

## Lavery's *Frozen*: The Psychosexual History of a Sexual Predator and the Poetics of Anti-Paedophilia \*

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### Abstract

Bryony Lavery is an important figure in British feminist drama. She has been noted by critics for her unconventional theatrical methods and themes. Her *Frozen* (1998) is an anti-paedophilic play that deals with a psychiatrist who tries to investigate the motives of a paedophile. Investigations into the past of the sexual predator blur the lines between the victim and the victimiser, and the acts of forgiving by the wronged family challenge conventional motifs of revenge. Lavery's use of black and dark comedy further challenges conventional ways of dealing with such serious matters. Therefore, by presenting the psychosexual history of the sexual predator in Bryony Lavery's *Frozen*, this article will analyse the social and psychological reasons behind sexual abuse in the play, and discuss Lavery's unconventional poetics of anti-paedophilia.

**Keywords:** Bryony Lavery, *Frozen*, psychosexual history, anti-paedophilia.

## Lavery'nin *Frozen* Adlı Oyunu: Bir Cinsel İstismarcının Psikoseksüel Hikayesi ve Pedofili Karşıtlığının Poetikası

### Öz

Bryony Lavery, İngiliz feminist tiyatrosu için önemli bir figürdür. Sıradışı tiyatro teknikleri ve konuları eleştirmenlerin dikkatini çekmiştir. *Frozen* (1998) adlı pedofili karşıtı oyunu, bir çocuk istismarcısının güdülerini inceleyen bir psikiyatristi irdelemektedir. Cinsel istismarcının geçmişi incelendiğinde mağdur ve mağdur eden arasındaki çizgi bulanıklaşmakta ve mağdur edilen ailenin istismarcıyı affetmesi geleneksel intikam ögesine karşıt bir durumu ortaya koymaktadır. Lavery'nin kara mizah kullanması geleneksel kavramlar çerçevesinde bu gibi ciddi meselelerin irdelenmesini daha tartışılır hale getirmektedir. Bundan dolayı, bu makalenin amacı Bryony Lavery'nin *Frozen* adlı oyununda cinsel istismarcının psikoseksüel hikayesini sunmak, cinsel istismarın sosyal ve psikolojik nedenlerini incelemek ve Lavery'nin alışılmışın dışında olan pedofili karşıtı poetikasını tartışmaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bryony Lavery, *Frozen*, psikoseksüel hikaye, pedofili karşıtı.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Bryony Lavery (1947-...) is a “highly prolific” playwright who has written and staged over sixty plays and other entertainments mostly in London and has produced a number of translations, adaptations, and essays (Brown et al. 2006). Lavery is an independent playwright who has contributed to the Women’s Theatre Group through “politically progressive productions” and promoted British lesbian theatre. She has also produced “long-running shows” in the Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company, concentrating on hitherto marginalised woman characters and plots as a performer-directed “feminist theatre collective” marked by “feminist and socialist ideals” (Keyssar 1996: 14; Goodman 1993: 69, 115). Nevertheless, as Goodman indicates, while collaborative work in the Regiment was successful, because of “[private] problems” resulting from “the collaborative-devising process” and difficulties about the “control of the written text,” “equal representation” and “working methods,” Lavery has “moved on to work with other companies,” but has “retained” her link with “the Regiment” (1993: 72, 103).

In her dramatic productions, Lavery subverts conventional forms and techniques of Aristotelian dramatic representations. By making use of Brechtian techniques such as sound, music, light, gestus, anachronism, and occasionally alienation in new and fresh ways,<sup>1</sup> Lavery offers a text that facilitates an exploration of subjects that are regarded as taboo such as domestic violence, sexualities and sexual misconduct. Considered an “experimenter and iconoclast,” she “has often defied stage convention” through her “handling of social problems and personal tragedies” which have “brought her greater success than her former light-hearted” plays (Brown et al. 2006). Her award-winning *Frozen* (1998) was one of those serious plays.<sup>2</sup> Defined by the critics as a “paedophile murder drama” and “trauma drama,” *Frozen* has received “strong” reactions (Wald 2006: 113; Sierz 2012: 80; Dellbrügge 2009: 5; Sweet 2017: 144). The play was performed first at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and proved to be a

<sup>1</sup> While Lavery’s plays such as *An Aching Heart* (1992), a lesbian romance, *A Wedding Story* (2000), the tragicomic story of three women at different ages, or *Illyria* (2002), a play on war and hate crimes, depict the blend of Aristotelian and Brechtian elements, she explores this hybridisation of dramatic conventions to the full in her award-winning play *Frozen* (1998). Each character in *Frozen*, for instance, is written to be played by a single actor/actress in a mimetic way, which gives the impression that Lavery uses conventional forms of dramatic representation. Yet, these characters use (interior) monologues that rather indirectly address the audience and each monologue gradually intermingles with other monologues to form dialogues towards the end of the play. Moreover, most of these monologues disregard time and space boundaries and chronological order that are indispensable in mimetic representations, because, in *Frozen*, former and present thoughts are scrambled together. The production scenery, as reviewed by Wald, further reveals the subversion of Aristotelian representation since adjustable lights are used to sketch rooms and floors in each part/scene of the play (2006: 116). In relation to the use of sound effects, Wald gives more clues about Lavery’s Brechtian approach:

*While the series of Nancy’s monologues express increasing paralysis and numbness, the level of sound effects establishes a counter-narrative to Nancy’s own experience of her inner states. After the scene in which Nancy learns that Rhona was killed, the audience hears ‘ice floes breaking up’ (29). The sound effect retrospectively underlines that Nancy was frozen rather than alive in her hope for Rhona’s return. After Nancy has articulated her feeling of emptiness and nothingness in the face of the demolished shed, the play inserts ‘a sound of splintering ice floes’ (43) and later on ‘[f]ar away, something falls from a great height ... fractures’ (44), ‘[s]omewhere, some liquid starts dripping slowly’ (51) and audiences hear the ‘sound of something breaking’ (51). (Wald 2006: 119)*

Thus, Lavery blends Aristotelian and Brechtian elements in her plays, especially, in her *Frozen*.

<sup>2</sup> All references to *Frozen* will be to act, scene, and page number, since line numbers are not indicated specifically. It must be noted that Lavery does not follow conventional scene numbers – whether to call the scenes “scenes” is also questionable. Scenes continue in an undivided way so that Act II begins with scene xx on page 162. Furthermore, the transcription of the text will be closely bound to the original where spaces, such as the one on page 186 between hurt and her, “hurt her,” will be maintained as much as possible.

controversial play both technically<sup>3</sup> and thematically, primarily because it deals with the ever timely subject of child abuse<sup>4</sup> in an unaccustomed way.

Set first in New York and later in an unspecified<sup>5</sup> English town, the play revolves around the serial killer and child abuser Ralph Wantage, who is caught by the police in his last attempt, the mother of one of his victims, Nancy, whose daughter Rhona went missing twenty years before, and Agnetha Gottmundsdottir who is a New Yorker psychiatrist investigating Ralph's case. Experiencing different types of traumas in different ways and places, the characters gradually meet and partially recover from their emotional wounds.

From a technical standpoint, *Frozen* uses many unconventional dramatic techniques, seen especially in the use of monologues that gradually become dialogues and between the shifts of some scenes, where the boundaries are so much blurred that it is not easy to tell when the scenes begin or end.<sup>6</sup> The element of surprise also conflates the boundaries between two successive scenes leading to several shifts in meaning in such transitions.<sup>7</sup>

Another unconventional technical aspect is that the play uses humour in an extensive way despite its serious subject matter. Although *Frozen* is a very dark play, there are some instances of humour used as a comic relief "to relieve the tension" (Cuddon 2013b: 139). However, the instances of comic relief are presented rather in the form of dark and black comedy,<sup>8</sup> which is in compliance with the theme of darkness prevalent in the play due to its

<sup>3</sup> For a spatial analysis of the "use of stage space" in the play's productions, see Wald 2006: 116-7.

<sup>4</sup> Lavery was influenced by the case of the murdered Lucy Partington who was missing for twenty years. The case was revealed in an article written by Lucy's sister Marian Partington in 1996 (Wald 2006: 117-8; Lavery 2007: 96).

<sup>5</sup> The fact that the place of action is unspecified makes the play and its subject less regional, more timely, and puts forth that the instances as depicted in the play may happen anywhere in an English-spoken town. A translated version could render the same universality within the given language.

<sup>6</sup> As Wald points out through her analysis of Caruth, the "chronological" and "spatial boundaries" of "external and internal reality" are conflated in a way akin to the effects of traumatic experience (2006: 115; Caruth 1995: 8-10). For instance, in her monologue, Nancy relates to herself her traumatic experience of how the police informed her that the body of her daughter was found nearby her house while she was "by a window, looking out" for her lost daughter (I.xi.130). The scene ends with a "sound of clapping..." (I.xii.131), which transforms into the applause of people who listen to Agnetha's lecture, entitled "Serial Killing ... A Forgivable Act?" Just like in this scene, the private and the public intermingle, and time and space seem to be disjointed throughout the play.

<sup>7</sup> The audience, for example, is not sure if Nancy's belated regret for loving her missing daughter Rhona less, or whether the in-play audience's applauding Agnetha in the "academic hall" (I.xii.131) are to be taken at face value or are mocked by the playwright. Likewise, the scene when Agnetha is having a call with David's wife changes after the arrival of "Nancy" who "walks into a room somewhere" (II.xx.165). Similarly, when Agnetha asks Nancy whether she wants some "Coffee," she "pours two cups and carries them into the next scene" (II.xxi.167), where she gives one cup to "Ralph" (II.xxii.168).

<sup>8</sup> As Cuddon maintains, dark or black comedy is marked by "laughter, grief, wretchedness and despair" which "are intermingled;" as the play "is pervaded by a kind of sour despair: we can't do anything so we may as well laugh" where "[t]he wit is mordant and the humour sardonic" (Cuddon 2013a: 81; Cuddon 2013c: 186). For instance, Agnetha, flying from New York to London where her lecture will be held, criticises the bad service in the plane, where she imagines herself "pouncing, / sinking [her] teeth into her [the Stewardess's] neck ... biting out her throat" for the stewardess's "inability to provide" Agnetha "with a vegetarian meal" (I.vi.117) through which Agnetha sardonically mimics the Stewardess's "How's this for going with / The Meat Option" (I.vi.118). Another instance of dark comedy is seen when David's wife asks Agnetha whether she has met anyone, where Agnetha relates her whole study of the imprisoned Ralph, saying:

No... I haven't met anyone...  
apart from serial killers...  
This Brit Killer made me an offer I could refuse...  
but hey, he's not dating at the present moment... (II.xx.164)

Similarly, when Agnetha asks Ralph whether he feels "sorrow / pity / compassion... / a sort of... tender feeling..." for Rhona and other victims, he replies: "[t]he only thing I'm sorry about is that it's [child abuse] is not legal" (II.xxii.169).

subject matter. Lavery's use of comic relief in a way that does not spoil the general darkness of the play contributes to the general unconventional mode of the play.

Following its success, however, the play has been overshadowed by accusations of "alleged plagiarism" by the criminal psychiatrist Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis. In 2004, when the play was nominated and won a Tony award, Dr. Otnow Lewis accused Lavery of using several passages from her book and article that she wrote in 1997 and 1998 (McKinley 2004.09.25; Simonson 2004).<sup>9</sup> Yet, these accusations have only increased interest in the play and the play's dramatic merits. As Aston states, the play is "critically successful" because of a sour-sweat mixture of violence, black humour and "forgiveness" (2003: 11, 55, 106).

*Frozen* confronts the audience<sup>10</sup> with the horrible act of child abuse which traumatises individuals, families and societies. The play displays the circumstances of the convict through which the audience may comprehend the motives of the child abuser, and makes it muse on the possibility of forgiving him. Approaching such a sensitive matter through unconventional techniques and suggestions, Lavery shatters both theatrical and social conventions. Therefore, in order to discuss her poetics of anti-paedophilia, this article aims to analyse the psychosexual history of the predator in Bryony Lavery's *Frozen* and discuss the social and psychological reasons behind the representation of sexual abuse in the play.

## II. THE PSYCHOSEXUAL HISTORY OF A PAEDOPHILE

The agenda of Lavery's *Frozen* is to raise awareness about paedophilia, which is a phenomenon usually silenced and unscrutinised by the majority of the society. The play tries to detect the reasons behind why paedophilia exists, and show its treatment in socio-psychological sense. Accordingly, in order to discuss the reasons behind the representation of sexual abuse and the subsequent murder of the victim and whether such an act can be forgiven, Ralph Wantage, the paedophile in the play, is used by Lavery in a functional sense. Rather than presenting a demonised and two-dimensional predator that should be purged from society, the details of Ralph's story are used to raise awareness for the underlying psychological and social reasons for the paedophile's turn to abuse children. Lavery's source-oriented approach can be seen as a preventive measure to highlight possible solutions for what could be done to prevent existing predators from misbehaviour and the occurrence of new child abusers. Hence, contrary to the exploitative treatment of child abuse in a sensational way in other plays<sup>11</sup> that present "either an off-stage character or a flat, static villain character, who serves as antagonist" being occasionally a "charismatic" figure (Wald 2006: 113-5), Ralph's characterisation is marked by its psychological depth.

From physical reasons to psychological motives of the actions of her characters, any aspect that can also be found in medical literature, has been used by Lavery to create her in-depth characters; Ralph being the most problematic one. Starting her study of Ralph by attempting to detect if he has had any physical damages first, Agnetha, the Icelandic New

<sup>9</sup> On counter-arguments about the use of "reality-based experiences and real-life human interest stories" in fiction, see Apter 2009: 88. For Lavery's apologetic response to and acknowledgement of her "inspiration of Dorothy Otnow Lewis, MD, and her work with Dr Jonathan Pincus concerning the neuropsychiatric characteristics of murderers," see her "Acknowledgements" prefixed to *Frozen* (2007: 96).

<sup>10</sup> Because of its subject matter and Lavery's treatment of this subject matter, *Frozen* is a troubling play for those who watch or read it. For instance, when the play was performed in the National Theatre in 2002, the *Theatre Record* noted that the play "disturb[ed]" its audience (2002: 908).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, among many, Claire Dowie's 1999 play *Easy access (for the Boys)*, which also deals with child abuse, has been accused by theatre critics like Paul Taylor of being materialistically exploitative rather than raising awareness or offering solutions to traumatic experiences: "[i]ndeed, in the past decade or so, it would be hard to find a dramatic subject that has been more abused than the abuse" (Taylor as cited in Wald 2008: 174).

Yorker academician, points out that “*physical damage to / the brain*” is an important factor in the development of future “*criminals*” (I.xvi.149).<sup>12</sup> As her investigation further shows, it is understood that Ralph’s mother “*threw*” him “*in the sink*” (I.xvi.149) while he was young, which led to both physical and psychological damage in him. In her lecture-style deductive aside, Agnetha further informs the audience that her study with Dr Nabkus on “*more than 250 dangerous criminals*” has shown that “*in significant numbers / these [criminals] have incurred physical damage to / the brain*” the proximity of which is shown as a “*verifiable*” “*evidence*” (I.xvi.149) for the relationship between physical damage and violent behaviour patterns. Therefore, the presence of even sporadic uses of physical violence leads Agnetha, and the audience, to question how often and in which manners Ralph was beaten in his childhood and beyond. It also leads to question in what kind of a family environment Ralph was raised.

Deducing from Ralph’s subsequent sexual deviance, the importance of stable family relations for the development of children is shown. When the play was performed for the first time in the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the importance of stable family relations were also highlighted by contemporary legislation in the UK. In 1998, the British government “*placed on local authorities,*” through the Crime and Disorder Act, the responsibility “*to address domestic violence*” and child abuse with preventive “*strategies*” to be consulted “*with non-governmental organisations,*” especially through legislation in Part 1, Chapter 1 and Section 2 of the same act (*Crime and Disorder Act 1998: 1-11; Home Office 2000: 3*). Thus, being a hot topic in 1998, intra-familial violence posits as a starting point to make Agnetha search for other physical damages in Ralph and “*look for evidence of [possible] child abuse,*” first concerning Ralph himself (I.xvi.149).

Agnetha’s search for evidence is not just a simple retelling of Ralph’s childhood, but a detailed analysis of the manner in which Ralph retells his past. The subsequent analysis of the child abuser’s “*[p]sychosexual history*” (Craissati 1998: 30) and “*focus on the behaviour [patterns] (usually called ‘pathology’) of the male abuser*” (Schlesinger 1982: 26) not only brings a formal credibility to the characterisation of Ralph, but also enables the audience to figure out the reasons for the existence of digressive sexual behaviours through a detailed depiction of the history of Ralph’s relationships within his immediate private space. As Fallor asserts, “*[r]esearch and clinical findings suggest that offenders in certain role relationships may be at greater risk for sexual abuse. The most consistent finding relates to stepfather vulnerability*” (1990: 59). Likewise, as the play progresses, it is understood that Ralph was sexually harassed by his several “*stepdads*” (II.xxii.173). Since Ralph, in his childhood, had a number of pervasive role-models whose relationships with him were marked by sexually digressive behaviour patterns, it can be argued that these experiences have conditioned Ralph to imitate such sexually digressive behaviours. Ralph’s family falls into the category of “*Multi-Problem Incest Family*” where “*incest [is] only one aspect of total family disorganization*” and the “*family has multi-problems*” (Schlesinger 1982: 15). Since Ralph’s mother also exercised physical violence over him while he was sexually abused by his stepfathers, this “*conform[s] to the pathological triangle, most involving some complicity on the part of the mother*” (Schlesinger 1982: 23). In this triangle, Ralph’s mother fails to become the “*rescuer*” in the conflict between the “*persecutor,*” the stepfather, and the “*victim,*” her sexually abused child (Karpman 1968: 39-43; Hooper et

<sup>12</sup> Also see Craissati 1998: 61 about the effects of physical trauma on socially deviant behaviours.

al. 2014: 13-71).<sup>13</sup> The mother's inactiveness can be regarded as a passive-aggressive behaviour pattern towards her son and his father. Since there is no mention of Ralph's father in the play, it can be deduced that he was brought up by a single parent who was probably economically and/or psychologically vulnerable. This vulnerability might have been further related with Ralph's father himself. Whether she missed Ralph's father or tried to forget him, it might be stated that Ralph's mother showed her frustration with life by mistreating Ralph and allowing Ralph's maltreatment by her present partner. In any case, the victimisation of Ralph can be regarded as an act of revenge on the part of the mother as she consciously did not rescue Ralph from his abusive treatment. While Ralph's resentment<sup>14</sup> towards his stepfathers is an important factor for him to choose to become a paedophile, his resentment towards his mother manifests itself in his choice of victims, namely girls rather than boys. Ralph is charged with the "murder of seven young girls / over a period of twenty-one years" (I.viii.106-26, I.12.135). His possession of pornography primarily featuring girls and women (I.v.114-5), his tattoo with "Madonna and Child" (I.viii.124), which is just one of the seven tattoos he got after each murder,<sup>15</sup> his irritation with the female "Needle[r]" and "fucking woman policeman," but not with male tattooists or officers (I.viii.123, I.x.128), and his use of the swearword "cunt" throughout the play indicate his obsession with women which derives from his frustration with his mother who failed as a rescuer in his childhood. When Agnetha asks the exact time "when" his mother threw him into the sink, Ralph says, "when she could get away with it still!" (I.xvi.149), which shows his resentment towards his mother that he transfers onto other women. Namely, Ralph substitutes sexual violence directed at small girls for his own childhood traumas he experienced through his stepfathers and his mother.

This transference that the play portrays can be explained in relation to dislocation of traumatic experience since "the impact of the traumatic event ... lies precisely in its ... insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 1995: 9). Ralph's reaction to his traumatic experience in the form of reiteration and transference shows that such a triangular relationship among the persecutor (stepfather), rescuer (mother) and victim (Ralph) results in accusations and in stagnation that prevent these characters from solving their problems. Violence, in the form of several father figures as sexual predators and a sadistic mother, has created a vicious circle for Ralph of raping girls, from which he could not, or rather chooses not to, escape.

The incestuous relationships between Ralph and his stepfathers can be defined as the main physical and psychological motives for Ralph's subsequent behaviours. In general, incest has been defined as the "acts of deviant behaviour including molestation, between persons who are related, including step-children," which may be traced back to the childhood experience of parental figures (Schlesinger 1982: 11; Craissati 1998: 12). Therefore, although the history

<sup>13</sup> Karpman's drama triangle is a social model for psychotherapy that uses the triangular relationships in fairy tales as a model to analyse human interactions in conflicts. For a detailed analysis of the model, see also Lister-Ford 2002: 67-84 and Hooper et al. 2014: 13-98.

<sup>14</sup> Although Sedehi, Kit and Yahya deal with Ralph's "repressed anger" towards his mother, they do not engage thoroughly with it from a psychoanalytic point-of-view and reduce the mother's role into that of a socially unacceptable woman. See, Sedehi, Kit and Yahya 2016: 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wald argues that the tattoos serve "as a compensation for the lack of imprint which the murders made in terms of internal, psychobiological change" on Ralph (2006: 112). Ralph indeed compensates for the immediate psychological effect of the rapes and murders on him, yet his choice of the sacred mother and child figure indicates that this compensation is closely linked with his frustration with his own mother with whom he could not have a healthy, let alone an ideal, relationship as represented in the Madonna and Child tattoo.

of Ralph's stepfathers is not displayed in the play, it can be assumed that they might also have experienced sexual harassment. Because of the fact that "*abuse by a parental figure is more traumatic than other types of abuse,*" this traumatic experience is usually canalised in the form of imitating the form of abuse (Gomes-Schwartz et al. 1990: 97). As Paulo Freire states in his seminal work on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the majority of the "*oppressed*" usually "*tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors',*" because they choose to follow the "*guidelines*" of the "*oppressor*" whose use of force creates "*fear*" and awe in them (2012: 43-7). It can be suggested that this can be seen as one of the underlying reasons why Ralph's stepfathers abused Ralph and Ralph chooses to abuse other children in return.

### III. SUPPRESSION

While privately imitating his traumatic experience by transferring it onto other children, Ralph suppresses his traumatic experience in public by fabricating a harmonious childhood as "*[a] much-loved only child*" with his "*Dad ... riding ponies*" and "*reading poytry [that is, poetry]*" (II.xxii.172). This suppression can also be seen in a child abuser's appropriate behaviours "*in other areas*" (Faller 1990: 57), which can be observed in Ralph's affected politeness, having "*manners*" and acting like a "*gentleman*" (I.x.129, I.xxii.134). Ralph wants to be accepted by society in spite of his trauma which he tries to cover up by his exaggerated compliance with rules and social manners.

The suppression of childhood memories in Ralph and his affected behaviour as an adult may be further traced to the fact that each of his stepfathers falls into the category of the authoritarian tyrant who uses "*threats of physical force or actual beatings in demanding submission*" (Schlesinger 1982: 18). Physical violence has silenced Ralph's fears, anger, and frustration in his childhood and has led him to consider keeping his worries to himself as a form of self-preservation. Repressing his problems into the depths of his memory, however, does not eliminate them, but only postpones his confrontation with them.

Ralph's suppressed experience with his stepfathers eventually comes into the foreground in a manner which reminds of Jung and Freud's arguments in their analyses of dreams: the "*conscious mind*" can no longer "*suppress the unconscious*" (Jung 2002: 230) and the "*repressed*" is "*act[ed] ... out*" (Freud 1986: 150); the opposite of which Ralph has tried to do throughout his life. Following the emergence of his suppressed traumatised childhood memories, Ralph impersonates his father and speaks out "*[i]n Dad's voice*" (II.xxv.183) displaying how his stepfather exercised verbal and physical violence over him in his childhood, which can also be heard in the "*[s]ound of thump on flesh*" or "*[t]lap on forehead*" (II.xxv.183; Wald 2006: 123), when Ralph beats himself while he is mimicking the aggressive behaviours of one of his stepfathers. It is possible that most adult abusers who do not receive "*clinical intervention*" in their childhood become "*sexual abuser[s] of young children*" themselves (Gomes-Schwartz et al. 1990: 103). Ralph's untreated traumatic childhood experience might be the reason for his sexual deviation in his adulthood, of which he might not have been aware.

Only towards the end of the play, when Ralph's encounter with Nancy, the victim's mother, functions like a therapy, he understands that he has been identifying himself with his stepfather. As Faller and Craissati elucidate, the abuser "*takes on the abusive role*" and assumes that by "*victimizing others, he gains mastery over his own trauma*" (Faller 1990: 58; Craissati 1998: 75). Hence, Ralph's intra-familial experience of sexual abuse forms the basis for his turn to extra-familial sexual abuse, where Ralph is an "[o]ut-house, unrelated" person in the perpetrator-victim relationship (Faller 1990: 152). Similar to what Freire argues in

relation to the interaction between the oppressor and the oppressed in general, the "ideal" of the oppressed "is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors" as they "adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor" who, through his behaviour patterns, becomes "their model of 'manhood'." (2012: 45).<sup>16</sup> This explains why the victimised Ralph models his adulthood on his stepfathers and becomes a victimiser himself, since his sense of reality is confined within the behaviour patterns of his abusive stepfathers.

#### IV. RATIONALISATION

Ralph's childhood trauma results in a vicious circle where wrong is tried to be corrected by further wrongs. Traumas create "holes or lacunae in his superego," as the "consequence of early life experience," that is, "an experience of sexual abuse," which leads former victims to "sexual[ly] abuse" other children (Faller 1990: 57). Early traumatising conflates the boundaries between accepted/right and forbidden/wrong behaviour patterns that are in a flux in the private and public life of a victimised/victimiser. This instability in standards of judgment prevents the traumatised from having a healthy psychological and sexual development. As in the case of other sexual abusers, Ralph's "psychosexual immaturity" makes him "sexually involved with other children" (Schlesinger 1982: 15). This condition is enhanced by what Faller calls "[t]hinking errors" where the child abuser "persuades himself of the acceptability of the sexual activity ... that the child will enjoy the sex," and "that it is not really harmful," for him/her (Faller 1990: 57). In a similar fashion, Ralph narrates how he persuaded himself, right at the beginning of his encounter with Rhona twenty years ago, that she "quite liked" him (I.iii.108). The rationalisation of the error can be considered as yet another tactic by the child abuser to deflect guilt and traumatic memory.

On the one hand, Ralph argues that he only has temporal outbursts of desire for sex with children, which he terms as "rush of blood" (I.iii.107). This rationalisation stimulates him for the many instances of "Non-family Sexual Abuse[s]" for which he "uses coercion in the form of ... affection" (Schlesinger 1982: 24). In Rhona's case, for instance, Ralph tries to attract her by making her reply to his insistent thirteen greetings of "Hello" (I.iii.108) in order to create an initially friendly atmosphere with Rhona the victim. This affection posits as his tactic to "abuse" Rhona "for a shorter time" (Craissati 1998: 13), where Ralph asserts that he will only "[s]pend some time with her" (I.iii.107).

On the other hand, although, Ralph "just" saw Rhona before he abused her, he seems to have "[c]alculated paedophilic abuse" where Ralph as a child abuser "consciously choose[s] to work or volunteer in settings where [he] can have easy access to children for sexual purposes" (Faller 1990: 194), which can be seen in the readiness of his van in advance with his "cushions in the back / And a sleeping bag" (I.iii.107, 109). Therefore, Ralph's abuses of children are far from being spontaneous acts of an unsteady personality, but rather the calculated actions of the same personality.

Besides, Ralph's readiness for sexual abuse has been fostered by external stimulators like pornography and alcohol that furthered Ralph's distortion of reality. As for the former, Ralph's obsession with his "precious" pornographies<sup>17</sup> that he got from Amsterdam, France

<sup>16</sup> After Ralph is caught by the police, he fears to be excluded from the public and accused of unmanliness because of his crimes, seen when he repeats the possible "whispering and threats" like "You're not a man. / That's not a man" (I.xx.129). Ralph has a masculinity complex; he wants to be considered as a man and wants to show his manliness through sexual violence in his private life, but fears to confront with social exclusion and accusations of unmanliness in his public life.

<sup>17</sup> The title of one of the pornographies, "Little Red Riding Hood" (I.v.114), alludes to the fairy tale, and epitomises Rhona's situation who went "to her grandma's house" (I.vii.119) just as Little Red Riding Hood does in the fairy



and Denmark, which he fantasises to be owned only by him (I.v.114-5), forms an important stimulator for him to abuse girls. As the many titles of his pornographic "videos" like "Little Ones In Love," "Child Love," "Little Linda" and "Baby Bonnie" further reveal, they create a false logic in him because the constructed plotlines and characterisations in these videos distort his vision of consensual sex. Moreover, the "rationali[s]ation" of erroneous behaviour patterns is actually a form of "repression" (Vaillant 1977/1995: 80, 132). Ralph rationalises his deviant sexual behaviour while he wants to repress the fact that he was abused by blaming outside factors such as watching pornography, consuming alcohol and being incited by the victim. This tends to explain why Ralph acts in a quite different way than observed by the critics in their analysis on spectatorship. For de Certeau, for instance, in a consumerist society, the passive "spectators" actually "refuse to be participants" as they lean back and watch others perform acts which they yearn to do themselves (1997: 18). Contrary to de Certeau's assertion that "[t]he more we see, the less we take" (1997: 18), the more Ralph sees, the more he is incited to take. The more Ralph watches paedophilic and lesbian pornographies, the more he wants to abuse children. Thus, as Faller asserts, "[s]ome sex offenders fantasize extensively about having sex with children" where they "may also use child pornography to stimulate their sexual interest in children and their fantasies" (1990: 61) as in the case of Ralph.

As for the latter stimulator, that is, alcohol, child abusers usually have a "longstanding alcohol dependency problem" (Craissati 1998: 62), which Faller defines as "[d]iminished capacity" as a consequence of "drug or," in Ralph's case, "alcohol use" (1990: 57). Ralph confesses that he has drunk "five lagers" and "four ... / Jack Daniels" (I.iii.107), which have further distorted his sense of outside reality. Thus, despite having experienced sexual abuse himself, by creating a false logic and using external stimulators such as pornography and alcohol, Ralph is "icebound," where he "can't adapt to a new situation" (I.xii.137).

## V. CONFRONTATION

Following Nancy's encounter with her daughter's murderer and her efforts to make him empathise with his victim, there is a sudden change in Ralph. As Wald argues, "[w]ith the help of Nancy, Ralph learns to categorise his own erstwhile feelings as pain and fear" (2006: 123). Ralph confronts the reality that he was "hurt" in his childhood by his family members (II.xxv.177-84), through which Ralph comprehends that he actually "hurt her [Rhona]" (II.xxvi.186). He feels "[r]emorse" because of his anagnorisis (II.xxviii.190), and commits suicide at the end of the play as he cannot cope with his encounter with the outer reality (II.xxix.193). Freiere states that "the oppressed, having internali[z]ed the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility" (2012: 47). Similarly, Ralph's escapism that prevents him from liberating himself from the vicious circle of sexual exploitation can be considered to be a result of his problematic confrontation with, and lack of engagement to "replace," the oppressor in himself.

Lavery posits Ralph's childhood trauma as Ralph's motivations for his exercise of sexual violence on Rhona. Yet, Lavery also questions his "responsibility" in the act (Aston 2003: 55). Agnetha's differentiation of "sin" and "symptom," "evil" and "illness" (II.xxiv.176) and Nancy's forgiveness (II.xxv.178), which are set as cardio-centric and neuro-centric poles of understanding the culprit in the play (Wald 2006: 124-5), ultimately challenge the conventional lynching and avenging anti-paedophilic responses in society. Nancy's earlier

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tale, which adds thematic unity to the play as well. Nevertheless, quite tragically, Rhona cannot escape the Wolf, that is Ralph, while Little Red Riding Hood does, which subverts the fairy tale. For a detailed study of the relationship of the fairy tale to the play, see Cousin 2007: 82-4.

anger and plea “to see him [Ralph] die” and get “[a]n eye for an eye / tooth for a tooth” (I.xiii.137-8), rather than forgiving “that monster” which would be “too much” (I.xix.161) is released with the help of her daughter Ingrid “like A Bird Into The Wind” (II.xxv.179). Nancy as “an ordinary woman ... demonstrates extraordinary energy in her ultimate forgiveness of Ralph,” which suggests that “the energies for moving forward” in the play are restored in women (Aston 2003: 55). Nancy and Agnetha want to heal this socio-psychological problem: Nancy through her campaigning for Flame, a public organisation that helps families find missing children and detects paedophiles, and Agnetha through her lectures. In the play, “public attention is paid to women’s experience and knowledge” (Aston 2003: 55-6). Yet, it should not be forgotten that Ralph’s character development was affected by another woman, that is, his mother who exercised physical violence over him. Therefore, any sentimental handling of the play towards the role of women as forgiving and caring mothers is also problematised. This, however, makes the subversive theme of forgiving the murderer of one’s daughter more meaningful. Ralph could not forgive his mother. It is for this reason that he developed a vindictive psychosocial behaviour pattern that imprisoned him in a vicious circle until Nancy’s act of forgiving led him to realise his erroneous behaviours. Thus, forgiveness leads to awareness which might have not been achieved if he was simply purged from society without scrutinising his psychosexual history.

## VI. CONCLUSION

*Frozen* is a both thematically and technically subversive play that deals with a topical theme that is almost a taboo in societies, that is, child abuse. Nevertheless, what makes Lavery’s play daring is her controversial suggestion that even such a horrible act could be forgiven in order to continue with life and not be ‘frozen’ in hatred.<sup>18</sup> The possibility of this proposal is, however, questionable, as it does not give an easy solution for a serious problem. Likewise, the play gives also voice to the abuser through his psychosocial history, which was a novel approach when the play was first performed in 1998. Agnetha’s study clarifies why Ralph is/becomes a paedophile, which is much in contrast with the conventional treatment of child abusers by society that usually disregards, excludes, and eliminates them although the elimination of the predator does not prevent the existence of subsequent predators, as recent horrific events have shown. The play shocked its audience members when it was performed in 1998 and its subsequent audiences. It still has the potential to shock audiences, because societies have not found effective means to make oppressors confront their repressed traumas, failed to liberate victimised victimisers from their vicious circle, and could not prevent the day by day victimisation of individuals and families in the UK and beyond. Since the problems regarding the presence of and reasons for paedophilia have not been unfortunately solved yet, Lavery’s poetics of anti-paedophilia is still relevant. Thus, a reading of the psychosexual history of Ralph shows that Lavery’s *Frozen* stands out as an important play enabling the audience to contemplate on the highly controversial and unsolved problem of child abuse from multiple angles.

<sup>18</sup> As Wald indicates, frost represents the static and harmful obsession of Ralph with his childhood trauma, Nancy’s psychosocial paralysation after her daughter’s death, and Agnetha’s workaholic manner to escape from her confrontation with her boyfriend’s death (2006: 111-2). As Wald further maintains, “[t]he play’s title announces the central metaphor of a frozen ocean, which synthesizes defining qualities of traumatisation. If the ocean represents the overwhelming, violent quality of the traumatic experience, the frozen ocean indicates how much the characters remain captured in and paralysed by their past experiences” (2006: 111). This is why the NGO on lost children is called FLAME in the play, to melt the frost away in post-traumatic periods that paralyses individuals affected by the loss of their loved ones.

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