WHEN A PLAY IS NOT A DRAMA?
A POSTDRAMATIC STUDY OF SIMON STEPHENS' CARMEN DISRUPTION

BY
Dr.Ayman I. Elhalafawy
Associate te Prof. of English Literature,
Faculty of Arts, Kafrelsheikh University

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of postdramatic theatre through an analysis of Simon Stephens' play Carmen Disruption (2014). Traditionally, drama has been characterized by a linear narrative structure, well-defined characters, and a clear cause-and-effect progression. However, it can be assumed that this kind of theatre challenges these conventions by blurring the boundaries between different elements of performance, emphasizing sensory experiences, and questioning the dominance of plot-driven storytelling. By examining Carmen Disruption as a case study, this paper aims to shed light on how postdramatic techniques are employed to deconstruct and reconstruct the traditional dramaturgical framework. Drawing on Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic-theatre model (2006, 2016), the paper tackles Stephens' play in a way that reflects on how it is a form of theatre after drama. The theatre in its post-dramatic form focuses on the relationship between the audience/reader and the play, neglecting the role of the characters in the play. Moreover, it makes the audiences/readers rethink the way they read the plays. Thus, the paper's main aim is to show how the English playwright Simon Stephens (1971 – …) applies the aspects and signs of postdramatic theatre to reflect fiction and reality in the play under consideration. The paper has reached three findings. First, Stephens uses postdramatic aspects to create a strong interaction and relationship between the actor(s) and the audience(s). Second, the irruption of the real creates audiences who are not able to decide whether the play is real or not. Third, Carmen Disruption embodies fiction and reality equally through monologues, media, opera and theatre, and musicality.

Keywords: Carmen Disruption, dramaturgy, media, musicality, narrative, postdramatic theatre, performance, Simon Stephens,

ملخص البحث:

تستكشف الورقة البحثية الحالية مفهوم مسرح "ما بعد الدراما" من خلال تحليل مسرحية سيمون ستيفنز "اضطراب كارمن"(2014). وتتميز المسرحية التقليدية بالهيكل السردي الخطي والشخصيات المحددة بوضوح والتطور الواضح السببي. ومع ذلك، يتحدى مسرح "ما بعد الدراما" هذه التقاليد عن طريق تشويش حدود العناصر المختلفة في الأداء، وتأكيد التجارب الحسية، وتساؤل سيادة السرد المستند إلى القصة. وتهدف هذه الورقة البحثية، من خلال دراسة مسرحية "اضطراب كارمن" كدراسة حالة، إلى إلقاء الضوء على كيفية استخدام تقنيات مسرح "ما بعد الدراما" لتفكيك وإعادة بناء الإطار الدرامي التقليدي. وتتناول هذه الدراسة بالاعتماد على دراسة ما بعد الدراما، جوانب وعلامات مسرح مابعد الدراما في مسرحية "اضطراب كارمن.وبعد الهدف الرئيس لمسرح مابعد الدراما هو التركيز على العلاقة بين الجمهور/القارئ والمسرح، مهملا دور الشخصيات في المسرحية. علاوة على ذلك، فإن مسرح مابعد الدراما يجعل الجمهور/القراء يعيدون التفكير في الطريقة التي يقرؤون بها العمل المسرحي. لذلك، لم تعد الحبكة والشخصية عناصر مركزية في مسرح مابعد الدراما. وبالتالي، فإن الهدف الرئيسي للدراسة هو اظهار كيف يطبق ستيفنز جوانب مسرح مابعد الدراما لكي يعكس الخيال والواقع في مسرحية اضطراب كارمن. نتيجة لذلك، توصلت هذه الدراسة الى ثلاث نتائج: أولاً، يستخدم ستيفنز جوانب ما بعد الدراما لخلق تفاعل وعلاقة قوية بين الممثلين والجمهور. ثانياً، يؤدي اقتلاع الواقع إلى خلق جماهير غير قادرة على تقرير ما إذا كانت المسرحية حقيقية أم لا. ثالثاً، يعكس" اضطراب كارمن" الخيال والواقع بالتساوي من خلال الحوارات الداخلية ووسائل الإعلام والأوبرا والمسرح والموسيقى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اضطراب كارمن، مسرح ما بعد الدراما، سيمون ستيفنز، سردي، أداء، الإعلام، الموسيقى

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to show elements of postdramatic theatre in Simon Stephens' *Carmen Disruption* (2014). This paper is divided into two main parts. The first part is theoretical. It focuses on the aspects and signs of postdramatic theatre as introduced by the German scholar and thinker Hans-Thies Lehmann. The second part is practical. It shows how the British playwright Simon Stephens (1971–) applies the elements of this type of theatre in *Carmen Disruption* (2014).

British theatre had flourished from the 19th century until the 20th century. Playwrights began to write their plays freely to express their problems, anger, and experiences through the 20th century. So, The Royal Court is the housekeeping for these young men. The Royal Court theatre inspired brave and important playwrights, such as John Whiting (1917-1963), Harold

Pinter (1930-2008), John Arden (1930-2012), Arnold Wesker (1932-2016), Tom Stoppard (1937-), and Howard Brenton (1942-). They used various techniques to shed light on social corruption and violence. In other words, British theatre reflects human attitudes and emotions toward violence. Those previous playwrights write their plays in the frame of capitalism, war, and postmodernism. Thanks to these brave playwrights, British theatre has witnessed a golden age after the 1990s (Aleks Sierz, 1997).

It should be noted here that, by the 1990s, global themes and the reality of ethical corruption, inequality, barbarism, and violence still existed. As a result, a new kind of theatre emerges in Britain due to cultural and global facts, and social factors that shape the society of that time. This new kind of theatre is not accepted so easily because it challenges and deconstructs conventional theatrical contents, characters, signs, and plots.

Postdramatic theatre uses different techniques related to space, time, text, dream imagery, media, and physicality. It presents a postdramatic panorama of the plays to the audiences. There is a difference between dramatic and postdramatic theatre. Dramatic theatre chooses passive audiences because actors and playwrights direct the play, and the audience/reader does not have any role. According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, (1944– …), "[d]rama is absolute; the dramatist is "absent" from it, as is the spectator" (*Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* 210). Accordingly, dramatic theatre is the theatre of a well-made play. It can be said that dramatic theatre reflects society. Moreover, classical drama has met with different historical theories including Symbolism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Expressionism, and Absurd theatre (Eric Sellin, 1969; J.L. Styan ,2003; Dietmar Elger,2004; Julia A. Walker,2005; Richard Hornby,2015).

Moving to postdramatic theatre, it should be noted that the term 'postdramatic' is coined by the German Hans-Thies Lehmann. According to Munby *et al.*, Lehmann has developed the term 'postdramatic theatre' 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" (1). They add: "That is they no longer conformed to the idea of mimetically enacting a dramatic conflict in the form of a story (fable), and dialogue spoken by characters in a fictional universe" (1). Lehmann's postdramatic theatre deconstructs the structure of the character and makes the audience/reader have a role on the stage. In other words, postdramatic theatre redefines performing mimesis, language, and concepts.

Catherine Bouko shows the confusion over the prefix "post" "because it can be understood in two different manners: [E]ither as an approach that does not take the dramatic advances into account and wants to make a fresh start, or as a spectacular form that does not deny the possibilities of dramatic renewals but directs its research towards non-dramatic modes of expression" (26). Postdramatic theatre rejects the representational and dramatic form of storytelling.

Lehmann offers terminology to analyze and reevaluate the close bonds between drama and theatre. He asserts that until the 1960s, drama dominated theatre, particularly in western nations. Naturally, this has led to an unfair placement of the dramatic text and the playwright in the finished output. Lehmann contends that since the 1960s, western theatre has shown a desire to produce plays that treat the play text, author, director, actors, costumes, décor, etc., equally to challenge the ingrained hierarchical structure. The stage action in these productions gives the audience the impression that they are being attacked. The post side of drama, according to Lehmann, is postdramatic theater. Lehmann describes how numerous writers, directors, experts, and corporations have attempted to create a different path from the traditional characteristics of drama in his book.

Over the past decades, there have been significant developments within the field of drama and theatre. This movement of changing dramatic concepts and critical principles from

the Aristotle poetics era to the digital and technological theatre causes new shapes and identities of dramatic works. The vast development from text-based theatre to unscripted postdramatic theatre rejects dramatic notions such as illusion, mimesis and mimetic representation, catharsis, characterization, and importance of character, a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end of well-made plays. With the use of symbols and images, viewers will encounter several worlds and react to the action on the stage, and with a reflection on their worlds in various ways. *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) and *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* (2016), two of German theatre scholar and theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann's landmark works, serve as primary sources because they discuss postdramatic theatre and tragedy, respectively, which are significant factors in shaping modern theatrical styles. Lehmann concentrates on the 1960s, a time when theatre "develops a new autonomy and autonomous artistic activity" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 50). Since "the theatre can no longer be confined to the dramatic paradigm that prevailed between the Renaissance and the birth of the historical avant-garde," he elucidates why postdramatic theatre is essential in today's theatrical world (Lehmann, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* 13). According to Muller and Lehmann, we should determine the features, qualities, and components of postdramatic drama. These characteristics include simultaneity, music, staging, visual filing, thoughts and feelings, carnality, and the existence of life situations (Lehman, *Postdramatic Theatre* 86). Theater's elements like time, text, place, body and medium are also to be considered.

Importantly, too, post-dramatic theatre, which Robert Wilson and Heiner Müller promote, is more comparable to dance, act, ceremonial, ritual, and dream imagery. According to postdramatic drama, text may be reduced to a minimum, and theatre can exist independently of text and narrative. Postdramatic theatre so employs performance and occurrences. Instead of animating a role, the body finds music, rhythm, and harmony. The text differs from conventional play in that it possesses the qualities of both visual and auditory objects. We question meta-narratives, ideas, and established theatric systems as media and artists become more closely entwined. It is impossible to determine a word's true meaning or if a comment has visual characteristics. Consequently, language serves as both a musical subject and an object. As a result of visuals and simulations, viewers will experience several worlds and have their perspectives on the situation altered.

Lehmann emphasizes the presence and physicality of actors rather than traditional roles. According to Lehmann, the primary characteristics of postdramatic theatre are the presence and physicality of the actors. Lehmann ends the coherence of character by emphasizing embodiment as the primary element of postdramatic theatre. He exhibits auto-sufficient physicality, which subverts the unity of nature, and is demonstrated in its strength, nonverbal potential, auratic existence, and conveyed strains (*Postdramatic Theatre* 95). In the postdramatic stage, physicality signifies the body. Lehmann explains postdramatic step: "The most severe instillation of significance into the body concerning social reality occurs when the body ceases to demonstrate anything other than itself and shifts from a body of signification to a body of meaningless gesture. The body is now the sole topic" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 96).

Postdramatic elements such as language, time, body, location, and media, as well as postdramatic characteristics, are presented by Lehmann in his dramatic analysis of postdramatic theatre. Space must take on a specific shape for dramatic theatre. Dramatic theatre does not work well in small or large settings since it offers a homogeneous reality. However, in postdramatic theatre, space acquires self-sufficiency and alters acting. After staging, reality becomes a prominent role in theatre; it is noted that the plays' breath, sight, bodily and psychological movements are all included in the stage's physical and spatial components. Space, which consists of visual structure, location, lighting, auditory subjects on

stage, costume, setting, performers, and spectators, dismantles the stage's conventional bounds and creates engaging interactions between the audience and the new structure. With the advent of avant-garde movements and postmodern discourse, traditional spatial patterns have changed. Postmodern authors and filmmakers dismantle these conventional systems. Lehmann contends that the way space is used in dramatic theatre is incorrect because it trivializes other space aspects and turns viewers into passive bystanders. In classical theatre, an actor's movement across the stage represents a fictive distance metaphorically or symbolically (*Postdramatic Theatre* 151).

Apart from classical drama, postdramatic theatre changes the roots of classical drama. Postdramatic drama focuses on the relationship between the stage and spectators. For example, a new stage performance focuses on using music, corporeal representations, dance, and gestures on the stage. Movements emphasize the relationship between the scene and the audience(s) instead of the players' dialogues. Lehmann considers that these factors move theatre a step further.

For Lehmann, dramatic theatre "[wants] to construct a fictive Cosmos [the ability for the reader/audience to enter and understand the world of the play] and let all the stage represent— be-a world" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 22). Lehmann adds: "Theatre is tacitly thought of as a theatre of dramas. Thus, postdramatic theatre deconstructs the structure of drama. Lehmann plans the deconstruction of three elements: Time, action, and space. In other words, postdramatic theatre emphasizes the death of the character and drama. It reduces the levels of unity in the text. In this way, Lehmann's aim is to revolutionize dramatic theatre. He uses signs such as parataxis, simultaneity, the density of signs, plethora, musicalization, visual dramaturgy, warmth and coldness, physicality, concrete theatre, the irruption of the real, and events.

As for parataxis/non-hierarchy, every subject of theatre is important, and it has the same impact on postdramatic theatre. So, this new reception is provided with a parataxis/non-hierarchal structure. According to Lehmann, parataxis/non-hierarchy is "a universal principle of postdramatic theatre" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 86). Parataxis is used on stage through acting, costume, dance, text, and light. As such, the main aim of postdramatic theatre is to create different meanings through signs presented to audiences, directing the audience to be more active than passive viewers. With the help of parataxis, postdramatic plays deconstruct the hierarchal structure in dramatic theatre. In other words, postdramatic plays do not contain a dominant element either on the stage or in the text.

As for simultaneity, many signs take place simultaneously with the help of parataxis; these signs have an equal impact on the stage. As Lehmann argues:

> [W]hile dramatic theatre proceeds in such a way that of all signals communicated at any moment of the performance only a particular one is usually emphasized and placed at the center, the paratactical valency and ordering of postdramatic theatre lead to the experience of simultaneity. (*Postdramatic Theatre* 87)

Therefore, the main aim of postdramatic plays is to use every element and sign simultaneously to make the audience(s) realize every element and sign.

As for the density of signs, they are important in postdramatic theatre. The density of signs is used to trigger audiences' imaginations with the help of television and media. Lehmann points out that signs may be too much or little and "in relation to the time, to the space or the importance of the matter, the viewer perceives a repetition or conversely a noticeable dilution of signs" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 89). Postdramatic theatre rejects unorganized signs but allows organized signs on the stage. The other significant sign is the plethora that distinguishes postdramatic texts from dramatic texts. In postdramatic plays, there is no unity, symmetrical structuring, or self-identity. Audiences face the density of signs and imagery.

Musicality is one of the most significant traits of postdramatic plays. Music is an independent structure of theatre. Music supports the text. Musicality may include foreign languages or sounds. In postdramatic theatre, actors use foreign languages. These foreign languages form a new rhythm. According to Lehmann, this new rhythm shows that there is "no longer [the] dramatic language of theatre" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 93).

Visual dramaturgy is used instead of the text. It focuses on imagery. In postdramatic theatre, visual dramaturgy occurs because of the deconstruction of language. Visual dramaturgy regulates elements such as music, film, and photography in postdramatic theatre. Using these elements, visual dramaturgy presents a catastrophic side of life and body.

As for warmth and coldness, with its different structures, languages, and linguistic imagery, postdramatic theatre manifests coldness in audiences accustomed to the traditional text-based theatre. At the same time, warmth is achieved by active audiences. Lehmann explains that "through the participation of living human beings, as well as through the century-old fixation with moving human fortunes, the theatre possesses a certain warmth" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 95). When an audience is faced with cold bodies, he/she feels cold.

In postdramatic theatre, physicality happens at a physical level that delineates pain and suffering as extremities. The body creates itself with gesticulation and physicality. Physicality takes place with the power of words or without hiding anything on the stage. In postdramatic theatre, physicality is staged with musicality, visuals, and languages. According to Lehmann, "postdramatic theatre presents itself as an auto-sufficient physicality, exhibited in its intensity, gestic potential, auratic presence and, additionally, a deviant body, which through illness, disability, or deformation deviates from the norm and causes an amoral fascination, unease, or fear" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 95).

One of the characteristics of postdramatic theatre is the irruption of the real. It distinguishes postdramatic theatre from dramatic theatre. The irruption of the real separates reality from fiction and creates audiences unable to decide whether the play is real or not. Postdramatic plays ask audiences questions and give them the chance to observe. Accordingly, postdramatic theatre leads audiences to the stalemate with its aesthetic fiction and provoking position formed between realities. Lehmann explains: "It [theatre] implicitly invites not only performative acts that confer new meanings but also such performative acts that bring about meaning in a new way, or rather: put meaning itself at stake" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 102). Consequently, postdramatic plays choose to represent fiction and reality equally. In postdramatic theatre, audiences participate in the play where they become active and can make observations.

The last sign of postdramatic theatre is the event/situation. Events and performances direct the audience(s) toward finding the meanings of the text through his/her interaction and participation. So, theatre becomes an active element. In this way, there are many aspects related to postdramatic theatre such as text, space, time, body, and media. The first aspect of postdramatic theatre is text. The text is analyzed with different events and meanings in conflict with one another. In other words, the new text rejects a single meaning or conclusion on the stage. Postdramatic plays prefer physical presence. On the stage, there are gestures, and different voices and languages. For Lehmann, these different languages consist of "tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by a meaning" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 146). So, the text is not an essential part of the theatre. In addition, postdramatic theatre analyses voice, noise, and text differently. It creates a space in the mind of audiences. Therefore, postdramatic theatre forms a new and different space for the stage by using physical reality, sounds, and visual expressions.

The second aspect of postdramatic theatre is space. In postdramatic theatre, space gains autonomy. After staging, fact becomes a main figure in the theatre; space contains all stage

units, psychological movements, physical, gaze, and breath in the plays. Space (including place, aural subjects of the stage, visual structure, spectators, players, setting, and costume) deconstructs the traditional borders of the stage. It can be said that space forms a lively relationship between audiences and the new structure. According to Lehmann, in dramatic theatre, space is interpreted wrongly because it creates a passive audience. In classical theatre, "distance covered on the stage by an actor signifies as a metaphor or symbol a fictive distance" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 151). In postdramatic theatre, a different and new space creates an active audience. With special frames, lighting, and gestures, the stage becomes like a tableau.

The third aspect of postdramatic theatre is time. In dramatic theatre, time creates and orders all events. Time makes all subjects and elements. To illustrate, postdramatic theatre deconstructs the unity of time, action, place, and lineal time. So, homogeneous time is lost or rejected. Peter Szondi states: "The crisis of drama around the turn of the century was essentially a crisis of time" (154). So, time does not belong to a particular period. In postdramatic theatre, time aims to combine acting/performing time with audiences' time. The time shifts to provide and reach the level of slow motion in which everything is moved or repeated slowly in postdramatic theatre.

The fourth aspect of postdramatic theatre is the body. According to Lehmann, "the postdramatic image occurs with/on/to the body" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 163). The aim of body image in postdramatic theatre is to represent theatrical reality. So, audiences feel the existence of the body. Moreover, pain, in postdramatic theatre, is analyzed through death, violence, and feelings of pity and fear, and it is staged with the imitation of cruelty, torture, agony, and physical suffering. Postdramatic theatre represents and reflects mimesis to pain when the stage becomes like life. For example, when a person falls or gets hit on stage, the audience begins to fear for the players. For that reason, the main aim of postdramatic theatre is to get audiences to experience pain through representational try. In other words, the body is the main aspect of postdramatic theatre. Lehmann explains: "As the body no longer demonstrates anything but itself, the turn away from a body of signification and towards a body of unmeaning gesture turns out as the most extreme charging of the body with significance concerning the social reality. The body becomes the only subject matter" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 96). To Lehmann, on the stage, the body represents economy, society, culture, and policy, representing reality and requiring the presence of a spectator. The presence of the body makes a connection between fact and fiction, and the stage and the outside.

The last aspect of postdramatic theatre is media. Media raise awareness, directing, deceiving, convincing, and misguiding society. Notably, postdramatic theatre uses media as effective communication. As Lehmann argues, "theatre […] reflects and deconstructs the conditions of seeing and hearing in the society of the media" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 167). Postdramatic theatre (using presentations, stenographic dialogues, videocassettes, entertainment films, news, comedy, sketches, television stars, and film) creates a type of television theatre. Vivian Sobchack states:

> Television, video cassettes, video tape recorders/players, video games, and personal computers all form an encompassing electronic representational system whose various forms interface to constitute an alternative and absolute world that uniquely incorporates the spectator/user in a spatially decentred, weakly temporalized, and quasi-disembodied state. (78)

Through technology, communication, and media, postdramatic theatre deconstructs the consistent narrative story. So, media (internet, newspaper, television, and radio) are the main means that creates specific performances. So, the presence of other media creates new ways

of staging words, sounds, and images. Lehmann explains the role of media as "if we remain spectators/viewers, if we stay where we are – in front of the television – the catastrophe will always stay outside, will always be objects for a subject" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 184). It can be said that spaces produce different meanings, bodies reflect the audience's fear and pleasure, and time reflects the outside world.

Hence, the second part of the paper focuses on Stephens' *Carmel Disruption*. The main aim of this part is to show how Stephens applies the aspects of postdramatic theatre to reflect fiction and reality in the play. Additionally, Simon Stephens is one of the English pioneer playwrights of postdramatic theatre and a professor of scriptwriting. His writing is performed throughout Europe. He is one of the English-language playwrights in Germany. He is the winner of the Olivier Award, Tony Award, and TMA awards. Stephens has written many plays, and most of his plays have won different awards. He has written around 20 plays, including adaptations of classics and novels. His plays for theatre include *Bluebird* (1998), *Herons* (2001), *Port* (2002), *One Minute* (2003), *Christmas* (2004), *Country Music* (2004), *On the Shore of the Wide World* (2005), *Motortown* (2006), *Pornography* (2007), *Harper Regan* (2007), *Sea Wall* (2008), *Blindness* (2020), and *Morning Sun* (2021).

The researcher has selected Stephens because of his awareness of modern theatre. Moreover, his works range from dirty realism to poetic fragmentation and storytelling. At the same time, among Stephen's 20 plays, the researcher picks up *Carmen Disruption* (2014) because it is the best example of postdramatic theatre.

Carmen Disruption shows how the music and characters of Carmen, an opera by the French Georges Bizet, inspire Stephens' play about loss, love, and emptiness. The play includes five characters: a renowned singer in the opera (The Singer), a taxi driver (Don José), a global trader (Escamillo), a gorgeous prostitute (Carmen), and a teenage dreamer (Micaëla). Everyone is looking for something. Stephens' *Carmen Disruption* re-imagines Georges Bizet's opera Carmen, an opera in four acts. The play is about love, social isolation, loneliness, betrayal, loss, and fidelity. In other words, it is about the individualism, egoism, music, sex, community, and isolation that technology brings.

In fact, one of the features of postdramatic theatre/play is the elimination of hierarchy; there is no definite beginning and end. In *Carmen Disruption*, there is no designed text; the text has no structure. In other words, the play does not have a traditional plot, structure, space, and the soul of drama. Moreover, the play does not have a certain protagonist and a central narrative. It can be said that the characters/actors appear to be such figures.

Carmen Disruption refers to an open text. It has the traits of literary texts that Malgorzata Sugiera describes these traits as "[they] do not respect the rules of traditional dramaturgy" (18). In this postdramatic play, all scenes are represented by monologues. For Seda Ilter, "each character and story is confined to one scene alone and has no relationship to the others" (250–1). So, the five characters do not connect. Each character tells his/her story and monologue to the audience/reader. The monologue brings loneliness to the five characters. There is no connection between them. So, audiences are taken on a journey through the minds of the characters. The attention of the audience(s) is turned in different directions during the monologues of the five characters. The characters, voices, and movement are deconstructed in *Carmen Disruption*. Moreover, Stephen uses language that helps characters express their pains, cravings, and desires. The five characters, in the play, speak short; they use sentences with limited words. In this way, the five characters never leave the stage or speak to each other. This leads to their social isolation; each one lives in his/her world. The five characters, in the play, refer to individual heterogeneous characters. It can be seen that Stephens deconstructs the unity of character. There is no relationship between the five characters.

According to Ilter, "the characters and their narratives remain limited to specific, fragmented scenes and are not structures as unified" (250).

Apart from the postdramatic structure, Stephens aims to create active audiences who have the roles of the characters. For Lehmann, "'audiences' comprehension finds hardly any support" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 88). So, audiences can use their imagination to assess the play. As a result, *Carmen Disruption* creates concrete theatre; theatre without text or plot, and audiences form their imaginary observation. This is one of the signs of postdramatic theatre. It can be observed that Stephens creates an unsafe place for audiences because he demands audiences understand the non-hierarchical and fragmented structure of the play.

It is worth mentioning that postdramatic theatre/play chooses to represent fiction and reality equally. Fiction and reality are presented in *Carmen Disruption* through monologues, pain, media, musicality, performance, and opera and theatre.

Concerning the monologues of the five characters, they give a visual image of their suffering, pain, loneliness, and fictional world. Thus, the audience/reader begins to participate in the fictional world of the characters. As mentioned earlier, the monologue of the five characters reflects their pain. Stephens uses violence and pain differently; he deals with pain through verbal and psychological elements. In the play, for example, *The Singer* suffers psychologically. She says: "I'm not sure if the thoughts are my thoughts at all. Or the voice is my voice" (238). She continues: "I gather my breath. I walk out of my room. I know exactly where I'm going to go. The voice in my head tells me exactly where to go" (231). *The Singer* does not know who she is; she cannot separate between her real world and the role she acts in the Opera House. Moreover, *The Singer*'s monologue shows her suffering as her childhood dream is to be an actress, but she is refused in acting school. *The Singer* says: "I want to be an actor. I only did the singing because I couldn't get a place in acting school […]. I like the way it makes me feel" (220). The audience knows *The Singer*'s inner pain through her monologue.

With this in mind, the monologue of *The Singer* refers to the inner conversation between The Singer and her inner voice. Hence, the inner voice of *The Singer* represents the fictional world. This is one of the features of postdramatic theatre called fragmentation. This makes the audience/reader active during the staging of the play. This monologue shows the split personality of *The Singer*. She says:" I have a voice in my head. It's a voice that tells me everything I should do" (211). She adds: "I dream of the voice in my head. I always dream about the voice in my head. Sometimes it's a man's voice but mostly it's a woman's voice" (217). *The Singer* struggles to separate herself from the other character she plays in the Opera House. She says: "when *I* put on this corset where does the stitching end? Where does *she* start? Where do *I* end?" [My italics] (217). So, Stephens's aim is to create physical contact with the thoughts of the character and make the audience/reader feel *The Singer*'s confusion. So, Stephens represents simulation that audiences question while watching the play.

Another character, Micaela, in the play, suffers psychologically because her beloved leaves her for an unknown reason. So, she tries to justify his behavior by saying: "Alexander left me because he told me I was too young to have a long-term relationship" (232), "Alexander left me because I told him I didn't fancy him anymore" (233), "Alexander left me because I told him I wanted his baby" (134), and "Alexander left me because after my grandmother died I talked for hours about death" (215). Micaela suffers from a broken heart. Stephens, therefore, aims to make audiences/readers get involved in the play. He discusses the inner conflicts of the five characters in the play. Hence, through the monologues, audiences can understand the inner conflict of every character. Consequently, pain is staged psychologically. D. Barenett explains individual pain staging "dramaturgy aims at [the] communication of a broad set of experiences that go beyond those of an individual suffers"

(23). That is to say that the text represents the mind of the characters. In this way, audiences witness pain and fragmentation from this character.

Another scene that reflects the psychological pain in *Carmen Disruption* is when Don Jose, a female taxi driver, says: "You will never know when my husband was dying he was in such terrible pain" (226). She continues: "He [her husband] lay on his back […] properly screaming, howling that it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt" (226). Literally, this sense makes audiences feel how this man suffers physically. It can be said that this is the main feature of postdramatic theatre. So, pain is analyzed through death in this scene.

Moreover, postdramatic theatre represents and reflects mimesis to pain when the stage becomes like life. In other words, postdramatic plays serve the physicality of the body that contains pain and catharsis. It serves pain because audiences can feel pain like their own pain. As mentioned earlier, the main aim of postdrmatic theatre is to get audiences to experience pain through representational try. *Carmen Disruption* contains many scenes of pain. Another scene shows pain when The Singer says: "A motorbike has crashed into the side of the bridge" (228), and "smashed into the foot of that bridge […] through the air in the direction he'd been going but the bike had stopped and so he'd been going but the bike has stopped and so he [biker]'d landed on his shoulder […] and then landed on his back and then lay there as a leather sack full of bones and didn't make a sound" (233). Affirmatively, then, the audiences witness physical pain on the stage, and they react to this pain in performance. Thus, they feel the physical and psychological pain on the stage, and they try to analyze them.

Another scene serves how pain is analyzed through violence when Carmen, a prostitute, hits another man:

> I kick him in his ribs with my bane feet which kind of hurts but kind of doesn't. I kick him in the side of his arm. I stamp my foot on his neck. I kick the side of his head. His skin breaks by his cheekbone so that blood spits out onto the carpet and catches between my toes. I hear the break of teeth under my feet. He's crying. (219)

Stephens serves the physicality of the body in this scene. Obviously, he aims to examine the reactions of society. It is noted that physicality is presented to audiences through violence and pain.

It can be observed that through the monologues of the five characters, the audiences feel that they live in two worlds: The fictional world where the actors live, and the actual world where the audience(s) live(s). It can then be seen that one of the characteristics related to postdramatic theatre is dislocation. There is no specific place in the play. Dislocation makes every character in his/her own space. Therefore, the audience/reader has an impression that every character feels lonely. Regarding media, media make the audience/reader differentiate between fiction and reality. By using media, the audience is aware that characters live in fiction. Media (internet, newspaper, television, and radio) create specific performances. So, the presence of other media creates new ways of staging words, sounds, and images.

In *Carmen Disruption*, media trigger the audiences' imagination. Signs such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter tell the audiences the importance of the matter. Micaëla, a teenage dreamer, says: "I found a song that my brother used to play in his bedroom on *YouTube* and played it very loud" [My italics] (211). Tim Etchells states that media focus on "rewriting bodies, changing our understanding of narratives and places, changing our relationship to culture, [and] changing our understanding of presence" (97). These signs deconstruct the unity and structures of the play. Stephens refers to media and technology as an aspect of postdramatic theatre. In other words, the signifiers of media and technology, such as TV, Skype, mobile, film, Twitter, IPad, and iPhone, hold an important place in the play (Lianna Mark, 2016).

Equally important, the use of technology in the play brings social isolation, loneliness, sex, music, and individualism. Moreover, technology makes the audience/reader differentiate between fiction and reality. By using media, the audience is aware that characters live in fiction. Media also show how each character lives in his/her bubble. Lehmann explains the significance of technology: "The electronic image […] is pure foreground. It evokes a fulfilled, superficially fulfilled kind of seeing. Since no aim or desire enters consciousness as the background of the image, there can be no lack" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 171). Lehmann means that postdramatic theatre uses media images to fulfill audiences' desires and activate them. In *Carmen Disruption*, the examples of the usage of media images are in the following quotes: Micaela says: "My grandmother wasn't on *Facebook* […]. I told her to go on *Twitter* but she didn't", and "I called her *mobile* six times after she died just to hear her *voicemail*" [My italics] (216). These lines show that the new generations spend the most time in the virtual world to the extent they connect via technology. Moreover, Carmen says: "I check my *Twitter* […]. I check out *Tinder*. I check out *Grindr*" [My italics] (227). In addition, Micaela meets her boyfriend Alexander for the first time "when [they] Skyped each other" (228). So, most characters in the play are addicted and tied up with technology. This leads to their social isolation. It can be observed that the characters use the virtual world to separate themselves from the real world. Hence, postdramatic theatre/play chooses to represent fiction and reality equally. In this respect, Facebook and Twitter represent fiction, and theatre represents reality.

In terms of musicality, Stephens gives a voice to the chorus. So, the use of the chorus is an example of postdramatic theatre. Stephens uses the chorus to deconstruct the unity of time because when the chorus speaks, characters and postmodern time stop. Practically, then, audiences/readers can differentiate between fiction and reality through the Chorus. The five characters live in a fictional world. While the audience participates in the fictional world of the five characters, the chorus brings the audience/reader to reality. The chorus becomes a part of the play, narrates the play to audiences, comments on the action, encourages audiences to think, and reflects on the main character. It is worth noting that Carmen *Disruption* is read like lyrics. The audiences feel that each character has a song. In this case, opera is used to make a distinction between music and voices. Music is used to highlight the characters' mental states. The function of the chorus is to enhance the audience's sense of the characters/actors' inner life and comments on the action but in a non-invested way. The chorus and characters do not interact. It suffices to say, music works as a division between most scenes. Hence, audiences hear different voices because, for Lehmann, postdramatic theatre "does not so much aim to make us [audiences] hear the one voice of the one subject but rather realizes a *dissemination* of voices, which incidentally is by no means exclusively tied to electronically or otherwise 'technically' arranged fragmentation" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 148). The different voices mean that spectators, characters, and the chorus begin to use time. So, Stephens gives a voice to the chorus.

Therefore, musical style is used to emphasize structure. *Carmen Disruption* revolves around music. Music is reworked and reimagined. Stewart Pringle, a playwright at the National Theatre, says: "Escamillo [a global trader in *Carmen Disruption*] and Carmen storm through the piece like super-heated astral bodies, Michaëla and Don José almost get lost in the noise. And there's plenty of noise to get lost in" (*para* 7). Pringe goes on to say: "Stephens supplements Bizet's score with snatches of Daft Punk [a French electronic music duo], Kraftwerk [a German band], and Sonic Youth [an American rock band]. These reforged characters carry their own musical universes around with them, their own motifs" (*para* 7). Each of the chorus pieces is sung. The director, Sebastian Nübling, who collaborates with Stephens, writes about him: "In Simon's plays language is rhythm. His language is rhythm because it is constructed like music. His language has a musical flow and the meaning lies

often not in the direct meaning of what the words literally mean but in the musical structure"(ix). He adds: "Though Simon often mentions songs from popular culture as a field of reference, the musical form of his language is not there to entertain […]. In Simon's plays, language is sound […]. He loves to follow musical lines, and he transforms text into sound" (x). Thus, by creating the story, music becomes an active dialogue with text by helping the spectator(s) to distinguish between fiction and reality.

Christopher Innes states that the use of music "as a reference and structuring principle" to generalize the situations of the character (461). So, the chorus sings about the condition of the five main characters. In the play, Carmen says: "I could sing. I could open up my throat and sing as loud as hard as I can" (221). Moreover, Carmen sings when he arrives at his mother's house "love is like a rebellious bird" (226). In addition, The Singer says: "Sometimes I find conversation difficult […] [and] when I could be singing. I find myself feeling like I should sing at somebody rather than just", and "the only time I ever feel real anymore is when I'm her [The Singer]" (221). In this case, postdramatic theatre is called a theatre of voice. It does not contain only the voice of one character, but the sound of the train, the voice of the chorus, and the voices of the five characters. For Lehmann, postdramatic theatre contains "*dissemination* of voices and exposition of *physis* of the voice in screaming, groaning, animal voices" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 148-9).

In addition, postdramatic theatre uses foreign languages; these languages form rhythm on the stage. This new rhythm, for Lehmann, shows that there is "no longer [the] dramatic language of theatre" (93). The Singer says: "I can hear them. *Ces gens la*. They know I'm listening to them" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 230). For Lehmann, "everything depends on not understanding immediately" (87). These languages create an ambiguous atmosphere for audiences. With rhythm and music, postdramatic theatre is close to a dance theatre. Using the rhythm of words, the audience takes place in the play. The Singer says: "Something which is just a shape becomes a sound. Something which is just a shape becomes a gesture" (243). Hence, the performance creates strong relationships with the audience.

At this point, fiction and reality, as a feature of postdramatic theatre, are represented in *Carmen Disruption* through opera and theatre; theatre represents real life, while opera represents the fictional world. So, it can be assumed that the most important aspect of postdramatic theatre is the gesture. The gesture of The Singer between opera and theatre creates an active audience. It is significant to note that meaning in postdramatic theatre is postponed. Lehmann states: "Meaning remains in principle postponed" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 82). The audience(s) cannot understand the meaning of the play easily. Thus, audience(s) experience(s) ambiguity.

In conclusion, the study of Simon Stephens' play *Carmen Disruption* has provided valuable insights into the concept of postdramatic theatre and its application in challenging traditional dramaturgical frameworks. By blurring the boundaries between different elements of performance, emphasizing sensory experiences, and questioning the dominance of plot-driven storytelling, *Carmen Disruption* exemplifies the characteristics of postdramatic theatre. Through an analysis informed by Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic-theatre model, this research has identified three key findings. Firstly, Stephens utilizes postdramatic aspects to create a strong interaction and relationship between the actors and the audience, enhancing the immersive nature of the theatrical experience. Secondly, the play introduces the irruption of the real, leaving audiences uncertain about the boundaries between fiction and reality. Finally, *Carmen Disruption* effectively embodies the coexistence of fiction and reality through its incorporation of various artistic forms such as monologues, media, opera and theatre, and musicality.   This research contributes to a deeper understanding of postdramatic theatre and highlights the innovative ways in which Simon Stephens employs postdramatic

techniques to reflect on the relationship between the audience/reader and the play, ultimately challenging conventional notions of what constitutes a drama. One important aspect is the deconstruction and reconstruction of the traditional dramaturgical framework. Traditionally, drama has been characterized by a linear narrative structure, well-defined characters, and a clear cause-and-effect progression. However, *Carmen Disruption* challenges these conventions by blurring the boundaries between different elements of performance. The play emphasizes sensory experiences, such as incorporating music and multimedia elements, and disrupts the linear progression of the narrative. This deconstruction allows for a more fragmented and non-linear storytelling approach, creating a postdramatic experience for the audience.

In a nutshell, in postdramatic theatre, performance is more interesting than acting, and theatre is more interesting than the play; the reader prefers to see postdramatic theatre before reading its plays because postdramatic plays are texts for performance than acting. In *Carmen Disruption*, audiences see where and how the line begins, but they never understand where the characters' lines finish. Indeed, Stephens forms long monologues, deconstructs dramatic structure, and forces audiences to read and watch the play from different perspectives. By way of illustration, in *Carmen Disruption*, he uses postdramatic aspects to create a strong interaction and relationship between the actors and the audience/readers. Moreover, the irruption of the real separates reality from fiction and creates audiences who are not able to decide whether the play is real or not. Thus, with the help of monologues, media, opera and theatre, and musicality, *Carmen Disruption* represents fiction and reality equally.

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