

Family Concept Within the Absurd Tradition: A Study of Arthur Kopit

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Abstract

This study focuses on an absurdist play in which examples of familial relationships can be found, showing how each member of the family is affected by the unhealthy environment within the family. The study provides an introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd and highlights its philosophy, which is to "express the senselessness of the human condition. Arthur Kopit is an important representative of this school, in which he wanted to show the lack of meaning in life. He wanted to force the audience to search for a more truthful and essential life by showing and exposing the absurd in ordinary everyday situations. Oedipal undertones are highlighted in the play Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You in The Closet and I'm Feelin' so Sad, which is about a domineering wife and her overprotected son and her dead husband, whose body keeps falling out of a closet during the play. And answers are sought to the questions of how it affects children when hidden complexes or abnormalities appear in the mother, and what happens when the child cannot fully resolve its Oedipal conflict.

Key Words: Absurd Theatre, Arthur Kopit, Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Oedipus Complex

Absürd Gelenek İçinde Aile Kavramı: Arthur Kopit Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Özet

Bu çalışma, aile ilişkilerinin örneklerinin bulunabileceği absürd bir oyuna odaklanmakta ve aile içindeki sağlıklı ortamdan ailenin her bir üyesinin nasıl etkilendiği göstermektedir. Çalışmada Absürd Tiyatro'ya bir giriş yapılmakta ve felsefesinin "insanlık durumunun anlamsızlığını ifade etmek" olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Arthur Kopit, yaşamdaki anlam eksikliğini göstermek istediği bu ekolün önemli bir temsilcisidir. Ayrıca sıradan gündelik durumlardaki absürdü göstererek ve ifşa ederek seyirciyi daha gerçek ve daha temel bir yaşam arayışına zorlamak istemiştir. Otoriter bir kadın ve onun aşırı korumacı oğlu ile oyun boyunca cesedi defalarca dolaptan düşen ölü kocasını merkeze alan Ah Baba Vah Baba Annem Seni Astı Dolaba ve Kendimi Çok Üzgün Hissediyorum oyununda Ödipal imaların altı çizilmektedir. Bu çalışmada annede birtakım gizli kompleksler ya da anormallikler ortaya çıkarsa çocuk bundan nasıl etkilenir, çocuk Ödipal çatışmasını tam olarak çözemezse ne olur gibi sorulara yanıtlar aranmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Absürd Tiyatro, Arthur Kopit, Ah Baba, Vah Baba , Oedipus Kompleksi

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Introduction

Family is the seed of a society. Problems which start in the family may become a threat to all parts of a society. So since family can be taken as the origin of the society, the relationships and ties between family members can be taken as a model for social relationships within a society. That means that if the familial ties and relationships are observed and investigated, a huge step towards a healthier community can be taken.

This study focuses on an absurd play in which examples of familial relationships can be found, and how each member of the family is affected by the unhealthy environment within the family is shown.

In the first part of the study an introduction to The Theatre of the Absurd is given and its philosophy is underlined which is "to express sense of the senselessness of the human condition" (Esslin, 1962: 21).

In absurdist plays, the characters are caricatures rather than real people and this exaggerated and hyperbolic narrative style makes it easier to work on the dysfunctions within the family. 'absurdism' means "without purpose" for an absurdist playwright. With neither a clear plot nor a convincing character, the plays often seem circular and pointless. Although they are pointless, they also carry very profound psychological, social and philosophical meanings under the shelter of nonsensical and meaningless elements. Arthur Kopit is an important representative of this school in which he wanted to show the lack of meaning in life. He also wanted to force the audience to seek for a truer and more essential life by showing and exposing the absurd in ordinary everyday situations.

The Theatre of the Absurd emerged in the 1950s with a group of playwrights that included Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter. The root 'absurd' denotes something that does not follow the roots of logic. In the Absurdist school of drama, existence is fragmented and pointless. There is no truth, so the search for truth is abandoned. Action moves outside of the causality to chaos. Their avant-garde plays expressed the belief in a godless universe where human existence has no meaning or purpose so therefore all communication breaks down. This breaking down of communication, leads to problems in society starting with the family (Esslin, 1962).

Mother figure is the central figure in the family, as she gives birth and rears the children and is responsible from the private sphere of the family life. Mother is the person who the child had complete dependence to, during the infancy period of his or her life. First orientation towards nourishment, pleasure and all other needs and drives of the child are fulfilled by the mother (Atkinson, 1993). Because of this the mother-child relationship in the play *Oh Dad Poor Dad* will be mostly focused on.

Oedipal undertones are emphasized in the play *Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You in The Closet and I'm Feelin' so Sad* (1960), which is about a domineering woman and her overprotected son and her dead husband, whose body keeps falling out of a closet during the play. And answers are sought

to the questions of how it affects the children when hidden complexes or abnormalities appear in the mother, and what happens when the child cannot fully resolve its Oedipal conflict.

With the outbreak of the socialization process, the child has to learn to give up certain pleasures in order to obey the limitations of the society. He or she cannot expect every desire to be satisfied. Civilization means limitation and inhibition. The basic inhibition that is introduced in the infancy period is to learn to share the mother. According to Sigmund Freud this stage of the infancy is called 'Oedipal Stage' (Atkinson, 1993).

In my psychological analyses, I will mainly use the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. Freud, the founder of psychoanalytic theory, is one of the outstanding intellectual figures of the twentieth century. He compared the human mind to an iceberg. The small part that can be seen above the water represents conscious experience; the much larger mass below represents the unconscious, a storehouse of impulses, desires and inaccessible memories that influence our thinking and behaviour (Pervin and John, 1997). Freud was not the first to discover unconscious mental influences -even Shakespeare incorporated them into his plays - but Freud was the first to recognise their primary importance in the day-to-day functioning of the abnormal personality.

Freud believed that during the first five years of life, the individual progresses through several developmental stages, that affect personality which he called psychosexual stages. These stages are oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, and latency period respectively. It is during the phallic stage that children must resolve the Oedipal conflict. This conflict is most clearly described in the case of a boy around the age of five or six. In this age the boy's sexual impulses are directed towards the mother. This leads him to take his father as a rival for his mother's affection. This stage takes its name from the Sophocles' play in which Oedipus Rex unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother. Boy desires the mother as an object of the opposite sex, but one that he is not supposed to have. He learns to recognise the claims that father has on the mother. He fears that his father will punish him against these sexual impulses by castrating him. He can't hope to win against the father, so he redirects his desire to somebody else. In a way he postpones his desires for the mother. He resolves his oedipal conflict by identifying with the father, and replacing the figure of mother with another woman (Atkinson, 1993).

If the child is unable to resolve its oedipal conflict by the latency period, some problems arise in the family. It is these abnormal relationships that will be examined in the play *Oh Dad Poor Dad*. So, in this paper, something concrete and useful will be extracted from Kopit's play and the family relationships, which are of great importance for the formation of a healthy society, will be focused on. I will use Freud's psychoanalytic explanations for this.

Freud, more than fifty years before the beginning of the tradition of the absurd, said "Delight in nonsense has its root in the feeling of freedom, we enjoy when we are able to abandon the straight jacket

of logic" (Esslin, 1962 p.263). He sees verbal nonsense as a kind of freedom and survival from the logical order and the rationality of the serious adult life. Literature and the theatre are the only ways of liberation from reality. Freud sees absurd, as a need and he tries to find evidence for it in the child's stringing words together without having to bother with meaning and the logical order.

Problems in communicating feelings, satisfying one's needs and responding appropriately to the needs and demands of others became intensified in the intimate context of marriage and family life. So by underlying those problems and focusing on them, it will be easier to form a healthier society.

Introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd

After the second World War, a new movement which destructs all the known rules, and the tradition of the theatre, started to appear on the stage. This new understanding of the theatre was not formed by the playwrights who were unified around a revolutionary understanding of the theatre. They were trying to express their own world views, and philosophy by using their own styles, without using the rules of the conventional theatre. In other words, there was not an organised stage convention. Those playwrights were part of a new and still developing stage trend that has not been completely understood, and has hardly ever been defined.

In 1961, Martin Esslin gathered all these 'different' plays under a term, which is 'The Theatre of The Absurd'. This classification is accepted by all the critics, and became an important part of the critical jargon.

Absurd plays can only be judged according to the standards of 'The Theatre of the Absurd', as they use quiet different methods than the conventional theatre. If a conventional, good play must have a well-constructed plot, these have no story or plot; if a good play must concentrate on real characters, these use characters which are more like caricatures than real people; if a good play should have a well organised theme, which begins and ends in a constructed way, these have no theme which has neither a beginning nor an end.

The real surfacing of 'The Theatre of the Absurd' is, with a group of playwrights who included, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter. They all agreed with the Existentialist philosopher Albert Camus' assessment in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942), that the human situation is essentially absurd, devoid of purpose. A pessimistic vision of humanity struggling vainly to find a purpose and to control its fate. Mankind in this view is left feeling hopeless, bewildered and anxious.

Camus in his essay *The Myth of the Sisyphus* said:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come.

This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. (Camus, 1942, p. 18)

If we take the term Absurd in a musical context, it means 'out of harmony'. In a dictionary, we can find the word as "meaningless, funny, illogical or impossible". Although the term 'The Theatre of the Absurd' is an imitated classification, it carries deep psychological, sociological and philosophical meanings, under the shelter of senselessness. Ionesco, who is one of the leaders of this new movement explains absurd as: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions became senseless, absurd, useless" (Esslin, 1984).

As it has already been mentioned, 'The Theatre of the Absurd', spread out after the Second World War. We cannot call this a mere chance. This was because of the social, political and economic environment which brought the chaos to its peak. Failure of the dreams, economic difficulties, the genocide which was performed by Hitler and the examples of barbarities, in a way are the reasons of reflection of this chaos over the stage. The gap which is formed by the collapsing of the conventional beliefs, traditions, and value systems couldn't be filled, and the search for the absurd revealed out. The human being was left in a hopeless situation, with lots of question marks in his mind. There was neither a beginning nor an end, neither a center nor a support for his endless emptiness. He can't know where he comes from and also can't guess where he will go. As a result of such a psychology, 'The Theatre of the Absurd' emphasizes systemlessness and deregulation. If the aim of the theatre is to reflect the real life over the stage, then Absurd is the most appropriate way of doing this. This utter disordered world and life of the human being can only be transferred on to the stage, by a play which has neither a beginning nor an end. This is the point where 'absurd' and 'real' intersects. If life is that much meaningless and confusing, then it can only be reflected by an absurd play which is the only 'reality'.

The roots of 'The Theatre of the Absurd' can be found in several philosophical movements. In the clearest sense, we can connote 'Absurdism' with the existentialist philosophy. Also the impact of ideas as expressed by the Surrealist, Existentialist and Expressionist schools and the writings of Kafka is also evident.

An absurdist playwright agrees on two points with the Existentialist philosophers like Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. These points are, the hopeless situation of the human being and the collapse of all the thought systems which tried to explain the reality. But according to Esslin (1962) these writers differ from the absurdist playwrights in the respect that:

They present their sense of irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while 'The Theatre of the Absurd' strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought (p. 17).

Besides Existentialist Philosophy, we can find the roots of absurdism in other genres in the history of literature, such as the dream/nightmare literature in Ancient Greek tragedies, *Commedia dell'arte* of the Italian Renaissance, the scenes of jesters in Shakespearian Plays, British mime plays, and the silent film comedy, "which has the quality of nightmare, and displays a world in constant, and wholly purposeless movement" (Esslin, 1962 p. 240). The deep poetic power of wordless and purposeless action is highlighted in this technique of cinema.

'The Theatre of the Absurd' speaks to the audiences' mind. It activates psychological forces, releases, liberates the hidden fears and repressed aggressions. This is the point which Absurd unifies with the thoughts of Freud. In the absurdist theatre the reader is made to see that the world has become absurd, and confronted with the madness of the human condition, so enabled to see his situation in all its despair. "This new form of drama forces the audience out of its familiar orientation. It creates a vacuum between the play and the audience so that the latter is compelled to experience something itself, be it a reawakening of the awareness of archetypal powers of a reorientation of the ego or both..."(Metman, 1960 p. 43).

According to 'The Theatre of the Absurd', language appears more and more as being in contradiction to reality. Language which is a means of communication between people, loses its meaning and the act of talking is only carried out, in order to get rid of the fearful! threat of the silence. With the feeling of a meaninglessness, language appeared as a phenomenon which is to be perceived with a kind of skepticism. So we see the Absurdist Theatre, attacking the conventional language skills.

It is believed that language belongs to the realm of the purely subjective and has no objective reality. In the field of psychology, too, the subconscious has a higher reality content than the conscious utterance. This can be illustrated by Freudian explanations. Every male child knows that there is a great gulf between his father and himself. A son who talks about his respect and love for his father is in reality filled with the deepest Oedipal hatred for his father. He may not mean it, but he means the opposite of what he says. For there is a psychological reality behind the words spoken. Freudian tongue twisters, which can be explained by saying something that is not appropriate to the situation and reveals the hidden thoughts of the subconscious, are also examples of the subconscious having a higher reality content than the conscious mind. An example of a Freudian tongue twister is when a man says to an attractive woman who is introduced to him: 'It's nice to seduce you', instead of saying: 'It's nice to meet you' (Triandis, 1944).

The Theatre of the Absurd which is the combination of ridiculous, purposeless behaviour and talk, that gives the play a sometimes dazzling, comic surface, also has an underlying serious message of metaphysical distress. It expresses modern man's endeavor to come to terms with the world in which he lives. It is in a way revealing the hopelessness out. This hopelessness also brings a feeling of freedom and survival too. Because of this 'The Theatre of the Absurd' is not only hopelessness and tears, but also the laughter of embracing the freedom. (Esslin, 1984 p.42) Absurdist Theatre which reflects universal

chaos, breakdown of language and the lack of harmony in humanity, is now a widely accepted term which took its place in the history of the theatre.

Arthur L. Kopit

Arthur L. Kopit was born in New York City in 1937. He graduated from Harvard in 1959, where he received a scholarship for a one-year trip through Europe. During his studies, he won two playwriting competitions and produced nine plays (6 of which he directed). One of the plays was performed on the radio, another on television. His first published play appeared in the Harvard Advocate.

Oh Dad Poor Dad was first produced by an undergraduate group at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in January, 1960. It was repeated by overwhelming popular demand in the following month. New York agents, producers, actors and publishers streamed out to Cambridge to discover the work of this exciting, original, American playwright.

Arthur Kopit is an important contributor to contemporary American Drama whose plays are noted for powerful social commentary and for innovations in dramatic form. Critics link Kopit's early works with 'The Theatre of the Absurd', a trend in modern drama characterized by experimental techniques and the philosophic view that, existence is meaningless. His later plays explore such timely subjects as the media's influence on human perception and the threat of nuclear war (Wellworth, 1971).

In his early works, Kopit presents nonspatial, nontemporal, symbolic settings in which his characters experience the futility of attempting to make sense of the world. Kopit gained wide recognition when his play *Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad* (1960) became popular in London and New York during the early 1960's.

In his plays, Arthur Kopit sees this modern world as a plethora of greed and sexual madness. He finds mankind unable to cope with his new environment: the environment of human beings. The transform from rural America to urban America has been too fast for a major adjustment in human relationships. Man might be able to cope with the elements of Wordsworthian nature, but the crowding of Freudian nature has evolved a vicious, cannibalistic environment.

Discussion

Oh Dad Poor Dad....

Kopit's early work, *Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You In the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad* is subtitled as 'A Pseudoclassical Tragifarce in a Bastard French Tradition.' The play, "a long winded mockery of sexual cannibalism"(Lewis, 1970 p. 197) is a kind of surrealist, grotesque attack on mother, sex and the devouring female. In *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad*, the family ties are portrayed in a highly dysfunctional and absurd manner. The central characters are Madame Rosepettle and her son, Jonathan.

The play takes place in a hotel room in Havana Cuba. In the first scene we see Madame Rosepeetle and her son Jonathan settling in a hotel room. In this first encounter with the characters, it's clearly seen that the characters are "comic strip exaggerations, symbolic and ludicrous on the level of a grand hoax or a sophomoric parody of Tennessee Williams, Ionesco, and all avant-garde writers (Lewis, 1970 p. 198).

Madame Rosepeetle is a dominating mother who tries to deprive Jonathan, her son, to contact with the outside world. Echoing the carnival spirit outdoors, the characters of this bizarre play exist in an atmosphere of total abandon. As in every other absurd play, there is not a well-constructed plot to talk about as a story. We see this piranha-like woman, her suppressed son, who is seventeen years old but dressed like a child of ten like a puppy. The mother keeps on shouting at everybody in the room in a nagging way. We learn that she keeps her husband's stuffed body in the closet. In the second scene we see Rosalie, a young girl who is ready to make love with Jonathan. We see how Jonathan is afraid of his mother, and how he obeys her rules. In the end of that scene we see Rosalie quarreling with Madame Rosepeetle about Jonathan. In the third scene we see a well-prepared dinner table for Madame Rosepeetle and the Commodore. Even Commodore's flirtatious behaviours do not soften Madame Rosepeetle's nagging character. She tells her desperate love story and background of her marriage where she reveals how possessive she is. She says: "I knew he could be mine...that no matter where he went or whom he saw, or what he did, Albert would be mine, all mine, mine to love, mine to live with, mine to kill, my husband, my lover my own...my very own" (Kopit, 1960, p.67). Commodore feels so uncomfortable and wills to go but he is afraid of Madame Rosepeetle and cannot leave the room until she finishes her story. At the end of the third scene, we see how rebellious Jonathan is by killing the piranha fish and the Venus flytrap that belonged to his mother. When Rosalie insists on sleeping with him in his mother's bedroom, Jonathan refuses and his father's corpse jumps out of the wardrobe, rushes between them and raises a dead hand warningly to Jonathan. Rosalie is suffocated under the stamp and coin collection of Jonathan. When Madame Rosepeetle comes home from amusing herself by kicking sand in lovers' faces on the beach and see what has happened, only thing she asked is "What is the meaning of this?".

All through the play, some kind of supernatural things happen like Venus'-Flytraps' growing larger and larger, or the piranha fish's speaking lines, doors' opening and closing on their own power, chairs' sliding away or remaining fixed or the corpse's embracing the young Rosalie as she attempts her seduction of Jonathan. These are all characteristics of 'The Theatre of the Absurd'. Arthur Kopit like the Absurdists before him "chooses to depict a horrific world where logic holds no sway. His characters are caught up in a world which is either macabre or grotesque" (Daspuhtal, 1985, p.5).

Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You in the Closet and I'm feeling So Sad belongs within the tradition of the typical American family drama, now brought up to date in an absurdist setting. But unlike so much of European Absurdist Drama, it has a strongly psychological bias to it. The relationship

between Jonathan and his mother, and Madame Rosepeetle's revengeful walks along the beach shoosing couples in embrace, carry Oedipal overtones. Her personal memories about Mr. Rosepeetle, with Hamlet-like meditations on the nature of sex and mortality, relegate the play at times, to a heavy-handed thesis on the Psychology of the human animal.

The names of many characters begin with the prefix rose. This is an interesting thing that is done on purpose to emphasize how simple and similar names, and therefore characters, can be. Rose, a common name, perhaps represents how similar women can be, even if they appear to be different. Throughout the play, there is an attempt to portray the women as triumphs, trying to win over the men by being the whole gender. Both Madame Rosepeetle and Rosalie do the same about Jonathan. Rosalie, using the words "come and let me keep you mine. Mine to love when I want, mine to kiss when I want, mine to have when I want. Mine. All mine"(Kopit, 1960 p.87) while trying to persuade Jonathan to sleep with her, shows how similar she is with Madame Rosepeetle.

Even the name of the fish, Rosalinda shows great parallels with these two women characters in the play. The fish is a piranha fish, which is able to eat a cat for the supper. Madame Rosepeetle is also a piranha-like woman as well as Rosalie. They also crowd together on top of Jonathan as the victim, and bite him part by part with their behaviours and words.

Madame Rosepeetle is a woman whose only aim is to triumph over man. She achieved her purpose by murdering her husband, and now drags his corpse around with her on her travels as a physical symbol of her triumph. She keeps her son Jonathan at the perpetual age of ten, warding off the destroying problems of growing up. She amuses herself by kicking sand in lovers' faces on the beach.

These can be explained by Freudian conceptions. Madame Rosepeetle's desiring to possess every man that comes in her life can be explained by going back to her childhood and taking into consideration, her relationship with her father. Freud explains this complex as 'Electra Complex', which is just the opposite of 'Oedipal Complex'. Awareness of the sexual organ impresses the girl with the idea that she lacks a phallus. She feels that, she has already been castrated, so lacking an important organ. She directs her desires to father, so in this way she may reachieve the phallus that she is in need of. Having a baby from the father, means having the phallus again. So this means that, as the male child's sexual desire is directed over the mother, the female child's sexual desire is directed over the father. She also has to learn that she cannot have the father, as there are claims of mother on the father. So she starts to identify with the mother. If she can become a woman and have a man like the father, she can recover the phallus in the form of having children from that man (Freud, 1956).

In Madame Rosepeetle's situation, this Electra complex may be unsolved, staying in a problematic way. As she couldn't possess her father, with the tempting of her unconscious, she may be in need of possessing the other male figures in her life. Although Jonathan is an unplanned baby, he can also be a

tool of regaining the power which she lost when she was born as a girl. When she couldn't possess her father she took all the man as enemies and decided to fight against them, until she triumphs. She has also always had the complex of having a normal relationship with a man including love and sex because of her fight against men, she couldn't fulfill her desire of herself. That became a hidden anger in her subconscious which led her to kick sand in lovers' faces in the beach at nights.

We can say that her only lover, only male that she could completely possess is her son Jonathan. She fulfills her complexes and desires over him. She brings him up as a college boy who is anti-woman, anti-sex and anti-life. She overly protects him doesn't even let him go out as the sun might harm his skin. She is a dominating mother, who makes her son even to stammer while speaking with him. She directs every single movement of him, locks him in the room, or chooses which books to read and which stamps to collect. Incredible overtones are seen in their relationship as Jonathan hasn't even been given the chance to solve his oedipal complex. Every male child lives in that complex during first five years of his life, up to he is given the chance to solve the complex by identifying with the father and postponing the desire for the mother (Freud, 1956). Here Jonathan is not given the chance to see another woman or identifying with the father as he didn't see his father except the corpse, which keeps constantly falling out of the closet.

At its best, however, the philosophizing in the play takes on an air of parody. Kopit manages to theatricalize the set of futile 'beliefs' about the meaning of life on which the play rests on occasion, however, the overly intellectual preoccupation with such beliefs leads to self-indulgence and the introduction of scenes that serves little purpose. Madame Rosepeetle's chance encounter of Mr. Roseabove is a set up for an exchange in French that merely points a finger at the birthplace of absurdism and corroborates the Madame's pithy statement "Feelings are for animal Monsieur. Words are the specialty of man" (Kopit, 1960, p.58). And true to her statement, the play's premise is grounded more on what is said, than on what is done.

Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You, in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad is indeed a bizarre and monstrous indictment of the American family and its dissolution amidst the madness of Western civilization. While the play loses in its subject matter because it is heavily psychological and verbose, its surrealistic imagery and dramatic action gain from the realistic family situation it attempts to portray. This theatrically powerful play remains one of the most skillful domestic products of absurdist drama. George Wellworth, in his article tells: "Kopit has written a brilliant satire, take off on the conventions of the avant-garde drama, and most of the play's popularity undoubtedly stems from the fact that it is wildly funny without being at the same time even vaguely disturbing" (Wellworth, 1971 p. 346).

Conclusion

This paper has been a study on an absurd play within the context of a psychological approach to the family ties and relationships that are manifested in it.

In the play studied in this paper, characteristics of the absurd is clearly seen. Characters are more caricature than real people, plots are not sequential, events are random with neither a clear plot, nor a convincing character. The play often seems circular and pointless, slapstick gestures and physical comedy help hold audience attention. The shared theme of all the absurdist playwrights who see absurdism as *without purpose*, can be summarized as, that man has not progressed, has not learned from history, and will not be empowered or saved. These features are the common features that are shared by all of the absurdist playwrights including Arthur Kopit.

In Arthur Kopit's, *Oh Dad Poor Dad*, we have seen Madame Rosepettle, the domineering and eccentric mother, has an unusual and controlling relationship with her son. She is portrayed as a powerful and manipulative figure who exercises authority over Jonathan in a rather extreme way. Madame Rosepettle is emotionally detached and seems more interested in her own desires than in providing a nurturing and supportive environment for her son.

Jonathan, on the other hand, is caught in the web of his mother's bizarre actions. The play explores the dynamics of their relationship, highlighting the absurdity and dysfunctionality of their family life. The fact that Madame Rosepettle travels with her deceased husband's body adds an extra layer of eccentricity to their family situation.

The family ties in the play are used as a means to satirize and criticize certain societal norms and values. The dysfunctionality of the family becomes a vehicle for commentary on the absurdities and contradictions within American society during the time the play was written. The play employs dark humor and satire to shed light on the complexities of familial relationships and societal expectations.

Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad by Arthur Kopit reflects characteristics commonly associated with the Theatre of the Absurd. Below are some aspects that align the play with the principles of Absurdist Theatre: Absurdity and illogicality: the play is characterised by a sense of absurdity, in which the situations and actions of the characters defy logic and reason. Even the title is absurd, and bizarre things happen in the narrative, such as a mother travelling with the corpse of her deceased husband. Lack of meaning or purpose: The theatre of the absurd often explores the futility and lack of inherent meaning in human existence. In Kopit's play, the characters find themselves in nonsensical and surreal situations that highlight the arbitrary and absurd nature of life. Breakdown of communication: In the play, there is often a breakdown of communication between the characters. In *Oh Dad, Poor Dad*, the characters struggle to understand each other and their interactions are disjointed, contributing to a sense of alienation.

Isolation and Alienation: The characters in the play may experience a sense of isolation and alienation, which is a common theme in the Theatre of the Absurd. Madame Rosepettle's dominating and controlling behavior isolates her son, Jonathan, contributing to the overall sense of existential

despair. Cyclical and Repetitive Elements: The Theatre of the Absurd often incorporates repetitive and cyclical elements, emphasizing the monotony and meaninglessness of life. While not as pronounced as in some other absurdist plays, *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* does contain elements of repetition in its structure and dialogue. Satirical Commentary: The play uses satire to comment on societal norms and conventions. The characters and situations are exaggerated and distorted to critique the absurdity of certain aspects of contemporary culture and family dynamics.

Overall, *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* aligns with the principles of the Theatre of the Absurd by presenting a world where the characters are trapped in absurd and irrational situations, highlighting the absurdity and meaninglessness of their existence.

Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study titled “*Family Concept Within the Absurd Tradition: A Study of Arthur Kopit*”, scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Arthur Kopit'in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* adlı oyunu, absürd tiyatro öğelerini barındıran bir eserdir. Oyun, başlığıyla bile absürd bir atmosfer yaratmakta ve karakterlerin karşılaştığı tuhaf durumlar, absürd komediye dayanmaktadır.

Absürd tiyatro, ilk olarak Fransa'da ortaya çıkan tartışmalı bir akımdır. Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco ve Jean Genet önde gelen uygulayıcılarıken, Harold Pinter ve M. F. Simpson İngiliz temsilcileri, Edward Albee ise en bilinen Amerikalı temsilcisi olmuştur. Bu makalede incelenen oyunda absürd geleneğinin özellikleri açıkça görülmektedir. Karakterler gerçek insanlardan çok karikatürize edilmiş tiplerdir. Sıralı bir olay örgüsü bulunmaz ve olaylar rastlantısaldır. Absürdizmi amaçsız olarak gören tüm absürdist oyun yazarlarının ortak teması, insanın ilerlemediği, tarihten ders almadığı ve güçlenmeyeceği ya da kurtulmayacağı şeklinde özetlenebilir. Bu özellikler Arthur Kopit de dahil olmak üzere tüm absürdist oyun yazarlarının paylaştığı ortak özelliklerdir.

İncelenen oyun, Madame Rosepettle adında bir karakterin etrafında döner. Madame Rosepettle, eşi tarafından terkedilmiş ve oğluyla birlikte tatilde bulunduğu otelde, kocasının ölü bedenini saklamakta olan aşırı korumacı bir annedir. Bu durum, oyunun ana çatışmasını oluşturur ve absürd bir şekilde olayların gelişmesine neden olur.

Aile konsepti, Madame Rosepettle'in aile dinamikleri üzerinden incelenir. Oyun, ailenin geleneksel normlarına meydan okumakta ve absürd bir şekilde ailenin içsel çatışmalarını sergilemektedir. Madame Rosepettle'in oğlu Jonathan da, annesinin tuhaf davranışlarına maruz kalarak, ailenin içsel dinamiklerindeki çürümeyi temsil eder.

Oyunu psikaanalitik çerçevede değerlendirmek için, oyunun karakterlerini ve olaylarını Freud'un psikanalitik teorileriyle ilişkilendirebiliriz. Otoriter bir kadın ve onun aşırı korumacı oğlu ile oyun boyunca cesedi defalarca dolaptan düşen ölü kocasını konu alan *Oh Dad Poor Dad Mama's Hang You in The Closet and I'm Feelin' so Sad* adlı oyundaki Ödipal imaların altının çizildiği bu çalışmada, annede bazı gizli kompleksler veya anormallikler ortaya çıkarsa çocukların nasıl etkileneceği ve Ödipal çatışmalarını tam olarak çözemeyen erkek çocuklarında bu çatışmanın yol açacağı sorunlara odaklanılmıştır.

Madame Rosepettle'in kocasının ölü bedenini saklaması, belki de onun geçmişteki kayıplarla baş etme veya bastırma çabası olarak yorumlanabilir. Jonathan'ın karakteri de annesiyle olan karmaşık ilişkisini temsil etmektedir. Ancak, psikoanalitik bir çözümleme yaparken belirli detaylara odaklanmak ve oyunun genel tonunu anlamak önemlidir. Kopit'in eseri, absürd tiyatro tarzının bir örneği olduğu için, mantık dışı durumlar ve tuhaf karakter davranışları, genellikle geleneksel analiz yöntemlerinden farklı bir açıdan ele alınmalıdır. Freud, absürd geleneğinin ortaya çıkışından elli yıldan fazla bir süre önce,

"Saçmalıktan zevk almanın kökeni, mantığın düz ceketini terk edebildiğimizde zevk aldığımız özgürlük duygusundadır" demiştir. Sözel saçmalığı, mantıksal düzenden ve 'ciddi yetişkin yaşamının' rasyonelliğinden bir tür kurtulma olarak görür. Edebiyat ve tiyatro gerçeklikten kurtulmanın tek yoludur. Freud absürdü bir ihtiyaç olarak görür ve bunun kanıtını çocuğun anlam ve mantıksal düzenle uğraşmak zorunda kalmadan kelimeleri bir araya getirmesinde bulmaya çalışır.

Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad adlı oyun, absürd tiyatro tarzının birçok karakteristik özelliğini sergilemektedir. Bu özelliklerden ilki mantık dışı durumların varlığıdır. Oyun, geleneksel mantık kurallarına uymayan olaylar ve durumlar içerir. Madame Rosepettle'nın ölü kocasını saklaması gibi tuhaf ve mantık dışı olaylar, absürd tiyatronun özgün bir özelliğidir. Ayrıca oyunda kurmaca ve gerçeklik arasında bir belirsizlik söz konusudur. Oyun, gerçek dünya ile kurmaca arasında belirsiz bir sınır oluşturur. Absürd tiyatro, gerçeklik ve rüya/ahlaki kabus arasındaki sınırları bulanıklaştırarak izleyiciyi düşündürmeye yönelir. Oyunda kullanılan dil normal eserlerden farklılık göstermektedir. Absürd tiyatro, dilin sıradan anlamını altüst eder, sözcük oyunlarına ve absürd diyaloglara dayanır. Başlık bile, alışılmadık bir dil kullanımına örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Bunun yanı sıra oyunda kullanılan karakter stereotipleri ironik olarak oluşturulmuştur. Oyun, tipik aile dinamikleri ve karakter stereotiplerine ironik bir yaklaşım sergiler. Madame Rosepettle'nın tuhaf davranışları, geleneksel aile yapısının sorgulanmasını neden olur. Diğer absürd eserlerde olduğu gibi bu oyunda da güldürü ve korku unsurları bir arada kullanılmıştır. Absürd tiyatro, gülme ile korku arasında bir denge kurarak izleyiciyi şaşırtır. Oyunun başlığındaki trajik durumu komik bir şekilde sunarak, absürd bir güldürü ortamı yaratır. Ve son olarak oyunda toplumsal eleştiri söz konusudur. Absürd tiyatro, toplumun absürd yanlarını ve paradokslarını eleştiren bir yapıya sahiptir. *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* da aile yapısı ve toplumsal normlara eleştirel bir bakış sunar.

Oyundaki aile bağları, belirli toplumsal normları ve değerleri hicvetmek ve eleştirmek için bir araç olarak kullanılmaktadır. Ailenin işlevsizliği, oyunun yazıldığı dönemde Amerikan toplumundaki saçmalıklar ve çelişkiler hakkında yorum yapmak için bir araç haline gelmiştir. Oyun, aile ilişkilerinin ve toplumsal beklentilerin karmaşıklığına ışık tutmak için kara mizah ve hicivden yararlanır.