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ANALYSING DRAMA

1) General Remarks

As opposed to poetry and fiction drama cannot be considered a purely textual phenomenon. Instead, every analysis of a dramatic text must take into account its multimedial character. Dramatic texts are intended for an institutionally framed collective enactment that can be described in terms of transformation (direction/production) and/or performance.

2) Text

a) On the textual level the multimedial character of drama finds its direct equivalent in specific **conditions/conventions of providing information** against an audience's horizon of expectation and advance information, and one should keep in mind that in drama information can be provided both verbally and non-verbally. One of the basic distinctions in this respect is the distinction between primary text (monologue/dialogue/asides/epic elements) and secondary text (stage directions etc.). Information can only be transmitted successively, so it is always worthwhile to have a closer look at the beginning of a play (exposition vs. dramatic introduction, isolated vs. integrated exposition), to examine the relationship between the provision of information and suspense throughout the play, and to distinguish between closed endings and open endings.

b) On the basis of the information provided the **dramatis personae** of a play can be analysed with regard to their overall constellation of contrasts or correspondences or with regard to specific configurations in single scenes. Figure conception can be either static or dynamic, and one can distinguish between personification, type and individual. Characterisation techniques can be explicit or implicit, figural or authorial. Under the heading of "The structure of perspectives in dramatic texts" the findings of a) and b) can be combined with regard to the relationship between figure-perspectives on the one hand and the reception perspective that is suggested by the hierarchical arrangement of figure-perspectives and/or other techniques used to control and coordinate figure-perspectives on the other hand.

c) Information and dramatis personae converge on the level of **action,** which is in turn dependent on structures of time and space (stage vs. off-stage, spatial correspondences and contrasts, neutrality/stylisation/realisation < historical reference > tense: immediacy vs. distance, structure: chronology vs. anachronies, progression vs. stasis, linear vs. cyclical movement). From all this a specific structure of action based on combination of sequences (succession vs. juxtaposition, plot vs. sub-plot, dream insets, plays-within-plays), segmentation (acts, scenes, etc.), and composition emerges, which can be, but need not be, indicative of generic conventions (tragedy, comedy, farce, etc.).