

In this paper, we will concentrate on the playwriting of the so-called young generation. In doing so, we will ask how this generation can be defined, given that the writers are quite individualised and dispersed among themselves, and their texts are quite diverse in terms of content, genre and form. We will argue that being born and growing up concurrently with the development of the internet, social networks and other new technologies, which are nowadays fundamentally inscribed in the social fabric, has significantly defined the young generation. Consequently, the boundaries between the virtual and the reality are constantly being blurred, and the symbiosis between the two, summed up in the term "biovirtual", is continuously being established. Using examples of four theatre texts (*The Thirty Somethings* by Eva Mahkovic and Tereza Gregorič, *It All Began with the Bunny Rabbit Goulash* by Varja Hrvatin, *The Interpretation of Sanja* by Ela Božič and *Work and the Maiden I-V: Serf Dramas* by Nika Švab), we will reflect on how young authors are incorporating the post-internet reality, defined by the ubiquity of new technologies, into their playwriting. We will consider whether these writers' generation generates new playwriting forms and dramaturgical approaches. Finally, we will draw attention to the conditions under which these authors operate, which (from systemic education and the repertory logic of staging to the pervasive precarisation and instability) do not provide economic security. Hence, there is no room for experiment and error. This forces writers to opt for already tested dramatic forms, strategies and themes. How, then, can one define the playwriting of a generation if it lacks a clear break with the tradition that would characterise this generation?

---

**Keywords:** young generation, social networks, post-internet drama, biovirtual, new technologies

---

**Varja Hrvatin** (1993), **Maša Radi Buh** (1998) and **Jakob Ribič** (1995) have been collaborating as writers and co-creators of the Radio Študent show *Teritorij teatra* (Theatre Territory) since 2018. They have produced thirteen episodes during this time, ranging from expert and theoretical contributions to collaged interviews and live programmes on a specific topic. In their collective work, they wish to combine their personal areas of interest and their shared knowledge and experience to create a dynamic insight into the diverse layers of the performing arts. By combining philosophical, theatre and sociological perspectives, they decode theory with practice, think practice with theory and bring performing arts closer to the broader or more peripheral societal issues.

varja.hrvatin@gmail.com, masaradibuh@gmail.com, vid.jakob@gmail.com

# Drama Without a Generation

Varja Hrvatin, Maša Radi Buh, Jakob Ribič

Academy for Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana

The development of Slovenian playwriting after the year 2000 was predominantly marked by numerous institutional and independent initiatives and programmes designed to create and develop new playwrights. Even if some of these initiatives have folded, their effect is still important. Today, there is much interest in playwriting within the young generation and, consequently, a rise in accompanying theoretical practice which attempts to outline some key formal and narrative characteristics while simultaneously identifying potential outstanding authors. Generations define art, and in this case, playwriting, through a tangible discontinuity in either aesthetics, content or form, which outlines itself by reacting to certain specifics of time and space. The current generation of young playwrights in Slovenia lacks such a defining moment or a shift in form, content or procedures. However, the unique rise of the internet, social media and integration of technology and everyday life unites it.

French philosopher Michel Serres calls them Thumbelinas in reference to their seamless use of modern touch-screen technology while British artist, writer and technologist James Bridle suggests that they (and we) live in a world of code-space where more and more situations are inherently tied to various technologies and algorithms. Exceedingly, social existence has moved from physical spaces to social media. There, everyone has the opportunity to choose a bubble to which they wish to belong. These bubbles differ significantly from traditional spaces of gathering. Instead of forging connections based on similar ages (generation), they are structured more around the same interests. The influence of such an interconnected yet online existence finds an imprint in playwriting with elements of self-referentiality, autobiography, hypertextuality, pop culture references and the appropriation of social media language. Plays like *The Thirty Somethings* by E. Mahkovic and T. Gregorič bring hypertextuality through references to or the strong use of social media slang. Their form, however, remains close to the traditional dramatic structure and does not introduce radically unfamiliar dramatic constructs. A (new) landscape dramaturgy which imitates the organisation of attention, representative of web browsing, emerges to include these significant life changes in dramatic texts.

An example of this is found in *It All Began with the Bunny Rabbit Goulash* by V. Hrvatin. Its dramaturgy is built upon a series of separated/individual scenes that are yet to be

composed into an entirety by the reader. Instead of linearity, a dramaturgy of reading consists of numerous permutations and heavily relies on the reader's individual choices. Aside from a few exceptions, most of this generation's plays scarcely problematise or include new technologies (and their consequences) in their texts.

This approach is surprising, given that the young generation is defined precisely by living in a biovirtual world. The reasons for it might be found in the specific conditions of the local education system. In playwriting courses at the Academy for Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, the emphasis still lies on the traditional and Aristotelian model of writing. Other playwriting workshops also rarely specifically encourage explorations of post-internet writing. In addition, young playwriting is mostly still written solely for reading, which alienates it from the staging process. When a stage adaptation does happen, plays with audacious and experimental forms often get overlooked. The youth can be a messenger of innovation and radical discontinuity only in times of appropriate conditions.

In our article, we cannot identify such a break or a shift. Although playwrights of the young generation include some elements of the biovirtual, hyper-digital world, a drastic change in ways of living is not reflected in the formal characteristics of their plays. The procedures they opt for are ones that other generations already introduced decades ago. The combination of out-of-date education and repertoire theatres that favour already tested forms and content hampers the options for risk, error and experimentation. When space for all of these is shut down, there is little opportunity for a potential break to emerge. The young playwright is thus deprived of initiating a radical shift since that could endanger their creative (and therefore their economic and social) security. Before looking for a discontinuity that ought to define a generation, a change in education and working conditions for playwriting should take centre stage – in the processes of either publication or staging.