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**DECONSTRUCȚIA DISCURSURILOR POLITICE
ÎN TEXTE DRAMATICE MODERNE**

Rezumatul tezei de doctorat

Coordonator științific,

Prof. univ.dr. habil. Constantin Dram

Student-doctorand,

Mădălina Ceciuleac

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FACULTY OF LETTERS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGICAL STUDIES

**THE DECONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL
DISCOURSES IN MODERN DRAMATIC TEXTS**

Doctoral thesis summary

PhD Advisor,

Professor Constantin Dram, PhD

PhD Student,

Mădălina Ceciuleac

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The doctoral thesis entitled “The Deconstruction of Political Discourses in Modern Dramatic Texts” investigates the status of political discourse in the playwrights of Ion Luca Caragiale, Tudor Muşatescu, Eugène Ionesco, Matei Vişniec, and Vlad Zografi. Starting from the observation that the political discourses present in the selected playwrights’ plays represent a form of questioning Power and discursive hegemony, the present study uses the conceptual and methodological tools offered by modern rhetoric and poststructuralism to analyze the condition of the orator as a politician, the status and functions of political discourse, the collapse of logocentrism, and the emergence of orators abandoned by the verb in (post)dramatic theatre.

I. Theoretical Premise and Research Objectives:

Subordinated for centuries to the illusion that the political *logos* reflects an objective reality, the (post)modern theatrical stage metamorphoses from a space of representation into a tribunal of power that problematizes the human condition in the world (from the deconstruction of the orator’s status in Ionesco, to the condemnation of the spectator in Vişniec) and the hegemony of discourse (from Foucault’s meta-discursivity to the specters of Power and the disintegration of the political and textual center in Derrida). Thus, the present

study aims to radiograph the mechanisms through which Romanian and European drama deconstructs the functions of political discourse, highlighting its conditions of production and functioning (exceptions, limits, and prohibitions according to the model conceived by Foucault in *The Order of Discourse*).

The central objective of the thesis consists in demonstrating that, represented on stage, political language loses its objective referent, becoming an autonomous machinery that captivates, controls, and ultimately annihilates the human subject (from the orators abandoned by the verb in Caragiale and Ionesco, to the orators killed by words in Vişniec). A constant that traverses the approach is the denunciation of political discourse in the analyzed authors' texts as a microphysics of power in the Foucauldian sense, which transforms it into an instrument of coercion and communication annihilation. The politician is no longer a bearer of the (ultimate) truth, but an architect of the simulacrum, translated most often into the hypostasis of a Panopticon in which the characters are captive (the dramatic space as obstacle, limit, and politically staged incarceration).

II. Methodological Framework: Regarding the methodology used, our investigation appeals to the theories

of discourse analysis conjoined with poststructuralism, theatrical semiotics, and modern rhetoric. The main reading instrument is the deconstruction theorized by Jacques Derrida, through which the dramatic text is read as a differential network, and the *logos* of power is exposed as a *pharmakon* that conceals and stages the presence of Power. This perspective is completed by the appeal to Michel Foucault's texts on power and discourse, especially *The Order of Discourse*, *The Order of Things*, and *Discipline and Punish*. On a complementary analytical level, the research assimilates J.L. Austin's speech act theory (*How to Do Things with Words*) to evaluate the performativity of utterances, as well as the status of stage directions in the analyzed dramatic texts (from the extensive pages of directorial indications in Caragiale to the austerity of stage directions in Vlad Zografi).

Regarding the organization of the subchapters belonging to the first part of the study, we follow the construction of a hermeneutic apparatus that transitions from speech act theory to discursive archaeology and the topographies of power (Foucault's *Panopticon* and *heterotopias*), up to Derridean dissemination. However, we did not stop at a mere overview, but integrated this

instrumentarium into an operational reading grid, testing and applying the concepts to specific dramatic situations, scenic architectures, and character typologies. Among the important examples of this exercise are: decoding the recognition scene in *The Bald Soprano* as a failure of the *archive* in the sense given by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, reading the spaces of political captivity as directed Panopticons (from the Smiths' living room to the waiting rooms in Vişniec's theatre), as well as interpreting the *lost letter*, the Ionescian chairs, or the colonel's photograph in *The Killer* in a Derridean key, as *supplements* and *traces* of an absent or deliberately staged referent.

III. Structure and Thematics of the Chapters: The analytical trajectory begins with the analysis of Caragiale's drama under the metaphor of journalistic clipping, a fact also supported by the specialized literature dedicated to the Romanian playwright. Thus, in the subchapters dedicated to the analysis of Caragiale's orators (Farfuridi, Caţavencu, Agamemnon Dandanache), we propose a theatrical semiotics interpretation of the discourses performed in *A Lost Letter*, highlighting the modernity and intuition of the theatre of the absurd (Farfuridi, a possible spiritual father of the Ionescian Mute Orator). In Caragiale's case, the political discourse is

no longer treated as an exercise in demagoguery and blackmail, but as a symptom of oratorical bankruptcy, as an alienated condition of the self abandoned by the ordering verb (without the silence of the opposition and without using the letter as an instrument of blackmail, neither Farfuridi nor Cațavencu can enter the *order of discourse* conceived by Foucault).

Applying Wayne C. Booth's grid to characters such as Traian Necșulescu from *Titanic Waltz*, the research advances towards the analysis of political games behind the curtain in Tudor Mușatescu's theatre. In the hands of the politicians from the ...*Escu* family, the political discourse oscillates between acts of absolute sincerity (Spirache Necșulescu) and behaviors of acute parvenuism (Decebal and Traian Necșulescu).

Crossing the experience of interwar drama, the investigation reaches the aesthetics of the theatre of the absurd, where Eugène Ionesco formulates the imperative of the re-theatricalization of the (dramatic) word. In the chapter dedicated to Ionesco's theatre, we analyze the transition from rhetorical simulacrum to a radical, ontological devaluation of language (the word-noise that alienates, leads to murder in *The Lesson*). This stage of the research maps the collapse of reason and the establishment of wooden language,

and of the mechanisms that annihilate critical thinking, paving the way for tyranny (*Rhinoceros*, *The Killer*). Ionesco deconstructs the figure of the providential leader (the orator in *The Chairs* or the headless politician in *The Leader*), demonstrating that the discourse of power stages and controls reality (from the plague-stricken city to the Smiths' living room, all spaces become a Panopticon).

In the final stage, the study analyzes the contemporary theatrical poetics of Matei Vişniec and Vlad Zografi, which problematize the de-composition of language and the de-dramatization of the post-absurd theatre. In this section, political discourse is defined as an engineering of memory, an oppressive machinery that operates in the regime of *hyperreality* (Baudrillard). The politician becomes a mere mouthpiece of alienation, an interchangeable individual (like the clown who takes over the identity and props of the corpse to continue the show in *Old Clown Wanted*). Contemporary theatre illustrates how the instrumentalization of myths and the confiscation of historical figures generate invisible dictatorships, in which citizens internalize their own oppression. The discourse is no longer an external instrument, but a weapon that penetrates the intimate structure of the individual, killing the meaning and substituting the

contingent reality with ideological fictions. The collapse of textual power centers signifies precisely the absolute domination of an autarchic language: characters no longer confront flesh-and-blood tyrants, but try to survive the aggression of “words that kill,” in a space where human identity has been completely erased.

If Vişniec practices an anti-totalitarian theatre in which he disenchants the nostalgias and illusions of the communist utopia, Zografi builds a theatre of ideas, profoundly metadramatic, which survives only within the frameworks of scenic representation and functions as an instrument of epistemological dissection. Beyond the illusion of representation, the stage conceived by Zografi reveals itself to be an archive in the strict Foucauldian sense: not as an inert deposit or an abandoned mechanism, but the space of exposing the system of rules that dictates the formation, limits, and authority of power discourses.

In light of this hermeneutic excursus, the present research shows that (post)modern drama functions as an anatomy of the invisible dictatorship of language. In the general conclusions of the work, we resort to the Ionescian metaphor of the doorbell that no longer announces a human presence, but confirms an absurd void to synthesize the status

of discursivity, the rupture of the referent, the ontological alienation of speakers (the discourse, as a mechanism emptied of meaning, becomes an arbitrary sequence of letters as in *The Story of the Panda Bears Told by a Saxophonist Who Has a Girlfriend in Frankfurt*). Thus, beyond the unmasking of ideological lies or the technological Panopticon, our thesis attests that the contemporary *logos* regresses into an oppressive mechanism, completely emptied of meaning, which announces the symptoms of the ontic (dramatic) exhaustion of the word (the disarticulated alphabet and political discourse as an arbitrary sequence of letters in Ionesco and Vişniec). Deconstructed, cut out, in fragments, the political discourses in the literary works of the analyzed playwrights are spoken either by mute orators or by politicians with autarchic tendencies. From Ionesco to Zografi, power is examined both in its explicit forms (providential leaders, enlightened tsars) and in its invisible, microphysical zones (Meyerhold's mind turned into a theatre stage, battlefield, interrogation room in Vişniec, or the disparate/fabricated memories in *All Your Minds* in Zografi).