

Towards a Spectatorial Approach to Drama Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the concept of dramaturgy has been expanded to include a wide range of new fields that rarely concern the analysis of the drama text itself, but rather the facilitation of creative processes. This article investigates dramaturgy as an analytical practice. The article provides an analytical, historical investigation of methodological approaches to drama analysis. The aim is to examine how drama analysis came to be regarded as a literary discipline that rarely considers aspects of performance and the material, scenic context for which the play was written. The study of drama thus became regarded as being distinct from theatre and performance studies. This approach, which has its roots in nineteenth century dramaturgy, effectively eliminated the spectator from its perspective in favour of a character and plot centred dramaturgy. It is the authors' assertion that the drama text and theatrical performance should, nevertheless, be regarded as intrinsically interconnected and that the spectator must be "re-inserted" in the analysis of the written drama. The authors explore how we might re-think the field of dramaturgy as drama analysis by emphasizing the corporeal, spatial, performative, and cognitive aspects of the drama text together with an emphasis on the historical and scenic context.

KEYWORDS

Dramaturgy, drama analysis, performativity, the implied spectator, scenic writing

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RECENT APPROACHES IN DRAMATURGY

In recent years, the concept of dramaturgy has been expanded to include a wide range of new fields that rarely concern the analysis of the drama text itself, but rather the facilitation of creative processes including the writing or rehearsal process. Dramaturgy has become a buzzword, but the drama is in danger of disappearing from the field. This article seeks to investigate dramaturgy as an analytical practice. In particular, we wish to examine how drama analysis, in a historical perspective, relates to the concept of theatre, that is, to theatricality and performativity. It is our contention that the drama text includes a constituting performative factor that involves a co-performance by *both* actors *and* spectators.

In the last decades, there has been an upsurge in the number of new books on dramaturgy. To name a few, Mary Luckhurst's *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (2006), Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt's *Dramaturgy and Performance* (2008), Eugenio Barba's *Directing and Dramaturgy* (2010), Katalin Trencsényi and Bernadette Cochrane's *New dramaturgy: international perspectives on theory and practice* (2014), and Katalin Trencsényi's *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (2015). While these books provide new insight into e.g. the profession of the working dramaturg or into emerging performative aesthetics and dance, the neglect of dramaturgy as an analytical practice concerned with the drama text is glaring. The notion of dramaturgy has come to stress the practice of the dramaturg as related to creative processes and performance.

In a Nordic perspective, recent books on dramaturgy/drama analysis, such as Frode Helland and Lisbeth Pettersen Wærp's *Å lese drama: innføring i teori og analyse* (2011) and Michael Evans' *Innføring i Dramaturgi. Teater. Film. Fjernsyn*

(2006),¹ have favoured a predominantly literary perspective that largely disregards the performative aspects of the text, or they have provided a survey over the history of poetics as in Svein Gladsø et al.'s *Dramaturgi. Forestillinger om teater* (2005, 2015).²

Dramaturgy as a practice and analytical discipline has existed for centuries. Perhaps the analytical practice of reading has involuntarily, without re-evaluating its own qualities, become a marginalized aspect of dramaturgy while other, newer fields of orientation have come into focus. The discipline of drama analysis has become regarded as a literary discipline that risks overlooking the performative aspects and the material, scenic context of the drama. The attention to the literary focus has had the effect that the analytical tools, which might relate to e.g. the performative, spatial, or spectatorial aspects in the theatre, have become reduced, if not even invisible, from the reader's perspective.

This literary tendency has its roots in the nineteenth century bourgeois dramaturgy (and even further back to Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BC), where visual presentation was ranked the least significant element of tragedy)³ that effectively eliminated the spectator from its perspective in favour of a character and plot centred dramaturgy. In the present article, we set out to explore how the performativity of the text, along with the perspective of the spectator, disappeared from the analytical dramaturgical view, and in which ways we might re-think the field of drama analysis by insisting on incorporating the corporeal, spatial, performative, and cognitive aspects of the drama text, while still emphasizing the historical and scenic context. Dramaturgy as an analytical practice of reading and interpreting must consider the drama text and theatrical performance as intrinsically interconnected. The drama text involves not one, but multiple dimensions that each offer their point of departure for approaching the text.

WHAT IS DRAMATURGY?

The European history of dramaturgy has existed as long as our knowledge of the written drama. Shifting understandings of the function of drama and different poetics have emphasized the notion of dramaturgy differently. Nevertheless, at least four key definitions or aspects of dramaturgy can be discerned:

- 1) the study of the composition, structure and effect of the drama.
- 2) the study of the composition of the performance, including both literary/textual elements and non-textual elements such as sound, lighting, movement, etc.

¹ And before them e.g. Göran Lindström's *Att läsa dramatik* (1971), and Erik Exe Christoffersen et al.'s *Dramaturgisk Analyse* (1989).

² Another strategy has been to turn to performance analysis as was seen in Ingvar Holm's early study, *Drama på scen* (1969).

³ Aristotle 1995, chapter 6.

- 3) the process of composition that takes place during the creation of a performative work.
- 4) the professional role, namely that of the dramaturg and his/her field of work, including the planning of the repertoire and collaboration with playwright and director (or other theatre professionals) during the creative process of developing works for performance (this might also include translation and adaptation of works).

The common denominator for all four understandings is the implication of critical analytical processes. These critical processes concern not only the text or performance alone, but also the context, framing, and the effects and reactions of the audience.

In a broader context, dramaturgy has also become an analytical term for the decoding or organization of socio-cultural events that are not framed as theatre or art. Dramaturgy here has become a perspective for analyzing or orchestrating socio-cultural forms of interaction. During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a more metaphorically applied use of dramaturgy has thus appeared in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and also in the theoretical field of management and organization.⁴

The term *dramaturgy* derives from the Greek *dramatourgia*, from *drama* “action” and *ergon*, “work”. Accordingly, dramaturgy may be “interpreted both as ‘actions at work’ and as ‘working on actions’”, both of which imply bodies, movements, and interactions in a spatial framing.⁵

In the contemporary use of the concept of dramaturgy, it certainly remains vexed with the different connotations in Anglophone cultures as well as in continental European theatre. The theatre director, Eugenio Barba (born 1936), has used the concept of dramaturgy intensively, to a large degree inspired by the film director, Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), who applied the idea of montage to the notion of score. Barba has defined dramaturgy from a practice-based position, which refers to the physicality of drama as layers of actions in performance: “For me, the performance too was a living organism and I had to distinguish not only its parts, but also its levels of organisation and, later, their mutual relationships. ‘Dramaturgy’, then, was a term similar to ‘anatomy’. It was a practical way of working not only on the organism in its totality, but on its different organs and layers.”⁶ Barba names his multiplicity of compositional strategies as ‘Dramaturgy of Dramaturgies’, containing organic dramaturgy, narrative dramaturgy, and evocative dramaturgy.⁷ This is observable in the performance, but it can also be traced to the montage of text fragments, which forms part of an orchestrated whole.

⁴ E.g. Benford and Hunt 1992, Brisset and Edgley 1990, Edgley 2013, Gardner III 1992, Goffman 1956.

⁵ Georgelou et al., 2017, 202.

⁶ Barba 2010, 9.

⁷ Ibid, 204-207.

Mary Luckhurst (born 1967) underlines that dramaturgy also has to do with text and writing: “In Liddell and Scott’s *Greek Lexicon* the noun [...] *dramaturgia*, is a subentry under *dramatourg-eo*, a verb meaning ‘to write a text in dramatic form’, [...]. *Dramatourg-eo* is related to *dramatopoi-eo*, ‘to put into dramatic form’; *dramatopoiia*, ‘dramatic composition’; and *dramato-poiios*, ‘dramatic poet’.”⁸ However, while professional dramaturgs may accordingly be both “Playreaders, advisers on repertoire and textual, critical and practical experts working in partnerships with directors and/or writers... accepted as an integral part of theatre-making”,⁹ a dramaturgical analytical practice that integrates the three-dimensionality of the “working of actions” into the textual analysis is still to be developed. The rift between text and performance is evident in Luckhurst’s summary of “the two common senses of dramaturgy”. The first, she states, “relates to the internal structures of a play text and is concerned with the arrangement of formal elements by the playwright – plot, construction of narrative, character, time-frame and stage action”, the other “to external elements relating to staging, the overall artistic concept behind the staging, the politics of performance, and the calculated manipulation of audience response (hence the associations with deceit).” “This second sense”, she notes, “marks interpretation of the text by persons like those now known as directors, the underlying reading and manipulation of a text into multidimensional theatre. Clearly, this interpretative act encompasses the creation of a performance aesthetic and as such can underpin a theoretical framework for any number of plays.”¹⁰ Luckhurst’s remarks are indicative of the prevalent idea that the drama text and the theatrical performance are inherently at odds with each other. As Hans-Thies Lehmann (born 1944) has expressed it: “Theatre and drama have existed, and still exist, in a relationship of tension-ridden contradictions.”¹¹ These contradictions are, in our perspective, nevertheless artificial. Lehmann seeks to dissolve this contradiction from the perspective of performance. To Lehmann, the postdramatic theatre describes more presence than presentation, which mainly took place from the 1960s with e.g. Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) as a precursor.¹² However, it is our contention that the potentials, or conditions, for performance are already there in the drama text, also in the so-called text-based theatre. A new direction for dramaturgy as an analytical practice should endeavour to overcome this artificial incongruity between text and performance lest it becomes restrictive, not only for the way drama is interpreted, but also for the way drama is written. But why has this incongruity come to dominate?

⁸ Luckhurst 2006, 5.

⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 10-11.

¹¹ Lehmann 2006, 46.

¹² *Ibid*, 85.

DRAMATURGY BETWEEN TEXT AND PERFORMANCE – A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335-323) is the well-known *Urschrift* of dramaturgy in the western world. Its focus lies on the structure of the written drama rather than the performance, and more specifically, on the ideal tragedy. Aristotle's approach is, at the same time, scientifically descriptive and normatively prescriptive. The *Poetics* advocates a causal, linear dramaturgy that, without any unnecessary subplots, progresses towards the solution of the puzzle (the resolution, or the untying of the knot) that was set up in the beginning of the plot. Aristotelian dramaturgy was adapted by renaissance humanists (Ludovico Castelvetro, 1505-71), French classicists (François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac, 1606-76, and Nicolas Boileau, 1636-1711), as well as in the dramaturgy of the "bourgeois tragedy" in the eighteenth century, the "well-made play" and realist theatre. The doctrine of "the three unities", which is *not* an Aristotelian doctrine at all, but a historical interpretation in an absolutist context, laid the ground for what has later been labelled "linear" dramaturgy.

Counter to this tradition we find the so-called "circular" or "associative" dramaturgies which throughout history have existed concurrently with the linear narratives. From the twentieth century, a major opponent of the Aristotelian dramaturgy is Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Brecht in his "Notes on the Opera Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny", emphasizes the dichotomy, Aristotelean versus non-Aristotelean, as being equivalent to the dramatic versus the epic theatre form.¹³ To Brecht, there is no longer a contradiction between form and content. Brecht preferred *function* (the purpose of the work) over form and challenged the notion of *mimesis*. To Brecht, the so-called *estrangement* (*Verfremdung*) completed the work as a 'whole', which means that, after all, Brechtian dramaturgy was not a matter of either dramatic or epic forms.¹⁴

Both Aristotle and Brecht were sensitive to the text's performative context of and its effect on the spectator with their notions of catharsis and *Verfremdung* respectively. The integration of text and performance is thus fundamental to, rather than estranged from, these foundational dramaturgic theories. Likewise, the progenitor of the professional working dramaturg, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), described a critical practice of dramaturgy as including both a literary and a practical point of view, just as he defines the craft of the actor as being "midway between the plastic arts and poetry", in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (*Ham-*

¹³ Brecht 2015, 61-71.

¹⁴ The schematically arranged dichotomy that Brecht sets up, which in the Brechtian agenda about "Lehrstücke" is quite instructive, does not, however, present the dynamics of these techniques. Both the epic and the dramatic techniques were together and present in the work. It is the interaction between the dramatic and the epic, which makes the estrangement visible.

burgische Dramaturgie, 1769).¹⁵ Turner and Behrndt, with reference to Eugenio Barba and Hans-Thies Lehmann, point to performative or postdramatic dramaturgies as involving a “turn from a compositional logic based on the primacy of the text, to a logic according to which this primacy is not assumed, so that other elements (visual, sonic, physical) may be equally significant, or may dominate.”¹⁶ Turner and Behrndt’s interpretation might, however, be pointing to a turn deriving more from an *appropriation* of dramaturgy rather than from a *definition of traits* of dramaturgy.

It might be with Gustav Freytag (1816-95) and his *Technique of the Drama* (*Die Technik des Dramas*, 1863) that the spectator begins to disappear, so to speak, from drama analysis and from the dramaturgic perspective. Freytag’s hugely influential dramaturgic model details the rise and fall of the action and the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist. In his time, Freytag’s pyramidal model responded to the economic efficiency of industrialization as well as to the formative novel of realism in the nineteenth century. Ironically and paradoxically, the disappearance of the spectator coincides with the appearance of the professional stage director as well as the emergence of the concept “mise-en-scène”. Equally paradoxical is the circumstance that the reader as spectator at that time was a highly visible presence in the drama. Since the Enlightenment, continuing until the late nineteenth century, it was common practice that the drama text was published before (if at all) the performance was shown on stage. Consequently, the reader was an imagining spectator, who, guided by stage directions, would not attend the theatre in order to discover the plot, but to experience how the drama was realized in a live contact with the audience.¹⁷

Some decades later, the establishing of *Theaterwissenschaft* as an academic discipline by Max Hermann effected a severance of the studies of drama and theatre. Drama became a literary – and theatre a historical discipline. In the ensuing scholarly practice, drama analysis seems to have followed the formalist and New Criticism schools, while the discipline of performance analysis took the lead from semiotics and phenomenology.¹⁸

The Hungarian-German literary scholar, Péter Szondi (1929-1971), whose doctoral dissertation *Theory of Modern Drama* (*Theorie des modernen Dramas*, 1956, revised in 1963) has long been a major reference for Nordic scholars in dramaturgic and literary theory. (While the book appeared in 1972 in a translation

¹⁵ Lessing 1962, 19.

¹⁶ Turner and Behrndt 2008, 31.

¹⁷ For an extensive historical survey (focusing on the period between the late 15th to late 19th century) of “the interactions between print and theatre”, see Peters 2000, 2. Peters highlights, for example, how the sensory aspects of theatrical performance were translated into text, for example in how writing would be reshaped to “conform to and express the sound of words, correlating page with voice”, Peters 2000, 159.

¹⁸ Sauter and Martin 1995, Sauter 2000.

into Swedish, it was only published in an English translation in 1983).¹⁹ Through a scrutinizing of the position of Hegel's distinction of the relationship between form and content, Szondi concluded that the modern drama (of Ibsen, Strindberg, Maeterlinck, Chekhov, and Hauptmann), in terms of the composition and narrative, had collapsed and found itself in a state of crisis. This crisis, according to Szondi, had its focus in the interpersonal relationship within the drama, replaced by its opposites as seen from 'the outside' of the drama. The nature of the encounter *in* drama was transformed into encountering through drama and through an epic gaze. Szondi proposed solutions to the crisis by introducing a number of dramaturgically formal approaches focused on the legacy of the dramaturgy of Strindberg's symbolist innovative dream play genre, applying compositions primarily from modernist playwrights. Szondi's attempt eventually led to perceptual reading strategies, which would face the crisis with more formal avant-garde dramaturgies, and this strategy in a sense made it possible to begin a new discourse in drama analysis.

Szondi's meta-analytical way of dramaturgically applying the theatrical aspects of drama forms as analytical drama tools opened up for approaches to the more non-linear dramaturgy of e.g. the theatre of the absurd. Nevertheless, in these theoretically absolute approaches, 'drama' is considered absolute in relation to the spectator. Steve Giles' critical reading of Szondi condemns the exclusion of the participatory dimension of the spectator as part of Szondi's concept of drama: "Speeches in *Drama* are not addressed to the spectator. The spectator witnesses the dramatic spectacle in silence, paralysed by the impression of a second world."²⁰ Szondi nevertheless has provided a pathway for approaches for devising in the postdramatic and the visual theatre from the 1960s and onwards with the related so-called visual dramaturgy of the theatrical elements.²¹

In several ways, to return to Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre (Postdramatisches Theater, 1999, translated into English in 2006)* continues where Szondi's work ended. To Lehmann, Szondi's upholding of the Aristotelian vs. non-Aristotelian dichotomy maintains the understanding of *drama as literature*. Lehmann, instead, insists on *theatre as performance*: "Conversely, a theatre that has, in the words of Szondi, 'absolutely' withdrawn behind the fourth wall and which lets smoothly functioning dialogical communication take place there, could be said to prevent the communication *in the theatre*."²² The discrepancy between the two understandings underlines Lehmann's argument that theatre and drama have become separate in the second half of the twentieth century. It is our argument,

¹⁹ Szondi 1981.

²⁰ Giles 1987, 271.

²¹ Arntzen 2007.

²² Lehmann 2006, 128.

that we can use both Szondi and Lehmann's "models" to overcome this separation, namely by understanding them interdependently as *performance in drama*.

The prevalence of Aristotelian dramaturgy, or more specifically the normative adaptation of it, as the principal point of reference, inhibited a truly innovative dramaturgic approach to the drama text. It is as if all that comes after tragedy in ancient Greece is 'Aristotle minus x'. Equally inhibiting and just as prevalent is the conception of Brecht as the father of epic dramaturgy, and the idea of the post-dramatic as the only form of drama that includes multimodal dramaturgies.

The distinction between linear and non-linear dramaturgies obtained another pair of oppositions, namely the 'closed' versus 'open' dramaturgies. This pair was introduced by Volker Klotz (born 1930), a German scholar in literature and art history inspired by Heinrich Wölfflin's (1864-1945) principles of definitions of style in different periods in art history.²³ Looking at drama as a world of an interference between subterranean tectonic and atectonic borders, Klotz applied these geophysical terms, also used in architecture and sculpture, to the world of drama, introducing the qualitative idea of style about 'closed' and 'open' drama. Through formal analyses of action, time, space, persons, composition, and language, he scrutinized the closed and open form, referring to these metaphors as being interdependent features and not singular concepts of an absolute theory. The terminology of the "closed" and the "open" dramatic forms (corresponding, as Patrice Pavis defines it, "partially" to the dramatic/epic and Aristotelian/non-Aristotelian"²⁴) as well as "postdramatic" risks limiting the outcome of the process of reading and of the interpretation of the work. Such terminology, which semantically resonates in a particular 'cold war' way in the beginning of the 1960s, is more simplifying than enriching for the discourse on different compositional strategies in dramatic structures. The terminology is not merely indicative of the generic features inherent in the text. It is to a greater extent also indicative of strategies that express a perceptual practice, and a pedagogical way of *reading* drama, which moreover relates to the more functional modes of expression in the performative realization of the work instead of also involving a poetic emphasis in reading. This in turn effects that the reading strategy becomes determining for the perspective of the imagery generated by the perception/staging of the work. Depending on the reading strategy, one can use different analytical tools to obtain different readings of the very same drama. The question is how we might take a new approach that takes its point of departure in the performativity and theatricality of the drama.

²³ Klotz 1985; see also Pfister 1988.

²⁴ Pavis 1998, sv. "Closed form", see also Wallis and Shepherd's account of Richard Schechner's open and closed structures in Wallis and Shepherd 2002, 80-81.

SPECTATORIAL APPROACHES TO THE DRAMA TEXT

Critical theory in recent decades has registered a number of “turns” which stress, for example, the spatial, the bodily, the performative, the cognitive, and the historical. However, such breakthroughs do not seem to have had any marked impact on dramaturgy as an analytical practice for reading drama texts. Rather, they have been appropriated by performance studies or performance dramaturgy.²⁵ Nor have theoretical schools such as reader/response theory of e.g. Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007), Roland Barthes (1915-80) and Umberto Eco (1932-2016), or the reception-aesthetics of Hans Robert Jauss (1921-97) been incorporated into the analytical practice when dealing with written drama. This is even more surprising since these theories emphasize exactly the “gaps” in the text (or performance) that the reader ‘as spectator’ can enter and creatively participate in and react to. A notable exception is the French theatre semiotician, Anne Ubersfeld (1918-2010), who, in *L'École du Spectateur* (1981), describes the participatory relationship between gaps in the text and the imaginary stage. This relationship can be useful for performance analysis, but it is equally a very useful conceptual approach to analysing both dramatic, epic, and postdramatic texts for the stage.²⁶

The emphasis on the physical body or form in the spatial context, a sensory-kinetic understanding of language, could qualify the decoding process of encountering a drama text. This means that the notion of the work implies an embodied and spatial dimension, which is expressed metaphorically in the way in which the text can be grasped both technically, sensorially, and through imagery. An interpretative phenomenological analysis may be considered an embodied act (re-action, re-enactment) in the perception of what one reads. Such an approach is fundamentally distinct from a traditional “literary” way of encountering a text.

The above-mentioned theoretical “turns” could offer new ways for approaching drama texts. A spatial, visual, and embodied approach that points to multiple modes of expression, imagery, and metaphoricity, which can be used performatively and/or theatrically in the staging of the work. The understanding of dramaturgy as a ‘score’, which e.g. Barba employs to the performance as a whole, could thus be equally useful for the notion of polyphony in the written work, especially when approached as a form of “stage writing” or “scenic script”.²⁷ Patrice Pavis (born 1947) outlined this “conflict” between drama and performance in his article “On Faithfulness”, dealing with the necessity of a constant reconsidering of the relationship between the text-performance couple.²⁸

²⁵ Hansen 2016.

²⁶ Ubersfeld 1981, 10-18.

²⁷ Kuhlmann 2016, 144.

²⁸ Pavis refers to Christopher Balme’s notion of “szenischen Schreiben”, Pavis 2008, 118. Balme employs the term in his account on filmic “Schreibkonventionen”, when clarifying cultural differences in the perception of Robert Lepage’s multimedia performances in Balme 1999, 142.

Considering the drama text as a “scenic script” involves not only the text, but also its context, or more precisely *contexts*. The historical context of the play and the contemporary re-contextualization of the play in performance are inevitable parameters for bringing the work into life. Both of these contexts include aesthetic, formal modes of expression, as well as scenic conventions and stage practices. A number of moves to integrate text and context have been made. Shakespearean scholarship, for example, has long studied the stagecraft implied in the text²⁹ as have studies of Henrik Ibsen.³⁰ And in the 1980s, New Historicist studies (also rooted in Shakespearean studies) called attention to the embeddedness of the text in its historical, social, ideological context – a context that concerns both the writer and the reader/spectator and thus render the interpretation of the text dynamic rather than fixed.³¹

CONTEXTUALITY AND CO-PERFORMANCE IN THE TEXT

One attempt to develop a dramaturgical method for approaching the historical and performative context of drama is Raymond Williams’ (1921-88) small and little-known book, *Drama in Performance* (1954). Here, Williams set out to study “*the written work in performance*; that is to say the dramatic structure of a work, which we may realize when we read it as literature, as this actually appears when the play is performed. The relation between text and performance will be seen, in practice, to vary; but to bring them together, in analysis, seems to me a necessary emphasis. In much contemporary thinking, a separation between literature and theatre is constantly assumed; yet the drama is, or can be, both literature and theatre, not the one at the expense of the other, but each because of the other. [...] I think the separation is now deeply disabling for the drama that I am examining, as a formal point of theory, the relation between text and performance.”³² Williams, writing in response to the New Criticism’s focus on the self-contained text’s intrinsic features, insists on the reader’s awareness of the spatial setting for which a play is written, and he operates with distinctions between e.g. different kinds of dramatic action: Acted Speech, Visual Enactment, Activity (movement), and Behaviour.

Williams does not, however, develop any analytical approaches to the actions performed by the spectators.

More recently, Martin Meisel (born 1931), in *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance* (2007), has argued that: “Reading plays in the fullest sense, then, means being able to read the dialogue and descriptions as a set of directions

²⁹ E.g. Brown 2002, Styan 1967.

³⁰ Northam 1971.

³¹ E.g. Greenblatt 1980, Orgel 2002.

³² Williams 1972, 4-5.

encoding, but also in a measure enacting, their own realization. It means bringing to bear something of a playwright's or director's understanding of how plays work on an imagined audience in the circumstances of an imagined theatrical representation."³³ Meisel considers how plays make use of aural and visual elements, as well as e.g. movement and gestures, his examination also includes analyses of how playwrights anticipate and utilize the audience's expectations, sympathies, and emotional responses, albeit somewhat superficial and primarily in relation to "staged audiences" rather than "actual audiences".

The theatricality of the drama text, which involves the relation to the spectator, continues to be an essential, but largely overlooked premise. This not only applies to plays that explicitly aim at including the audience in the performance such as Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience* (1966), or Tim Crouch's *The Author* (2009). To include the perspective of the active spectator and to develop a dramaturgical method that begins with the premise that the structure of the drama text involves a co-performance by both actors and spectators, seems to be crucial to the future development of dramaturgy. This means that the embedded theatricality and scenic, spatial implications are keys to unlocking an implicit aesthetic experience of the drama text. Contrary to the traditional literary conception of the drama, the text *is not opposed* to performance, but primes the performance.

The drama and the drama text presupposes the spectatorship of the reader. The drama text presupposes a bodily gaze in the sense that a reading of a drama text demands a sensibility for what is going on (literally 'taking place') in the drama. The dramaturg should be capable of distinguishing the 'matrix' of the drama in a way that allows the reader's perceptual capacity to fill in the 'gaps' in the drama. These perceptual gaps are spatial boundaries of the necessarily embedded encounter between stage and audience for a differentiated understanding of the theatrical realization to come. All this presupposes an understanding of theatre as something that involves an implied spectatorship.³⁴ Hence, the spectator's bodily gaze is present and takes part in the act of reading. Identification, as for example in empathy, is a participation, and catharsis, basically, demands participation. Hence, Erika Fischer-Lichte's (born 1943) notion of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators in the so-called auto-poietic feedback loop equals the reader's co-presence with the drama as identifying the transformative

³³ Meisel 2007, 1-2.

³⁴ The notion of the implied spectator has its background in the theories of e.g. Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco, Roland Barthes, Roman Ingarden, and J. L. Austin. Erika Fischer-Lichte, too, has highlighted the fact that a perceptual function is embedded in the text, that is, the position of the reader or spectator is integral to the work, but the implied spectator figures mostly as an analytical focus for performance rather than drama, see e.g. Marinis 1987.

power of the very performance.³⁵ Therefore, when reading a play, a more performative side of presence should be evoked so that co-presence also implies co-performance.

This claim includes a break with the dominant and often ruling idea of the passive spectator. The idea of the active, participating spectator (which at the moment seems to apply to participatory, interactive performance only) is not a new invention; it has just been omitted from the ideological perception of what it means to be a spectator and also a reader. The philosopher Jacques Rancière (born 1940), has become a stable source when it comes to identify participatory theatre. Rancière has expressed it the following way: “Every spectator is already an actor in her story; every actor, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story”.³⁶ This means that the participatory element is always present, and that the so-called passive spectator stems from a more ideological use of the word. In *The Theory and Analysis of Drama (Das Drama. Theorie und Analyse, 1977)*, German literary scholar, Manfred Pfister (born 1943), involves the spectatorial impact in the reading of a drama by emphasizing the “discrepant awareness” through the explicit and implicit communication in the drama.³⁷ In other words, imaginary forces play a role in this discrepant awareness.

The dramaturgical approach must accordingly re-introduce the spectatorial perception in focus as a specific dramaturgical sensibility. This means that the visual and rhythmical perception of the drama makes our imagination perform both while reading and while experiencing the drama in performance. There is an implicit temporality of the drama which often evokes a sense of estranged reaction in the mind of the reader. This reaction ‘on time’ makes it possible to detect the drama from the actual contemporary perspective, the here and now, obliging the reader to distinguish him/herself as reader *of* ‘the meantime’. To use Rebecca Schneider’s words (born 1959), or perhaps more properly to transfer her ambition as it is mainly expressed in *Performing Remains* (2011), encountering a dramatic material demands a sort of re-enactment by the reader/spectator. The body of the reader/spectator is explicitly emphasized when reading the play. It is a body-to-body encounter, and the dramaturg should mobilize a bodily sensibility during the act of reading.

By including the position of an implied spectator in the dramaturgic analysis, the interplay between the text in performance and the spectator’s sensation and imagination becomes essential.³⁸ An analysis of a drama text must thus include

³⁵ Fischer-Lichte 2008, 47.

³⁶ Rancière 2009, 17.

³⁷ Pfister 1988, 48ff.

³⁸ For an analysis of three interrelated aspects of a dramaturgy of imagination, namely ascription, modes, and dynamics see Kallenbach 2016, 115f. or for an extended analytical framework, see Kallenbach 2018, chap. 10.

an examination of how the text involves strategies for cognitive actions that are to be performed by the spectator: strategies, which are also historically conditioned.³⁹ Neuroscience and cognitive science may offer useful analytical tools, and have been employed, for example, by scholars of early modern theatre. Amy Cook, in her study *Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance through Cognitive Science* (2010), offers insight into how cognitive linguistics may inform the study of dramatic texts using conceptual metaphor theory (as developed by e.g. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson) and cognitive blending theory (developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner). Cook demonstrates, for instance, how an analysis of the motif of the "mirror" in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be rooted in an early modern historical context of the original spectators as well as in a cognitive linguistic framework through which the mirror is revealed to consist of multiple blends of different meanings or input spaces.⁴⁰

The spectator's imagination and sensory experience in a historicised context was also central to the work of the Polish-American scholar and dramaturg, Jan Kott (1914-2001). Kott, in his seminal book *Shakespeare, our contemporary* (published in Polish 1963; and English 1964), juxtaposed the dramaturgical analytical interpretation of the "absurd" dramas with Shakespeare's works on the backdrop of the post-World War II era. The realism behind the "absurd" dramatic genre was to Kott a logical consequence of socialist realism, which praised the worldview of Joseph Stalin. Kott would consequently emphasize the modern existential and philosophical aspects in his readings of Shakespeare's works as he saw them through the filter of the theatre of the absurd while remaining sensitive to the implications of the historical context of Shakespeare's stage. Kott's analysis of Edgar and Gloucester approaching the edge of the cliffs of Dover in the chapter, "King Lear or Endgame", precisely highlights how the staging embedded in the dialogue demands the active participation of the spectator to transform the theatrical "pantomime" where "Edgar [...] lifts his feet high, pretending to walk uphill" while "Gloucester, too, lifts his feet, as if expecting the ground to rise, but underneath his foot there is only air."⁴¹ It is as if Shakespeare deliberately has written performatively on the topic of "the gap" or "the abyss", both contextual matters concretize the theatrical imagination for a spectator. "This pantomime", Kott notes, "only makes sense if acted on a flat and level stage."⁴² The dramatic, intra-textual situation "in which a madman leads a blind man and talks him into believing in a non-existing mountain" is mirrored in the extra-textual, theatrical

³⁹ Kallenbach 2018 provides an extensive overview of theories of imagination in the early modern to late modernist theatre and drama.

⁴⁰ Cook 2001, 43-63.

⁴¹ Kott 1974, 142.

⁴² Ibid.

situation, in which, “in another moment a landscape will be sketched in” by the spectator.⁴³ The scene depends on both the illusion and disillusion of the non-existent height for the characters and spectators alike.

As a modern equivalent, Kott mentions Eugène Ionesco’s *The Killer* (1957). The entire first act takes place in an invisible setting, while the second act consists largely of an offstage soundscape. The play is an astonishing example of how the drama happens via the interplay of the spectator’s imagination and sensory engagement with the performed text.⁴⁴

Taking the lead of the above mentioned studies, a ‘new’ dramaturgy would consider the drama text as a score, where all aspects of the performance, narrative as well as sensory, simultaneously come into play and involve a stage space, a fictional space and an audience space. A text that is inscribed into an embodied, spatial, material setting, which resonates with the body,⁴⁵ and a text that speaks to other levels than the semantic level. As a score, the text includes, for example, a gestural score (that calls attention to the text that is written to be acted, as was crucial to the dramaturgy of Brecht), and a sonoral score (that calls attention to the text as spoken and articulated by the actor, and, accordingly, stresses the potentials for signification found in tempo and rhythm). This is not only expressed via stage directions, but also via the implied style of acting, the implied use of movement and props, as well as the visual themes and imagery employed by the playwright. The drama text, at the same time, points backwards, to the spatial and bodily context for which it was written, and forwards to the multiple contexts in which it might be performed.

The theatre’s interest in the audience and audience development has, perhaps, never been greater. This current interest for cultivating a new audience for the theatre is evidently needed for the theatre of tomorrow. New media and various platforms (such as readings and artist talks) have opened up for new ways of interaction between artists and audiences, and for the spectator to enter into dialogue with the theatre. Concurrently, there is an increased interest from the audience to become part of the performance, not only in participatory, interactive formats, but in the theatre in general.

On these backdrops we see a unique possibility for having the spectator also enter into drama analysis.

⁴³ Ibid, 143.

⁴⁴ A close analysis of the spectator’s cognitive, imagining co-performance in *The Killer* can be found in Kallenbach 2018, 249-77.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, in ch. 17 in the *Poetics*, also stressed the need for the poet to visualize the action as taking place, see Aristotle 1995.

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