

## REGARDING NEW TEXTS WITH NEW METHODS

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### ABSTRACT

We are faced with the fact that the “new” techniques used by contemporary theatre scripts are actually not that new, but are the consequence of the changes and conversions that are continuous in drama since the Renaissance, which constitutes the beginning of modern drama. While on the one hand of the mechanism, that triggers these changes and conversions, are great social developments and historical turning points, on the other hand are the ceaseless experiments and the search for new phraseologies of writers, actors, theorists, critics and directors, in the sequel. This study will try to focus on the literary features that are prominent in contemporary theatre scripts by drawing upon these two platforms and will put emphasis on new methods of analysis with examples that have distinctive features in terms of genre.

**Keywords:** new texts, new methods, theatre scripts

### 1. INTRODUCTION

On the historical, social and artistic platform, great changes emerge with crises; and, according to Peter Szondi, are the roots of contemporary drama constituted by the “crisis of representation” that starts to appear onwards the second half of the nineteenth century. (Karacabey, 2007:9) According to Szondi, there are three key elements that determine the form of drama, which underlies modern drama and begins with the Renaissance: Always present, interpersonal, and event. These three elements definitely occur in Renaissance texts and, in this regard, constitute the pure style of the Renaissance. (Burghardt, 1988:106) The dramatic style has not yet a presence discrete from time and space; further, its content and inform is still inseparably interdependent. And, beginning from Ibsen, writers like Strindberg, Chekhov, Maeterlinck and Hauptmann started to change this dramatic structure and the split widened thoroughly in the historical avant-garde period.

“The representation crisis, occurring not only in the field of theatre but also in all the other forms of art, is the result of the change in experiencing the perception and expression of reality. The classical representation aesthetics is based on a perception of external reality that will be taken as a reference. In this aesthetic perception, all style/form devices are subservient to the representation; the perceived reality is reproduced by describing and expressing. In this comprehension of representation, the relation of the signifier and signified composes a unity. With enabling the signifiers’ purification from the meaning by becoming independent, with the fragmentation of the signifier-signified relation, art will enter the “abstraction” phase.” (Karacabey, 2003:37)

European drama started with the individual’s emancipation from the decisiveness of the superior forces for the first time in history in the Renaissance period. In the centre of the process, that will culminate with the idea of enlightenment, is the individual and, in general, it is thought that the individual can change the world with its choices, subjective orientations, and preferences. In this regard, the world of drama is the relationship between individuals. As for that, the only means of communication of the relationship between individuals is dialogue. Between every scene is a cause effect relationship and the structures of the texts, as a closed system, present a structural wholeness in terms of content and form. With Szondi’s words, drama “is not the secondary narration of primary subjects, it is what it narrates”. (Aktaran, Karacabey:11) The nineteenth century is the period in which this structure of drama goes through a crisis. The most important factor, that reveals the crisis or the change in dramatic structures, occurs with the injury of this universal individual envision and starting to lose its individualism within objective conditions.

The aggravated circumstances of the industry and the totalitarian and tyrannous regimes of the governments turned upside-down the ethos of the intensive alienation enlightenment utopia and the dominant vision forms, and this became the main determinant of dramatic texts. It is possible to see the change, coming with this crisis, in the romanticists, in Ibsen, Chekhov and Hauptmann. The dialogue structures of the Renaissance drama turn into speeches into which the monologue seeps in Chekhov, and “forever now” or “infinite now” began to fragment together with the past and future in Ibsen’s plays. As to Hauptmann’s plays, the inter-individuality of the Renaissance drama has been presented in the decisiveness of the nonhuman, that is to say the political and economic, relationships.

These are the a posteriori breaks occurring in dramatic structures and the major quake occurred with historical avant-garde movements. Avant-garde movements, such as Symbolism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism, started a total war against all dramatic forms

that developed under the dominance of the culture and philosophy of the bourgeois art and formed the basis of dramatic features that leave its mark on today's theatre scripts.

## **2. THE AVANT-GARDE QUAKE AND POSTMODERNISM**

The structural wholeness of the historical avant-garde movements and content and form fragments totally, the experience of the whole gives way to the knowledge of the fragment. The general dramatic structure that is based on verbal expression gave way to structures in which the body is at the forefront and the desire to make theatre theatrical displaced the literary dominance of dramatic structures. The dialogue leaves its former duty, the character loses its wholeness. The closed system that proceeded with the cause and effect relation turns into episodic structures and language becomes theatrical by moving away from a rational language of reason.

According to Süreyya Karacabey, it is possible to regard contemporary texts as beyond modern, and postmodern texts as the advanced results of the process that the historical avant-garde created. (Karacabey, 2003:20) In beyond modern texts, alongside techniques, such as citation, montage, and collage, which historical avant-gardes used, thematic elements, such as “the fragmented individuality of the individual in the face of the objective world”, presented a theatrical variety by making a great progress. Drama has been exceeded completely as a historical genre, every text has become a unique test field.

The view, that can be characterised as beyond modern or postmodern and that leaves its mark on contemporary texts, has produced itself as an extension of great social developments which produce in economic, technological and cultural terms and interacted with new forms of vision that, again, produced themselves with these developments. Facts, such as the flexibilisation of the economic production, great social doctrines giving way to micro perspectives, means of communication developing at an unprecedented pace and turning the world into a global village, shattered the universal consent individual and social perception and, in order to analyse this brand-new world, philosophers, thinkers and academicians revealed new varying and rich approaches.

Studies and history-human-society analyses of names such as Jean François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, are a profound source for processes of both writing and understanding the written about beyond modern texts. On the other hand, approaches that flourish with their intellectual output, such as hermeneutics, deconstruction and new historicism, constitute the necessary devices that we require to analyse contemporary texts. At this point, feminist criticism, lesbian/gay criticism or variations of analysis with an identity perspective that have the focus on black people, and the other oppressed races and folks, also made progress by interacting with these approaches and

views. One of the essential points, being a basis to all these analyses, is “language”. Especially, with the studies on language of thinkers, like Lacan, Derrida and the Guattari-Deleuze duo, the results that the consciousness is structured like language and that there is a close link between social problems and language were obtained.

### **3. NEW THEMATIC AND STYLISTIC ORIENTATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY TEXTS**

When we overview the new writing techniques and viewpoints having emerged in contemporary texts, we discover that the relationship between the writer and reader/audience changed in such a way that the reader has become a more productive and interpretive element, the writer’s background has lost its significance from the point of both the reader and critic, the texts hybridised, the distinction between comedy and tragedy has totally disappeared, and the verbal dominance has given way to performance. In this respect, where the word (logos) turns into the body, and the whole percept of time and space disappears as the fiction develops reelingly, we can see that, there emerged a multidimensional space and a skipping time fiction in the texts, the character split, the dialogue changed into a monologue, there are made rapid transitions between texts, technical features such as quotation, pastiche, collage, and intertextuality are intensively put into place.

According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, Szondi’s definition of representation crisis turned, primarily, into a time crisis in the contemporary world. The change in the world’s scientific image, with inputs like relativity, the quantum theory, and space-time, contributes to the experience of the chaotic melding of the city life’s different rhythms and speeds as well as to the emergence of new perspectives. (Lehmann, 2006: 154) It is possible to see the correspondence of this idea of Lehmann one-to-one in contemporary texts. For instance, we can see that the chaotic structure, created by this new time perception, has been treated in a parodic way in Matei Visniec’s play “Three Nights with Madox”. The characters, living through the same things in the same period of time like Madox, who comes to their town, reflect the idea of a parallel world, which developed with the quantum theory.

The idea of a parallel world is mainly connected with the creation of parallel worlds by the division of time and space into more than one part due to the individual’s choices. There is a centre world and the signals sent by the other worlds and the experiences of the individual in another world are transported to each other via this centre. And according to this theory, “déjà vu” is actually something connected with the events we experience in our other worlds. By preferring, for his three nights there, to spend time with somebody, Madox, according to this theory, created five parallel worlds between Bruno, Grubi, Ceasar, Clara, and Njami. And these

five worlds overlap at some point in a humorous way and the characters tell each other their experiences nonplussedly.

It is possible to see this time chaos and perturbing intersection of spaces in various contemporary texts. For example, in Bovell's work "When the Rain Stops Falling" we can see lives and stories that intersect timewise and spatially in a time period from the 1950's until today. Again, in Arthur Miller's play "Mr. Peter's Connections", Mr. Peters is a character who has lost his time perception and brings, in an amorphous way, the people that had an important place in his past to today. Miller presents a multidimensional and spiritual ground to the social events in his recent era, individual-society, women-men, and family relationships with Mr. Peters' confused mind.

One of the most handled subjects in contemporary texts is about people, who are catastrophically girded by new media tools and can correlate with the reality only via this platform, and their relationship with each other. With a shorter expression, the "media society". In contemporary texts, as in Dušan Kovačević's play "Life in Tight Shoes", where the labour-capital conflict as a global problem and privatization being still bitter as a current problem are presented together with problems like inhuman working conditions, low wages, and social security, one can find strong critical viewpoints about how these problems are handled in the media society. In Kovačević's play, the television is both, standing as a social opium, a simulacrum by having a direct effect on the people's conscious, and used as a weapon by the employers against the labourers who revolt against the exploitative conditions.

Another key element, seen in contemporary theatre plays, is the "shocking" effect, which also came with the historical avant-garde movements to the theatre. This shocking effect sometimes makes its case within the course of events and sometimes with the character's choices. We can see this shocking effect coming into being within the course of events frequently in Edward Bond's plays. Bond developed the Brechtian "estrangement effect" in a way to have also a strong effect on the reader or audience's emotions and reached the "aggro-effect". While the "aggro-effect" emerges with the plucking out an old man's eyes in Lear, the rape of a pregnant woman, or a poor labourer, who accidentally killed his friend, being murdered on the spot to speed up the work, it takes shape in the play "Saved" with the stoning of a baby carriage. The intended aim is to have a shocking effect on the reader or audience that occurs outrageously. As an example for the shocking effect that occurs with the character's choice we can show an example from Bernard Marie Koltes' "Roberto Zucco". Roberto Zucco holds a young man captive within a crowd and although his demands are accepted he murders him cold-bloodedly making the audience's blood run cold.

One of the trends that corresponds in a post-dramatic way in contemporary texts is the "fragmentation of language". Language is not any longer something signifying things, or being

the whole reflection of the signified, but it reveals situations where sounds, words, and phrases do not make sense. Peter Handke's "Offending the Audience" is an example for this situation. In the play, the language, disconnected from the meaning, is presented with repetitions, and syntactic or musical constructs. As another element that gives the meaning, we frequently come across the method in post-dramatic texts in which the dialogue gives way to the monologue, and the monologues form a polyphonic structure. In the plays of Heiner Müller, Handke, Koltes, and Lagarce puns that do not produce any other meaning than themselves burst into sight frequently.

#### **4. THEATRE BECOMING THEATRICAL AND CONCEPTS OF ACTING SCRIPTS**

Postdramatic theatre, becoming a performance or acting script by completely pulling away from dramatic theatre, corresponds to the desires of names such as Artaud and Meyerhold that theatre should become theatrical and create its own language. Actors-writers like Peter Handke, Heiner Müller, and Bernard Marie Koltes create their scripts as acting scripts. By changing the main components of drama, they turned drama and action into inaction, and put the classical causality and the structure leading to the result into the cyclical notion of eternal recurrences. They detract the character from selfhood, use monologues or chorus instead of dialogues and, accordingly, change all the components of the classical drama.

For instance, Koltes creates a postmodern mythology by basing on none of the classical myths in his texts. Koltes' heroes are, indeed, not physical figures that are in an acting state, but are logical abstractions, abstract persons with philosophical dialogues, symbols that are ironic and carry a code-designated strongly literary content, and communication theorists that, on the one hand, talk at length and, on the other hand, complain about not understanding each other. It is possible to see these features, particularly, in Zucco himself, then from the guardians to the prostitutes, from Zucco's mother to the woman in the park, in all the characters in Roberto Zucco. Again, in Quay West, as though they seem as dialogues, emerging as the family's "outbreaks" in the frame of a dystopian life, their monologues, being totally strange to each other, set an example to this point. According to Patrice Pavis, the theatre culture, consisting of abstraction, of postmodern writers, such as Robert Wilson, Heiner Müller, and Bernard-Marie Koltes, brings out a hell machine that runs on its own. (Pavis, 95) The transported culture has no longer any equivalence with reality, it can do without making any reference to human and nature. The point in question is a language that has a valuable syntax and programming, but does absolutely say nothing about the world of facts any longer.

#### **5. NEW METHODS USED IN THE ANALYSIS OF TEXTS**

The theatrical perceptions, devices, and techniques that have been disrooted from the classical dramatic structure and that we have tried to present above by instantiating, are, undoubtedly,

significant for the analyses of these plays. The polyphonic and multidimensional dramatic structure that appears in most of the texts necessitates also methods of analysis that corresponds to itself. Hermeneutics, for example, is such a method, depending on interpretation by conceiving the structure to be analyzed in its unique self. With this method, any artefact, such as a literary work, theatre text, painting, or a conversation, can be examined, and its own order and codes can be tried to be deciphered. That is to say, the artefact is being tried to be comprehended in its own “uniqueness”. (Kale, 287) These features of the method make it appropriate for applying it on various contemporary theatre texts, most of which have been written by minding that it does not bear any other meaning than itself.

We have mentioned that the dramatic structure in many of the contemporary texts does not take shape as a reflection of a direct meaning. However, this fact does not mean that one cannot make any meaning of it. In this regard, a poststructuralist method like hermeneutics is also as a method with a validity in front of us. With this method, the structure of the text, based on contradictions and paradoxes, is fragmented and by looking at data, such as how and what the contradictions represent, the power relations established in the text, and representations of women and men, the text is deconstructed. Feminist criticism, especially, is a widely used method. Peter Barry schematizes the distinctions of poststructuralism and what poststructuralist and structuralist analysts study as presented below: (Barry,2002:72-73)

*“The structuralist seeks: \_\_\_\_\_ The post-structuralist seeks: \_\_\_\_\_”*

<u><i>Parallels/Echoes</i></u>	<u><i>Contradictions/Paradoxes</i></u>
Balances Viewpoint Tense Time Person Attitude	Shifts/Breaks in: Tone
Reflections/Repetitions	Conflicts
Symmetry	Absences/Omissions
Contrasts	Linguistic quirks
Patterns	Aporia *

*Effect: To show textual unity and coherence Effect: To show textual disunity”*

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\* Aporia :the situation of a discussion leading to no result because of any reason.

It is an observable fact that not every contemporary text wholly takes shape in a post-dramatic structure. We still come across plays that have subjects, contain contradictions and a cause effect relationship, and in which the time, space, use of language, and dialogues are formed as in dramatic theatre. In this respect, besides the semiotic, structuralist, Marxist, and feminist approaches that we also use for the analyses of modernist texts, approaches and perspectives such as lesbian/gay criticism and new historicism (which Foucault pioneers) have also an important function in analyzing contemporary texts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As it is observed, contemporary theatre scripts as well as new methods of text analysis greatly vary and are rich in the applied techniques and the aesthetic and intellectual perspectives. In this regard, the largest context they overlap occurs in their being reader centered and presenting a wide scope of freedom for the reader or researcher. In other words, there is an unlimited space in front of the reader as to how to read and interpret a text. This unlimitedness is provided by the multidimensional semantic systems of the texts and the presence of different and varying methods of analysis that can be linked to these systems. What remains to the reader is only the duty to overcome the deeds of little reading, little research and little questioning, which is one of crucial problems of our age.

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