



## THE SHAME OF HUMANITY – HIROSHIMA

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the messages that Rebecca Lenkiewicz would like to give to the world in her recently unpublished work *Wisconsin*. In this work the author chooses as the subject the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima by America on 6 August 1945 that resulted in the death of approximately 140,000 people and led to a massive destruction. One of the main protagonists of the work is Jinno who managed to survive yet unrecognizable due to the horrible influence of the bomb. Strangely enough, Jinno tries to look for a remedy in America, the very country that caused all her troubles, to regain her health and her lost dreams since some people like her have been invited to America with the promise of treatment. Throughout the play, the reader/audience tries to find answers to two striking questions: Will the desperate young girl be able to regain what she has lost after years of the disaster, and be happy? What is the real reason behind America's invitation of these victims? The author brings this terrible period back on the stage with the play *Wisconsin* and draws attention to today ongoing massacres, notably in the Middle East.

**Key Words:** Rebecca Lenkiewicz, America, Hiroshima, *Wisconsin*

### İNSANLIK AYIBI - HIROŞİMA

### ÖZ

Bu makale, Rebecca Lenkiewicz'in son yazdığı ve henüz yayınlanmamış eseri *Wisconsin*'de dünyaya vermek istediği mesajları incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yazar, bu eserine, 6 Ağustos 1945'te yaklaşık 140.000 kişinin ölümüyle sonuçlanan ve büyük bir yıkıma yol açan, Amerika tarafından Hiroşima'ya atom bombası atılmasını konu olarak seçer. Eserin ana kahramanlarından biri, bu faciadan canlı kurtulmayı başaran ancak bombanın korkunç etkisiyle tanınmaz hale gelen Jinno'dur. Ne gariptir ki Jinno eski haline ve kaybettiği hayallerine yeniden kavuşabilmek için çareyi yine kendisini bu hale getiren Amerika'da bulmaya çalışır çünkü kendisi gibi birkaç kişi daha tedavi edilme vaadiyle Amerika'ya davet edilmişlerdir. Oyun boyunca okur/izleyici iki çarpıcı soruya yanıt bulmaya çalışır: Çaresiz genç kız faciadan yıllar sonra kaybettiklerine yeniden kavuşup mutlu olabilecek midir? Amerika'nın, bu kurbanları davet etmesinin altında yatan gerçek neden nedir? Yazar, *Wisconsin* oyunu ile bu korkunç dönemi tekrar sahneye taşıyarak bugün başta Ortadoğu olmak üzere bütün dünyada devam eden kıyımlara dikkat çeker.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Rebecca Lenkiewicz, Amerika, Hiroshima, *Wisconsin*

### INTRODUCTION

*I'm knocking at your door  
Aunt, Uncle... give a signature...  
The children shouldn't be killed  
So they also can be able to eat candies*  
(Nazım Hikmet)

Rebecca Lenkiewicz who is considered a feminist powerful pen of contemporary English theatre and screen writing particularly focuses on women in her works. Thus their identity searches as well as other difficulties that they face like their vulnerability,

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marginalization, and exposure to both sexual and psychological violence and both patriarchal and social pressures are among the main topics discussed in her works. Women, both politically and socially, but particularly marginal ones and their rights and place in the society are all and end all for her theatre career. On the other hand, social injustice, human rights abuse, wars and their consequences, displaced persons and refugees, sexual and religious discriminations are of vital importance in her theatre as well.

The playwright is observed to have a Socialist and Marxist feminist view that can easily be recognized in her works. She is not deaf to the injustices no matter where they are seen in the world. She sometimes tries to be the voice of those who are struggling to have their social rights since they are under the pressure of bad governing and sometimes to be the voice of a young girl who is killed by Taliban only because she shouted for girls' education right. She sometimes tries to show unrecoverable consequences of wars and bad intentions of developed countries on the poor due to their political greed. As a representative of the new generation of British theatre, Lenkiewicz has crowned her successes by winning several awards. The playwright's *Her Naked Skin* (2008) and the co-written film *Ida* (2013) have attracted a great deal of attention of the critics and won various awards.

What Hiroshima evokes first is the atomic bombs dropped in 1945 and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians for the sake of greed of nations. The two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6, 1945 and 9 August 1945 respectively and this had been registered as a stigma on the history of mankind. In the final stages of the Second World War on 6 August 1945 at 08:15, the USA used Uranium-235 type 20KT, the bomb called Little Boy in Hiroshima. Half of the city within a few minutes was destroyed. 60 to 70 thousand people died and 140 thousand people were injured and thousands were left homeless. Radiation affected almost 100 thousand people and of 90 thousand buildings in the city, 60 thousand were razed to the ground.

Three days after Hiroshima, the US carried out its second massacre in Japan by using the second atomic bomb B-29 aircraft Bockscar and The Fat Man plutonium-239 type in Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 at 11: 02 (a.m.). The total population of Nagasaki was approximately 240 thousand, and 74 thousand people lost their lives, 36 percent of buildings were destroyed. Later, the death toll reached 143.124 with the effect of the atomic bomb. A disease called "Cataract of the Atomic Bomb" appeared among most of the victims surviving the atomic bombs.

The effects of the bombings were so far-reaching that a person sitting on the stairs of a bank 250 meters to the point of explosion in Hiroshima immediately burned down by the temperature of 1000-2000 degree along with the light, and left nothing from herself – only a mark on the floor. The dreams and future of many children and youngsters were also burned likewise. Only a small number of deaths in the attack were military personnel. Moreover, radiation caused by the atomic bombs has continued to influence the region for decades. Many children were crippled; hundreds of thousands of people were developed cancer due to the radiation.

After the war, the US and the Britain to justify bombings suggested that the atomic bomb caused the war to end early, so fewer people died during the war. But when the



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bombing took place it was known that this was not the reason that ended the war. Description of the warring parties showed that this claim was subsequently proposed, probably to justify it. As a matter of fact; The US was regularly bombing the cities where only civilians were living before dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. With this method, paying no attention to the civilian deaths, the U.S. was trying to create demoralization. While Potsdam Conference (1945) was continuing, the U.S. announced that Japanese cities would be bombed with leaflets dropped on the city, immediately afterwards, the US aircraft had carried out a heavy bombardment on the cities where mostly civilizations were living. On July 28, six cities and on August 1, four cities were attacked this way. On August 6, the first atomic bomb was thrown on Hiroshima. This bomb killed 140 thousand people almost immediately. Later the number of deaths reached 300 thousand due to radiation-induced cancer and other diseases. Only about 20 thousand of them are known to be the members of the army. The rest were civilians. Almost 80 thousand civilians died with the bomb dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August. There were factories in the region where the bomb was thrown on Nagasaki. Thousands of Japanese workers as well as Korean workers in forced labour were passed away with this atomic bomb. Students appeared to be the majority working in the factories. It is known that only 150 of those who died in Nagasaki were army members since there was no military unit there. And finally, Japan formally surrendered on September 2, and World War II resulted in an estimated 55 million deaths worldwide. It was the largest and most destructive war in history.

The US is not the only country to have used nuclear weapon on civil targets. It is known that the similar methods used widely in Germany. One of the most famous examples is the bombing of Dresden. 25 thousand civilians were killed in the 1945 bombing of Dresden on February 3, yet the military targets outside of the city were untouched. The bombs used in the attack caused great fire and many civilians had burned alive. The aim of the attack that would be acclaimed in the following days was suggested as to impress the Soviet Union before the Crimean Conference. Before those 48 thousand civilians were killed in the attack on Hamburg in July 1943. Yet there is a fact that should not be forgotten: The US is the most dominant country who is drawing other nation's fate in the world.

The foreign political culture of the United States has several different aspects. With its unprecedented position, the United States intends to become a benevolent hegemon rather than a traditional one by using the means of soft power. However within the evolution of this foreign political culture, an American cult has been created which caused American foreign policy to drift to the point from which a return to its roots is hardly possible. (Sümer, 2008: 119)

In this article called it is stated that Pearl Harbor attack that led the US to enter World War II has been breakthrough in terms of US foreign policy. The war declaration of Nazi Germany on the United States has launched a new era in American foreign policy. After the war, President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull desired to have access to a new world. Choosing New York as the centre of the United Nations is one of the best indicators of it. The US Secretary of State, George Marshall, underlined that US prosperity depended on a growing economy in Europe in his famous speech related to the Marshall Plan



at Harvard University in 1947. Due to a power vacancy in west after World War II, an environment has been prepared for America to participate effectively in world politics forever. The political development of the US unlike any previous politics has served for the formation of different foreign policy models. ‘Wilsonian idealism’ interacting with the Cold War has created the current foreign policy called ‘global meliorism’. Theodore Roosevelt’s progressive vision of imperialism is the main ingredient of conservative ideology while the US president Woodrow Wilson’s vision was formed by the liberal ideology of American values. Thus; two different leftist foreign policy traditions of America can be observed.

On the other hand, the geographic location of America is a major factor defining its foreign policy as well. Thus; since America is surrounded by small countries that are socio-economically underdeveloped, American identity becomes more arrogant. As a consequence, America has invented an ‘American Dream’ and pretends to be a reconciler for the discordant nations; a guardian angel for the ones in need, yet has a bully foreign policy to attain his object since then.

### **THE SHAME OF HUMANITY - HIROSHIMA**

Many works have been written about Hiroshima so far. The famous French film ‘Hiroshima Mon Amour’ and the ‘Hiroshima Poem’ of Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet whose last quad is given above are only two of them. Perhaps the most poignant of these is this poem that is inspired by a real life story. “Little Girl” is a poem written on Sadako Sasaki by a Turkish poet, Nazım Hikmet. The poem tells the story of a girl who had been diagnosed with leukaemia ten years after the atom bombing in Hiroshima and lost her life. According to a legend if a sick person manages making a thousand paper cranes, this person is healed by the Gods. Unfortunately, Sadako can fold only 644 paper cranes and dies. (Coerr, 1977: 39-74). The fate of the Japanese people is all told by pathetic and creepy stories in these works. Rebecca Lenkiewicz’ play *Wisconsin* (2016) reminds us the disgrace of humanity- The Hiroshima bomb that has been forgotten for a long time. The play should be accepted precious as being an advice to the nations and warning to the wrong policies of the countries in this worrisome century. It would be in good taste to evaluate *The Wisconsin* as the ironic confrontation of two disappointed main characters- one is the miserable girl victim of the war and the other is a prospering professor on child rearing who fails in his private life. Lenkiewicz’ bringing these two characters together through the end of the play is quite striking. The play tells the story of a twenty seven year old girl who has survived from the disaster of Hiroshima and has come to America –the country that made her unrecognizable- hoping help from the same country but in the end turning to her own country in despair.

The second main character is a famous professor who tries to measure love in the laboratory and underline the importance of touching during the process of child rearing, but who ironically has to face a separation and emotional failure due to depriving his two sons and wife of these precious feelings and who eventually fails to show the success in his private life.

As mentioned in the beginning, the play especially focuses on the Hiroshima bombing carried out by America on Japan towards the end of the Second World War and its lethal effects on



the Japanese, particularly a young girl called Miss Jinno. Just as Hiroshima is attacked with a nuclear bomb, Miss Jinno is cleaning the tiles with other peers of hers. She tells terrifying moments of the disaster after ten years:

I heard a B-29 plane. My friend looked up at it...There was white ... vapour...coming out of the plane. A tiny object dropped from it...that was the last time I saw her. Then I was on the ground. There was a huge noise. When I became conscious it was dark. Nobody around. I was almost naked... My body was burned, black. My hands were numb. I could not open my mouth. My body was...charred...My mother, she wore a kimono that day. She was in our house. A few miles away...But dark clothing took the heat in... absorbed it. My mother's kimono was white...The print of the kimono, roses; they were burnt into her flesh. Her body was covered with black roses burnt into hers skin.(31)

United States decides to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki at an hour when most people are outside. The US did it by identifying Japanese life style so those many deaths were not a coincidence. The young protagonist Jinno informs the reader about precise plan of the US in the process of bombing Hiroshima. Miss Jinno and her mother are the only two members of the family who have been able to survive. Although she has undergone thirty operations after the disaster, she does not completely recover. Her mother still cannot believe how she has been able to survive although she has been unrecognizable after the bomb. She even sometimes prefers Jinno's sister's survival instead of hers, since she was not hurt as much as Jinno. She reveals every detail about the disaster during an interview with a university student Yuri and tells about her mother's desires: "... My sister died. My mother was always very sad that my wounds were greater than hers. She said to me once that it would have been better for me to die that day" (56). The bomb not only kills her family and destroys her country but also demolishes her maiden dreams. She expresses her desperation and misery during the same dialogue:

MISS JINNO: Why especially? Can you look at me?

YURI: Yes.

MISS JINNO: What do you see?

YURI: A young woman. Scars. When they tested the first bomb Oppenheimer said they knew the world would never be the same again. He said when it went off the whole team were watching and some laughed and some cried. But most were just silent. He thought of the line from the bhavagadgita, "I am become death. The destroyer of worlds."

MISS JINNO: I am not talking about Oppenheimer. I'm talking about me.

YURI: Yes.

MISS JINNO: Me.

YURI:I know.

MISS JINNO: Then don't change the subject. People look away. That is changing the



subject. Switch off your machine.

YURI: I'm sorry.

MISS JINNO: Everyone's sorry. Just look at me. Please. Please. Look at me. (57)

In the second part of the play Miss Jinno's face is described as badly scarred. Moreover, as she is open mouthed, she cannot speak easily. One of her hands is resembled to more of a claw. The reader learns that for Miss Jinno as well as many other girls sharing the same fate to have a baby is almost impossible. What is painful and ironic about all these is that a young girl still hopes for help from the country that has turned both her life and her nation upside down. Moreover we learn from an interview made by her in the story that she is not the only girl who has come there for treatment, but also twenty five Japanese women have been invited to America to undergo reconstructive surgeries. Ironically these women are expected to feel grateful and indebted to this great country for healing their injuries like a redeemer as if nothing has happened. Although, in one hand it is hard to understand how these women accept the help of America, on the other hand they may be justified since there is no other way for them. Nevertheless, Miss Jinno turned back to her hometown without any remedy. It has already been a mistake to hope for help from America. As a matter of fact to invite these maidens to this country is only to mislead the world media as a part of its foreign policy.

When it comes to the dreams of a young girl, whose life has been turned upside down, we again face Jinno's deplorable story. There are two dialogues between Miss Jinno and curious and sensitive young student Yuri in New York. He wants to be the voice of the young girl and inform as many people as possible about the case. Hiroshima Maiden reveals her desires as a young woman when she decides to turn back to her country although America has given her the right to be the citizen of their country. The things that are ordinary for most young women are impossible for Miss Jinno. These are the sentences that reveal her dreams that can never come true:

MISS JINNO: You were in my dream. You were between my legs.....And I cried a little. Not sad. Happy. Quiet happy crying. Then we were silent. In the film you would kiss me.

YURI: If this were a film they wouldn't cast you as the heroine. I didn't mean. I meant the Jap the all American cheerleader thing. I didn't mean. (89-90)

YURI: Do you need something?

MISS JINNO: I'd like to have a child.

YURI: Really? I suppose most women want that sort of thing. It's natural isn't it? I'd like all that. In the future. That's all way off for me. I don't know if this is the kind of world that can cater to children. Not truly.

MISS JINNO: I'm not asking for one. I can't have one.

YURI: Oh. Okay. I see. Like medically you can't...no (97-98).

The dialogue above is enough alone to unfold iniquitous consequences of the war on innocent human beings. All human beings share some common rights. To live free and in safe is the primary right of them. In the third article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) it is stated: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."



However, somehow when it comes to the interest of the same countries, they can kill hundreds of thousands without wincing. To put these human rights into practice may not be so easy for those who want more. Leo Tolstoy's *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* (1886) is full of words of wisdom for those thinking in this way. In the novel a quotation by the protagonist Pahom, when he is about to gain enough land to be a landlord just a few minutes before his death, reveals how valuable the life of a human being is: "There is plenty of land, but will God let me live on it? I have lost my life, I have lost my life! I shall never reach that spot!" (109). These are his final words full of regret. Probably Rebecca Lenkiewicz is in a struggle to warn the humanity before it is too late as in the example of Pahom.

Another deplorable story about the Hiroshima where the humanity is lost ends with the confrontation of two desperate characters at a railway station- A Hiroshima maiden and a professor - trying to escape from Wisconsin, a city in America.

HARRY: You want one?

MISS JINNO: Thank you.

*MISS JINNO takes a cigarette. HARRY lights it for her.*

HARRY: Are you going far?

MISS JINNO: Yes. And you?

HARRY: I am. I'm going a long way.

They wait for the train. The screen shows the teenage Japanese girls dancing together. The music is the song "Sakura" (99).

## CONCLUSION

"Hiroshima should never have happened. It's an unthinkable nightmare. Politicians can talk of defence and responding to an attack but the nuclear bomb is mankind's shame" (Lenkiewicz, pers. comm. 2016). These words of Lenkiewicz clearly state the purpose of writing *Wisconsin* and the playwright's perspective on war and nuclear weapons. The nations have always been inclined to ask for more since their existence. This has sometimes forced them to act without regarding the consequences of their desires. The World War II and Hiroshima that is accepted as the shame of humanity are the most striking examples of this case. The greed of nations and hard-nosed approach of their foreign policy have caused death of hundreds of thousands and millions of people have been affected one way or another. America is considered to have a right to do everything under the pretext of being the biggest, the most powerful, equitable and charitable country in the world. For instance, the fact that the US entered the Vietnam War to defend a free nation that resists communist aggression was another idea desired to spread around the world. Noam Chomsky in his book *Media Control* (1997) writes about Edward Said's thoughts of how media is used by American ambition. He thinks that mainstream media in the US plays an outstanding role in convincing the world that as if the right of correcting the wrongs and eliminating evil in the world is incumbent on Americans. According to American belief a state that America clashes cannot be a state seeking freedom and democracy. Thus, a foreign policy movement called global meliorism is created when Wilsonian idealism has entered into interaction with the Cold War. Invitation of Jinno and the other twenty five women to America after the war should not be



seen strange considering its foreign policy. In the story America is the offensive but at the same time protective of the bedevilled. Furthermore, to invite Hiroshima Maidens to America pretending as if the country dresses their wounds but doing this showing off with the help of media shows how professional America is in using media. The woman playwright openly reveals her disturbance about American and her own country's foreign issues: "America's attitude is so often the bully and England follows the States, it's a sad affair" (L. Adıgüzel, personal communication, May 7, 2016).

The facts of the world are given in a heart-breaking way by Lenkiewicz who seems to be the voice of women. In this chaotic period that we live in, Lenkiewicz's writing *Wisconsin* is quite meaningful. Perhaps under the idea to remind the present generation the shame of Hiroshima in 1945 conceals the fear that similar catastrophes and associated traumas could repeat in the near future. The feminist playwright, who is observed mostly to focus on the rights and freedom of women in her works, is also extremely competent in writing about social issues. Written in a simple and fluent language, *Wisconsin* is one of the best examples of recent plays. Lenkiewicz explains the terrible effects of war and the abuse of technological power on innocent people in this work. By making generalizations through the main character Jinno, the playwright describes how these innocent war victims seeking for remedy are abused again by the same greedy states. Using the press these states are in an effort to justify themselves as in the case in *Wisconsin*. Lenkiewicz's reminding this crime against humanity committed by America years later should be accepted as a vital message to the world, and also should be taken very seriously by humanity.

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