

In the article, the author tries to illustrate the extent to which Handke's drama *Storm Still* fits into Peter Szondi's *Theory of the Modern Drama*. The analysis of textual and contextual features in *Storm Still* shows that new definitions of the textual understanding of Handke's plays can be produced within the theoretical field of absolute drama, in which the boundary between objective and subjective style is usually broken, in the form of aesthetic excesses of so-called literary transgressions. With post-modern approaches of estrangement, the author goes beyond the concept of absolute drama. Handke's play is strongly based on the question of individual identity that is built between the self and the other in the form of literary transgressions. The latter stem from different forms of estrangement that build up a hybrid potential of the text and stimulate further discussions.

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**Keywords:** Peter Handke, Peter Szondi, modern drama, literary theory, estrangement

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# *Storm Still* by Peter Handke and Szondi's *Theory of the Modern Drama*

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In the article, the author aims to illustrate the extent to which Handke's drama *Storm Still* fits into Peter Szondi's *Theory of the Modern Drama*. The analysis of textual and contextual features in *Storm Still* will show that the new definitions of the textual understanding of Handke's plays can be produced within the theoretical field of absolute drama, in which the boundary between objective and subjective style is usually broken, in the form of aesthetic excesses of so-called literary transgressions. Handke's drama *Storm Still* is not an example of a typical drama, as it heralds changes in aesthetic paradigms. Due to its linguistic and structural characteristics, it can be categorised as a short narrative. It also includes epic elements, which, according to Peter Szondi, are the foundation of the modern dramatics. Given the above, it can be claimed that this literary work is a hybrid of both genres, that is, narrative and drama.

The content and form of Handke's drama are distinguished by unique linguistic aesthetics that extend the spatial and temporal dimension of the literary text. The inter-human relationships in Handke's drama cross between thematic relationships and create a contextual transgression between the subject and the object through the fragmentation of dialogues. The drama *Storm Still* discusses the familiar environment in the reflection of the Other. It follows that the understanding of one's own identity is only possible in relation to the Other. Estrangement is a kind of precondition for the identification process of literary figures, as they distance themselves in space from everything known and recognise themselves as a reflection of alienated interrelationships. We can assume that the identity construct during the drama is fragmentary because the circumstances increasingly unify and alienate the literary figures among themselves. Entities are involved in a transformational process of identity, which is formed in the relationship between one's own and the Other. It turns out that the subjects turn into objects of their own acts of perception, awareness, and truth recognition. At the beginning of the drama, the literary figures present themselves and form a family community, that is, their own belief of connection. As the events or conversational flocks are in place, the belief moves away with different alienation techniques, right down to the complete negation of one's existence. The literary figures transition from the active to the passive sphere, which reaches its climax in terms of social and cultural alienation.

In the drama, we can see the following post-modern linguistic effects of alienation: interrupting the dramatic present, timing, introducing historical persons and situations to the foreground, transferring events into fictitious environments, the incarceration of the act into prologue and epilogue in various dramatic times, these have to do with the present, interrupting dialogue by commenting, fragmentation, breakdown of dialogue, hybrid speech plot, polyphony, language disassembly, deconstruction of time-space structures, the crisis of dramatic figures, loss, identity search and death of characters. These tendencies can be understood as internal post-modern artistic processes degrading traditional dramatic forms. They represent a move away from tradition or something known in the presence of the Other.

Handke's drama *Storm Still* can only be partly placed in Szondi's concept of the modern and absolute drama, as it transcends it with its own alienated narrative constructs. Literary transgressions are seen according to: the deviation from the classical and absolute drama conventions; the absence of fabula, which consists of the narrative content; the commitment of space and time (chronotop); conflict (the search for identity in the alienated world); the alienation of literary figures, text figures (alienation through textual, discursive and actant mechanisms); genre and discourse (the problem of genealogy). The time and space notion has an impact on the literary figures' image. In the drama, the chronotop is interpreted as a closed and determined rural space that (de)constructs temporal-spatial structures. Literary figures get lost in the fragments and operate on unrelated levels. Thus, space and time establish and take away the existence of literary figures.

The narrative rhetoric in Handke's drama transcends the boundaries of the traditional, as the drama *Storm Still* does not include direct speech. In certain text places, it is also difficult to discern which literary figure dominates the speech or has the assigned word. It is common to use semi-direct speech, with which the narrator controls literary persons and events. A mix of perspectives, multi-voices, or polyphony, is present. The language in the drama *Storm Still* has the function of mirroring the psychological state of the literary figures in connection with their family background and cultural attachment in a determinative minority environment. Thus, the comments and description become fundamental content of the drama, both the subject and the object.

Nevertheless, the World War II events in Carinthia and the post-war events built the framework of the fabula. But from the very beginning of storytelling, it is obvious, that the ancestor's dream represents the framework story. The partial story absence is an indication of literary transgression.

In absolute drama, only the figures speak, not the author, so the drama *Storm Still* cannot be fully classified into Szondi's concept, since the author is integrated into

the story and performs as the lead figure. We are also not witnessing an ingenuous narrator, but a first-person one, because statements in the literary text can be assimilated to that of the author. History is placed in the present time, but there is no absolute moment, as the entire drama text is fungated as a fragmentary narrative of mixing times and perspectives. The drama does not follow the absolute principle of the dialogue, but it remains intersubjective. Interpersonal relations are based on language acts, also in monologue form. The structure of the drama *Storm Still* is not absolute, as the cause-and-effect ratios do not end in syntactic perfection, precisely because of the event dispersion or fragmentation.

The contemporary drama form calls into question the relationship between the subject and the object. Peter Handke deconstructs the drama concept with poetic language and builds a language autonomy, in which language is no longer subject to dramatic form. At the forefront of Handke's dramaturgy is not drama, but language poetics. Thus, poetic language is attributed to the primary creative role. Peter Handke's dramatic works thematise individual realisation or identification. An individual can only develop in the world through literary transgressions, which transcend linguistic and genre conventions with a particularly poetic aesthetic of storytelling and mythology. Poetic language thus offers a space of free drama development.