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TRANSPLANTATION AND EXPLOITATION IN TIM CROUCH'S ENGLAND

TIM CROUCH'UN ENGLAND OYUNUNDA TRANSPLANTASYON VE SÖMÜRÜ

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT ENGLAND is a play performed in an art gallery by two performers, Tim Crouch and Hannah Received: 15.10.2020 Ringham. The play, which discusses the social position of contemporary art, has a design that can only be performed in a white walled art gallery where Crouch and Ringham alternate in the narration of an intense monologue. In the first act, the protagonist, whose boyfriend is **✓** Accepted: 28.12.2020 a wealthy art dealer and participates in art auctions as part of his work, is portrayed as a very serious heart patient who despairingly awaits for an organ transplantation. In the second act, Keywords: the protagonist, now named as English, goes to an unknown city in the Middle East to thank a Muslim widow (the wife of the donor, Hassam) who believes that her husband was killed ENGLAND, and his heart was stolen to save a Western person's life. The play contextualizes a different Exploitation, kind of exploitation within the context of transmigration and transplantation. It represents Tim Crouch, the invasion of a heart for a wealthy Westerner's body and another country's culture. In addition to analysing the text, this study aims to provide an overview of Tim Crouch's work Transplantation, and to show the themes of transformation and exploitation in ENGLAND. Contemporary British Theatre. Review Article

MAKALE BİLGİSİ	ÖZET
@ Geliş: 15.10.2020	ENGLAND, iki sanatçı Tim Crouch ve Hannah Ringham tarafından bir sanat galerisinde sergilenen bir oyundur. Çağdaş sanatın sosyal konumunu tartışan oyun, yalnızca Crouch ve
✓ Kabul: 28.12.2020	Ringham'ın yoğun bir monolog anlatımında dönüşümlü olarak yer aldığı beyaz duvarlı bir sanat galerisinde oynanabilecek bir tasarıma sahiptir. İlk perdede erkek arkadaşı zengin bir sanat tüccarı olan ve işinden dolayı sanat müzayedelerine katkıda bulunan kahraman, çok ciddi bir kalp hastası olarak tasvir edilir ve umutsuzca organ naklini beklemektedir. İkinci perdede İngiliz olarak adlandırılan kahraman, Batılı kadının hayatı yüzünden kocasının öldürüldüğüne ve kalbinin çalındığına inanan dul Müslüman kadına (bağışçının karısı / Hassam) teşekkür etmek için Ortadoğu'da bilinmeyen bir şehre gider. Oyun, göç ve nakil bağlamında farklı bir sömürü türünü bağlamsallaştırır. Oyun, zengin Batılı beden için bir kalbin ve başka bir ülkenin kültürünün istilasını temsil eder. Tim Crouch'un eserlerine genel bir bakış sağlayan bu çalışma, metni analiz etmenin yanı sıra, <i>ENGLAND</i> oyunundaki dönüşümü ve sömürüyü göstermeyi amaçlar.
Anahtar Kelimeler: ENGLAND, Sömürü, Tim Crouch, Transplantasyon, Çağdaş Britanya Tiyatrosu. Derleme Makale	

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Introduction

Impulsive thinking is always coherent with the realisation of the message — theatre is a place of meeting — where communication between actors and spectators is essential for the success of the performance. The elements of traditional theatre are not completely disrupted — the theatrical text, the units of time, place and space — but experimentation is often pushed to the limit, in consideration of the fact that rigorous schemes and narrative dogmas make theatre a 'closed' space, where the audience is passively limited to having fun. Inciting the awakening of conscience is perhaps a bit anachronistic; experimentation is about calling the audience to participate in the performance more critically. Bringing the essence of theatre into a gallery of art, physically eliminating the stage and positioning the characters directly between spectators are just some of the characteristics of Crouch's theatrical methodology.

Crouch's theatre escapes more authoritative categorisations such as story line, story organization (beginning, middle and end), plot structure (rising action, turning point, falling action) and as a result it is classified as contemporary dramaturgy. Vicky Angelaki exemplifies Crouch's theatrical aesthetic as: "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" (2013:XII). Crouch's work often mixes tradition and innovation to create a credible performance, almost always free of scenography and disturbing elements in a theatre that wants to be a pure form of communication — of which the public is not a simple user, but takes an active part in its realisation.

Within this scope, it is not unexpected that there has been a significant increase in participation, witnessing and cultural productions discussing events around the world, situations and exploitation of people that relate to Crouch's distinctive texts. Crouch's texts portray unconventional theatrical aesthetics which represent unfortunate conditions, suffering, abuses, exploitation and depressions on stage. The live performance does not in fact provide reactions on command and the risk of failure is always around the performance. However, the choice belongs to the spectators who, aware of what they are witnessing, decide whether or not to become an active part of all performances that Crouch's project works and proceeds in a unique and precise direction. The judgement is positive and overall, Crouch theatre is found stimulating, always open to new research and collaborations. This is demonstrated by the great success it has achieved all over the world, becoming the spokesman for a theatrical aesthetic all its own.

In this sense, this paper is to show Crouch's third play *ENGLAND* that is framed by consumerism, exploitation and dehumanisation which has been transplanted from the West. West also transplants of the victim's heart which becomes the matter of exchange like an object that can be sold and bought to save the wealthy protagonist's life. The inequality of the contemporary world creates victims who suffer from imperial capitalist system and privileged people's need which exploit human life anywhere in the world. With this in mind, this study will offer a critical reading of the play, which Stephen Bottoms in the introductory part of *Tim Crouch Plays One* has mentioned as being part "of one of the most important bodies of English-

language playwriting to have emerged so far in the twenty-first century" (2011: 11) in relation to the commercial exploitation of Western intrusion. By western invasion and the inequality in the contemporary world produces a moral breakdown. The protagonist is sick however, s/he can buy the heart of a poor man and thus clutch onto life. The most respected notion in the contemporary world is money, and human life can be abused commercially everywhere in the world. Crouch questions how human lives become commodified, exploited and trivialized to guarantee the lives of others. Crouch's main purpose is to share with the spectators the destructive history of the modern world and transnational exploitation. In addition, this paper will also discuss how abuse and exploitation by the play's protagonist and his/her boyfriend are represented in the text.

Tim Crouch

Thinking about staging, playwriting, storytelling, and art concept inquiries, Crouch finds the concept of traditional staging, acting, and theatre scene insufficient and limiting. To Crouch, the performance aims to create active participation and instead of blinding each other's creative thoughts, co-producers will be co-creators by sharing responsibility throughout the performance. Crouch's works struggle to include the spectator in the performances. Taking part in all phases of staging, acts and academics Crouch focuses on the theatre's relationship with the audience.

In Crouch's theatre, performance of both living and inanimate participants is carefully determined around the idea of mutual relationship which creates different emotions at the same time among audiences and "maximize what's happening in the audience" (Bottoms 2009: 69). Within this context, we can separate the genre of Tim Crouch as unique and original, far from all playwrights who wrote for the theatre from the 90s onwards. However, it is necessary to provide a historical and social context and an explanation in order to understand how Crouch found his place in the contemporary British theatre world. On May 8, 1956, John Osborne presented his Look Back in Anger at the Royal Court Theatre. It was a revolutionary moment that managed to speak to young people, the so-called 'Angry Young Men' related to the red brick universities. Osborne has provided a new direction for the theatre and given voice to change. Through Osborne, it has been realised in an instant that not a theatre of direction, not of actors, but a theatre of writing for the future of British drama has been shaped. By Osborne's works, British drama, which remained silent for a long time, removed the borders and put social and political conditions and human life in the centre again. It is always an innovation in the wake of the textual theatrical tradition, of a new wave to emerge within the macro category of new writing. This cult of the new, however, must not make the new writer think as a young writer at the beginning of his career, since the voice that brings the connotations of novelty and originality must be that of the work, not of its author. It is clear those generational heterogeneous writers of the quality of Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Martin Crimp who actually present similar characteristics, i.e. a strong experimentation, but always in a theatrical literary mould, especially where the playwright is the firm pole of the scope. Cristina Delgado-García (2015:70) illustrates Crouch's scope in two perspectives:

"The first is the indebtedness of his plays to conceptual art. This legacy was originally recognised by Crouch in his 2006 online interview with Caridad Svich, examined

subsequently in Stephen Bottom's article 'Authorizing the Audience: The Conceptual Drama of Tim Crouch' (2009), and expanded in Emilie Morin's 'Look Again': Indeterminacy in Contemporary British Drama' (2011), where the influence of Fluxus artists is also considered. The second aspect is Crouch's widely documented intention to promote spectators' imaginative, intellectual and ethical implication in the work".

García argues that Crouch's works deconstruct stereotypes and heighten the audience's imagination, intellectuality and creativity applying to metaphorical subjects in the text. Crouch, emphasizing various viewpoints in his stories which make the spectator feel different reactions at the same time and unlimited experimentation in his presentation. Within the context of culture as performance, which questions the dominancy of textuality, audience goes to the theatre to see more than the script and to grasp the spirit of the performance. Similar to Lehmann's postdramatic theory, which presents new aspects and signs for theatricality which provide any attempts to disrupt the text-oriented theatre and the conventional rules, Crouch's experimental theatrical attitude and heterogeneous signs (bodily appearance of the actors, unknown identities, gestures, gaps, language, sounds and music) represents open performances for his audiences. Each of his plays brings to light a feeling, a world view, a differently charged drama and forces spectators to participate in the performance. Crouch's highly heterogeneous results are united by an ever-growing desire for novelty, scandal, vitality, and energy. Without restriction the performance with time, place or any conventional rules, Crouch deconstructs traditional roles of the actor, audience and character and represents collaborative process for performance in *ENGLAND*. In the play, Crouch shows his desire for novelty and vitality revealing different emotional conditions, lifestyles shaped by economic, cultural, political or religious thoughts and exploitation of the identities in an experimental way and plans a play which happens inside its spectator.

Transplantation and Exploitation in ENGLAND

The award-winning play *ENGLAND* was written at the request of the Traverse Theatre to be performed in the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh in 2007. Like *The Author* (2009), *ENGLAND* has a distinctive space-specific practice; being staged in a real gallery, the play invites the spectator to act round the space. And, like *My Arm* (2003), which portrays the story of a young boy who raises his arm above his head that over time causes serious health problems and his disabled body and alienation from the society stand out in the art circles, Crouch represents the link between art and exploitation in *ENGLAND*. Within the context of art circles, the depth of identity character and history is exploited by international inequalities and alienation of characters and spectators from the society are also tried to be reflected in the play. The exclusive and cultivated world has been occupied by the art dealer and his girl/boyfriend (the protagonist) and like the international works in the art galleries, art dealer and the protagonist think that anything can be sold and bought regardless of national or international identities and human values.

The play, offering two perspectives, integrates art within the play by presenting a performance in a gallery and sets the play rightly between the spectators. All subsequent performances are carried out within the so-called 'white walled galleries' (art galleries

characterised by white walls). Tim Crouch describes the play being performed in an art gallery as:

"ENGLAND is about an empire of a different kind – one of transmigrations and transplantations. It's the story of one thing placed inside another: a heart inside another person's body, a culture inside another country's culture, theatre inside a gallery, a character inside an actor, a play inside its audience" (2007).

In the play, choosing the gallery as the setting for the play, Crouch represents a microcosm which shelters exploiter-exploited, criminal-victim, favoured-neglected and European-non-European character. The play, which discusses the social position of contemporary art, has a design that can only be performed in a white walled art gallery where Crouch and Ringham alternate in the narration of an intense monologue. In the first act, two performers guide in a sense the viewers who come to the art gallery, by giving information about the history of the gallery building, the pictures exhibited and the artists: "Performed by two guides within an exhibition, ENGLAND travels the trade routes of art and human beings" (Crouch 2007). Through the guides, the spectator is educated to identify the presented artworks while trying to understand whether they are images or artworks from the protagonist's life. These two different individuals create a particular subject-protagonist with Ringham stating: "I am English" and Crouch maintaining: "My boyfriend is American". "From this moment on, their joint first-person singular speech outlines what appears to be a singular-subject protagonist" (García 2015: 168).

The play consists of two acts which has long silences and gaps. Every word, voice, silences and gaps are crucial elements for Crouch's theatre. By the help of these practises, Crouch can interrelate with the audience and as a writer he aims for the audience to participate in the play, fill the gaps and also speak for the character, in other words audience becomes new voice of the performance. Silences in the play also represent non-European and exploited character whose voice is silenced by the governing language. The language of non-Western country is ignored and "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 2010: 136). Exploited character can only be existed with translated other language however he/she can't make his/her voice heard.

In the first act, the man/woman, whose boyfriend is a prosperous gallerist and participates in art auctions because of his work, is a very serious heart patient who despairingly waits for an organ transplantation. Referring to character and personhood in *ENGLAND*, Rebellato (2014: 86) evaluates them as:

"Tim Crouch's ENGLAND is a strange kind of two-hander. In the first half, the two actors, a man and a woman, alternate the lines, jointly playing a single character. It is a rounded, interesting character with humour, personality, a story, but because of the nature of the text and the two performers, we do not know their gender".

Representing two actors as the same person, the long silences portray an uncertain condition; the character can be a male or a female. In the second half, the protagonist goes to an Islamic country whose name is not mentioned in the play. Crouch's aim is to convey unknown gender

and identity of characters to spectators who will solve the puzzle "through their intuition, their way of understanding, and their imagination" (Lehmann, 2006: 61). Instead of text-based traditional form, Crouch's play intents to spectators to take active role during the performance.

Act I does not specify any character name, gender; it presents the character both as woman and man. As the story continues, the absence of the protagonist becomes evident and Crouch forces the audience to construct the type of character in their mind and invites the audience the "act of mental supplementation" (Radosavljevic 2013: 156). In the first act, "the audience are provided with extensive information about the protagonist's life, including details of the swiftly deteriorating heart disease. However, they are never told the protagonist's gender" (Pilny 2016: 141). Crouch opens a space between actor and character, indicating the dualism typically perceived by those who recite: "... the duality that I am on the stage as me, but I am also not me" (İlter 2011: 402). A story of suffering emerges, of a human being looking for an effective cure. We discover that the protagonist-ghost is ill and is in an indeterminate state between life and death, a condition of uncertainty that does not allow him/her to show himself/herself to the public. What is certain is that the English person agonises over an exquisite heart illness and needs a heart transplant.

From the first page onwards, a third, non-speaking character appears: the fiancé, an art dealer living together with the protagonist in London and who has not yet given up in the face of the illness of the partner. For every sigh, s/he has a word of hope ready and is not tired of visiting hospitals and private clinics to find the right therapy. In each of these places there are works of art hanging on the walls: "Artwork can bring many therapeutic benefits to patients, visitors and staff within a hospital environment [...] It's like being in a church. Or in a gallery. Everyone talks so quietly. Everything is so clean" (Crouch 2011: 135-142). Art is represented as a treatment centre.

In the play, while art is represented as an aesthetic gratefulness and a treatment centre, opposing feelings about the protagonist and his/her health condition comes into view and starts to be discussed. The idea of art as a treatment centre is questioned. Thoughts related to art, such as "help them feel better about their illness", "can make you feel better about going to die" and "can make you live longer" (Crouch 2011: 124-128) have started to be deconstructed. In the first act, by using the boyfriend's thought "good art is art that sells" (Crouch 2011: 128), Crouch stresses the commercial role of art. The power of art is measured by its purchasing power. Delgado-García clarifies the power of art in the play: "The universality of art is delicately blended with the capitalist illusion of universal purchasing power, which comes to reinforce the positive face of capitalism supported in this first act" (2015: 171). Art is only helpful when it brings lots of money and can make you live longer while exploiting another person's life and making it miserable so this treatment centre means the end of the world for the veiled Muslim woman. The words of Rebellato (2013: 137) illustrate his idea that "This creates a fascinatingly paradoxical stage character, someone who is rounded and vivid and individual, yet with a key marker of their identity suspended". Actually two paradoxical women characters in the play are not vivid, one tries to find a new heart for transplantation, the other tries to find her husband who donates his heart. While "the protagonist gains access to

privileged medical treatment which saves her/his life" (Pilny 2016: 142) and buys an exploited life with the help of an art-dealing boyfriend, the widow woman tries to regain their exploited life.

In Act II, Crouch portrays the narrator from the first act as "English" and introduces the "Interpreter" to the characters. The spectators, being seated, watch the second act in a more traditional way, in a different part of the gallery. Also, the spectators are physically active participants in this scene because spectators "are cast in the role of a veiled young Muslim woman" (Pilny 2016: 142). In this second act, the play takes place in a third world country in the Middle East (another room in the gallery), where the protagonist, who had a heart transplant, went to visit the widow of the heart donor as an uninvited guest:

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"If it weren't for you I wouldn't be here!

(...)

You saved my life

(...).

Never thought I'd be here. Never thought I'd see this or meet you or anything, really!

It's amazing!! People at home think I'm crazy but I've been imagining this"

(Crouch 2011: 143).
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The change of place indicates "a chronological, spatial and epistemological shift in the story: The protagonist has received a life-saving heart transplant and is now in a hotel room, in a remote non-specified Islamic country" (García 2015: 153). The other character acts as an "Interpreter" between English protagonist and the Muslim widow, embodied by the spectators. The interpreter however, expresses only his/her own thoughts without paying attention to what English says. The interpreter sometimes translates what is said and sometimes ignores English's words:

"English: Would she like some refreshments ask her?

Would she like some tea? Or a Coke?

There's machine out in the corridor. Or we could phone room service.

Interpreter: Would you like something to drink?" (Crouch 2011:144).

It seems that the interpreter does not care much about the widow who lives in a third world country, either. On the other hand, asking a suffering widow to drink tea or coke is an imperial impulse and exposes the selfishness of the modern world. The widow is the victim of the unfair social order. She suffers from inequalities and imperialist system of the modern world.

The conversation between the characters hones in on the young woman's husband, Hassam who was only twenty-six and a victim of a terrorist attack. He was injured in an explosion in the terrorist attack on Marriott Hotel where an American official was killed. It is also ascertained that there are doubts about how Hassam died and how the heart was taken from him for transplantation: "I was told that someone had offered to fly my husband to this other clinic. In a helicopter. The doctors told me there was a good chance Hassam would recover so

I was happy to let him go" (2011: 153). However, Hassam's wife was informed that Hassam's brain was dead and she could get money if she accepted her husband's organ donation. Through money and exploitation of woman, which question the existence of full equality and human rights and represents some certain people are more world citizen than the others, by Western invasion, exploitation and intrusion are also witnessed "within the context of the using of brain power and labour from poorer countries by Europeans, since English's GP, cardiologist, and heart surgeon are conspicuously of South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern origin" (Pilny 2016: 143). It is shown that Western countries exploit people's lives and wealthy English could even get an organ without paying anything. Contrary to what is believed by the protagonist who "understood the transplant to be a generous gesture from Hassam that has been rewarded monetarily" (García 2015: 153), Hassam's wife has not received the money she was assured of:

"He said that to save the life of one is to save the whole of mankind. He offered me half a million for my husband's heart. I was confused. I had nothing. My father was ill. My husband wasn't dead. I signed a paper.

...

There is no place for my grief. It is unbearable. Intolerable. No wife should have to live with what I have had to live with. I am young. I have nothing. I received no money...I have nothing. My father is ill. I have nothing" (Crouch 2011: 155).

Hassam's body was not returned to the woman and she got a very small amount of money. For that reason, "the widow believes the heart was stolen and her comatose husband effectively murdered, so that English might live" (Bottoms 2011: 18). While the protagonist can cure his/her diseased heart and his/her boyfriend has three passports and is a citizen of the world, the widow cannot even reach her husband's dead body and has to struggle with her loneliness. Because of commercialised culture and policy, which regulate and protect the government actions and laws and financially support activities related to the arts and exploit people's lives for the sake of wealthy English, social irresponsibility, inequalities and exploitation which continue to exist in the world and because of the shortcomings of economy, the widow has to donate her husband's organs.

Thinking of the widow's conditions, English brings her a gift, which is an expensive and beautiful work, to state her gratefulness: "I have a present, a gift, to thank you, to say thank you, to help you. I bought it from England" (Crouch 2011: 157). The gift brought from the UK is very valuable and the woman can do whatever she wants with it; however the woman does not want to be exploited anymore and pays no attention to the marketable value of the gift. All that she wants is to have her husband back and she explains her thoughts with the following expression: "she says she wishes you were dead so that her husband were alive" (2011: 158). The play ends with English's final words "What is she saying?" (2011: 159). The expensive present which the English protagonist has given to the wife of the donor as a statement of gratitude, to whom s/he owes his/her life and it expresses both the opposition of East and West and how identities of the West exploit the East. English wants to present an object which symbolises the economic power of the West to ease the woman's mourning. With the help of

the protagonist's verification, commercialised and consumer culture are represented in Act I. Furthermore, in Act II, consumerism and Western intrusion create inequality and suffering for the Eastern people.

Conclusion

In experimental performance of *ENGLAND*, Crouch wants to draw attention to imperial imprudence and selfishness through heart transplantation, different bodies, identities and nations. The inequality in the contemporary world creates a moral vacuum. Because the sick protagonist is wealthy, s/he can buy the heart of a poor man and thus hold onto life. In this context, borders can be violated. The most valuable concept in the contemporary system is money, and human life can be exploited financially anywhere in the world. Globalised capitalism and wealthy people's need for transplantation create transnational exploitation. The imperial West ruthlessly carries out actions to survive and *ENGLAND*'s neo-concept questions the relationship between theatre and conceptual art; Crouch interrogates this relation until the end of the play. The idea of exploitation and ending other lives in order to keep it alive is unbearable for the playwright. Without restriction the performance with time, place or any conventional rules, Crouch deconstructs traditional roles of the actor, spectator and character and represents the unbearable process through collaborative performance in *ENGLAND*.

In the play, the exploitation of identity is explained by the imprisonment of one body in another and a third world country, whose name is not specified, in the United Kingdom through heart transplantation. While the protagonist sets off a new life, the widow receives despair and faithlessness. Within this context, the nationality of the couple as central characters in ENGLAND metaphorically implies that the transplant story has a relation with existing economic conditions, conceivably with the well-being state of Western economies. Crouch, observing invasions and war conditions which destroy the lives of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan on behalf of core values, such as democracy and freedom, represents the exploitation and annihilation of the lives of Hassam and his wife. Accordingly, in *ENGLAND*, Crouch points out to the importance of the concept of world citizenship, which mirrors the inequalities of the modern world, the value of art and human life, and the impositions of the consumer society that spends human values, and sees all individuals equally. Western invasion and privileges continue their exploitations in the globalised world order and human suffering turns into an overwhelming theatrical experience. Representing commercialised art circles in the globalised world order, Crouch's central thought is to portray the spectators the destructive history of the contemporary world and transnational exploitation.

Ethical Statement

Scientific, ethical and quotation rules were followed in the writing process of the study named "Transplantation and Exploitation in Tim Crouch's England"; according to ULAKBİM TR DİZİN 2020 criteria, there was no need for data collection in the study requiring ethics committee approval.

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