

Title: The Function of *Theatrical Gesture* in the Chekhovian Poetics of Negation on the Basis of Chekhov's Drama, *The Seagull*

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The Great Theatre Reform was a period of meaningful changes at the turn of the 19th century which has given rise to the many experiments aimed at defining the role of the new art. The core problem was the notion of a new, educated recipient who was to understand the meaning of a work and cross its transient boundaries to grasp the metaphysical sense. As artists studied the problem of perception they emphasized the importance of intuition and instinct as well as the unity of body and soul in the process of creation. The theatre was considered the place of the audience's communion with the mystery, the *kathartic metamorphosis* through the art.

This paper proposes the interpretation of *The Seagull* as the attempt to explore the function of the category of *theatrical gesture* in the aesthetical system of the Great Theatre Reform. The text of the aforementioned drama is considered as the model of the specific Chekhovian poetics, which exposes all typical features of Chekhov's writing style. *Theatrical gesture* is treated as the peculiar key for decoding the text, the tool that can change the way of understanding words in the drama and reveal "the emptiness" of the text that can be "filled in" by the potential audience. Lotman's notion of the *meaningful absence*, which is emphasized in the analysis, seems to be an adequate metaphor exposing the role of Chekhov's poetics of negation. The creative exploitation of the concept focuses the attention on the presence of the contrastive elements of the text, whose interdependence and juxtaposition can create the source of the dynamics of the drama's meaning. It seems that the reading of the gesticulation can "revive" the typical Chekhovian stagnation, place an interpreter "inside a text" and make him cross the conventional boundaries between reality and unreality, *profanum* and *sacrum*.