

## RÉSUMÉ AND MAJOR THESES OF THE DISSERTATION

### THE DRAMATURGY OF THEATRICAL SPACE IN SHAKESPEARE'S ROYAL TRAGEDIES

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The primary purpose of the dissertation is to reveal the anatomy of tragic space through mapping up the spatial world of Shakespeare's royal tragedies – *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* – via the comparative analysis of the three plays embedded in the context of the whole tragic oeuvre of the Bard. It pays equal regard to both the generic (genre-specific) and unique (play-specific) features of dramatic space, its dramaturgical roles and modes of operation, its various shapes, directions and dimensions.

The dramaturgical significance of space and a directly space-specific approach to the world of the theatre, of drama, of tragedy, of Shakespearean tragedy and of the three distinguished radical tragedies in focal–horizontal succession can be justified on various grounds within the conceptual framework of the dissertation.

Along a deductive approach space gathers hermeneutical ground in the context of the genre's culture-historical evolution both in case of the Greek (organic-pantheistic) and the Christian (conceptional-monotheistic) theatrical practice – originally a ritual performance of cultic purposes – and drama as its culturally articulated literary successor.

The phenomenological and hermeneutical context of dramatic space is generated by all the dimensions that can be described in terms of a dialectical matrix' dominant binary oppositions – sacred-profane, mythical-historical, divine-human, fictitious-real, abstract-concrete, communal-individual etc. – and played decisive roles in the evolution of the genre through gaining both cultic as well as cultural representation in the theatres of the successive eras. The physical and metaphysical aspects of dramatic space – particularly those of tragic space – their visible and hidden dimensions jointly ensure the spiritual continuity of the genre through the continuous secularizing process of its evolution in both cultures.

To describe dramatic space in its multifunctional complexity is impossible for it is present in all the constituents of both the page and the stage versions of the plays due to its primary dramaturgical agency in the making of the plays' worlds.

In philosophical terms space is a basic still highly complex phenomenon whose definition demands the multi-conceptual discourse of the allied forces of systematic thought: those of ontology (space as a domain of existence and the primary sphere of tragic being), phenomenology (space as an objective entity and its mental equivalent; space as an existential category), epistemology (the limits of cognition of space and the metaphysical dimensions of tragic space) and hermeneutics (ways and limits of interpreting real and fictitious, experiential and mental, direct and reflective spaces and tragic space as substance, medium and instrument of man's self-reflection and self-definition). A complex contextual discourse ensuring hermeneutical reliability would need the comparative analysis of the space-world, its nature, composition and dramaturgy of all the arts diachronically and/or synchronically related to drama – a task, far transcending the limited scope of the present work, that can only be attempted through obvious analogies and tangible references.

The "theory" of dramatic space can be verified only through the inductive analysis of plays as unique, complex and complete aesthetic entities that contain and embody a self-contained dramatic definition of reality - an approach that maps up their world and its constituents: its spheres, regions, locations, the nature, structure, agency and operation of tragic space both in its dramatic/textual and theatrical/performative aspects. The hermeneutical significance of dramatic space is ensured by thematic (conventional tragic topoi), structural (the compositional arrangement, relation and interaction of its constituents) and instrumental functions (the language of verbal communication and the performative "language" of the theatre as a complex medium).

Tragedy as a dramatic definition of man and the *conditio humana* presents its subject as a victim of self-reflection cast in an excentric existential position "without" himself – a creature of multiple dualities without an identity of his own that would verify and qualify his existence whose most vital issues – belonging and alienation, community and isolation, identity and estrangement, sin and retribution, power and subjection etc. - create an organic topical network of spatial relations that appear in all the standard compositional elements of a play.

The three royal tragedies of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are all set in worlds of extremes, of heightened physical, emotional and intellectual intensity i.e. liminal states stretched to the very limits of human experience – the authentic setting for the dramatic metamorphoses that represent the all-pervading duality of man entrapped between two worlds in all the conflicting domains and contrasting dimensions of life (sacred-profane, mythical-historical, factual-fictional, individual-communal).

The dissertation is divided into three major chapters of sequential arrangement mapping up the dramaturgical dimensions of theatrical space, tragic space and the spatial world of the three royal tragedies in gradually growing scale.

## I. The topography of theatre-space

The introductory chapter surveys the cultic and cultural dimensions of theatre-space in the light of Hermes' heritage: the fruitful match of hermetics and hermeneutics. Following the classification of the basic terminology of space and the related notions (place, region, location, scene etc.), in the context of philosophical space definitions, it reaches back to the genre's mythical roots, the Greek and medieval Christian traditions. The overview attempts to reveal the nature of Renaissance theatre-space, the relevant spatial aspects and dimensions of the Elizabethan public playhouses playing distinguished attention to the much debated, ever changing relationship of space and place, their analogous and contrasting features, correspondent, complementary and controversial aspects.

## II. The topography of tragic space

Relying on the analogous features of the 10 tragedies, the chapter takes a comprehensive survey of Shakespeare's tragic space, its genre-specific compositional elements, its dominant dimensions and its complex dramaturgical agency. The topical centre of the analyses is the tragic individual himself around whom the unique world of each play is organized physically, emotionally and intellectually alike. The chapter is divided into three proportionate parts through the comparative analysis of the three major domains of tragic space with the body (the physical-sensual presence of the characters), the mind (the mental-psychological sphere of the protagonists' being) and the language (as the verbal medium of communication with a distinct poetic i.e. aural and visual space-making role) in focus as chief agents of instrumental roles in creating the spatial world of a play.

## III. The topography of the royal tragedies

The third part of the dissertation surveys the space-world of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in three separate chapters focusing on the spatial composition as well as the unique dramaturgical features of the individual plays with an eye and ear on the analogies and correspondences that verify the substantial kinship of the plays.

### 1. THE "MASTERPIECE OF CONFUSION": *MACBETH*

The first in-depth analysis is organized around the concept of N. Frye's "royal metaphor", its emblematic status and operative agency i.e. its central role through multiple nominal and topical (thematic and locative) signification in the world of *Macbeth*. The royal metaphor through multiple chronotopical embodiment is the topical centre of Shakespeare's darkest tragedy of the most condensed dramaturgical composition, spatial structure and spiritual gravity. In its instrumental quality it is the hermeneutical master key of the play that, through its physical, conceptual and verbal variants can open all the domains and dimensions of the Macbeth-world.

### 2. INFINITY IN A NUTSHELL: *HAMLET* FROM WITHIN

The analysis attempts at mapping up the spatial world of *Hamlet* drawn up from within the conceptual/intellectual framework of the play, rooted in the realm of the mind – the sphere of Hamlet's globalized scepticism – focusing on both the emblematic and idiosyncratic features of Hamlet-space. The play's unique position in the Shakespeare canon, its central place in Shakespace is – among other factors – partly due to the phenomenological as well as hermeneutical complexity of its spatial structure. *Hamlet* in this respect is the most controversial representative of the established Shakespearean practice of charging space and its constituents (place, location, scene) – both in the physical, metaphorical and conceptual sense – up with distinguished dramaturgical agency. The spatial design of the play takes shape and gain "habitation" through all the major compositional elements of tragedy in manifold local correspondences of plot, character, language, thought and scenery. In the world of all-pervading and undermining duplicities the double agency of tragic space is in full accord with all the other constituents of the tragic experience. It is the primary and primordial signifier and signified, agent and instrument of order, stability, constancy and continuity – the repository of tradition as much as the most authentic and expressive instrument of voicing the characteristically interrogative mood and profoundly sceptical mind of the times, the age of its making.

### 3. "ENDGAME": *KING LEAR*

In Shakespeare's tragic universe undoubtedly Lear's kingdom is the most distant dominion. It is the frontier of the tragic experience, a strange, inscrutable and uninhabitable nowhere land lacking reliable spatial and temporal definition that provide proper setting to the other two related tragedies. This existential state of indefiniteness is an ideal setting to the sensual, emotional and mental extremities of the plot, the complex liminality of the tragic experience. At the same time it is the main source of the play's universalism which both topically and structurally transcends the established spatial limits of the conceptual framework of the genre. *King Lear* is not only the richest storehouse of the archetypal topoi of tragedy; in its spatial composition it also recalls the universalism of myths when raising the most vital existential issues of life in the complex, polyphonic language of the stage uniting the instrumental forces of theatrical presentation. Shakespeare's third "radical" tragedy is the anachronistic closure to the Bard's great tragic sequence, the grave endgame of his royal trilogy closing down the tragic cycle through corresponding culture-historical analogies recalling the classical pagan and the medieval Christian heritage in discordant concord.

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