is currently in a liminal phase, transitioning towards incorporation. Ukrainian playwrights’ texts written during this liminal phase demonstrate their quest for forms that express creative freedom beyond the confines of rules, traditions, and established literary norms.

The methodology employed in this study includes a careful analysis of literary texts that exhibit elements of liminality, exploring the transitional periods and boundary-crossing moments within the narratives. Close reading and textual analysis are conducted to identify instances of liminal themes, symbolism, and character development. Additionally, comparative analysis is employed to examine the similarities and differences between different stages of development within contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy.

Results and Discussion

The concept of “liminality,” proposed by Turner (1977), offers the opportunity to understand any transitional phases and comprehend threshold situations and human reactions to them. It also provides a framework for studying and describing boundary stages in the development of culture when old rules, laws, traditions, and artistic methods are discarded because they no longer adequately reflect the new reality (of the world or the artist), while the new ones have not yet been formed, leading to a search.

The concept of liminality is therefore productive for researchers, including literary scholars, whose scientific interests lie in studying the process of tradition renewal and observing artistic explorations of new forms and alternative reference points that transcend the confines of a conservative system defending certain limitations (traditions, norms). This concept highlights the need for updating and

transforming traditions according to contemporary issues.

As such, the study of liminality provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of cultural and artistic change, as well as the ways in which literature and other art forms respond to and shape societal transitions. It allows researchers to examine how creative works challenge and transcend established boundaries, opening up new possibilities for expression and interpretation. Ultimately, the concept of liminality helps illuminate the complex interplay between tradition and innovation in the realm of literature and the arts.

Liminal literary strategies encompass several areas of research:

- I. The study of literary epochs and transitional periods between the formation of a literary movement or method.
- II. Comparative, postcolonial, and national literary studies that reflect the developmental peculiarities of a country, society, and culture during their liminal phases. This includes investigating postcolonial literatures that separate from colonial centers but undergo a transitional phase before forming a new historical, cultural, linguistic, and poetic structure.
- III. The intensification of intermediality during boundary epochs, characterized by active interart diffusion.
- IV. The formation of an author's individual style with liminal stages of uncertainty experienced by artists.
- V. The exploration of intergeneric or boundary genre creations in the formation of genres.
- VI. The specific embodiment of liminal characters in literary texts who undergo (or fail to undergo) separation/liminality/incorporation (such as the portrayal of adolescents, immigrants, exiles, refugees, displaced individuals, LGBT individuals, tricksters, etc.).
- VII. The particularities of plot realization, composition, and motifs of "rites of passage" (symbolic death and rebirth, loss of stability, search for national identity in postcolonial contexts, illnesses, separations, coming of age, rejection of parental values, journeys, monasticism, student life).
- VIII. The cultural-historical backdrop of transitional epochs in literary works (societies in anticipation of invasion, during wars, revolutions, epidemics, when ordinary hierarchies cease to function, cultural liminality).
- IX. The examination of artistic techniques that can acquire transitional characteristics (symbol/metaphor/allegory).

These areas of inquiry illustrate the productive potential of the concept of liminality for literary scholars. It is worth noting that the concept of liminality proposed by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1977) has faced criticism, particularly regarding the lack of consideration for gender aspects and the disregard of a psychoanalytic approach. For example, while studying ritual, Bell (1997) summarizes the observations of historian Bynum (1990), stating that Victor Turner's conclusions are based on a male perception and male experience: he fails to take into account women's experiences and the experiences of those who undergo the rite of passage (Bell, 1997, p. 56).

Regarding the female experience of the rite of passage, Bell (1997) adopts B. Lincoln's trajectory of "enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence" (Lincoln, 1981). In an analysis of women's initiation rituals, Lincoln (1981) suggests that van Gennep's spatial model for ritualized social passage is not entirely applicable. Women's initiations often involve a different set of symbols, as the young girl is rarely completely separated from her village and family. Although she may experience isolation, she remains within the vicinity of her family. Instead of a symbolic logic of separation-liminality-reincorporation, Lincoln proposes that the symbols of enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence are more suitable. He also

finds that many women's initiations rely on a logic of molding to transform an immature girl into a culturally defined image of womanhood. The symbolic activities used in this transformative process are diverse, but they evoke the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, rather than a boy passing through dangerous and purifying ordeals to return as a warrior (Bell, 1997, p. 56).

In our opinion, the juxtaposition of the two frameworks (V. Turner and B. Lincoln) does not contradict either of the concepts; instead, it complements them. It allows for a clearer understanding of the secondary role that women have played in established structures and holds great potential for gender studies. It offers a characterization of the stages in the exploration of the female experience, as depicted in literary works when women strive to assert their right to undergo the "stages of transition" – separation/liminality/incorporation – on an equal basis with men. Similarly, the overlooked experience of suffering and pain undergone by the initiate in the process of initiation, actively investigated by psychoanalysis, can be naturally incorporated into the liminal concept, without contradicting it but rather enhancing it. This includes the work of S. Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (which explores the inherent experience of grief and pain in the ritual of transition), as well as other psychoanalytic works on the study of separation and its consequences (Freud, 1917).

The concept of liminality has been embraced by scholars in various fields, including cultural studies, art history, and literary studies. For example, it is prominent in collections of articles such as "Liminal Borderlands in Irish Literature and Culture" (Nordin & Holmste, 2009) and "Beyond the Threshold: Explorations of Liminality in Literature" (Dass, 2013; Viljoen & Van der Merwe, 2007). It is also discussed in J. Crosby's article "Liminality and the Sacred: Discipline Building and Speaking with the Other" (Crosby, 2009) and in John's introduction to the book "Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance" (John, 2008) among others.

Exploring Liminality: Strategies and Terminology in Contemporary Ukrainian Literature

Ukrainian literary scholars actively employ concepts in their scholarly research that reveal the specificity of the liminal phase: "transgression," "frontier," and "transitional culture" regarding the strategies of contemporary Ukrainian literature and the poetics of artistic works of Hundorova (2016), Haleta (2013), V. Chernetsky (2003), Revakovich (1987), and others. For literature that embodies oscillations between postmodern irony and newfound sincerity, terminology that reflects liminal states best helps articulate the characteristics of the new artistic era in its indefiniteness and search for meaning and forms.

By applying liminal terminology to the study of contemporary Ukrainian drama, the following stages of development can be identified:

- 1) Separation (since 2013);
- 2) Liminal phase (2014-2022);
- 3) Incorporation (since 2023).

It can be argued that Ukrainian drama has gone through phases of separation, liminality, and is currently in a state of initial incorporation.

Returning to history, the stage of separation for the «new Ukrainian drama» began with the Revolution of Dignity in 2013. Playwrights actively participated in the events, creating artistic actions on Maidan Square. When Russia took an antagonistic stance against the revolution, artists such as N. Vorozhbyt and A. Mai wrote the documentary play «Maidan Diaries» and held a reading at the Moscow-based «Teatre.doc» to explain to the Russian audience what was truly happening. Before the Revolution of Dignity, a number of Ukrainian writers, including N. Vorozhbyt, A. Mai, M. Kurochkin, D. Humenna, Ya. Humennyi, O. Mykhailov, and N. Blok, participated in Russian festivals and had many productions in Russia. This experience greatly influenced their artistic growth. One of Russia's

most influential drama schools is M. Ugarov and E. Greminaya's «Teatre.doc» school. They create documentary projects and strongly oppose the current Russian government. It is worth noting that Ukrainian theaters rarely staged contemporary Ukrainian drama and were unprepared to address the sensitive and challenging issues raised by the playwrights of the «new Ukrainian drama» in their works.

Together with their support for the Maidan movement, Ukrainian dramatists ceased writing plays for Russian theaters (scripts for television projects and series) and actively engaged in creative reflection on the experience of the revolution and the ongoing war that Russia initiated with the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. They sought answers to questions that their characters addressed, such as «What does Ukraine mean to me? Which pages of our history need to be remembered to understand who I am? What past mistakes have led to our present problems?»

Dramatists have undertaken a series of artistic volunteer projects, such as “Teatr Pereselentsia,” “Class Act: Skhid-Zakhid,” “Dity i viiskovi,” “Polon,” “Tovar,” “PostPlayTeatru,” “Opolchentsi,” “Chornyi snih,” “Osin na Plutoni,” “Dyplom,” “Teatru suchasnoho dialohu,” “Teoriia velykoho filtru” (*in Ukrainian*) [“The Refugee Theater,” “Class Act: East-West,” “Children and Soldiers,” “Captivity,” “Merchandise,” “PostPlay Theater,” “Militia,” “Black Snow,” “Autumn on Pluto,” “Diploma,” “Theater of Contemporary Dialogue,” “The Theory of the Great Filter” (*in English*)]. A significant portion of writers found themselves in the «linguistic frontier,» having been primarily influenced by Russian culture. These authors consciously began using the Ukrainian language in their works, exploring and discovering Ukrainian culture, which, in turn, led to the creation of numerous plays based on the works of Ukrainian classics. This mastery of the language, along with intentional efforts to reclaim it, motivated interesting linguistic experiments within texts.

On the other hand, some Ukrainian playwrights lived, worked, or studied in Europe and were influenced by European theater. This includes individuals such as P. Arje and O. Matsiupa, who brought new dramaturgical forms to the national stage. For several years, Ukrainian playwrights were invited to the laboratories of London's «The Royal Court» theater, which focused on the stylistics of «in-yer-face» and social themes. N. Vorozhbyt, Ye. Markovskiy, O. Savchenko, and others were commissioned to write texts, and their works were read and staged there.

On a voluntary basis, Ukrainian playwrights established the «Week of Actual Plays» competition in 2011. The competition, which was not funded by the state, played a crucial role in the development of Ukrainian drama. The playwrights saw it as their mission and a necessary trial for them as novices. In 2019, the Playwriting Laboratory of the National Union of Theatre Professionals of Ukraine was created under the initiative of playwright P. Arje. Playwrights demonstrated characteristics of «communitas» as a community of free and equal individuals without status or recognition (with internal recognition being the most important within the community). This lack of status was also evident in the fact that the theater largely ignored contemporary drama, except for non-state or amateur theaters and theater volunteer projects created by the playwrights themselves. Theatre scholar H. Veselovska described the peculiarities of the generation of novice playwrights, stating, «However, an unexpected obstacle for accomplishing their tasks was the lack of professional knowledge and skills in the majority of authors, even among those who were regarded as professionals. Because, truth be told, the majority of Ukrainian playwrights, starting from Ivan Karpenko-Karyi, were self-taught. And among contemporary Ukrainian authors, few have philological education» (Veselovska, 2019; 2023, p. 5).

Until 2022, Ukrainian contemporary drama was hardly published. The structure of state literary organizations and associations did not consider the new playwrights as writers, despite some of them being successful screenwriters and directors. Instead, the playwrights themselves saw themselves more as «theater people,» volunteers, and social activists. As a result, only two authors from the «new

Ukrainian drama» generation had their works published in Ukrainian publishing houses before 2023: P. Arje's «Baba Prisia ta Inshi Heroi» (*in Ukrainian*) [Judy Psisia and Other Heroes] and N. Vorozhbyt's «Pohani Dorohy» (*in Ukrainian*) «Bad Roads» (2011). With the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, A. Mai and M. Kurochkin published an anthology of Ukrainian playwrights' plays called «8» in 2021. To make their plays accessible, playwright I. Harets created the website «Ukrdramahub,» where playwrights could publish their works (Flynn, 2022; *Ukrdramahub*, n.d.). For these playwrights, remaining in the field of drama and continuing to write while staying true to the principles of artistic freedom and experimentation, addressing complex and uncomfortable contemporary issues, and giving all social groups the «right to be heard» in artistic texts, meant going through an initiation process.

An important manifestation of «communitas» was the establishment of the «Theatre of Dramatists» by Ukrainian playwrights (on equal rights for all participants). This theater aimed to overcome the problem of liminal homelessness and funding was collected through crowdfunding. The founders of the theater, which was created in February 2020, are playwrights P. Arje, O. Astaseva, I. Bilyts, N. Blok, A. Bondarenko, N. Vorozhbyt, I. Harets, Yu. Honchar, O. Hapieieva, O. Hrytsenko, T. Kytsenko, A. Kosodii, M. Kurochkin, Ye. Markovskiy, O. Matsiupa, K. Penkova, O. Savchenko, L. Tymoshenko, V. Chenskyi, and Liena Liahushonkova.

With the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory in 2022, contemporary Ukrainian drama began to emerge from a liminal phase. We can speak of the beginning of a phase of incorporation/unification, which was a logical consequence of remaining true to their principles and responding quickly to the pressing needs of a country at war. Drama has the unique ability to respond promptly to contemporary issues and engage creatively with audiences through theater performances or dramatic readings. The demand from audiences for relevant topics and new artistic forms is slowly but steadily changing the conservative theater and publishing system.

Plays are actively translated into multiple languages and staged in theaters abroad. Numerous meetings with playwrights from the «Theatre of Dramatists» take place, and anthologies of translations are published, such as «A Dictionary of Emotions in a Time of War: 20 Works by Ukrainian Playwrights.» The project «Worldwide Ukrainian Play Readings» by American theater critic and translator J. Friedman, in collaboration with theater producer F. Arno from the Center for International Theater Development, has organized over 300 readings of Ukrainian playwrights' plays in 29 countries worldwide. Ukrainian playwrights have also received European playwriting awards, such as Liena Liahushonkova being recognized as the best young playwright in Europe with the «European New Talent Drama Award Schauspielhaus Stuttgart.» In Ukraine, several playwriting competitions have emerged, including state-funded ones, and there has been an increase in the publication of playwriting texts.

The incorporation of the «rites of passage» concept into the study of the stages of development in contemporary Ukrainian drama has allowed us to demonstrate only a small part of how the process of change in the literary field can be explored through a liminal matrix. The realization and study of other liminal strategies in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy are also necessary, including:

- 1) Its transgressive aesthetics (ideological and thematic aspect);
- 2) The embodiment of the phenomenon of post-documentalism in play texts (between the documentary, fictional, and performative);
- 3) The aesthetics of «magical realism» mediated through the Ukrainian context (between realism and magical elements in the texts, characteristic of many Ukrainian playwrights' works);
- 4) The liminal space-time of plays with specific heterotopias (archives, libraries, museums, prisons, shelters, etc.);
- 5) The poetics of liminal corporeality;

- 6) The narrative of initiation in the search for national identification (post-colonial context);
- 7) The liminal ritual matrix in the genre modeling of contemporary Ukrainian drama;
- 8) The deconstruction of national narratives (between farce and tragedy);
- 9) Postdrama as a genre formation (between literature, theater, and performance);
- 10) The actualization of monodrama and the “sketch aesthetics,” and more.

These various liminal strategies open up new avenues for understanding and analyzing contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy within a broader literary framework.

Conclusion

The aesthetics of “rites of passage” and the concept of liminality have allowed us to highlight and articulate the characteristic features of the development of contemporary Ukrainian drama and its specific strategies. The concepts of “separation,” “liminality,” “incorporation,” “structure,” “communitas,” “rituals of passage,” and others have significant potential in literary studies, which investigate processes of change and renewal in the system.

By applying these concepts to the analysis of contemporary Ukrainian drama, scholars and researchers have been able to delve deeper into the complexities and nuances of the genre. The concepts of separation, liminality, incorporation, structure, communitas, and rituals of passage offer valuable insights into the processes of change and renewal within the Ukrainian literary landscape.

From around 2013 onwards, the contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy began to undergo phases of separation, moving away from traditional conventions and established norms. This marked a significant departure from the previously dominant modes of expression and paved the way for experimentation and innovation within the genre. Currently, Ukrainian drama finds itself in the liminal phase, existing in a state of transition towards incorporation. During the liminal stage, Ukrainian playwrights have demonstrated a strong inclination to challenge and surpass the restrictions imposed by traditional rules, societal expectations, and literary conventions. This newfound creative freedom has enabled them to explore and openly address pressing and previously unexplored contemporary issues. By venturing “on the edge,” they have been able to push the boundaries of their work, gradually evolving towards a new dramaturgical structure.

In this liminal space, Ukrainian drama rejects established forms as unconvincing, outdated, and ineffective. Playwrights are driven to seek alternative artistic expressions that lie beyond the confines of genres, art forms, and traditional devices. They engage in a process of self-negation, constantly questioning and redefining their own artistic models.

By engaging with the aesthetics of “rites of passage” and the concept of liminality, contemporary Ukrainian drama has found a way to break free from the limitations of traditional modes of expression. This has allowed for the emergence of fresh perspectives, unique narrative styles, and an exploration of previously uncharted territories.

Thus, the aesthetics of “rites of passage” and the concept of liminality have proven to be invaluable tools in examining the development of contemporary Ukrainian drama and its specific strategies. Through these frameworks, Ukrainian playwrights have been able to reshape and redefine the genre, embracing a sense of creative freedom and innovation that continues to propel the evolution of Ukrainian dramatic literature.

Funding: This research did not receive any financial support.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Biographies

Zhanna Bortnik: PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Department of Theory of Literature and Foreign Literature, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University.

Authorship and Level of Contribution

Zhanna Bortnik made a valuable contribution to the study of contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy development stages by exploring the use of liminal strategies in literary studies. Through a detailed analysis of the various stages of development in Ukrainian drama, the author was able to identify key characteristics and themes that emerge during these transitions. By drawing on the concept of liminality, the author was able to investigate how these strategies contribute to the evolution and transformation of the literary field. Extensive research was conducted on Ukrainian playwrights, their works and how contemporary Ukrainian drama is received both domestically and internationally. The author delved into the use of “rites of passage” and the concept of liminality to understand the process of change in Ukrainian literature. By examining the aesthetics of “rites of passage” and the liminal period itself, the author revealed unique strategies employed by Ukrainian playwrights to navigate their artistic journeys. In addition, the author analyzed specific plays and theatrical productions, highlighting their relevance to the concept of liminality and their impact on the broader literary landscape. Overall, this research expanded the understanding of the development stages in contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy by integrating the concept of liminal strategies. The author’s work shed light on the transformative power of liminality in Ukrainian literature and its role in shaping the artistic landscape.

References

- Bell, C. M. (1997). *Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions* (p. 351). Oxford University Press, USA.
<https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Ritual.-Perspectives-and-Dimensions-by-Catherine-Bell.pdf>
- Bynum, C. W. (1990). Material continuity, personal survival, and the resurrection of the body: a scholastic discussion in its medieval and modern contexts. *History of Religions*, 30(1), 51-85.
- Chernetsky, V. (2003). Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine. *Ulbandus Review*, 7, 32-62.
- Crosby, J. (2009). Liminality and the Sacred: Discipline Building and Speaking with the Other. *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, 5(1). <http://liminalities.net/5-1/sacred.pdf>
- Dass, M. (2013). Beyond the threshold: Explorations of liminality in literature. *A Journal of English Studies*, 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10131752.2013.783395>
- Flynn, M. (2022). Class Act: East-West: Youth Theatre and the Making of Meaning in Postrevolutionary Ukraine. *TDR*, 66(2), 191-210.
- Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, 14(1914-1916), 237-258.
- Haleta, O. (2013). Literary CombiNation: Memory and space in contemporary Ukrainian anthologies. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies*, 5(2).
- Hundorova, T. (2016). Ukrainian Euromaidan as Social and Cultural Performance. *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change*, 161-181.
- Ingwersen, M. (2017). Towards a trickster science/fiction: complexifying boundaries with Neal Stephenson and Michel Serres. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 42(3), 255-268.
- John, G. S. (Ed.). (2008). *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance*. Berghahn Series (p. 358). Berghahn Books. ISBN 1845454626, 9781845454623.
- Johnston, P. A. (1996). Cybele and her companions on the northern littoral of the Black Sea. In *Cybele, Attis and related cults* (pp. 101-116). Brill.
- Kraft, C. (2021). An Ecocritical Reading of the Marsh as a Liminal Space in Delia Owens's *Where the Crawdads Sing*. *The Southern Quarterly*, 58(3), 131-150.
- Lincoln, B. (1981). *Emerging from the chrysalis: Studies in rituals of women's initiation*. Harvard University Press. ISBN 0674248406
- Mensah, J. (2019). Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review. *Cogent social sciences*, 5(1), 1653531.
- Morrison, K. M. (2002). *The solidarity of kin: Ethnohistory, religious studies, and the Algonkian-French religious encounter*. SUNY series in Native American Religions (p. 243). SUNY Press. ISBN 0791454053, 9780791454053.
- Nordin, I. G., & Holmsten, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Liminal borderlands in Irish literature and culture* (Vol. 9). Peter Lang.
- Revakovich, M. (1987). *Z mishka mandrivnyka: poezii [From the traveler's bag: poems]* (p. 62). New-York, Publishing House of the New York Group.
- Spariosu, M. I. (2013). Computational models of intercultural relations in Banat and Transylvania: theoretical and practical issues. *Romanian journal of information science and technology*, (2-3), 109-130. <http://www.romjist.ro/content/pdf/01-spariosu.pdf>
- Spariosu, M. I. (2015). Exile and utopia as liminal play: A cultural-theoretical approach 1. In *Philosophical Perspectives on Play* (pp. 13-26). Routledge.
- Turcan, R. (2001). *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times* (p. 180). Taylor & Francis. ISBN 0415929741, 9780415929745.

- Turner, V. (1977). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (p. 222). Ithaca, New York: Cornell Paperbacks Cornell University Press. https://monoskop.org/images/9/90/Turner_Victor_The_Ritual_Process_Structure_and_Anti-Structure.pdf
- Ukrdramahub* (n.d.). Portal suchasnoi ukrainskoi dramaturhii [Portal of modern Ukrainian drama]. <https://ukrdramahub.org.ua/>
- Van Gennep, A. (1908). Totémisme et méthode comparative. *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 34-76.
- Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago (p. 198). IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Veselovska, H. (2019). Capabilities and Constraints of the Communicative Model in the Immersive Theatre. *Art Studies Readings*, (2), 250-257.
- Veselovska, H. (2023) *Tryhery suspilnoho spokoiiu. Pokydky ta inshi piesy*. Suchasna ukrainska dramaturhiia: zbirka. [*Triggers of public peace. Dumpsters and other plays*. Modern Ukrainian drama: a collection] Kharkiv. Folio. 383
- Viljoen, H., & Van der Merwe, C. N. (Eds.). (2007). *Beyond the threshold: explorations of liminality in literature* (p. 272). Peter Lang.