

**THE TRAGIC EXPERIENCE IN TIM CROUCH'S
POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE**

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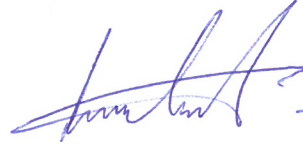
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December 2020

DENİZLİ

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Kadriye Bozkurt', written in a cursive style.

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ÖZET

TIM CROUH'UN POSTDRAMATİK TİYATROSUNDA TRAJİK DENEYİM

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Yirminci ve yirmi birinci yüzyıllarda tiyatrodaki yeni yaklaşımları ve toplumsal değişimleri irdelediğimizde, Alman Tiyatro uzmanı ve kuramcı Hans-Thies Lehmann'ın da belirttiği üzere, tiyatronun yeni bir özerklik kazandığı ve bağımsız estetik teknikler geliştirdiği görülmektedir. Çağdaş dönemde konu, biçim ve temsil açısından tiyatrodaki deneyimsel yaklaşımlar ve yenilikler katlanarak artmıştır. Bu değişimler savaşlardan terör, şiddet, aile içi şiddet, göç, istismar, sömürü, tüketim ve metalaşmaya değin çeşitlenen çağdaş insanın trajik sorunlarının sahnelenebilmesi için köklü tragedya kavramına yeni yorumlar getirilmesini gerekli kılmıştır. Trajedi dramatik tiyatrodan kendisini arındırarak ve performans sanatı, ritualistik sahne ve kurgusal olmayan temsil şekli keşfederek varlığını yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Oyun yazarları bazı prensipleri terk etmiş ve trajedi için geleneksel biçimlerin ve bilindik sahneleme yöntemlerinin ötesine geçen başka yeni olasılıklar üzerinde durmuşlardır.

Çağdaş teoriler, Lehmann'ın postdramatik tiyatro ve postdramatik trajedi teorileri gibi, tiyatronun gelişimine yönelik teorik yaklaşımlar ve taze fikirler ortaya koymuş, ayrıca çağdaş insanın trajik durumunu anlamaya katkı sağlamışlardır. Benzer şekilde, deneyimsel tiyatronun ustası olarak adlandırılan İngiliz oyun yazarı Tim Crouch, oyunlarını bilindiğin dışında bir estetik tavır ile yazmış ve geleneksel yazımın olasılıklarını sorunsallaştırarak 'trajik kavramı' üzerinde durmuştur. Bu bağlamda, bu tezin amacı Lehmann'ın postdramatik teorileri ve çağdaş trajik yazın üzerine geliştirilen farklı fikirlerin ışığında Crouch'un geleneksel olmaktan uzak oyunlarında trajik motifin ve trajik deneyimin nasıl işlendiğini açığa çıkarmaktır. Crouch'un yetişkin seyirciler için yazdığı *My Arm* (2003), *An Oak Tree* (2005), *ENGLAND* (2007) ve *The Author* (2009) oyunları bu tezde incelenmek için seçilmiş olan oyunlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Trajik kavramı, Trajik deneyim, Deneyimsellik, Postdramatik Tiyatro, Tim Crouch.

ABSTRACT

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BOZKURT, Kadriye

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While investigating the new approaches to theatre and the changes in society in the twenty and the twenty first centuries, it can be clearly seen that, as German theatre scholar and theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann states, theatre develops a new autonomy and independent artistic practice. In the contemporary era, the experimentalism and novelties in theatre are multiplied in terms of subjects, forms and representation. These changes require new interpretations for the grand tragedy concept in order to enact the tragic issues of contemporary people varying from wars, terror, violence, domestic violence, immigration, abuse, exploitation and consumerism to materialization. Tragedy reforms itself by divorcing from dramatic theatre and by rediscovering the power of the performance art, ritualistic stage and nonfictional representation. Playwrights abandon some principles and dwell on other new possibilities for tragedy that goes beyond the conventional forms and familiar staging.

Contemporary theories on theatre and tragedy, like Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre and postdramatic tragedy, bring fresh ideas and theoretical approaches for the development of theatre and the also contribute to the understanding the tragic condition of contemporary people. Similarly, known as the master of the experimental theatre, English playwright Tim Crouch writes his plays in very unfamiliar aesthetics and he touches the 'concept of tragic' by problematizing possibilities of the traditional writing. In this sense, this dissertation aims to explore the ways the tragic motif and tragic experience are treated in Crouch's unconventional plays under the light of Lehmann's postdramatic theories as well as different ideas developed in contemporary tragic writings. Crouch's plays for the adult audience *My Arm* (2003), *An Oak Tree* (2005), *ENGLAND* (2007) and *The Author* (2009) are chosen to be analyzed in this dissertation.

Key Words: Concept of Tragic, Tragic Experience, Experimentalism, Postdramatic Theatre, Tim Crouch.

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INTRODUCTION

Life is not only full of miracles, but it also appears as a very sophisticated phenomenon in front of human beings embracing happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain, hope and disappointment altogether. For ages, human beings have been experiencing these dichotomies and striving at giving a meaning to their unstable lives and to their existence in the universe. In this exploration process, they have begun to discover themselves and their relation to the world, and theatre as a mean has benefited from the human explorations and has become an artistic mirror reflecting and experiencing the changing human lives, emotions and tastes. As Ronald Harwood asserts:

The theatre is one of man's ingenious compromises with himself. In it he performs and entertains, shows off and amuses himself. (...) The theatre can be controversial or reassuring, subversive or conservative, diverting or enlightening: if it chooses, it can be all of these, and more. (...) More important, in creating that special atmosphere it is able to provoke deep, often subconscious emotions, and to embody those drives and forces in the human mind which set both individuals and society most at risk. (1984: 13.)

Theatre which is preliminarily produced to exhibit the human actions and emotions mimetically takes its subjects from life and from the implicit or explicit feelings, pains and desires of human beings in addition to the imagination of the writer. Theatre, at first, is subdivided into two basic genres as tragedy and comedy in relation to their themes, characters, form and diction. Tragedies are written to reveal the noble characters' conflicts, sufferings, unfortunate fates and tragic fall, and comedies are written to expose the comic events and more private matters with plebeian characters. Greek philosopher and theorist Aristotle (384 BC -322 BC) in his theoretical work *Poetics* (335 BC) defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament" (2008: 8), and a change in hero's fate from fortune to misfortune. By means of the tragic life of the chosen noble hero, tragedy aims to present an insight and some ready-made didactic messages for the audience that should be learned by them passively.

From its prototypes of tragedy in Ancient Greek to today's tragic writing, countless tragic stories have been issued and innumerable tragic heroes have been ruined because of several internal and external factors, however, not all the time the tragic motif, the formal structure and the narrative styles have remained the same to reveal the

destruction of the tragic heroes. Defined as “suffering extreme distress or sorrow” (Oxford Dictionaries), the term ‘tragic’ explains an event, a condition or feeling, and its representation in theatre exists and persists across the ages. As Lehmann emphasises, “it has found different forms of expression at different times. However, modulated, tragic experience returns again and again” (2016: 411). Changes like the inclusion of comic elements, representation of ordinary man as tragic hero, rearrangement of transgression as the new tragic motif and valuation of performativity, multiple codes, discontinuity and nonlinearity in plotline, deformation in language, anti-mimetics, heterogeneity, non-textuality and pluralism widen and reform the scope of tragic writing.

German theatre researcher and theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann’s (1944-) landmark books *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) and *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* (2016) are applied as the reference books since the ideas on postdramatic theatre and tragedy are mostly the determiners for the contemporary theatre aesthetics. Lehmann focuses on the years 1960s when theatre “develops a new autonomy and independent artistic practice” (2006: 50). He clearly explains his claims about the necessity of postdramatic theatre in the contemporary theatrical landscape because “the theatre can no longer be reduced to the dramatic paradigm that dominated between the Renaissance and the emergence of the historical avant-gardes” (Lehmann, 2016: 13). Searching for theatre’s development from the antiquity to the contemporary age, Lehmann clearly asserts that dramatic theatre “in the course of the twentieth century, reached a limit and led to the postdramatic present” (410). That is to say, what is called as tragic motif is not unchangeable and definite; on the contrary, its content is shaped according to the current time and culture. This study dwells on the important ideas and theories asserted about tragedy and tragic concept with an attempt to manifest the ongoing struggles, sorrows, sufferings, pains, ruins and fall of the contemporary people. In Lehmann’s postdramatic tragedy, postdramatic aesthetics and tragic experiences of contemporary people intertwine with each other, and this dissertation aims to exhibit that certain strategies presented in his theory are very suitable for revealing the tragic condition of people, which can clearly be observed in the selected plays of Tim Crouch, too.

Centring upon the growth of tragic events and circumstances in contemporary tragic writings, in this dissertation British playwright Tim Crouch’s plays are put under the scope for detailed examples. Crouch is one of the most sophisticated and prominent experimental playwrights of the contemporary British playwriting. Also known as an

“English experimental theatre master” (Brown, 2016: par 1), Crouch’s plays written for both adult and child audience open new directions for theatricality. Stephen Bottoms emphasizes his daring nature by saying “I can think of no other contemporary playwright who has asked such a compelling set of questions about theatrical form, narrative content and spectatorial engagement” (Crouch, 2011a: IV). Crouch is a highly versatile theatre maker because he can be an actor, a writer and also a director at the same time. In this way he can use every alternative way to generate new possibilities for narrating and staging. His plays challenge the conventional frames by creating an atmosphere of scepticism in every sense, and they break the perception of realism. Jake Orr’s statement clearly shows the true nature of Crouch’s theatricality:

Crouch’s plays are unique in their ability to test and discover new ways in which a play can interact with its conventions of staging, and interaction with audience and actor alike. They are poetic and heartfelt, completely believable and full of imaginative qualities that take the reader into the centre of the performance, allowing them to nestle between language and form and find a home amongst Crouch’s words. (2011: par 8).

Writing unfamiliar, experimental plays benefitting from all elements of theatre and from other genres/medias as well, Crouch is seen as an expert in catching the spirit of the time. He takes inspiration from his real-life experiences and his observations of others’ lives and transfers these materials on stage. The contemporary tragic issues and the struggles of contemporary people are revealed by the strategies of postdramatic theatre; which means that his certain plays can bring together the tragic experience and aesthetic experience on stage by emphasising the current status of the unfortunate contemporary people.

In contemporary world, life is fragmented, and identities are dismantled; for that reason, new writing does not ask for linearity, logicity and continuation in plot to represent the tragic condition of the contemporary people. George Steiner, literary critic and philosopher, denominates this time as the “post-linguistic era” (qtd. in Angelaki, 2013: 80) in which language turns into an illegitimate, unspeakable and distrustful structure. Similarly, the postdramatic theory celebrates new dimensions of theatricality which make available any attempts to challenge the text-oriented theatre and the established rules. As the postdramatic theory highlights, contemporary tragic writings welcome the audience with a very unexpected experience in theatre, blurring fiction and reality, textuality and performative practices, dialogues and monologues, the existence of actor, playwright and character and the space as stage and auditorium. In the

presentation of tragic issues, simultaneous signs, dream images, authentic representation and shared experience are benefitted from with the intention of functionalising the tragic experience on those who witness the tragic events and moments as observers or participants. Any certain hierarchy is problematized in order to produce collaborative, shared and an authentic experience by giving active participation for all elements of theatre.

Combining the aestheticism of theatricality with the themes from personal experiences and social realities in contemporary age, tragedy reinvents itself by divorcing from dramatic theatre and rediscovering the power of the performance art, ritualistic stage and nonfiction presentation. Contemporary tragic writing shows the temperamental nature of the tragic concept considering time, place and people; and unfolding the tragic experiences of the actors and the audience. Tragic writing has its share from the novelties, experimentalism and intermediality of the contemporary theatre. As Jen Harvie and Dan Rebellato say:

Theatre has taken its place within a broad spectrum of performance, connecting it with the wider forces of ritual and revolt that thread through so many spheres of human culture. In turn, this has helped make connections across disciplines; over the past fifty years, theatre and performance have been deployed as key metaphors and practices with which to rethink gender, economics, war, language, the fine arts, culture and one's sense of self. (qtd. in Reid, 2013: VII.)

German literary theorist Walter Benjamin asserts that tragedy/tragic writing “articulates a representation of tragic experience in different epochs under different “constellations” (qtd. in Lehmann, 2016: 4), and the new modern and postmodern developments and changes activate the fluid nature of the tragic to adjust the practices and discourses of the contemporary period.

While investigating the tragic experience and its current appearance in contemporary writing, many approaches and ideas of many theorists and literary men such as Aristotle, Hegel, Peter Szondi, Friedrich Nietzsche, Terry Eagleton, Bertolt Brecht, Roland Barthes, Antonin Artaud, Jacques Derrida, Howard Barker, George Steiner, Raymond Williams and John Orr provide guidance in unearthing the roots of the tragic concept and in unfolding the evolution in the content and form of the tragic writing. Both the controversial place of the tragedy in contemporary writing and the new interpretations for tragic concept necessitate a retrospective look for the certain periods of time when the formal and contextual rules of tragedy have been determined. The Ancient period is one of these periods in which the magnificent ancient tragedies were

written by great writers Aeschylus (525 BC–456 BC), Sophocles (496 BC- 406 BC) and Euripides (480 BC-406 BC) and the rules of tragedy were formulated by Aristotle in his book *Poetics*. The tragedies written by Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the Renaissance period bring the golden age of the tragedy in British Theatre. The Neoclassical period which is thought to be the revival of the Classical period also provides a passage to the modern period as in the examples of the neoclassical plays by Racine and Corneille.

The new ideas and the unconventional writing styles spread their seeds at the end of the nineteenth century when drama is seen as “in a state of crisis” (Carroll, Jürs-Munby, Giles, 2013: 13) in the framework of the traditional perspective. The impelling changes in the society affect every field and every individual; the unavoidable sovereignty of capitalism, the rise of modernism, the economic crises, the unfair income distribution, the prevailing world wars, the loss of hopes and beliefs leave certain marks in human life. Following the challenge to rationalism and positivism; relative thoughts, individuality, plurality and symbolic representations are accompanied by avant-garde movements that shake the notion of the reality and open huge doors to relativity, imagination and interpretation. The second half of the twentieth century, a new theatrical tradition initiated by the playwrights John Osborne with his play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and Samuel Beckett with *Waiting for Godot* (1953), come into prominence questioning and shattering all the past forms of theatre. In 1960s, there are many forms written with this new spirit from documentary theatre to Epic Theatre to reflect the experiences of World War II, traumas of war, scepticism, annihilation of people and the loss of hope. Therefore, this new contemporary and experimental theatrical attitude generates “confrontational and provocative plays” (Middeke, Schnierer, Sierz, 2011: IX) in order to convey personal or communal ideologies.

It should be emphasised that even though the word “tragedy” sustains its serious meaning related to the classical tradition of tragedy, in the contemporary period ‘tragedy’ mostly refers to the tragic moments and tragic events people experience. Various theatrical approaches and sensibilities are introduced to reflect the contemporary life, and the status of contemporary people in this sophisticated environment is carried to the stage with different experimental techniques. As a kind of breath-taking experience in theatre, In-Yer-Face theatre appears as a new sensibility for British theatre by smashing the boundaries and the taboos of the conventional theatre. Anthony Neilson, Mark Ravenhill and Sarah Kane make their audiences shocked with

their bold and violent plays written with this new experimental approach. At the end of 1990s, new playwrights like Joe Penhall, Jez Butterworth and Martin McDonagh bring a new breath for British theatre by opening new dimensions for theatricality. Moreover, the twenty first century is the new millennium when the newness and experimentalism in playwriting are multiplied in terms of subjects, forms and creativity with important playwrights like Tim Crouch, Simon Stephens, Debbie Tucker Green and Lucy Kirkwood. The subjects vary from wars, terror, family, domestic life, violence, migration, abuse and globalization to multiculturalism which are written beyond the conventional forms and familiar staging.

Crouch's selected plays in this dissertation reveal these tragedies of the contemporary people and convey the darker, traumatic and self-questioning atmosphere by diving the hidden secret feelings of the audience. Being a powerful voice to expose hidden and invisible tragic feelings of people, Crouch writes his certain plays with the aim of "exploring a darker world" and difficult place (Keating, 2017: par 6). His plays written for the adult audience are *My Arm* staged at the Traverse Theatre 2003, *An Oak Tree* premiered at the Traverse Theatre in 2005, *ENGLAND* played at The Fruitmarket Gallery in 2007, and *The Author* staged at the Royal Court Theatre in 2009. In these plays, Crouch explores many themes from cultural identity, child abuse, self-alienation, discrimination, violence, existentialism to traumas. His first play *My Arm* tells the story of a young boy who insists on raising of his arm above his head and keeps it there, resulting in a serious health problem for him. While displaying the psychological, physical and artistic developments of the boy, Crouch uses unfamiliar, radical staging techniques by using randomly selected everyday objects as the characters on stage.

The other play *An Oak Tree* unfolds the story of a father who loses his daughter in a car accident. Thematically, this play reveals trauma, exposure, guilt, shame and the pain of loss and death. Each performance of this play features a new unprepared actor in the role of father directed by Crouch who acts also as the hypnotist on stage. *ENGLAND* is a play written to be performed in a gallery and it offers a story on heart transplantation. The play also reveals the relationship between moral and aesthetic values, and relationship between the different nationalities of the world. *The Author* is another shocking and also highly disturbing play on child abuse, and it is new for the audience in terms of acting and staging. The play is acted among the audience, and the action of the play is surprising and unpredictable. Each of Crouch's plays stands out with their original stories, unconventional techniques and collaborative performances

and the selected plays in this study expose the tragic events that are staged with the new writing strategies and performing techniques. These plays are crucial in terms of presenting the evolving nature of the grand tragedy tradition that changes into the narratives/performances of the tragic events/circumstances of ordinary people in the contemporary period.

CHAPTER ONE

TRAGEDY AND TRAGIC EXPERIENCE

1.1. Discussions on Tragic and Tragedy

The new writing tradition which started in the twentieth century onwards, has created a suspicion for ancestral past forms and contents, and brought new aspects and styles to theatrical writings and performances. Especially in the modern and postmodern periods, deconstruction and reconstruction of the all-grand narratives and their challenge with new writing styles lead tragedy as one of the grand genres to be questioned. Tragedy, being one of the earliest and universal literary genres, has been in existence throughout the history as a powerful, serious, tragic play of high status. It is possible to witness tragedy's glamour and sovereignty in many ways in literature. It appeared as a pure tragic theatrical narrative in Ancient Greece, it was coloured by new tragic motifs in the Renaissance period, it was regenerated as the rewritings of the past tragedies in the Neoclassical period, and it has undertaken a multidimensional tragic representation in the modern and postmodern periods. Even this highly serious theatrical form that was set over philosophy and history by Greek philosopher and theorist Aristotle (384 BC -322 BC) receives an insecure place in contemporary literature and its basis shatters because of the continuing debates.

The strong historical roots of tragedy and its development in the course of time add new characteristics to tragedy and present a wide and new literary field to be studied by many philosophers, theorists and philologists. For that reason, various ideas are put forward on its historical past and current status. The survival of tragedy is supported by many ideas that search for the existence of tragedy in modern and postmodern world as in the book *Modern Tragedy* (1966) by Raymond Williams or *Tragic Drama and Modern Society* (1981) by John Orr, and the extinction of tragedy is supported by the announcements of tragedy's death as in the books like *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) by Friedrich Nietzsche or *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) by George Steiner. So many challenging ideas lead philologists and theorists to rethink on the essence of tragedy and to re-evaluate this genre. Even the supporters of the survival of tragedy sometimes have difficulty in agreeing in all hands on the theory of tragedy. In the process of vindication for tragedy's existence in postmodern world and of preserving its well-deserved place some support promoting the necessity of classical frames for tragedy and tend to evaluate tragedy in the light of

Aristotelian concept while others suggest an independent formula for tragedy in accordance with the contemporary necessities and theatrical concepts.

Ideas on tragedy in contemporary period is crucial because as in the remarks of German literary man and theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann underlines (1944-) “the tragic does not exist without tragedy as its mode of theatricalization” (2016: 4). Although this new blurry atmosphere of this era triggers the discussions on tragedy that even goes to two opposite poles from its survival to its death, clearly the tragic experiences of contemporary people necessitate the writings on the tragic events and their representations on stage. Just like the past times, contemporary world is also unfortunately surrounded by distressful and sorrowful events and people cannot get rid of the tragic fate created by their own hands or by the outer forces. As Lehmann suggests, “it is remarkable that ancient tragedies already thematized suffering concretely, and even simply: as pain, separation, aging, the loss of a child, the fear of death and so on. It did not occur for the first time” (46). Tragic events are still at work and affect people’s lives deeply. As depicted by Tim Crouch in his plays, contemporary people struggle with the similar tragic issues and suffer from many different reasons that bring them sorrow and pain. While dealing with the existential quest in *My Arm* or the pain of death in *An Oak Tree*, Crouch underlines the continual tragic motifs that have always taken place in human life.

If one of the essences of tragedy ‘the tragic motif’ still exists, so why are there so many discussions on tragedy writing today? Why are contemporary peoples’ tragic experiences suspiciously approached? And why do theorists produce ideas about death of tragedy in an era which is abundant in tragic incidents? Answers for these key questions will also provide a rethinking for the challenges of tragedy. It is clear that the higher and serious nature of classical tragedy brings some suspects on the current status of tragic writings in postmodern era. The magnificence of ancient tragedy and the references of Aristotle probably intimidate some of them to define contemporary tragic writing as tragedy. Bert O. States successfully observes this condition and says “we have given tragedy an honorific status in confusing it so easily with vision; and that is why we cannot decide whether it is dead or alive: something like it is still around, but it doesn’t come in the right shape” (1992: 7). These obsessive ideas with the past formation of tragedy build a barrier to the possibilities of it in the contemporary era. Here what is ignored is the fact that tragedy does not occur independent from its time.

All constructions of tragedy have been affected by the changes in time in terms of their creations and developments. It will not be right to expect the same contents and forms

from tragedies that have been produced in Ancient Greek time, in Roman period, in Renaissance Italy, in Elizabethan time, in Enlightenment or in the contemporary era. They will not be the exact copy of one another since they are very special to their time and their people. Things never stay the same; time has passed, civilisations have fallen into pieces and new civilisations have been created, new continents have been discovered, new philosophies and beliefs have been developed. Societies, economics, politics, ideologies, have changed and inevitably, art and literature have changed, too. Therefore, these changes also penetrate the essence of tragedy; it has been influenced from the developments and then transformed itself in accordance with the necessities of its time. For instance, Christianity brought new beliefs to the pagan belief that affects the ideas concerning the afterlife, redemption and resurrection. This new religion affected the meaning of hope, suffering and salvation and relatively influenced components of tragedy that were originally written from the worldview of Ancient Greek paganism. Rationalism and secular societies challenged the religion, the divine power and all senses of the sacred that were the essences of classical tragedy. Industry, science and technology that surrounded the modern world demolished metaphysical beliefs at the core and inevitably caused huge economic, social and cultural changes in society. The reflections of these changes were represented in the nineteenth century drama with “the authentic, social realism, and naturalism” by abandoning “a concept of theatre as relational ritual and public event” (Foster, 2015: 224). Then the contemporary postmodern period has witnessed the ambiguity, annihilation and despair because of wars, terrorism, oppression and inhumanity. The fragmented minds of individuals, their hopelessness and alienations have found their place in the newly experimented theatrical approaches like epic theatre, theatre of cruelty, verbatim theatre, puppet theatre and then in the new experimental writings like In-Yer-Face theatre.

In the contemporary period any fixed and unidirectional ideas are questioned whereas the flexible and authentic ideas are celebrated, which makes any standard identification to tragedy can be very risky. The approach of Sevda Şener can be mediatory on the discussions of tragic and tragedy since she stresses that the term ‘tragedy’ is a kind of vested right for the tragic writing of the Ancient, Renaissance and Classical periods; yet, it will be more appropriate and acceptable to talk about tragic in Romantic, Realist and Modernist writings rather than tragedy (2016: 85). In the readings of ‘tragic’ motifs in the contemporary era, tragic turns into a more sophisticated and open-ended concept. This era is a process that covers postmodernist approach by deconstructing the dichotomises,

generalisations, definitions and so-called absolute truths and by celebrating subjectivity, multiplicity, obscurity and polyphony. These drastic changes in the life of people necessarily alter, to some extent, the form and content of tragedy since it is impossible to resist the natural flow of life. As it can be observed in Crouch's plays *My Arm*, *An Oak Tree*, *ENGLAND* and *The Author*, contemporary tragic writings diverge into the narratives on the pain, sorrows, traumas, fall and deaths of the ordinary people in contemporary world rather than following the path of the grand narratives of tragedy, and additionally new theatrical strategies are persistently experimented on stage for the creation of the multiple tragic experiences.

1.2. The Theory of Postdramatic Theatre and Tragedy

Being certainly aware of the richness of tragedy and the necessities of the contemporary period, Lehmann puts forward his theory on tragedy preserving its essential nature in this era. As one of the supporters of the survival of tragedy, he analyses it from many different perspectives by searching its historical, sociological and cultural basis as well as its literary basis. His theory helps determine a safe place for tragedy in modern and postmodern ages. In his books *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) and *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* (2016) Lehmann brings new interpretations for appreciation of theatre and tragedy in modern and postmodern world. As Karen Jürs-Munby asserts "Hans-Thies Lehmann's study has obviously answered a vital need for a comprehensive and accessible theory articulating the relationship between drama and the 'no longer dramatic' forms of theatre that have emerged since the 1970s" (qtd. in Lehmann, 2006: 1). Lehmann suggests the deconstruction of dramatic conventions considering many multifarious new writings from multimedia theatre to experimental performances, and then he centres his attention on the mixture of text and performance as a new theatrical aesthetics.

In his book, Lehmann clearly draws the boundaries of theatre giving specific examples from writers and categorizes it in three main titles. His approaches that develop under the name of postdramatic theatre successfully explain the nature of contemporary theatrical inclination; their divorce from the constraining of the past rules and the attempts to use components of theatre to their full extent. To Lehmann, "assuming the modern understanding of drama, one can say that the former is 'predramatic' that Racine's plays are undoubtedly dramatic theatre, and that Wilson's 'operas' have to be called 'postdramatic'" (34). His categorization indicates certain

characterizations of theatre that are peculiar to certain periods. Lehmann approaches tragedy in the same way and uses the same classification by suggesting that “the theory of tragedy must make its point of departure the distinction between predramatic, dramatic and postdramatic theatricality” (2016: 4). Lehmann knows “that the terrain of tragedy, a field difficult to navigate and well-travelled” (1), for that reason, he is highly attentive while drawing certain frames and determining certain rules for tragedies written in contemporary time.

It is a fact that the cultural and religious atmosphere of the contemporary time is far from the time of grand tragedies especially in terms of the position of human beings in the world and in front of the Divine powers. Modern and postmodern tragic writings reshape their own tragic discourse by revealing the status of humankind who put themselves to the centre; so, their interactions, their cultures, their sorrows and anything concerning human beings are highly precious. Relatively, the characterisation, the flow of action and the techniques of staging are organised around the human centred tragic narratives. As professor of theatre Theodore Grammatas states that “it is a multidimensional cultural product with aesthetic, philosophical, existential, social status, created in a specific place and time, under particular situations” (2015, par 17). Relatively, it would be fair to suggest that the tragic writings of the contemporary period cannot be unconcerned about the social, cultural or political discourses of the time and their form and content are shaped according to the requirements of the time and people. The attitude does not seem bizarre when Susan Sontag’s suggestion is taken into consideration in which she claims that “modern discussions of the possibility of tragedy are not exercises in literary analysis; they are exercises in cultural diagnostics, more or less disguised” (1967: 132).

Considering the deep and multi-layered experiences of contemporary people, in his postdramatic tragedy, Lehmann works on the concept of tragic concentrating on the togetherness of the aesthetic experience that is provided by the strategies of postdramatic theatre and the presence of tragic experience that is provided by the actor’s and the audience’s experience on stage. To analyse the creation of the required tragic effect in tragic writings, aesthetic experience benefits from any theatrical vehicle and formal structure that appeal to the appreciation and perception of the audience.

All aesthetic experience, without exception, depends on the *how* of representation; so-called content proves secondary at best. Therefore, tragic experience is not determined by the thematic motif of transgression – as if it were then just a matter of defining it – but rather by the ways and means whereby transgression achieves

representation, presentation, organization, segmentation and style – in brief: form (Lehmann, 2016: 144-145).

To Lehmann, aesthetic side of the tragic writing is crucial because the tragic experience can only be available when the tragic plot is unfolded through the true theatrical forms and proper representational strategies and props. In this way, aesthetic representation of the tragic plot will trigger the effect of tragic and the audience will observe this fictionally well-built tragic character with whom they experience and endure the tragic fall together.

John Orr also emphasizes the significance of aesthetic structures of tragic writings with the following words; “dramatically through the resources of the text and the stage, through the synchronised speech, movement and setting of the dramatic spectacle, then we possess that theatrical totality which is authentically tragic” (1989: XII). The same aesthetic concern can be seen in Roland Barthes’ definition of tragedy as “only a way of assembling human misfortune, of subsuming it, and thus of justifying it by putting it into the form of a necessity, of a kind of wisdom, or of a purification” (qtd. in Poole, 2005: 62). Tragedy, this grand genre, has been the ideal form for tragic by using the power of the words and theatrical devices for hundred years; and in contemporary world, it continues its survival in different ways from its past formulas, as it is also claimed in the theory of postdramatic tragedy. Feeling the crucial place of the aesthetic experience in revealing the tragic effect, Lehmann draws attention to the contemporary formulations of the theatre in the process of his theory of postdramatic theatre, then in his theory of postdramatic tragedy, Lehmann combines the contemporary formal aesthetic and the tragic experience. With Emma Cole’s words, Lehmann suggests “a modern-day home for tragic experience” (2019: 271).

The strategies of postdramatic tragedy are very compromising with contemporary theatre aesthetics since postdramatic tragedy opens the stage to all possibilities and challenges the standards with the intention of a true representation of tragedies of post-war human. As Lehmann says “tragedy is not literature. The focus grows too narrow when theories of the tragic discuss drama alongside the novel and other literary forms (or in terms of philosophy) but do not address the performative reality of acting and the theatrical situation” (2016: 119). After the post-war period, the performative sides of the theatre gain prominent. The general inclination is to depart from the fictional illusion and wholeness of dramatic theatre; playwrights invite their audiences to feel, to share and to be aware of the individual and communal sufferings

and sorrow. Postdramatic tragedy can be assumed to be a passport for these new inclinations to represent the contemporary suffering with contemporary art. As Peter A. Campbell suggests, this theatrical aesthetic refers to “contemporary theatrical performances that do not follow traditional or recognizable modes of dramatic structure” (2010: 55). So, the rigidness of the tragedy is lost in the grey atmosphere of the contemporary world.

Postdramatic aesthetics searches for the true definition of the theatricality of second half of the twentieth century and after. During this search, unlike the common inclination of some theorists, Lehmann does not categorise theatrical innovations regarding the historical periods, instead, he investigates the theatrical developments to make this separation. Apparently, the modernity and the modern drama progress independently from each other; for that reason, Lehmann does not prefer any definition of theatrical processes relating to the time sequences like modern or postmodern/after modern. While the other literary genres like novel or poem make an adaptable progress with historical periods and can be categorised as modern and postmodern, the theatre develops introspectively and “many of the features commonly identified as postmodernist in the other arts are in one sense or another ‘theatrical’; and they already have a long history in modernist theatre” (Drain, 1995: 8). So, rather than making a confusing chronological distinction for theatre, Lehmann directs his attention to the essence of theatre and the radical changes in it.

As Karen Jürs-Munby asserts, ‘postdramatic’ is a conscious term which can be used “as an alternative to the then ubiquitous term ‘postmodern theatre’ in order to describe how a vast variety of contemporary forms of theatre and performance had departed not so much from the ‘modern’ as from ‘drama’” (qtd. in Lavender, 2016: 23). So, the prefix ‘post’ is not generated regarding modern or postmodern culture; but this prefix ‘post’ indicates “a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and are in many ways an analysis and ‘anamnesis’ of drama” (Lehmann, 2006: 2). This is very similar with Julie Sanders’ “after tragedy” concept that is used to define certain tragic writings of modern and postmodern period. Just like the prefix ‘post’ which points out the novelties and experimentalism in theatre in Lehmann’s postdramatic theory, the prefix ‘after’ here refers to “finding new angles and new routes into something, new perspectives on the familiar, and these new angles, routes, and perspectives in turn identify entirely novel possibilities” (Leighton, 2014: 61).

The second half of the twentieth century, as in the Western theatre in general, has provided a new path for the English theatre. The new experimental writing sensibility refreshes the spirit of the theatre, provides new opportunities to search for new ways of representations and alternative narrative styles. Contemporary plays have been embroidered by novelty, diversity and plurality to the highest level, adding more and more to the historical avant-garde movements and theatrical aesthetics. Lehmann reveals his observations about the fading forms and styles followed by many literary men like Shakespeare, Corneille, Racine, Ibsen and Strindberg in this period, because the twentieth century theatrical practices necessitate a new formulation of theatricality with all its components. The new theatre aesthetics in form, style, acting and staging is theorized under the name of ‘postdramatic theatre’ by Lehmann as he focuses on “the amalgamation of drama and theatre” (2006: 48) to present different discursive formations. This approach challenges the traditional dramatic theatre which exalts the fictional world created by well-designed plot and meticulously chosen words and puts all the theatrical devices in primary status. In this sense, postdramatic theatre is thought as an intersection of the dramatic textuality and theatrical visuality, because postdramatic theatre aesthetics is neither a total rejection of dramatic features at all, nor the complete continuation of its practices. It equally cares for all the components of theatre from the text to performer, from director to designer, from scenography to music and light. So, describing this change as “the shift to the postdramatic” (2016: 121), Lehmann suggests in his postdramatic theatre that certain out-of-date, mimetic, textual practices of the dramatic theatre are set aside, thus, this theory embraces the newly born creative theatrical aesthetics with unconventional, non-mimetic, heterogenous, deformative and performative elements.

In the playwrights’ search of new ways to transmit their messages to their audiences; alongside the written words, music, dance, stage props and nonverbal movements, and any theatrical elements, all of which were put into secondary positions for tragic formulations once, are now used for producing of alternative narratives. This autonomic unity of text and stage that can be defined as *parataxis/non-hierarchy* requires shared authority and “free combinations of all theatrical signs” (Lehmann, 2006: 59). Here, American avant-garde theatre’s pioneer, director and playwright Richard Foreman’s idea on theatre is very descriptive for many contemporary plays and it is also very close to the postdramatic aesthetics. Known for his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, Foreman states that:

The playing space is an environment for the text to explore, a gymnasium for a psychic, spiritual, and physical work-out. It's an exercise room, a factory, an examination room, and a laboratory. (...) All the materials we find available in the theatre should be thrown together in full polymorphous play. Curtains, scenery, moving platforms, lights, noises, bodies- all add complexity to the stage space (1995: 68).

Postdramatic aesthetics one more time reminds us that the 'theatre' as a literary genre differs from other branches like the novel, poem or essay; in its presentation of the live performance in front of its audiences combining visual, audial and narrative elements on stage. As Lehmann emphasises "we may grasp the actuality of tragic experience in a way that goes beyond inherited notions of tragedy as a literary form; more precisely, we have the opportunity to examine the alloy constituted by the tragic and tragedy-*as-concrete-theatrical-praxis*" (2016: 120). Theatre uses its advantageous features of having the physicality and live interaction with its addressee. Especially the performative elements are brought more into view in postdramatic aesthetics. By presenting authentic performances and Happening¹, postdramatic theatre includes reality, simultaneity and event/situation on stage to make "the theatre closer to real life" (Styan, 1981b: 164). The theatre does not appear as the fictional production as a whole, but as an art very close to the real life in its fragmented structure, real experiences and representation of the moment with presentation of "here and now effect" (Sugiera, 2004: 21). In accordance with the original characteristics of the theatre, Lehmann defines postdramatic theatre by celebrating the "appearance instead of plot action, performance instead of representation" (2006: 58). This is also indicative of concrete theatricality that gives more chance for the actor and the audience to experience the real moments at theatre, additionally, changing the status of the actor as well as the audience.

The domination of the dramatic theatre which can also be labelled as the 'writer's theatre' (Furse, 2011: V) is unsettled since all the theatrical elements are expected to work on stage with a shared duty with textual side of the play. The convention of well-made play that has a logical storyline interwoven with a beginning, a climax or a well-defined ending has lost its priority. The illusion of dramatic theatre is shattered by "all motifs of discontinuity, collage and montage, decomposition of narration, speechlessness and withdrawal of meaning shared by the absurd and the postdramatic theatre" (Lehmann, 2006: 54). For certain, the textuality of the dramatic theatre is not

¹ 'Happenings' named by Allan Kaprow in 1959 refers to a kind of improvised performance that eliminates the barriers between fictional space and real space, the audience and the actors, stage and auditorium.

abandoned at all and the postdramatic aesthetics benefits from symbols, images, dreamworlds, patches, montages and intertextuality of this textual fictional writings to create alternative worlds on stage. As Anna Furse stresses, in many contemporary plays, “the play-writer-director-actor sequence that traditionally informs a rehearsal ‘from page to stage’ is broken by a range of directed and self-directed approaches that have led to performance, and then a text that is consequently possible to publish” (2011: V). There are many contemporary plays which are completed after the collaborative works and brainstorming methods in theatre workshops and rehearsals. Postdramatic aesthetics is open for the idea that “theatre can either be the consequence of ‘staging a play’ or “the culmination of research towards of making” (Ibid). Now the actor does not act like a puppet directed by the written text or by the instructions of the director but rather she/he becomes a contributor to this process who actively reveals her/his experiences through the performances and adds it to the final status of the play. Moreover, the audience participates in this process being active during the performance. Observations of Susan Bennett clearly underlines the scarcity of available text in contemporary theatre, and she delivers the current theatrical practices with these words; “in the explosion of new venues, companies, and performance methods, there is a non-traditional theatre which has recreated a flexible actor–audience relationship and a participatory spectator/actor” (1997: 19).

The development of the theatre from the beginning to the end of the second half of the twentieth century demonstrates the new elastic, cooperative and de-hierarchized elements of the theatre and possible ways of narrative and representation. The deviation in the representational styles such as in the episodic plot, real and surreal scenes, loose and nonlinear narration, open ended stories, nonunified characterisation, short cut dialogues or monologues or even meaningless words distance these modes of contemporary theatre to the established dramatic conventions. Peter A. Campbell summarises this situation:

Postdramatic structure highlights the interruption and fragmentation of story and character and is rarely concerned with following along or even reinventing the structure of the narrative. Instead, it leaves those fragments and interruptions in the liminal space of the performance, just as multiple forms of information and narrative come to us through the burgeoning, mediated ether. In this sense, it is arguably a more effective representation of the contemporary human experience: the fleeting, fragmented moment, the brief and sudden inspiration, and, inevitably, the terrors of existence (2010: 68).

These dramatic changes and newness in the storyline, narrative style and textuality require and cause a reformulation of the status of the actors and the audience on stage/in theatre. Contemporary performances no longer expect their actors to react empathically to the written character since these plays do not present any neatly created characters with whom the actors or the audience can bear empathy. These characters, to Şener, are purposely not identified morally and psychologically, but in many tragic writings they appear as the representatives of trapped, scared, destructed human beings in the unknown mechanism of society and universe (2016: 69). Post-war characters find themselves in an existential inertia in an unmeaningful dehumanized world surrounded by wars, terror and death. As in Albert Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), the contemporary people find themselves in a futile struggle to get more but they have less. In the tragic writings, they appear as the nameless figures, fragmented entities and hallow souls. There is no difference between knowing and unknowing, acting or remaining passive since the perspectives of the individuals are narrowed and their enthusiasm for future is broken by outer forces.

Alongside the ruptures in the characters construction, postdramatic theatre reformulates its representation on stage through its actors. The illusion created by the correspondence of the dramatic persona and the actor is challenged by the real existence of the actor who can mostly be called as a 'performer' or a 'text bearer' in postdramatic aesthetic. As it is touched upon in the book titled *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political*, contemporary age diversifies character types immensely:

Character is largely dispensed with, the stage (where it is still employed) peopled by vestigial figures, 'text bearers', characters without coherent psychological 'interiority', or characters who – for instance through being surrounded by a chorus – have multiple or collective identities. We will also encounter 'real' people, who bring aspects of their real-world identity into the theatre, unadorned with fiction or character: disabled performers, as well as untrained actors who stand as witnesses and whose testimony evades and challenges 'imposed, official history' (Carroll, Jürs-Munby, Giles, 2013: 3).

On contemporary/postdramatic stage, the audience witnesses the multiple identities of characters and the real entity of actors who are divorced from being the product of imitation of the fictional character. Actors are at present as 'text bearer' on stage which can be explained as the actors' "function of delivering the text" (Delgado-García, 2015: 39). The actors do not have to alienate from their own real presence while acting as the characters of play, because they serve on stage as "the carriers of the theatrical signs"

(Poschmann, 1990: 7). J.L. Styan interprets the same issue by saying; “for centuries a character was essentially a ‘mask’, a dramatic persona, a representation of humanity or of some aspect of it, and not truly a human being” (1965: 64). In the modern plays, the actors are allowed to remove their masks on stage, and they can also represent also their own existence; they can appear as the real human beings beyond their given characters. For instance, in the performance of the play *The Author*, Tim Crouch appears as the writer of the play in real sense and also the author character who performs in fictional level. The same attitude takes place in the performance of *When will the September roses bloom?* by Goat Island in which a performer interrupts the performance, then performers disappear but it is uncertain if this is a part of the performance or not. In these kinds of plays, actors undertake a kind of double duty against the audience; an empathy -yet not powerful as in dramatic theatre- for the fictive characters, and a distancing effect to the actors’ real presence. The actors stand on stage as the performers of the characters and as the real selves at the same time; this is what the Lehmann calls as “co-player” (2006: 100) for the postdramatic theatre actors.

Doubleness is a significant factor in the audience experience in postdramatic theatre since it challenges the passivity of the audience and intends to refresh their functionality in many different alternative ways. As many contemporary plays do, postdramatic plays present “a unique forum for the face-to-face interaction on stage” (Sierz, 2014: IX-X). The audience is drawn into the plays directly via a discussion, randomly conversations and direct addressing, or indirectly via detachment techniques, multimedia usage and physicality. These kinds of new treatments for performing in postdramatic theatre confuse the audience’s settled watching roles since it requires an active participation from the audience. Unlike some media elements in which people turn into passive listeners or watchers of the media such as television, videos and social media tools; postdramatic theatre brings interactive attitude and total experience forward. Each theatrical element that helps breaking the illusion of the dramatic theatre also helps the reformulation of the audience’s role in dramatic theatre as “a peeping Tom, sitting in darkness, eavesdropping on the lives of other people, watching ‘how the other half lives’” (Styan, 1965: 35).

Now the audience are invited to take part in the play, in a way they are unsettled from their safe place in their auditorium to the centre of the stage. In this way, they not only ‘witness’ the event but also participate in the action and experience the happening in person. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub explain this circumstance by formulating it

in the term “double witnesses” that suggests two different roles of the audience as witness and active participant (1992: 58). Postdramatic theatre puts the audience in the total unit of the theatre, thus, they appear as observers and as active contributors at the same time. For the status of contemporary audiences, Vicky Angelaki makes a righteous comment by saying:

audiences are more alert because of recent radical developments in dramatic representation, but also more demanding by means of these; to an extent, I would contend, they have become more empowered, seeing beyond the outwardly experimental (text-based or not) and making active, informed choices on where to invest their time” (2014: 137).

This new audiences create their own time and space in the theatre place because they are active in the play and they make a significant contribution to the flow of action. To keep the audience active, alive and ready to any possibilities, postdramatic plays expose the audience to “everyday bombardment with signs” (Lehmann, 2006: 89) on stage. These theatrical signs appeal to many senses at once, as in the density of the signs in real life. This excessive usage of signs that is also called as *plethora* distorts the conventional form and the staging techniques by dissolving the coherence and by presenting fragmented and mis-constructed performance as the real life itself. Of course, the signs are not always abundant, sometimes the signs are purposely reduced to activate imagination or prevent distraction. In both ways they share the same purposes as in Artaud’s theatre, one of the main objectives is “to disrupt the audience’s unconscious and pulverise their sensibilities by developing a new theatrical language beyond the written word - concrete, physical, incantatory, ecstatic” (Carroll, Jürs-Munby, Giles, 2013:12). By using theatrical signs, physicality and concrete elements, it intends to shake every sense of the audience from head to toes.

Plays that are open to any interaction also change the experiences of the audience in the contemporary period, because the stories presented for the audience do not create wonder or excitement now, on the contrary they evoke shock and anxiety as they represent the tragic matters in the universal perspectives. The postmodern age faces many critical events like the terrorist attacks, wars, economic crisis, violence and abuses, so human beings need to ponder upon them. Even the more private matters are unfolded as a miniature for the general problems that are presented by the authentic performances of the actors on stage. Experiments of new writing on forms coordinate with the multifarious experience of the audience by highlighting the subjectivity of emotions and

differences of life experience. Postdramatic theatre which really cares about the experience of the audience could share Peter Brook's approach that underlines the importance of the diversified audience responses for theatre:

From a shanty town near Paris to the villages of Africa, in front of deaf children, asylum inmates, psychiatrists, business trainees, young delinquents, on cliffs, in pits, in camel markets, at street corner, in community centres, museum, even zoo. (...) What is theatre? (...) To learn about theatre, one needs more than schools or rehearsal rooms: it is in attempting to live up to the expectations of other human beings that everything can be found. Provided, of course, one trusts these expectations. This is why the search of audience was so vital (1995: 321-322).

Here, as well as the individual experiences of the audience, their participation to the performance is emphasised to create a collective experience. As in Brook's concept of 'empty space' that refers to an imaginatively neutral space for 'a total experience', he again underlines the free and collective acts of the actor and the audience allowing subjective experience and simultaneity. These redefined roles contribute to the observation of the diversified points of view from different groups of theatre audience in different spaces and under different circumstances. The variety in the experiences, the ethnic diversity, local dialect or cultural accent provide the musicality and rhythm for the plays. The vivid representations of life from different life experiences have its own tune and notes; for that reason, the music of life can be very flexible and polyphonic.

The postdramatic aesthetics discussed in this part of the study constitutes an important aspect of Lehmann's theory of postdramatic tragedy. As noted earlier, this theory aims to form a wholeness by means of the true synthesis of postdramatic aesthetics and tragic experience. Accordingly, the following part will search for the tragic experience by presenting a detailed retrospective exploration about the tragic idea and tragic writings.

1.3. Entwinement of Tragic and Tragedy from Past to Present

To convey tragic conditions of human beings, tragedy creates a fictive world by using all the theatrical devices and the power of the words, and then submits it to spectators' consideration. The tragic is the inherent part of the tragedy, and therefore Lehmann puts forward that "the tragic does not exist without tragedy as its mode of theatricalization" (2016: 4). This strong bond and cooperation between tragic and tragedy unfolds the tragic circumstances. This close and interrelated relation is even

certified in dictionary meanings. The tragic is an adjective that is defined as “causing or characterized by extreme distress or sorrow, suffering extreme distress or sorrow” (Oxford Dictionaries) and tragic as its relation to tragedy is defined as “in the theatre, tragic means having to do with a tragedy (type of play having a sad ending)” (Cambridge Dictionary). The word ‘tragedy’ takes place as a noun in dictionaries and finds its definition as “an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe” (Oxford Dictionaries). As a literary genre, it is defined as “a play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character” (Oxford Dictionaries). That means, tragedy and tragic are complementary for each other; these sorrowful, unpleasant, distressing, heartrending, unlucky, woeful and serious circumstances are the essential sources of the tragedy, and tragedy presents the tragic state in the most suitable way. An ideal fictive world is produced in tragedy “to arouse the passions of fear and pity while at the same time purging them” (Bernstein, 2014: 206). As Lehmann says, “it invokes the world rather than portraying it” (2016: 137). This ideal world is presented through the true combination of the theatrical components and the credible representation of the tragic motif.

For sure, each distinctive idea and approach generated on tragic and tragedy is drastically beneficial to appreciate their definition and function in certain time periods. Considering Lehmann’s remark that “art in general cannot develop without reference to earlier forms” (24), a research for tragedy’s strong bound with its retrospective rules that were accepted and applied in distinctive periods -the Classical, the Renaissance and the Neoclassical periods- and for its systematical evolution from the past to the present will be insightful to elucidate the interpretations of tragic concept in the contemporary period. The first occurrence of tragedy can be encountered in about the tenth century BC in Greece in “the dithyrambs” performed in rituals for Dionysus (Scodel, 2011: 33).² It appeared in the way Lehmann specifies as “the predramatic ancient theatre” (2016: 96), by presenting a kind of primitive events and rituals featured as choral songs and hymns, ecstasy with dances and songs of all participants in a carnivalesque atmosphere. These rituals of Dionysus cult were defined with the characteristics like illogicality,

² About the initial existence of tragedy Ruth Scodel presents three different alternatives; firstly, he suggests a newly generated theatrical form with its narrator, chorus and mythical characters, secondly, he refers to performance derived from Dionysian festivals and thirdly he shows the possibility of performance that was organized and supported by the regulations.

animalistic instinct, drunkenness, alcohol, ecstasy, dance, sex, rhythm, wine and masks. The masks and animal hide (goat and deer post) were used as a kind of disguise of the identity and a passage to animalistic nature that brought them away from logic and mind. Along with these enthusiastic and ecstatic celebrations, choral performances with their songs and dances for praise of Dionysus, recitation for telling the stories and mimesis for representation of certain social activities like hunting or harvest planted the seeds of theatre and tragedy. Nietzsche shows the necessities of chorus for the ancient tragedy and the importance for its initial qualities by suggesting that “originally tragedy was only ‘chorus’ and not ‘drama’” (1872: 25). In the sixth and seventh centuries BC, leader of the chorus had individual lines separating himself from the group of choruses. The songs of the chorus evolved into poetry that presented tragic and comic narratives that later would be source of tragedy and comedy.

Thespis came to stage as the first true actor, he wore a mask and performed his dance accompanied with dithyrambs in the Great Dionysian festival. He also spoke to the chorus leader in a dialogical way which can be accepted as the first steps of the dramatic theatre. Gradually adding novelties like the inclusion of the second and the third actors, dialogue, and decorum on stage, playwrights created a special dramatic literary text that was seen as the extension of the Dionysus rituals. In this way, the Greek tragedy developed from ritualistic and visual performances with dances, odes, masks and costumes to a more dramatic and poetic literary work with an eloquent language, dialogical narration and individual actors. “In antiquity, mythological prehistory provided the stuff of tragedy” (Lehmann, 2016: 121) and these stories were made up mostly from legends and mythological tales turned into more dramatic masterpieces in the artisan hands of playwrights.

Among the tragedians of Ancient Greece, Aeschylus (525 BC–456 BC), Sophocles (496 BC- 406 BC) and Euripides (480 BC-406 BC) were the more prominent writers and took attention with their successes in festivals. Their knowledge, poetic abilities and insights gave inspiration for masterful pieces of the Ancient time, and their successful tragedies gave the necessary material to Aristotle about the nature of tragedy. Aristotle celebrated Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* as the best example of tragedy and he aimed to reveal the characteristics of tragedy through its components. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defined tragedy as:

An imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being

found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (2008: 8).

Being the primary source for the ancient tragedy, Aristotle's theories and explanations were very crucial in preserving the Ancient Greek tradition. He both helped true appreciation of ancient tragedy in that time, and also left his ideas to the following centuries. Here, with the general definition of tragedy Aristotle underlined the dual function of tragedy; the aesthetic and the ethical functions. Tragedy presented the aesthetic sides with its search for beauty, sublime art, noble characters, well-structured plot, theme, mimesis of human nature; and ethical sides with morality, purification of individuals, purgation of emotions and cathartic effect through pity and fear. He emphasized the idealism and order presented through theatrical space of tragedy. In addition, the final cathartic effect of tragedy by purging excessive vicious emotions served "as a kind of public therapy" (Eagleton, 2003: 163). Being the most detailed and systematic analysis of the dramatic poetry, Aristotelian concept stepped forward as the basic reference source for the next generations. In his books Lehmann often addresses Aristotelian thought of drama and tragedy to be able to compare the old traditions and the contemporary ideas on tragedy and tragic.

While conceptualizing tragedy, Aristotle specified six main elements for tragedy by giving priority to the 'plot' as the essence of tragedy by calling it "the first principle, (...) the soul of tragedy" (qtd. in Poole, 2005: 46). The other components character, diction, thought, spectacle (scenic effect), and song (music) were other subsidiary elements after the plot, and they formed altogether the essence and backbone of the tragedy. The reason of Aristotle's stress on plot laid in his idea that "tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality" (2008: 5). What made people happy or sad was the result of their actions; as the plot unfolded the actions and the incidents in the course of the play, the plot was not surprisingly accepted as the primary element of tragedy. In order to depict the action in a believable and plausible way and to convey the necessary ideas and emotions for the tragic effects a well-constructed plotline was the prerequisite in tragedy. For that reason, incidents were presented in order and a wholeness with naturally constructed the beginning, the middle and the end. Also, plausible plot structures and correct cause-effect relations of incidents made tragedies true to life and highly effective. Aristotle says, "the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what

takes place” (15). So, the episodic narration was frowned as it distorted the complete action. The degree of the tragic effect was accompanied by the pleasure and empathy of the audience in the process of purgation. The pleasure that tragedy would give was not any kind of pleasure; it was meaningful and balanced. Since tragedy appealed to both emotions and minds of the audience at the same time, it entertained the audience with the aesthetic qualities of tragedy.

Myths, and legends of Ancient Greek, as Joachim Latacz indicates, were not completely fictive and random; they took their subjects from the beliefs of people and from the lives of Greek kings, prince and princess, and the leading people of society (2006: 1). These subjects dealt with so many objective and universal issues that numerous archetypes about human collective values and consciousness were hosted in tragedies of the Ancient period. By the help of these archetypes, societies could find their autonomy, and they helped the other generation to define these past nations in every aspect. To Aristotle, the mythos of tragedy unfolded “logically compelling arrangement of events” (qtd. in Lehmann, 2016: 19) and it enlightened the morals and realities throughout indirect and symbolic messages of this literary form. In this way, it helped the continuation of the order in society and public by preaching the citizen to be in a unit and to be aware of their responsibilities.

In the presentation of these stories, along with of the basic elements of tragedy - plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song-, certain cruxes that showed the changes and dynamics of the action also helped the striking development of the plotline. In the plot structure, these were the keystones of the tragedy to add an aesthetic and tragic value. From them, *hamartia* emphasized the fatal flaw of the tragic hero. It represents the misdeeds or wrongdoings of the character that bring her/him to her/his downfall. *Anagnorisis* meant the recognition level of the protagonist who discovers the truth about the incidents and characters. *Peripeteia* showed a reversal of the expectations, events or fate opposite to the protagonist. *Pathos* defined the sorrow and grief, revealed the pain that the protagonist felt after the realization of his fault and revealed the truth. And *catharsis* referred to a kind of purification and cleansing through the emotions of pity and fear. With catharsis, Aristotle aimed at an identification of the audience with the tragic hero and it had an idealistic and moral function by giving a lesson via the bad fortune of the hero. In the well-organized plot structure of tragedy, every stage of these cruxes “prepares the process for the audience” (Eagleton, 2003: 123) and the audience witness a new course of action that carries the hero to his tragic

end step by step. Additionally, Aristotle stressed the importance of unities of time, place and action to avoid any distraction of the audience and any rupture in action. In this way the flow of the action would not be disconnected, and the right tragic effect would be unearthed.

Since the plot structure and the flow of the action were uttermost essential and irreplaceable to convey tragic fall and then catharsis, Aristotle gave a secondary role to 'character' in tragedy suggesting that tragedy paid attention to what people did rather than with who they were. Since the main concern of tragedy was the presentation of the incidents, character was treated as only the bearer of the action. Aristotle suggested that the "dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in subsidiary to the action" (2008: 9). The flow of action provided the tragic effect and the mythological duty of the character compelled playwrights to purify his characters from their subjectivity. The tragic character in tragedy was named 'Spoudian' by Aristotle referring to "above the average, of high character, good, superior, noble, heroic" character; this naming showed its difference from the comic character which was named 'Phaulon' by referring to "below the average, of low character, inferior, bad, ignoble" character (qtd. in. Kelly, 1993: XIV).

Tragedy took its stories from myths, legend or religious narratives, for that reason its characters were noble and from high status. These down-to-earth, consistent, idealized, and ennobled features provided the plausibility of the story and helped the rise of catharsis. Also, Aristotle suggested a middle way for the character which prevented the excessiveness in both goodness and wickedness. "Tragic protagonists, in Aristotle's eyes at least, must also be reasonably though not outstandingly virtuous, a fact which is not always easy to square with their genteel provenance" (Eagleton, 2003: 84). For that reason, in tragedies the gods (Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, Aphrodite, Ares and others) appeared in the flow of the action but they were not attributed as the protagonist for these tragedies since the protagonist was expected to represent human nature with life's tragic aspects.

The characters chosen as the tragic heroes were very symbolic figures, and "their role was to prove the total unity of the ancient world. Whenever something happened to the heroes, it was perceived as a danger to the world as well" (Kozak, 2003: 27). Thus, the cathartic effect was so high in ancient tragedy; the audience believed that the results of the action of the tragic figure could save or destroy the whole city. So, the tragic protagonists of the Ancient period were called in later periods as 'tragic hero' referring

to the fall of a noble man in very unexpected and tragic way. The faults or wrongdoings of the character were named as 'hamartia', and the tragic fall was developed around it. This was the important component of tragedy, which reserved as the essence of tragic fall. Hamartia was often presented in the course of the action not putting the main blame on tragic hero. That means the tragic hero of the ancient tragedies did not have to carry a hubris, a lack, or an excessiveness; like the characters Oedipus or Antigone, her/his fall could occur because of her/his bad fate. The fall and frailty of the hero decreased nothing from her/his noble and good character. Her/his fall created a tragic motif in Ancient Greek that was found in the conflict between tragic hero and superior forces. She/he struggled with gods, fate, religious beliefs, moral or public rules though she/he knew that they were invincible, and the main conflict in the action was supplied by the intrusion of the external forces like gods, fate or oracles and character's wish to self-accomplishment.

Other elements underlined by Aristotle in the production of tragedy were diction, thought, spectacle and song. Diction indicated the proper and appropriate words and language for characters and the flow of tragedy. Tragedy narrated the high issues about higher ranked people, so its language and words were necessarily artistic, eloquent and sublime. As Horace pointed out in his 'The Art of Poetry' (19-18 BC) that "tragedy scorns to babble trivialities" (qtd. in Eagleton, 2003: 4). So, the unnecessary words and explanations, excessive remarks were not appreciated for tragedy as the appropriate use of the language was proper to transfer the thought of tragedy to the audience. Thought was about the theme or idea of a play and it was defined by Aristotle as "the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in the given circumstances" (2008: 9). The presented story was generated around the main thought of tragedy. Spectacle was another main characteristic of ancient tragedy that differentiated tragedy from other literary genres; from poetry, epic or lyric. Spectacle dealt with scene and materials used in decorum so playwright could use some outer elements such as dances, masks, costumes and accessories to keep the audience's attention alive. It was little connected with literature but visuality. Although in Aristotelian concept spectacle was put on the back burner a bit, in modern period the importance of stage performance, setting, decorum and all stage properties are well appraised.

The tragedies were presented in certain areas and the audience had to stay there until the end of the play. Therefore, tragedians wrote their plays in certain length; not too short to be out of focus and not too long to bore the audience, then actors adjusted

the volume of their voice to be heard by the audience. Song was another essential element for tragedy since tragedy was considered to take its roots from the choral songs. Even in the classification of the Lehmann, he clearly underlines the existence of the chorus in predramatic concept of theatre/tragedy. Songs of the chorus served several ways to ancient tragedies from its primitive ritualistic forms to its dramatic even postdramatic forms. Chorus was the most distinctive element of the characteristic of the ancient tragedies because it had multifunctional characteristics fulfilling any blanks. It could appear as a narrator of the story or a commenter for the action, as an actor to dramatize a role, as a spokesperson of the citizen or as an informant about past and future of the incidents. Unfortunately, the importance of the chorus would decrease in time in the process of shifting from predramatic to dramatic theatre and duties of the chorus would be replaced by other theatrical elements. To avoid any intrusion in the dramatic action, tragedians reduced the number of chorus and increased the number of actors; then the chorus functioned like an audience who commented on or gave reaction to the flow of action, but not intervene in it.

In Ancient Greek tragedies, Aristotle found the tragic in the reversal of the tragic protagonist's fortune. The perfect reversal suggested by Aristotle was the change of character's fortune from good to bad like the tragic ends of Oedipus and Thyestes. The journey of a noble character from the prosperous life to a disaster attracted the audience. It created a kind of identification that was necessary for the true presentation of cathartic effect through pity and fear. Seeing the fall of this character, the audience could feel sorry for her/him and then think about their own condition in the world. In the same vein, a slight deviation could be seen in construction of tragedy; Aristotle emphasised that "misfortune is brought not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty" (2008: 14) stressing the good nature for the tragic hero. Here the play *Medea* was a very strong sample for the break of the standard tragic hero and the concept of hamartia in Ancient Greek as she was a "vicious woman who moves from adversity to triumph by means of the most unspeakable crimes" (Kelly, 1993: 19).

The diversity of the tragic motifs in the Ancient period is a very powerful clue for the unlimited nature of the tragic literature. The masters of tragedy of the Ancient time Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Roman Seneca revealed different tragic motifs for their audiences. It would be missing and incomplete if Greek tragedies are defined with only the catastrophe, pity, fear, despair or suffering, because they were built by ritualistic, mystical or theistic components. The grief and the fall of men could

come through the external forces beyond their control like the interference of gods that changes the flow of life. The power of fate or divine power on human is clearer in the play *Oedipus* by Sophocles. Since in this play the tragic hero Oedipus could not escape from his tragic fate, the oracle happened no matter what people tried to avoid it. In the end, he stoically gave in his fate by understanding the impossibility of fighting against his destiny.

Not all characters were as submissive as Oedipus; Aeschylus in his *Prometheus Bound* unconventionally used the gods as the characters and he created the independent rebellious Prometheus character. Being the first who put the gods in the centre of tragedy, Aeschylus told the conflict between the titan Prometheus and god Zeus. The tragic reversal began for Prometheus when he acted in a rebellious by wishing to be close to human beings and broke the orders of Zeus. In the process of self-achievement, the individual found himself consciously or unconsciously rebellious to superior powers. This was unfortunately the beginning of the tragic end. The conflict experienced by the tragic hero was not limited to the divine powers; the rules of the state also restricted the individuals. The play *Antigone* is a great example to show the work of social rules against tragic hero; Antigone was torn between her wish to give a proper burial for her brother and to obey the order of the king. Antigone was a strong enough character to stand behind her intention and to oppose the state, which eventually resulted in her suicidal death. Unlike Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides did not reflect the impassivity of his characters to society. His play *The Trojan Women* presented a kind of protest against imperialism and war. Although the conditions were tragic for characters, they were more daring to rebel against the oppression and war, and also to express their distrust and suspicion against the gods. In these exemplary tragedies, the intrusion of the external powers was more influential on their falls and destructions rather than the fault of these heroes.

However, there were passionate characters whose excessiveness brought them their tragic end. Hubris, greediness, proud, jealousy, hatred or passions were the unwanted feelings that estranged people from virtue and goodness. Sophocles' *Ajax* was a tragedy that showed the fall of a good, noble soldier because of his pride. His extreme self-confidence turned him from a brave and noble soldier to a hateful and jealous man, and finally he killed himself with his own sword because of his disgrace. A similar tragic end existed for Medea because of her jealousy; but while building the character of Medea, Euripides touched on the psychological forces which caused the wickedness of

Medea so that the audience could find a deep personality in her. In his trilogy *Oresteia*, Aeschylus told the family issues of a noble family Atreus. The first starting point of the tragic events occurred with the murder of the king by his deceitful wife and his lover, and then avenger actions followed each other. In this play, the stories were covered with political and familial issues, and divine powers appeared in the play as judges who rewarded or punished the related people. The excessiveness of the characters in power and feelings such as love, hate or revenge was the reason for their sorrow and breakdown. The stories of Oedipus and Orestes were good examples of tragic feeling to Aristotle, because “no situation, strikes us as more horrifying and pitiful than murder or the like done or meditated by brother on brother, by son on father, by mother on son, or son on mother” (Faas, 1984: 8). Similarly, in the tragedy of *Electra* written by Euripides, familial issues and the wish for revenge were unfolded as the themes. Here the tragic end of characters came from their excessive wishes for revenge in spite of the oracle of god Apollo who warned them against the crime. Although the same story was written by Aeschylus and Sophocles, this play differentiated itself from others by presenting an ordinary life for Electra with her peasant husband. She was cast out of the noble life and she was insecure contrary to other writings. With such a depiction, Euripides gave place to common people in tragedy and this was very uncommon for his age when the characters were adorned with highly noble attributions. Euripides broke the armour of the ancient tragic heroes by depicting their ordinary lives.

The diversified representations of tragic helped the writing of new tragedies that appealed to the audience in different aspects. It should be kept in mind that the ancient tragedies had a great power on the audience. Hereinbefore, they wholeheartedly believed myths and legends of the tragedies. Especially the mysticism and the existence of gods in tragic plot made tragedies more believable and impressive. The sacred and magnificent meanings attributed to tragedy and the tragic in ancient period elevated this genre to a superior position. The powerful effect of those tragedies can be clearly understood from the words of an ancient commentator’s following words: “when Aeschylus brought the Furies on “in scattered fashion”-so much so that pregnant women in the audience had miscarriages and children passed out” (qtd. in Raebum, 2017: 70). This shows that ancient people experienced the actions of the story simultaneously with the characters feeling the empathy at its zenith. This is mostly related to the absence of the fourth wall for the audience; the physicality of the tragedies did not separate the fictional world and real world at all, for that reason the audience felt themselves as a

part of the play. Tragedies presented collective performances allowing a kind of shared experiences. Lehmann shows the obvious difference in appreciation of tragic experience from past to present. He says, “Ancient Greek audiences found Attic tragedy so thrilling and so horrifying that-according to the lore-children fainted, men wept, and pregnant women were said to miscarry. However, the ancient plays pack no such wallop in the modern world” (qtd. in Dowden, Quinn, 2014: 131). Relatively the tragic experience was felt to the marrow by the actors, the audience and all the observers of the play. This was one of the samples of the shared experience and togetherness in shouldering the sorrow and the grief. Inevitably, this communal unity would be exposed to some changes in accordance with the novelties in tragedy.

By breaking off the continuity with the ancient tragic form, the theatre of the Medieval period was mostly formed in religious and moral context. The importance of the plays was associated with their practicality to convey the religious messages to the illiterate society. The theatre was assigned with the duty of teaching religious and moral issues to the audience through the performative and literary elements. So, the popularity of mystery and miracle plays in this period was not coincidental since they depicted the rules of the Divine, the life of prophets and saints and emphasised a virtuous life and importance of preparation for afterlife. These plays were arranged by a religious doctrine that no longer presented tragic themes and they also drifted apart from some basic motifs of tragedy. As a result of the belief in Divine God, the meaning of suffering gained a different dimension in these plays. Religious context brought forgiveness and hope for suffering instead of a tragic fall, the resurrection and the redemption of religion challenged the tragic end of tragedy that celebrated the punishments and suffers of the tragic hero. Then, as the theatrical genres of the Medieval Age commonly focused on Biblical issues and the lives of saints, the basic focus was on the praise of God and on the wish for redemption and absolution. These were not adequate to create neither a tragic effect nor a feeling of empathy and the final catharsis that was very crucial for the Aristotelian concept of tragedy. Nevertheless, the aim of these plays was not to create tragic effect anyway. The salvation presented in the end of the religious plays did not create the pity and fear effect of tragedy that was presented by the destruction of the hero. On the contrary, the religious plays did not present a fall and destruction at all like the tragedy even if they were finalised with death, since death meant to reach Divine and his absolution in a religious context. The Medieval period

narratives also warned people not to trust the Fortune for their worldly gain and success; therefore, the Fortune was considered as changeable and untrustworthy.

Renaissance theatre, by closing the doors of Antique theatre and opening the doors of contemporary drama, created its own style not leaving the ancient tragic tradition aside but reshaping the tragic style in new perspectives. The writers of the Renaissance period unfolded the experiences of the English society, their beliefs, their fears, their expectations and their struggle. For that reason, while the writers were embracing some motifs or writing styles from the past, at the same time they could turn away from certain concepts which were out of date in terms of keeping with the Renaissance ideals. Observing the changing notions of tragedy in the Renaissance period, Lehmann designates the term 'dramatic' for the tragedies written in Renaissance and Baroque periods. In terms of tragic writings, there are certain periods when the true tragedies are accepted to be written. Distinctive qualifications were developed in tragedy regarding the cultural, religious, political and social norms of the time. For Lehmann, after the Antique period, the Renaissance period which he defines as the time of dramatic theatre and tragedy is another excellent time for tragedy. He asserts, "early modern tragedy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is understood as tragedy in a form that came to bear dramatic weight – *dramatic tragedy* in a specific sense, which is to be distinguished from predramatic and postdramatic forms of tragedy" (Lehmann, 2016: 7). Detailed readings of Seneca's plays, discovery of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and the translations of Greek masterpieces enlightened the way of tragedy in Renaissance and after. Powerful playwrights like Italian Petrarch, English Marlowe and Shakespeare, French Corneille and Racine broke up the Medieval Age's darkness on tragedy. All these writers had their own voices in their works as well as the common characteristics that appeared all their writings.

The special place of the Renaissance period for tragedy can be found in George Steiner's consideration on it as one of the magical periods for the representation of the tragic motifs. When the fluctuations are considered in the writings of tragedy, it is possible to see that there is not a certain continuity in tragedy. Steiner reveals very certain times that are crucial for tragedy by saying "what impresses one is a sense of miraculous occasion. Over wide reaches of time and in diverse places, elements of language, material circumstance, and individual talent suddenly gather toward the production of a body of serious drama" (2013: 74). The rarity of tragic drama and its presence in certain time periods support the idea of Steiner who defines the Renaissance

period as one of the miraculous times when the masterpieces were written. The success of the writers in this period was not a coincidence, the playwrights did not randomly create their arts masterfully. Certain writing styles of the playwrights and some common characteristics of the plays distinguished them from the other times and the other writings.

Shakespeare, for sure, was one of a kind who knew how to write and how to impress his/all audiences in Renaissance Period. Steiner glamourizes Shakespeare with these words; “nature made it and broke the mould” (95). In addition to four great tragedies *Hamlet* (1600-01), *King Lear* (1605-6), *Macbeth* (1605-06) and *Othello* (1604-05), his other tragedies *Coriolanus* (1607-08), *Julius Caesar* (1599-1600), *Romeo and Juliet* 1594-95, *Timon of Athens* (1606), *Titus Andronicus* (1593-94) and *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-07) attracted the attention easily with their distinctive writing style, characters, and tragic pattern; and with his creativeness, his observations on human nature, his skills on rhetoric and word plays. Shakespeare built up his tragedies not by violating the essence of tragedy but by improving it. His free and open tragedies permitted the experiment in tragic hero and tragic plot. He shined out in this period because “no other writer of his time was able to create and enter into the interior worlds of so many characters, conveying again and again a sense of unique and irreducible selfhood” (*The Norton Anthology*, 2005: 1059). He achieved to construct a whole character with social, moral and psychological togetherness. Each hero in his tragedies had her/his own voice and own frailty. The great observations of Shakespeare concerning human life and decision gave the necessary inspiration for his versatile and unique characters. His treatment of the tragic plot became diversified with deception, misunderstanding, intrigue, disguise, betrayal, the family structures, the social and political order and awareness. He did not limit the source of the tragic fall to an external force or individual fault; on the contrary, he handled the process by thoroughly examining all the motivations behind the tragic fault.

In general terms, themes of the Renaissance tragedies were not very different from the classical ones. Both the classical tragedies and the Renaissance tragedies addressed the universal themes about human life that made them unforgettable and irreplaceable for presenting a common experience. As Francesca Schironi states that:

The discussion of power and human destiny, gender boundaries, and the weakness of human nature, prey to passions and desires often in conflict with hidden truths (hence the incest), are thus very common themes in Greek and Roman tragedy;

they might even be considered the tragic themes par excellence, used over the centuries in Western drama (2016: 147).

The similar themes like the human's weakness and passions or power struggles were discussed as the subjects of the Renaissance period, too. In the process of transferring these themes into their own tragedies, Renaissance playwrights demonstrated the originality of their own perceptions. After leaving the classical myths behind, playwrights took their characters from chronicle history or they created their own characters and stories. They avoided copying the stories of ancient myths, in this way they presented authentic texts that suited the Renaissance spirit. Peter Szondi says, "the drama of modernity came into being in the Renaissance" (1987: 7) and Lehmann refers to these remarks to explain his ideas on the Renaissance drama. Plays in this period were mostly divorced from the religious doctrines by leaving the miracle and mystery plays behind. Largely focusing on the social and moral issues, tragedies in this period diverted their way from religious themes to human matters and this process opened the way for the evolvement of theatre to the more secularised and human-centred status. The concept of the fall of the tyrants was widely the theme of the tragedies, and the audience were expected to be aware of the injustices and the tyranny of their rulers. So, these narratives of tragedy warned and gave lessons to rulers, kings and princes fiercely by cursing the corruption, oppression and tyranny of the rulers.

The Renaissance drama that put the human in the centre of the play decentralized other inhuman characters. Inevitably, this circumstance changed the nature of 'the conflict' of tragedy and finally affected the process of the tragic fall as well. Classical tragedy presented the conflict around the human struggles under the Divine power. The hero trapped between her/his wishes and the obligations of divinity that was unescapable and irrefutable. Unlike the classical concept, Renaissance tragedy put forward dichotomies as the reason of the conflict. In this way, the conflict was presented between the right and the wrong sides, the moral and the immoral sides, the honest and the cheated sides; or between the individual and the society, individual and morality, individual and politics; or the conflict inside the individual that was defined as the excessiveness. The Renaissance tragic hero could be tempted by a villain as in *Othello*, in which the hero Othello was cheated by the antagonist Iago, or he could be enslaved by his greed for the crown as in *Macbeth* after he was tricked by the Weird Sisters. The hero was not depicted as strictly pure and moral, on the contrary, she/he was adorned with human frailty as in real life.

The tragic hero had a courage to shoulder the outcomes of her/his own decisions, of bad and good deeds, even these decisions brought glory or regret to them. So, what was called as ‘hamartia’ that means tragic fault of hero was needed to be redefined. In contrast with the classical hero who was innocent only having some errors that brought her/him to fall, the hero of Renaissance was built with human weakness and excessiveness. Since the playwrights did not have worries on creating a metaphysical atmosphere, they could concentrate on the social and moral issues by giving opportunity for the characters to choose their acts and to take the responsibility of their actions. Renaissance playwrights created “three dimensional characters” (Sierra, 2014: 41) who could present the power of their speech, the visuality of their physique and the reflection of their inner feelings at the same time. Along with the acts and the dialogues, the gestures and facial expressions of the unmasked actors contributed to the formation and the wholeness of the character. Body movements and miming added extra meanings for the spoken words and increased the emotional response. Also, playwrights used many techniques like ‘theatre within the theatre’ ‘interior monologues’ or ‘aloud thinking’ to show their audiences the inside of their characters’ mind. As in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, characters could display another dramatic performance in the play, or they could convey their inner turmoil and dilemmas by thinking aloud and talking. For this reason, as Lehmann says, “dramatic theatre brings players into focus just as much as the fictive persons they represent” (2016: 213). Even the roles of the actors became so important in the following ages that in some plays “starring actors” shouldered the play (Steiner, 2013: 77).

When the characters of the Renaissance tragedy are examined, it is possible to see that as a frame the unfortunate noble, high born and virtuous nature of hero did not change³; however, it gained deeper and more authentic qualities in Renaissance tragedy. In classical tragedy, the character was like a spokesperson of the moral authorities. She/he was the representative of the society and the carrier of the good qualities rather than having an individual character. On the contrary, Renaissance tragedy gave its hero their freedom and individuality. As Lehmann elucidates about configuration of characters in Renaissance, dramatic theatre “focused the process on the figure of the

³ In Renaissance, the characters of the ‘domestic tragedy’ were bourgeois or provincial personas who were mostly associated with comedies and tragicomedies. In the plays like *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1606), domestic tragedy was presented writing about domestic violence like oppression, murder, infidelity. In terms of its characters and its themes, domestic tragedy has some similar attitudes like the contemporary tragic writings.

individual actor” (2016: 213). In this period as he asserts “certain role-types (devil, intrigant, martyr, loyal servant etc)” still decorated the plot structures (Ibid). Inevitably, the role types underwent a different relation with the hero since the hero gained an identity, a power to act and a voice to speak.

The improvements, changes or abandonment in certain traditions of tragedy shattered the eminent place of the chorus in the Renaissance period. Especially the strong character building and a variety of abilities of the characters/actors affected the existence of the chorus in a negative way. The decrease in the function of the chorus and the elevation of the dialogical communication in play are pointed out as the dramatic theatre/tragedy’s characteristics of Renaissance plays by Lehmann. To him “the chorus’s prayers, songs and lyrical expressions of lamentation (or even joy), which set the tone in ancient tragedy, did not vanish entirely with the rise of the dramatic theatre, but they faded into the background relative to dialogue between characters” (216). As the interference of chorus was lessened in Renaissance plays, the audience was given more understanding and responsibility and were left alone to get the lesson, to feel the real tragic effect and to question the action in the play. The directing, commenting and convincing choral functions were mostly replaced by the vivid language and strong dialogues and for that reason the way of attention and response of the audience towards plays slightly changed.

Moreover, not surprisingly, the Elizabethan tragedies featured lovers, fools, villains and heroes altogether in their plot structures. Breaking the tragic and comic division Kyd, used servant boy for comic relief in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Marlowe added comic scenes and farcical elements to his tragedy *Dr Faustus* and a comic servant scene in *Tamburlaine*. Renaissance playwrights knew the potential of their audiences and penned their plays considering the audience appreciation.

Then the mixed audiences of public theatres represented an exceptional blend of the nobility and gentry, respectable middle-class merchants, artisans, and ‘mere riff-raff’, a social range that took in ambassadors and apprentices, peers, pickpockets, and prostitutes (Briggs, 1997: 251).

The plays of the Elizabethan playwrights were performed both in the private houses and the wide public theatres by taking the attention of a great number of audiences. Especially the public theatres outside the London’s centre, hoping less control from authorities, hosted a variety of people from very different background. So, the existence of the stereotypic comic characters like the servant, clown or fool both lessened the

tension of the tragedies and also appealed to some groups of the audience of the lower class. The physicality of the theatre affected the feelings of the audience in this period; the plays were acted in indoor places like private playhouses lessened the number of participated audiences, for that reason the feeling of shared emotions were lost. The grand public places like the front of the palace or the skirt of the big hills were chosen for the Classical tragedies and this increased the sense of belonging. The changes in the physical construction of the Renaissance theatre places affected the feeling of the tragic experience of the audience. “In the fixed playhouses, the relationship between the audience and the actors quickly became conventionalized because it was dictated by the structure of the theatres themselves, which offered clearly differentiated spaces for the stage and for the audience” (Marcus, 2000: 136).

The glory of Elizabethan Renaissance tragedy could not be furthered in England; but in France the examples of widely acclaimed Neoclassical tragedies were given by Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) and Jean-Baptiste Racine (1639-1699). In his division of tragic eras, Orr points out three major events for drama and tragedy in his book *Tragic Drama and Modern Society* (1981); “the emergence of Classical tragedy in Ancient Greece, the Renaissance of the tragic form in sixteenth-century England and seventeenth-century France, and finally the more diffuse tragic drama of modern civilisation, written and performed in the period of industrial capitalism since 1880” (1989: XI). Just like in England, the writers in France followed the ideals of Aristotle and Horace; the separation of tragedy and comedy, the unities, didacticism and sublime art were traced. They also supported the purification of the tragedy and frowned the coexistence of realism and fantasy, tragedy and comedy, poem and prose. Elevating rationality and logic of Neoclassicism in the plays, the conflict was presented between passion and reason.

Being one of the greatest classical tragedians of France, Corneille was mostly known by his play *Le Cid* (1637). Unfolding the story of a Spanish hero, the play was firstly written as tragicomedy. He rewrote this play by adding the expected classical elements and excluding unnecessary ones, he revised this play into a tragedy. In his other famous tragedies, *Horace* (1640) *Cinna* (1640-41) and *Polyeucte* (1642-43), Corneille successfully applied the classical rules and silenced all the criticism towards his plays. Each play unfolded the conflict between individual and society or moral values, and then tension was built up on the dilemmas and decisions of the hero. He was concerned with the existence of didacticism in his plays and of social and moral growth

for his characters. The struggles of characters would make them stronger in every sense in this way they could fight for rightness and justice.

The political power and its tragic nature were the main themes of Corneille's tragedies. He depicted the politics of Rome in *Cinna*, and the palace intrigue in *Othon* (1664). Knitting the plot around the power struggles and fight for reign, Corneille testified the strong language and rhetoric to present dramatic action. The strong monologues and dialogues of the characters displayed the power of words for politicians. These plays showed that the language of politics could make people submissive creatures who were hallucinated by the power of the rhythm of sentences. This was what Corneille called the "damnation of politics" with its "mind-clouding matter" (Steiner, 2013: 43). Considering his other play *Pompée* (1643), in a way reminiscent of the dramatic tragedy concept of Lehmann, Steiner stresses dominance of language:

Events are not acted; they are recounted. (...) No doubt there are situations and motifs to which a theatre of language rather than of action is inappropriate. (...) But the kind of theatre in which language is supreme, accords precisely with political tragedy. We must learn to listen to these plays as we would to music; we must be audience rather than spectator (44).

These plays which were presented with the oracles exhibited the perfect use of language for the service of dramatic action. Corneille knew to glorify his tragedy through words, and he created a political language from the speech of his characters. Indeed, Steiner relates Corneille's theatrical attitude to French classical tragedy in general. Stressing the absence of the physical action in the plays, Steiner emphasizes the importance of language for the French Neoclassical tragedies. The power of the French language and the references to French lifestyle undoubtedly made the written texts difficult for translation and adaptation to other languages. This can be interpreted as the dominance of the written texts on the performance and these tragedies are very available for the classification of Lehmann's text based dramatic tragedy.

The power of Racine's rhetoric and the beauty in his poetry can be seen in his tragedy *Bérénice* (1670), as well. With his words, he created a miraculous world for love and death. Lehmann refers to Racine's tragedies as a pure dramatic tragedy since Racine's Neoclassical theatre "focuses entirely on interhuman events, dialogue and the present moment" (2016: 253-254). Through the written text he drew the picture of the scenes in the mind of the audience. His words were his brush masterfully used for stage.

For instance, in *Phèdre* (1677) his strong poetic language was presented in the words of his shy but passionate lover Theseus who could not describe himself with his acts but his words. Called as “the last true tragedy” (Poole, 2005: 20), *Athalie* (1691) was designed in a perfect way with verbal expression and style by depicting a sacred place under attack that referred to Aeschylus’ *The Suppliants*. In each play, his depiction of the scenes of violence and blood with words was highly sufficient in order to create necessary emotions for the audience and to feel the horror and terror in their veins. Racine was seen as one of the innate followers of the Neoclassicism and Lehmann says, “the account of tragedy’s evolution during the Renaissance into specifically dramatic tragedy is followed by a case study, ‘pure dramatic tragedy’: Racine” (2016: 11). The word ‘pure’ can be explained by the ingenuity of Racine’s usage of classical tradition in his work. The chorus, the unities and anything about classic overlapped with Racine’s theatricality; as Lehmann supports, they were accompanied with his powerful language. They were not seen as compulsory applications of the Classical rules, they were very natural. He tried to adapt the sacred values and divinity for the rational new world.

Racine knew that supernatural elements and miracles were parts of the Ancient tradition and they were indispensable for tragedy, so he reconciled the reason and the materials of the ancient myths. In this respect, he was likened to Euripides who also used very rationalistic views in his stylization of mythology. Racine found the answer for that situation and in his play “ritual and action take place without a necessary implication of belief” (qtd. in Steiner, 2013: 82). Therefore, he felt a need for a change for the original mythologies for the sake of his audiences who would not be satisfied to see miracles, goddess and prophecies at all. Racine built up an excellent dramatic combination by mingling the necessity of the Classical tradition with his own age. In the frame of Classical rules, he worked on various themes from murder of the father, incest, rivalry to desire. He strongly dwelled on the ‘desire’ as an excessive feeling that disrupted relations of love, ruined any order, damaged the reign, violated any social order, neglected the duties or broke any friendship. Anyway, along with all these tragic plots, in his plays the tragic endings most of times were replaced by happy endings as his audiences expected. Since the main message of tragedy could be given by the poetic justice that meant that the bad deeds were punished, and good deeds were rewarded in the end of plays. So, the tragic experience was accompanied with a moral recognition and didactic relief.

In the contemporary period, many discussions are going on about the nature of tragic and the status of tragedy. So tragic writing becomes torn apart between the ardent supporters of the classical tragedy tradition and the modernist approaches that look for the innovative design for tragedy regarding the changing requirements. The discussions upon the existence/death of tragedy in the postmodern period seem to be a never-ending story. It is possible to generate bilateral arguments on this issue since there are sensible hypotheses that partly make these opposite poles righteous on their approaches. For instance, while Nietzsche is suggesting the lack of pure tragedies in the modern period, he demonstrates the absence of myth and metaphysical power that were the core of the ancient tragedies, however, Arthur Miller in his essay “Tragedy and the Common Man” (1996) suggests that the misfortunes of the ordinary modern men can be the subject of the tragedy though it is contradictory to the Aristotelian concept. Professor Thomas Van Laan directs his attention to the necessary separation between tragedy and tragic by loosening the tragic writing from the accepted rigid rules of tragedy. He says “tragedy and the tragic vision are two distinct things that have a symbiotic relationship to each other. One is not the other, but one is impossible without the other” (Laan, 1991: 29). By defining the separation between these two terms, he also emphasises their inseparable relation that is also supported by Lehmann’s this following remark; “the tragic does not exist without tragedy as its mode of theatricalization, whatever particular shape it then assumes” (2016: 4). These approaches put both the supportive and paradoxical ideas together and the mutual, strong bond and cooperation between tragic and tragedy is not denied.

The tragic, as it has appeared in classical tragedy, is commonly evaluated in its two different aspects which are also eligible for postdramatic tragedy, too; one “the tragic as the figuration of “overstepping” or transgression” (42); and the other “the tragic as a certain kind of conflict -exemplarily, in Hegel’s aesthetics” (390). Tragic as a manifestation of ‘overstepping’ is accompanied with excess, self-destruction and disaster. It presents the state of going beyond the limits, breaking the norms and ignoring the orders which are put by the ruler figures. The tragic characters who are expected to have a moderate personality should be submissive to the limits determined for them. Otherwise, they possibly turn into a kind of Promethean, Icarian or Faustian tragic hero brave enough to search their wishes but counted as rebellious and greedy individuals at the end of the day. This excess brings serious punishments and destruction for the hero

since she/he ignores the rules and crosses the line.⁴ About conflict model, myths or tragic narratives of societies feature this model; a hero is created in a battle with the Divine powers, with the Fate, with the God, with the social/moral/religious values or with the character herself/himself, then this conflict carries the hero to her/his tragic end step by step. Although this conflict brings the destruction of the hero in general, Hegel finds it as a very brave act. The hero fights for her/his aim daringly and takes the responsibility on his shoulders, regardless of the fact that this courageous behaviour might end up with death. Academic Sean Carney evaluates the conflict in the existing or created dichotomies in human life; “at the heart of tragic is the apprehension of the human as both sacred and profane, free and determined, metaphysical and material, soul and body, high and low, and thus as incoherence in response to the rigid oppositions of binary thought” (2013: 15). The individual is trapped by the forceful choice between things wishing not to have to do so.

The final decision of the protagonist is harder in the contemporary period since she/he has been now surrendered by more and more conflicting phenomena than ever before; even she/he is in a fight with her/his own existence. This existentialist reading for conflict model appears in August Wilhelm Schlegel’s approach who finds the conflict model in “the hero’s war with her/his mortal existence” (qtd. in Aşkaroğlu, 2016: 5). He underlines the unstoppable nature of death in peoples’ lives and the burden of knowing the tragic end in the final. Now the death is not a salvation or a divine punishment, postmodern individual correlates death with extinction and the loss of all worldly gain. Just as human beings do not have any control over his birth, they cannot avoid their tragic end, so the tragic dimension of death also intensifies. In Nietzsche’s conflict model, he finds the root in “the Apollonian creation and Dionysiac destruction”; however, he creates the image of a child who plays with sand (Nietzsche, 1999: XXIV). The conflict is a total unit repeating itself in an equal pleasure of a child who forms a sandcastle then purposely destroys it and then recreates it again and again. In a way, Nietzsche depicts the cycle of life with all its ups and downs by using this image.

The changing lifestyle, the new family structures, monetarily issues, social values and ongoing tragedies expand the mould of the tragic concept in the contemporary period. The depiction of tragic by Peter Szondi supports the broader

⁴ The tragic end that comes with transgression of the hero is very open to interpretations of rereading for tragic concept because there are ideas suggesting this is a process that prepares the hero for maturity and self-exploration and even it ends bad, it has hidden god messages for human.

aspects on tragic issue, he defines tragic as “strictly the destruction of something that should not be destroyed and, once done away with, leaves a wound that will not heal” (qtd. in Hoppe, 2014: 330). When Szondi’s idea is considered, the word ‘something’ is very vital to explain the contemporary perception for the tragic. This ‘something’ can be very open to comment and very peculiar to the individuals. Something is not defined by certain words, that means the tragic in contemporary world does not fit in a definite description. This can be any destructions that hurt people dramatically, or it can be about ordinary peoples’ lives as in the tragic plays of Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller or Sarah Kane; no restriction at all. In a similar manner, very embracing remarks for tragic are uttered by Orr who says, “the essential tragic experience is that of irreparable human loss” (1989: XII). The contemporary world presents adequate reasons for people to feel the tragic deeply, as their lives are encircled with losses, deaths, sorrows, mourning and desperations. Edith Hall deepens the loss of human and correlates tragic with modern and postmodern terms; “the experience of the internal death of the self that comes from various forms of alienation: social, personal, or psychic” (qtd. in Carney, 2013: 15). This definition of the tragic that loads broader meanings and abstract images shows more sophisticated human experience in contemporary time. As Herbert McArthur expresses, the feelings of happiness and unhappiness are mingled and get more complex, he claims that “when they are deep, tears and laughter get mixed up; people cry for great happiness, and a terrible kind of laughter occasionally marks the shock of grief, in a reversion of both laughter and tears to the primitive protective shudder” (1961: 36). The truth is that it would be very constraining to qualify tragic by its past definitions; it is not because now the sufferings of the people are less or unimportant but in fact that the sorrows of people are deeper, individual, complicated and very hard to define.

CHAPTER TWO

TRAGIC WRITING AND POSTDRAMATIC AESTHETICS IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

2.1. Reformulation of Tragic Concept in New Modernist Writings

New incidents and developments in the world and new experiences of people lead the theatre to shift its perspective. The tragic experiences of contemporary people are no longer searched in well- designed plots and established rules of the grand tragedies. Although many of the anxieties, sorrows, struggles and pains of people are universal, people's perceptions and internalisation of these emotions have changed. For the subjects of the tragic writing this period presents every individual as the hero of their own life, and the life presents them enough tragedies to feel in pain and sadness. Just like it appears in the plays of Crouch, people's lives can easily turn into a tragic stage that is surrounded by sudden attacks, violent crimes, deathful pandemics, or depressive minds. Relatively, the contemporary audience does not expect to see the representations of the legendary destructions of the cities or the tragic murder of a noble king.

These tragic experiences are reflected in the contemporary plays that divorce their close bound with the textuality and are accompanied with the highly rising importance of performances, happenings, live arts on stage with their theatricality and visuality. Rather than being a textual work ready to be acted and directed, the theatre pieces turn into collaborative works that are formed on stage altogether. "The English stage of the twentieth century has produced (on the whole so far) 'theatrical' rather than 'literary' drama" (Reynolds, 1949: 49). That means the plays are aimed to be staged with a collective work rather than to be studied or to be read. This radical change surely does not happen instantly, it is a cumulative process that comprises certain periods. Lehmann himself traces the important time period that prepares the postdramatic nature of theatre and tragedy:

The 'take off' towards a formation of postdramatic discourse in theatre can be described as a series of stages of *self-reflection*, *decomposition* and *separation* of the elements of dramatic theatre. The path leads from the grand theatre at the end of the nineteenth century, via a multitude of modern theatre forms during the historical avant-garde and then the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s, to the postdramatic theatre forms at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries (2006: 48).

It can be said that postdramatic theatre and tragedy find their roots in the developments of the modern theatre. Comprising the second half of the nineteenth century and lasting till the end of the first half of the twentieth century, the modernist techniques in drama innovate the direction of the theatre and open ways to many new trends and approaches. In world stage, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and August Strindberg; and in English drama George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry were influential in rejuvenating the theatre with their plays as the representatives of the modernist movement. Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's novelties for drama are crucial for the process of the passage from dramatic to postdramatic period. Rather than tracing the prevailed forms of the theatre before his time like comic opera, melodrama or vaudeville, Ibsen deals with realistic plays that put an idea for the audience and present a serious theme as well. Refusing the simple entertaining function of drama expected in that time, Ibsen determines to write his realistic plays by presenting controversial environments for discussion on the ideas. He helps the drama to regain its powerful voice in literature because it has been shadowed by the rise of the novel. Ibsen knows to bring together the magnificence of the past with the qualities of the day. He conditions his plays with poetic prose or a colloquial dialogue that enlarge the narration, and then bring the society in the focus.

Ibsen's usage of contemporary everyday life in his serious plays contributes to modern tragic drama (Orr, 1989: 53). As Raymond William says, "Ibsen was to be the first in whom there were fulfilled ideals of tragic form which derived neither from the antique nor the Shakespearean example" (1966: 29). He gives place to family issues, domestic values, gender wars and many different social problems in a realistic way and presents these issues with versatile characters. His plays are closer to life and they depict the influence of industrial and capitalist society, as well as the ideas of post-Darwinian era. The ordinary problematic struggles of modern people are the basic theme of his plays. In *A Doll's House* (1877), he opens a social discussion about the condition and freedom of women. In *Hedda Gabler* (1890), he looks for another moral and psychological quest after the suicide of the woman in the end. Ibsen is very keen on touching the tragic side of the world as in his plays *Ghosts* (1881), *The Wild Duck* (1884) and *Enemy of the People* (1882). The tragic condition of characters in modern world and their tragic end easily take their place in Ibsen's plays. In these plays, he creates Ibsenian characters who are strong enough to fight the chains of taboos and to engage in a quest of life. They are powerful enough to question their existence. The characters

do not resemble the past heroes since Ibsen puts aside the heroic poetic past narratives aside and ponders upon the everyday issues with realistic ordinary people. This opens the way for the modern tragic writing about ordinary life of the ordinary people. He gives a mission for drama to show the realities of the common people and to change the society for interest of people.

Ibsen's mission is traced by many important playwrights and these improvements in drama trigger further steps. In English modern drama, George Bernard Shaw is the unusual voice who contributes to the initiation of the revolution of the twentieth century modern drama. Furthermore, Shaw is thought as "the greatest English playwright after Shakespeare" (qtd. in Berst, 1973: XI). Shaw is influenced by the realism of Ibsen and then gains the originality in his plays mingling social, comic, fantastic and historic together. He applies the characteristics of the avant-garde writings in his plays, so his writing has eclectic and experimental style. Even this eclecticism occurs to his own mind set as being a social critic, a literary man, a philosopher and an activist. He is well-known for his socialist ideas and he attempts to express his ideas through theatre. In his *Heartbreak House*, Shaw presents a "symbolic reality" by providing "symbolic characters" in the representations of personal experiences and social relations (232). The reality is sometimes broken with the fragmented emotions, dreamlike atmosphere and the images and madness. He creates a combination of philosophy, aesthetic and theatricality together. He is very talented to use visual side of theatre; settings, props, lighting and also music so that he can strengthen the effect of the plays and can make multiple social, religious, political and archetypal levels for characters. Shaw points out that "there is a great deal to be learnt on the stage as to stage execution" (1970: 154) and this idea is very near the postdramatic theatre approach that celebrates theatricality and nowness. This is an important emphasis on acting and staging near the textuality of the theatres.

In his tragic narrative, the social issues are carried on stage like the corruption that lead prostitution of women or hard economic conditions that suffocate the characters. For instance, his play *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1894) unfolds the ignored realities of the society that force poor women to prostitution not giving them any alternatives, it was not a preference but like an obligation for them. As well as the themes, the way he treats the tragic is crucial to mention because his plays show the blurred separation of the genres, and tragic, comic, fantastic and historic can be naturally

together in his plays. Here the ideas of because as Charles A. Berst exhibits this togetherness:

Tragedy and absurdity in Shaw go hand in hand as they reflect life caught in the emotional and mundane. Conversely, comedy and seriousness go hand in hand as they seek intellectual and spiritual direction. Tragedy's intense seriousness can be comical when it is too self-conscious or too densely obsessive and sombre regarding the importance of worldly things (1973: 311).

It seems that Shaw reflects the reality of life from all the perspective with its bitterness, absurdities, happiness, comics and tragedies, with dreams and hopes. In this way, he can compose them together and suddenly in the most comical moment. Shaw can shake his audiences with the tragic as in the story of Bluntschli's wounded friend who was burned alive in a wood yard. Togetherness of all these different feelings and various situations creates the special Shawian characters. He invents characters like Mrs Warren, Dick Dudgeon, Candida, John Tanner, Liza Doolittle who are chosen purposely to unfold the different ideas and ideals from all levels of society. Brecht takes attention an important point about his plays, "it seems he considers it healthier to live among common people than among heroes" (1965: 17). They are the common people chosen among people, not heroes or heroines of Antiquity, and these common people have something to tell the audience and show their character development on stage. Shaw makes his characters more active and by putting the character prior to the plot, in a way, he challenges Aristotelian balance in theatre. The tragic is also built on the character not on Divine or Fate. Shaw creates characters who pursue their ideals so they can be victims of their decisions in the end.

The new realism presented by Ibsen and Shaw both challenges the conventional literature and the idealisms of society as it appears in Orr's following remark, "modern tragedy requires both literary and sociological analysis" (1989: XI). It is right that the tragic drama still sustains its purpose of didacticism alongside the balanced entertainment; additionally, in modern time the tragic issue is designed especially with ordinary incidents and ordinary characters. As Shaw specifies, "the daily events and incidents of life were meaningless to us until they were arranged in significant relationship" (qtd, in Styan, 1981a: 65). This new concept of tragic focuses on the everyday life, ordinary people, individual and social matters as in the Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1836) that is thought as "the first real tragedy of low life" (Steiner, 2013: 174).

Now the ordinary people's sufferings do not appear only as the farcical or burlesque style; they can appear in the grand narrative of tragic drama.

This changing treatment of modern plays to tragic mode finds explanation in these words of Orr: "the Greek mode is basically divine, the renaissance mode predominantly noble, while the modern mode is fundamentally social" (1989: XII). In the concept of tragic writing, the modern time witnesses the fall of strong characters whose decisions prepare their tragic end; at that point, the modern playwrights drive the attentions to the function of society. It presents the narratives of social alienation, social injustices, victimized individuals, existential problems in society and many others. The society contributes to the tragedy of characters by triggering their problems and adding more, or by ignoring these problems and leaving them to their fate. Unfolding the relation between tragic and society, Jean Jacques Rousseau ponders upon the same point of view. From a rationalistic perspective, the Divine intervention or the Well of the Fate are not the source of the tragic; but the wrong and unfair human acts are. He says, "the chains of man were man-forged. They could be broken by human hammers" (qtd. in Steiner, 2013: 84). Modern people do not find the tragic in the first sin of man or the curse of the god or fate; the human relations and their social construction cause to sufferings. People create their tyrants and victims within their own systems. The opposeless social conditions require the redefinition of the hamartia/the tragic fault since society is seen the catalyser for the misdeeds and the tragic end. This ecote is strengthened by August Strindberg in Sweden and Anton Chekhov in Russia. And the tragic destiny of the people goes on to be depicted in some plays of Sean O'Casey and T.S. Eliot.

The early twentieth century encircled by world wars, economic crisis, industrialisation, mechanisation, urbanisation and capitalism generates the natural outcomes in culture, art, literature and every field. Romanticism, realism, naturalism, idealism and heroism are put aside since this new condition of the world needs new ways of expression. The prevailing dark atmosphere leads the questions about the realities on stage; consequently, the theatre heads for new fields with images, symbols, dreams, fantasies, rituals, absurdism, silence and distortion. In general sense the newness is called as avant-garde that is "the term is sometimes taken to describe what is new at any given time: the leading edge of artistic experiment, which is continually outdated by the next step forward" (Innes, 1993: 1). In this century, avant-garde forms appear as manifestos and abstract works that challenge the conventional forms. This

challenge covers all the bases about modern industrial society, social institution, political ideologies and philosophies of the time. It brings a new voice for fragmented society that cannot be represented by the established artistic forms. So, the unstable and the devastating environment of war produce the movements of Symbolism, Dadaism, Futurism, Surrealism and Expressionism, Epic Theatre, the Theatre of Cruelty, Theatre of the Absurd and many other new sensibilities. What is celebrated by avant-garde is idealism of primitivism, archaic models, dreams states, ritual and myth rather than the values of modern technological world. The ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung encourage playwrights to use mythical and dream world elements in their plays and to create deeper characters in psychologically. Their studies give opportunity to interpret the plays in terms of psychoanalysis going beyond the visible realities. The concrete world is now depicted with the intuitions, impressions and symbolic images. So, the stage is attempted to use improvisations, common language, splendid costume, stage presence, make up and all kinds of visuality in order to reflect beyond the reality.

All these new attempts and experiments in theatre both suggest the “permanently renewing” nature of theatre and also show the “period of germination” (Hinchliffe, 1974: X) for the improvements in 1960s postdramatic theatre and tragedy. While naming his theatre Lehmann does not use the term ‘post’ dramatic as a division or a clear-cut separation from the past dramatic form; for that reason, the term points an accumulative development that embraces the past controlledly and gives availability for the experiments and novelties. Lehmann’s this attitude is parallel to the general ideas of Styan on theatre, he says, “the story of the theatre is one of rebellion and reaction, with new forms challenging the old, and old forms in turn providing the basis for the new” (Styan, 1981a: XI). Postdramatic aesthetic on the one hand challenges the dramatic theatre convention; on the other hand, it feeds from dramatic theatre forms. Furthermore, the avant-garde movements and theatres that stand in limbo; between dramatic and postdramatic. Underlining the fact that theatre is not simply the copy of the real life as in the old narratives, avant-garde aesthetics experiment unfamiliar techniques that will be hereditary for postdramatic theatre/tragedy.

Firstly, it is meaningful to say that avant-garde aesthetics appear as a reaction to the modern period, mechanisation, industrialization and wars. As well as the literary novelties, avant-garde movements attempt to develop a vision for life. For that reason, every new movement and theatre try to add something new for their approaches. For instance, Symbolism supports that “the act of putting life on exhibition is an act of

reformulating reality: indeed, the existence of drama itself suggest there is an abiding need for symbolic representation” (Styan, 1981b: 1). That is why Symbolism concentrates on a different aspect of life with symbols and images, fantasies and dreams. These symbolist elements search and present alternative representations for reality. Freudian and Jungian psychology clearly become influential on Symbolism to create these alternative individual realities. Additionally, “the Symbolists saw theatre as a potential crucible in which the arts of poetry, painting, music and dance might be harmoniously fused” (Drain, 1995: 4). In a way, symbolism shatters the temporal and spatial limitations through the harmony of all theatrical elements. Expressionism also uses stage crafts; on stage with the usage of shadowy, unrealistic lightening and visual distortion or the decor with bizarre shapes, the nightmarish atmosphere of modern world is attempted to be described. The Freudian and Jungian psychology merging with Nietzsche’s ideas introduce “neo-romanticism” (Styan, 1981c: 1) for theatre by encouraging the subjective and eccentric perception of the world. The emphasis on the private experience, subjectivity and freedom, and the acclaim of the inner world and subconscious create an objection to the existence of universal and the pure reality.

Futurism alternates a new model for drama by rejecting “the solemn, the sacred, the serious, the sublime of Art” and by celebrating “comic distortions, unromantic eccentricities and grotesque parodies” (Styan, 1981b: 51). This movement contributes the stage with new techniques like “these planes of coloured lights, dynamic stage architecture that will move the vital intensity of the scenic action” (Prampolini, 1995: 23). Dadaism, by pointing the ruins of First World War, rebels against the social order and the conventional art. The chaos of the world can be reflected with the subjectivity, spontaneity and simplicity rather than systematic art. Surrealism promises to reveal the feelings and ideas of the irrational mind, depicting the human senses and unfold the disarranging in time and space. In a way surrealism arranges the chaos and gives change to Symbolism, Surrealism “viewer could look upon some inner landscape of the mind” (Styan, 1981b: 53). As it is understood, avant-garde movements aim to emphasise the new post-realities and to subvert the well-made play. They present a portrayal of the new century by criticizing and moralizing it without any idealization.

The path which modernist movements have followed is also traced by the avant-garde theatres. Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) appears as a cult figure with his Theatre of Cruelty. This theatre suggests a mystical and ritualistic theatre stage for the audience. Inspired from the Oriental dance performances, Artaud longs for the transcendental,

mystical and primitive nature of the theatre to activate feelings. This theatre discipline expects actors/performer to use the physical movements, the gestures and posture as a communication vehicle rather than words. The rhythm of the motions can create the necessary emotion for the audience because of that the Theatre of Cruelty does not often use the verbal language for communication. By reducing the words, Artaud benefits from gestures, dance, music, spectacles and any theatrical component that can help provide the mysticism and collectivism. This reminds the ideas of Wagner, Verdi and Mozart who have understood the close bound between music and tragedy so they suggest that opera or music drama could refresh tragedy. The importance of music and dance for tragedy is also emphasised in Nietzsche's these remarks: "tragedy had been born of music and dance. Spoken drama had been a long detour; by returning to music, the tragic play would, in fact, be returning to its true nature" (qtd. in Steiner, 2013: 285). The mystic, musical and visual stage of the Theatre of Cruelty in a way recalls these ideas about tragic and the vital position of music and dance in tragedy.

Metaphorically the walls of the theatres are broken, the borders between the actors and the audience vanish; the audience can be ready to live the play in a communal production, not to watch it. Artaud wants his audiences to be like the live actors who also feel the same emotions, hypnotised with the happenings and react to it with body and soul. Purposely he suggests the suitable playground for the plays suggesting hangar, a barn or a holy place as playhouse. The physical structure of theatre can help the plague effect of his theatre which means that the powerful theatrical effect should be felt by the audience both physically and mentally. Plague effect refers to the pandemic called as the Black Death in the Middle Age. It caused deaths of millions of people at that time and now its painful symptoms like headache, vomiting, fever and skin patches are associated by the expected strong physical experience by Artaud for his theatrical aesthetics. What is aimed here is a kind of therapy or confrontation that can cleanse the vices and crimes through intense physical reaction. He benefits from the ancient myths and applies them to the modern stage as in his play *The Spurt of Blood* (1925). This surrealist and primitive play that has the representation of the collapse of civilisation and also the rebellion of human against gods giving place the bite of a whore to the wrist of God. In a way, his plays recall the ideas of Nietzsche who correlates the death of tragedy with the abandonment of the myth in literature. The attempt of the Theatre of Cruelty to revive the myths and rituals probably eliminate certain barriers in front of the tragic writing. It supports the active audience participation by using extra-dramatic

ways. This emphasis on the shared experience and active participation is also one of the basic elements of postdramatic approach.

Considering the novelties about the status of the audience and the actors in theatre, for sure, Epic Theatre follows very different direction from the Theatre of Cruelty and conventional theatre. Formulated by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, Epic Theatre opens its stage for the audience as an “arena for battling ideas” (Styan, 1981b: 133) with a new aesthetics. It blurs the separation between actors and the audience by breaking the ‘fourth wall’ of the theatre and putting the audience’s attention and participation to the heart of the plays. The audience’s status as passive listener and unseen spectator is turned into an active participant in this manner the audience can gain a great authority in Epic Theatre. This participation necessitates the shared experience but not in an empathetic way as in the explanation of Brecht, “the spectator was no longer in a way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play” (1995: 113). The identification with the character is seriously objected because identification means accepting the feelings and views of character unquestioningly. What is aimed with Epic theatre is the presentation of the possibilities of the change. For that reason, the catharsis and the self-sacrifice as in the ancient tragedies are criticised strongly. Called as the ‘Alienation Effect’, the distance covers both the audience and the act of actors as well. For instance, in Beckett’s play *Mother Courage*, the subject of the play and the characterisation do not give opportunity to feel empathy for the audience. Similar to postdramatic theatre which opens “an essentially possible world, pregnant with potentiality” (Lehmann, 2006: 11-12) for its audiences, Epic Theatre designs its plays for the activation of its audiences.

The realist/naturalistic actor role is distorted, “the theatre needed this new kind of actor, one neither of the declamatory nor the naturalistic school, on not improvising his emotion, but giving a commentary on his emotion” (Styan, 1981c: 130). To be able to arouse a questioning, the actor and the audience are expected to have a distance to the characters, for that reason, emphatic acting models are rejected. The acting needs to put a rational play on stage, that encourages actors to be real individuals on stage and also reminds the audience that this performance is a fictional construction. The power of the play is also strengthened with many narrative and visual devices that help the final aim. The technologic devices are also used as a sign of modern scientific society.

Consciously, the Epic Theatre -especially Piscator⁵- gives place to “mixed media” (131); consisting of slides, videos, films, signboards, reports songs, dances, and stories. Epic Theatre presents a fragmentary form, episodic plot that can be a whole unit on stage during the performance with its all liberal elements. All these elements serve to break the illusion of the stage or emphatic trance with a challenge against the Aristotelian theatre concept.

The conventional theatre rules are shattered by another avant-garde theatre aesthetics, Theatre of the Absurd. Existentialist ideas of Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus are deeply effective on the absurdist’s writers. So, the trapped man as in Camus’s ‘The Myth of Sisyphus’, the spiritless man of Kierkegaard’s existentialism and the helplessness and futility in Sartre’s existentialism echo in these plays accompanying with the symbolist tradition. The tragedies of people because of the wars and social disorders find echoes in Beckett and Ionesco’s the Theatre of the Absurd and it shows its difference in handling of tragic by mingling it with comic and absurd; and it experiments new ways as in other avant-garde aesthetics. Since the tragic incidents in the world wars, nuclear bombs, mass genocides find explanation for some people in the nihilism, the Theatre of the Absurd often questions the aim and the place of human in the world. “Beckett and Ionesco, the two dramatists share a common view of the incapacity of man to control his own destiny” (Hinchliffe, 1974: 5). The nightmarish purposeless world that surround human beings is represented with irrational plot structure, unmotivated characters, monotony, repetitive language and silence.

The absurdist plays do not preach, and the characters do not have long speeches to discuss their condition. On the contrary, they portray the world as it is; so, the audience live the silence, boredom or anxiety with the characters. The real time and the stage time intertwine in absurdist plays. The potential tense atmosphere is broken by the comic effects and laughter as in “the techniques of mime, the music hall, the circus and the commedia dell’art to represent the business of everyday life” (Styan, 1981b: 126). Often the characters appear as the comic pairs like Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* or in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz*

⁵Along with his Epic theatre, Piscator uses documentary theatre revealing the factual events on stage for social and political awareness, discussion and criticism. And his techniques for presenting the real-life stories and hidden truths become inspiring for the new writing, too. He attempts to reveal his truths with theatre. In the docudrama, the factual stories, newspapers, autobiographic narratives, photographs, films, videos, statistics and slogans abundantly used to create the realism on the stage. This theatre both appeals to mind and emotion of the audience. The actor can address the audience and communicate with them.

and Guildenstern Are Dead. As Martin Esslin says, the Theatre of the Absurd makes use of the stage crafts to reflect the absurdity in all senses; and he emphasises that “the stage is a multidimensional medium: it allows the simultaneous use of visual elements, movement, light, and language” (qtd. in Lavery, Finburgh, 2015: 15). In this way, the existence of the theatrical elements or their purposeful absence help the actors and reciprocally the audience for experiencing their weird, meaningless and futile life. About the experience of the audience of the Theatre of the Absurd, Michael Y. Bennett puts forward a different view; he says, “we will always be bound to lose ourselves in our absurd situation, where our desires cannot be met by the realities of the world” (2011: 29). To him the experience should not drive the audience to despair since the absurd representation sometimes can give clues to search for meaningful life for them. This is an efficacious interpretation of colourful theatricality. Avant-garde aesthetics is very exemplary and inspiring for the contemporary theatre; since it not only diversifies the theatrical forms, techniques and vehicles, but also widens the vision, the perception and the experience of the audience, actors and all participants.

2.2. Contemporary Tragic Phenomena and Postdramatic Writings

Regarding the current tragedies of people and their new representations on stage, like many innovative experimentalist playwrights all over the world, British playwrights are very concerned with conveying the tragic themes through new theatrical approaches. British theatre, which is defined as “one of the most conservative and unadventurous in Europe” (1989: 254) by Orr considering the years between 1890 and 1956, has been refreshed by the new experimental writings of 1960s. These experimental writings that touch any single detail about the human life in their subjects, inevitably, cannot stay away from the loss and sorrows of people. John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956) inaugurates this revival like an introduction for the upcoming inspirational minds of new writers that reawaken the spirit of theatre. The long silence is broken, and now, the time for theatre begins to settle in the centre of human life. As Hinchliffe says, “we can see Osborne’s work as one long development: a series of personal tragedies. Such tragedies are related to contemporary social and political problems” (1974: 59). Osborne successfully creates his angry young man Jimmy Porter; on the one hand and the audience is invited to bear witness to his character’s individual aggressive mood on the other hand; this character is pictured as a representative of the changing English society in post-war period that is shaped by the rise of capitalism, the conflict between classes,

“the wish of unified society” and “the trappedness” (Carney, 2013: 6). All these social and political criticisms structured around the personal documents of Jimmy are introduced by a brutal realism with angry violent manners, modern accent and miscommunication.

Similar courageous attempts to reveal the radical changes and the tragic sides of life are traced by many playwrights and theatre groups in their authentic tone and collaborative working style as in Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop or Royal Court Theatre’s new experimental playwritings. Called as ‘the most original and unpredictable director working in British theatre today’ (in British Library) by Kenneth Tynan, Littlewood believes in the importance of performances and improvisations rather than the script; so she stresses the importance of “a kind of theatre in which the producer is more important than the text, action than the word” (Hinchliffe, 1974: 54). The aim is to give an opportunity for any possibilities for theatre encouraging the spontaneity, creativity and collaboration that prevents the museum-like theatre. Also, as a challenge of the preconceived textuality, Theatre Workshop highlights the coordinated shared function of text and performance that can be reshaped during the completion period of the play with the contribution of all theatrical elements from written text to actors, from music to costume.

The realistic and naturalistic tones of the plays in the modern and postmodern times are problematized by the experimental writing strategies; the well-made plays are challenged by playwrights who benefit from artistic liberations in creating their own ways for theatre. In many plays, the trapped contemporary people appear in a similar way the ancient heroes who were trapped in their fates; however, the divine power or fate in the ancient tragedies is replaced by the system created by people and defined by money, power and gain instead (Şener, 2016: 78). The stories of the individuals who subjugate the negative outcomes of colonialism, globalisation, clashes of classes and the conflict of rural and urban become the subject of the tragic writings. Additionally, the tragic characters’ inner struggles, fear of failure and quests on self-existence are conveyed in a brutal, violent and catastrophically incoherent way, as in Howard Barker’s *Theatre of Catastrophe*. Caryl Churchill benefits from the Freudian concept with the purpose of reflecting the tragic and alienated characters in a socialist-feminist perspective (Carney, 2013: 22). Her plays reveal characters who are trapped by the social forces; however, they are also left to their fate all alone.

Post-war writers obviously, do not need to search for tragedies in the grand Ancient narratives, because they have more than enough material to create tragedies of their own time. Playwrights so daringly put their theatrical genius on stage in their representation of the sorrow and desperation in society; and call for awakening and confrontation to the audience. As Aleks Sierz says, the post-war era that has experienced “the twin shocks of the Holocaust and the Atom Bomb” opens a forum to interaction on stage for the audience to be able to question the meaning of life (2014: IX-X). Edward Bond’s play *Saved* (1965) leaves the audience speechless and shocked by shaking them from head to toes. Touching the themes of loneliness, cultural poverty, alienation degenerations and dehumanization in contemporary world, Bond depicts his scenes with realistic brutalism. Unlike the tragic convention, Bond carries all violence and terror on stage especially with his extreme scene in which a baby is stoned to death. Peter Brook follows the same path while indulging in the experimental anti-war play *Us* (1966), he mirrors the tragic cases from the real-life experiences of the people of Vietnam war. Brook summarises in a way the general intention of a great number of post-war writings; “Is it possible, then, we ask ourselves, to present for a moment to the spectator this contradiction, his own and his society’s contradiction? Is there any dramatic confrontation more complete than this? Is there any tragedy more inevitable and more terrifying?” (2011: 7). With these plays, the audience’s confrontation to the tragedies of the real world is aimed at. To Brook, rather than the made-up stories on the fall of noble heroes, the real-life narratives present the tragic stories for contemporary writings.

Among all these experimental and unconventional new writings, Lehmann specially puts Sarah Kane’s plays forward with their tragic concept and its formal structure as the representatives for postdramatic tragedy. To Lehmann, Kane’s works are among the small but significant contemporary writings that go beyond the space of drama for tragedy and these works joint tragic and performance as in other different representations of tragic in Artaud’s rituals or ‘learning-plays’. In her plays, Kane knits the Promethean tragic characters who follow their wish to live their lives but find themselves in violent truths of the society and time. In Kane’s plays, as in many contemporary plays, there is not a certain barrier between what is called as ‘tragic experience’ and ‘mere emotional effect’ that two terms are considered differential for definition of the tragic effect. Lehmann observes the moments of tragic experience of the audience:

From the dawn of tragic theatre through Shakespeare's plays and Beckett's endgames, up to Einar Schleeff's choruses and the writings of Heiner Müller or Sarah Kane, *tragic experience* has shown the moment when the human being is pushed out onto the *stage*: from a state of security, normalcy, inconspicuousness and lowliness into a position of visibility, vulnerability and endangerment (which appear here, effectively, as synonyms) (2016: 131-132).

The personal problems of ordinary people are presented like the miniatures of the problems, pains and vulnerabilities of the common people in Kane's plays. These plays blur and intermingle the individual and common problems just like that they are the links of a big chain. In this manner, the private matters of the characters are carried to the stage, then suddenly the audience realizes that these are not the problem of that individuals only; but these are the problems of their own as well. For instance, her famous play *Blasted* (1995) opens a world for the audience to experience the struggle of the characters to survive and to question the truth of the world surrounded by terror and war. The play starts in an expensive London hotel about the affair of a couple that will turn to a tragic rape scene and the play is suddenly intervened by a soldier's invasion to the room; thus and so the individual tragic experience is maximized by revealing another global tragedy about the war fields of thousands of people. This is carried to the centre of the stage in an instant similarly the war that has come out for people's lives unexpectedly. As Rebellato says, "this sense of de-territorialized placelessness subliminally prepares us for the great formal shock of the play" (2009: 26). This strategy helps put this universal problem on table to be seen by giving no opportunity for the ignorance and indifference for the audience. So, the tragic is presented like a bomb put into the middle of the audience and they are called to feel, to think and be aware. Depicting a war atmosphere with "a theatrical aesthetic similar to that of Edward Bond" (Taylor-Batty, 2014: 66), the brutal realistic scenes of her plays both shock the audience and lead to imagination and self-awareness.

Kane's other play *Cleansed* (1998) allows her audiences to experience the extreme feelings by presenting very brutal violent storyline to them like the reminiscent of the ancient revenge tragedies. Lehmann shows this play as the sample for his postdramatic tragedy concept in terms of its formal structure and thematic elements. In the directorship of Katie Mitchell, it has been staged in an old university building that creates an authentic representation, then the authentic and dreamlike representations of the scenes and "beautiful constant running soundtrack of electronic screams and pulses, groans and grinds" (Rebellato, 2016: par 18) demonstrate the beyond-dramatic sides of

the play. This atmosphere is reflected with many postdramatic theatre aesthetics to unfold nonlinear illogical storyline, small dialogues, short sentences and one-word talking. *Cleansed* includes many violent incidents ranging from rapes to tongue-cut, from bloody surgical operations to the hanging. Rebellato reveals what kind of experience waits for its audience; “you will experience moments that feel comfortlessly cruel and you will have moments that feel swirlingly loving. It will feel unavoidable and it will haunt you” (par 1). This play provides the audience an eclectic experience of the feeling of joy and hate together, and its violent images chill the audience to the bone. Hence, the play’s name ‘cleansed’ suggests, the play’s end is expected to provide the cathartic relief and a purgation; on the contrary it leaves the audience in an uncertain, subjective and confused world. This is the condition of the contemporary people who are living in uncertain world, unknown future and insecure society. Kane’s last play *4.48 Psychosis* (2000) also challenges the dramatic convention with its implicit structure, unconventional performative elements and surreal depressive mind state. This play is mentioned by Lehmann as “one of the great texts in analogy to postdramatic theatre” (2016: IV) and as “one of the strongest contemporary examples of a tragic text” (2016: 436). Concentrating on the themes of suicide, depression, loneliness and human affairs, Kane uses new ways of staging for the unstable condition of the depressive mind. The broken textuality of the play and its performative novelties make it close to the postdramatic aesthetics since on stage characters, time and setting are uncertain, language is broken, monologue and dialogue exchange randomly stressing the mode of the depression.

The similar theatrical aesthetics, brutal realism and experimental techniques are identifiers for the writings of 1990s that are labelled as ‘In-Yer-Face Theatre’ by Aleks Sierz. The playwrights, including Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Martin Crimp, Anthony Neilson and Martin McDonagh intend to fulfil the task of representing the unseen problems of the society in a disturbing, challenging and confrontational way. In a kind of naturalism, they write their plays on the subjects from drug addiction to alcoholism, from sexual violence to terror, from war to personal suffers by breaking taboos with their filthy language, violent action, obscene depictions and bloody scenes. Their treatment to tragic subject and their experimentalism overlap the features of postdramatic tragedy. The crisis of communication and toughness of mutual understanding are provided with furious harsh dialogues. They divorce from the traditional mechanisms to employ empathy and identification, but they use shock tactics

to awake the audience and to activate them. It is aimed to provoke the feelings and to unsettle the passive responses, so that these plays can shake the audience like the plague effect of Artaud's theatre. Sierz puts forward how the audiences' responses have changed with these words:

The greatest of the Greek tragedies deal with extreme state of mind: brutal deaths and terrible suicides, agonizing pain and dreadful suffering, human sacrifice and cannibalism, rape and incest, mutilation and humiliation. (...) Yet Greek drama was probably intended not to attack but to heal the audience, to make it better able to face its time. This argues for a kind of utilitarian role for theatre, making it a form on shock therapy (2001: 10).

The duty of the Greek tragedies that firstly shocks the audience with terror then heals through purgation is not reciprocated in contemporary tragic writing. The extreme subjects throw the audience for a loop and put them into a very uneasy position; however, contemporary plays do not search for a compromising ending to heal the audience. On the contrary, the audience leave with many questions in their minds about their existence. Sierz likens watching an *In-Yer-Face* play to a process of internalisation "the idea of putting yourself through the hell in order to exorcise your inner demons" (10) that grabs the audience both mentally and physically. It distorts the sense of safety, discomforts its audience, shakes them and dives in their inner private feelings.

The extremities of the contemporary plays presented by an abstract level of language are carried to the concrete stage through the body images. The body figures that are widely used to represent the pain and torture on stage like the scene of the eye blinding or cutting the tongue emphasise the physicality of the contemporary plays. As Mark Taylor-Batty says in 1990s theatres, playwrights use the "physical pain and vulnerabilities of the body as a motif" (2014: 61) to mirror authenticity alongside the violence and terror. Suffering presented through bodily pain gains a kind of illocution that cannot be described with words but can be represented with physicality and bodily expressions. Alongside the filthy language, the bold scenes, wilderness and obscenity; the pain of the body puts the audience into dilemma about their experience. This status of the audience is defined as "warmth" and "coldness" by Lehmann (2006: 95). He asserts that during these two polarized audience experiences; on the one hand they feel empathetic with the fictional character or they feel warmth through interaction in the real time of the play, on the other hand they feel distance and alienation because of the extreme and violent scenes of the plays. The stage is adorned with such strong images that the audience gets difficulty to feel empathy but anyway they cannot stay away from

the charm of the plays. Irruption of the real and creation of the concrete physicality keep the audience alive and awake, also gets the audience closer to its didactic aim.

Considering the tragic experience and the theatrical aesthetics, the coming of the new millennium widens the novelties on stage and unfortunately witnesses the occurrence of new tragic incidents. The more the flames of people's sorrows are fanned by the accumulation of the tragic events, the more playwrights search for new ways of representation. Timberlake Wertenbaker shortly touches on the gloomy atmosphere of the last century people who have lived, and expresses her worries for the new century:

I have felt that in this twenty-first century, in this third millennium, human beings are in trouble in some way. They have lost their certainty. Perhaps it was never really there. (...) Perhaps this was lost with Darwin, then lost more profoundly in the twentieth century, partly through an awareness of the limits of science, its own uncertainty; and partly because of the savagery of the wars; then lost again with the fall of political ideologies in 1989; and now with 11 September, when even the rules of hostility have changed. Indeed, when there seem to be no rules (2002: VIII).

While people are expecting a new century that is shaped with scientific developments and technological innovations, many unexpected disastrous incidents shadow them. In the United Kingdom, eight-year-old Sarah Payne was abducted and murdered in 2000, in 2002 Milly Dowler suffered a similar fate. There are many other disappearances, kidnaps and sexual harassments direct the attention to the crimes and abuses against the children. Therefore, the abundance of the plays on sexual child abuse like Judith Jones Beatrix Campell's *And All the Children Cried* (2002), Alan Bennett's *The History Boy* (2004) or Crouch's *The Author* is not a coincidence. Also the plays like Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (2004) that presents the war experiences, Anthony Neilson's *Normal* (1991) that depicts violence or Roy William's *Fallout* (2003) that depicts the racial discrimination are not the result of random inspiration but the result of the social traumas and ongoing turmoil. As Rebellato reveals in his book *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (2013), the century witnesses the terrorist attack as in 2001 9/11 attacks on United States, in 2003 Istanbul bombings or in 2005 London bombings and many others, then witnesses the violence and vandalism between different groups and never-ending racist attacks (2013: 7). In addition, environmental problems like global warming, natural disasters like earthquake and tsunami and many diseases make people desperate, spiritless and sceptical. The constant wars as in 2003 Iraq War and in 2008 Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip and many others bring death for thousands of people, and

bring destruction, pain, trauma, distrust, hopeless life, life without most beloved ones and loss of faith for others. There is no easy way of bearing even watching these events, and what is more thousands of people are forced to experience them in person.

Facing so much tragic events, playwrights do not stay indifferent for the human sufferings. They benefit from all the blessings of the new millennium to construct their tragic writings. Writers actively use technological elements of media, like the use of videos, slide shows, social media and the technological devices like televisions and computers to mirror authentically the social problems and the sufferers in this turmoil. For instance, Simon Stephens builds his play *Three Kingdom* (2011) around the crimes and violence of globalized world. Employing the postdramatic theatrical aesthetic, this play presents an experimental and collaborative form appealing its audiences from all over the world. Lucy Kirkwood and Ed Hime's play, *Small Hours* (2011) is highly catchy in terms of both its plot and its staging. Disturbingly brave subjects of this play are presented by the combination of different sounds together from the newly born baby cries to the sound of the playing CD by creating "cacophony of other sounds and noises" (Aragay, 2014: 1). Moreover, it breaks all the separation between the actor and the audience; an intimate and shared experience is aimed when the audience is invited to take off their shoes and sits armchairs in the living room, the place of the plays. These playwrights treat many subjects like local and global problems, social and political issues, class conflicts or domestic violence, and they achieve to use all possibilities of the stage to be able to catch true tragic feeling.

Considering the diversity in the contemporary tragic narratives and the postmodern condition which frowns any dominant and orthodox artistic acts, it goes without saying that there is no easy certain way to put forward contemporary tragic experiences of people. Postdramatic tragedy takes on the duty of representing true tragic feeling by using the postdramatic theatrical aesthetics. The elements inherent to tragedy become flexible in accordance with the changeability of the human condition and postdramatic theatre inclines to reflect it on stage by highlighting the authenticity, visuality and theatricality. If the postmodern world puts people in uncertainty, desperation, doubt and chaos, postdramatic tragedy sees no harm to embrace any artistic and literary forms and methods for true representation of it. To achieve that, this theatrical aesthetics benefits from "natural theatrical synthesis of various arts – visual, plastic, verbal, musical becomes an intersection of all kinds of artistic and medial practices as it has never been before" (Shevchenko, Shevchenko, Salakhova, 2017: 173).

Considering all these novelties, it would be very appropriate to state that Tim Crouch (1964), with his innovational works, can be interpreted to be one of the most prominent experimental playwrights of British theatre. Therefore, his unfamiliar and experimental style and his original stories with versatile characters who experience tragic incidents in different ways will be the focal point of the next chapter. His plays *My Arm* (2003), *An Oak Tree* (2005), *ENGLAND* (2007) and *The Author* (2009) are chosen as appropriate examples of postdramatic theatre in which presentation of the tragic experience comes forward with unique narrative and theatrical strategies employed by Crouch appear distinctively. The characters in these selected plays appear as the significant representatives of the contemporary people who suffer from multi-layered tragic conditions. So, in the next chapters, with detailed analyses of these plays, it is aimed to exhibit a concretisation of the concept of postdramatic tragedy and an explanatory argument on the changing nature of the tragic experience and the tragic writing in the contemporary period.

CHAPTER THREE

NEW THEATRICAL AESTHETICS OF CROUCHIAN THEATRE

3.1. Tim Crouch's Works and His Theatrical Approach

In terms of a new lease on theatre, the experimentations and the challenge of established theatrical rules in the twenty-first century British theatre, Tim Crouch (1964, Bognor Regis) comes to the forefront, being one of the most prominent, the most versatile and the most frequently discussed playwrights of these decades. He masterfully uses his advantage of being an actor, a playwright, a director and a performer at the same time. In most of his plays, he appears as both a co-director and a performer. Professor Ondřej Pilný labels Crouch as “one of the most gifted and most challenging authors to have emerged in the early twenty-first century” by observing his “vigorous search for a new kind of estrangement in theatre” (2016: 23). His theatrical aesthetics is divorced from the psychological realism, empathetic and mimetic representations and any formal rules that restrict imagination, interpretation and active participation of the audience. He allocates new roles and duties for the actors, the audience and all the theatre participants by searching for new ways in form and representation.

The universities he studied at and the companies he worked in contributed Crouch to “discover more experimental methodologies” (Radosavljevic, 2013: 216) and to find his own theatre aesthetics. He completed his BA in Drama at Bristol University. He was co-founder of the theatre company, Public Parts, and he worked as an actor in this company. Then he completed his postgraduate degree on acting at the Central School of Speech and Drama. He was involved in teaching in National Theatre's Education Department. This teaching experience became effective for Crouch to feel confidence to write his plays. Crouch continued acting in England and America, during these periods, Crouch found the opportunity to observe both the conventional practices of theatre and the new possibilities for form and staging. He focused on discovering his own voice on stage and this search for finding his own theatrical aesthetics was clarified by Crouch with these words: “The job is to find your own. You are your own artist” (Hytner, Crouch Willson, Dale-Jones, Houstoun, Davies, Donnellan, Dijana, and Silviu, 2010: 120). He continued to explain the motivation of his writing by declaring “only then did I start to write - with no conscious thought of any theory or any practitioner other than my own predicament, with no motivation other than to make something that

was mine” (123). For that reason, his unique and unconventional theatrical techniques can be called as ‘Crouchian Theatre’ to emphasise their originality and distinctiveness.

Crouch manifests his own artistic practices with his unexpected, unconventional and unfamiliar aesthetics to generate experimental, live and concrete plays which attract and surprise even the theatrical circles. While the theatre scholars are engaging in defining his plays under some categorizations, Crouch writes distinctive plays each of which has their peculiar form of staging tactics. His plays written for both the adult and the young audience has brought him many awards from Herald Angel, OBIE, Fringe First, and Total Theatre Award to John Whiting Award. His success and his diversified theatrical experiences can also be testified by various venues and outstanding institutions he works in such as Royal Court Theatre, The National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. The main impulse to write his own plays is explained with these words by Crouch, “I started writing in order to make the theatre I wanted to see – and to stop me moaning about the theatre I didn’t want to see. The setbacks are when the reality doesn’t live up to my idea and I become the thing I used to moan about” (qtd. in Thompson, 2018: par 9). The beginning of his writing career comes with his full length drama *My Arm* (2003), and continues with *An Oak Tree* (2005), *ENGLAND* (2007), *The Author* (2009), *What Happens to the Hope at the End of the Evening, Adler & Gibb* (2014) and *The Complete Deaths and Total Immediate Collective Imminent Terrestrial Salvation* (2019). He also writes for the younger audience by giving place for younger actors; *Shopping for Shoes* (2003), *Kasper the Wild* (2006), *John, Antonio and Nancy* (2010), *I, Shakespeare* collection (2011), and *Beginners* (2018).

Crouch determines his own rules for each play and his theatrical attitude is mostly defined with the words “challenging”, “risk-taking” and “mould-breaking” (Wright, 2015: par 1). For instance, in the play *Adler and Gibb*, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre with his co-directors Karl James and Andy Smith, Crouch makes experiments on formal structures of play by adding different levels for the acting styles, and avoiding any facial expression or action while uttering the lines of the play. By revealing the story of the two conceptual artists, Crouch aims to challenge the limits of realism and naturalism through the false representations and absurd presence. In his other play, *Total Immediate Collective Imminent Terrestrial Salvation*, premiered in Edinburgh International Festival and then staged at the Royal Court, Crouch presents a new theatrical experience for his audiences. While telling the story of a family’s loss,

the play invites the audience into a kind of ritualistic metatheatrical practices; the audience is asked to take part in the reading process and collaborate in the progression of the play.

Crouch attentively pens his plays for the young audience as he does for the adult audience to enlarge their imagination and theatre love. *Shopping for Shoes* is Crouch's first play for children premiered at the National Theatre. Touching the subject of consumerism and capitalism in some respect, the play twists minds with its use of shoes as the characters of the play. In his other play *Kasper and Wild*, he presents a choral performance from young actors. In *John, Antonio and Nancy*, Crouch unfolds a story about the 2010 UK election using verbatim style taking the dialogues of children as three-party leaders from the TV debates. In *Beginners*, Crouch uses uncertain characters; adults and children who switch their roles time to time in play, in this way this play gives an opportunity to look for complicated adult world both from the children's point of view and adults' as well. Moreover, in the writings of the Shakespeare pieces Crouch both shoulders the duty of introducing Shakespeare to the young audience and giving them theatrical awareness. The subjects chosen from stories of minor unfortunate tragic characters in Shakespeare plays are enacted with storytelling technique and extraordinary representation style.

About Crouch's plays, David Lane emphasises an important point by asserting that "all Crouch's plays concern the art of representation and its deconstruction, and all of them have recognizable human stories at their heart" (2010a: 28). Each of his plays explores different theatrical forms unfamiliar to traditional audience perception. Their stories are shaped around the radical new formal structures that drive the audience into the performances by inviting them to be a part of this process. For instance, while unfolding the tragic story of a boy who is insistent to put his arm above and rejects to put it down in the play *My Arm* or while expressing the agonies and grief of a father after his daughter's accident in *The Oak Tree* or while telling the stories about abuse and violence or giving voice to the minor characters of Shakespeare, Crouch uses unfamiliar strategies in form and representation to be able to reveal these striking stories. Literary critic David Chadderton underlines that "Crouch's productions tend to operate on three levels" (2010: par 2); the first level is about determining the true setting for the play, the second level is about delivering strategies of the performance to the audience, and finally the last one is about the message of the play that is hidden under the themes of the play. The first two levels can be associated with the aesthetic side of the plays.

The last level is about the stories of the play that present a deeper look for life and nature of the human. Crouch entwines the aesthetic and the thematic sides in harmonic ratio for that reason the plays can touch the audience's heart and mind at the same time. The critic Gareth K. Vile explains the theatrical attitude of Crouch more precisely with these words:

Tim Crouch's theatre combines an intellectual rigour with an emotive power: even at his most provocative, he consciously invites audiences to recognise the trickery of performance, drawing attention to theatricality while delivering serious reflections on extremes of human experience (2016: par 1).

His plays intersect the daring subjects like abuse, violence or consumerism with bold and courageous theatrical practices. Elizabet Kovačeva defines Crouch's theatre as "another update of the in-yer-face experientiality" (2017: 54), stressing multiple perspectives in his stories that make the audience feel different emotions at the same time, and limitless experimentations in his staging. The taboo breaking In-Yer-Face attitude can be traced in unconventional formal construction of the plays, ever-changing representation formulas and carefully selected daring stories. As it is suggested in this thesis, Lehmann's theory of postdramatic tragedy underlines that the tragic experiences of the contemporary people are intrinsic to the contemporary period and these experiences are required to be represented by the new theatrical aesthetics; and it can be suggested that Crouch in his plays explicitly reveals the tragedies of contemporary people by using any experimental practices for representation multifaceted tragic conditions.

3.2. Tim Crouch's New Experimental Techniques

David Lane notes that "Crouch's work in particular creates numerous crossovers between these categories, both 'performance' and 'new writing' in its aesthetic but also 'traditional' and 'text-based' in its pursuit of a story structured around the resolution of a character's inner conflicts" (2010b: 150). That is actually, what overlaps Lehmann's postdramatic theory and Crouch's experimental theatrical approach. In a similar way, to Lehmann's presentation of an equalizer stage for theatre elements, Crouch sticks to the text in his plays, additionally he presents open performances for his actors and his audiences. In Lehmann's own words; "the dwindling of the dramatic space of imagination in the consciousness of society and of the artists seems, at any rate, indisputable and proves that something about this model is no longer in tune with our

experience” (2006: 182). Lehmann’s emphasis here is the illusion of the text that directs and limits the audience; which is also avoided in the performative space created in Crouch’s theatre aesthetics. Erika Fischer-Lichte observes the ignorance of performative side of theatre till 1970s. She underlines the important shift from “culture as text” to “culture as performance” in the turn of 1990s, and she talks about a performativity that deals with the audience experiences (2008: 70). She defines performance as “a structured coherence of theatrical signs such as scenic space, the bodily appearance of the actors, gestures, movements, language, sounds, music, and so on, and in this sense as a text –which does not mean the literary text of a play but a text made up of heterogeneous signs” (69-70). Collaboration of all theatrical signs for a complete piece of art is evaluated by Crouch with these words:

The words are always the same, but we don’t go to the theatre to see the words. If we did that, we could just pick up a script. We go to the theatre to see the meshing of the soul, to see someone reveal themselves. We go to see the emotional thing, the thing that isn’t scripted, that’s what we go to and so that’s the thing that I have no control over (Davies, Crouch: 2).

With these words, once again Crouch emphasizes the visual and audial sides of theatre which have partly lost its equal importance against textuality in dramatic theatre concept. The featured performative elements of contemporary theatre that collaborate script, visual and aural elements are also theorized in Lehmann’s postdramatic theatre. Although Stephen Bottoms designates Crouch’s theatre as “reinvigoration of dramatic traditions” (2009: 67), observing his obedience to Aristotelian unities; Crouch’s theatrical aesthetic is one move ahead of dramatic theatre. Liz Tomlin intersects the colourful experimental writing style of with tenets of Lehmann’s postdramatic theory by explaining this with his own words:

To consider alongside these, and countless other, revisions and subversions of the classic realist model, the explicitly poststructuralist aesthetic of the more experimental texts by Kane, Crimp and Caryl Churchill, and the radical subversion of drama’s invisible fourth wall in the theatrical innovations of Tim Crouch, enables us to understand contemporary drama as a much richer and more diverse field than the singular, logocentric and ultimately strategic ‘other’ to the ever-burgeoning field of the postdramatic (qtd. in Angelaki, 2013: XII).

To Crouch, stage is a space for freedom of imagination and experience and the trial of any theatrical devices for new experimentation. The conventional restrictive theatre attitudes direct him to create his own theatrical aesthetics. He has worked as an actor, but he does not approve the mimetic conventional role-playing, he is not pleased with

the realist dramatic representations. This is why the concept of postdramatic theatre that questions the dominancy of textuality, the limitation for time and space, the strict division between genres, the mimetic roles of actors and passive roles of spectators is very close to the Crouch's aesthetics. Since postdramatic theatre frowns the hierarchy and certain authority; it celebrates the kind of theatre which reminds of "a social activity" (Styan, 1965: 2) bringing together writer, director, actor, and the audience to share the live performance altogether. Postdramatic theatre embraces all the ingredients from any art forms and literary genres; so it is not surprising to face the abundant use of music, painting, poetry, comic effects, literary references, storytelling, dance, pantomime or videos as well as making use of the technological devices. Lehmann explains this inclination with these words:

postdramatic theatre, which presents itself as a meeting point of the arts and thus develops – and demands – an ability to perceive which breaks away from the dramatic paradigm (and from literature as such). It is not surprising that fans of other arts (visual arts, dance, music) are often more at home with this kind of theatre than theatregoers who subscribe to literary narrative (2006: 31).

The contemporary world that is shaped by postmodernity shatters the border, blurs the literary genres, and intermingles them. Theatre, novel, poem, dance, music, painting and any other literary or artistic genres are no longer self-enclosed; on the contrary, they evolve in interdisciplinary development by having a close connection with each other.

In his plays, Crouch benefits from any art and genres. He employs the storytelling method in some of his plays believing in the power of oral tradition that appeals the ear and the mind of the audience. Crouch reveals that the stories his father made for on their long drives and the writing discipline of John Wilson have given inspiration for Crouch to use the storytelling techniques in his plays and not to lose his eagerness for theatre (Hytner and et al., 2010: 120). Crouch performs some of his plays such as *My Arm* or *I Cinna (the Poet)* using storytelling technique. So, these plays seem to be one-person-plays in which the actor/performer tells the story of the play or performs it on stage by herself/himself. It must be stressed that even though Crouch puts one character on stage, he expects his actor/performer to be in contact with the audience. It is the distinctiveness of Crouch's plays that he treats the audience as the second actor. The actor/performer pulls the audience in the play, addresses them, talk to them, and gives them the opportunity to be the active participants of the play. For that reason, it can be said that his plays are not composed of monologues at all: on the contrary, if each

audience is counted as the actors, these plays can be called as polyphonic plays with many voices from the audience. This is very close to the postdramatic categorisation that Lehmann says as “for postdramatic theatre, it is symptomatic that monologic and choral structures supersede the dialogical” (2006: 129).

Additionally, storytelling techniques are purposely used for presentation of a wasteland for the audience where they can build their own imaginative world. As Crouch says, “the mind’s eye is an empowering thing. No one can lay a claim to how you see something in your mind. I try to encourage an audience to trust what their mind’s eye sees. This offers a challenge to the material values of the stage” (Essential Drama, par 4). This choice also echoes his avoidance of using spectacle that can limit the imagination of the audience. This is closely related to Crouch’s description of his aesthetics with the term “dematerialisation” referring to the minimal stagecraft and nonrepresentational performance (Delgado-Garcia, 2014: 77). The absence of materials or the misemployment of the object is a strategy Crouch uses to give priority to the imagination and the ideas of the audience. This attitude reasons Crouch to be associated with ‘conceptual art’⁶ that deemphasises material objects, commodification and consumerism. Theatre academic Cristina Delgado-García explains Crouch’s engagement of conceptual art with these words:

Conceptual art in particular and art in general offer Crouch suitable metaphors to question the ways in which some human lives become exploited, commodified or rendered immaterial to warrant the pleasure of others. It therefore recommends for a more nuanced understanding of Crouch’s engagement with conceptual art, as well as sensitivity to his theatrical roots (69).

In postdramatic aesthetics, the absence of signs and the minimum use of props on stage are used to make the stage simple and to make the audience perspective sophisticated. Following the same aim, Crouch explains his technique as: “I minimize what’s happening on stage so I can maximize what’s happening in the audience. If I maximized what was happening on stage, I feel there’s an inverse dynamic which reduces the role of the audience” (qtd. in Bottoms. 2009: 69). In Crouch’s theatre his preference to use

⁶ Gaining prominence especially in the 1960s and 1970s, conceptual art is designed with its characteristic of reduction of the material elements. Though conceptual art embraces plurality and heterogeneity, it does not celebrate abundance of signs. In visual arts, it aims to leave an open space for the imagination and interpretation of the art visitors to encourage generating their own meaning about the art. The performative dominated theatrical aesthetics that celebrates collaboration, interdisciplinary, heterogeneity and de-hierarchy has been applied by Fluxus group, in Kaprow’s Happenings and other performative practices.

less props and materials, and the absence of signs of postdramatic aesthetics can be associated with his idea of 'very theatre'. Crouch says:

in tandem with this description of 'very theatre', there is also a commitment to a reduction, to take things 'simpler'. So, if something becomes 'very' theatre for me, it becomes the purest and simplest expression of theatre rather than an elaborate demonstration of what theatrical is" (qtd. in İlter. 2011: 403).

He explains 'very theatre' by comparing it to the big production and the colourful West End tradition and talks about the pure level of the theatre that presents theatrical transformation. It is apparent that Crouch's performances are aimed to be purified from pomposity and exaggeration.

Crouch uses technology as another tool to maximise the role and the interpretation of the audience. Clearly, he knows how to keep up with the necessities of the time. He gives place to the technological devices in the play and benefits from the videos, sound effects, lightening and other media of technology. In many ways, technological devices contribute to the construction of the performances; sometimes they trigger the effect of the certain scenes through visual and sound effects, sometimes they help to go away from fiction and break the illusion and sometimes they produce realistic depiction that makes incidents more believable. Technology helps the creation of cathartic effect appealing to the mind and the heart at the same time; however, it also serves the creation of the alienation effect that warns the audience against the fictional world of play. The dramatic structure is shattered by infusion of slide shows, videos, phone calls, internet and social media in play. They open multiple semantic fields, layered representation and dense theatrical signs. These technological elements interrupt the linear progress and increase the density of theatrical signs. As Lehmann constantly underlines in his book, "the mode of perception in theatre cannot be separated from the existence of theatre in a world of media which massively shapes all perception" (2006: 185). Emphasizing the inevitable power of technology and the role of media on theatre, İlter introduces "mediatized dramaturgy" as an umbrella concept to explain the effects of technology and its culture on theatre (2015: 240). Technological devices, social media, messages, cameras and many other media elements settled in the middle of our life, direct our interactions and reign our perception. These kinds of productions that bring together theatre and videos, or any other different media together are called "multi-media" emphasising the heterogeneity and multiple components of art or literature (Bell, 2000: 41). Different media diversify the receptions of the audience and the videos, films

or slideshows by creating a more realistic impression on the audience. Technology helps to present simultaneity by creating multiple spaces for the audience at the same time. As well as the visual technologies, the audial components like music, sounds or the lightening of stage or auditorium affect the perception of the audience. This creates a 'synaesthesia' by distracting and multiplying perceptions. Crouch's enlightened auditorium, projected videos, sound effects and technological devices like computer or mobile phone indicate his multifaceted, eclectic and polyphonic theatre aesthetics.

In Crouch's theatre, both the living and the inanimate participants of the performance are carefully designated around the idea of the "democratic relationship" (İlter, 2011: 399) that indicates the necessary duties and mutual relationships of the participants. Crouch explains this relationship recalling the responsibilities of each contributor of theatre, he asserts that "there is a crosstrade of responsibility from the actor to the audience, from the audience to the actor, from the author to the audience, from the author to the actor – rather than one part of that triangle abnegating or removing itself from any sense of responsibility" (qtd. in İlter, 2011: 315). As Crouch always emphasizes, theatre is a process that starts with the writing of the playwright, but it does not end until its final seconds of the performance on stage. Text of the play is only a part of the theatrical performances; theatrical piece is completed only when all the participants actively shoulder their roles on and off stage. Here the role of the actors and the audience comes to the forefront since it is one of the most concerned priorities of Crouch. Since the actors are present as text bears in postdramatic theatre, they appear as the carrier of character rather than imitating it; that means that Crouch's actors do not display mimetic acting. Therefore, he is applying a very different acting style from Konstantin Stanislavski or Lee Strasberg who support the acting for emotions, empathy and illusion.

3.3. Audience Experience in Crouch's Theatre

Indeed, in most of his plays, Crouch appears as both writer and actor, but he does not identify himself with the character whom he represents. He appears on stage with his dual roles as the representative of the character and as the real self. Lehmann explains this approach as "physicality and gesticulation" (2006: 95) referring to the actors' ontological existence on stage rather than pretending to become the written character. For Fischer-Lichte, the co-existence of actors "phenomenal body" and "semiotic body" (2008: 76) at the same time on stage is a part of the live performative

representation that aims to evoke different experiences of the audience; here phenomenal body refers to the actor's real presence and by semiotic body she refers to actor's dramatic figure. The existence of the actors in both real and fictional space affects the perception and the experience of the audience. It creates an environment that is open for the mutual interaction between the audience and the performers. In this way, as Richard Hornby touches, theatre presents more real space for performers and the audience since it gives the opportunity for the audience to respond to the performance act. About the audience experience, Hornby mentions, "the audience at a live theatrical performance is very aware of being an audience" (2003: 144). The collaboration of the contemporary theatre doubles these responses and realness effect. Now, the audience can see each other in auditorium or watch the performers on stage, in a way they become the observer and the observed at the same time, additionally they can act on stage if any roles given. This widens the "isolated, private experience" (Ibid) to an actively shared experience. When they come together like the small pieces that complete the big picture of a puzzle, all theatrical elements gather and create the piece of theatre; here the audience is among these pieces of the theatre but they are not the small ones, they are at the heart of it.

Crouch puts the audience into the centre of the process, and it can be said that the play is rewritten on stage with the contribution of the audience. He says, "for me 'theatricality' is about the live relationship between the audience and the stage" (qtd. in Wright, 2015: par 2). In his theatre, the audience does not only react by laughing, crying, shouting, feeling angry, embarrassing but also appears in the performance as the active participants with certain determined roles, to Crouch "this sounds like heavy duty, but it's very playful in its engagement" (2014a: par 4). This is, as Bottoms says, the way for Crouch to "authorize the spectator" (2009: 67) in performance. Crouch reveals the nature of his plays and the role of the audience:

as with most of my work, the audience can expect a piece that invites, to some extent, their role as co-authors. Space is left for the audience's input – contradictions that require an audience to resolve. The play is complete but remains as open as I can make it. This openness is there to allow the audience entry (2017, par 6).

Crouch's insistence for the audience's active participation and their live experience on theatre can be strengthened with the words of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who says "to experience a structure is not to receive it into oneself passively; it is

to live it, to take it up, assume it and discover its immanent significance” (1979: 258). Every individual perceives and interprets the world according to their life experiences that are shaped by difference regarding the lives of people from their babyhood to the current age. So, each audience carries her/his experiences to the theatre space and receives what is presented by filtering their own experiences.

This is the reason why Crouch does not present ready package experiences for his audiences, instead; he presents an open area to generate the new experiences all together. By doing so, alongside the individual experiences, the audience can feel the shared experience that is produced during the collaborated creating process of the play on stage performance. With the words of Crouch, “rather than herd-like acceptance”, he prefers “maximising the possibility of personal responses” (qtd. in Bottoms, 2011: 454). Dan Rebellato writes about the openness of the plays to produce a new meaning regarding to the new context; referring to Jacques Derrida’s ‘Signature Event Context’, he stresses the “iterability” of the words that represent the re-use of the words regarding to changing contexts (2013: 22). In Crouch’s plays, clearly the iterability appears in his words that are very flexible and adaptable for the new contexts and new discourses. Even the iterability is accompanied by the performative elements; here the important thing is that it does not appear in the traditional sense because in every staging of the plays Crouch’s words are reused creating distinctive meanings peculiar to that exact time. These words do not produce certain kind of unchanging meanings, because Crouch gives the authority to the audience to have their own meanings, so the meanings can change according to their receptions and interpretations. The plurality in experience and perspective is the inevitable outcome of the collaboration of Crouch with Karl James and Andy Smith as co-directors for many of his plays. Smith’s remarks reveal that they consciously form multifaceted plays; he says:

there’s always the possibility of more than one perspective. There’s always an opportunity to see it differently. There’s always a chance to hear or have heard something else, allow another view; and, of course, get some confirmation... We try as hard as we can to see the work in many ways; to not presume what the audience are thinking or fix what we want them to think (2011: 410-411).

They altogether meet and discuss about the play, ask questions and search for ways to make the audience included in the play, ways for communication. The multiple layers presented for the audience to widen their imagination and not to restrict their receptions are provided by a series of processes before staging of the play and its construction

continues during the performance by being enlarged with the participation of the audience.

Crouch provides a wide scope for the audience's interpretation and experiences by participating them in the performances, so he puts into practice a theatrical aesthetics that "transcends the notion of hierarchy between text and performance and draws attention to the process of communication and of the meaning being communicated by a mutually constructed theatrical metaphor" (Radosavljevic, 2013: 190). This theatrical metaphor is provided and sustained as the collaborative role of the actors, the audience and even writer and director. Jacques Ranciere in his book *The Emancipated Audience* (2009) explains what the emancipation means, "the blurring between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of collective body" (2009: 19). And he advises formulations for the active power of the audience in theatre that will turn them from "passive voyeurs" to "active participants" (4). He suggests an unusual spectacle to stop the seduction of the illusion of fiction, then rational distancing must be provided to disrupt audience's position as observer and passive receiver. Most of these strategies have already appeared in Crouch's performances to break the illusion and reality intrude in the play. The presence and active involvement of the audience make them feel the real moments of the play that take place exactly at the very moment they experience and this is associated with 'here and now' concept of postdramatic theatre indicating the realness on stage. The play is being produced at that moment at that stage in front of the audience even with their contributions. Crouch explains the process with these remarks:

the experience we'll give our audience will be more authentic, more honest, more deeply felt or perceived. (...) Perhaps, in theatre, the game is bigger, freer and more accommodating than we imagine. In my play there are children as children and there are children as animals. There is an animal as an animal. There are objects pretending to be other objects, light pretending to be other light, a set pretending to be another set, an actor pretending to be another actor. And a kiss. A real kiss (2014b, par 5).

Here, Crouch emphasizes the fact that reality in theatre can be created in many ways, and he uses some ways to break the illusion with the help of some tricks on stage. Marigold Hughes makes a significant observation about the contemporary period and the expectation of the audience, then asserts that "in this era of cyberspace and virtual reality, we seem to be craving real experience and genuine interaction. In our theatre, we want to come closer to what is real –and what is most real in a theatre is the audience"

(2007, par 9). Sharing the same ideas, Crouch in his theatre prefers using many techniques to create a real atmosphere, to shatter the illusion of the fiction, and to avoid the empathetic audience feelings. His use of metatheatrical techniques in performances establishes a nonfictional staging. Provided by direct addressing to the audience, the audience's active participation to the performance, the misemployment of the theatrical signs and references to other plays and arts, metatheatre is purposely applied on stage to create a self-reflexive theatre.

Richard Hornby in his book clearly says, "a play does not reflect life, it reflects itself. (...) It is through the drama/culture complex, rather than through individual plays, that we interpret life" (1986: 17). That are the axioms Hornby puts forward for the relation of drama and reality. About metatheatre, he determines five categories as; play within play, self-reference, role playing, ceremony within play and literary and real-life references. To Hornby, the play also forms a system that he calls as "drama/culture complex". It intersects other plays, other literary works, other non-literary works and the culture and cultural productions. Hornby underlines that "the notion of passivity leads to questions about artistic value" and considering the archetypal systems like Northrop Frye's, he concentrates on the wholeness of the plays as theatrical performance by saying "a play relates (...) theatrical performances as a whole, and communal codes of speech, dress, and gesture, as well as of artistic convention, political ideology; social conventions and religious belief" (19). Underlying the hybrid and eclectic nature of the play, Hornby stresses the activating effect of it; so that the techniques of metatheatre help while demolishing dramatic illusion that pacifies the audience. In Crouch's performances, he achieves to present metatheatricality in various ways from his design of setting to his story telling techniques, from his actors as text bearers to his audience as the co-author. This can be associated with Lehmann's coldness that means the avoidance any "empathy, sympathy, commiseration and compassion with the simulated fate of the simulated figure embodied by the actor" (2006: 118). Here, inevitably the cathartic effect on the audience changes as well. Lehmann has highlighted the shared pain and cathartic effect by pointing out a "transition from represented pain to pain experienced in representation" (166). As it can be observed that the changes in the semantic and conceptual field of tragic concept affect the representation of tragic in contemporary writings and the perception of the audience. These plays that, most of the time, occur in a liminal space between past and present, between real and fiction, between stage and auditorium present unconventional performative representation.

They also present the themes varying from violence to rape, discrimination to victimization, ignorance to mourning that perplex, shock, frustrate, annoy or dishearten the audience but do not provide empathy and identification in classical sense.

Sean Carney in his article directs Julian Meyrick's question about tragedy and tragic; "is tragedy a meaning, a signification? Or is it a feeling, an experience?" (2002: 119). Carney replies these questions himself considering important contemporary tragic writings in general and focusing on Kanen's *Blasted* as sample. He says, "tragedy, *Blasted* shows us, is a meaning that is simultaneously a feeling, but this also means that tragedy takes place in a liminal zone at the edges of the possible" (Ibid). That is important to support the idea that in contemporary writing, even though the place of the tragedy is often debated, though for some parties it is accepted as death, it can be an alternative to discuss tragedy on the tragic feeling which also feeds the meaning of tragedy. In Crouch's plays, relatedly, the struggles of the characters reveal the tragic feelings of contemporary people, simultaneously presenting their meaningful struggles to survive. Since especially after the post-war period the meaning of life has changed dramatically for people and the human life became devastated by wars and crisis, the broken feelings of people like hopelessness, scepticism, uncertainty, futility or nihilism could not let people to dare to expect peaceful world. As Carney gives the remark of Adorno: "[t]he ultimate absurdity is that the repose of nothingness and that of reconciliation cannot be distinguished from each other. Hope creeps out of a world in which it is no more conserved than pap and pralines, and back where it came from, back into death" (qtd. in 291). This remark is highly important to reveal the mood of contemporary people who are children or descendant of post-war.

As Elisabeth Angel-Perez says, "tragedy, such as it was being convincingly written before the philosophical *aporia* of the mid-twentieth century, can no longer express the complex tragic feeling of our time" (2013: 80). The complexity of tragic feeling appears in the writings of many playwrights who closely indulge in the tragic matter of contemporary people. As in Kane's tragic war stories, Mark Ravenhill's subjects of pain and vulnerability, Penhall's stories on schizophrenia and mentally disordered people, Simon Stephen's plays on violence and sexual exploitation and Tim Crouch's narratives on abuse and existential quest, the audience of contemporary plays is challenged by different modes of tragic feelings. As it is offered in this thesis, tragedy in the contemporary period makes its presence felt with its peculiar characteristics, and each writing reveals sorrows and devastation of contemporary people with new writing

strategies. Especially Crouch's unconventional theatrical aesthetics and unfamiliar narrative styles used in the representation of unfortunate conditions, sufferings, abuses, discriminations or depressions on stage demonstrate not the death of the tragic writing but its evolution in the contemporary period.

As it can be seen from the writings of many contemporary playwrights, some tragic stories are unfolded on "ethical disasters of our time" in a way "reinventing tragedy" (Angelaki, 2013: 93). In his book *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (1998), William Storm once again reminds us "the nature of tragic has, certainly, been highly contestable subject in critical and philosophical discourse" and "the tragic, which has purely aesthetic history that extends to the same Dionysian ceremonies that gave rise to tragedy, is a phenomenon that transcends the period of its Greek beginnings" (1998: 1). It evolves in time from the ancient tragedies to the modern tragic writings as in the Beckett's, Ibsen's, Miller's or Kane's or Crouch's. So, the components of tragedy are used in variety of ways to structure around the sensibilities of the time and possibilities of the theatre. "Senseless tragedy" (4) is a phrase Storm uses in his book, it defines common contemporary tragic experiences and random misfortunes and reasonless sufferings in personal or global level. "We have grown so used to outbreaks of violence without apparent motive, and suffering of undeserving victims, that the non-sensical quality of such events is, ironically, one of their more predictable attributes" (Ibid). Clearly, in contemporary tragic writing, chaos and unreason take place the reconciliation of the ancient tragedies. The justice that was provided at the end of tragedy is replaced by uncertainty, complex feelings and accidental endings. By the same token, Edward Bond in his essay underlines the inevitable interaction between society, culture and theatre. He stresses the social side of human beings that can easily affect the social incidents. Therefore, in contemporary age, we come face to face with tragic events, but they are interpreted in secular discourses and these tragic incidents are not thought as the outcome of the destiny or the gods' plays. (Carney, 2004: 14).

Herbert McArthur says, "only tragedy dares to suggest that something can be left when everything is gone, to assert life in the midst of death and happiness in the midst of suffering" (1961: 37). And it can be said that Crouch successfully reflects the loss of people, the suffers of the left behind, the regret of the excess in his plays, in a way he mirrors the modern people's tragic condition in very unfamiliar form and content. His plays are not structured around the classical tragedy, but around the unique and challenging way peculiar to him and his extraordinary writing and performing style.

Crouch defines his plays' content by saying "all my plays are about how people present themselves to the world. Who we think we are -and who others think we are?" (Making the Play, 2018: 6). Arthur Miller bravely utters, "tragedy makes us wonder not only 'what made us' but also who 'we' are" (qtd. in Poole, 2005: 43). In a similar attitude with Miller, Crouch asks who we are and shows the audience the different tragic conditions of the human beings. His plays for children even have "developed side by side with a growing repertoire for adults, in which he has explored complex themes of violence, cultural identity and child abuse in his frank, intimate style" (Keating, 2017: par 6). And themes of his plays give such a powerful effect that it is obviously understood that they are written for a reason. To Şener, tragedy carries the mission of fixing the degenerated structures of the real life and what is the tragic is that the hero must pay for it (2016: 99). Actually, Crouch does not preach in his plays, or does not present a dichotomy as vice or virtue, good and bad; but he draws a picture for the audience and wants them to look, to feel, to be in part of it and gain their own interpretations. He undeniably inspires from the real world, the theme he chooses clearly about the matters that happen around us, however he is well aware of the difference between theatre and real life. As Lehmann says, "it invokes the world rather than portraying it" (2016: 137), and doing that tragedy serves a purpose. He creates another reality on stage through the artistic devices and all components of theatre. This is the uniqueness of his plays in which the alternative reality is reinvented again and again with new audiences and new theatrical strategies.

While revealing his tragic theme on stage, Crouch gives certain significance for how the tragic is experienced by both the actors and the audience. On the one hand, with his techniques he alienates his actors from the characters so the actors experience the tragic as witnesses of their own characters, but on the other hand, the audience watches the tragic from two-dimensional representations: from the fictional character of the play and from the real-life physicality of the actor. Crouch especially concerns the reception and responses of the audience to tragic theme, and he believes the audience role to construct the formation of the performance, and to complete the missing part of it. The famous critic David Kornhaber, in his review of Lehmann's *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, comments on his tragic theory, and underlines an important point about his attitude. He says:

to understand what binds Aeschylus to Shakespeare to Sarah Kane, (...) we must look at what they actually share in common: not drama, here rendered as a limited

invention of the European Renaissance, but theatre. The tragic experience, (...), does not refer to experience which is supposed of the tragic hero, but rather to the experience of those who witness – or, as the case may be, ‘live through’ – the tragic process as spectators and observers (qtd.in Lehmann, 2016: 10).

The approach of Lehmann for tragedy in the contemporary period is mostly carried out on tragic concept. In contemporary writings, for Lehmann, the tragedy/tragic no longer develops dependently to form and style; like the emphasis here and now effect in his postdramatic theatre, the tragic effect can occur on stage at that moment when the play is staged. Lehmann’s attitude also justifies Crouch’s concern for the audience and their experience. In Crouch’s plays, how actors carry and reflect the tragic to the audience, and then how the audience reacts, feels, thinks, reflect it on stage constitute the heart of them which differentiates these plays from the conventional writings in which the audience is treated as the passive receiver and the final message is dictated to the audience.

Crouch allows his audience to undertake the double duty in his performances as witness and enterer. Together with the actors, who also experience tragic feeling, the audience, to some extent, actively takes part in performances. This reshapes and multiplies their perception of the tragic experience. Crouch’s experimental theatre aesthetics provides a strong basis for all the participants to be free in their roles and interpretations. Nothing is fixed in Crouch’s theatre, and it is open to new experiences and new attempts for the sake of theatre. Our correlation to Crouch’s plays and their performances on stage and Lehmann’s theory of postdramatic theatre and postdramatic tragedy lies in the fact that the contemporary tragic concept and the contemporary new writings and performances are the main concerns for them. Therefore, even though there are the suspicions on the survival of the tragedies in the contemporary period, the detailed analysis of the Crouch’s chosen plays with their relation to the different tragic experiences and Lehmann’s theories will demonstrate the existence of the ongoing tragic conditions of contemporary people and the experimental writing strategies to represent these tragedies on contemporary stage.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNEARTHING TRAGIC EXPERIENCE AND POSTDRAMATIC STRATEGIES IN TIM CROUCH'S SELECTED PLAYS

Contemporary people find themselves in the chaos of life that is surrounded by violence, war, abuse, consumerism, exploitation, dehumanisation and intolerance which lead them to ask the questions about the meaning of existence, the truths of life and the values of people. Post/modern world does not present life as black and white, the actions as right and wrong and human beings as saints and sinners. Today to understand human actions, to comment on the righteousness of them and to predict the feelings of the actants are more difficult to guess. It can be observed that during the twentieth and twenty first centuries, tragic writings have gone through a process of evolution under the influence of post/modernization, which deeply and inevitably alters their original features and in some respects breaks their bound with classical tragedy. In his theory of postdramatic tragedy, Lehmann analyses retrospectively the convention of tragedy from the Ancient period to contemporary age suggesting “the distinction between predramatic, dramatic and postdramatic theatricality” (2006: 13) and he points out that contemporary tragic writings offer a true combination of tragic experiences of contemporary people and the unconventional theatrical strategies used on stage. Since contemporary tragic writings do not unfold the divine gods, great kings, pretty princesses as the heroes, the tragic experiences of ordinary human beings and the tragic events they face are carried to the stage of the contemporary theatre. The represented tragic slices of life are the realities of some unfortunate people that live in different places in the world.

In the narratives of the tragic events, the frames of the tragic can be expanded with the experiences of panic, anxiety, fear, vulnerability, pity, disgust, ignorance, violence etc. In these plays, different presentations of the tragic events and cathartic effects invite the audience to their independent places to ponder on the issues and deduce their own judgements. The general inclination of the contemporary plays towards not presenting any ready ends or an absolute solution aims to avoid imposing certain ideas, messages and emotions. These plays encourage the audience to think, to be alert and find their own ways in this tragic atmosphere. The changing perceptions of the audience to experience the tragic cause of distortions in the occurrence and aim of the cathartic effect. Now the audience does not appear as the outer observer of the tragic

performances, they find themselves in them as the real actants of these tragic actions. In the Aristotelian concept, catharsis is formed around a kind of empathy produced by the feelings of pity and fear, and its outcome is expected to be a cleansing and purification. In theatrical approach of the new tragic writing, catharsis is reformulated in different ways questioning its presence; as it is framed by the alienation effect as in Brecht's famous work *Mother Courage* (1939) or by ritualistic cleansing as in Artaud's *Spurt of Blood*, or by violence and blood as in Kane's *Blasted*. In Crouch's plays the cathartic effect can be found in the liveness and physicality of the performances and in the produced shared experiences of the audience.

The minimalism in Crouch's plays and his purposeful reduction of the stage props are important strategies of him to reveal this sophisticated atmosphere and to maximize the potential various perspectives of the audience. His dematerialized theatre aesthetics attempts to present limitless experience for the audience by appealing their mental process and imagination rather than giving readily produced visuals and messages. A sense of being in a labyrinth is felt in Crouchian plays in the manifestation of paradoxical aspects together for both performers and the audience through the unfamiliar structures and settings of the plays. This textual or spatial labyrinth on the one hand limits the utterances and physicality of performers and the audience to certain extent, on the other hand it presents an open area for action, collaborative experience and imagination. Each of Crouch's plays stands out with their original stories, unconventional techniques and collaborative performances. However, the selected plays of him which will be scrutinized in the analysis section, *My Arm*, *An Oak Tree*, *ENGLAND* and *The Author*, distinctively take attention with their depictions of the tragic experiences of contemporary people. Parallel to the theory of Lehmann's postdramatic tragedy, Crouch's selected plays expose the tragic events that are staged by the new writing and performing strategies of the contemporary period. These plays do not present far away kingdoms or legendary heroes; instead, they reveal the real struggles of people, the ideologies of the contemporary period and the authentic confrontations in everybody's own tragic life.

4.1. *My Arm*: Tragic Agent

Tim Crouch's first theatre piece *My Arm* was premiered at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in August 2003. This monologue-based play was co-directed by Karl James and Hettie McDonald, and it took the attention of the audience and the theatre circles with its originality, its unconventional narrative style and nonrepresentational performative techniques. It gave Crouch a fresh start as a playwright, and he confesses that he wrote this play very quickly with an impulse to react to the current theatrical practices. This play was written "as a provocation and a challenge to the dominant culture of the theatre" (İlter, 2011: 389). Feeling disappointed about the "ideas of character and representational performance, literal performance and figurative performance" (Ibid), Crouch searches for new experimental approaches that are missing in conventional theatre aesthetics. As a playwright, an actor and a director, his versatile identity manifests itself in this play as in his other plays. This solo performance about the story of a boy who is insistent to hold his arm above is performed by Crouch himself, and inevitably, he experiences the advantage of being the writer and director of this play simultaneously while he is performing on stage. It is clear in his very remarks; "in the post-show discussion, I confess that it took me five days to write the play. The Germans have rehearsed it for five weeks. Five weeks? Had I not made it clear enough?" (Crouch, 2004: par 5). As the writer of the play, Crouch knows the purpose of every single word, stage direction, voice and silence. He can interact with the audience since he knows the aim of his plays, he is also the director who has the authority to lead the performances. So, his performances are proceeding more consciously not having some worries to catch the intention of the writer or director. Moreover, he criticises one of the German productions in which the boy is acted in a way holding his hand during the performance stressing that this action is against the philosophy of this play by saying "(it) was bizarre because the central philosophical tenet of the play is that the person should not put his/her arm above their head" (qtd. in İlter, 2011: 401). This is clearly demonstrative of the fact that, as the writer of the play he knows the acting necessities better, and as the director he knows how to perform on stage in accordance with the intention of the writer and the expectations of the audience.

My Arm is one of the most frequently discussed plays of Crouch in terms of both its themes and strategies used in its performance. In terms of its theme, this play reveals many points about the contemporary life, as well as the tragic condition of the

contemporary people. On the life of the protagonist, Crouch touches the separate words of children and adults, the loneliness and alienation of people, the lack or toughness of understanding the others, and ongoing consumerism that is gain and exploitation oriented. Academic Helen Freshwater says, “the piece explores the consequences of choices made in childhood, the construction of childhood memory, and art’s relations with the power of capital, problematizing the distinctions between subject and object, and the desire to find meaning and authenticity even where it is most vigorously denied” (2013: 171). By refusing “to explain or justify his behaviour” (181), Crouch reveals the world of a child that is shaped around his own decisions which cannot be changed by his parents or other outer effects. The autobiography of the nameless protagonist is narrated in this solo performance, and his act of holding his arm above his head is the focal point of his life and this performance. Retrospection of the old days is displayed through this autobiographical storytelling method and through dialogues with his brother, his parents and other people. In his childhood, the protagonist and his brother Anthony always test each other with some challenges like being silent for days or taking their breath for a while. Even the play starts the words “I am going to hold my breath until I die” (Crouch, 2011a: 25). Like the other games that appear arbitrary, one day the protagonist starts holding his arm as a reflection of his self-determination, and he continues holding it in a decisive way. Feeling worried about his physical and mental condition of their son, his parents arrange visits for doctors and therapies from psychiatrists, and anyway these efforts do not work on him to give up his decision. Although he takes negative reaction and scolding, he keeps holding his arm. His act gives real pain and eventually brings him near death. Interestingly, while his body is weakening day by day, his disabled body and his story gain prominence in the art circles. He is painted and photographed as the symbol of the living contemporary art, and his decision becomes the advertising matter for some artists and art dealers. The play is finalized with his transferring the talking with his brother on phone about their current life and about the paintings of their missed nostalgia.

Crouch only tells us the protagonist’s act of holding his arm without giving certain reasons or commenting on his resistance to repeating this act. He says, “there’s an action, a big action, the action of a boy who actually puts his arm above his head, but there is never any attempt to psychologically explain that action or explore that action” (qtd. in LePage, Rebellato, 2012: 14). Though the act of holding his hand above his head is seen as a result of his childish behaviour, it is possible to find deeper meanings under

this act. At first glance, this act seems like one of these games and challenges that the brothers display for each other, like Anthony's turning his eyelids inside out or the protagonist's putting needles into his skin of his palm. Most probably, the protagonist inwardly likes his father's questions about his arm and the curious look on his mother's face when she hears about this arm thing. In the fourth day of his act, while he is feeling an unbearable pain, he explains his feelings with these words; "I thought that enough was enough and that was that. I felt elated by what I achieved but, when I brought my arm down, I was swamped by a feeling of failure. Also, the pain was as bad as now with the arm down as it was up" (Crouch, 2011a: 30). In his mind, he also equates his act with failure or accomplishment, for that reason, persisting this act means an accomplishment for him.

He feels like a superhero in the car while he is putting his arm out of the open window. He says, "I was the boy with the arm" (Ibid) and he was feeling now he knows who he is, he feels like he creates his own identity. Now, he is known by other people too, he is visible. He realizes that he is seen by other people: "I did as little with my life as I had done before, but now, when I was doing nothing I had a sense that I was also doing something" (34). It looks like that he tries finding a solution to "the monotony" of his life by holding his arm above and drawing the attention on him, moreover his act is interpreted as a reaction for "lack of parental attention" (Pilný, 2016: 133). Stephen Bottoms' comment is very explanatory for the protagonist's state of mind, he states that:

In *My Arm*, the boy with the arm above his head eventually finds a sense of self-worth through the creative attentions paid to him by a portrait artist, yet this 'redemption' comes too late to save him. (...) Like many young people, the boy seems to suffer from a kind of existential crisis of value and meaning in his own life. (Crouch, 2011a: 17).

He is slapped by his father to finalize this act, and his parents take him to the doctor and child psychiatrists, but he does not give in. The child psychiatrist Mrs. Williams thinks that he wants to show himself with this behaviour and recommends having a doll and putting it where it could see him with the feeling of being noticed. She says, "everyone feels better about themselves if they feel that they are being noticed", but the protagonist knows that "in that modern world it was easy to be invisible" (31). The psychiatrist's diagnosis, in general sense, can be very suitable to define the condition of the contemporary people who want to be seen and heard in a large crowd of people; somehow trying to prove themselves. He likes to be treated as a special person because

of his arm. He feels that he is setting his own rules. He has a special place in school, people stare at him in street, and he also becomes the focus of aggression. His parents try everything they could do for him from taking him to clinic for behavioural problems to having arrangements for an exorcism. Nothing changes his decision.

A confession comes from him in the process of some tests about his childhood and family. As if he was pointing the alienation, the lack of communication and self-oriented life in the contemporary period, he says “no one actually ever asked me to put my arm down, but clearly they wanted a success, whatever that might mean” (34). Lane summarizes his condition and his feeling by stating, “we find a character searching for an inner meaning but choked by the multitude of meanings others project upon him” (2010a: 131). Bottoms also comments similarly and asserts: “Yet instead of finding support and guidance, he is constantly judged by others (relatives, teacher, doctors, artists) in terms of their own assumptions about bad behaviour, mental ill health, or cultural transgression” (Crouch, 2011a: 17). Clearly it is seen that while he is struggling for/against his own existential quest, people are busy with generating their own interpretations about protagonist’s act even without asking sincerely about it. He is criticised and judged in different ways, but he is not given voice to explain his act. He is left alone with his act; with his arm above. Even the nameless mother and father symbolize the loneliness and alienation he feels.

Furthermore, he is exploited as a tool of art. Crouch presents three different artists in the play, and Simon is drawn as the opportunistic artist. Consumerism is symbolised by the character Simon who believes the motto “art is anything you can get away with” (36) and he uses art for the economic profit. While the protagonist suffers from a health problem because of his arm, Simon only concentrates on how to make money on his arm as a figure for contemporary art. As Ílter comments, “whose (the protagonist’s) retrospective evaluation of his meaningless gesture suggests a critique of modern commercialised art and consumerist celebrity culture” (2011: 394), because Simon uses the protagonist as an object for having more money on him. Delgado-García defines his relationship with art as being “the precious subject/object/abject of an avid British conceptual artist and an American art dealer” (2015: 81). Crouch, alternatively, depicts two other types of artists who are not interested in art for monetarily reasons; one is the type of his brother who socially engages with art and the other is that of the figurative artist whose paintings become a searchlight for protagonist. The protagonist’s

paintings win awards and he is popular now but unluckily “no art proves able to save the protagonist from his tragic end” (Pilný, 2016: 135).

The audience can see the tragic end of the protagonist, while he is renowned with awards, paradoxically these awards represent his illnesses and his disabled weak body. The rise and fall parallelly progress in the play. With the final image the tragic condition of this boy who is an adult now, is triggered. The performance finalizes with a touching narration of the phone call between the protagonist and his brother: “He said he’d send me a portrait he’d done of me as a small boy. In it, he said, I was watching TV, plump and contented. With my arm around him” (Crouch, 2011a: 47). He has to face the outcome of the arbitrary decision he took as a child. He is now close to the death with his weak heart and many confusions in his body. And tragically he is talking about his brother’s painting about the past days when the protagonist had his brother on his side, and before he had lost his arm.

Here it is possible to see a modern tragic hero, since his excessive insistent act brings his destruction, he creates his own fate by his hands (or by his own arm) as many tragic heroes do. He does not compromise, he does not listen to any suggestions about his health, his stubbornness appears as a kind of tragic fault that carries him to death at a very young age. This act is very meaningful for the protagonist even though it is bizarre and problematic by bringing him the final destruction. During his quest of existentialism, he finds it in his randomly act of holding his arm. Through his undefinable act the boy searches for his identity and searches for a place in society. His arm symbolises his presence, his identity and his self-decision in a world where he is in a struggle to define himself and to have difficulty of the meaning of the existence. In the post/modern world he wants to have a voice as an individual, however, he is also a victimized character at some points exploited by the ideologies and politics of the time. In the system of consumerism and capitalism, the arm is materialised and treated as an object of bargain. In this period everything can be easily consumed; the works of art, literature and theatre also can be easily consumed.

This deteriorated arm in this play can be interpreted as the presentation of abstract level of suffering and pain on the concrete stage through the body images. As Taylor-Batty touches, the body figures are mostly used in contemporary plays as a metaphor to refer “physical pain and vulnerabilities” (2014: 61) that can also be positioned in Lehmann’s idea of physicality. In this play, this image of arm may not only symbolise the struggles of the protagonist of the play, furthermore, it may

symbolise the struggles of the playwright- maybe most of contemporary playwrights- who has difficulty in writing his qualified unique plays. The protagonist discovers his own existence through his arm, he becomes a hero in his childhood and an artistic figure in his adulthood; similarly, the playwright uses his arm like a tool to produce his writings. Relatively, in terms of playwriting, the deteriorated arm can be read as the pain and vulnerabilities of the contemporary writers in the process of the creation of new and original plays, especially in this time when anything can be easily consumed, objectified and materialized. In addition to this, during the performance of the play, in fictional level Crouch depicts the boy with his arm above and in the real space he appears as the storyteller who only tells the incidents without holding his hand above. He never holds his hand above during the play and his intentional display of his healthy hands can be an emphasis on his achievement to write his original plays and his usage of new performative techniques on stage.

To be able to present his unusual story of *My Arm*, Crouch benefits from the coherent and chronological script and unconventional performance techniques on stage to put into practice this scripted story. Reminding Lehmann's theatre aesthetics which declares that "the moment of speaking becomes everything" (2006: 76), Crouch presents multi-layered staging that creates both fictional space and here and now effect. Crouch uses nearly an empty space that only have a television screen to show the objects, a table on which he puts the objects he takes from the audience, and a wall that is used for projection of videos. His setting recalls his interest in conceptual art and his constructed dematerialized theatre that leaves little place for the prop on stage but more space for imagination of the audience. It is surprising for the audience that Crouch does not use early prepared props for setting, on the contrary before the performance starts, he collects everyday objects from the audience, and explains that he will use them in performance. This is a crucial step for Crouch to pull the audience in the performance and to create the liminal space for the performance between real and fictional. While he is narrating the story in the real space as his own self, he creates a fictional space for this story with the collected objects reflected on television screen. During the storytelling, Crouch mingles fiction and real as in the depiction of the Great Silence in 1973; in which the boys displayed long silence as self-determination in their childhood and on stage there happens an unbearable silence as if all participants were in a great silence like the boys in.

These collected objects show that Crouch does not use the props with a certain function and the randomness he creates during the play has a strategic function. As he says before, he does not feed the audience by ready images and messages; on the contrary, they are expected to interpret what is seen on stage. Additionally, Crouch allows them to create their own individual experiences by taking their objects as the props. The objects asked from the audience are used randomly not having any representational purposes. The doll that represents the protagonist is the exception; it is projected on the larger screen and this doll's arm is kept always above the head. Other objects are randomly used, for instances, a necklace can represent the brother, a pen can represent the mom. This nonrepresentational technique puts an alienation effect between the narration and the props; anyway, the audience can catch the story of the play, and shape the characters' images on their heads. They are not limited with the given definitions and images, instead they are encouraged to create their own interpretations. About the audience experience Crouch says:

the objects are selected entirely at random by me. (...) They are nominated as the characters in the story, named as my father, mother or brother. Again, I don't activate them like puppetry, they are just presented. I love the way the audience responds to that offer by imbuing those objects with significance... the audience wants to imbue things with significance, that is their role, that is their task. They want to deconstruct or decode symbols, they want to do that, they want to resolve contradictions (Interview, Role of the Audience).

Bottoms testifies the audience experience about Crouch's usage of the objects he asks from the audience before the performance begins; he says; "the lack of physical resemblance between the presented objects and the things they are made to represent creates a sense of humorous incongruity, but also allows the audience to bring in personal emotional associations of their own" (Crouch, 2011a: 13).

ME: This is my dad's car.
He presents a photo or an object.
 This is my mum's car.
He presents a photo or an object.
 This is our dog.
He presents a photo or an object.
 At this time my dad –
Another object. (My Arm, 25-26)

What Crouch aims to do with his misrepresentation of the characters can be associated with the question of the true referentiality. The twentieth century is an applicable period for that kind of quest. While breaking the theatrical illusion with this manner, Crouch

also tests receptions of the audience and the readily made formations of the characters, because “representation is never neutral: it is both selective and subjective, and both qualifiers reduce whatever is being represented in some shape or form because the referend will always be more complex than that which is distilled into a representation” (Barnett, 2008: 14). Crouch is aware of the restriction in the representational performances, and he tries these new tactics to enlarge the reception of the audience. The randomly chosen objects and their random usage for the subjects are intentional and functional.

The use of objects operates on many levels –ideological, theatrical and narrative. It reflects the dynamic of a boy whose action is committed without his conscious understanding, but which is given significance by the people around him. So, similarly, this object here [showing the voice recorder] is my mother; this object cannot perform my mother. In performance, I think, there is a dynamic to transform that comes from the audience (İlter, 2011: 400).

In his essay, Jon Erickson refers to Nietzsche’s ideas on the arbitrariness of perceptions about the reality and readings of Saussure who claims that there is an arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified; and then he considers the truth and its representation (2009: 21). The randomly chosen objects that represent any characters refer to this arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified. As in Dan Rebellato’s assertion “Crouch’s conception of stage-worlds as metaphors” (qtd. in Belloli, 2016: 16), it can be said that Crouch uses the objects as theatrical metaphors; the objects used onstage may not correspond to what is the signified in terms of physical and mental construction. David Barnett reminds that “the postdramatic proposes a theatre beyond representation, in which the limitations of representation are held in check by dramaturgies and performance practices that seek to present material rather than to posit a direct, representational relationship between the stage and the outside world” (2008: 15). It breaks the romantic, realist or naturalist representations on stage, instead, it searches for the nonrepresentational imaginative processes prepared with props for the quest of the audience.

The story is told from the mouth of the first-person narrator by focusing on the decision the boy has taken when he is ten, and his life is told as shaped around this decision; however, Crouch appears in his real identity on stage. İlter depicts this uncertainty, “*My Arm* facilitates a blurring of the distinction between the real-world persona, Crouch the artist, and the fictional character, the adult self of the arm boy” (2011: 396). In fact, for the careful audience there are many clues to understand that

Crouch does not unfold his own story. Though he says that the protagonist never lowers his arm, during the play he never keeps his arm above, or he does not have an amputated finger or a scar from an accident while the protagonist has as it is narrated. He says, “I didn’t have to do any of the psychological gestures, or the psychological actions. I could give an audience the authority to make the transformations around me without having to transform myself in any way” (Radosavljević, 2013: 218). Crouch appears as the text bearer in this performance, even he is assumed to tell his own story, he deliberately shows the dissimilarities between the protagonist and him on the stage by emphasizing that he has a healthy arm and healthy body. Crouch says, “there is acting but it is not representational acting, I won’t become a character, I won’t present an emotion of the character” (qtd. in Ćlter, 2011: 401).

These characteristics of the play which we can associate with postdramatic theatrical features blow the audience mind by blurring the distinction between the real and the fictional character of the play. The audience should be attentive to catch the physical features of the performer on stage and the narrated protagonist, only in this way they can separate them. Furthermore, Crouch uses the doll that represents the protagonist, he raises the doll’s arm, and makes it speak with other characters. In a way he says, Tim Crouch is not the representative of the character, he is only the storyteller of this performance. Crouch says:

It is very important that I don’t emote at that moment, or I don’t try to demonstrate that emotion. And I hope that each member of the audience will have a different image of what is happening in the narrative and where that character is emotionally. If I were to show it, that would be the only image they would have in their heads (403).

This attitude is very far from to the conventional approach in which the audience is directed certain feelings or ideas deliberately. It is a reaction to the conventional role playing that leads the audience to feel and to think in a predetermined way by leaving very little possibility for other options.

In order to diversify the presentation techniques that affect the reception of the audience, Crouch benefits from advantages of technology. Television screen and the video images are used for creating multiple spaces for the performance. On television screen, the objects and their animated dialogues build the fictional space for the main story. The videos projected on walls help for the construction of the realness since the filmed videos can be perceived as more realistic by the audience. Phaedra Bell suggests

that “cinematic images may consequently seem in some ways more “real” to an audience than do theatrical images” (2000: 45). Crouch presents a multi-media art that meets the theatre with the other media on stage and he benefits from its “ability to create simulacra” (15). It creates the heterogeneous artistic performance that brings light to the different levels of perception and reality. Different media help Crouch testify his story with extra evidence from protagonist’s life, and also help the audience in their passages from the real setting to the fictional narration. Nevertheless, sometimes Crouch misrepresents what is told and what is presented as in the scene where the protagonist’s mother died. Though it is said that the mother fell down dead in a bus stop, in the video projected on wall a woman walks on the beach full of health. Crouch challenges the attention and logic of the audience. Just as the objects which are randomly selected at the beginning of the performance, these kinds of misrepresentations attempt to give the authority to the audience to create their own assumptions and meanings. Sometimes, they should connect the missing or irrelevant parts, or they can interpret and fill that part with their individual references.

From the beginning to the end of the performance, the audience is invited to the process of preparation of this performance. Crouch does not preach, direct or give clues but he presents a story from which each audience can get their own assumption. In this manner, Crouch leaves the final words to the audience. During the time of the presentation of the story, which is defined to be a “quietly tragic account of a paradoxical life both wasted and utterly transformed” (2010a: 131) by Lane, Crouch deliberately avoids showing any emotion or gesture that can be associated with the character. He expects his audiences to understand these two separate identities on stage and these different spaces presented as real and fiction. At that moment, they are left alone to create their own emotions and meanings about the story. Any emotion or any ideology is not implied, Crouch focuses on the audience’s creative and interpretive processes and he gives the control to his audiences, in this way they are not directed to feel or think in certain fixed ways. The randomness of the props and the obscureness in character’s representation (actually that is not aimed by Crouch, on the contrary he wants to be open and clear in order not to surprise the audience that can shadow the comprehension of the performance) serve the coldness on stage, a technique for eliminating empathy and identification. Crouch says, “my job as a performer is to do very little and I don’t work very hard in my performances in the traditional sense” (Davies, Crouch: 1). In the contemporary sense, the presentation of the tragic stories of contemporary individuals

is only one side of the coin, the contemporary plays are completed on stage with the contribution of the audience who actively takes part in the action and shares the various experiences while the plays are being performed. In this play, Crouch opens an unfamiliar stage for the audience in which they can feel the warmth by experiencing the pain, vulnerability and destruction of the characters empathetically, at the same time they can alienate themselves from the illusion of the story as a result of the nonrepresentational performance techniques and the nonmimetic acting style. The play demonstrates common points with Lehman's theory of postdramatic tragedy in its presentation of the tragic with eclectic, authentic and collaborative performative techniques. Crouch does not finalize his play by implying certain messages or expecting certain feelings, therefore, alongside having some shared experiences, each audience has her/his own individual judgement, idea and feeling in the end.

4.2. *An Oak Tree*: Tragic Death

What is the limit of theatre? Is it possible to reflect the feeling of sorrow experienced upon losing our beloved ones? Is the suffering the essential part of human beings? Can the tragic moment be created on stage with the collaborative contributions of all participants? *An Oak Tree* by Crouch is a play which can correspond to all these questions. With this play, Crouch puts the sadness of loss and the grief of death on stage by carrying the experiential theatre to its zenith. *An Oak Tree* which premiered at the Traverse Theatre in 2005, was co-directed by Crouch, Karl James, and Andy Smith. Crouch intersects his story on mourning and his interest of conceptual art and hypnotism in this play. Attracting attention with its story and performance, the play won a Herald Angel award and OBIE award. With this unusual play, Crouch presents a new issue and an unexpected experience for not only his audiences but also the actor who has not seen the text before the performance. As Stephanie Withers says, "through the fragments of story, the audience and actor together uncover the tragic after-effects of losing a child. A lost character played by a lost actor, both trying to find their way; the form complements the themes elegantly" (2015: par 1). It is apparent that, this play activates the actor and the audience at the same time to search for the story and its performative process on stage together.

Crouch, for the idea of this play, is amazed by Michael Craig-Martin's work of art 'An Oak Tree 1973'. Also, he talks about his interest in hypnosis especially of the book *Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion* (1922) by Émile Coué which has

become effective in the generation of his ideas on hypnotism (Radosavljevic, 2013: 219). The two main issues, Martin's concept of transformation and hypnotism, are combined with the theme of death like a trivet of the play. Written in the form of two handers, this play unfolds the grief for death of a daughter and the unexpected encounter of two characters in a hypnotism show in a pub. As two main characters, Crouch appears as the Hypnotist, and a second actor appears as Father, Andy. The other characters, Dawn, Marcia and volunteers for show do not appear on stage, they are represented by two performers in very unfamiliar ways. These two characters struggle to cope with the pain and to overcome tragic and depressive effects of the accident. Andy as the grieving father rejects to accept the accident and the death of his daughter; hypnotist, as the person who causes the death of the girl, feels guilty and also incapable of hypnotism. Considering death and its representation in one of his interviews, Crouch says:

If I lost one of my children I would not be able to represent the world in the same way ever again, so I know there was an emotional sort of biographical (...) hypothetical or imagined biography and that story about what would happen if you lose a child. (...) it's my imagining, my horrible imagining (Question and Answer, 2016: min 3.17).

Unluckily, Crouch's imagination becomes someone's reality in real life. It goes without saying that death is a part of human life, and the human sufferings and their losses always become the subject of human affairs. Though the death can be interpreted in different perspectives related to the earthly relations or religious belief, such as annihilation or reuniting God, one face of death brings sadness and sorrow for people. Here in this play, the story revolves around the sufferings of a father because of his daughter's death, and the sufferings of a hypnotist who causes this death because of an accident. In these two ways, these characters feel in sorrow and unease related to the loss due to the death. The deep trauma of death is explained by as following words, "at the core of human existence lies the monstrous trauma of death and the threat of eternal perdition. (...) What we call reality is just the set of shabby illusions which shield us from death" (Eagleton, 2003: 215). Since death appears as the opposite of life, aliveness and exuberance, people suffer anguish because of it. The more they internalize death, the deeper they can feel its pain.

In theatre sometimes narratives on death appear as an elegy to praise and commemorate the dead, sometimes they are written to convey the regrets for wrongdoings and apologies for the dead, sometimes they are written for the wishes for

peace after death if the dead one does not have a restful world life, or they can be written for the nature of the death that separates the beloved ones; the families, the lovers or communities. Whatever the purposes of them are, the narratives on death mostly cover the collective or individual mourning and sorrow. Thinking on the death and grief in literature, Poole gives references on tragedy; “the origins of tragedy may be bound up with mourning rites for a dead hero or king” (2005: 41), and he makes a distinction between the past narratives and modern ones concentrating on their treatment of the death and mourning. For instance, having very controversial lives, after their deaths Ajax and Oedipus are wished to rest in peace in their rites as collective activity (Ibid) or the star-crossed lovers of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* make everyone cry and feel regretful with their death. Seeing the communal lamentation of people as “public commemoration rather than private memory” in that kind of tragedies, Poole puts forward modern tragedy’s concern to “private, even secret, mourning” (Ibid) as the distinctive points. This approach can be associated with the notions of subjectivity and individuality that modernism has brought into people’s lives. If the matter is the suffering and trauma of an individual, then it can be experienced in a “private, neglected, unnoticed” way (42), unlike the collective public mourning in the past.

In *An Oak Tree*, it is possible to witness the dimensions of the sufferings from death and how collective or personal it is. Death creates tragic characters who agonize over the loss of their precious ones, and various emotions accompany this suffer like missing, regretting, guilt, desperation, rebellion or disbelief. As Aristotle declares and then Lehmann reminds us again, “nothing tragic can exist without ‘heavy grief’” (2016: 45). The heavy grief atmosphere in *An Oak Tree* is presented through the sorrows of three different characters, hypnotist, Father Andy and Mother Dawn. They are experiencing their sufferings differently and searching for some ways to cope with the loss of their beloved ones. For instance, the sorrow of hypnotist is the outcome of his regret and guilt since he causes the accident in which the girl has died. Emotionally he is so intensely affected that he cannot perform his hypnosis shows. Father’s suffering and mourning are accompanied by the rejection of the truth of his daughter’s death. He believes that his daughter has been transformed into an oak tree nearby the road the accident happened. Contrary to her husband, Dawn lives the mourning in her heart by accepting all the realities about this tragic condition. She is very logical with her acts to get over this big sorrow, she tries to face the truth to be able to continue her life. She

does her best to communicate with her husband to give up his imagination about his daughter, but it is in vain.

Father refuses to go the mortuary and he goes for a walk on the day of the funeral by saying, “I had no one to bury” (Crouch, 2011a: 89). It seems that he loses his ability of judgement. As Catarina Love mentions, his condition shows “the confused mind of a grieving parent” (2017: 42). Standing between fact and fiction, Father tries to avoid feeling of the loss of her existence in the world. The illusion and imagination caused by pain blur the borders of real and fiction and open an abstract phenomenal world painted by different colours. He describes how they feel that very night of accident: “Our pulses raced in purple. We phoned the piano teacher in brown. (...) Dawn’s knees gave way in white” (Crouch, 2011a: 80-81). These mental states of Father struck by the pain of death produce the aggressive, depressive and psychotic moments which are free from the limits of time and space. His mental breakdown carries him to a dreamy and illusionistic point that blocks rational thinking and logical interpretation. His words reveal what kind of illusion he is in: “I looked at the tree. A tree by the road. I touched it. And from the hollows and the spaces, I scooped up the properties of Claire and changed the physical substance of the tree into my daughter” (Crouch, 2011a: 89-90). He embraces the tree on the roadside where the girl has died by supposing that miraculously his daughter has transformed into this tree. He says, “I came to the roadside. I needed a hug from my girl” (Ibid). He keeps believing in his illusion as it can be seen in his dialogue with hypnotist:

FATHER: No, it’s not like that. I’m here because –I wanted to –I needed you to know. It’s good news.

Claire’s fine.

HYPNOTIST: What do you mean?

FATHER: She’s fine. I mean she’s okay.

She’s not okay.

I mean I found her.

I haven’t found her.

I mean I know where she is

I don’t know where she is.

Only

You have to help me.

I’ve done something.

Something impossible.

And I don’t know what to do.

Something miraculous. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 4)

Raymond Williams argues that “however men die, (...) the experience is not only the physical dissolution and ending; it is also a change in the lives and relationships of others, for we know death as much in the experience of others as in our own experience and endings” (1966: 80-81). Maybe the fear of the ending makes Father so depressed and rebellious to the fact. He does not want to accept the end of his daughter’s physical existence. The annihilator and devastating effects of death drag him in a hollow and depressive mode that contradicts the truth and logic. As Crouch reveals, “he [Father] finds her in absence, he finds her in conceptual absence, and he finds a more holy in a way than when she was alive as a girl” (Question and Answer, 2016: min 15.16). Father provides a new unbounded territory for his daughter to maintain her life in his imaginary world.

This narrative that reveals death and grief with a very unusual story line is crowned by unfamiliar and unconventional techniques of performance. Crouch’s interest in conceptual art shows itself in his approach to the play both as theme and form. Crouch says, “conceptual art was rooted in the losses of the first world war really at time where you couldn’t represent the world as you had done prior to that moment” (min 15.16). Dealing with imagination, abstract images and de-materiality; conceptual art includes many elements that also appeal to Crouch’s interest. Caridad Svich explains the new ways Crouch looks to establish his own theatricality; “in some senses the death that is being explored in *An Oak Tree* is the death of that traditional realism in theatre, that ‘sleight of hand’ (...) The audience and the play ‘meet’ to seek help from each other, to find a healing for the ‘loss’ they’ve suffered” (2006: par 6). The tragic effects of death are unclosed on stage following the new aesthetics of theatre and new experiences for the audience. This attitude that unites the tragic, aesthetic and audience experience is also stressed in Lehmann’s postdramatic tragedy. Lehmann professes it in general perspective:

The theatre brings forth a newly “aestheticized” dimension of the sphere that tragedy represents suffering, pain, death, conflict, self-destruction, collapse, doom, paradox, and what is unthinkable or intolerable. (...) Therefore, tragic experience, as theatrical experience, includes both an overcoming of apathy through the emotion of collectively experienced terror, as well as the necessary, distance-creating “interruption” of aesthetic bearing as such (2016: 56).

Defining *An Oak Tree* as the “metaphor with regard to the relationship of art to calamities everyday events” (Crouch, 2013: 232), Crouch handles sufferings of ordinary people in aesthetic frames. Additionally, he includes the audience in the production

process. In the performance, the author, the director, the second actor and the audience altogether go into the feelings of depression, guilt and sorrow step by step. The play invites the audience on the open space to discover the nature of this tragic condition and, to process and experience it altogether.

Crouch believes in the powerful effect of liveness in theatre and he emphasises “*An Oak Tree* is all about saying that theatre is something that is created ‘live’” (qtd. in Ilter, 2011: 400). What is produced on stage should not be fixed, closed or readily made. He looks for approaches that generate different decisions, unexpected actions and various responses. As in the idea of the second actor, Crouch likes taking risk for the sake of new theatricality. He is well aware of the limits of the theatre, for that reason when the relation of freedom and control is asked, Crouch replies underlying the need for order and structure: “Yes, I do believe strongly that structures do provide freedom and if you have no structure then you go to pieces. (...) What they don’t see is that within every action in *An Oak Tree* there is the possibility of a hundred other actions” (Davies, Crouch: 2). His explanation answers some criticisms about his so-called use of his second actor like a “puppet” or a “robot” (Pilný, 2016: 137). The first time when Crouch gives the script to the second actor to read happens on stage in front of the audience. That means that the storyline has been structured and the words of the actor have been determined before; however, as Lane puts forward that “the actor’s journey might be termed an ‘anticipated narrative’” (2010a: 134), because it is not a traditional text as in the dramatic theatre. The script limits the second actor only in terms of words, at that moment, the actor is free from representational limitations. On the one hand, Crouch draws a frame for his play, on the other hand he leaves spaces for the actor and the audience to act and move freely. Crouch presents a kind of text labyrinth for his second actor; he is free to act within the text, but he cannot exceed the border of it. Furthermore, this is a way to break the dramatic illusion by showing the audience this performance’s imaginary construction produced from a text. This is what the postdramatic theory refers to while saying that theatre is beyond textuality; text is processed on stage equally with all the theatrical elements and alternative staging.

For Crouch, ‘liveness’ appears on stage when “nothing is hidden – all the processes are exposed” (Wright, 2015, par 4), and this is actually similar to Lehmann’s ‘here and now effect’ in the postdramatic theory. The liveness of this play can be felt at any moment with the irruption of real and with the direct addresses to the audience. Especially, by means of the existence of the second actor who has not rehearsed the play

before, the audience is pulled into performance through the unexpected experience. The idea that the actor will be with no knowledge about the play needs the rotation of the actor in every performance. This idea is the product of the discussion of Crouch, Karl James, and Andy Smith about the best way for representation and the liveness. They realize that “the object can in turn be replaced by a changing performer and this became a ‘liberating constriction’ which facilitated a fast writing of the piece itself” (Radosavljevic, 2013: 155). This technique liberates the actor from memorizing and mimicry, and the audience from the illusion of the constructed fictional space. Even in the prologue, Crouch gives her/his role in front of the audience:

FATHER: What are you being?

HYPNOTIST: I’m being a hypnotist.

Look.

I’m fifty-one years old. I’ve got a red face, a bold head and bony shoulders. (This must be an accurate description of the actor playing the HYPNOTIST).

Look.

I’m wearing these clothes.

Now ask who you are, say ‘And me?’

FATHER: And me?

HYPNOTIST: You are a father. Your name is Andy You are 46 years old, you’re six foot two. Your lips are cracked. Your fingernails are dirty. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 1)

As Crouch writes in the part ‘Notes for Second Actor’, the second actor steps on stage accompanied by Crouch, and then waits for Crouch’s instructions. No information about the story or the performative techniques is given before; during the performance she/he is given a script to read, she/he is asked to follow the instruction and she/he is expected to vocalize what Crouch says audibly or inaudibly via headphones. The use of the headphone reminds “headphone-verbatim technique of performance”⁷ (Garson, Gonzalez, 2019: par 17) that provides plurality for narrative and challenges the techniques of grand narratives. Besides that, it shows the effect of technology in contemporary plays and the functional use of it for unusual experience.

It is obvious that the second actor is not built in the conventional sense, so his performance on stage does not fit into the traditional acting methods. Crouch knows what he expects from his actor: “I didn’t want an actor who would do acting –I think I

⁷ Cyrielle Garson explains headphone-verbatim theatre as “a paperless form of performance featuring the faithful reproduction of speech patterns whereby actors are required to wear headphones and speak along to a sequence of carefully edited audio interviews” (See, Garson, Cyrielle. (2014). “Remixing Politics: The Case of Headphone-Verbatim Theatre in Britain”, *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, 2(1), (50-62), 51.)

got quite bored or tired or depressed about acting” (Radosavljevic, 2013: 220). Any physical resemblance with the character is not required; any age, any sex, any height are fine for this character, though he is depicted with certain physical characteristics in the script. Crouch points out that “*An Oak Tree* is consciously designed to resist the notions of superficial typecasting that pervade the acting profession like a disease -a world where people have to look like their characters, rather than their characters just happening to look like them” (2007: par 8). Therefore, as the second actor, he chooses anyone who is not familiar with the depiction of the second character of the play. Considering the construction of the characters, Crouch emphasises that he presents “no casting criteria in any traditional sense” (2011a: 55); no early preparation, no memorization, no mimicry, no costume or no design. The status of the second actor is also important to show the people’s status in general against the death; the second actor does not know the story beforehand, and she/he is given a script on stage or he is given her/his word to say. That means she/he faces to the theme of death in an instant without any preparation for it physically and mentally even if it occurs in fictional world. Father depicts the very moment it comes in the third scene. “Death. Death walked through into the lounge. He put his helmet on the piano stool, spoke to us silver. He then pronounced two concrete blocks in black and left them to hang inside my ribcage, pushing against my lungs” (81). In real life, death can come suddenly, and there is no true time for the encounter with death since people never be prepare to it. The suddenness and unexpectedness of the death can be found even in the second actor’s unrehearsed action to perform this play.

The audience can see the second actor’s endeavours for being the character while she/he is struggling for reading the script on stage, feeling the true emotions or trying to catch the words Crouch says through the wireless receiver and transfer these words to the audience. These words of Crouch liken the summary of his attempts and aim in this performance:

The second actor plays a character who is lost in their life. And that character is played by an actor who is ‘lost’ on the stage. The form supports the story: the story supports the form. The device also contributes to my search for ‘liveness’ in theatre –the audience see the choices that are made from moment to moment throughout the performance. Nothing is hidden –all the processes are exposed (qtd. in Wright, 2015: par 3).

One of the second actors of this play in 2015 Edinburg Performance talks about her experiences in an after-show question and answers. She says, “it ... puts you on a little action, it’s like different. I completely lost the track of who I was and what I was doing (...) because I didn’t know I am performing myself to what extent (...) I am quite shaky now because that’s such an unusual” (Question and Answer, 2016: min 0. 39). Michael Pinchbeck refers to other works which use the guest performer such as Pinchbeck’s *the Man who Few into Space from his Apartment* (2015) or Nassim Soleimanpour’s *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* (2010). He defines the production of the play on stage:

The performance takes place in liminal space between composition and dissemination and sees dramaturgy as process and product. The text is the seed, but it grows in different ways depending on how it is interpreted by the performer. It is germinated in performance in front of an audience not the usual incubation in the rehearsal room (Pinchbeck, 2016, 64).

The detection about Crouch’s play’s ‘germination in front of the audience’ is significant in highlighting to highlight both the textual and the performative sides of them, also the interaction between the living elements of theatre. The performance is unfolded altogether regarding the script of the playwright, instruction of the director, responses of the second actor, the reception of the audience and all other theatrical elements from music to the lighting.

In this collaborative performance, the story is unfolded by the multi-layered representations. Highlighting the postdramatic aesthetics, fiction and fact, real persona and the performer, the audience and the show watcher are intermingled on stage. Both the audience and the second actor in the play feel uncertain and lost between real and imagination, presence and absence, abstract and concrete. Firstly, Crouch and the second actor, Father, appear on stage in their real identities. Crouch introduces the second actor to the audience emphasizing that she/he has never read the script and never rehearsed the performance. Then, he reveals her/his role in the performance: “I’m being a Hypnotist. Look. I’m forty one years old. I’ve got a red face, a bald head and bony shoulders’ (Crouch, 2011a: 59). After distributing their roles in front of the audience, Crouch lets them be in the fictional world. In this second layer, a fictional future is created “in a pub a year from now” (60). In this pub, the hypnotist and Father encounter in the hypnosis show. Other fictional layer is created about the death of the girl and grief of the family with retrospection to the past. Crouch does not present these different layers in a linear narrative. These layers are so interwoven that both the actor and the

audience hardly catch the incidents and be certain about whether they are real or fictional; whether they are a part of hypnosis show or a part of Father's story. Lane reveals this feeling of uncertainty suggesting that "as the whole play revolves around the idea of hypnosis and pretence, the theatrical world of the piece encourages a suspension of disbelief and a willingness to play" (2010a: 134).

FATHER: Could I ask a question about my character?

HYPNOTIST: Of course.

FATHER: What does he do for a living?

HYPNOTIST: I've always assumed he's a teacher. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 6)

In this conversation, performers appear in the first level in which they reveal their real identities. On stage, they talk about their fictional characters attributing some features to them, this causes the break of dramatic illusion in the narrative and the alienation from the character for the audience. There is another dialogue which shows another layer of the play. In this scene, Father is hypnotized and he feels naked and shit his pant:

HYPNOTIST: Yes. Yes. All right. I'm sorry. You're naked. You have shit down your legs. (...) Here. Let me clean you up. Here, with this cloth. This is the right kind of cloth, isn't it? Say: 'Yes.'

FATHER: Yes. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 7)

Here, Crouch challenges the audience's perception by using a kind of 'performance within a performance' technique. The fictional hypnotist's show unfolds another fictional level while Father is behaving under the effect of the hypnosis. Hypnotist pretends as if Father was really dirty and naked, he cleans and clothes him on stage. And then the deepest level appears in the mind of Father:

FATHER: I've changed it into Claire.

HYPNOTIST: I say "Our girl is dead, love. She's dead. I say "That is a tree, I am your wife, this is your daughter, that is a road. This is what matters. This. This is what we have to deal with. This. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 7)

Clearly, this play appeals to the audience's feelings, minds and imaginations at the same time; these different layers are too intertwined to comprehend with unidirectional shallow observation. These interlinked narratives, identities and spaces are the reflection of the contemporary fluidity and borderlessness. Now, multiple and unclear identities, undefinable and accidental incidents challenge established definitions. As in the play, one performer can represent many characters at the same time or be present in real and fictional spaces at the same time. People can go beyond the limitation using their imagination, relatively, materiality and visibility cannot be seen enough to determine

these limits. For that reason, believing in the power of human imagination, Crouch chooses a minimalized setting for his performance. There are eight chairs and a piano stool on stage, apart from the technological devices like microphone or speakers. Anyway, he knows to use his limited objects very functionally. Crouch intentionally misemploys these objects; chairs turn into the daughter or into the volunteers of the show, and piano stool into a tree on the roadside, the bare floor into the road. Getting inspired from Martin's conceptual art that transforms a glass of water into a tree, Crouch enlarges the space of his performance by benefiting this idea of transformation both in construction of character and in staging of the storyline.

FATHER: And his other daughter. (...)

HYPNOTIST: Marcia.

FATHER: How old is she?

HYPNOTIST: I don't know. Whatever you think

FATHER: 'about five?'

HYPNOTIST: '[f]ive's good

FATHER: Do you ever see her?

HYPNOTIST: She appears as a chair. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 6)

This technique is very tricky to stimulate the audience participation in the performance and to enlarge their imagination. Challenging ready-made and materialist representational performances, Crouch applies the misemployment of the objects that activate free association in audience's mind and widen their imagination. *An Oak Tree* does not restrict the audience to think about the character with certain physical appearances; in their mind they can depict these characters with any physical quality. Very limited information is given about them other than their gender or their familial position in order not to limit the construction of character in their imagination.

Crouch even gives the role to his audiences; the audience is drawn into another fictional space where they are given role as the costumers of the pub who watch the hypnosis. Now the bare stage turns into the upstairs of a pub, and the audience into fictional audiences of another performance. Feeling pulled into the performance, the audience experiences the transitions of many narratives and many characters in mind blowing way, like a Russian nested doll. In performance, Crouch benefits from the music to give the audience clues about the narrative spaces; for instance Carl Orff's 'O Fortuna' by Carmina Burana is played to represent the tragic fate of the family or cheesy 'come on down' music for entertainment in the hypnosis show, the trance music during the hypnosis, then Aria from Bach for the final scene. The tension of the tragic is

lessened with the clownish music in hypnotist show and comic trance moments. Under the trance, Father thinks he shits himself when he hears a fart sound, or he plays the imaginary piano. These kinds of moments present relief for the heavy mood of the grief and sorrow. Although partly these music pieces appeal to the emotions and make some scenes more tragic or some scenes clownish, its main function is to provide a completeness of the performance and narrative in audience's mind.

Marigold Hughes likens hypnotism and theatre by pointing out “theatre reaches its audience by bypassing the rational part of our mind in order to appeal to the irrational, subconscious part” (2007, par 7). Theatre's power to create alternative realities cannot be comprehended by logic and mind alone; the irrational, emotional and imaginary sides are necessary to catch multiple experiences and possible meanings. The final scene is presented as a trance scene and these two characters hypnotise each other to wake up for a free alternative future:

HYPNOTIST: When I say sleep, she lifts her hand up.

When I say sleep, you say goodbye.

FATHER: When I say sleep, everything stops

HYPNOTIST: When I say sleep, you're free again.

FATHER: When I say sleep, you're free. (*An Oak Tree*, Scene 8)

This play finalizes with a kind of hypnosis two grieving characters want to be in. In the fictional narrative, if the hypnosis works, the characters will be experiencing a transformation from mourning to freedom. It is like a passage from one hypnotic world created by the pain of death to another hypnotic world created by posthypnotic amnesia. Like the state of Father and Hypnotist in this play, contemporary people are shocked and hypnotised by the grief and sorrow of death, and they are vulnerable and helpless against it. Even if it is thought as a part the cycle of world, it can be hardly possible to accept it as just another death after experiencing its destructive effects in person.

As the final word, Crouch's *An Oak Tree* is a highly powerful work which mesmerizes its participants and audiences with its theme and theatricality. On its tragic figures who experience the depressive effects of death, this play show irreparableness of the loss of beloved ones and toughness of overcome the grief and guilt. To explore the unpleasant side of death altogether on stage, any possibilities of theatre are used. Crouch drives apart his performance from the world with concrete, visible and touchable substances. He makes use of the idea of conceptual art and the power of hypnosis to enlarge his theatrical practices and to widen the vision and experience of performers and

the audience. The nature of death, and the sorrows and helplessness of human beings in front of death are put on the stage with experimental techniques like the inclusion of the unprepared second actor or the use of dematerialized theatricality. The shared experience in the course of performance shows that this play is not acted on stage; it is lived on stage together.

4.3. *ENGLAND*: Tragic Victims

ENGLAND is Crouch's third play written for adult audiences that surprises them with its sophisticated themes and unconventional techniques but never disappoints them on stage. Commissioned by Traverse Theatre, co-directed by Karl James and Andy Smith, this play premiered in Fruitmarket Gallery in 2007. It won many awards like Fringe First Award, Total Theatre Award, and Herald Archangel Award in its homeland, also gained international success in the galleries of many cities in different countries from Lisbon, Madrid, Singapore, Quebec, Tehran to Hong Kong and many others. The play presents serious issues through the symbolic and complex relationships, and through reflections from the contemporary lives and perceptions from different parts of the world. Choosing the gallery as the setting for his play, Crouch once again shows the close relation between theatre and art, also widens the vision of his theatricality by unlimiting his performance with time, place or any established rules. He distorts the traditional roles of the actor, the audience and the character, and rebuilds them with collaborative performative aesthetics. In the play, Crouch presents everything in a duality; a luxury life is accompanied by death, artistic works by money, human life by money and European character by non-European character.

ENGLAND is composed of two scenes that occur in two different rooms of the gallery. Entitled as 'Dabbing' and 'Wringing,' these two acts emphasise two related physical actions that are left for the audience's interpretation. Written in the form of two handers, as in *An Oak Tree*, this play consists of two characters/performers; however, in an unfamiliar way, Crouch and the other performer Hannah Ringham employ their roles in alternative rotation. Before revealing the story of the play in storytelling technique, two performers welcome the visitor/audience in the art gallery, and like a real guide show some works to them and give some information about the gallery. Their synchronized presence is the clue for the uncertainty of the character. Being suitable for Lehmann's actor as the text bearer, these characters only perform the role of telling the story for the audience. While structuring one of these characters in the play, Crouch

never gives any clue about this character's sex, nationality, belief or physical appearance. Very few things are known about her/him other than her/his illness and relationship. Crouch leaves the audience alone with their imaginative power to construct this character in their mind. He says:

Hannah Ringham and myself are two performers in that play: we remove ourselves away from character to such a degree that you don't know if that character is male or female; we speak on behalf of the same character, but we never genderise that character. So, there are all sorts of issues that get really explored in *ENGLAND* (qtd. in İlter, 2011: 402).

The audience is invited in an “act of mental supplementation” (Radosavljevic, 2013: 156) and they create their own character, not character of the playwright. From the telling of this character, the audience learns that she/he has a rich art-dealer boyfriend, and they are living in a flat in Southwark. This rich boyfriend can speak many languages; he sells and buys works of art in international markets in overseas countries. The art dealer boyfriend provides luxury life for the character, but in the following narratives it is understood that she/he has fatal heart problem that requires transplantation. She/he reveals her/his experiences about the illness, the pain she/he feels and the psychological condition she/he is in, then she/he mostly repeats the discourses on the importance of art for life, and mentions her/his relationship with this boyfriend. Her/his illness gets worse, and she/he takes the time in hospitals and surgery clinics. The act ends with a heart attack of the character that finalizes with this phrase “the end of the world” (Crouch, 2011a: 142).

Surprisingly, in the second act, the same character appears named as ‘English’, but still no more information is presented about her/his age, sex, appearance, sexual orientation or gesture. The audience is invited to another room in the gallery which is imagined as a hotel in unspecified country. Again, two performers are on stage, now other characters appear in fictional level; Hassam, the man whose heart has been transplanted to English, the Widow who is Hassam's wife and the Interpreter who functions as the communicator between English and Widow. Approximately twelve months later, after the death of Hassam and after the transplantation, this character comes to this country to thank to the widow of Hassam. He was the original owner of the heart. She/he brings an expensive work of art to give as a present for the heart given to her/him. The widow is not interested in this gift at all and mourns for her husband thinking he was killed for selling his heart. English and this woman need an interpreter

to communicate and reveal their intention. One of the performers acts as an interpreter who speaks only English and translates the second language which is not given in play. The other performer becomes English, and then in the half of the scene they switch their roles. The audience overtakes the role of the grieving Muslim widow who wears the veil. Different languages, different emotional conditions and different perceptions of them make their communication barely impossible. The woman does not want anything from English, no expensive gifts, she only wants to touch English's heart to feel her husband's existence. With the words of English "what did she say?" (159), the play ends.

Crouch's character chosen for this play shows that in the contemporary period most people are trapped and lost in certain systems shaped by economic, political, cultural or religious ideologies. Individual and communal decisions, taken consciously or unconsciously, affect all other people's lives directly or indirectly. In the play, different tragic figures can be searched on the basis of four characters: English, boyfriend, Hassam and Hassam's wife. They appear as perpetrator or victim, exploiter or exploited, the privileged or the ignored. These characters in the play live these incidents in their small microcosm, when these incidents are thought in wider perspective counting bigger communities, then the severity of the situation can be clearer. In the first scene, the character tells about her/his illness; she/he feels useless, desperate and physically weak. She/he waits for death among her/his enviable luxury life with beloved boyfriend and she/he wishes to be alive, to live longer with her/his boyfriend as it can be realized from these words: "Where is my/ strength gone? ... I hate it when my boyfriend doesn't get what he wants. I wonder if everything stops. I wonder if there is an afterlife. There must be. All this beauty can't just stop, can it?" (119-120). This illness negatively affects the progress of life and her/his relationship. She/he is physically, emotionally and psychologically weak and in search of tiny-teeny hope for her/his terminal illness. She/he tries to accept death; she/he makes plans about her/his burial, the song to play during the funeral while her/his boyfriend is trying to stop her/him. Thanks to her/his luck and also thanks to money she/he is transplanted a heart, nevertheless after the surgery, this character, now named as English, cannot achieve to catch happiness because of the dreams with snakes, elephants and other animals. Feeling uneasy and aiming to find the reason of these bad dreams, English decides to go to the place where the former owner of the heart lived before. Following the arrival of this unspecified middle east city, she/he meets the interpreter and the talk about this country:

ENGLISH: (...) When do you go back?

INTERPRETER: I live here.

ENGLISH: Here! Bloody hell! Good on you.

What a place.

I don't think I could live here.

Hard to see how they're feeling with just the eyes. (*ENGLAND*, Act 2)

When the title of the play -ENGLAND- and the character name -English- are considered, this illness and unsettled heart of this character can be interpreted as symbolic references to peaceless and “a culture’s corrupt heart” (Thomas, 2009: 1) and the transplantation refers to the necessary intervention to heal it. For some critics, English’s diseased heart is also associated with political and economic issues concerning “Western intrusion in the Middle East and Africa” (Pilný, 2016: 143). English’s manner and ongoing unsuccessful dialogues with the widow give enough reasons to discuss about the stereotypes and otherness created between people in different parts of the world. Interpreter is from Manchester, and English really wonders stereotypically and scornfully how this person lives in this developing country. Furthermore, she/he chooses “somewhere neutral” (Radosavljevic, 2013: 222) to meet the widow by avoiding any interaction with other people of that country or by securing her/his position. Clearly, she/he is a stranger to the culture and religion of this country otherwise, she/he cannot oversimplify wearing the Islamic veil as only covering the face. These kinds of scenes in the play direct the audience to think about the concept of value; value given for art, value given for human life, value given for human belief. Svich critically claims that: “Inside a lexicon of failure -failed utterances, failed bodies, failed and foiled transactions, collapsing words, and wounded hearts- *ENGLAND* questions how a colonizing body wrests the objectivity of narrative from a subjected Other” (2009: par 8). Hassam and his wife are perfect samples to mirror failed interactions, wounded heart and the other marginalized half. Hassam, 26-year-old young man, is a victim of a terrorist attack that shows the tragic face of the endless turmoil and the war of developing countries, additionally he is the victim of the capitalist and consumerist ideology and Western privileges. According to his wife’s claims, his heart is taken away when he is in a coma, his life becomes the issue of exchange like an object that can be sold and bought to save another life:

INTERPRETER: The agent offered me 300,000 if I would give permission for my husband’s heart to be taken. I couldn’t believe my husband was dead. I was told that he would recover. His eyes were open. I forbade the operation... My

husband wasn't dead. I signed a paper. There was an American. (*An Oak Tree*, Act 2)

Here, the truths about heart transplantation are not totally revealed, for that reason it leaves shady discussions in audience's mind. The possibility of the rightness of widow's claim make the twenty first century theatre audiences worried. Can this fictional story really be the real story of someone? This century has been heralding freedom, heterogeneity and globalization before it comes, how is it now? In point of fact, many discourses have been produced on that idea; world is a global village and each person is the citizen of it by referring the unification and togetherness of all people regardless of their race, color, religion, or any features. Furthermore there is a powerful universal document, Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 that securitizes right of each human being in earth and that aims the foundation of peace, freedom and justice and the prevention human right abuse with many articles like the article 2 which says, "no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty" (Universal Declaration of Human Right, 4-6). For that reason, each person has a right to expect equal treatment and equal opportunity.

It is sad to witness that today's world could not be freed from homogeneity and standardization at all. Humanity could not achieve to develop unbiased acceptance of any nationality, religion or culture; especially false histories or anger and hate speeches easily manipulate communities against the others. Sometimes the fabricated polarizations like East vs West or Islam vs Christianity complicates everything about the sense of togetherness and common life awareness. These kinds of categorizations generate prejudices, injustices, hostility, and otherness between societies or nationalities. One of the theorists working on cultural and mostly known for his ideas on Orientalism and Occidentalism, Edward Said asserts that there is a distinction considering ontological and epistemological differences related to people's customs, beliefs or life style etc. which is accepted by most of writers, philosophers, political theorists or sociologists. To Said, Orientalism was produced by European culture systematically: "European culture was able to manage- and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post Enlightenment period" (1977: 3-4). The Orient does not occur as a free subject, she/he is surrounded by limited imposed qualities and actions; however, this is

not the only determiner for the Orient. This cannot be separated from the colonial experiences of the European countries in Eastern world. As Said highlights, colonial past brings the industrial and economic hegemony for the Occident and the constructed distinction built as being “European and non-European” flames cultural hegemony, the idea of being superior against non-European peoples and cultures (8).

In the play, Crouch’s characters and stories can be read from this dichotomic perspective. Many non-European characters such as Gp. doctor Kumar, Doctor Frempong from Ghana, Cardiologist Mrs. Raad from Lebanon appear as the saviour for the ill character and they seem to be specifically revealed. On one side these characters can be read as a reference for the multicultural identity of England, on the other side they are thought as a “central image to the use of brain power and labour from poorer countries by Europeans” (Pilný, 2016: 143). In this concept, (if Crouch’s theatrical attempt to avoid distraction in story with another language is put aside) even the absence of the second language can be interpreted as the ignorance of the language of a non-western country: “The form of the play invites us to see two processes active at once: translation, and the theatrical process of deconstructing character to words, gestures and a paradoxical ‘presence’” (Lane, 2010a: 136). The widow is only allowed to exist with translated other language. She could not raise her voice; she is silenced by the dominant language. Furthermore, the final words come from English, and play finalizes without waiting for the answer from the widow as if the dominancy of western language is shown over unprivileged eastern culture.

As Crouch says, “there is a huge clash between these values, between culture, art and place” (Davies, Crouch: 1). This big gap in values is seen when English tries to give very expensive present as a reflection of gratitude:

ENGLISH: (...) I have a present, a gift, to thank you, to say thank you. To help you.

I brought it from England. (...) It’s a work of art. (...)

You can do what you like with it. Sell it or keep it. It’s yours. A lot of money.

For food, or clothes, or water. For your village. For whatever you want... A lot of money... It’s yours. Look.

INTERPRETER: She asks if she can listen to you. If she can listen at your chest.

...

INTERPRETER: She says that she recognizes her husband.

She can hear her husband. (*ENGLAND*, Act 2)

English thinks that the expensive present can relieve the grieving widow economically and emotionally, but the grieving widow cannot be deluded by the materialism. She feels desperate by thinking her husband was murdered for his heart, and all she wants is to feel her husband once again by hearing his heartbeat. When her/his lifestyle is taken into account, it is not surprising to see English in that position. In the first scene, she/he says, “we’re here to see a leading heart surgeon who has agreed to see what can do for me. It helps to have a rich boyfriend” (Crouch, 2011a: 142). English experiences all the advantages of having lots of money and it is seen in the very beginning of the second scene. The first scene finalises with this stage direction; “*The end of the world*” (Ibid), the character has a heart attack and with a false ending it is suggested that she/he has died. The power of money brings this character back as English, and the end of world may come for other poor ill people.

This character, “the privileged protagonist” (Delgado-García, 2015: 81), lives with an art dealer boyfriend who is obviously a representative of the capitalist world order. He commodifies the works of art thinking that the best art equals great amount of money. He looks at art as a source of money because art sells everywhere, and capital works anywhere. Underlying “art’s relationship to late capitalism and commodification” (78), like a protest of the materialised art world, Crouch intentionally creates this rich man who sees art as an object. This mindset damages value of art and degrades art to a commodity to sell. Crouch’s conscious choice of art galleries as the setting for this play is a reaction to materialized and exploited art, and he gives art its real status. In this “site-specific play” (Kovačeva, 2017: 54), the audience finds the opportunity to visit an art gallery and to watch a performance at the same time. Deliberately, the gallery is not turned into a theatre stage. The play does not progress as the individual performance apart from the gallery; the storyline is mingled with the setting of the gallery and arts of the exhibitions. Crouch explains this process by saying “you come to a gallery, and in the process of being in a gallery, we start to take you somewhere else, not through material transformation, not through sets, not through anything like that, but through language, through text” (qtd. in İlter, 2011: 402). It is very adaptable to the architecture of the gallery and the arts presented there. Not fixed setting is required.

Crouch wants to live the moment all together feeling the space of the gallery, feeling the power of the art and theatre together. A labyrinth text is constructed with spatial labyrinths entrapping the audience and the actors in the tragic events. The togetherness of the fictional world of the play and the physical structure of the gallery

redefines the traditional setting concept in the audience's minds. Especially, during the progress of the story, the references given about the works of art in the gallery room strengthen the power of the setting and the audience experiences being the audience and also the visitor of the art gallery at the same time. The story is narrated alternately with references to art works, some of them are present in the room or some of them imaginatively structured. Through the utterances of the protagonist, Crouch emphasises the importance of art; its effect in people's inner world, and its healing power: "This is my doctor's surgery. (...) Look. The patients like to look at the paintings. It helps them feel better about their illnesses" (2011a: 123-124). Internalizing the ideals of conceptual art and rejecting materialisation, two performers enact their performance in an empty room free from any objects. The room is filled with words of the performance, presence and imaginations of the audience. To Crouch, "it doesn't need sets, costumes and props, but exists inside an audience's head" (qtd. in Fisher, 2007: par 4). Here the audience can sit, but they are asked to overtake the role of the widow. Now, they are not only present in physical space of the play, but in the fictional level the audience appears as the Hassam's grieving widow. Especially this is an unusual experience for the audience imagination to look or not to look at themselves as 'the other' from their own point of view. Crouch reveals the effect he aims to create on the audience with these words:

They have bought into all the values that are contained within this space and I want to then take the values that are contained within that space and place them somewhere else where they do not have the same meaning and that issue of Western Art and Eastern art and the value of art and life" (Davies, Crouch: 3).

For different aesthetics used in the construction of different special layers, Crouch borrows the term the "gnoseological space" from Brazilian theatre maker, Augusto Boal (quoted in. Davies, Crouch: 2). Boal asserts that "the aesthetic space possessesgnoseological properties, that is, properties which stimulate knowledge and discovery, cognition and recognition: properties which stimulate the process of learning by experience. Theatre is a form of knowledge" (1995: 20). As in *ENGLAND*, different real and fictional, micro and macro spaces widen the scope of the audience, challenge their perceptions, invite them to live experience and provide new theatrical methods for the Crouchian polymorphous theatre.

Maria Cristina Cavecchi likens Crouch's use of gallery to usage of "laboratory for experiment" (2018: 131). In the gallery, Crouch enlarges the physical restrictions of place and benefits from the works of art in gallery alongside his own unconventional

theatrical techniques. In this gallery, Crouch not only presents a visual feast for the audience, but also opens a discussion area for very serious and tragic matters of the contemporary world. He always reminds that he is not a politic writer by saying, “But I’m so not David Hare. It’s not about wanting to use theatre as a vehicle for political debate; there are better vehicles for that” (Fisher, 2007: par 6), but it can be said that he stays on human side by not closing his eyes to the problems of contemporary people. In *ENGLAND*, he is not deaf to certain subjects like late capitalism, consumerism, injustices, elitisms, Orientalism, exploitation etc. Cristina Delgado-García observes that Crouch engages in “how we are together, and what we mean to each other when we are together” (Delgado-García, 2015: 76), so in *ENGLAND* Crouch reveals many aspects of human nature.

When reading ethical dilemmas in this play, we realize the rightness of Elizabet Kovačeva who claims the close relation of the abundance of tragic conflict and multiculturalism in contemporary world (2017: 57-58). In theory, the world becomes globalized; colours, nationalities, beliefs and customs are thought to be the parts of a whole unit. In a similar way, the rich art dealer boyfriend is described as “he is citizen of the world” (Crouch, 2011a: 113) in the play. Unfortunately, in practice, the existence of full equality and human rights can be questionable when there is privilege for some individuals or groups. In the play, considering the behaviours of characters and their interaction to each other, it is inevitable to be disagreed with Bottom’s ideas on this play. He says, “*ENGLAND* is a ruthlessly satirical exploration of Western presumptions and privileges, in a globalized world order, and we the audience are implicated directly in its critique by believing cast, collectively, in this single role of the veiled Muslim women” (18). The widow and her dead husband are the victims of the unrighteously built social order; they appear as the modern tragic heroes while suffering and even dying in the middle of wars, inequalities and imperialist capitalist system. In contemporary tragic writings, tragic heroes are not only defined with their flaws, transgression or conflict but also their victimized status in society; in the world. There are tragic figures who are the rings of the chain in this system, but they cannot be happy and satisfied at all since they are hunted by guilty conscience, greed, fear of loss, selfishness, etc. And there are victimized tragic figures whose lives are turned upside down because of domestic turbulence in society and chaos in the world order. Once again Rousseau’s words ring in ears; “the chains of man were man-forged. They could be broken by human hammers” (qtd. in Steiner, 2013: 84).

4.4. *The Author: Tragic Self-Destruction*

The Author is Crouch's fourth play written for the adult audience and it is the most controversial, notorious, disturbing and violent one among all the others. Commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre, this play was premiered in Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in 2009 under the directorship of Karl James and Andy Smith. This is such a violent and annoying play that the audience is warned about it before their arrival of the auditorium, "there will be disturbing images and periods of darkness" (Crouch, 2011b: 416). In this play, all hierarchies are dismantled; stage and auditorium, the audience and the performer, the author and the performer, the director and the author are intermingled; the borders of real and fiction are blurred. In addition to this, Crouch does not call any audience to the stage, now performers become the host of the audience by sitting among them. Performers use the storytelling technique to narrate their stories in a random order, but these stories are not the ordinary cheerful stories; they are highly violent and abusive to test the tolerance and patience of the audience. There is no stage in this play, the stage is positioned among the audience; there are two banks of audience facing each other which provide a "multi-directional, panoptic visibility" (Hubbard, 2013: 23) for performers and the audience. Crouch specifically writes in performance notes "the audience should be beautifully lit and cared for" (2011a: 164). That means, the play is structured around words, stories, mutual stares and glimpses of audience and performers. The auditorium of the audience turns into a stage, and in this way the audience mentally, imaginatively and physically becomes a part of the performance.

The play consists of four performers and all performers are called with their real names in the play. Only the name of the author Tim Crouch remains unchanged, other names can change according to the changing performers of different performances. When the play begins, the first performer who talks among the audience is Adrian. He has the role of the Royal Court lover audience and surprisingly he talks to the audience as if he was an ordinary audience who tries to make friend with them. He asks about their names, professions, or many other personal matters. At first sight the audience cannot be sure at all whether he is an audience or one of the performers.

ADRIAN: I love this. This is great, isn't it great?
 .. This is such a versatile space. Isn't it versatile?
 It's amazing what they can do. They can do anything. Can't they? (space) ... I
 am Adrian and you are? Hello! (*The Author*, 165)

The audience is not forced to answer, these direct questions are not to make the audience under pressure to answer, but to create togetherness and fun. In addition, Crouch benefits the power of the music saying, “it brings us into the here and now and helps the audience to feel good about being together. It can play for a long time without anything happening” (164). So, accompanied by music, both Adrian and the audience wait for a while for other performers to unfold their stories. These stories are not revealed in a certain order or a dialogical way; they are structured in the layers of the play-within-play technique. It is a fact that, as in his other plays, Crouch never attempts to present dramatic illusion for his audiences and here the metatheatrical techniques strengthen the awareness of the audience and also the storyline of the performance. The author and two actors try to get prepared for the staging of the fictional author Tim’s⁸ play, and this rehearsal process brings tough times for all of them to adapt the real life after the staging of this violent play. Crouch creates a self-reflexive play with *The Author*, the performers exist on stage being present at two fictional levels. Ester undertakes the character, daughter Eshna; Vic becomes abuser father character. The story that reveals the domestic abuse subjected to a daughter by his father and the violence and disgust are multiplied by the violent images and videos watched by the actors as the preparation for the play. Furthermore, Tim’s final act, the child pornography and the abuse of the baby are the peak point for the violation ethics and morality.

Crouch uses the metatheatrical technique to comment on naturalistic and mimetic theatricality through the author and characters and the process of the rehearsal. Crouch confesses that he puts theatre in question by representing “hyper-naturalistic rehearsal techniques” (Crouch, 2011b: 416), additionally Bottoms finds in this play merciless satire of In-Yer-Face tradition (2011: 459). Crouch depicts the creation process of a play that adapts the mission of conveying explicitly and empathically the pain of the real world. The playwright Tim asks his actors to work on the real pain of people to convey true emotions on stage. Vic explains what is expected from them as the actors:

VIC: Tim said, with a monologue, the most important thing is to know who you are speaking to... You can’t just pick a spot above the audience’s head and deliver it into the middle distance! You have to give the audience the character, a relationship to you. ... They have to may be need convincing of something or persuading of something or rousing or enlisting. Imagine them as a child or- or a

⁸ To avoid any confusion between the real and fictional author Tim Crouch, Crouch will be used for the real author and Tim will be used for the fictional author character.

confessor. ... Then the relationship between me and the audience is alive, is real, not rhetorical but active. ... Tim said you should get them to a point where they almost feel able to answer back. Or shout out. (*The Author*, 170-171)

This is the fictional author Tim's expectations from his actors. The imitation of the real sufferers and the identification with the sorrowful characters on stage are shown necessary to pull the audience in the emotion and to persuade them about the realness of fictional world presented on stage. Therefore, to be able to catch the true emotions for the play, the actors search for what is happening in the real world and they collect images, news, and videos and the real-life stories. The author tells his actors "if we do not represent them then we are in danger of denying their existence" (Crouch, 2011a: 183) by reminding the words of Kane⁹ when she is advocating the use of violence in her plays. So, the actors need to recognize and absorb that "violence happens around us all the time" (Ibid). They watch many videos, like the video of the raped pregnant prisoner woman by the soldiers or the beheaded soldier by the terrorist. Then the actors find living witnesses; Vic finds Pavol whose family has been killed, and his son has been also shot in massacre. Esther goes to the shelter and talks to the woman, Karen, who has been raped by his father when she was a teenager. Esther turns into this character Karen, and answers Tim's question about her abuse in a mutual conversation. After many tragic stories, these actors cannot get over the post-traumatic effects of what they have seen and heard. The play leaves detrimental effects and irreparable damages on them. Vic turns into a more violent and brutal character in his real life, Ester becomes estranged from her family and her baby.

To Gareth White, the play is a strong criticism of Tim's theatre as an "institution that is parasitic on real-life suffering" because "it seems that the theatre is anything but a 'safe space' from which to observe life, but more hazardous for its professionals than for audiences" (2013: 190-191). Crouch believes that in order to convey the real-life sufferings, the characters do not need to suffer on stage, the performers can appear as the text bearers as in postdramatic theatre. The empathetic role-playing in violent plays is a difficult task for the actors since it requires a strong psychology to endure witnessing the violence. Moreover, the illusion also blinds the mind of the audience who cannot escape from the images of the violence and mixture of real and fiction. This authentic

⁹ Sarah Kane says, "If you are saying you can't represent something, you are saying you can't talk about it, you are denying its existence". (See Graham Saunders, *"Love me or kill me": Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 24).

role playing can be hypnotic for some audiences who only focus on the emotions not the conscious process. This is one of the motivations in the play that avoids the performers acting mimetically and empathetically. Remembering his days of acting when he was asked to act empathetically, Crouch confesses his disbelief of “art’s role to naturalistically imitate reality” (2011b: 416). In this play, performers sit on their seats and without performing any mimetic action; they reveal their stories, and they do not have any attempt to be realistic and to make the performance reliable. The human mind is rich and powerful to imagine without only seeing but also hearing. This is an alternative for the mimetic performances, and here the stories are revealed by storytelling techniques not with the actions and expressions. The stories are depicted by specific descriptive narration to let the audience draw a picture of these violent scenes in their mind. In this manner, the theatre’s safe place for the audience is also shattered not through the actions and visuals but through the active imagination, bombardments of the narration of the violent acts and distracting non-linear monologues from the performers.

Another important issue to debate in this play is that why the audience Adrian feels so safe in theatre while watching all the violent, guilt-laden and bloody scenes. He talks to the other audiences by explaining:

ADRIAN: it’s all safe! I’ve seen everything imaginable here. I’ve seen bum sex and rimming and cock sucking and wankings and rapings and stabbings and shootings and bombings. Bombings and bummings! ... so many blindings! ... A baby stone to death. ... a dead baby get eaten! that was great! ... It’s such an education. (*The Author*, 192)

It goes without saying that, British theatre is not unfamiliar to the narratives of violence and its representation onstage blatantly. As it is also referred to in *The Author*, in many daring plays like Edward Bond’s 1965 *Saved* or Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* in 1995, the violence has been put on stage by shocking the audience thematically and aesthetically. Contrary to the classical tragic understanding that puts violence, blood, rape and anything filthy out of the stage, contemporary plays intentionally carry these bloody and fierce issues on stage to make it more visible to the audience even in hardly bearable ways. These scenes of violence in these plays shake the audience recalling the effect of Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty. Sean Carney explains how the violence is dealt with in Kane’s play: “The violence in *Blasted* is profoundly aestheticized and essential to the play’s significations, which are centred around the political function of dramatic tragedy

in the contemporary moment” (2005: 276). With Hegelian perspective, the violence is staged by aesthetic devices of theatre on stage to be able to create ‘the concrete’ representation. However, in this age, as it is understood from the words of the audience Adrian, the visualisation of the violence loses its shock effect and turns into a consumed production. *The Author* touches this very issue and it unfolds “a discomfiting sense of complicity by linking the conventions of British theatrical provocation with voyeuristic consumption of dehumanizing images and then with the revelation of the playwright’s weakness for internet child pornography” (Wallace, 2014: 129). The violence, filth and disgust presented with the images and acts in many plays are presented with words in *The Author*. It challenges the taboos and compels its audiences with hardly bearable stories.

Elizabet Kovačeva examines Crouch’s plays in terms of Julia Kristeva’s Abjection Theory by asking this question: “Can abjection be staged without props and images, without “[t]hese body fluids, this defilement, this shit?” (2017: 6). Clearly, Crouch presents it with his words, not with any action, any stage props or any audial effect. The story of Eshna and Karen in which the domestic abuse is depicted, the murder of American soldier whose throat is cut, the killing of Pavel’s family and the monstrous confession of Tim about child pornography and his suicide act are powerfully narrated among the audience without regarding any visual materials or physical actions as necessary. The filth, blood and disgust are drawn by words in audience’s mind; so, no stoned baby as in Bond’s *Saved* or no cannibal soldier as in Kane’s *Blasted* is presented on stage to shock and awake the audience. For that reason, Crouch’s engagement with the violence in this play positions it between the classical tragedy and contemporary In-Yer-Face tradition. The violence is sensed or felt through the words or stage directions as in classical tragedies; however, the words are filthy and obscene as in In-Yer-Face tradition. Crouch uses his unique theatrical aesthetics to extract the true feelings about violence and blood.

Through the fictional character Tim, Crouch opens a discussion area on violence and morality. The author Tim leaves tragic victims behind himself. Because of his insistence on the realistic acting, the actors Vic and Esther lose their peaceful life. Vic becomes more and more aggressive, and even attacks an audience after the show, and Esther feels emotionally devastated avoiding seeing her family and her child. If he really abuses the baby, it is left to the audience interpretation, he also leaves deep traumas for the baby and its family. He appears like a modern tragic anti-hero; the wicked and lustful

antagonist. His action is even too extreme to be explained by Sigmund Freud's arguments on character and tragic. Freud says, "all the sex and violence they commit - all their 'errors' -act out for us the desires and fears we have to repress. Of course, tragic characters are primitive, barbaric, monstrous. They represent all that we have had to overcome in the cause of culture and civilization" (qtd. in Poole, 2005: 51). This kind of excess is meaningful in the readings of Icarus when he wishes to fly higher and higher with his loam wings even knowing that it will melt in front of the sun, or in the narration of Faustus who signs a contract with devil for unlimited knowledge. However, the actions of Macbeth who kills the king because of his greediness for throne or of Othello who kills his dear wife Desdemona because of his jealousy and ignorance may be remembered as examples of transgression that bring destruction for them. Even they are making their ill decision they are tempted outer factors, Macbeth from the witches and from his wife, Othello from Iago. On the contrary, Tim says; "I have the choice to continue. I have the choice to stop" (Crouch, 2011a: 202) and by taking the wrong decision he turns into a wicked and abuser figure under the effect of his lust. Indeed, from the first narratives of this character, the audience is disturbed with the obscenity of his words and imaginations:

TIM: I'm led downstairs by a young woman ... I think about her being naked. Even at this time, in this state, I think about her naked and stretched out for me. Can you imagine? I look at the shape of her breasts. I think about the weight of her breasts...Her dress is pressed across the curves of her young body. I imagine her legs opening for me, her dress lifting up. Her soft flesh opening up for me. I imagine I...
 Is this okay?
 Is this okay if I carry on?
 Do you want me to stop?
 Do you?
 Do you? (*The Author*, 169-170)

In that condition, it is hard to correlate the excess of Tim with the classical excess such as Julius Caesar's excessive love of justice and patriotism. Similarly, Tim's actions could not be categorized also in Lehmann's tragic concept that is defined by "transgression" and "overstepping" (Lehmann, 2016: 43) in the contemporary period because this excess is abusive and criminal. Here what Crouch does can be explained by Eagleton's idea of tragic because he says, "tragedy is disturbed by the presence of evil in the world" (2003: 133), and Crouch directly shows this disturbance in his play by revealing evilness in human's minds and acts. The final moment of Tim's suicidal

attempt after disgraceful act is the very moment to define proper and improper. As a punishment of watching child porn, also as a reference to the tragic end of Oedipus, Tim firstly thinks on blinding himself, but then he goes to floatation tank cut his throat with blade; “I press the blade into my neck” (Crouch, 2011a: 203).

The Author's story once again carries the murders, crimes, abduction, abuses of children in front of the public eyes. Indeed, the abundance of the works on children in British theatre reveals the reality of the situation; plays like Simon Stephens' *Bluebird* (1998) and *Punk Rock* (2009); Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997); or Ridley's *Leaves of Glass* (2007) *Shivered* (2012) reveals stories of children who are killed, kidnapped, unprotected, or sexually abused (Freshwater, 2013: 168). As in his other plays *My Arm* and *An Oak Tree*, Crouch gives place to the issues about children in this play. Here, Crouch shoulders a risky and responsible task by giving his name to this abuser character and also performing it among the audience. After watching the child pornography and maybe acting it in a real sense, he is going to the floatation tank apparently to kill himself, but he is still fantasising sexual images of the assistant woman in his mind and can reveal it to the audience. At first glance, the audience may ignore this narrative supposing it as a male fantasy; but the final scene of the play that depicts the child pornography carries these narratives to a nonnegligible position. It happens after the dinner party when everyone is asleep, Tim reveals it by saying, “a couple of clicks before bed! I see a baby. This baby has a dummy in its mouth. The baby's skin is damp with sweat from the evening heat, presumably, in this strange house” (Crouch, 2011a: 202). He disturbingly tells in detail what he does; and then goes to sleep his bed near his wife forgetting to shut down and delete history. These are the confessions of the abuser who is going for his own self-punishment. Tim kills himself at the end to stop this disgust and disgrace, but he leaves the audience behind himself who feels worried for the present and future of their children, who feels insecure and distrustful. After uttering these words, “The author leaves his narration. *The Death of the author*” (203), Crouch leaves from the auditorium like a protest of this act. This is another end in real space.

This ‘the death of the author’ is a term borrowed from French theorist Roland Barthes' essay “The Death of the Author” (1967) that supports the liberation the text from its writer. Barthes says:

As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the

very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins (1977: 143).

The death of the author shows the deconstruction of the prior authority of the author and the given authority for the actors and especially to the audience. In play, this death brings liberation for other characters Vic and Esther in fictional level, and in textual level it brings liberation for its audiences and readers. Crouch demands that his real audience stays awake and interrogated. His fictional audience Adrian is an unwelcomed type of audience who passively consumes any production presented to him. He enjoys watching the violent or obscene scenes without any judgement. For instance, in the scene where Ester carries the character Karen on stage, she reveals her traumatic story about her abuser father. When Tim says he feels sorry for Karen, she says, “No you’re not. you are not fucking sorry. None of you are fucking sorry” (Crouch, 2011a: 187). And then Crouch turns to the audience and asks them whether they have any question or not. Here Adrian asks an unexpected question, “what is it like working with Daniel Craig?” (188), by ignoring the sufferings of Karen and focusing on fun and passing time. Crouch aims to eliminate that kind of audience attitude towards his theatre, for that reason he gives the authority to the audience. As Pilný says about this play, it “turns the tables on the audience by abolishing the stage space and blurring the boundaries between performers, characters, and spectators in a disturbing examination of responsibility pertaining to the consumption of images of violence” (2016: 23). This sense of responsibility is expected to be shared by the constituents of theatre circles and the audience as the representatives of the society. As Crouch says, “we are all responsible for this world” (2011b: 417) and the audience at this point, should think wisely, deeply and analytically. And in this narrative, they should also take responsibility for being on the centre of theatre stage and listening to all these incidents.

The mentality of the passive audience has been abandoned for a long time ago, and each passing day new ways are being tested for the creation of the active audience experience. Crouch is, inarguably, one of the most experiential playwrights who are in favour of active participation of the audience. In *The Author*, he places the audience in the centre of the play, thus and so the audience becomes “the objects of the crafting process” (Belloli, 2006: 19). This process and this setting can be thought as the microcosmic reflection of societal issues, some bad things are happening in front of people, and each person will response different ways to them as in *The Author*. In the middle of many narratives, Tim pauses and asks permission from the audience to

continue. In this way, he both draws the attention again to what he tells and also gives some time for the audience to absorb this hard to listen stories. The audience is given some choices to react or chances to leave out the play. There are scripted walkouts in this way, they do not feel under pressure while leaving early. Andy Smith says, “at the beginning of the run in Edinburgh this year: there was one particular night when fifteen or twenty people walked out. And that became ‘the night when fifteen people left!’” (qtd. in Bottoms, 2011: 424). Crouch scripts the walkouts as an alternative respond for his play, and these walkouts function as a protest for violence or an escape from the realities for some audiences. Moreover, for the performers, these walkouts are the way for protection from the violent verbal or physical responses of the audience who cannot bear the further narrative.

There are many different and vital responses for this play. In a way, in this play Crouch’s audiences sometimes function in the course of action by recalling the chorus of the ancient tragedies who comment on the action and warns the audience about the potential tragic ends; however, contemporary audiences’ reactions are slightly different. Chris Thorpe remembers, “a woman stood up and said –very loudly and very venomously- ‘You disgust me!’ and left the theatre” (426). These kinds of reaction indicate the existence of active audiences who can raise their voices against the ongoing violence and abuse and “let it be heard” (427). Conor Whelan explains his unexpected observation about the feelings of the audience after the end of the performance of *The Author*: “What I was quite struck by last night -looking around the audience towards the end of the play -was that everyone’s faces had quite similar expressions. Everyone’s jaws were kind of (...) hung” (429). As well as appealing to the individual life experiences of the audience, the play also appeals to the collective culture and collective sense of vice and virtue, good and bad. With *The Author*, Crouch leaves his audiences into a controversial, challenging, disturbing and authentic territory by asking them not to look with blind eyes to the tragedies of contemporary people. The status of the audience against the filthy language and the violent scenes is shaped around two polarized audience experience empathy and alienation or Lehmann’s ‘warmth’ and ‘coldness’ (2006: 95).

Crouch, by himself, discharges his responsibility by writing this play *The Author*, and then overtakes the role of the abuser author Tim. Accepting the notoriety with this role, Crouch does not stay indifferent to tragic issues of the world and he performs his character by himself “in another alternative reality” (LePage, Rebellato,

2012: 22). As depicted in the play, unfortunately, wars, decapitations, rapes, murders, child abuses, terrorist attacks, tortures are happening all around the world and these evil acts are “not perpetrated by anonymous ‘evil’ villains, but perpetrated by people not that much unlike ourselves” (Crouch, 2011b: 2). So, the audience must differentiate watching for fun and seeing deeper meanings. In one of his narratives, the character, Tim says, “it became a small hobby of mine-like stamp collecting, ha. Not a collector, but an assembling, an assemblage- placing image against image. I took it upon myself to look at images of abuse, at beheadings, for example! To follow all the links on my computer” (Crouch, 2011a: 177). How the images of sorrows, tortures or death can be compared to the collecting stamps, how people can be so insensitive and blind to other people’s sorrow and death. This is an irony and a criticism against the abundance of the violence in the world and the ignorance of people against it.

As stressed in this play, the borderless stage and togetherness emphasise the collaboration for the avoidance “the brutalisation of today’s society” (416-422). Gareth White mentions, “audiences and actors, writers, directors and producers work together to bind theatre and society together, so that one influences the other, inhabits and is co-extensive with the other, exists in the other as metaphor an metonymy (2013: 4). This is the ideal version of de-hierarchised theatre and the expected audience participation. Crouch’s preference of using an unusual way for the representation of these themes is also about the wish of breaking the ignorance and familiarity of the individuals towards the tragedies of people. He states; “if we represent violence so casually on stage, the consequence becomes a casual relation to violence in the world” (Crouch, 2011b: 417). Criminal and monstrous acts should not be swept under the carpet, contrarily, they must be visible and questionable.

CONCLUSION

The tragedy of this world is that no one is happy, whether stuck in a time of pain or of joy. The tragedy of this world is that everyone is alone. For a life in the past cannot be shared with the present. Each person who gets stuck in time gets stuck alone.”

Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*

In its long history, theatre has always served its audiences by reflecting the human life on stage and by appealing the individual or communal experience. As Ronald Harwood states, “human beings have a permanent, never-sated appetite for seeing and recognizing their own image enacted live, in all its possibilities” (1984: 13). In theatre, the narratives on human conflicts, sorrows and falls have always found a place for themselves even though they appeared in different modes and different techniques. For ages, in the tragic stories the reversal of fate from good to bad has been unfolded, the explicit moral lessons have been given, poetic justice has been emphasised and humanly desires and extremities have been exposed. Many reasons that drag people into the tragic destruction have been revealed in tragic writings like a warning for all people; however, people cannot be saved from their tragic ends and they cannot get rid of experiencing the misfortunes of former tragic heroes by falling into common mistakes again and again. That means, like our ancestors who could not escape from their tragic ends, contemporary people cannot get free from the tragic events, painful incidents and destructive circumstances. On the contrary, this period creates more tragic agents because of the endless wars, terrorist attacks, urbanisation, violence, abuse, accidents, economic crisis, or moral corruption. Our world is unfortunately surrounded by a large spectrum of distressful and sorrowful events, and they have affected people’s lives calamitously. The abundance of the tragic issues in contemporary life strengthens the place of the tragic writings and performances on stage since the ideas like that “theatre is flesh and blood and we are seemingly as simulacrum of reality of everyday” (Conversation on Making, 2013: min 9.17) coincide tragic and theatre on contemporary stage.

It is the fact that human beings are subjected to changes in their life in the marching time, and relatively this causes reformation in the limits of the theatre. The most serious and magnificent genre of theatre, tragedy gets its share from these changes in time. Nothing from the initial point in the Ancient period to its current condition in the contemporary period has remained completely same as in the past; the theatrical

elements, the formal structure, themes, characters, motifs and many other components have been widened and changed or they have disappeared concerning the social and epochal changes. Contemporary tragic writing does not present the tragic 'hero' but the tragic protagonist or first actor whose tragic end is mostly associated with individual's wrong choices or the conflict between the norms or society. The tragic figure of the contemporary period is not a redeemer, a noble king/queen or a fearless general; she/he is the ordinary individual with ordinary human values and desires. Gods, Fortune, the stars or heredity that bring the tragic reasons for the final destruction cannot work with the same effective credibility and moral lesson. So, Poole's question "so who is to blame for a tragedy?" (2005: 45) is not easy to answer with certain remarks. Human life is reshaped by witnessing crises, violence, catastrophes, conflicts, globalization, wars and terrorist attacks in the contemporary period. The condition of the modern people is more complicated and more multifaceted than it is seen, borders are blurred and truths are relative, for that reason, the representation of these conditions on stage will be different from the past tragic narratives.

As it is pointed out in this thesis in detail, even though tragedy is mostly defined by certain rules as a unique form considering the rules of Aristotle, the tragic motif gains new perspectives and meanings related to the time it is written and by whom it is written. As it appears in Lehmann's postdramatic tragedy, tragic experiences of contemporary people can be unfolded by the novelties, diversities, and experimentalism in contemporary tragic writings. The grand tragedies are replaced by the performances of tragic events and shared tragic moments. In the process of performing tragic plays on stage, their formal and theatrical constructions are very striking for the audience as well as the themes of the plays. Divorcing from the centrality of textuality and mimicry, the new theatrical aesthetics celebrates the live active participation of all components of theatre. Lehmann defines this process in the postdramatic aesthetics as "a shift away from theatre's 'logo-centric' legacy and towards performance" (Crombez, Van den Dries, 2016: 7). Underlining the new and fresh ideas in theatre, Lehmann puts forward the subversion of the hierarchies in textual, visual and aural elements of theatre. Through the postdramatic theatrical techniques like parataxis, simultaneity, density of signs and musicalization, unique polyphonic live performances are provided for the audience to produce shared experience and 'here and now effect'. Erika Fischer-Lichte likens this theatre performance to "a social process in which different individuals and groups encounter, negotiate, and regulate their relationships in different ways" (2008: 74). With

the nonmimetic practices of the performance of contemporary theatre, the audience find the opportunity for introspective questioning in theatre space and also a collective experience sharing the same presence at the same place with a community. This is important in terms of observing the tragic experience of the audience and to show the changing cathartic emotions in these plays. Additionally, rather than empathy and identification, shock tactics are used on stage to awaken the audience and to activate them. It distorts the sense of safety, discomforts its audiences, shakes them and dives in their inner private feelings.

In the contemporary period, the changes and fluctuation in tragic motif and tragic experience appear highly visible and subjective. The components and characteristics of tragic writing are reinterpreted and reformed drastically with the effect of modernist and postmodern techniques. Firstly, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, as one of the first initiators of the modernist period, provides tragic writing to open its way for ordinary life of ordinary people by showing the realities of common people and changes in the society for good. The tragic condition of characters in modern world is represented in Ibsenian characters who are strong enough to fight the chains of taboos and to quest life, they are powerful enough to ask for question about their existence but they are not noble or hero at all. Then, the eclectic, realist and experimental style of George Bernard Shaw gives the original tragic works that mingle with social, comic, fantastic and historic together. The historical avant-garde movements and theatre aesthetics also touch the tragic issues using their unconventional narrative and staging techniques to reveal the destruction of wars, economic crisis, industrialisation, mechanisation, urbanisation and capitalism.

The second half of the twentieth century and after becomes the turning point for new writing that challenges the established rules for theatre and shatters the grand narratives. The changing lifestyle of contemporary people alters the feelings and expectations, correspondingly the nature of the tragic experience. When the perceptions of tragic from past to present are compared, new attributes for the tragic concept appear in contemporary tragic writings. To determine the sophisticated nature of tragic and the evolving formal and contextual characteristics of tragedy in the contemporary period, a retrospective view for the tragic concept and a brief historical glance for tragedy is found highly necessary for this thesis in order to present some comparatively researches as Lehmann applies in his theory of postdramatic tragedy by suggesting “the distinction between predramatic, dramatic and postdramatic theatricality” (2006: 13). In order to

unfold the tragedies of the contemporary people, Lehmann theorises his postdramatic tragedy that combines the contemporary theatrical aesthetics with tragic experiences of people. As their ancestors have done by writing great tragedies on the human pain and sufferings in the past, similar way contemporary playwrights do not become deaf and mute for the struggles and sorrows of their people. Even it is named as tragedy or as tragic writing in the contemporary period, playwrights give their thoughts on tragic side of life. Using many different theatrical sensibilities, aesthetics and narrative styles as in Epic Theatre, In-Yer-Face Theatre, Documentary Theatre or the Theatre of Catastrophe, in different decades of the century playwrights such as John Osborne, Caryl Churchill, Anthony Neilson, Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Joe Penhall, Jez Butterworth, Tim Crouch and Simon Stephens etc., one way or another find new ways to reflect darker sides and tragic moments of human life.

As it can be seen in the narratives of these playwrights, in a world encircled by wars, economic crisis, industrialisation, mechanisation, urbanisation and capitalism, the tragic struggles of people begin to be determined by the outer forces besides their inner dilemmas. In the concept of tragic writing, the modern time witnesses the destruction of ordinary people because of their wrong decisions and extremities, additionally, because of their conflicts with social, economic or political institutions. Moreover, Oscar winner Iranian director Asghar Farhadi says, “Classical tragedy was the war between good and evil. We wanted evil to be defeated and good to be victorious. But the battle in modern tragedy is between good and good. And no matter which side wins, we'll still be heartbroken” (Markatos, 2015: par 5). As it is exemplified by the stories of Crouch, post/modern people cannot be easily categorised as hero or villain, and their acts as right and wrong. Tragic experiences of this era are presented on the narratives of social alienation, social injustices, victimized individuals and existential problems in society, accidentalism and many others. Modern people do not find the tragic in the first sin of man or the curse of the god or fate; unfortunately, people create their tyrants and victims within their own systems. In Crouch's plays, relatedly, the struggles of the characters reveal the tragic feelings of contemporary people, simultaneously presenting their meaningful struggles to survive.

In contemporary writing, considering the nonending debates on tragedy, it can be a pertinent approach to discuss tragedies of contemporary people on the tragic events and tragic feelings that occur in different ways. Therefore, upon investigating the issue of tragic in the contemporary period, polymorphous and polysemic nature of tragic are

taken into consideration. The chosen plays of Crouch for this thesis clearly actualize this process since Crouch opens an unfamiliar non-authoritative atmosphere by saying; “I want you to have to navigate your journey rather than have that journey navigated for you by the actors on stage” (LePage, Rebellato, 2012: 24). Crouch’s plays present a place of unification for all participants as in the rituals of the Dionysus festivals; however, he does not aim ecstatic and entranced audiences for his plays. His bare stage gives opportunity to his actors and his audiences to act, feel and share freely to certain extent. Crouch uses the theatre stage as the mirror of real life, he carries various tragic experiences onstage and he purifies his theatre from the conventional attributes and makes it a kind of gathering spot. In the introduction of Tim Crouch’s *Plays One*, Bottoms says about Crouch; “no other contemporary playwright who has asked such compelling set of questions about theatrical form, narrative content, and spectatorial engagement” (Crouch, 2011a: 11). Thus, Crouch’s plays, *My Arm*, *An Oak Tree*, *ENGLAND* and *The Author*, are to the point texts that reveal the tragic and the new aesthetics of the contemporary period. Each of them is original and unique regarding the chosen themes and the theatrical strategies used on Crouchian stage. Consciously presenting the tragic stories alongside comic, tragic, boring, ritualistic and randomly chosen elements, Crouch mirrors the confusing, fragmented, accidental, traumatized and unclear life of contemporary people and modern world.

Tim Crouch’s first theatre piece scrutinized in this study, *My Arm*, reveals the themes of loneliness and alienation of people, the lack or difficulty of understanding the others, and ongoing consumerism and exploitation through the story narrated by depicting the separate words of children and adults. Besides its themes, the play is also mostly referred to because of the strategies used in its performance. In terms of its theme, this play takes attention with its originality, its unconventional narrative style and nonrepresentational performative techniques. While telling the story with randomly chosen objects that represent the characters in the play, Crouch blurs the separation between the real-world actor and the fictional character, real space and the fictional setting. The second play analysed in this study by Crouch, *An Oak Tree* also challenges the established conventions with its strategies. The tragic outcomes of death are put on stage by carrying the experiential and experimental theatre to its zenith. This play which takes attention with its presentation of the second actor who has no information about the story, or the performative techniques beforehand provides live and instant experiences both for the performer and the audience. The play does not necessitate any

early preparation, any memorization, any mimicry, any costume or any design for this second actor. Performed in the galleries, the play *ENGLAND* invites its audiences to an art festival, at the same time it opens very serious and tragic issues for them such as the globalized world order, capitalism, privileges and victimisation. With this play, Crouch once again shows the close relation between theatre and art, also widens the vision of his theatricality by unlimiting his performance with time, place or any established rules. He also does not limit his characters with any sex, nationality, belief or physical appearances. Another play of Crouch in which all the hierarchies are dismantled, and all borders are vanished is *The Author*. This play is performed among the audience and purposely stage and auditorium, the audience and the performer, the author and the performer, the director and the author, real and fiction are intermingled. In this self-reflexive play, very disturbing themes are unfolded such as child abuse, domestic abuse, violence, terror and disgust, and they are made visible for the audience. Tragic stories used in these plays give certain ideas about the potential real tragic stories of contemporary people and through the experimental and original strategies of these plays all people are invited to feel and share these experiences and be concerned and conscious without ignorance and prejudice.

As an afterword, it can be stated that tragic writing has a long history and now contemporary experimental playwriting appears as a part of it with the current subjects and new theatricality. For the subjects of the tragic writing, this period presents every individual as the hero of their own life, and the life presents them enough tragedies to feel in pain and sadness. As it is exemplified by the tragic stories of Crouch's plays, the tragic writings of the contemporary period do not aim to produce legends and myths for their audiences, but real life stories with an authentic stage they can see, feel, think and live. Recent periods give variety of materials for playwrights since people are unfortunately living in a world where loneliness, placelessness, cultural poverty, alienation, degenerations, dehumanization, violence, war, abuse and many negativities become commonplace. To reflect these pains, sorrows, and devastations contemporary playwrights utilise shock tactics, violent scenes, shared experiences, collaborative performances, physicality, and 'here and now effect' by changing the perceptions and the functions of all theatrical components. It is reminded once again that, escape from certain tragic circumstances may not be possible for contemporary people; nevertheless, they must be alert, active and prepared to embrace these tragic circumstances so that they can become the architect of their own destinies.

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