

# DOCTORAL DISQUISITION'S THESIS

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## GAMES OF THE SPACE

*Changes in the rapport of virtual space and historical time in Páskándi Géza's and Marin Sorescu's drama*

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### 1. Goals of the disquisition, delimiting the topic

One can notice a fundamental change in case of Páskándi Géza and Marin Sorescu regarding their relationship to the drama, and for both of them the appearance of the historical drama definitely modifies their earlier career.

Their careers are complete, presenting a chequered picture from the point of view of the content and form, a career that is continuously related, permanently in dialog with the actual events of the European drama literature.

Anyone who analysis Páskándi Géza's or Marin Sorescu's dramas and theoretical writings about the drama can notice that both authors are Central-European followers of the absurd drama creating two different and separate drama languages. They are such creators who starting from the fountain of their own literature and following the newest changes that occur in drama literature created a characteristic, easily recognizable drama parlance.

Henceforward I intend to analyze this characteristic parlance, namely the changes that a drama-writers given, already evolved parlance suffers when it faces some of the historical drama's content references.

There are some theoretical statements that are important from the point of view of the study, theoreticians who interpret the historical drama not as a reformulated detail of reality but

as metaphors<sup>1</sup>, so much so that within the concept of the historical drama not only historical but also mythological events have their place. It is obvious that the drama that revives history in the Lukács's sense can broaden the idea of history, more than that can shift the text of the drama towards the atemporality of mythology precisely because of its hidden metaphorical character.

And atemporality is the main characteristic of absurd dramas – the absurd act rooted in existentialism “exiles time as it aims the atemporality of the moment”.<sup>2</sup> But this is primarily valid for Beckett's and Ionesco's dramas and one has to give much more defined answers when analyzing other, especially when analyzing significant Central-European absurd drama writers.

History has completely different role in the works of Mrožek, Örkény, and also in case of Páskándi's and Sorescu's dramas, as in case of the dramas of the two French lions of the absurd, but still nourishes rapport with the representatives of the absurd drama. Not even in case of the historical dramas in the highest sense of the word, neither for other dramas – Páskándi and Sorescu do not consider themselves absurd authors, but this does not exclude the possibility that we face two important authors of the Central-European absurd drama, as we have to agree with the statement of Nicolae Balotă that “the thinkers, writers of the «absurd» usually refuse this denomination”<sup>3</sup>.

With the comparative analysis of Páskándi Géza's and Marin Sorescu's dramas I intend to highlight such phenomena that appear within the inner structure of the dramas, that are characteristic not only for the works of the two analyzed writers, more than that are appropriate to create new analysis background, new approaching methods for some references of drama theory – starting with the idea according to which: if the analysis methods can be used as suitable means to draw conclusions in case of two different literary works than they can be used in case of any literature, for any kind of drama.

Before discussing the drama theory viewpoints and notions we have to specify the system of comparatistic notions, the methods of comparison used in the analysis of the two drama writers (relevant in case of the changes of the historical drama).

## **2. Delineating the used method**

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<sup>1</sup> See: Mašek, Victor Ernest: *Literatură și existență dramatică*. Editura Meridiane, București, 1983., p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Ungvári Tamás: *Absurd drama – drámai abszurdum*. Helikon, 1965/1, p.83.

<sup>3</sup> Balotă, Nicolae: *Az abszurd irodalom*. Translated by Zirkuli Péter. Gondolat, Budapest, 1979., p.6.

The comparatistic base of the disquisition is discovered in the theory of Adrian Marino about literary invariants.

In his book *Comparatistics and the Theory of Literature*<sup>4</sup> Adrian Marino offers not only a new comparatistic method but also a new comparatistic attitude. According to him the mission of the new comparatist is “*more and more modest and ambitious: the new comparatist unequivocally has to offer new alternatives, a work-hypothesis, namely a theory and a method, that confers such perspective that belongs only to himself; that cannot be confused or overlap with any of the less or more fashionable (structuralist, semiotic etc.) methods. His virtual role is only putting face to face, complementing and mutual checking.*”<sup>5</sup>

He draws his theory about literary invariants, notion that stands for the basic elements of literary phenomenon simplified to the extremes: “*the invariant is always understood as the residual element obtained after eliminating all the particularities and that makes possible all the literary consequences, synchronisms and parallels that aim at the universality of literature and literary thought. If on one hand the comparatistics of rapports or actions – as it asserts - individualizes, narrows the visual field, on the other hand the comparatistics of invariants aimed at differences and particularities seeks the unity of identities, the permanence hidden beyond variants.*”<sup>6</sup>

Compared to the former drama-history period space gets in the foreground within the drama. It works as such an invariant that determines the possible development direction of the drama's form, namely: a given space structure creates a given drama form. Space determines action, dialogs and names. So we have here an inverse building that does not determine space by the series of actions created by the dialog among the names, on the contrary space determines the faith of characters right at the beginning of the drama.

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<sup>4</sup> The original book was published in French in 1988 and the Romanian translation in 1998.

<sup>5</sup> „Misiunea lui este în același timp mai modestă și mai ambițioasă: noul comparatist trebuie să ofere clar o alternativă, o ipoteză de lucru, adică o teorie și o metodă situate într-o perspectivă ce nu-i decât a lui; care nu se confundă, nici nu se suprapune cu *nici una* dintre metodele mai mult sau mai puțin în vogă (structuraliste, semiotice, etc.) Rolul său virtual este numai de confruntare și de complementaritate, precum și de verificare reciprocă.” – Marino, Adrian: *Comparatism și teoria literaturii*. Translated by: Mihai Ungureanu. Polirom, 1998., p.17.

<sup>6</sup> “prin invariant se înțelege întotdeauna elementul rezidual obținut după eliminarea tuturor particularităților și care face posibile toate coincidențele, toate sincronismele și paralele literare ce visează universalitatea literaturii și a gândirii literare. Dacă, după cum se afirmă, comparatismul raporturilor sau a faptelor individualizează, îngustează câmpul vizual, orientat spre diferență și particular, comparatismul invarianților caută, dimpotrivă, unitatea identităților, permanențele ascunse dincolo de variații.” – Marino Adrian: quoted work: p. 76.

According to my hypothesis the space-projection manifested in all three fundamental elements of the drama, in the analyzed dramas of the two authors creates specific drama forms facing historical time (or facing the lack of historical time). Being “historical dramas”, “mythological parables” or drama texts showing some specific references of contemporary life, these drama forms have a strong connection with the idea of history, manifested either in mythological plays situated on the merge of mythological time, or in dramas that revive some periods of history and its characters. And all this happens amidst a continuous communication with the absurd drama literature.

During the disquisition I analyze the changes in the rapport among space-projections, absurd and historical time within the circles of names, dialogs and instructions, also paying attention to the way the sector or milieu character of the space-projections determines the content and formal elements of the given dramas. I used Adrian Marino’s invariable-theory in such a way to seek within the drama-pairs such new content or formal elements that could be relevant not only for the national literature serving as background for the two authors but also in case of the universal literature. I also took into consideration the possibility to examine the justification of new drama theory notions that could appear during the analysis of Páskándi’s and Sorescu’s work.

### **3. Enumerating the results**

The analysis of Páskándi Géza’s and Marin Sorescu’s dramas offered many practical and theoretical results. A practical result of the research could be that it put into different light the Páskándi- and Sorescu texts many times changing their interpretation possibilities, and paying attention mostly to the texts instead of their environment – namely the analysis of the characteristic drama structure lead me to the conclusion that I presumed at the beginning of the research: the analyzed authors wrote such characteristic dramas that confers them a special, significant place within the Central-European, moreover within the European drama literature.

Regarding the theoretical results it is now obvious that the virtual space of the drama as a drama theory category is a good analysis point of view in case of the interpretation of different dramas, hereby exceeding the limits of narrowly understood comparatistics, entering a broader, more reflexive space in which the “facing” of different drama theory and literature notions results

in such a net of notions that can be used further on not only in case of comparatistic researches but also for drama interpretation, for drama theory studies, more than that for studies that belong to the intermedial space searching connection among different art branches.

The new theory that was born during the research is nothing else than the row of theoretical statements appeared around the existence of the drama's virtual space, that all together sustain the fact that in every case of drama text there has to be a special virtual space-structure in order for the drama to exist as a literary text or as a text meant to become a performance.

The notion of the drama's virtual space helps the disassembly of the text into invariants and in the same time supports its reconstruction. Placing the different notions and the texts/text fragments of these into the virtual space of the drama aims at the Name manifested within the Dialog, and the Name will turn to be such a Sign that is multiplied in the space of the drama and becomes the resultant of the crowd of characters and precisely this is the aim of comparatistics in the Marino sense.

The basic position of the lookout for the unit of identities and the consistency beyond the variants lead me to the conclusions of drama theory and drama analyses, which are due to the unique and pale space of Central (Eastern) Europe. The spatial obscureness of this notion led me to the drama's virtual space, because as Central-Europe, the drama continuously stretches, step through its own limits, borders –this is why Erika Fischer-Lichte refers to drama as the space of border crossing points.

Passing the boarder means setting relationships and offers the space for comparison as it was almost given the 2 author's comparative study, regarding not their biographical similarities but the ones that appear in their literary works.

This is how I noticed during my research that next to the fact that in some views there is a huge distance between the two authors, there are similar fundamental motives (just to mention only the most important ones: their strong relation to the absurd drama, the view of the absurdity of being, continuous facing history and historical time, persistent, sometimes rebellious dialogue with the literary genre of drama) that these 2 authors share. The most important one is that the role of the dramatic character in space and the alteration of this position determines the formation of the virtual space of drama, and this is true the other way around, too: the „how”, the form of the drama's virtual space fundamentally determines the drama's characters.

During my comparative research I had to recognize the view, that drama, if it is really a drama, than all the time has to contain its own beginning –even the traditions of the ancient and medieval times.

From this point of view we can state, that the 20th century's drama despite of its rebellious character, has a very strong connection with traditions. Not only in the point of the genre (comedy and tragedy, the game of farce and morality), but in the drama structure, too. It is noticeable that in both starting point of drama history, Character and Chorus faces each other. In case of tragedy the Character by facing the /entering in dialogue with the Chorus, realizes the dramatic situation that he/she entered in – this is similar to sources of the medieval theater, too, where the Character/Angel faces the 3-Women-Choir even in the *quemqueritis* phase of the play.

Páskándi and Sorescu they both know these traditions, they both are poeta doctus of the drama genre, who starting from the above mentioned beginning point of the drama and continuously entering in a dialogue with the traditions of this genre, they both form their own unique and proper parlances, which characterizes their works' dramatic strata.

They both start building consciously from the very beginning all what later we consider as dramatic lifework. Sorescu starts *Jónás* with a very proper dialogic variant of the dramatic monolog, Páskándi measures the possibilities of a dialogue in the first phrases of the *Az eb olykor emeli lábát*, so that after these 2 character plays they could step forward toward the more colorfully dyed dramas.

In both cases we can speak about the teamwork of tradition and innovation. This teamwork includes elements such as philosophical background (absurd literature and the existentialism), drama structure and its components, like time, space and character. These elements set up together the drama's virtual space, in case to gain new contents by combining it with the elements of the historical time and ultimately by the postmodern life philosophy, and the possibility/non-possibility of rewriting it. These elements enlarge the authors' possibilities to create novel and unconventional dramatic works within their own literature as in the frame of world literature.

The drama's virtual space cannot come into existence without time, because it is essential that the reader could see the space-structure in which the plot takes place by the dialogue between

the names.<sup>7</sup> Reviewing Páskándi's and Sorescu's dramas from the notion of dramatic space it is obvious that everything that comes in the "empty" space of the drama influences, changes and lends new possibilities of interpretation, enriches the drama with new dimensions. The Character too undergoes this transformation; his/her appearance is due to the coercive power of the space: he/she appears as a "naked" Sign who will be vested by time and space with different characteristics through the plot.

By the space, which could be closed (sacred) and open (profane), too.

Páskándi and Sorescu they both gradually get from the closed space determined drama to the usually open space characterized historical dramas, from the non-linear drama to the linear one, and so on, toward a drama in which the main focus will not be on the character, who will manifest in the space of one drama, but who will be created within the meta-dramatic drama structure of the **guest-texts'** clashes and interlocks.

Their space handling creates the meeting point of the profane and utopist space's argument or linkage, and in both cases we can see that in contrast with the „non-structural system” of the „profane” space the utopist space gives the possibility of an excessive structural division.<sup>8</sup>

In their dramas not only the space-handling, but the duality that is present in the Character's personality and in his/her speech style led me to examine the author's dramas as „mirror-game” successions.

Studying the achiral games new guideline gain priority, which regards drama as an achiral surface, that reflects only one Character and his/her personality – this surface could be the drama's virtual space, or time within this sphere, these 2 variants are the most important elements when doing a comparative study of drama. I have pointed out that the tradition of reflection, and its role in the given culture, (drama) literature, theatre has been present in the European culture even in the ancient and medieval times.

Páskándi and Sorescu remount to tradition such a way that it constantly gets renewed. In their 2 role-plays, such in *Jónás* and *Vendégség*, the I and the Other Me are in dialogue, whereas

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<sup>7</sup> Patrice Pavis a drámai teret így határozza meg: „A dráma terét a néző, illetve az olvasó alakítja ki, hogy rögzítse a cselekmény előrehaladásának és a szereplők fejlődésének a kereteit. A drámai tér a drámaszöveg része, láthatóvá kizárólag a néző képzeletében válik. – Pavis, Patrice: *Tér – a dráma tere*. In: Pavis, Patrice: *Színházi szótár* L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2006., p. 447.

<sup>8</sup> „Față de lipsa de „structură” a spațiului profan, spațiul utopic oferă un exces de structură” –Stoichiță, Victor Ieronic: *Efectul Don Quijote*. Repere pentru o hermeneutică a imaginii europene. P. 18

in the historical dramas, such in *Hidegtelelés or Tornyt választok* two different worlds, two diverse space structures contribute to the drama's powerful conflict, through which we can follow the fight between the upper and lower worlds, the fight of the real and appearance.

The characteristics of those drama structures, which are based on the setting face to face of realm and appearance, and on the achiral idiosyncrasy, are cached out on the level of conformance in both author's cases, even if this is not similar in each of their dramas.

The cavalcade of the achiral worlds it's not far off from that viewpoint that used to be called postmodern, because tradition, the reflection of the ancient texts in Páskándi's and Sorescu's texts leads the authors to write such a drama texts, which is a sort of „postmodern”, built upon intertextuality, abounded in word games and juggling with them. These elements lead the drama into a space, where real and appearance, the drama's text and the guide-text, the historical and the reversible/mythical/utopist time they altogether create such texts, as Sorescu's *Shakespeare sógor* and Páskándi's *Todagar jaur kvárna*..

This thesis tries to analyzes these two authors' most important dramas from a very proper point of view (the circumstances of how the virtual space comes into being), in case to contribute to the exploration and adaptation of the inner semantic content of the drama texts.

Beside exploring the possible text interpretations, this theses had other edifications, too:a) drama could be perceived as a play taking place in a virtual space, and which is open to literature and theater, too, b)drama could be understood as the inner dialogue of the only Character, or as a dialogue of the Character and his/her projections. Due to the achival element, these projections can dissolve into and function as different characters.

My hope is that the content of my theses will help the profound examination of Sorescu's dramas and will help to replace Páskándi's drama works from the „twilight” oblivion into the deserved place in the Hungarian (drama) literature. I also hope that both authors will be placed on the achival surface of the world literature and in the virtual space of the comparatistics, because it will be more and more certifiable that they are excellent innovators of the drama's form, who, by the conscious knowledge of the drama's forms regenerated the drama's genres, starting from the 2 role plays to the historical dramas, and metadrama, which perceives reality with irony.

#### **4. Articles:**



1. *Tükör által, hagyományosan.* Helikon, irodalmi folyóirat, XX. évfolyam 2009. 16. (534.) szám – augusztus 25.
2. *A látható szereplőtől a láthatatlanig.* Történelemszemlélet és drámakoncepció Páskándi Géza és Marin Sorescu történelmi drámáiban. Látó, 2009. július
3. *Abszurd és történelem. Bevezetés Páskándi Géza és Marin Sorescu drámáinak elemzéséhez.* Korunk, 2009. Január
4. *Színház, hasonmás, esszé* – Irodalmi Jelen, 2006. augusztus.
5. *Színháztól a drámáig és vissza* – Irodalmi Jelen, 2005. június.
6. *Drámák Erdélyben* – Irodalmi Jelen, 2002., szeptember.
7. *A semmi íze* – Korunk, június, 2001.