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Editörden

Theatre Academy'nin ilk sayısı yayına çıkarken, bizler aynı zamanda Atatürk Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nün ilk dergisini çıkarmanın heyecanını yaşıyoruz. Mart ve Eylül aylarında olmak üzere yılda iki kez yayımlanacak olan dergimizin akademisyenler, araştırmacılar ve tiyatro uygulayıcıları arasındaki mevcut tartışma platformuna katkıda bulunması ümidini taşıyoruz. Adının bir bölümünü Eflatun'un kurduğu felsefe okulundan, diğerini ise zamanın sınırlarını aşarak her çağda bir 'seyir yeri' olarak hizmet etmiş bir sanattan alan *Theatre Academy*, tiyatrodaki var olan tartışmaları ileriye götürmeyi ve tiyatro sanatını tekrar tekrar ve katman katman sorguya açarak yücelten yeni görüş ve yaklaşımları ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir.

Edebiyat Fakültesi Dekanı Prof. Dr. Dilaver DÜZGÜN'ün kıymetli desteğinin ve derginin editör yardımcısı Dr. Tuğba AYGAN'ın büyük emeğinin yanında dergi ekibinin katkıları olmaksızın dergimizin ilk sayısını yayına sunmak mümkün olamazdı. Kendilerine teşekkürlerimi sunuyorum. Ayrıca yayım sürecinde bize yardımcı olan Sanat Tarihi doktora öğrencisi Ayşe DURAN'ın yanı sıra yayımlanmak üzere gönderilen yazıları okumak için zaman ayıran (ve ayıracak olan) şimdiki ve gelecekteki tüm hakemlerimize de şükranlarımı sunarım.

Doç. Dr. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ

Editor's Note

As the first issue of *Theatre Academy* is coming out, we also feel thrilled to be publishing the first journal of the Department of English Language and Literature at Atatürk University. Published twice annually, one in March and the other in September, the journal will hopefully contribute to the existing platform of discussion among the academics, researchers and theatre practitioners. Taking part of its name from the philosophical school founded by Plato and the other part from an art which has travelled beyond the borders of time to serve in all ages as a 'viewing place', *Theatre Academy* is dedicated to furthering existing discussions in theatre as well as bringing out fresh views and approaches that uphold the art of theatre by means of questioning its multifarious layers.



It would not have been possible to publish this journal without the invaluable support of Professor Dilaver DÜZGÜN, the Dean of the Faculty of Letters and the hard work of Dr. Tuğba AYGAN who is the co-editor of the journal as well as the significant amount of work produced by the journal team. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Ayşe DURAN, a doctoral candidate at the Department of Art History who assisted us along the way to publication and all our reviewers—now and future— who kindly spared (and will spare) the time to read the manuscripts sent for publication.

Assoc. Prof. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ



Prof. Dr. Ahmet BEŞE'nin anısına saygıyla...



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Theatre Academy

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Harold Pinter'in *Git-Gel Dolap* Adlı Oyunu Üzerinden Absürt Tiyatro'da Komığın İşlevselliği

The Functionality of the Comic in The Theatre of the Absurd Through

Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*

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Öz

Tarihin en kanlı savaşlarından olan iki büyük dünya savaşı, çok sayıda insanın yaşamını kaybetmesine ve hayatta kalanların da maddi ve manevi olarak büyük yıkımlar yaşamasına sebep olmuştur. İnsani değerlerin çöküşüne ortam hazırlayan bu savaşlardan özellikle İkinci Dünya Savaşı insanları umutsuzluk, güvensizlik, endişe, korku ve anlamsızlık duygularıyla baş başa bırakırken onları büyük bir varoluş sorgulamasına da itmiştir. Bu savaş deneyiminin etkisiyle, insanın Tanrı tarafından dünyaya fırlatıldığı ve Tanrının onun varlığına kayıtsız kaldığı inancı öne çıkıp Varoluşçuluk akımı gelişmiştir. Varoluş felsefesinin tiyatrodaki yansması ise Absürt Tiyatro ile kendini gösterir. Savaş sonrası insanlık durumunu yansıtan Absürt Tiyatro yaşamın usa aykırılığını bütün sanatsal formları yıkarak sahneye taşır. Absürt Tiyatro insanın büyük trajedisini, yani saçma ama acı olan yaşam gerçeğini komiğe başvurarak trajikomik bir üslûpla ele alır. Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov ve Harold Pinter gibi absürt oyun yazarları komığın sırtına yükledikleri derin anlamlarla savaş sonrası insanlık durumunu ortaya koymaya çalışır. İnsanları güldürerek trajik, korkunç ve saçma yaşam gerçeğinin bilincine vardırarak isteyen Absürt Tiyatro ortaya bir kara mizah çıkarır. Trajik karakterlerin eylemlerinde ve konuşmalarında ürettikleri komik ile seyircisini duruma yabancılaştıran Absürt Tiyatro'da komik, insanın varoluş trajedisine dayanma gücünü veren güçlü bir silahtır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma Absürt Tiyatro'da komığın güçlü bir silah olarak nasıl ortaya çıktığını çağdaş İngiliz oyun yazarı Harold Pinter'in *Git-Gel Dolap* (*The Dumb Waiter*, 1957) adlı oyunu üzerinden tartışmaktadır. Korku, gizem, tehdit, trajedi ve komedi unsurlarını birleştirerek bir 'tehdit komedisi' üreten Pinter'in oyununun hareketler ve sözler üzerinden yarattığı komiklikler ve saçmalıklar ile varoluşsal bir sorgulama alanı yarattığı sonucu paylaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Absürt Tiyatro, Komik, Trajikomik, Harold Pinter, *Git-Gel Dolap*

Abstract

Two of the deadliest wars in history, two great world wars, resulted in loss of many people's lives and the survivors suffered from great destruction materially and morally. Among these wars, which led up to the collapse of human values, especially the Second World War left people with feelings of hopelessness, insecurity, anxiety, panic and meaninglessness, and pushed them into the great quest for existence. Existentialism, highlighting the belief that human is thrown into the world by God and that God remains indifferent to their existence, emerged out of that war experience. The reflection of Existentialist philosophy in theatre shows itself in the Theatre of the Absurd. Reflecting the post-war human condition, the Theatre of the Absurd brings the irrationality of life to the stage by destroying all artistic forms. By applying to the comic, the Theatre of the Absurd has presented the great tragedy of human, that is, the reality of the absurd and bitter life, in a tragicomic manner. The absurdist playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter have tried to reveal the human condition with the deep meanings they have hidden in the comic. The Theatre of the Absurd, which aims to heighten awareness of people on the tragic, terrifying and absurd reality of life by making them laugh, creates a dark humor. In the Theatre of the Absurd, the comic produced by tragic characters in their actions and speeches alienates the audience from the situation and the comic is a powerful weapon that gives the strength to endure the tragedy of existence. In this content, this study discusses how the comic has emerged as a powerful tool in the Theatre of the Absurd through contemporary British playwright Harold Pinter's play *The Dumb Waiter* (1957). It infers that Pinter's play, which produces 'comedy of menace' by combining the elements of fear, mystery, threat, tragedy and comedy, creates a space of an existential quest with the funny elements and absurdities created through actions and words.

Keywords: The Theatre of the Absurd, Comic, Tragicomic, Harold Pinter, *The Dumb Waiter*

Giriş

Hamm: Son başlangıcın içindedir, gene de sürdürürsün.

Nell: Hiçbir şey mutsuzluktan daha gülünç değil, kabul ediyorum. O, dünyadaki en komik şeydir.

Endgame /Samuel Beckett

Absürt Tiyatro'nun önde gelen isimlerinden olan İrlandalı oyun yazarı Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), *Oyun Sonu* (1957) başlıklı oyununda Hamm karakterinin dilinden insan yaşamının saçma döngüsellliğini ve insanın bunu yaşamaya yazgısını dile getirirken, Nell karakterinin dilinden de bu saçma varoluşun verdiği mutsuzluk duygusunun dünyadaki en komik şey olduğunu söyler (1985, s. 20). İnsanın, kontrolü elinde olmayan bir yaşamı bir döngüsellik içinde sürdürmek zorunda olduğu gerçeği son derece trajiktir ve bu durum İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında yaşanan ölümler, yıkımlar ve bunun doğal bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan güvensizlik ortamındaki acı, endişe ve korku duygularıyla daha da belirginleşmiştir. Savaş sonrası tiyatrodaki insanın trajik var

oluş mücadelesi, Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), Arthur Adamov (1908-1970), Eugéné Ionesco (1904-1994), Jean Genet (1910-1986), Tom Stoppard (1937-) ve Harold Pinter (1930-) gibi absürt oyun yazarları tarafından çeşitli bakış açılarından temsil edilmiş ve bu noktada komiğe işlevsel bir misyon yüklenmiştir. Absürt oyun yazarları insan yaşamının saçmalığını ve trajikliğini anlatırken komiğe başvurmuşlardır.

Büyük ve derin yıkımlara sebep olan İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın ardından ortaya çıkan Absürt Tiyatro, modern insanın trajedisini trajikomik bir üslûpla dile getirmiştir. Türkçeye 'saçma' ya da 'uyumsuz' diye de çevrilen absürt kavramı "bir kural ya da nedene bağlı olarak uyumdan yoksun, uyumsuz, usa yatkın olmayan, mantıksız" (Esslin, 2001, s. 19) anlamına gelir. Yirminci yüzyıl tiyatrosuna damgasını vuran Absürt Tiyatro hareketi içerisinde kavram, savaş sonrası insanlığın geldiği nihai noktayı anlatmak için kullanılmıştır. Absürt Tiyatro, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında ortaya çıkan ve yaşamın usa aykırılığını, bilinen tüm sanatsal uyumları bozarak sahneye getiren tiyatro akımı" (Şener, 2006, s. 297) olarak tanımlanır. Absürt Tiyatro'nun gelişiminde ise Fransız yazar Alfred Jarry'nin (1873-1907) 1896 yılında ilk kez Paris'te sahnelenen oyunu *Kral Übü'sünün*, Rumen asıllı Fransız şair ve yazar Tristan Tzara'nın (1896-1963) başını çektiği Dada hareketinin ve Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) ile Albert Camus (1913-1960) gibi önde gelen isimlerin yer aldığı Varoluşçuluk felsefesinin katkıları büyük olmuştur. Absürt tiyatro hareketinin tanıtılmasında ise *Absürt Tiyatro* (1961) başlıklı kitabıyla Martin Esslin (1918-2002) öne çıkmıştır. Esslin, Absürt Tiyatro'yu insanlığın durumundaki anlamsızlık duygusunu akılcı araçların ve gidimli düşüncenin terk edilmesi yoluyla açıklamaya çabalayan bir tiyatro hareketi olarak tanımlar (2001, s. 20).

Toplumdan soyutlanmış, yalnızlaşmış ve korkuları ile baş başa kalmış bireyin sorunları ile ilgilenerek öznel bir dünya portresi çizen ve bunu yaparken de belli bir oyun dizgesi takip etmeyip olay örgüsünü tutarsız bir şekilde ilerleten Absürt Tiyatro, neticesinde "dünyanın aldatmaca gerçeğine karşı bir protesto" (Şener, 2006, s. 301) olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu noktada oyun yazarları komiğe başvurarak insanın içinde bulunduğu dünya aldatmacasına çeşitli imgesel ve biçimsel göndermelerde bulunmuşlar ve bu yolla seyircisine insanın dünyadaki trajikomik durumunu sorgulatmaya çalışmışlardır. Absürt Tiyatro'da komiğin işlevselliğini ortaya koymayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, bu amacını İngiliz Absürt Tiyatrosu'nun tedirgin edici ve sarsıcı oyun yazarlarından biri olan Harold Pinter'in 1957 yılında yazdığı *Git-Gel Dolap* oyunu

üzerinden gerçekleştirecektir. Bu bağlamda öncelikli olarak komiğin geçmişten günümüze işlevselliği ve Absürt Tiyatro'daki yeri üzerinde durulacak ve sonrasında da *Git-Gel Dolap* oyunu üzerinden komiğin yeri ve işlevselliği tartışılacaktır.

Komik Olan

*Türk Dili Kurumu Sözlüğü*nde komik “gülme duygusu uyandıran, güldürücü, gülünç” (1988, s. 1349) şeklinde tanımlanır. Peki, komik ya da gülünç olan şey nasıl ortaya çıkar? Her güldüğümüz şey gerçekten de komik ya da gülünç müdür? Ya da gülünç görünen bir şeye gerçekten herkes gülebilmekte midir? Gülmenin insan için bir anlamı var mıdır? Komik dediğimizde hemen hemen bu tür sorular aklımıza gelir; ancak bu sorular için vereceğimiz net cevaplar bulunmamaktadır. Öyle ki komik olan konusu araştırıldığında üzerine eski dönemlerden bu yana pek çok çalışmanın yapıldığı ve konuyla ilgili pek çok farklı kuramın geliştirildiği görülür ki bu durum komik kavramının oldukça kapsamlı ve işlevsel olduğunu göstermekte; aynı zamanda bu kavramın çok yönlü, esnek ve yorumlamalara açık olduğu sonucuna bizi ulaştırmaktadır.

Komik ve gülme arasındaki ilişkinin izleri sürüldüğünde ise yolumuz Antik Yunanlı düşünürler Platon ve Aristoteles'e kadar uzanır. Her bir düşünür ise komiğin oluşumunda farklı durumları öne çıkararak, komik ya da gülünç olanı açıklar. Örneğin, Platon (M.Ö. 427-347) *Devlet* (M.Ö. 380) başlıklı eserinde gülmenin devlet otoritesini sarsıcı bir gücü olduğundan bahsederek gülmeye, yani komik olana eleştirel bir açıdan yaklaşır (Platon, 2011). Aristoteles (M.Ö. 384-322) ise *gelion* kelimesinin karşılığı olarak kullandığı gülünç kavramının acı vermeyen, gülünç kusurları ifade ettiğini belirtip, gülücün ya da komiğin özünde soylu olmama davranışının yattığını vurgular. Ona göre, kötü bir olay soylu bir kişinin başına geldiğinde bu trajik olacakken, aynı olay sıradan bir kişinin başına geldiğinde komikleşmektedir (Aristoteles, 1983, s. 20). Bir diğer ifadeyle, Aristoteles gülücü sınıfsal temelli bir anlayışla açıklar ve *Poetika* (M.Ö. 344) başlıklı eserinde de tragedyayı soylu kişilerin eylemlerini taklit eden bir tür ve komedyayı ise alt tabaka insanının eylemlerini taklit eden bir tür olarak tanımlarken bu sınıfsal temelli gruplandırmaya vurgu yapmış olur (1983, s. 17-20).

Komiği açıklarken gülme eyleminin neden kaynaklandığını sorgulamak gerekir ki gülme eyleminin kaynaklandığı yer esasen komiğin kaynağını ortaya koyar. Gülme ise çok çeşitli sebepten kaynaklanabilir ve bu konuda pek çok kuramcının farklı açıklamaları söz konusudur. Örneğin, ünlü *Leviathan* (1651) adlı eserinin sahibi İngiliz

felsefeci Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) bir başkası sendeliyorken her güçlüğü yendiğini görüp kişinin tazelemiş olduğu güven duygusunun gülmeyi doğurduğunu iddia eder. Gülmeyi anlık bir zafer olarak değerlendiren Hobbes, gülmenin diğerlerinin zayıflığı karşısında kendi üstünlüğümüzü gördüğümüzde hissettiğimiz bir zafer hissi olduğunu söyler (Hobbes, 1992). On sekizinci yüzyılın ünlü düşünürlerinden biri olan Alman Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) da gülmeyi zorlanmış ümidin ani değişim yoluyla boşa çıkması olarak tanımlar. Kant'a göre, gülme hiçbir şeye varmayan, ansızın belli olan bir beklemeden gelir ve komik yeni ile eskinin, içerik ile biçimin, amaç ile aracın, davranış ile çevrenin, insanın gerçek doğası ile kendine ilişkin kanısı arasındaki bağdaşmazlığı yansıtır (Kant, 2006, s. 206-209). Psikanalizin kurucusu Avusturya doğumlu nörolog Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) ise gülmeyi, komik veya gülünç olan ile insanın psikolojik yönü arasındaki ilişkiyle açıklar. Ona göre, fiziksel hareketlere çok enerji harcayıp zihinsel hareketlere az enerji harcayan insanlara gülünür. Freud, gülmenin çocukluktan getirilen şiddet duygusunu dışa vurmanın bir yolu olduğunu altını çizer. Freud'un Psikanaliz teorisinden kaynağını alan Rahatlama Kuramı'na göre, bastırılmış duyguları içerisinde barındıran psikolojik enerjinin fazlası gülme yoluyla atılır (Freud, 1990, s. 185). Gülmeyi gizemli bir olgu olarak değerlendiren Freud, onun istemli bir hareket sonucunda gerçekleşmediğini ve bilinçaltı ile alakalı bir durum olduğunu dile getirir. Gülme ister güçsüz biri karşısında hissedilen zafer hissinden ister hayal kırıklığından ister psikolojik bir rahatlama isteğinden kaynaklansın, neticesinde çok çeşitli işlevselliğe sahip bir eylem olarak karşımıza çıkar ki bu noktada her bir düşünürün gülme veya komik üzerine fikirlerinin komik teorisinin gelişiminde de önemli rol oynadığının altını çizmek gerekir.

Gülme konusunda ayrıntılı çalışmalar yapan kişilerden birisi de şüphesiz Fransız düşünür Henri-Louis Bergson'dur. Bergson (1859-1941) gülmenin sosyal boyutu ile ilgilenir. Gülmeyi "toplumsal bir jest" (2014, s. 58) olarak değerlendiren Bergson, insanlık dışında hiçbir şeyin komik olmadığını dile getirir (2014, s. 87) ve gülmenin duygusuzluk ve merhametsizlik duyguları ardından gerçekleştiğinin altını çizer. Ona göre, gülme duyguya yer vermez ve kalabalıklar içinde ortaya çıkar. Bergson, gülmenin yankıya ihtiyaç duyduğunu ve insanlarla paylaşılan bir şey olduğunu belirtir. Komiğin dolaylı ya da dolaysız insanî olan her şeyde var olduğuna işaret ederek, etki yaratmasında da sakin ve dümdüz bir ruh düzleminin olması gerektiğini vurgular (2014, s. 5-6). *Gülme* başlıklı eserinde komiğin gelişim sürecini ele

alan Bergson biçim komiği, devinimlerin komiği, durum komiği, söz komiği ve karakter komiği olmak üzere beş tür komikten bahseder ve komik olarak ortaya çıkan şeyin ne kadar doğal olursa o kadar komik görüneceğinin altını çizer. Kuramcıya göre, yineleme ya da tekrarlar, mekaniklik halleri, tersine çevirmeler ve dizilerin birbirlerinin içine girmeleri komiği ortaya çıkartan durumlardır. Kuramcı yaşamda tekrarlar olmadığı için tekrarlanan hareketlerin kuklaları hatırlatmasından dolayı komik olduğunu söyler (2014, s. 34). Ona göre, jestlerde, tavırlarda, yüz çizgilerinde ve hatta sözlerde ortaya çıkan mekaniklik halleri; belirli bir durumun ya da rollerin ters çevrilerek tekrar edilmesi; olayların birbirlerinin içine girmesi, bir başka deyişle olayların domino taşlarının ya da kurşun askerlerin birbirini devirmesi şeklinde ilerlemeleri veya bir kartopu gibi büyümeleri tekrarlar gibi komiktir (2014, s. 47-67).

Her ne kadar gülme üzerine çeşitli teoriler ortaya atılmış olsa da günümüzde insanların neden güldüğüne dair üç temel kuramsal yaklaşımdan bahsetmek mümkündür. Genel kabul gören bu kuramsal yaklaşımlar ise Üstünlük Kuramı (Superiority Theory), Uyumsuzluk Kuramı (Incongruity Theory) ve Rahatlama Kuramı'dır (Relief Theory) (Monro, 1985: 356-358). Kaynağını Thomas Hobbes'un Leviathan eserinden alan Üstünlük Kuramı, gülüncün kişinin, başına gülünç bir şey gelen başka kişi karşısında kendini üstün görmesinden kaynaklandığını öne sürerken kaynağı Aristoteles'e dayanan ve Kant, Schopenhauer gibi isimler tarafından geliştirilen Uyumsuzluk Kuramı, beklentilerin boşa çıkması ya da tersine dönmesi ile beraber ortaya çıkan şaşkınlıktan kaynaklı bir gülme eyleminden bahseder. Kaynağını Sigmund Freud'un Psikanalitik teorisinden alan Rahatlama Kuramı da öncesinde de belirtildiği gibi kişinin gülme eylemini gerçekleştirilmesiyle beraber gereksiz enerjiden kurtulmasını ve rahatlmasını ifade eder.

Aristoteles'ten Kant'a, Bergson'dan Freud'a kadar çeşitli kuramcılar tarafından gülme veya komik üzerine ortaya atılmış çeşitli kuramlar ve fikirler, neticesinde bizi komik veya gülünç olanın özünde aslında öznel bir yargının var olduğu sonucuna ulaştırır. Çünkü anlaşıldığı üzere komiğin bağlamdan bağlama, bireyden bireye, kültürden kültüre ve hatta çağdan çağa pek çok farklı tanımlaması mevcuttur. Tüm bu farklı tanımlamalar öznel deneyimlerin sonucu ortaya çıkmakta veya öznel yargıları ifade etmektedir. Bununla birlikte her bir tanımlamanın da kendi içinde tutarlılığı söz konusudur. Bu bağlamda Absürt Tiyatro'nun trajikomik uyarlamasındaki komik tarafın anlamını ve derinliğini keşfetmek ve anlamak önemli hale gelir.

Absürt Tiyatro'da Komik Olan

Absürt Tiyatro'da komik olan, trajik olan bir kaynaktan çıkar; uyumsuzluktan, bir başka ifade ile trajik olan ile arasındaki gerilimden beslenir. Alman düşünür Soren Kierkegaard'a (1813-1855) göre, "komik olan hayatın her safhasında mevcuttur. Zira nerede yaşam varsa orada bir çelişki vardır ve nerede çelişki varsa komik orada yer alır. Varoluşun kendisi, var olma hareketi bir çabalamadır ve aynı derecede acı verici ve güldürücüdür" (2000, s. 196). Absürt Tiyatro'da komik, Kierkegaard'ın yaptığı gibi varoluşsal bir çerçeveden değerlendirilir; çünkü insanın saçma dünyadaki yaşam gerçeği trajik olduğu kadar komiktir de. Nitekim absürt oyun yazarları öncelikli olarak "dünyanın trajik olduğu kadar komik olan saçmalığını onaylamış" (Şener, 2006, s. 299) ve insanın ölüme yazgısının farkında olması için dünyanın aldatmacasını komiğe başvurarak trajikomik bir üslûpla seyircisine aktarmaya çalışmıştır. Bunu yaparken komiğe en temel araç olarak başvuran absürt oyun yazarları bu amaca hizmet ederken, yani dünya aldatmacasını seyircisine gösterirken, farklı stratejiler kullanmışlardır.

Absürt Tiyatro'da komiğin ortaya çıkma yolları çeşitlidir. Belli bir olay örgüsü içinde gelişmeden ve neden-sonuç ilişkisine bağlı kalmadan ilerleyen absürt oyunların olay örgüsü, komik yanlar barındırır ki bu noktada sürekli tekrarlanan amaçsız konuşmalar veya hareketler komiği üretir. Absürt oyun yazarları, Bergson'un *Gülme* başlıklı kitabında yer verdiği biçim, hareket, durum, karakter ve söz komikliklerini işlevsel olarak devreye sokar. Bunu yaparken hepsinin ulaşmayı istediği nihai nokta dünyada insan yaşamının saçmalığını, aynılığını veya anlamsızlığını gözler önüne sermek, seyircisini avutmak yerine onların gerçeklerle yüzleşmesini sağlamaktır. Bu bağlamda komik de insanın varoluş trajedisine dayanma gücünü veren güçlü bir silah olarak ortaya çıkar ve komik yoluyla ortaya konulan aslında gülünç olanın karanlıkta kalmış tarafıdır. Öyle ki "kahkaha ciddi bir iştir ve komedi trajediden daha tehlikeli bir silahtır" (Lahr 1987, s. 160). Absürt oyunlarda insan bir yandan güldüğüne ağlamak bir yandan da ağladığına gülmek zorunda bırakılmıştır. Absürt tiyatro komik ve trajik gerilimi yoluyla dünya aldatmacasını seyircisini hem üzerek hem güldürerek hem onu şaşkınlık içinde bırakarak hem de onda dehşet duyguları uyandırarak ortaya koymaktadır. Sevda Şener'e göre,

Absürd oyun yazarları toplumun günümüzdeki şizofrenik durumunu, insanların şaşkın hallerini sergilerken seyirciyi korkutma ve şaşırtma yöntemlerine başvururlar.

Mantıklı bir gelişimi olmadığı için birdenbire ve nedensiz olarak meydana gelen olaylar seyirciyi irkiltir. Bu irkilmede dehşet duygusu ile gülme birbirine karışmıştır. Dilin ve görüntünün alışılmamış düzenlemeleri, grotesk ögesine bolca yer verilmesi traji-komik etkiyi artırır. (2006, s. 304)

Şener'in de belirttiği gibi, absürt oyunlarda sahneye konan insanın içinde bulunduğu acınılası saçma durum, hitap ettiği seyirciyi bir endişe ve tehlike içerisinde hissettirir ve onda beceriksiz olduğu duygusunu yaratır. Böylelikle seyirci tepkisel olarak pasif hale gelir ve kahkahası bir tepki olarak elinde son kalan malzemesidir ve oldukça da etkilidir. Absürt oyun yazarları insanın içine düşmemesi gereken hali groteskleştirip, seyircisini oyun kişisine yabancılaştırıp ona güldürerek sunar; bir anlamda kendisinin de parçası olduğu saçmaya seyircisini güldürür. Ancak önemli olan taraf, durumun komik olandan arındığı son halidir; yani saçma yaşam gerçeğidir. Çünkü komik olan, insan durumu ortaya çıkmaya başladığı andan itibaren komikliğini yitirmeye başlamaktadır. Öyle ki Esslin'in de işaret ettiği gibi trajedi ile ilgili dikkat çekici husus her şeyin artık komik olmadığı noktadır (2001, s. 237).

Karakterlerle ilgili psikolojik ayrıntılara yer vermeden iletmek istediğini seyircisine imgelerle aktaran absürt oyun yazarları, Epik Tiyatro'nun kurucusu Bertolt Brecht'in yabancılaşma etkisinden faydalanır; bir diğer ifadeyle yabancılaştırıcı bir etki yaratması için komiğe başvururlar. Absürt oyun yazarları karakterleri belirsiz ve anlaşılmasız düşünceler, tavır ve davranışlar ile temsil ederler ve bu şekilde seyircisinin onlarla özdeşim kurmasının önüne geçerler. Esslin'in ifade ettiği gibi, "güdülerin anlaşılmasızlığı ve oyun kişilerinin eylemlerinin çoğunlukla gizemli ve açıklanamaz yapısı nedeniyle seyirci oyun kişileriyle özdeşim kuramaz" (2001, s. 403) ve karakterlere dışarıdan bakıp onlara gülerek tepki verirler. Bu doğrultuda Absürt Tiyatro'daki yabancılaştırıcı etki seyircisini bir bölünmüşlük içerisinde bırakarak kendi içindeki gizli korkuları ile yüzleştirir ve onu özgürleştirir. Bir diğer ifadeyle, seyircisini kendi içindeki bütünlendirici güçlerle karşılaştırıp psikolojik güçleri aktifleştirir (2001, s. 404).

Absürt Tiyatro'nun yabancılaştırma etkisine başvurması oyun yazarının iç dünyasının, insan durumuna dair fikrinin ve bunu ifade ediş biçiminin anlaşılması açısından önemlidir. Arpine Mızıkyan'a göre, Absürt oyun yazarı

belirli bir düzeni olmayan ve anlaşılmasız bir yer olarak dünyanın çarpık bir resmini çizer. Bundan dolayı, karakterler böyle bir dünyada benlikleri ol(a)mayan ve

davranışları anlaşıl(a)mayan insanlar olarak karşımıza çıkarlar. Oyun kahramanlarının dramatik, hatta trajik olan uyumsuzluğu, bunu izleyen seyirciye gülünç görünür. Bu durumda, insan nasıl ki kendi yaşamını bir yabancıya benzer bir şekilde anlamadan sürdürüyorsa, izleyici olarak tuhaf olay örgülerine tanık olduğumuzda onlara bir anlam veremeyiz. [...] Bertolt Brecht'in oyuncu ve izleyici arasındaki herhangi bir özdeşleşmeyi engelleyen 'yabancılaştırma etkisi' olarak adlandırdığı durum bu tür tiyatrodaki öne çıkar. Bu kavrama göre oyuncudan rolünü onunla özdeşleşmeden oynaması beklenir. Özdeşleştirme imkânsızlaştığında, oyun komik hale dönüşür; ama izleyicinin tepkisi gülmenin ve dehşetin iç içe geçtiği bir tepki niteliğindedir. Yazar, amaçsız ve anlamsız bir evrendeki insanın güvensizliğini ve umarsızlığını sergilerken izleyeni korkutma ve şaşırtma yöntemlerine başvurur. (2010, s. 26)

Absürt oyun yazarları komedi ile trajedi özelliklerini kullanırken, seyircide kahkaha ile korkuyu bir arada yaşatır ve sonrasında komik bulduğu şeyi komikten arındırarak seyircisini varoluş saçmalığı ile yüzleştirmeyi hedefler. Bu yüzleşmeye kadar seyirci bir anlamda güldürülerek kandırılmaktadır; ancak ondan beklenen bu yüzleşmeyi kendisi olarak gerçekleştirmesidir. Bu bağlamda Absürt Tiyatro'da bir aldatmaca olarak sunulan komiğin özünde bir aracı işlevi ve düzeltme niteliği vardır. Çünkü seyircisine sahnede gördüğü saçma durumlara kahkahalar atarak tepki vermesini sağlasa da durumlardan kendine ait sonuçlar çıkarmasını ve bunun doğal bir sonucu olarak da kendi varoluşu ile yüzleşmesini ister. Bu noktada seyircinin kahkahası da acı verici bir hal alır. Absürt oyun yazarları komiği bir silah olarak kullanırken derin anlamlar üretirler ki bu anlamlar komiğin arkasına gizlenmiş insan varoluşuna dair derin anlamlardır ve gerçekte tıpkı insanın varoluşu gibi acıklı ve trajiktir. Çünkü insan varoluşu gerçekte acıklı ve trajiktir. Nitekim Absürt Tiyatro'nun bu yönünü vurgulamak için Fransız oyun yazarı Emmanuel Jacquard onu 'Acı Alay Tiyatrosu' (Theatre of Derision) (1974) olarak nitelendirir. Esslin'e göre, Absürt Tiyatro'daki komik seyircinin kötümser mesajı almasında aracı işlevi görür. Ona göre, seyirciye kötümser mesaj esprili/komik bir üslûpla iletildiğinde onu daha kolay anlayacaktır (2001, s. 244 & 403-404). Nitekim kahkahanın gücüne inanan Eugène Ionesco mizahın insana eleştirel bir ruh bağısladığını ifade eder. Ionesco insanın mizah yoluyla trajik durumunun veya saçmanın farkına vardığını, yani insanın kahkahası yoluyla korkunç olanın bilincine vardırılıp korkunç olanın efendisi haline geldiğini söyler (akt. Esslin, s. 183). Sonuç olarak Absürt Tiyatro komik unsurlarla trajik unsurları birleştirerek bir kara mizah yaratır, korku ile kahkahayı bir arada sunarak anlamsızlığının dehşetini ortaya koyar.

Bu bağlamda Absürt Tiyatro'da komiğin ortaya çıkma yollarını İngiliz oyun yazarı Harold Pinter'in bir tehdit komedisi örneği olarak ürettiği *Git-Gel Dolap* adlı oyunu üzerinden tartışmak Absürt tiyatrodaki komiğe yüklenen misyonu somutlaştırmak noktasında faydalı olacaktır.

Harold Pinter'in *Git-Gel Dolap* Adlı Oyununda Komik Olan

Oda (1957), *Doğum Günü Partisi* (1958), *Kapıcı* (1960), *Koleksiyon* (1963), *Yuvaya Dönüş* (1965), *Eski Günler* (1971), *Aldatma* (1978) ve *Bir Tek Daha* (1984) gibi oyunları ile bilinen Nobel ödüllü oyun yazarı Harold Pinter (1930-2008), gençlik yıllarında İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na tanıklık etmiştir. Savaşın yıkıcı etkilerini hayatı boyunca derinden hisseden yazar, savaş deneyiminin bir sonucu olarak kendisinde gelişen dış dünyaya karşı duyduğu güvensizlik ve huzursuzluk hislerini oyunlarında çeşitli stratejilere başvurarak ortaya koymuştur. Savaş sonrası dönemde gelişen insan varoluşundaki nihilist duyguyu açığa çıkararak Absürt Tiyatro'nun temsilcilerinden biri olarak kabul edilen yazar, *Pinteresk* (*Pinteresque*) denen kendine has üslûbu ile insan varoluşundaki trajikomik duruma gizem ögesi katarak şiirsel bir dille ifade etmiştir. Bu üslûpla 1957'de kaleme aldığı *Git-Gel Dolap* başlıklı oyunda Pinter yalnızlık, iletişim eksikliği, dış dünyanın acımasızlığı, bireyin sıradanlığı ve gelecek korkusu gibi çeşitli konulara değinmiştir. Pinter "tehdidi gülünç içerisinde tanıtmak" (Dick, 1961, s. 258) konusunda uzmandır. Yazar oyunda komiği kullanarak insanın dünya üzerindeki daha en baştan yenik düştüğü ya da zaten hep yenik olduğu savaşını çarpıcı imgelerle okuruna başarılı bir şekilde aktarmıştır. Korku, gizem ve tehdit üzerine inşa ettiği oyununda Pinter, varoluş trajedisindeki trajikomik tarafları saçma, komik, korkunç, gizem ve acımasızlık yoluyla göstermiştir.

Çok fazla sessizlik ve duraksamaların yer aldığı *Git-Gel Dolap* oyunu Pinter'in komik, trajik ve grotesk unsurlara başvurarak modern insanın trajedisini anlattığı çarpıcı oyunlarından biridir. Oyun, "darağacı mizahını komik bir rahatlama biçimi olarak birleştiren kara bir tehdit komedisi"dir (Von Paschen, 2012, s. 78). Yazar, Ben ve Gus isimli iki kiralık katilin görev için geldikleri bodrum katındaki bir odada yaşadıklarına odaklanan oyununda, pek çok çalışmasında yer verdiği gibi oda sembolünü kullanır. Esslin'e göre, Pinter 'oda-kapı gerilim sendromu' (the room-door-suspense syndrome) yoluyla oyunu ilerletmektedir (1976, s. 70). Pinter, çoğu oyununda karşımıza çıkan ve olaylara tehdit, gizem ve gerilim havası katan oda sembolü üzerine şunları söyler: "Bir

odada iki insan; çoğu zaman, odadaki bu iki insanın görüntüsü ile ilgilenirim. Sahnenin perdesi açıldığında bu görüntü çok etkili bir soru gibi görünür bana; odadaki bu insanlara ne olacak? Birisi kapıyı açıp içeri girecek mi?" (akt. Tynan, 1960). Bodrum katındaki penceresiz odada iki kiralık katilin trajikomik durumlarını resmeden Pinter, *Git-Gel Dolap*'ta seyircisini oyun boyunca bu iki insana ne olacak sorusu ile meşgul eder ve oyunun sonunda ulaşılan doruk noktasıyla ise seyircisini şaşkına uğratar ki bu noktada gülünç olanın seyirciye Uyumsuzluk Teorisi'ne uygun olarak sunulduğu söylenebilir. Eleştirmen Michael Billington'ın da vurguladığı gibi, yazar ilk olarak seyircisini açıklık ve doğallık ile karşılar ve sonra onları kolayca kontrol edilemeyen bir belirsizlik ile boşuna umutlandırır (2007, s. 89) ve sonuç trajikomik bir durum, saçma yaşam gerçeğidir. Bir fare gibi kısıtlandıkları oda, her iki karakter için güvenli bir yer gibi görünür; ancak ilerleyen saatlerde tedirginliklerini arttırır, panik ve gerilim yaratır ve ayrıca en sonunda da Gus'ın mezarı olacaktır.

Tek perdelik oyunun girişinde ilk olarak gözler yatağının üzerinde uzanmış gazete okumakta olan Ben ile ayakkabılarını bağlamakla uğraşan Gus karakterine yönelir. Çocuksu tavırları öne çıkan Gus, bir tekinde kibrit diğerinde sigara paketi sakladığı ayakkabılarını zorlukla bağlamaya çalışırken yavaş hareketleri ve yaptığı tekrarları ile dikkati eylemlerinin üzerine çeker. Bu durum Pinter'in mekanik olarak fiziksel hareketler üzerinden yarattığı bir komedi unsuru olarak karşımıza çıkar. Gus söz konusu mekanik hareketini gerçekleştirirken, Ben tehditkâr bakışları ile onu izleyip uyarır ki Ben oyun boyunca bu tehditkâr bakışları ile Gus'ı sürekli rahatsız edecektir. Ben gerçek bir katil gibidir. Ancak Gus tedirginliği ve korkusu ile bu tanımlamadan çok uzaktır. Nitekim Gus'ın dış dünyadan gelen tehditlerden ve bunun neticesinde iç dünyasında yaşadığı duygusal belirsizliklerden dolayı hareketlerindeki mekaniklik ve konuşmalarındaki tekrarlar ile yarattığı anlamsızlıklar seyirci açısından komik olanı üretirken bu durumu da açıkça bize gösterir. Dışardan ve içerden gelen tehlikeler Gus'ı konuşmalarında ve hareketlerinde gülünç hale getirirken anlamsızlığın ortasında debelenen insan için bir bütün olarak trajikomik bir sonucu ortaya koyar. Gus komik bir biçimde sürekli Ben'in sözcüklerini tekrarlar bir kukla gibidir ve bu haliyle oldukça trajikomiktir. Her bir karakter aslında hem bizi kendilerine güldürürler aynı zamanda da sinirlendirerek rahatsız hissettirirler. Her iki karakter de adeta Bernard F. Dukore'un ifade ettiği gibi "etraflarındaki dünya tarafından tekmelenmiş (...) hiçliklere indirgenmiş" (1962, s. 55) birer karakterdir. Daha oyunun girişinde ikili tekrar eden komik hareketleri

ve saçma davranışları ile bize Samuel Beckett'in *Godot'yu Beklerken* (1953) oyunundaki Vladimir ve Estragon karakterlerini hatırlatırlar. Kendinden emin tavırları ile ortaya çıkan, her zaman durumlar hakkında üstün bilgi sahibi biri gibi davranan ve Gus üzerinde otorite kuran Ben, Vladimir'e benzer. Her şeyin en iyisini bildiğini gösteren bir otorite karşısında boyun eğmek zorunda kalan ve aptal gözüküp oyun ilerledikçe sorduğu sorular ile Ben'i terleten meraklı, gergin ve şaşkın Gus ise Estragon'a benzer. Birbirinden zıt özellikler taşıyan ancak birbirini tamamlayan bu iki karakter, oyun boyunca rutubet kokan bir odadan başka bir yere kımlıdayamaz ve gergin, komik ve trajik halleri ile seyirciyi hem güldürür hem üzer hem de tedirgin eder. Gerçekte birbirlerinden korkup görünürde birbirlerine güveniyor gibi davranan ikili, Vladimir ve Estragon gibi amaçsız ve anlamsız bir bekleme eylemi içerisinde ve adeta sanki Godot'yu bekliyorlardır (akt. Zarhy-Levo, 2009, s. 261). Nitekim bir asansör vasıtasıyla yukarıdan gelen siparişleri karşılayacak güçleri kalmadığında Gus'ın ifade ettiği üzere "Yok, yok! Hiçbir şey kalmadı. Anlıyor musun, hiçbir şey yok! Bitti" (1962, s. 38) derken tıpkı bu iki adam Vladimir ve Estragon gibi amaçsız beklemekten ve belirsizlikten tükenmiştir. Bir anlamda ikili sonlarını bekler gibidir. "Harekete geçme" konusundaki yetersizlikleri nedeniyle Ben ve Gus, Sisifos'un olduğundan daha kötü bir kaderle karşı karşıya kalmış gibi görünürler" (Goh, 2017, s. 56). Her ikisi de içinde buldukları durumdan dolayı sıkılmış ve endişe içindedirler. Belirsizliklerden dolayı korku hissederler. Ortak bir amaç için bekleseler de birbirlerine asla güvenmezler. Birbirlerinden sürekli bir şeyleri saklarlar. Birbirlerine güvendiklerini gösterdikleri anlarda bile ironik bir biçimde güvensizlerdir. İlişkilerindeki en büyük sorunsal da birbirlerine güvenmeyip duygu ve düşüncelerini birbirlerinden saklamalarından kaynaklanır ki bu durum trajikomik bir unsur olarak seyirciye yansır. Her ikisi de iç dünyalarında benzer duygulara sahiplerdir; ancak bu duyguların dışavurumları birbirinde farklıdır. Bu bağlamda çocuksu tavırlarıyla öne çıkan Gus durumlar karşısında bir id gibi ilkel dürtüleri doğrultusunda basit hareketler, komik tepkiler gösterirken, Ben bir süperego gibi uyarıcı, ciddiyetle sürekli olması veya yapılması gerekenleri hatırlatıcıdır.

İkili, önemli tartışmalara girmeyip hep sıradan konular üzerine konuşarak kendi ruh sağlıklarını korumaya çalışır; bir anlamda korkularını ve tedirginliklerini bastırmaya çabalar. Üstelik Ben Gus'ın varlığına bile dikkat etmez, onun sorularını ve tepkilerini hiçe sayar, sürekli emirlerle onu kontrol altında tutmaya çalışır. Esslin'e göre,

oyunda “komedinin ana unsuru iki adamın artan endişelerini arkasına sakladığı zeki küçük konuşma tarafından sağlanır” (2001, s. 233). İkili, sıradan uğraşlarla tekinsiz bir odada kendilerini meşgul ederek içlerini rahatlatmayı dener. Bu noktada Pinter'in bu iki karakterini sembolleştirmesi söz konusudur. Yüzeydeki görüntüleri altında derin anlamlar barındıran ikili aslında birer kurbandır ve tüm insanlığı temsil ederler. Ben itaatkâr bir tavırla ve Gus da sorgulayıcı bir tavırla kaderlerini beklemekte, aslında saçma yaşam gerçekleriyle yüzleşmektedirler.

İçinde yer aldıkları durumlar ve bu durumlar karşısında verdikleri cevaplar ile birer soytarıyı/maskarayı andıran Ben ve Gus, pek çok saçma, komik ve aşırıya kaçan fiziksel hareketleriyle oyunu adeta bir kaba güldürüye dönüştürürler. Ayrıca öldürecekleri kişiyi bodrum katındaki rutubet kokan odalarında amaçsız bir şekilde beklerken, tıpkı Amerikalı gazeteci-yazar Ernest Hemingway'in *Katiller* (1927) adlı kısa hikâyesinde yer alan, önceden hiç tanışmadıkları ve öldürmeleri beklenen kişileri restoranda bekleyen Al ve Max adlı katil haydutlar gibilerdir (Stevenson, 1984, s. 30). Ancak onlardan farklı olarak yazar tarafından daha az tektipleştirilmişlerdir; çünkü her biri kendine has karakter özellikleri ile ortaya çıkar. Bir bakıma ikili görevlerini yerine getirme noktasında hem ustalarmış hem de beceriksizlermiş izlenimi vermektedir. İşini ciddiye alan Ben ve ne yapacağı konusunda daha tedirgin ve gergin görünüp sorgulayıcı bir tavır takınan Gus sürekli anlamsız ve saçma davranışlarla meşgul olup, önemsiz konular üzerine konuşur. Aptalmış gibi görünen Gus her ne kadar ciddi meseleler üzerine sorular sormaya çalışsa da devamlı ona emirler veren ve nasıl davranması gerektiğini söyleyen otoriter figür Ben tarafından sürekli susturulur veya konuşması, sorular sorması engellenir.

Git-Gel Dolap oyunu trajedi, komedi, tehdit ve gizem öğelerinin mükemmel bir karışımını sunar. Pinter oyunda komiği çoğu kez belirsizlikler ve gerilimler üzerinden yaratır. Esslin'e göre, “Pinter'ınki bir dil tiyatrosudur; belirsizlik, dramatik gerilim, kahkaha ve trajedi kelimelerden ve bunların ritminden ortaya çıkar” (1976, s. 48). *Git-Gel Dolap* oyunu Pinter'in *Oda* ve *Doğum Günü Partisi* oyunları gibi ‘tehdit komedisi’ (comedy of menace) olarak nitelendirilen oyunlarından biridir ve bu tabir, ilk kez 1958 yılında eleştirmen Irving Wardle tarafından kullanılmıştır. Wardle, kavramı oyun yazarı David Campton'ın *The Lunatic View: A Comedy of Menace* isimli oyunundan ödünç alıp, Pinter'in 1957-1968 yılları arasında yazdığı oyunlarını nitelendirmek için kullanmıştır (Merritt, 1990, s. 225). Söz konusu tabir normal olan durumun ardında

saklanan bir tehdidin ve yaklaşan bir felaketin olduğu duygusunu, iletişimin olanaksızlığını ve dışarıdan gelenlerce huzuru bozulan kapalı bir alanın var olduğunu vurgularken; gerçeklerin belirsizleştiği ve çarpıtıldığı bir ortamda şaşkınlığın yaşandığını da ifade eder (Cohn, 1986, s. 85-86). Pinter oyunda kahkaha ve tehdidi araçsallaştırır. Trajik durumları kaba güldürü unsurları, ritim ve tekrarlı diyaloglar kullanarak komikleştirir; ciddi meselelerin tehditkâr ve gizemli boyutlarını komik diyaloglar ve fiziksel komiklikler ile gizler. Charles Evans'a göre, "(...) ciddi tiyatrodaki *Git-Gel Dolap*, alışılmadık, komik ve tehdit edici karışımı ile ruh halini daha hassas bir şekilde yakalar" (2009, s. 175). Evans ile benzer düşüncelerin altını çizen Dukore'a göre ise, Pinter oyunları çoğunlukla komik bir şekilde başlayıp sonunda fiziksel, psikolojik ya da potansiyel şiddete döner (1988, s. 24-25). Oyun, "bir tiyatral anın sınırları içerisinde kahkahadan endişeye doğru geçerken ise seyirciyi şaşırtır" (Roumani, 2012, s. 107) ve bu durum oyun sonunda Gus'ın Ben tarafından vurulmakla karşı karşıya kalmasıyla somutlaşır.

Pinter oyun boyunca yarattığı sürekli tekrar eden hareketler, sonuçsuz kalan eylemler, gerilim ve gizem yüklü durumlar ve saçma diyaloglar üzerinden komiyi iletir. [Yazar Anna Luyat'ın da belirttiği gibi "[...] kahkaha ve söz oyunları hiçbir şeyden şüphelenmeyen karakterleri hiçbir kaçış yolunun olmadığı son derece umutsuz durumlara sokar" (2009, s. 238). Daha oyunun girişinde sıkışıp kaldıkları küçük odada zamanlarını geçirecekleri pek bir uğraşları olmayan bu iki kiralık katilden Gus'ın ayakkabılarını tekrar tekrar bağlamaya çalışması, Ben'in Gus'a sürekli çay demlemesini söyleyip eylemin Gus tarafından bir türlü gerçekleşmemesi ve konu üzerine yapılan saçma ve tekrar eden diyaloglar oldukça komiktir.

Pinter oyuna ilk olarak bu iki kiralık katilin işleri üzerinden komik bir hava yaratarak başlar. Yatağında uzanan Ben, elindeki gazeteden Gus'a ölüm temalı iki haber okur ve her ikisinin bu trajik haberlere yaptıkları yorumlar oldukça komiktir. İkilinin günlük yaşamın olaylarına başvurarak yaptıkları konuşmalar dış dünya ile ilgili bilgiler verirken bu eylemler aslında ikilinin görünürde zaman geçirmek için yaptıkları birer eylemdir ve gerçekte gerçek duygularını, yani hissettikleri korku ve gerginliklerini gizlemenin bir yoludur. Bu durum sadece gazeteden haber okumakla sınırlı değildir ve ikili önemsiz pek çok konu üzerine konuşarak gerginliklerini ve korkularını gizlemeye çalışırlar.

Gazeteden okunan ilk haber ise yaşlı bir adamın kamyonun altında kalması ile ilgili haberdir ve haber üzerine ikili arasında geçen trajikomik diyalog ise şöyledir:

BEN. (*Gazeteye eliyle vurur.*) Vay canına! (*Okur.*) İşe bak sen! (*Okuduğuna kasıtlı.*)
87'lik bir ihtiyar yolda karşıdan karşıya geçmek istiyor. Kalabalık tabii. Bir kamyonun altına girmiş.

GUS. Ne yapmış?

BEN. Bir kamyonun altına girmiş. Yük kamyonu.

GUS. Valla mı?

BEN. Kamyon yürümüş geçmiş, çiğnemiş.

GUS. Yoo?

BEN. Burada öyle diyor.

GUS. Sonra ne olmuş?

BEN. Daha ne olsun. Ölmüş tabii.

GUS. Kim demiş ona altına girsin diye.

BEN. 87'lik bir ihtiyar, kamyonun altına giriyor.

GUS. İnanılmaz şey.

BEN. İşte burada yazıyor. Beyaz üstüne siyah basmışlar.

GUS. Aklı duruyor adamın. (Pinter, 1962, s. 6-7)

Ben'in gazetede okuduğu bu ölüm haberi, dış dünyadaki şiddeti gözler önüne serer. Ben'in trajik bir ölüm haberini sunma biçimi ve Gus ile birlikte haber için yaptıkları yorumlar oldukça komiktir. Pinter işleri insanları öldürmek olan Ben ve Gus'a trajik bir ölüm haberini komik bir üslûpla sıradanlaştırarak sundurur ve böylelikle gülerek tepki gösteren seyirci için durum oldukça trajikomik bir hal alır. Pinter'in yer verdiği söz komiği burayla sınırlı kalmaz ve devamında gelen diğer ölüm haberinin sunumu da aynı şekilde trajikomiktir ve burada komiğin dozu daha da artmıştır. İkilinin aralarında devam eden konuşma ise şöyle ilerler:

BEN. (*Elinin tersiyle gazeteye vurur.*) Vay canına.

GUS. Ne olmuş?

BEN. 8 yaşında bir kız bir kediyi öldürmüş

GUS. Yoo!

BEN. İşte bak sen. 8 yaşında kız kedi öldürüyor.

GUS. Ne adamlar var şu dünyada.

BEN. Adam değil bu, kız.

GUS. Nasıl yapmış?

BEN. Şey yapmış. (*Gazeteyi kaldırıp bakar*) Yazmıyor.

GUS. Niye?

BEN. Dur bakayım. Diyor ki, 11 yaşındaki kardeşi pencereden görmüş, diyor.

GUS. Sonra?

BEN. Sonrası bu kadar işte.

Sessizlik.

GUS. Garanti o yapmıştır.

BEN. Kim?

GUS. Kardeşi.

BEN Bence de.

Sessizlik.

Ne buyrulur? 11 yaşında bir velet kediye öldürüyor; sonra da kardeşim yaptı diyor.

Buna ne derler- (*Sonunu getirmez. Gazeteyi okur. GUS kalkar.*) (1962, s. 8)

Her ikisi de birer ölüm makinesi olan Ben ve Gus ölümle sonuçlanan haberler ile ilgili yaptıkları yorumlarla seyircisini kahkahalara boğar. İkili ölüm temalı iki haber için yaptıkları yorumlarda trajik durumları sıradanlaştırıp ortaya grotesk bir komik çıkarmışlardır. İlk durumda yaşlı bir adamın kamyonun altında ezilmesi ve ikinci durumda ise küçük bir çocuğun bir kediye öldürmesi ve bunu kardeşinin üzerine attığına dair Ben'in tahmini son derece komik bir üslupla ele sunulmuştur. Bu sunum ile seyircisini duruma yabancılaştıran Pinter, onlardan bir anlamda söz konusu ciddi meseleler üzerine düşünmelerini talep etmektedir.

Pinter oyunda ironi, mizah ve tehdit unsurlarına bir arada yer verir. İki kiralık katilin içinde buldukları durum gizem, gerilim ve tehdit doluyken aynı zamanda da komik yanlar barındırır. Bu komikliği yaratan da kimden geldiğini bilmedikleri dış

tehlikelerle başa çıkmaya çalışan ikilinin basit hareketleri ve saçma diyaloglarıdır. Pinter oyunlarını trajikomediy olarak tanımlayan Elin Diamond'a göre, yazar pek çok oyununda olduğu gibi *Git-Gel Dolap* oyununda da komik eylemlere ve karakterlere oyununu yapılandırmak ve seyircisinin ona tepki vermesini kontrol etmek maksatlı yer vermiştir. Yazar komik karakterlerini metafizik terörle birleştirip kahkahamızı altüst etmiş ve ortaya acı bir komik çıkarmıştır. (1985, s. 12-13). Francesca Coppa'ya göre, oyunun "içerdiği espriler, seyirciyi kendi ittifaklarını sorgulamak için gülmeyi kestiği ölçüde önemli ve ciddidir" (2009, s. 55). Oyunda başarılı bir şekilde mizah ve trajedi unsurlarını bir arada kullanan Pinter'a göre, "her şey gülünç; en büyük ciddiyet gülünç; tragedyaya bile gülünç. Ve sanırım oyunlarımda yapmaya çalıştığım şey yaptıklarımızın, davranış ve konuşma biçimlerimizin absürtlüğünün bu ayırimsanabilir gerçeğine varmak"tır (akt. Foster, 2004, s. 32). Pinter absürt olandaki komik tarafı görür. Ona göre, varoluşun trajik yanları olsa da varoluş da dahil her şey komiktir. Oyunundaki komik sahneler de seyirci açısından görünür de komik gibi görünse de karakterler açısından korkutucudur. Oyununda yazar komiğe kahkaha yaratmaktan ziyade karakterlerinin iç dünyalarına bir içgörü sağlamak için başvurmuştur. Oyunda komik bir noktaya kadar komikken, bir noktadan sonra trajik meselelerin boyutunu ciddileştirmiştir. Elin Diamond duruma şöyle bir açıklama getirir: "*Git-Gel Dolap*'ta Pinter'ın stratejisi parodidir. Bir kurbanı alt etmek için bekleyen tetikçilerin gerilimini hem istismar eder hem de alay eder. Gus'ın kaygısı ve Ben'in kavgacı tavrı, klişeleri göz önünde bulundurur" (1985, s. 241). Esslin'e göre ise karakterlerin saçmalıklarının korkutucu, korkunç, acıklı ve trajik hale geldiği noktaya kadar oyun çok komiktir. (2001, s. 233). Ancak oyundaki komik yan, karakterlerin gerçek durumları ile yüz yüze gelmeleri ile trajik bir hal almaktadır ki bu durum oyuna kara bir komedi havası da katar. Oyunda söz konusu durum öldürmek için kurbanlarını bekleyen kiralık katillerin gerçek kurbanlara dönüşmesiyle ortaya çıkar; çünkü Ben namıyusu kapıdan ilk giren kişi olan iş arkadaşı Gus'a doğrultmuştur ve tetiğe basması da an meselesidir.

Ben ve Gus'ın kaldıkları oda, aslında eski bir lokantanın alt katıdır ve oyunun ilerleyen bölümlerinde ikili yemek asansörü ile kimden geldiğini bilmedikleri yemek siparişlerini kendilerince karşılamaya çalışırlar. Bu sayede aşağıda yalnız olmadıkları anlaşılan ve bu durumun sonucu olarak kendilerini gergin ve korkmuş hisseden ikili hiç sorgulamadan siparişler için ellerinde mevcut olan süt, bisküvi, cips, erimiş çikolata ve ekşimiş kek gibi bayat yiyecekleri gönderirler. İkili telaşları, gergin halleri ve saçma

hareketleri ile komik olsa da tehdit altındayken oldukça trajiktir. Bu halleriyle ikili, Esslin'in vurguladığı gibi, "insan durumunun [...] ete kemiğe bürünen ve aynı zamanda son derece komik ve trajik olan somut şiirsel bir imge olarak sunumunu" (2001, s. 330) üstlenirler. Aynı zamanda yukarıdan inen asansör aslında, Michael Billington'ın da altını çizdiği gibi komik bir araç olmanın yanı sıra "bir giyotinin rezonansı ile uçsuz bucaksız bir yükseklikten inen bir asansör"dür (2007). Yukarıdan gelen siparişlere yetişmeye çalışan ikilinin yaşadıkları gerginlikler hareketlerinden okunur. Ayrıca sonradan fark ettikleri konuşma borusu vasıtasıyla yukarıdaki bilinmeyenle temas kurma çabaları ve onları ellerindeki ile memnun etme uğraşları oldukça gülünçtür. Yukarıdan istenenlerin bir türlü bitmek bilmemesi ve duruma verdikleri tepkiler komik görünse de ne olduklarını tam olarak bilmedikleri görevleri için bir odada hiçbir yere kıvıldamadan beklemeleri ve bilmedikleri güçler tarafından rahatsız edilmeleri yeterince trajik ve tehditkârdır.

İlk oyunlarında kasıtlı olarak komiğe yer veren Pinter, Francesca Coppa'ya göre, *Git-Gel Dolap* oyununda yüksek seviyeli komedi tekniğini kullanır ve böylelikle hikâyesini kara mizahlı bir masala dönüştürür. Coppa, Pinter'ın komiğini Freudyen şaka üçgeni içinde değerlendirir. Ona göre, öldürme eylemini gerçekleştirme için emri veren ve sahnede hiç görünmeyip sadece ismi geçen Wilson, bu şaka metaforu içerisinde şakayı söyleyen kişidir ve bu kişi, "sadece olaylar üzerinde değil, Ben üzerinde de güç ve kontrol gösteren [...] görünmez [bir] karakterdir" (Leon, 2001, 263). Şakanın nesnesi sürekli bir aptal gibi görünen ve sorgulayıcı tutumu ile öne çıkan Gus ve emirleri sorgulamadan yerine getirmeye hevesli Ben'dir. Ben ve Gus, "görünmeyen bir otoritenin kurbanları ve birbirleri ile tartışan, birbirlerini sınanan, birbirleri hakkında konuşan ve eski zamanları sıralayan vekil evli bir çift"tir (Billington, 1996, s. 90). Son olarak bu üçgeni şakayı dinleyen ve onunla eğlenen seyirci tamamlar ve şakaya gülüp gülmemesi de onun elindedir (Coppa, 2009, s. 44-45). Coppa'ya göre, Pinter'ın oyunundaki bu önemli şaka "genellikle seyircilere gülmeyi bıraktıran, yani kitleleri saldırgan şakacılar ile kendi ittifaklarını sorgulatan bir şeydir" (2009, s. 44); çünkü aslında seyirci de Ben ve Gus ile aynı saftadır; yani birer kurbandır. Coppa, Pinter'ın oyununda komiğin milyonlarca şakanın ortasında ciddi, karamsar ve kutsal bir şakayı keşfettiğinin altını çizer ki bu kutsal şaka insanın dünyada eli kolu bağlı ölümü bekleyişi ve herkesin gerçekte birer kurban olduğudur. Bu durum, oyunun sonunda Ben'in Gus'a doğrulttuğu silahlı sahnede gözler önüne serilir. Dukore'a göre,

Oyunun başında komik olan ölüm, sonunda komik değildir. Mağdurların komik hikâyeleri oyunu başlatır, Gus'ın komik olmayan bir tasavvuru, oyunu bitirir. Oyunun sonunda, talimatların tekrarlanmasında görülen, eğlenceli görünen bir hata, aynı durum gerçekleştiğinde artık eğlenceli olmaktan çıkar. Gus'ın hayatından mahrum bırakılabileceği zaman, Gus'ın kaynaklarından komik bir şekilde yoksun bırakılması komik olmaz. (1976, s. 21)

Karşı karşıya kaldıkları durumdan dolayı afallayan ve tedirgin olan ikilinin yer aldığı son, oyuna kahkahalarla eşlik eden seyircisini de şaşkına uğratır ve afallatır. Nitekim oyunun kara mizahı da bu andan itibaren seyirci ile tamamlanır. Seyirci duruma yabancılaştırılır ve kendinden yapması beklenen eleştirel mesafeden bakmaya yöneltilir. Pinter oyunda seyircisini “çoğunlukla tamamen ikircikli hale getirilen ancak yine de deneyimsel olarak yoğun olan entelektüel ve fizyolojik-duygusal tepkiler” (Chiasson, 2009, s. 41) vermeye iter. Sonuç olarak Pinter'in seyircisi tiyatroyu kendi kahkahaları tarafından büyülenmiş bir şekilde terk eder (Coppa, 2009, s. 11). Bu sonla tetiğin ucunda kalıp ölümle burun buruna gelen Gus, avcıyken av haline gelmiştir. Gus “düşündürücü ve bir şekilde komik bir karaktere dönüşmüş, (...) kurallarına uymakta zorlandığı bir dünyaya hapsolmuş; (...) bu dünyanın kurallarına karşı çıkmanın bedelini acı bir biçimde ödemiştir” (Vitello, 2006, s. 29). Trajikomik kurgusu ve şaşırtıcı sonu ile Pinter'in *Git-Gel Dolap* oyunu bu noktada basit bir komedinin ötesinde hem korkutan hem de acı veren bir trajikomediye dönüşmüştür.

Sonuç

Pinter'in *Git-Gel Dolap* oyununda komik yalnızca bir güldürü aracı olmanın ötesinde, beraberinde trajik ve grotesk unsurların melezlendiği çok katmanlı bir yapı olarak ortaya çıkar ve bu durum oyunu bir tehdit komedisine dönüştürür. Pinter dünyadaki güvensizlik ve tedirginlik duygularını trajikomik bir perspektiften durumlar, hareketler ve sözler üzerinden yarattığı komiklikler ve saçmalıklar ile varoluşsal bir sorgulama alanı da yaratarak yansıtır. Renée Von Paschen'in aktardığı gibi, “Pinter'in söyleyiş biçimi, keskinliği, özlülüğü ve zorlayıcı sıradanlığı ile İngiliz mizahının büyük ve harikulade canlı geleneğinden türemiştir” (2021, s. 79). Oyun, Ben ve Gus adlı kiralık katillerin kurbanlarını öldürmek için buldukları odada kendilerinin birer kurbanı dönüşmesinin hikâyesini anlatır. Her iki karakter yaptıkları hareketler ve konuşmalarıyla komiklikler üretirken aslında trajik bir durumun içindedir ve seyirci de onlarla birlikte aslında bu trajikomik durumun içerisine sürüklenmiştir. Her iki karakter

hapsoldukları odada büyük korkular yaşar ve bu korkuları kendilerine bile itiraf edemezler. Eylemlerinde ve konuşmalarında ürettikleri komik, aslında ironiktir. Gus'ın mekanikleşmiş hareketleri ve tekrarlardan oluşan tepkileri ile Ben'in durumlara karşı yönelttiği sert tutumu arasındaki gerilim oyunun trajikomik doğasını yansıtır. Yazar seyircisini karakterlerin yer aldığı trajikomik durumlarla güldürmenin yanı sıra yarattığı gerginlikler ve absürtlüklerle şaşırtıp düşünmeye sevk eder. Saraci Terpollari'ye göre, "Pinter, trajediden çok komedinin biçimine bağlı olsa da bu, kötülüğün güçlerinden kaçmak isteyen karakterlere yönelik gizli tehdidi azaltmaz. Pinter, günümüz dünyasında insanların karşılaştığı kaçınılmaz çelişkileri göstermeyi sever" (2013, s. 385-386). Aslında bu durum tam olarak insanlık tarihinden bu yana insanın yaşam gerçeği içinde yaşadığı çelişkiler ve onun trajikomik durumunun yansımasıdır. Sahnenin kararması ile birlikte ise Pinter, seyircisini kendisiyle baş başa bırakır ve güldükleri şeylerin gerçekte bir aldatmaca olduğunun ve asolanın saçma yaşam gerçeği olduğunun farkına varmasını bekler. Şimdi kendi yaşamını sorgulama sırası seyircinin kendisindedir. Aynı anda hem tetiğin başında olan Ben hem de namlunun ucunda olan Gus gibi seyirci de trajikomik, saçma yaşam gerçeği ile kendisi olarak yüzleşmelidir.

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Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

Memory and Recalling in Shelagh Stephenson's *The Memory of Water*

Shelagh Stephenson'ın *The Memory of Water* adlı Oyununda Hafıza ve Hatırlama

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Abstract

Memory, through which knowledge, memories, and experiences are conserved in mind, is of great importance for the history of humankind. It is not a novel idea that the ability of memory constitutes the human identity and consciousness. Psychological studies, as well as philosophical assumptions, demonstrate the significance of recollection of past events in conducting life and constructing a healthy personality. In light of those preliminary observations, this paper focuses on the historical development of the subject of memory and turning points of memory studies. In addition to the chronological description of memory, how it is evaluated under the effect of historical development as well as the significance of it in the life cycle of human beings is likewise specified in this study. Expressing the thoughts and research of various thinkers and philosophers, this study represents the variable approaches to memory. While discussing Shelagh Stephenson's award-winning play, *The Memory of Water* (1996), the central concern is to analyse how subjective and mutual memories have formed and influenced the characters' lives. The play reveals the portrayal of the prominence of remembering and reminiscing, which are directly related to our constitution of self and well-being. In light of scientific research and the recollections of the characters, the significance of remembering and reminiscing actions that are directly related to our constitution of self and well-being is specified. The play stresses the paramount importance of communicating and sharing among the family members or within a social environment, as misattribution shows up as an imperfection of memory.

Keywords: Memory, Recalling, Shelagh Stephenson, *The Memory of Water*

Öz

Anıların, öğrenilmiş bilgilerin ve deneyimlerin zihinde tutulduğu alan olarak tasvir edilen bellek, insanlık tarihi boyunca büyük bir öneme sahip olmuştur. Belleğin insan benliğini ve bilincini yapılandırdığı düşüncesi yeni değildir. Psikolojik çalışmalar ve felsefi varsayımlar geçmiş yaşantılara ve olaylara yönelik birikimlerin bir hayatı sürdürme ve sağlıklı bir kişilik inşa etmede belleğin ve hatırlamanın önemini vurgulamışlardır. Bu ön gözlemler ışığında, bu makale bellek konusunun tarihsel gelişimine ve bellek çalışmalarının dönüm noktalarına odaklanmıştır.

Belleğin kronolojik olarak tanımlanmasının yanı sıra, tarihsel gelişimin etkisi altında nasıl değerlendirildiği ve insanın yaşam döngüsündeki önemi belirtilmiştir. Çeşitli filozof ve düşünürlerin bellek konusundaki düşünce ve araştırmalarının tartışıldığı çalışmada bellek ile ilgili çeşitli yaklaşımlar incelenmiş ve Shelagh Stephenson'ın *The Memory of Water* adlı ödüllü oyunu analiz edilmiştir. Karakterlerin geçmişiyle ilgili bireysel ve ortak anılarının hayatlarını nasıl etkileyip şekillendirdiği ve cenaze töreninin çocuklukların travmatik anılarının canlanması üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada anılarımızı hatırlamamızın nedenleri ön plana çıkarılmıştır. Bilimsel araştırmalar ve kız kardeşlerin anıları ışığında, benlik ve öznel iyi oluşla doğrudan ilgili olan eylemleri hatırlamanın ve anımsamanın önemi belirtilmiştir. Bireysel ve ortak anıların karakterlerin hayatının nasıl etkilediği ve şekillendirdiği tartışılmış, hatırlamanın benlik gelişimi üzerindeki önemli etkisi açığa çıkarılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bellek, Hatırlama, Shelagh Stephenson, *The Memory of Water*

Introduction

Stephenson's first stage play, *The Memory of Water* had its debut in 1996 at the Hampstead Theatre and then transferred to the West End. The play received the Olivier Award for Best Comedy in 2000. Epitomising the problematic relationships and tensions within the lives of a middle-class English family immediately after the death of the mother, the play represents a direct analysis of the past experiences and memory through the personalities of the three sisters and their mother, who appears on the stage posthumously.

Born in 1955, in Tynemouth, Northumberland, the playwright Shelagh Stephenson attracted considerable attention for her plays from the mid-1990s to the middle of the 2000s. She studied drama at Manchester University and before being identified as a successful playwright, she had a career as an actor with the Royal Shakespeare Company. In addition, she was taking part in television dramas, essentially in supporting roles (Billingham, 2011). Stephenson's writing career proceeded with *Five Kinds of Silence* (2000), originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and rewarded with the Writers' Guild Award for the Best Original Radio Play in 1996. The play, which is a ferocious representation of domestic abuse and its consequences, is often evaluated as the "strongest and most distinctive piece" written by Stephenson (Billingham, 2011, p. 475). Her other award-winning play, *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) was inspired by a Joseph Wright painting, 'An Experiment on a Bird with an Air Pump' (1768). The play doubles four contemporary characters with four characters from a different time, which allows Stephenson to present a

defamiliarisation of the present with the perspective of the past, and familiarisation of the past through the angle of the present (Billingham, 2011). Her writing career has been secured in recent years with plays such as *Mappa Mundi* (2002), *Enlightenment* (2005), *The Long Road* (2007), and *A Northern Odyssey* (2010). In addition to these, she was the co-writer and co-producer of the television drama *Enid* (2010), which received much critical acclaim.

Initiating Stephenson's career in the British theatre world, *The Memory of Water* has had a distinct place among its contemporaries because of its conventional style of narration, traditional character types, language, and dramatic form. The three sisters' return to the family house for the funeral of their departed mother provokes a re-examination of their lives in the light of shared memories as each member in the family has apparently carried back home the complicated and contradictory recollections of their childhood. In this highly problematic trip into their past, emotional crossroads determine future considerations about their familial relationships.

This study focuses on the historical development of the subject of memory and turning points of memory studies. Discussing the thoughts and researches of various philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, John Locke, David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry Bergson and neurologist Sigmund Freud on memory, it examines the variable approaches to memory. In addition to the chronological description of memory, how it is evaluated under the effect of historical development as well as the significance of it in the life cycle of human beings is likewise specified in this study. While exploring Stephenson's award-winning play, *The Memory of Water* which represents incompatible memories of three sisters and a recently departed mother, the central concern is to examine how subjective and mutual memories, related to the characters' past, have formed and influenced their lives, and the effect of the funeral on the reactivation of the traumatic moments of their childhood. This study scrutinizes the reasons why we recall our memories come into prominence. In the light of scientific researches and the recollections of the sisters, the significance of remembering and reminiscing actions which are directly related to our constitutions of self and well-being is specified. Throughout the study, the hypothesis that individuals' discovering their past determines the perception of who they are, is emphasised in the light of their experiences at specific times and places. The play under examination signifies the indispensable roles of individual and social relationships in the formation of memory.

The specified thoughts and assertions of the researchers and philosophers indicate the reality that memory inherently has the capability of distorting past experiences and situations in the minds of the individuals. At that particular point, the reliability of the memory is questioned throughout the study in line with the conversations related to past experiences and recallings. In conclusion, *The Memory of Water*, ensures a profound platform to discuss the aspects of memory across a wide perspective, through the statements of the characters related to their mutual experiences. The play is noteworthy in terms of its exploration of memories formed by different views of events or misconceptions because it focuses on how inconsistent recollections have a significant impact on the lives and personalities of the three sisters who come together for their mother's death. The incidents that take place throughout this dramatic work raise issues regarding how we recall our lives, why different people remember things in different ways, and why emotional experiences tend to leave a more lasting impression on our minds than frequently encountered events. This modern theatrical portrayal embodies the idea of the trustworthiness of memory in addition to challenging the value of memory for humans.

Memory from Past to Present

How much similarity must there be between the two moments in order for the one to count as a memory of the other? How much of the content of the experience must be reproduced and how accurately? How many portions of the past is the present connected to in a condensed memory, and how is this determined?

(Marya Schechtman, 1994)

Defining memory is a challenging task as there are a number of difficult questions involved when it comes to issues regarding the human mind. To put it simply, memory is our basic access to the history of ourselves. Schechtman above poses questions about the very core of memory and investigates the time necessary to constitute a memory, the proportion of experiences that can be remembered, and the criteria of accuracy in terms of generating a true recollection of happenings (1994). Memory, throughout and after childhood, is arguably the most basic cognitive capacity that human beings have (Hansen, 2015). Without the capacity of memory, we could never make our recollections applicable to the present, and we would be completely

deprived of the ability to think about our past (Hansen, 2015). As a cognitive ability, memory, which was given considerable importance and generated a prominent research concern in the twentieth century, has occupied a remarkable place in philosophical and psychological investigations from the fifth century BC to date.

Memory, through which knowledge, memories and experiences are conserved in the mind and applied to at will in desired times or unintentionally, is of great importance for the history of humankind. According to Hansen, “it is difficult to get a perspective on memory because it is so intricately bound up with cognition and identity” (Hansen, 2015, p. 201). To be associated with two prominent aspects of human beings makes the investigation of memory both challenging and demanding. As memory has a comprehensive connection to such distinct natural features of human beings as cognition and identity, a broad examination is necessary in order to express a valid opinion on the subject of memory. As Richard Terdiman writes, memory is “so omnipresent, so fundamental to our ability to conceive the world that it might seem impossible to analyse it at all” (1993, p. 8). The multidimensionality of memory and its significance in perception makes it a challenge to make an exact analysis of it. In fact, no detailed study of memory exists before Plato and Aristotle (Sprague, 1968). There is only an anonymous work called *Dissoi Logoi* or *Dialexeis*, which was written prior to these philosophers and has survived to this day. This work is considered to be the first work that attempts to do a memory review. In *Dissoi Logoi*, memory is presented merely as a human ability that needs to be developed to make memorisations and strengthen the remembering capacity. Memory, defined as “the greatest and fairest discovery has been found to be... useful for everything, for wisdom as well as for the conduct of life”, is considered as a research topic via which the features and connections of it to human nature can be analysed; thus, it comprises methods by means of which a person can remember a text that should be recited (Sprague, 1968, p. 166).

It should be noted that throughout “the classical period of Greek thought, the question of what memory is was linked intimately with the problem of how we know what we know, and what the object of knowing essentially is” (Coleman, 1992, p. 4). In terms of that kind of investigation, to explain what memory is, it can be said that “the most obvious starting point is Plato’s description of memory in *Theaetetus* (c. 360 BC), which established an important and influential model for later thinkers” (Whitehead,

2006, p. 15). In one part of this book, which is constructed upon a dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, a student, Theaetetus is asked to conceptualise “that our minds contain a wax block, which may vary in size, cleanliness and consistency in different individuals, but in some people is just right” and which is thought to be a gift of Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses (Draaisma, 2000, p. 24). While explaining the extent of remembering, Socrates utilises the example of a wax block. For instance, he claims that the mental impressions of a person will be explicit, intense, and permanent if s/he possesses a smooth and consistent wax. For him, that is a precondition for quick learning and good memory. Conversely, those whose waxes are too soft will have impressions in their minds that are ambiguous and inclined to be blurred. As a result, these individuals are capable of learning in an adequate time but are rather prone to forgetfulness. Extending his metaphor, Socrates continues:

[...] whatever we want to remember of the things we see, hear, or we ourselves think of, by submitting it to our perceptions and thoughts, we strike off into this, as if we were putting in the seals of signet-rings. [...] whatever is wiped off or cannot get impressed, that we forget and do not know. (Plato, 1984, p. I-61)

As indicated above, when we want to keep the details of an experience or impression, we imprint it cognitively. On the other hand, anything that does not get enough attention tends to be forgotten. As long as the images related to the happenings are preserved, they will be remembered. However, when the images or impressions disappear, anything related to the subject of remembrance will concurrently disappear.

Throughout the dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, the definition of memory gains both active and passive features. According to Socrates, who verbalises the thoughts of Plato on memory, remembering is initially active; that is to say it is merely our mind that has the privilege of deciding what to remember in that we “subject the block to the perception or the idea and stamp the impression into it” when we want to remember (Draaisma, 2000, p. 24). In this respect, the individual’s own desires have an effect on the process of remembering. However, Paul Ricoeur, who is one of the prominent philosophers of the twentieth century and a supporter of Plato’s wax metaphor, defends the passive component of memory and states that the concept of the stamping process for Plato contains at the same time “the external causality of an impetus ... which is itself at the origin of pressing the seal into the wax” (2004, p. 51). Memory, to him, then, has two dimensions, as both comprising the things that we

ourselves desire to keep in mind and the things which are more passively experienced and leave a trace in our minds. This suggests that memory is situated somewhere between what we endeavour consciously to retain and what leaves an impression upon us.

The metaphor of the wax tablet, which Plato used in his writings on memory, is later perpetuated by Aristotle who nevertheless disagrees with him on various points. According to Douwe Draaisma, “more than Plato, Aristotle stresses physiological aspect of memory [...] gives the metaphor of the wax tablet, which in Plato is still a playful image, a more literal meaning” (2000, p. 25). More influenced than Plato by empirical thinking, Aristotle believed that the receiving sense organ carries the impressions of the material forms of external things (Whitehead, 2006). When the perception is over, the second process commences, and the image of the senses is then transferred to the soul, which serves as a vehicle for the acts of remembering and thinking. Hence, the images of the senses and the images of memory differ from each other. The latter is produced by, or derived from, the first through a kind of printing process. According to Aristotle, memory consists precisely of images acquired through senses. He does not subscribe to the idea of Plato that objects can exist independently of the sensual and material world. In this respect, Aristotelian memory may be identified as a physical process through which “something is literally stamped into the body, an impression with physiological features, a material trace” (Draaisma, 2000, p. 25). It can thus be concluded that the metaphor of the wax tablet gains a more authentic meaning with Aristotle. To him, the physical traces can endure unnoticed, embedded and without effect, which is to say that the individual may not be aware of these traces. However, they can be retained as images and any single sign can bring them to recollection level so the action of remembering is actualised.

In the very beginning of his book, *On Memory and Recollection*, Aristotle declares his thoughts about memory. To him, “memory is of the past”; it cannot be defined as a sensation or concept; instead it is a state of possessing them or the affection that originates from them in the process of time. The act of sensation belongs to the present, while the concept is related to the future. Based on this observation, he concludes that memory develops through time (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E/2007, pp. 25-27). He indicates that the stamping process is generated by recording the impression of the perception with respect to the past. The movement and change in this stamping

process are reminiscent of people using seal rings. A definite change occurs in mind, just like the change created on the wax while using a seal ring. To him, the happenings which are learned, experienced, and perceived leave traces in body and soul (Bloch, 25). Thus, memory is constituted by these traces of feelings and recollections. Plato considers memory as the “heart” of the soul and assigns an active role to it in the acts of thinking and demanding (Plato, ca. 369 B.C.E./1984, 194d). He thus paves the way for a memory design capable of predicting the future. An individual can plan the future by taking into consideration past happenings. Aristotle, on the other hand, unambiguously determines the boundaries and the subject of memory and posits that memory does not have such a realm of authority.

Hume endeavours, in *A Treatise of Human Nature* in Section III ‘Of the Ideas of the Memory and Imagination’ to define memory and imagination in order to make a distinction between their components. According to him, when an impression occurs in our mind, it comes back as an idea. If the new aspect of the impression has substantially retained its original vitality, it turns into a memory in mind. On the other hand, if the original impression is unclear and faded, it does not develop as a recollection but as imagination. As a consequence, the ideas of memory are more vivid and are stronger than those of the imagination:

When we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas in the imagination the perception is faint and languid, and cannot without difficulty be preserved by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time. (Hume, 2009, p. 28)

Discriminating between imagination and memory, Hume stresses that there is a difference between them in terms of the efficacy of the recall processes related to them. When a previous happening is recalled, it reappears in mind in a persuasive and vivid manner. Conversely, in the process of imagination, what is sensed is dim and it requires effort to be retained by the mind. In addition, in this process, it is challenging for the mind to sustain the perception in a straight and perpetual form. In another section, entitled ‘Of the Impressions of the Senses and Memory’, Hume refers to the inclination of memory to degrade over time. He indicates that, after a long period of time, memory may inevitably be corrupted even if it is not completely erased. In the same way, it is difficult to determine whether an image is drawn from memory or

imagination as it does not have vivacity (2009). As a result, it is possible for imagination and memory to substitute for each other.

In the nineteenth century, a perception that memory was principally subjective and appertained to an inner life gathered momentum. In the late modern period, “individual subjectivity is overwhelmed by the persistence of the past and comes to seem dominated, indeed possessed by it” (Terdiman, 1993, p. 84). This was the result of a developing preoccupation concerning memory which arose in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as a consequence of industrial revolution and modernisation as well as the developments in the field of technology. Traditional communities were destroyed with the outcomes of these factors, and these gave rise to the appearance of traumatic symptoms constituting the focus of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis studies. The focus of memory studies changed with the unrecoverable ferocities actualised under the ideologies of Nazism and Communism, and centralised upon the memories of the people who experienced the practice of them. In addition to the effect of these ideologies, horror resulting from the Holocaust directed memory studies “producing a concentrated focus on the traumatic memories of those who survived its terrors” (Whitehead, 2006, p. 84). That massacre has been regarded as a profound point of focus on the traumatic memories of the members of the community who were exposed to its results. This anxiety both resulted in the continuity of the burden of the past on the present and suppressed individual subjectivity. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche depicts that kind of memory as a burden. According to him, animals are happy thanks to their sudden forgetting; for the human being, on the contrary, the amassed burden of the past threatens to oppress him/her thoroughly: “he braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark, invisible burden which he would like to disown” (Nietzsche, 1997, p. 61). Rebellious against this impossible burden, Nietzsche recommends forgetting the past, which becomes a complexity over time and results in the deprivation of one’s authority on the present and the ability to act.

Among the twentieth-century memory investigations, Henri Bergson’s approach to memory is particularly innovative as he was one of the prominent thinkers to highlight the significance of dealing with different kinds of memory. In his book, *Matter and Memory*, he brings into question the singularity of memory, asserting that it is virtually

a combination of two kinds of memory. First, habit memory that is formed by definite manners of automatic behaviour gained through repetition that “accumulates within the body” and second, “pure memory” which refers to the continuity of personal memories in the unconscious (Bergson, 1911, pp. 82-92). His analysis is regarded as fundamental in terms of his investigations into the importance of the body in modes of remembering. According to Edward S. Casey, Bergson was “the first philosopher to have devoted concerted attention to body memory” (1987, p. 147). His inquiry is significant in that the role of the body in methods of remembering had been overlooked until this time.

Consequently, with the contributions of the above-mentioned philosophers, memory studies have gained ground in time. In determining the function of memory and its probable effects on human life, psychology and physiology have been of great concern for different branches of science such as philosophy, psychology, literature and neurology. From a mnemonic system the subject of remembering proceeds to the act of reviving in order to generate a healthy and consistent individual identity beside the collective consciousness in a community. Philosophical assumptions as well as psychological studies indicate the prominence of recollection of past events in conducting life and constructing personality. It is at this point, that Stephenson's play *The Memory of Water* provides an opportunity of examining the significance of memory for the psychological well-being of the individuals. Containing numerous examples of recollections that bring into question the reliability of memory, the play presents a platform to discuss the relationship between memory and truth. Revealing the nature of the memory and its profound impact on individual experience, the play endeavours to demonstrate how memory forms the individual identity.

Memory and Recalling in Shelagh Stephenson's The Memory of Water

The Memory of Water presents the memories and complicated recollections of three sisters and their recently departed mother. The title of the play refers to homeopathy, a method of treating similar with similar that began in the first half of the nineteenth century. With this method, as mentioned in the play, “you can remove every last trace of the curative element from a water solution and it will still retain its beneficial effect” and that signifies the reality that water has memory: “You can dilute and dilute and dilute, but the pertinent thing remains. It's unseen, undetectable, untraceable, but

it still exerts influence” (Stephenson, 1996, p. 37). With this method, instead of the effect of the substance used to relieve the symptoms, the information copied into the water is used to abolish the knowledge of the symptoms of the poison (Emoto, 2018). In the play, the reference to the fact that a human body contains at least fifty percent of water is associated with the researches’ demonstrating the effect of both positive and negative environmental and social impact upon the individual.

Vi, the mother of the three estranged sisters, is the key person who brings together for her own funeral the middle daughter Mary who is a doctor, the eldest sister Teresa, who has a health food supplement store with her husband Frank and the youngest member of the family, Catherine, who constantly tries to draw the attention of her sisters by stating that she has always been excluded by the other family members, both in childhood and afterwards. In the play, the mother’s Alzheimer’s disease, Mary’s teenage patient who loses his memory after a kitchen accident, and the sisters perpetually recalling memories that contrast with each other are consistently interwoven by the playwright. Alfred Hicking emphasises the significance of the funeral for the plot structure of the play and opines that “there’s nothing like a funeral to bring out the worst in people” (2009). A funeral usually denotes an ending for human beings. However, in the play the funeral has an instrumental role in a re-evaluation of the past by reuniting the family members. This reunion serves several purposes, such as triggering the worst memories of their childhood, provoking fresh beginnings that unite them at the end of the play and freeing them from the misunderstandings related to collective memories of their childhood.

The play takes place in Yorkshire in winter during a snowstorm, which symbolises the atmosphere surrounding the sisters inside. Consisting of two acts, the play is performed in the departed mother’s bedroom where the siblings whom the funeral brings together quarrel from time to time as they try to organise the funeral arrangements. In that emotional atmosphere of reunion, they discuss memories related to their past which seem to have formed their lives. All the resentments and misunderstandings that have invaded their lives for years emerge, provoking an unavoidable confrontation with their past. The conflicts pertaining to their past re-emerge; and, thereby, a collision of memories is observed; and their personal secrets and thoughts are eventually unearthed. Through their conversations, the memories of each sister collide and, although they are compatible with one another in terms of time

and place, they cannot arrive at a mutual decision of who experienced what. As echoed in the final encountering of Vi, who appears on the stage posthumously in Mary's dreams, and says that she "felt like I'd gone away. Like I'd broken up into islands and in between was just a terrible muddle of old songs and odd names drifting by, men I vaguely recognized. I felt like a cut-up thing" (Stephenson, 1996, p. 86). The three sisters drift around their so-called islands of memory and cannot compromise with each other in relation to particular points of recollection. Nevertheless, their familial connection is the factor keeping them unified.

As the sisters gather in their family home for the funeral, the audience is invited to confront their mutual experiences in diversified versions. While they are all in their mother's bedroom, each sister waits for a telephone call from their partner. At this moment, Mary warns Teresa to switch off her telephone at this funeral, an act she forgot to do at their father's:

Teresa. I didn't know it was in my bag.

Mary. You could have turned it off. You didn't have to speak to them.

Teresa. I didn't speak to them.

Mary. You did. I heard you. You told them you were in a meeting.

Teresa. You're imagining this. This is a completely false memory.

Mary. All memories are false.

Teresa. Mine aren't.

Mary. Yours in particular.

Teresa. Oh, I see, mine are all false but yours aren't. (Stephenson, 1996, p. 7)

The quarrel between Mary and Teresa is one of most crucial conversations that emerge on memory and truth in the play. Teresa insistently asserts that what she remembers of their father's funeral is true. However, Mary argues with some details that Teresa is remembering wrongly; furthermore, she declares that all the recollections are false. To examine the reliability of memory, it is essential to review types of philosophical theories of memory which are the traditional archival view and the contemporary constructive view. According to the archival view of memory, memory is a passive device that works for recording, storing and reproducing the representations of significant past events when necessary. On the other hand, for constructivists, memory is not principally charged with reproducing details related to the contents of previous experiences. Because of that, remembering can actualise with

some minor misinterpretations and errors. Daniel M. Bernstein and Elizabeth F. Loftus state the constructivist location as:

All memory is false to some degree. Memory is inherently a reconstructive process, whereby we piece together the past to form a coherent narrative that becomes our autobiography. In the process of reconstructing the past, we colour and shape our life's experiences based on what we know about the world. (2009, p. 373)

In that scene, as the audience will witness at the end of the play, Teresa seems to remember the details incorrectly. However, she insists that she is truly recalling the event at that moment. Thus, the content of what Teresa persists in remembering is different from the content of the principal event. Memory preserves the content although there are discrepancies in details that turn out to be mistakes. Hume also supports the idea that memory is far from being flawless when he writes “memory preserves the original form, in which its objects were presented, and that wherever we depart from it in recollecting anything, it proceeds from some defect or imperfection in that faculty” (2009, p. 12). According to Hume, our recollections remain faithful to the initial forms but to a limited degree as, through the event of retaining, we partially lose the preciseness of what happened. As observed through the above conversation between Teresa and Mary, Teresa shows resistance to Mary's idea and does not accept the probability of not remembering accurately. Therefore, she asserts that what Mary remembers is not compatible with what really happened. The remembrance and recalling of their mutual childhood memories in falsified or changed ways shadow the reliability of their past memories. The conversation between two sisters reveals another significant detail about their memory: not only they have difficulty in interpreting their mutual experiences but also in determining which one of them is the subject of the experience. Inquiring possible answers to the questions “Can people create false memories of childhood experiences? Can people forget traumatic childhood experiences and many years later recover memories of the event?” Oakes and Hyman (2001, p. 88) declares two adverse explanations that are available: “The memory is either a false memory created in response to suggestions or a true memory recovered during adulthood” (89). Focusing on the part the self plays in fabricating memories, they allege that “Although memory helps us comprehend the self, the self also has a significant impact on memory” (p. 88). As reflected through the conversation of the

sisters, their memories are distorted, and it is obvious that their self and experiences have the crucial role in either remembering or reinventing the mutual happenings.

At the very beginning of the play, Mary and Teresa discuss their past experiences. Both of them feverishly defend their ideas about the main character of an incident they experienced when they were teenagers. The fact that they cannot reach an agreement creates uncertainty in the minds of the audience. It becomes challenging to decide which one is telling the truth. In spite of having a debate on one of their mutual recollections, they cannot come to a conclusion and end the discussion. Since enough information is not presented to the reader, the truth of the matter cannot be ascertained. According to Stan B. Klein, memory does not have to be relevant to truth. Regarding this possible lack of connection between memory and reality, he asserts:

There is no principled reason for episodic recollection to adhere to any particular degree of fidelity to the past; all that matters, from a functional perspective, is that the information supplied is beneficial to the adaptive challenges faced by the organism... Environmental regularities and the demands of reality place limits on which anticipatory behaviours will work, how well they will work, and which will fail. Nonetheless, within the (sometimes fairly broad) constraints imposed by reality, the memory content served up to consciousness need not entail 'precision of match' to past events as a criterion of success. (2014, pp. 438-439)

Episodic memory is the storage for our autobiographical personal experiences and happenings. To Klein, there are no strict rules that necessitate episodic recalls to be convenient to the past. If the provided information is satisfactory and helpful for the user in encountered situations, it would be functional. The desire of truth loaded on memory can make it difficult for the individual to sort out the convenient behaviour in different conditions. As a result, to combine past happenings and their recollections correctly need not to be an obligatory action for either Mary or Teresa. In this case, the playwright does not present a coherent agreement to finalise the discussion. This enables the audience to conclude the conversation between the two characters in their own minds, by taking into consideration the characters' personalities. The interactions between the siblings encapsulate the very essence of the reliability of the memory throughout the play. As it is not a novel or shorty story or as there is the absence of an omniscient narrator or interlocutor, the audience can solely rely on the interlocutors' transmissions of personal experiences or to some extend happening which were

witnessed by at least two characters. The crucial point that it is a play under examination restricts the audience to the examine the outburst of the sisters; make a connection between the events and their behaviours to come up with a plausible explanation for why there are disconnections and contradictions as well as to find out what actually literally happened in the past. It also provides an environment to think about their respective experiences and memory misconceptions. At this point a distinction can be made between memories which are false solely in detail and those which are entirely false. In the first case, the elements related to the experiences or happenings of the past are altered or condensed. However, in the second, there is a failure of corresponding completely with the past experiences. So, there may be errors in terms of details but that will not indicate that the memories are entirely false (Hamilton, 1998). Ainat Pansky et al. concur and further discriminate between “memory for gist” and “memory for details” (Pansky et al., 2000, p. 481). Memories can be defined as true in spite of having some deficiencies concerning the details related to the past recordings. One of the most crucial conversations of the characters which challenge the reliability of remembering brings about this subject of memory and truth:

Catherine. The only time I went to the beach, it was with you and you left me there. You forgot me. You didn't remember till you got home and Mum said, 'Where's Catherine?'

Teresa. That was Mary. She was too young, she was being a pain and showing off in Esperanto, so we ran away and left her. With no bus fare and the tide coming in. (Stephenson, 1996, p.23)

In this dialogue, in the light of the transferred recollections it can be deduced that one of the memories is false. The false memories can additionally generate into forms as temporally displaced memories and source monitoring errors. Temporally displaced memories are those in which the event reported did actually happen. However, the trouble with the time of the event is that it did not happen when the individual reported it to have done. On the other hand, source monitoring errors ensue when the individual confuses what s/he experienced first-hand with what s/he comes to learn through witnessing other sources (Bernerker, 2017). A real-life sample of that kind of relatively true memory is presented by Crombag and colleagues' research. The researchers studied the memories of one hundred Amsterdam residents when El Al Flight 1862, a Boeing 747 cargo aircraft crashed into a block of flats in Amsterdam in 1992. Although the crash was not filmed, it is found that 66 percent of the witnesses reported that they

watched the crash on television. Amsterdam residents gathered information from different sources to create an image of the accident, and for that reason, they accepted the idea that they had seen it on television (Crombag et al., 1996). In the case of the sisters, whether it was Catherine or Mary who was left on the beach, it can be assumed that Catherine reinvented the events and positioned herself as the protagonist of the happenings as explained by Mary and Teresa. The non-inferential (pure) memory allows the information content to expand. New information is constantly generated in memory, and the recalled event, unlike the experienced version, is combined with information from other sources. The information related to the happenings expands and thereby it becomes possible for someone to attach distinct notions and remember more than experienced. Here, Catherine situates herself in the position of Mary by interchanging memories. There three processes thought to be involved in the creation of false memories according to Hyman and Kleinknecht which are plausibility judgments, memory constructions and source monitoring errors (1999). The suggested event must be realistic for someone to fabricate a memory. To put it another way, the event must be something that the individual feels could have happened to them. A person must still create a memory—an image with a narrative—even if they think an event is probable or even happened. Every autobiographical memory is created by fusing personal experiences, suggestions, and demands from the present with schematic knowledge from other sources. Even if a person creates an image of a believable occurrence and thinks the image to be a personal memory, this is not a guarantee. In order to have a false memory, the participants must make a source monitoring error, they must claim the image as a personal memory (Oakes and Hyman, 2001).

The reasons behind the adoption of personally offending events belonging to childhood can be traced in the traumatic experiences and thoughts of the individual. Throughout the play Catherine perpetually complains about her childhood and her mother. Her memories and those of the other two constantly contradict each other. It can be deduced that Catherine's personal traits and life style were formed by her misevaluation of her mother and sisters. She arrives at her hometown for the purpose of participating in her mother's funeral; however, instead of instantly coming home and sharing the sorrow of that loss with her siblings, she does not inform them about her arrival or where she is staying and goes to have a drink with her friends. When she

finally comes home, she reveals that she went shopping and demonstrates what she has bought. As her behaviour expectedly disturbs the others, they remind her of the death of their mother, to which she unemotionally replies: [...] you want me to sit down and cry about it and I can't" (Stephenson, 1996, p. 14). The reason why she is so insensitive to what would normally be considered an immense loss lies in the belief that she did not love Vi and Vi did not love her. While talking about their childhood, she asserts having had "a horrible childhood" (Stephenson, 1996, p. 22). Mary and Teresa try to soothe her by asserting that they "all have the same childhood. It was not horrible" (Stephenson, 1996, p. 22). As a result of these discussions, Mary charges her with being an egomaniac and Teresa tries to persuade her to rethink by presenting the antithesis of what she remembers. Catherine utters her memories with the aim of demonstrating that she is remembering correctly: "She [their mother] had the cat put down without telling me. She shut me in a cupboard. She said it was an accident but it wasn't", "she excluded me from everything. She made me stay in the shop after closing time and count nails" (Stephenson, 1996, p. 23). The funeral and homecoming which play a crucial role in resurrecting the past, make Catherine recall these unwanted memories of childhood which have profoundly affected her entire life and thoughts. In this case, it will be beneficial to refer to involuntary memory which was first posited by Marcel Proust. Catherine recalls the moments of sorrow, grief and suffering that she involuntarily remembers. The memories she verbalises have been conserved, symbolising unhappiness and irreversible loss for her. They resurrect and reactivate the traumatic moments of her childhood. The past overwhelms her entire life and incapacitates both her present and future. According to James and Neisser memory forms an important part of how we perceive ourselves (1890, 1988). The individuals, who create false memories through various connections with their own self, can be shaped by these false memories over time, and these false memories have an important role in evaluating their selves, their positions in the social environment and their relationships with other people. As the self has a crucial role in construction of memories and as the self chooses reliable information for memory and frequently makes positive revisions to the past (Ross&Sicol, 1979), it may be deduced that under the effect of her thought of herself Catherine constructs her childhood memories in a fashion to make her family responsible for her current behaviours, feelings and lifestyle. In the light of the conversation between Mary, Catherine and Teresa, it can

be observed that they are sharing these memories with each other for the first time. As anxieties of the past emerge, discussing their misunderstandings gives the three sisters a chance of overcoming the haunting and pervasive power of the past.

When Catherine's and the other sisters' previously mentioned statements are taken into consideration, it becomes difficult to assess whether the initial representations of the events are compatible with the reminiscences of the events. As there is no possibility of directly accessing the original representation of the event and taking Catherine back to compare her recollection with the initial happening, indirect means such as existing photographs or rumours must be relied on. Validating the claimed recollections becomes a challenging task as the reliability of the event can change depending upon various conditions. Henry Habberley Price evaluates the problem as one where without relying on other memories, no one memory can be affirmed or refuted. It is commonly assumed that we may confirm or refute a memory judgment using current perception, such as by reviewing documents or records. Again, it is assumed that we will be able to do so by appealing to natural rules. Whatever, in both circumstances, we are depending on inductive generalizations, and the probability of an inductive generalization is obtained from past observations. However big the likelihood of an inductive generalization may be, its probability is determined from prior observations. We only have memory to confirm whether or not those previous observations were made, and if so, what kind of observations they were (1969, pp. 78-79). An inferential discussion on the reliability of experience turns out to be a vicious circle. It seems that the recollections of memory can only be validated by recollections of another memory. That is to say, the trustworthiness of the memory depends on presuming the authenticity of another memory. In the play, the sisters endeavour to persuade Catherine that the sorrowful events encompassing her life had not actually happened in the way she believes. Here, Mary's and Teresa's memories act as the signifiers of truth and purifying agents for Catherine to recover from her traumatic memories. This indicates that the funeral and homecoming proved beneficial as traumatic memories were confronted and challenged.

As the sisters come together for their mother's funeral, the family home triggers some old experiences which act as memory stimuli. The house, where the sisters used to live as children, reawakens the associations and feelings of them belonging to their childhood. Mary shares her feelings and thoughts with boyfriend, Mike:

Can you feel nostalgia for something that never really existed? I remember growing up here. I remember nightlights and a doll's house. I can see them in my mind's eye. And I'm not sure we had either. I find myself aching, longing for it. This half-imagined childhood. (Stephenson, 1996, pp. 37)

Mary has an opportunity to go through her memories which have faded into oblivion as there have not been reminders around her. In fact, the happenings in daily life are retained; past experiences are stored by the memory in a complete or deficient form available for present or future recollection. Conserving images and feelings belonging to experience implies that individuals are perpetually burdened by the past. The mind may carry with itself the entire memories. Here, Mary, through the stimulus of the house recalls childhood memories which are incomplete or not authentic. Her indistinct and scattered memories act as both resurrections of the past and a reconstruction of them in the present.

The other reason why Mary feels nostalgia for her past is because of the upsetting reality that she gave her child, Patrick, up for adoption. She feels incompetent and now desires to have a child. However, for her partner Mike having a child is no longer an option as he had a vasectomy. In Act II, while she dreams about her mother, Mary blames her for giving her child away. Perpetually yearning for, and wondering, about him she substitutes the loss of memory of her patient with no generated memories of her and Patrick:

Mary. I look at this patient of mine. This twenty-year-old boy lying in a hospital bed, completely blank, no memory of anything at all, just an empty vessel. And all I see is Patrick. Full of memories that I didn't put there, that someone else filled him with. And I think, did I give him anything? Is there some part of him that's still mine? Maybe he smiles like me. Maybe he walks like me. Maybe he doesn't. You made me obsessed. (Stephenson, 1996, p. 85)

Mary's condition, her questions regarding the memory generation of her son, foreground the significance of remembering and memories in individuals' lives. The reason why we recall our memories comes into prominence. Remembering and reminiscing are actions which are directly related to our construction of self and well-being. During the emergence of the modern era, John Locke had a central place in the field of memory studies as he associated memory with the concepts of personality and individualism. Ricoeur assuredly asserts that "the equating of identity, self, and memory... is the invention of John Locke at the beginning of the eighteenth century"

(2004, p. 97). Locke's characterisation of memory as an essential component of human identity is also expressed by Frances Ferguson who states that Locke demonstrated "the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time" (1999, p. 509). Locke's approach to memory is crucial because, according to him, the continuity of memory actively creates the individual identity rather than merely being consistent with the behaviour or appearance. In order to have a psychological continuity, an individual should be able to construct autobiographical memories while, at the same time, narrate them to people, thus establishing a mutual relationship with parents, friends, society and finally the world (Fivush et al., 2011). Mary could not establish a healthy past in common with her son as her mother made her give him up for adoption, in order not to constrain her future ambitions and plans. That is why she recently complains about the lack of Patrick in her life and of losing the opportunity of constructing memory in common with him.

Following the three sisters' conversations, which are constructed upon misunderstandings related to their memories, the play delves into Mary and Vi's conversations, that act as a means of exculpation for Vi. Throughout their encounters, the mother and daughter have the opportunity of questioning their past and relationship. The play gives a broader picture and goes deeper into the misunderstandings and problems standing as a barrier in their mother-daughter relationship:

Vi. [...] You behave as if I'd no hand in the making of you. I took you on picnics, I got up in the night for you. And you remember the things you didn't have. Holidays not gone on. Bicycles never got. A particular type of shoe. How was I to know? When are we going to be done with this? I hear you talking and I think your memories aren't the same as mine. I remember the time of your childhood, and it seems to me that you don't remember it because you weren't there. (Stephenson, 1996, p. 53)

Witnessing all the conflicting memories of her children, Vi reproaches them for their unreal representation of their childhood memories recollected throughout the play. At that point, the assumption that one cannot question his/her own confident perceptual and memory beliefs reveals another aspect of the reliability of recall. Sydney Shoemaker indicates that "it is a necessary (logical or conceptual) truth, not a contingent one, that when perceptual and memory statements are sincerely and confidently asserted, i.e., express confident beliefs, they are generally true" (1963, p.

229). His argument proceeds with his assertion that what one believes to be true is also true of others. No one would claim that the perceptual and memory beliefs they have can potentially be false. They have to claim the authenticity of their recollections of experiences. This causes a problematic condition: the inability to question one's own confident memory beliefs does not necessitate accepting others' beliefs of confident memory without questioning. Witnessing others' incapacity to question their own confident memory beliefs is not equal to accepting them as either completely or generally true. In the play, Catherine cannot question her authenticity when reminiscing the past events. Thus, the others, who were the partners of her past and are conveying the same happenings in a contrasting form, become the references to rely on. Vi's statement also indicates that what Teresa and Mary assert happened is compatible with Vi's recollections.

The incompatibilities of memories among the family members bring their problematic relationship into question. They have built different memories about their shared experiences and have not attempted to resolve these misunderstandings until that time. This indicates the fragility of their bonds. They have daily constructed insurmountable obstacles between themselves with each misunderstanding:

Vi. I never knew how you felt. I never knew how you felt about anything. You thought your feelings were too rarefied to share with me. You cut me out. You looked straight through me. You shared nothing with me, not a joke, not a smile that wasn't patronising, you never let me in, you never let me know you. This stony punishment all these years, wanting me to be better than I am, always your mother, always responsible, always to blame. How could I apologise, when you wouldn't give me the room? (Stephenson, 1996, pp. 85-86)

The family environment, principally the attitudes of mothers and fathers, surely has crucial effects on children's styles of reminiscing. The positive and negative behaviours of parents and the emotional conditions in which mutual sharing is constructed contribute to the healthy memory formation of the children. Young children as active individuals in the family dynamics progressively construct their autobiographical self through interaction with their parents. Hence, parental practices of the shared past principally affect the style of reminiscing of the child (Wang, 2016). In addition, the vital interactions among the family members considerably affect the children's positive development (Cox and Paley 2003, p. 194). Here, Vi complains about her children's

distancing her from their activities. Throughout the play, it is clear that the family members have not engaged in any intense interaction with each other. When there was a misunderstanding or an offending action, they kept it to themselves and did not endeavour to rectify the situations that were deteriorating. This failure to talk about the experiences and their mutual memories has led to different perceptions and interpretations of past happenings. As a result, this has adversely affected their relationships and their attitudes towards each other. Here, by showing Vi in the dreams of her daughters, the playwright desires to assure her audience that all the misunderstandings are resolved and that the three sisters replace false memories with true ones so Vi can rest at peace after resolving the problems. This technique serves to promote the re-evaluation of their past in a shared environment. At the end of the play, when they are ready for the funeral, her daughters are in a state purged of false childhood memories and misunderstandings. As a result, they are also prepared for new beginnings.

One of the striking points of the play is the fact that, although she has Alzheimer's, Vi appears posthumously as a healthy woman who remembers the past correctly and who endeavours to annihilate the misunderstandings of the entire family. One may misremember either because of the fact that her/his memory malfunctions or because the representation fed into the memory process is false (Bernerker, 2017). Before dying, Vi forgets most of the things related to life and her environment as she has memory disorders because of her illness:

Teresa. Every month something else went, another wire worked itself loose. Not big things, little things. She used to put her glasses in the oven. 'What day is it?' she'd say, and I'd say, 'Wednesday,' and she'd say 'Why?' 'Well, it just is. Because yesterday was Tuesday.' And she'd say, 'There was a woman here with a plastic bucket. Who is she?' 'Elaine. You know Elaine. Your home help.' And then she'd look at me and we'd start all over again. 'What day is it?' I mean, she wasn't even that old. (Stephenson, 1996, p. 25)

Vi's disease is a key point of the play as it reminds us of the significance of remembering and having memories for human psychological health. Throughout the play, all the problems between the sisters and their mother stem from misunderstandings and wrongly established memories. When she was alive, Vi could not establish a balanced and durable relationship among the family members. Thus,

until now, their familial bonds were vulnerable to the smallest negations from their childhood years. Appearing posthumously on the stage, she, to some extent, rehabilitates their relationships and fulfills her last duty of motherhood. As a result, instead of having deficiencies of memory through to the end of her life, she acts as the secure source of past and memory in the play.

The term memory is utilised to refer to happenings through which information of the past is conserved and recalled when necessary. In *The Memory of Water*, recollections of the past function as determinants that ameliorate the poorly established fraternal and parental relationships. Each sister's perceptions and emotions ascribed to mutual experiences have put a wall between them. Nevertheless, the funeral provides the opportunity of reminiscing and examining their past and thereby eliminating the misperceptions. The play demonstrates how events can be perceived differently by each individual and how the interpretations of happenings can affect their personality. In addition to that, the play associates having memories with psychological well-being and constructing a healthy personality. The playwright interrogates the relation of memory with life through the words of Mary and thereby has the final crucial note for audiences: "But who did you feel like? Who are you if you take your memories away" (1996, p. 86). The autobiographical narratives are significant for a healthy perception of our surroundings and the world. This reality is emphasised in *The Memory of Water* by bringing forward familial relationships under the shadow of memories.

Conclusion

Memory, which has always proved to be a curious subject and studied in various scientific and philosophical contexts, also appears as a crucial issue in literature. Memory can be defined as a cognitive ability allowing retention in the mind of knowledge, experience, testimonies and memories related to the past. It plays a major role in understanding the events taking place today and the relationships established between events, in addition to trying to shape the near and far future with the deductions made from these events. It constitutes a crucial part of the human cognitive structure and has an undeniable effect on social life, personality formation and an overall perception of life. Developed and enriched as a result of experiences from an early age, memory shapes the personality of individuals and determines their social

assets. For this reason, memory that occurs as a result of both individual acquisitions and social interactions is vital for individuals.

The Memory of Water is one of the most significant contemporary British plays in which memory has been a central theme. Focusing on how inconsistent memories have an immense effect on the lives and personalities of the three sisters who gather for their mother's funeral, the play is notable in terms of its analysis of memories generated by distinct perceptions of events or misconceptions. Throughout this dramatic work, the events highlight questions about how we accumulate memories of our lives, why the ways of remembering are specific to individuals, and why the memories formed by emotional experiences are more permanent than daily experienced events.

In addition to questioning the importance of memory for individuals, this contemporary theatrical representation embodies the concept of the reliability of memory. It is revealed that an individual, who claims to make correct transferences of recollections, might have got the wrong impression at the outset of events. The way in which misunderstandings between siblings and parents have negative effects on their future relationships is explored. It is depicted, through the attitudes of the characters, that misconceptions affect their attitudes towards their family and even their seriousness towards life itself.

In *The Memory of Water*, the sisters' sense of self-construction in their family interactions facilitates both the forms and functions of their narrative identity. The audience is invited to confront the profound effects of memory and how the differences emerge in the mother-daughter or sister-sister reminiscing. Moreover, the play demonstrates how the malfunctions of memory contribute to the on-going emotional relationships and psychological well-being of the characters as well as leading to differences in an emotionally coherent sense of self. Their social interactions within the family subsequently determine the other forms of social interaction throughout their life. Their identities are constructed and understood within these social interactions. Catherine, Teresa and Mary have stories they tell about themselves. In order to be securely attached individuals or to develop a healthy identity, these stories reinforce the growth of their personalities and emotional relationships. It appears that to create

and maintain a sense of self as a secure, competent, and loved adult, healthy childhood interactions and emotional attachments have significant value.

Subsequently, *The Memory of Water* gives a broader picture of memory and delves more deeply into the inner lives of the three sisters and their mother, portraying the far-reaching effects of insecure memory and misunderstandings. Examining events from the very distinct past of the characters, Stephenson investigates the three sisters' reactions to their childhood and teenage experiences, and provokes them to confront their recollections of familial experiences, in order to reform their past from the perspective of the present. She fundamentally engages them in a nostalgic atmosphere so as to force them to foresee the future, as memory which primarily embodies the past, is also indirectly about the future.

In conclusion, adopting an emancipating attitude, for the three sisters' and their mother's revising their memories in a mental journey back to their past experiences prompts the awakening of consciousness, heals their wounds, reconstitutes dignity in their lives and achieves the reformation of their belated familial affiliations. Additionally, events centre on the reiteration of the emotional inferiority complexes of each character in the play. Upon investigating the relationship between healthy individual development and memory, the play demonstrates that the faculty of memory constitutes the human self and consciousness. From this perspective, the playwright reminds her audience of the paramount importance of communicating and sharing among the family members or within a social environment, as misattribution shows up as an imperfection of memory.

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Araştırma Makelesi/Research Article

Feminist Mothers and Daughters in *Top Girls* and *Yerma*

Top Girls ve *Yerma* Adlı Oyunlarda Feminist Anneler ve Kızları

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Caryl Churchill'in *Top Girls* (1982/1991) ve Simon Stone'un *Yerma* (2017) adlı oyunlarını feminist annelik kuramları aracılığıyla ele almaktadır. Bu iki oyunun baskın özelliği anne-kız ilişkisini işlemesidir. *Yerma* adlı oyun Federico Garcia Lorca'nın (1934/1968) aynı adlı oyunundan uyarlanmıştır. Çalışmada incelenen anneler, açıkça feminist olduklarını ifade etmeseler de okurların/izleyicilerin onları feminist olarak tanımlamalarına sebep olabilecek birtakım özellikler arz etmektedir. Annelerin ve özellikle de çevrelerindeki kişilerin tasvirinden hareketle bu makale, güçlü kadın ve başarılı bir kariyer ile annelik arasındaki geleneksel uyuşmazlığın yeniden üretildiğini iddia etmektedir. Çağdaş bir oyun olan *Yerma*'daki anne Helen, *Top Girls*'ün kahramanı Marlene ile aynı kuşağa ait olarak kabul edilebilir. Marlene'in kızıyla sorunlu ilişkisi, Helen'in annelik deneyimine yansımıştır. Her iki anne de güçlü kadındır fakat güçlerinin kaynağı annelikleri değildir ve bu güç, kızlarına intikal etmez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Annelik, İngiliz Tiyatrosu, Anne-kız ilişkisi

Abstract

Through feminist theories of motherhood, this essay discusses the mother-daughter relationship, a dominant feature of two British plays, *Top Girls* (1982/1991) by Caryl Churchill and *Yerma* (2017) by Simon Stone, the latter being an adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's (1934/1968) play with the same title. The mothers on which this essay focuses present certain characteristics and express certain views that lead the readers/audience to identify them as feminists, though they do not declare themselves as such. What this essay argues is that the portrayal of these mothers, and particularly through the attitude of people around them, reproduces the traditional incompatibility between female empowerment and motherhood, between having a successful career and being a mother. The mother in the contemporary play *Yerma* can be regarded as belonging to the same generation with Marlene, the protagonist from *Top Girls* whose problematic relationship with her daughter is mirrored in Helen's experience of motherhood. Both mothers are empowered women, yet their empowerment does not come through motherhood and moreover, they do not pass it on to their daughters.

Keywords: Feminism, Motherhood, British Theatre, Mother-daughter Relationship

Introduction

What kind of person would Hippolytus have been, had he been raised by the Amazons, a matriarchal society to which his mother belonged before being 'conquered' by Theseus, instead of being brought up in the patriarchal society of Ancient Greece? Would he still utter the following words?:

HIPPOLYTUS: Oh God, why did you bring into the sacred light of/ day this counterfeit evil, this plague for all mankind, women?/ If you wanted to keep the human race going you should have found a way to do it without/ women. It should have been possible to go to a temple with some gold or silver or bronze/ and buy some embryos, each one priced according to its worth, and then these could be/ brought up in houses free of women. (Euripides, trans. 2009, pp. 32-33)

His furious tirade launched against women demands not only their exclusion from the whole process of procreation and breeding of children, but also implies the extinction of all women from the face of the Earth. Read beside his, Jeffner Allen's radical feminist rejection of motherhood does not appear that radical anymore:

If woman, in patriarchy, is she who exists as the womb and wife of man, every woman is by definition a mother: she who produces for the sake of men. A mother is she whose body is used as a resource to reproduce men and the world of men [...] Motherhood is dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be women and mothers, and conversely, because it denies to females the creation of a subjectivity. (as cited in Takševa, 2018)

Both Euripides' Hippolytus and Allen agree that motherhood is dangerous; however, for the former motherhood is dangerous for the society (represented by men), whereas for the latter women are the ones endangered by their capacity to bear children. Their observations are related to a patriarchal category of motherhood, defined by Adrienne Rich (1995) as an institution "which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control" (p. 13). The potential Rich refers to is the other form of motherhood, on which the institution superimposes, "*the potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children" (p. 13, emphasis in original). According to Maroney (1985), the formulation of motherhood as an institution has several consequences: it places it in the sphere of social and not biological determinism, it underlines the differences between patriarchal and matriarchal motherhood and it brings out the paradox that the burden of childbirth and childcare is

placed solely on women who have actually no control or authority on these issues (pp. 45-46). Unlike patriarchal motherhood, the matriarchal version is “thought to be cooperative, natural, sex positive and permissive, peaceful and able to integrate males on a basis of equal exchange” (p. 47); however, to return to the story of Hippolytus, not all matriarchal societies reflect this image. On the contrary, the Amazons were not peaceful (Hard, 2004, p.357-358), nor able to integrate males in their community. Then again, as is the case with other ancient narratives, they are expressions of male writers’ point of view and attitude towards women and society and as such, they present a one-sided, limited version of the world.

First published in 1976, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1995) written by a woman, that is, Adrienne Rich, marks the beginning of scholarly research on the topic. The manuscript came at a time when feminism could be described as ‘anti-motherhood’, as expressed in the views of Allen, a view which might have been a radical one, but in its essence reflects the struggle feminism had and still has in integrating motherhood to its practices and theories (Maroney, 1985, pp.40-41). This struggle is rooted in the widespread belief of the second wave feminism that motherhood was “a significant, if not the determining, cause of women’s oppression under patriarchy” (O’Reilly, 2021, p. 227). Rich’s distinction between the oppressive form of motherhood and the women’s actual experience of motherhood has been further developed by Andrea O’Reilly, the scholar who coined the term ‘motherhood studies’ in 2006. In her book titled *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice* (2021), motherhood is characterised as “socially and historically constructed by imperialist, white supremacist, and capitalist patriarchy” in contrast to mothering which is “a practice and not [...] a fixed, stable, and essentialist identity” (p. 26); just as being a woman is not a fixed, stable and essentialist identity. Matricentric feminism, defined as “a feminism developed from and for the specific experiences and concerns of mothers” (p. 213) is, according to O’Reilly and other scholars working in the field (hooks, 2015; Maroney, 1985), a concern visibly missing from academic feminism. For this reason, it is not only the inclusion of motherhood studies within universities’ curricula that is required, but also more research into the way women, be them biological mothers or not, experience the act of mothering.

Carl G. Jung’s (2004) observations on motherhood are, surprisingly perhaps, in line with those of feminist scholars in the sense that he also distinguished between the

mother herself and “the archetype projected upon her, which gives her a mythological background” (p. 16), the latter being not far from what patriarchal motherhood means. Jung discusses the mother archetype particularly in connection to what he calls “the mother-complex” which is “clear and uncomplicated” only in daughters. The reason why in sons the complex is more challenging, though not “more serious”, is due to its entanglement with the erotic aspect in the mother-son relationship (p. 20). The mother-complex in daughters manifests itself in a number of forms: hypertrophy of the maternal elements, overdevelopment of Eros, identity with the mother and resistance to the mother. As O’Reilly (2021) indicates following Rich, “the daughter feels rage toward her mother, however, she is expected to identify with her because the daughter is also a woman who, it is assumed, will someday become a mother and wife as her mother did” (p. 60). Nancy Chodorow’s (1978) seminal work on the reproduction of motherhood argues within a psychoanalytical context that, put it briefly: “Women mother daughters who, when they become women, mother” (p. 209). Notwithstanding the fact that every mother in history since the beginning of times was first a daughter, Rich (1995) observes that the mother-daughter relationship “has been minimalized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy” (p. 226). Within a literary context, Marianne Hirsch (1989) also reveals that these female figures are “submerged in traditional plot structures” (p. 2) that give prominence to the father-son or mother-son dyads. Fortunately, steps have been taken in the past decades to tackle this issue with more research being published and more writers directing their attention to mothers and daughters.

In the context of feminist theories of motherhood, this essay discusses the representation of motherhood through the mother-daughter relationship, in two British plays, namely *Top Girls* (1982/1991) by Caryl Churchill and *Yerma* (2017) by Simon Stone, the latter being an adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca’s (1934/1968) play with the same title. My initial interest and understanding is shaped by the performances of the plays which can be accessed online via the National Theatre at Home (2020) website. In these plays there are a number of mothers whose relationship to their children as well as motherhood itself is presented to the audience as problematic. Marlene, from *Top Girls* and Helen, from *Yerma*, though featuring in plays written and set in the twentieth and twenty-first century respectively, are both the product of the cultural and social revolution that is feminism. Since feminism, empowerment and

success are traditionally viewed as incompatible with motherhood, this essay explores the way in which the two British playwrights address this conflict.

Twentieth Century: Empowerment without Motherhood

Named by the renowned theatre critic Michael Billington as “one of the ten best plays of the twentieth century” (Dorney & Gray, 2013, p. 116), Caryl Churchill’s *Top Girls* was first performed in 1982 at the Royal Court Theatre, under the direction of Max Stafford-Clark. The first act shows a celebration party organised by Marlene for her newly appointed position as the managing director of the ‘Top Girls’ Employment Agency. Her guests are five famous women from history and fiction who “were to some degree punished or abused by the patriarchal system throughout history” (Rees, 2020, p. 43). The second act offers glimpses of the lives of Marlene’s sister, Joyce and her daughter, Angie and the work dynamics at Marlene’s office. In the third and final act, during Marlene’s visit to her hometown one year earlier, it is revealed to the audience that Angie is in fact her daughter. Even if the play has been widely analysed, the impetus for including it in this essay is its relevance to *Yerma* which is relatively the more contemporary play. Roughly speaking and with a bit of imagination, it can be argued that the mother in *Yerma*, Helen belongs to the same generation as Marlene. This view can be supported by a mathematical calculation – if Helen is in her sixties in a play set in the second decade of the twenty-first century¹, then she could have been of an age close to that of Marlene in a play set in the last decades of the twentieth century – but more significantly what places them in the same generation is their individualistic attitude and lack of enthusiasm for motherhood. This essay will hopefully show how Marlene’s attitude to motherhood is mirrored in Helen’s.

The historical and fictional women invited to Marlene’s party in the long first act of the play have proved (in general lines) their success, independence and revolt against the patriarchy in their own ways. What seems to have remained however beyond their control was their children who were taken away from them. Joan, a legendary Pope of the nineteenth century, gave birth to a child during a procession as a result of which she was stoned to death and the child presumably died as well.

¹ The temporal setting of the play is not specified by Stone; however, there is a reference to the fact that Her is a member of the ‘Free the Nipple’ campaign, which started in 2012 and since the play was first performed in 2017, it is safe to suggest that the action is set around these years.

Isabella Bird, a Victorian traveller, did not have children, but was very fond of horses. Lady Nijo from Japan, one of the Emperor's concubines and later on a Buddhist nun from the thirteenth century had four children, one of them with the Emperor and the others conceived with her two lovers. Two of her children died and one of them was taken away by the wife of her lover who could not have children. The fourth child's fate is unclear; the only thing Nijo says is that she "felt nothing for him" (p. 124)². Dull Gret, a village woman painted by Brueghel had ten children; her elder son died on a wheel and her baby was murdered by a soldier. No further information about her other children is provided in the play. The last to arrive at the party, Patient Griselda, a character in Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer's works, had two children both taken away by her husband with the purpose of testing her obedience.

These stories are indeed significant for a discussion regarding the representation of motherhood; however, the focus of this essay is Marlene's understanding of motherhood as expressed not only in relation to her own daughter and mother, but also in her quite strong reactions to the distressful narratives of her guests. The first instance when she makes a remark on one of her guests' babies is when Joan tells how she found out that she was pregnant. Marlene's immediate response is: "So the only thing to do/ was to get rid of it somehow" (p. 120). However, Joan not being used to having the body of a woman and not having other women around her, did not realise that she was actually pregnant and when her lover, the chamberlain, realised her pregnancy, as Marlene points out "it was too late" (p. 121). Later in the play when Marlene and Joyce argue about family matters, Marlene accuses Joyce of being jealous for not being as clever as she was; to this, Joyce replies: "You was [*sic*] the most stupid/ for someone so clever you was [*sic*] the most stupid, get yourself pregnant, not go to the doctor, not tell" (p. 223). It is surprising that Marlene's reaction to her pregnancy, in the twentieth century, is not that different from Joan's a millennium before. It is clear that even in the twentieth century there was a lack of education about sex and pregnancy and a general secrecy about these aspects of life.

The story which is so unbearable that makes Marlene leave the table is that of Griselda. The Marquis, Griselda's husband, marries her after she promises to obey

² *Top Girls* (1991). All numerical references are to quotations from this edition of the play.

him in everything. She does obey him even when he takes away her babies to be killed, first a girl and after a boy, since it was “Walter’s child to do what he liked with” (p. 131). As mentioned before, feminist scholarship on motherhood is mainly interested in mothers’ experience (O’Reilly, 2021); yet, women as mothers have been usually depicted through the lens of male writers from ancient to modern times, as is the case with Griselda, a character that appears in the works of Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer. There is however one ancient story which scholars interested in motherhood wish to retain and enhance and that is the story of Demeter and Persephone, a paragon of the mother-daughter relationship. In stark contrast to Demeter stands Griselda, who does not react to her children being taken away. Unlike Demeter who revenges herself against her daughter’s kidnapping by stopping grain from growing and manages to have her daughter back even if only for a few months each year (Hard, 2004), Griselda’s children are not returned to her thanks to her revolt against her husband; they are returned to her precisely as a reward for her passivity.

The relationship between Demeter and Persephone has often been employed by scholars to demonstrate that empowerment is the key for effective mothering (O’Reilly, 2021, p. 158) and for this to happen, there is need for “a more discordant, direct, and defiant [politic] in our critique of patriarchal motherhood” (O’Reilly, 2021, p. 208). It is not by chance that the first and the only feminist press on motherhood is named Demeter Press. Even though this may indeed be every mother’s dream, to have the power to undo harm done to her daughter, and of every daughter, to have a mother with such a great power (Rich, 1995, p. 240), is it not dangerous to aim for such an ideal? Is Demeter not an example of the ‘good’ mother, one part of the binary opposition which feminist motherhood tries to dismantle? Having Demeter as a ‘role model’ may indeed empower women, but it may also make women who do not have such a power feel guilty of not protecting their child, be it a son or a daughter, or cause the child to feel hate, anger, disappointment towards his/her mother and these are in fact emotions frequently experienced by mothers and their children.

This anger can actually be observed in Marlene’s attitude towards her mother who, according to her, wasted her life being “[m]arried to that bastard” (p. 230), the ‘bastard’ being her father. Rich (1995) defines matrophobia as “a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers’ bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree

woman, the martyr” (p. 236). Marlene’s lack of compassion both towards her mother and her daughter can indeed be explained through the prism of an individualistic society, Thatcherism (Rees, 2020, p. 43) and her adherence to patriarchal norms and values (Biber, 2013). Yet, it can also be inferred as a deep fear of becoming her mother, of being a victim of abuse and misery. According to Jung (2004), one way of achieving this distancing is through cultivating one’s intellect:

[R]esistance to the mother can sometimes result in a spontaneous development of intellect for the purpose of creating a sphere of interest in which the mother has no place. This development springs from the daughter’s own needs and not at all for the sake of a man whom she would like to impress or dazzle by a semblance of intellectual comradeship. (...) Intellectual development is often accompanied by the emergence of masculine traits in general. (p. 27)

Jung’s description seems to be written precisely with Marlene in mind. It is understood that she decided long before getting pregnant, when she was thirteen years old, that she would get out of that place and would never have her mother’s life. Her sister may not be of the same opinion on the matter and as a socialist she views the situation of her parents through their poverty and poor living conditions, but for Marlene a child at that age meant being stuck in the same place as her mother. This is precisely what happens to Joyce even if she does not complain about her life and as Billington (2019) writes regarding the National Theatre’s performance, she is a “fiercely proud woman”. Joyce’s portrayal shows that a woman does not necessarily have to remove herself from the place of trauma in order not to be a victim.

Even if what it would have meant for her to be the mother of Angie at that age is quite clear from her comments, Marlene actually avoids answering Joyce’s questions of how she got pregnant or why she kept the baby if she was not planning to raise her. This contrasts sharply with her strong opinions about what women around her, who are mothers, should have done about their pregnancies and children. For her, as long as deciding not to go through with a pregnancy, abandoning a child or being a mother to it is one’s personal choice, any choice is acceptable. What Marlene does not accept is men’s interference in this decision. Her refusal to be a victim, her belief in choice, in the right to make a decision on one’s body and the revolt against men’s interference are traits that can lead the readers/audience to characterise her as a feminist. She is in control of her own reproductive system; she had two abortions and this “wasn’t a

problem” (p. 224). If she wishes, she may have a baby, though she has been on the pill for a long period so she’s “probably sterile” (p. 224). For a brief moment, it appears that she is willing to take Angie with her if Joyce does not want her anymore: “I’ll take her/ wake her up and pack now” (p. 223) and this would make sense if she truly believes that she may not be able to conceive again. She is not really willing though and does not actually want a child, for when Angie visits her at the office, Marlene’s reaction shows a lot of awkwardness and impatience to get rid of her (Churchill, National Theatre at Home, 2019). Angie simply does not fit in Marlene’s world. This is evident even from her physical appearance which is in contrast with that of the women in Marlene’s workplace. They are all, including herself, very fashionable, dressed in pastel colours, whereas Angie looks out of place with her vibrant coloured clothes. Unlike the mother who feels awkward in the presence of her daughter, Angie puts Marlene on a pedestal as revealed by the way she looks at her and by the way she speaks about her with her friend. Marlene’s presence seems to be the centre of her world, which leads her to run away from home to be with her. Yet, Angie never mentions to her that she knows she is her mother probably for fear of rejection.

The question that has to be posed is whether Marlene can be called a mother or not. O’Reilly (2021) advocates for the more inclusive use of the word ‘mother’ not as a noun but as a verb. As such, for one to be a mother, giving birth to the child is not compulsory. This stresses the performative function of motherhood as being something that is done and not a biological and natural feature of women. Can then the verb also be used in a manner of exclusion? That is to say, does the fact that Marlene gave birth to a child make her a mother? The answer would be no; just like not giving birth does not mean that one is not a mother, in the same way the act of giving birth does not make one a mother. Does she then have the right to interfere in the way Joyce, the woman mothering Angie, raises, educates or speaks about her? When Joyce asks Marlene what will happen to Angie who is weak and scared and does not fit in the image of a determined person Marlene advocates for, she says: “You run her down too much. She’ll be all right” (p. 233). Yet, her answer does not reflect her true thoughts about Angie since she knows very well that a person like Angie will not be all right in a world dominated by people like herself.

Twenty-First Century: From Empowered Mothers to their Daughters

Adapted from Federico Garcia Lorca's (1934/1968) play with the same title, Simon Stone's *Yerma* premiered at the Young Vic in 2017 under the direction of the playwright. The play tells the story of a woman who cannot conceive, the word 'yerma' meaning barren in Spanish. The female protagonist is simply referred to as 'Her' in the playtext and this may imply that she is reduced to something belonging to her, in this case, the desire of having a child. This desire appears to belong to her only as her partner is at ease with not having a child. The moment she realises this, after numerous IVF procedures and financial disaster, is the moment she stabs herself in the womb, hoping to go towards the child who clearly does not come (Stone, National Theatre at Home, 2017). This scene is present only in the performance, the stage directions of the text do not describe the suicide, just imply it in the words "I'll be coming/ To you." (p. 105)³. Although this essay does not discuss the play as an adaptation, it should be mentioned that in the Spanish text, *Yerma* does not commit suicide; instead, she kills her husband upon learning that he does not really want a child. As noted before, everything is about her in this adaptation, even death.

The scenery throughout the performance is barren to reflect Her's feelings. The only scene where the home is furnished, looks full and warm is when a baby is present. Only when they hold a baby, who is in fact her nephew (though the audience is not aware of this at that moment), does their life seem complete. This small intrusion in the play is meant to show how the couple's life could have been if they had a baby. The remaining scenes focus on her desire, efforts and emotions involved in the whole process of conceiving followed by the disappointment and despair each time her womb stays empty. In the meantime, people around her get pregnant or get someone pregnant by mistake, while on the pill, with no effort whatsoever. This contrast serves to reflect how frustrating this must feel to Her.

Before being a mother, any woman is a daughter and as daughters, Marlene and Her are at the opposing ends of what Jung calls the mother-complex. In Marlene, the complex manifests itself as a resistance to the mother, whereas in Her the hypertrophy of the maternal elements dominates. Yet, she is actually very conscious that she is more than her reproductive system (p. 15) and feels embarrassed to open the subject of having children. She is in fact a funny, open-minded, clever person, with

³ *Yerma* (2017). All numerical references to quotations from this play are from this book.

a successful career as the senior editor for Life Style and Culture magazine. She is also a feminist, as evidenced by her involvement with the 'Free the Nipple' campaign. She decides what to do with her body, does not shave her armpits, but shaves "down there" (p. 7); while younger and in another relationship, she decided to have an abortion though her partner wanted her to keep the baby. She also decides to put her body through twelve IVF procedures.

To argue that her obsession with having a child is rooted in her relationship to her mother, as a need to create a strong mother-child connection she did not experience with her, may seem a simplistic way of approaching the character. However, even if they do not necessarily have a hostile interaction, her mother Helen does not seem that attached to her. She is an academic, a woman who puts herself first and moreover, a woman who "could have done without it [her daughter] too" (p. 42). Helen even considered killing herself when pregnant with her, though she says nothing about her pregnancy with Mary, Her's sister. This discussion opens in the part titled in the performance 'SHE LOOKS FOR ANSWERS' (Stone, National Theatre at Home, 2017), the scenes being captioned in a Brechtian style (Clapp, 2016). The answers she looks for are presumably related to her difficulties in conceiving. The question she addresses to Helen is not included, but from her answer it can be deduced that she wants to learn about her own experience with pregnancy. Helen's words are a reflection of the kind of feminism characterising her youth:

HELEN: I hated the idea of getting pregnant. Being colonised by someone's sperm. Eugh. You know that film *Alien*? Well that's a very accurate representation of what my pregnancies felt like. Waiting, horrified, feeling this creature growing inside me, until the day where it forced itself out of me, screaming demandingly, expecting me to satisfy its every whim, a parasitic succubus". (p. 38, emphasis in original)

Helen is interrupted at this point by her daughter who is clearly disturbed by the vivid description. It should be noted that Helen is not portrayed as a bitter or mean woman; she is just being open about her experience. After a detour on the topic of food, Her suddenly wants to know why her mother never held her/them. The only instance she remembers is after she fell off the bike and her mother patted her "awkwardly like you'd pat a stranger's dog" (p. 40). Helen is shocked by the accusation and says that she always held them. Challenged to hug her in that very moment, Helen cannot find any reason to do it, but gives her a truly awkward hug nevertheless. The reason she gives

in seems to be simply to avoid embarrassment at work as she says: “Come on then. Otherwise you’ll write some bloody article about how your mother didn’t want to hug you and then all my colleagues will be bringing it up at academic board meetings and sniggering” (p. 41). Helen’s career is very important to her and this is underlined a few times in the play. Apart from the instance just mentioned, towards the end of the play when John has to go on a business trip and leaves Her with Helen, she makes a point of the fact that it was not easy to find someone to take over her lectures. Even if she is too busy to read her daughter’s blog, she understands John’s need to go on this business trip. She comes to take care of her daughter, but it appears that she does not even know how to make an avocado toast or how to use a coffee machine. Helen cares much about her own career and seems to have adopted a patriarchal sense of success, which is defined above all by individualism. However, her daughter’s inability to conceive does not bother her, which gives us an idea about her worldview. Helen, much like Marlene, is individualistic in her attitudes and despises the mother instinct as, to her, it seems to be associated with the old image of self-devoting, weak woman.

From the perspective of patriarchal motherhood, good mothers are expected to be “nurturing, altruistic, patient, devoted, loving, and selfless; they always put the needs of their children before their own and are available to them whenever needed” (O’Reilly, 2021, p. 22). If this is what a good mother looks like, then Helen is definitely not one. When Her is missing and Mary desperately tries to reach her on phone, she admits that they did not speak for a long time and the reason it was difficult to reach her was that she needed a break and turned the phone on flight mode. While Mary and John desperately try to find her, Her is at a festival together with her assistant and there, she harasses different men to impregnate her. A woman played by the same actress as her mother offers her help which creates a kind of contrast with her own mother’s behaviour. Helen was perhaps not aware of the exact state of her daughter, but she knew that she is not well; still, she put her own needs before her daughters’ and was not available when Her and Mary needed her. In a way this image resembles that of Marlene who abandons her daughter to be independent and not trapped like her mother, but is this alright from an ethical point of view? The answer would be no; just as feminist scholars on motherhood emphasise, the aim should be for both mothers and daughters to be empowered just like in the story of Demeter and Persephone, which is not the case in these two plays.

Helen's elder daughter, Mary, goes through more than one pregnancy. Her first child is a boy to whom Her feels quite close in the beginning, but as her obsession with having a child increases, she avoids seeing him. Mary is tormented by her struggle with taking care of him and sees herself as an "unmotherly mother" (p. 45). Mary's next pregnancy ends up in a miscarriage, an event which Her admits in her blog that made her feel relieved. By the end of the play when she is desperately searching for her sister, Mary is heavily pregnant again. Her husband offers no help; quite the opposite, he is just like another child she has to take care of. In order to keep her unfaithful husband at home, she buys him a PlayStation. When the mother and the two sisters discuss about this marital problem, Helen urges her daughter to leave him, to which Mary answers: "We can't all be first wave feminists" and her mother remarks: "Or any of the other waves" (p. 20). This short dialogue supports the idea that Helen is in fact a feminist, just like Her and unlike Mary. In a sociological study titled *Feminist Mothers* (1990), Gordon stresses the fact that in order to characterise a mother as feminist it is important that she defines herself as one (p. 4). However, in literary works such as the plays discussed here there are very few examples of women actually uttering the words 'I am a feminist'. Instead, their words, actions and reactions are crafted by the authors in ways that suggest if they are feminists or not.

Feminism in all its variations emphasises that biology is not destiny. Her knows this very well, that is why when she opens the subject of having a child, she underlines that she is not her reproductive system. As years pass by however, and the disagreements between the couple increase day by day, she tells John that she simply cannot let go: "I CAN'T my body is not letting me I can't I can't let this go I can't" (p. 64, emphasis in original). The reason why he cannot understand what she is going through is because he is not getting the messages she is getting, "Every single second of every single day" (p. 64). When they start trying to conceive she is 33 years old and the reason she wants a baby is not that she is very fond of them in general, but might regret later on if she did not. Just like Marlene, she had an abortion and has been on a pill for a long time and she views these factors as part of the problem. She had an abortion at 23 because she wanted to focus on her career and thought that she would have a child later. Now, she feels tricked; as hooks (2015) observes, this is the case with many women in the last decades for whom the possibility to work offered them financial independence, but "it has not adequately fulfilled human needs" (p. 134). In

an attempt to fill in this empty space, they turn to family and motherhood. Unlike them, the previous generation of women under the direct influence of the women's movement, like Marlene and Helen, could have done without children as well.

Conclusion

In the past, literature regarding women as mothers moved along the dichotomy of good/bad mothers. In contrast, more contemporary works tend to present a complex and less stereotypical image making it difficult to choose between characterising a woman as a good or a bad mother. Recent feminist scholarship on motherhood has contributed to this change of attitude to some degree. The contemporary play discussed in this essay, *Yerma*, is a representative example of such complexity. Helen is a part of her daughters' lives, in her own way, a way which works well for herself. Though her behaviour towards her daughters may be characterised as guided by self-centeredness, she is not portrayed as an evil or resentful mother. She does not actually do something to hurt her daughters nor does she actually complain about the fact that she brought them into this world and raised them. In changing the approach from 'or' to 'and', the construction of Helen's character problematises the traditional image of motherhood.

The plays discussed in this essay share a number of similarities: the fathers are absent since the focus is on the mother-daughter relationship and this relationship is presented as thorny. The daughters are however the ones criticising their mothers, that is to say they are dissatisfied with their mothers whereas the mothers (with the exception of Mary) do not find any fault with their mothering. Feminist scholars on the field argue that mothering is the opposite of patriarchal motherhood and one way of empowering women as mothers. The mothers Marlene and Helen are indeed empowered women who nevertheless are not empowered through being mothers. They are white, middle-class, college-educated reminiscent of the women involved at the beginning of the women's movement. They are empowered exactly by the fact that they reached adulthood in a time when women were thought to have the same rights as men and when motherhood appeared as an obstacle in benefiting from these rights. Marlene manages to be a successful woman in men's world by leaving behind everything that she associates with weakness, the place where she saw her mother being abused by her father and most importantly by abandoning her daughter. Helen

on the other hand, did not abandon her daughters, but apparently, they have never been the centre of her life. Nor does she comply with the 'good' mother image. The fact that they are empowered women does not mean that they raised empowered daughters, thus being far from the Demeter-Persephone ideal. Yet, deconstructing such ideals, which served their purpose at a given time, no matter how inspiring they appear, may be a step towards the discovery of what is unique about every experience, be it that of a mother, a father, a child or simply a human being

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To Come Out or Not to Come Out: Queer Coming Out in *Nine Lives* by Zodwa Nyoni

Açılmak ya da Açılmamak: Zodwa Nyoni'nin *Nine Lives* Adlı Oyununda Kuir
Açılma

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Abstract

Queer studies, as a field of gender studies with particular focus on LGBTQ+ culture and issues at the end of the twentieth century, has increased nonbinary individuals' visibility because it has enabled queer people to define and reveal their non-normative gender identities and sexual preferences in many ways and platforms. This process, also called "coming out", has become one of the watersheds in a queer person's life. Despite its importance for the queer individuals, this process is a rather manifold one. Variables such as race, religion, and family cause difficulties in terms of the coming out process of individuals. In 2014, Zimbabwean playwright Zodwa Nyoni wrote *Nine Lives* which delves into the coming out process and its challenges. The play portrays Ishmael's experiences who flees from his country Zimbabwe due to his sexual identity. Although he succeeds in entering the United Kingdom, Ishmael continues to struggle to be out with his sexual preferences. This paper scrutinises the process of coming out and how the internal and external factors in a queer person's life affect the process and its outcome as they are manifested in *Nine Lives*.

Keywords: Coming Out, Queer Theory, Contemporary British Theatre, Queer Theatre, Zodwa Nyoni

Öz

Yirminci yüzyılın sonunda, özellikle LGBTQ+ kültürü ve sorunlarına odaklanan bir toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmaları alanı olarak ortaya çıkan kuir çalışmaları, nonbinary bireylerin görünürlüğünü artırmıştır. Bu çalışmalar, kuir bireylerin normatif olmayan cinsiyet kimliklerini ve cinsel tercihlerini birçok şekilde ve platformda tanımlamalarına ve açığa çıkarmalarına olanak sağlamıştır. "Açılma" olarak da adlandırılan bu süreç, kuir bir insanın hayatındaki dönüm noktalarından biri haline gelmiştir. Kuir bireyler için arz ettiği öneme rağmen, bu süreç birtakım değişkenlere bağlı olarak çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Irk, din ve aile gibi değişkenler bireylerin açılma süreci açısından çeşitli zorluklara neden olmaktadır. Benzer bir şekilde açılma sürecini ve sürecin zorluklarını ele alan Zimbabveli oyun yazarı Zodwa Nyoni, 2014'te *Nine Lives*'i kaleme almıştır. Oyunda, cinsel kimliği nedeniyle ülkesi Zimbabwe'den kaçan Ishmael'in yaşadıkları anlatılmaktadır. Ishmael, her ne

kadar Birleşik Krallık'a girmeyi başarsa da, cinsel tercihleri noktasında açılma için mücadele etmeyi sürdürmektedir. Bu makale, *Nine Lives*'da betimlenen şekli ile açılma sürecini ve bu sürecin sonuçlarının kuir bireylerin hayatlarındaki iç ve dış faktörlerden nasıl etkilendiğini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Açılma, Kuir Teori, Çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosu, Kuir Tiyatro, Zodwa Nyoni

Introduction

The word queer is originally described as “someone or something with an odd or unusual appearance or of questionable and dubious character” (Oxford Dictionary, 1989). Yet, at the beginning of the twentieth century, queer has started to be used as a pejorative term for homosexual people. However, by the end of the twentieth century, queer is reclaimed to refer to people who do not fit into the gender binary and is linked to the LGBTQ+ pride. The reclamation of the word opened a path for queer theory to emerge as a field of critical theory that is mainly associated with gender studies. Originally, “[q]ueer theory attempts to break down the continual use of categories and labels that stereotype and harm those who are in marginalized positions, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people” (quoted in Gedro and Mizzi, 2014, p. 450) as Teresa de Lauretis points. It puts the emphasis on the fluid nature of sexuality and encourages the removal of identity categories that limit a person’s sex, gender, sexuality, and gender role.

As the awareness of nonbinary identities increases, queer people begin to take the public step of disclosing their gender identities or sexual orientations. This disclosure is referred to as coming out of the closet. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick coins the phrase “skeleton in the closet” (1990, p. 65), meaning someone has something to hide or keep private from others. In the world of queer, the skeleton symbolises the identities of queer community hidden in their closets. The process of coming out is important because it increases queer visibility and presence. However, many LGBTQ+ individuals choose to remain silent without taking a public step in their lives as these public steps can result in being exposed to shaming, humiliation, and discrimination in their social circles.

The reactions given to the coming out process vary from one environment to another. This means that the consequences of coming out might involve negative responses or actions taken against queer people. It is possible to see such responses and consequences of coming out in the works of playwrights, as well. For instance, Zimbabwean playwright Zodwa Nyoni writes *Nine Lives* in 2014. The play depicts a gay

character named Ishmael, who knows that his sexual orientation will not be tolerated in his country Zimbabwe. That is why he flees to the UK. Yet his problems relating to his sexual identity and to his coming out process do not come to an end just by changing his environment.

The struggles with coming out stem from several reasons. Religion is one of the main reasons why LGBTQ+ individuals feel oppressed about coming out. Brenda Beagan and Brenda Hattie state that “[m]any people experience conflict between an LGBTQ identity and any religion with which they identify, since many faith traditions denounce homosexuality” (2015, p. 1). Homosexuality is considered as a sin in most religious beliefs. It is not tolerated, in fact, nonbinary identities are either chastised or cast out their societies.

Additionally, the lack of family support leads LGBTQ+ individuals to stay closeted. When LGBTQ+ individuals believe that coming out would bear devastating consequences for themselves and their family, they choose to keep their gender identities and sexual preferences hidden. In their study conducted on family support’s effects on LGBTQ+ youth, Adam McCormick and Stephen Baldrige conclude that “LGBTQ youth who are not out to their family report that the lack of acceptance was the most overwhelming obstacle in their lives” (2019, p. 33). In situations where the parents lack the education on differing gender identities, they tend to deem their children as a disgrace to their names and/or to their families. Such negative responses and lacking the support causes the lack of self-esteem and confidence in individuals.

Last but not least, racism appears as one of the reasons as to why LGBTQ+ do not disclose their sexual orientation. As one of the biggest problems of the world, racism is an obstacle when it comes to coming out. In their study conducted on ethnic/racial differences in the coming out process, Margaret Rosario, Eric W. Schrimshaw, and Joyce Hunter (2004) write that “[f]or ethnic/racial minority LGB individuals, the coming-out process may be complicated by cultural factors that operate to re-tard or arrest the process” (p. 216). People with certain inherited attributes still endure hard times because of their racial background. LGBTQ+ members with different ethnicities living in foreign countries are often victimised by the bigotry towards their ethnicities on top of their gender identities. Such bigotry causes them to feel doubly ostracised both because of their ethnic and gender identity. In the following part of the paper, the coming out process and how

internal and external factors affect this process are examined in Zodwa Nyoni's *Nine Lives*.

To Come Out or Not to Come Out: *Nine Lives* by Zodwa Nyoni

In 2014, Zodwa Nyoni wrote *Nine Lives*, a monologue of a gay asylum seeker Ishmael, who recently fled from Zimbabwe and is dispersed into Leeds struggling to get his residency. In the writing process of the play, Nyoni makes use of the experiences of asylum seekers, as well as her own. Regarding her experience to get a residency, Nyoni says "most of my teens and all of my 20s were shaped by applications for residency. I spent a lot of time feeling unwanted despite giving back to communities and to the arts" (The Guardian, 2020). Being a refugee, Nyoni portrays how it is to be a refugee and gay through her protagonist Ishmael as opposed to how it is reflected by the governments.

The first scene of the play mainly focuses on Ishmael's escape to the United Kingdom and how much he craves for adapting to his new surroundings as himself. He does not have a permanent place to stay in and he is constantly dragged wherever the Home Office sends him to. He flees from his home country as he is afraid of being rejected by his friends and family if he were to come out. Furthermore, due to the spiteful approach towards homosexuality in his country, he would possibly encounter homophobic persecutions. As Gibson Ncube states "non-normative genders are criminalised in Africa" (2016, p. 10). They are considered "un-African" (Epprecht, 2008, p. 6). Being one of them, Ishmael leaves Africa and pursues happiness in the United Kingdom.

Attesting to this flight, the play opens with Ishmael on a dimly lit stage. In order to light up the place, he takes out a light bulb from his pocket and screws it into the holder. As the light switches on, Ishmael gets startled, because an angry mob marches towards him and he starts running for his life. Ishmael's turning on the light can be read as a metaphor for his coming out as he is immediately chased by a group of people referring to the homophobic reactions of society to queer visibility. As soon as a queer individual comes out with their gender identity or sexual preference, they may encounter negative responses or even assaults from their society. In Ishmael's case, it is seen that when he is under the dim light, in other words, in his closet, he is not disturbed or agitated. However, the moment he gets to have a bit of visibility, he starts to be chased down by a group of people.

Commenting on this chase, as he outruns the mob, Ishmael stops to sing to a Zimbabwean instrument:

Some of us are running. Some of us are fleeing. Some of us know wars that will never cease. Some of us were persecuted. Some of us were stripped and beaten. Some of us have scars that will never heal. (Nyoni, 2014, p. 1)

The song has a crucial function when the overall message of the play is considered because Ishmael sings for people alike. 'Some of us' in the song refers to refugees, nonbinary people, and nonbinary refugees like him. It comments on their common fate. They have to flee from the oppressions of their people, countries, and beliefs in order to be themselves and find peace. Yet, each of them has to face various difficulties as accentuated at various parts of the song. Each and every sentence reveals the fact that these people's lives will never be free of suffering. They get assaulted, beaten, and wounded. They are either imprisoned, sent back, dispersed, or left alone without any choices. Ishmael's likening the possibility of being kicked out of the United Kingdom and being sent back to Africa to a "nightmare" (Nyoni, 2014, p. 2) explains how it feels for these people to live. In this sense, the song turns into a collective elegy of those who share the same fate with Ishmael.

The homophobic atmosphere created in African countries deprives people of their freedom to be themselves. The country's intense homophobic approach is the very reason why Ishmael ends up fleeing his country. He knows that his country will not tolerate his homosexuality in any way. He knows that he will not have a place in his society if he chooses to come out. He fears that he would be treated differently by his friends and family alike. As he gets older, he starts to be afraid of what "drunk mouths would say" (Nyoni, 2014, p. 4). As he realises and embraces his tendencies, his country begins to feel more like a prison rather than home. It is at this point he begins to long for a place that he can call home and feel it. The consequences of coming out and staying in his country might have been fatal for Ishmael, which justifies his decision to leave the country in the first place. Even if he were sympathised with by a few people, he would still have to deal with homophobic slurs and assaults. He would be marginalised in his society; he would be chastised and/or end up losing everything that he has, and it might even lead to a point where he loses his life.

The oppressive environment and intolerant attitude towards nonbinary gender identities are affiliated with religious beliefs. In a study on the role of religion in internalised homophobia conducted by Kubicek et al., a participant claims that “I am always committing a sin just because I’m being me” (2009, p. 612). This sort of approach naturally affects the individuals who are a part of a religion. Such negative depictions supported by religious claims might lead individuals towards internalised homophobia. This means that LGBTQ+ people would start to be in a state of doubting, questioning, and conflicting themselves due to the idea that they do not meet the needs of the correct way to be.

For instance, Ishmael admits that he contemplates coming out to his mother. Yet, he does not, as he is sure of the result. Humorously, he says “I thought about telling my mother. But maybe she’d die right there on the spot, and then be resurrected to drag me to church to receive a healing” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 4). The possibility of his son coming out as a gay is so impossible that he thinks she would have a heart attack and be resurrected immediately to drag him into a church. He believes that his mother would recognise his identity as a sort of sickness to be cured in church.

When such an oppressive topic turns one against oneself, such religious passion can have their families and friends turn against them after coming out. Since coming out is an ongoing process that a nonbinary person relives with each person they come out to, an ongoing support is utmost needed. Familial support can contribute to an individual’s mental welfare, self-esteem, and independence to be themselves even when their religions are strictly oppressive. In their study, Kathleen Miller, Ryan Watson, and Marla Eisenberg conclude:

Religious affiliation, while associated with both depressive symptoms and family acceptance, was not clearly identified as either a detrimental or protective quality for LGBTQ youth. Rather, we found that family acceptance, regardless of religious affiliation, continued to be a powerful protective factor for LGBTQ youth. (2020, p. 35)

Familial and friendly bonds are the most intimate bonds a person can have. Therefore, this kind of support is mainly provided by one’s family. It can be an emotional support or a financial one depending on the individual’s age. It further complicates things when they are not accepted by their families and friends alike. When they lack the support of the ones that they feel closest to, it may result in LGBTQ+ people repressing themselves.

It is no surprise that LGBTQ+ people feel an immense amount of stress when they cannot find the courage and freedom to come out to people closest to them. Regarding familial support, McCormick and Baldrige state that “family acceptance is one of the strongest predictors of the health, mental health, and well-being outcomes of LGBTQ youth” (2019, p. 36). This can easily be seen in Ishmael’s example. Ishmael admits that after he leaves his country, he did not contact any of his family or friends. For years, Ishmael contemplates coming out to his parents, curious as to what they would say, and how they would react. He claims, “I spent years practicing what I’d even say to my father” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 4), but he remains silent as he cannot predict whether his father can handle the news. Regarding his father’s reaction, he says, “maybe he’d understand. Or maybe I’d die right there on the spot. No, not his only son. Not the one who’s supposed to carry his name. Not in this family! Not in this house!” (Nyoni, 2015, p. 4). In the end, the oppressive burden to carry out his father’s bloodline weighs heavier and he gives into it as the heteronormative understanding of his family would not allow such a stain on their family.

The situation is not so different when it comes to his friends. Although he feels so close to them, Ishmael does not feel comfortable enough to come out to them. Ishmael claims “I wanted to tell them. When I was fifteen, I knew for sure. But, I was worried about them treating me differently” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 4). Although he wants to come out to them, he feels forced to stay closeted due to the fact that their responses might be negative. He claims that he knows about his identity for sure yet, he chooses not to come out to them because he thinks that they will not understand. As he grows older, he starts to feel those around him will not see him as a man. Even when it is the people to whom he feels closest, he feels oppressed about coming out.

It is evident that LGBTQ+ people encounter many hardships throughout their lives when they attempt to be accepted by their families, friends, or societies in general. Lacking support from the loved ones leads to the lack of confidence and hopelessness. In order to explain the feelings of LGBTQ+ people, Rozhan Khdir and Gözde Latifoğlu state that “feelings of hopelessness and pessimism have been commonly experience[d] among [LGBTQ+] people” (2021, p. 1). Therefore, LGBTQ+ people often feel ostracised when they live in homophobic and discriminatory environments. Ishmael’s situation presents a comparable example. Throughout the play, Ishmael appears to be overtly stressed about revealing his identity even when he is in the UK. His stress mainly stems

from the fact that he comes from a country that has heterosexual expectations with a homophobic frame of mind. He feels as if he would be judged and shamed regardless of whom he comes out to. For instance, he meets a white girl named Bex at the park and Bex acts quite friendly towards Ishmael. However, Ishmael does not know how to act around someone friendly, so he ends up lying about who he is. Even after he redeems his lies and Bex accepts him as he is, Ishmael cannot come out to Bex directly.

Ishmael's ostracisation is also caused by his loneliness as he is denied support from people like him. He tries to contact his old lover David with whom he escaped Zimbabwe. David justifiably does not want to risk losing hard-earned asylum by helping Ishmael. But this does not change the fact that Ishmael is left alone even by people that share the same fate. His experiences lead him to feel oppressed by minority stress which can be seen among the members of a minority group. Minority stress is described as "excess stress to which individuals from stigmatised social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position" (Meyer, 2003, p. 675). Ishmael's minority stress seems to be rooted in both external and internal factors. Nicholas C. Borgogna, Ryon C. McDermott, Stephan L. Aita, and Matthew M. Kridel explain such factors as "discrimination, harassment, and prejudice based on one's identity (i.e., heterosexist social policies) are considered external stressors, whereas the negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions one has as a result of their identity (i.e., internalized heterosexism) are considered internalized stressors" (2019, p. 55). As someone who is aware of the discrimination and prejudice his country harbours, and the harassment he endures during his encounter in the Home Office, Ishmael begins to feel the minority stress due to external factors. His experiences with these external factors lead him to have negative thoughts and feelings towards his identity. Although this does not necessarily mean that he despises what he is, he is still not comfortable with being open about himself.

Later, with a flyer he pulls out of his suitcase, Ishmael demonstrates that he has been to a place called the Sanctuary Point, a place that holds gatherings of others like him. He meets a Nigerian man who greets him warmly. He is informed that there are five Nigerians, one Ghanaian, and six Libyans. As the man advises him to not worry, Ishmael begins to worry. Although he is out and is in a different country, he still feels somewhat oppressed to talk about his homosexuality. He fears to let them know about his claim in the United Kingdom. He says "I know that, even in our collective misfortune, my brothers

and my sisters could still shun me. A citizen of the unwanted being excluded by the excluded” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 5.) In their study, Robin J. Lewis, Valerian J. Derlega, Jessica L. Griffin, and Alison C. Krowinski state that “[o]ne’s expectations regarding prejudice and discrimination as a result of being gay/lesbian may also be important in understanding the distress of G/L/B individuals” (2003, p. 718). He believes that although everyone else in the room is cast away or forced to run, they can still be judgmental about Ishmael’s sexual orientation. He fears that his homosexuality could be perceived as inferior to others’ claims. Despite the diversity in reasons for people to leave their country, Ishmael sees his homosexuality to be unspeakable. He believes that due to his sexual preferences, he would be shunned by those who are also otherised for different reasons. Ishmael feels doubly ostracised as he feels like a pariah not only in his country but also among those who are excluded.

As the story progresses, it is found that Ishmael was not eagerly accepted when he first came to the United Kingdom. The Home Office does not believe that he is gay, so they ask him to prove it: “[t]hey ask me, what does a penis feel like? Why do I like it? (Visibly upset.) I need to tell them we weren’t dirty. I need to tell them we were so much more. I need David” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 4). Although he was forced to keep his true identity a secret back in his own country, he is now asked to be open about it and is embarrassed as he feels uncomfortable to even talk about it because of the direct way the questions are asked. Despite the fact that the United Kingdom is known for its embrative attitude towards variety in genders, it does not seem to apply equally to Ishmael because he will not be granted asylum for as long as he does not cooperate. As Ishmael does not answer the private questions, his residency claim is postponed. This causes him to feel even more stressed and insecure.

Ishmael does not want to leave it to chance to see whether people like him and accept him for who he is. His stress leads him to forget how to be someone around people. He either chooses to remain silent or lie about his identity. This is one of the results of minority stress faced due to the distal stressors. Kyle K.H. Tan, Gareth J. Treharne, Sonja J. Ellis, Johanna M. Schmidt, and Jaimie F. Veale assert that “proximal stressors also [include] nondisclosure, which describes attempts made by TGD [trans and gender diverse] people to conceal their TGD identity in an attempt to protect themselves or others close to them from directly experiencing distal stressors” (2019, p. 12). Despite the fact that he did not suffer any homophobic responses for coming out, he gets involved

in a mental state where every coming out scenario ends disastrously. He does not even come out to people who seem to show affection and connection.

As both his possession and stage prop, Ishmael carries a suitcase that he brought with him from Harare. Changing from scene to scene, he uses the suitcase as different objects such as a chair, bench, or a sofa or he pulls out different sets of objects such as African dancing shells or Sanctuary Point fliers. The suitcase is like a symbol of Ishmael and his identity. Just like the suitcase, he is constantly on the move, ready to be opened yet always closed as he cannot find the right place and circumstances. It is like his closet; all his possessions and items regarding his experiences are placed inside the suitcase belonging nowhere waiting to be opened. As he proceeds with his story, he uses the items one by one linking them to his past and current experiences.

Another reason why the suitcase resembles his closet as a gay person is because it also includes items that are only known to Ishmael. Throughout the play, inside of Ishmael's suitcase is not seen by anyone else unless he tells the stories related to the items that he pulls out of it. Similarly, his homosexuality is not known to everyone unless he decides to reveal it to certain people such as David, and indirectly to his newly made friend Bex in the UK. He also tells the Home Office that he is gay to justify his claim. But he is not truly out. He does not feel comfortable enough to come out and reveal his sexual preferences vocally. Hence, just like his suitcase, Ishmael is loaded but both can never find a place to settle and to open.

Sedgwick describes the closet as the defining structure for gay oppression in the twenty-first century (1990, p. 71). This is because the closet exists as societies accept heterosexuality as the default sexual preference along with the gender binary as the default gender identity. Therefore, nonbinary individuals feel forced to come out to disclose their identities and if they choose to remain closeted, they will be regarded as heterosexual. It is quite appropriate to link Sedgwick's statement to Ishmael's situation. As he is raised in a country that only sees the gender binary as the only possible gender category, he is oppressed. He is afraid of facing the consequences of coming out because of his homophobic country, religious family, David's abandonment, and discriminatory approach of the Home Office. He spends all his life worrying about how he would be perceived if he dares to come out. Ishmael's learned hopelessness leads him to never be at ease with anyone around him.

In the fifth scene, Ishmael finally casts aside his insecurities and fears to embrace himself even for a brief moment. He pulls out a pair of pink and glittery stilettos from his suitcase. This allows the readers and spectators to realise that this is one of the examples in which his suitcase should be interpreted as his closet as a gay man. As he shows the stilettos to the spectators, he appears hesitant. It is crystal clear that Ishmael might be an out gay man, but he has not yet completely left his closet and still lives in it. At night, Ishmael decides to go to a gay club that he could not find the courage to enter before. As he puts on the stilettos, he says “I want to know what it’s like to become. Inner beings escaping from their cages. Free to be. I want to escape my body” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 14). Though he does not verbally come out to anyone, Ishmael embraces himself and visibly steps into his reality. Regarding coming out Paula Rust (1993) states that “[c]oming out is a process of discovery in which the individual sheds a false heterosexual identity and comes to correctly identify and label [their] true essence, which is homosexual” (p. 53). Similar to how Ishmael likened their lives to “concrete cocoons” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 1) from which they shed the past to new afflictions, his coming out exemplifies Rust’s description of coming out. By accepting to be himself, Ishmael finally comes out to himself and starts to shed the hidden and false heterosexual image he has maintained to keep his own identity a secret.

He is later accompanied by a possible drag queen in the club. He is asked to let go and start dancing. To be able to comprehend this unfamiliar situation and feelings, he asks himself some questions such as “[i]s this what it feels like to not be afraid? Is this what freedom feels like? Is this how it feels to be yourself?” (Nyoni, 2014, p. 14). He recognises his awkwardness, and he embraces it. He finally gets a glimpse of what it means to be himself or what it feels like to become somebody. He is able to communicate with the drag queen in gay slang. As he gets lost in the moment, he realises that he has been holding himself for too long and he finally decides to move on. Once again, he does not directly come out, but he begins to perform his gender as a way of coming out. Regarding performing one’s gender, Judith Butler states:

Gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. (1990, p. 33)

It is evident that as Ishmael begins to perform his gender, he accepts and becomes who he is supposed to be. He dresses, acts, dances, and speaks like a gay man. He is finally at peace with himself. For the first time in what feels like forever, he feels free of his worries, insecurities, and fears. Pure joy completely takes over him as he dances.

At the end of the play, Ishmael receives a letter from the Home Office that bursts his bubble, and he is reminded that it is not that easy to have a choice once again. He will have to go for his last appeal, and he has to prove himself yet again. It is possible that he will have to endure the same homophobic approach shown by those responsible for refugees in the country's Home Office. In the beginning, Ishmael comes to the United Kingdom with the hopes that he will be welcomed and accepted as he is. However, he encounters new difficulties and a different wave of homophobia.

Conclusion

Coming out process is one of the most important phases in a queer person's life. This process does not only provide an opportunity for queer individuals to be open about their identities but also increases queer visibility and presence. However, reactions to coming out are not always positive and embracing. This process is also negatively affected by internal and external factors. It is concluded that racism is one of the reasons as to why LGBTQ+ individuals feel ostracised. It is seen in Ishmael's example that Ishmael encounters racism in the UK which is one of the reasons why he struggles to come out. Furthermore, religion is deduced to be one of the reasons why LGBTQ+ individuals cannot come out. Ishmael's endeavours to come out are also oppressed by religious views of his country because homosexuality is seen as a sin. It is further understood that lack of family support interferes with Ishmael's self-esteem and causes him to feel insecure about himself. The external factors of coming out cause Ishmael to develop minority stress and internalised homophobia which ultimately make him feel forced to hide his preferences or lie about himself. The negative reactions and depictions make Ishmael believe that every coming out scenario would end up in misery. However, despite the challenges and negativities Ishmael does not give up. Therefore, it is further concluded that he still strives to be himself which is the reason why he escapes his country in the first place.

Ishmael's story exemplifies the case of many LGBTQ+ members like him. Whether it is their countries, religions, faiths, values, families, or all of these reasons together, they are forced to live their lives within the boundaries without being allowed to settle anywhere. As one of these people, Ishmael is also the one who chooses to remain closeted due to the intolerance and homophobia he has been exposed to. Therefore, he takes the bold step of giving up on his family, friends, and country to start a new chapter where he can be himself unapologetically. However, life does not treat him kindly even after his departure. He struggles to get a residency and he experiences a homophobic encounter in the country's Home Office. He is humiliated and treated as inferior, which ultimately makes his coming out process even more challenging than it is.

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Theatre Academy

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İnceleme Makelesi/Review

She Wolf by Isla Cowan

Isla Cowan'ın *She Wolf* Oyunu

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Abstract

This review provides a brief analysis and an evaluation of the contemporary play, *She Wolf* by Isla Cowan, a young Scottish playwright. The play offers a sophisticated ecofeminist analysis of the parallelism between human nature and wild nature, exploring the connections between women and nature in culture, politics and economy. The play's protagonist, Maggie, transforms from prey into a predator as she fights against the oppressive patriarchal and capitalist society. However, this transformation ultimately leads to Maggie's mental collapse. Although the play harbours a provocative potential against the patriarchal system, the ending is bleak and may undermine the play's aggressive and motivational power. Despite this, Cowan provides a powerful performance that allows the audience to sympathise with Maggie's concerns and question her savage change.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Capitalism, Nature, Isla Cowan, *She Wolf*

Öz

Bu inceleme, genç İskoç oyun yazarı Isla Cowan'ın *She Wolf* adlı çağdaş oyununun kısa bir analizini ve değerlendirmesini sunmaktadır. Oyun, kültür, politika ve ekonomide kadın ve doğa arasındaki bağlantıları keşfederek, insan doğası ile vahşi doğa arasındaki paralelliğin çok yönlü ekofeminist analizini sunmaktadır. Oyunun kahramanı Maggie, baskıcı ataerkil ve kapitalist topluma karşı savaşırken bir avdan bir avcıya dönüşür. Ancak bu dönüşüm, nihayetinde Maggie'nin zihinsel çöküşüne yol açar. Oyun, ataerkil sisteme karşı kışkırtıcı bir potansiyel barındırır da kasvetli bir sonla bitmesi oyunun saldırgan ve motive edici gücünü bir ölçüde baltalamaktadır. Buna rağmen Cowan, izleyicinin Maggie'nin endişelerine yakınlık duymasını ve onun vahşi değişimini sorgulamasını sağlayan güçlü bir performans sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekofeminizm, Kapitalizm, Doğa, Isla Cowan, *She Wolf*

Review

She Wolf (2022), the latest play of Isla Cowan, a young representative of British new writing, premiered at Assembly Roxy Theatre (Downstairs) under the direction of Joanna Bowman and Josephine Balfour-Oatts. The production runs at Assembly Roxy

throughout August 2022. Performance notes in this review are based on Isla Cowan's performance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival on August 13.

Even though Isla Cowan has only been writing plays for a relatively short time, her political plays, acting performances and accomplishments (Winner of the 2021 Alpine Fellowship Theatre Prize and 2022 Assembly Art Awards) have been recognised in British new writing. In her latest play, *She Wolf*, which is about a young professional woman trapped in a patriarchal and capitalist society, Cowan offers a sophisticated feminist analysis of the parallelism between human nature and wild nature. Cowan's playwrighting can, at best, be defined as challenging in terms of questioning modern life through ecofeminism. Her play asserts an ecofeminist perspective that explores the connections between women and nature in culture, politics and economy. Setting the play in a zoo features the parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women. The sounds of the animals in the cage heard in the background while the character speaks echo with the cry of the character who is oppressed by the patriarchal and capitalist society. This echo creatively exposes the patriarchal dominance over both women and nature.

As the play begins, the audience is confronted with a desperate character, Maggie, who thinks her relationships and professional career falter despite her best efforts to succeed. Maggie directly talks to the audience and uses the analogy of the alpha wolf in her monologue to depict her battle to get to the top of the food chain of the capitalist society, where only the strongest survive, by giving up the so-called civilised human behaviours that hold her back. Disheartened by the events she witnesses with her family, colleagues, boss and callous boyfriend, Maggie realises that only fighting can drive her to the top from the trio of the fight, flight or freeze, which she defines as the rules of survival. Mark Fisher notes in his review that fight, flight or freeze are our primary responses to threats: "We do not need to think about them. Our animal instinct kicks in long before rational thought. We simply act. Beneath the high-status jobs, the designer clothes and the fancy cars, our animal selves remain" (Fisher, 2022). All of our so-called civilised habits and duties are replaced by primordial impulses when it comes to survival. When capitalism gradually takes over Maggie's living space and becomes so oppressive that it does not give her any freedom, the only thing left to do is to fight constantly, as Thomas Hobbes describes with the term 'state

of nature' in his famous work *Leviathan*. The capitalist society in which Maggie lives and what Hobbes calls the state of nature are quite comparable. There is constant fighting in both dystopian worlds, and no one is certain of their own lives or future. People employ their innate impulses to preserve or defend their lives. This leads Maggie to suffer from anxiety, fear and psychological issues and becomes more animalistic and threatening as she gets deeper into her story.

Totally driven by monologue, the play explores the disturbing relationship between capitalism and exploitation through the transformation of a young woman from prey into a predator. This transformation is rather remarkable because Cowan seems to be arguing for a fundamental change that prioritises collaboration and care through more aggressive and forceful behaviours to undermine patriarchal domination. Along with her transformation, this aggressive and dominant attitude can be observed in her voice. As time passes, we sense blood on her lips as she recalls the circumstances that have brought her here. Cowan's powerful performance makes it easy to sympathise with Maggie's concerns and question her savage change. Cowan impresses the audience and her speech strikes them as this transformation begins. The audience, in reality, is a part of the setting. The audience bears the same responsibilities as zoo visitors. This time, though, they see the enslavement and exploitation of a member of their own species in front of them. As a result, the audience is shocked to face that they also have a stake in this order.

The power of *She Wolf* stems from grasping the urgency of understanding of the oppression of marginalised groups and nature are connected by cause. Patriarchal dominance, which assumes masculine characteristics are more desirable, has caused the annihilation of nature as well as the marginalisation of groups such as women, children and even animals. Due to its emphasis on efficiency at all costs and disregard for many characteristics viewed as feminine, including nature itself, capitalism exacerbates this tyranny. While Maggie appears to be undergoing a transformation in order to survive, her repeated phrase "this world is not made for you" throughout the play presents the fact that there will be no winner in this never-ending fight. Maggie, hence, becomes vulnerable and suffers a mental collapse towards the end of the play.

As Ben Hall claims, some parts of monologue are pushed a bit too far beyond the realm of realism, which weakens the play's political message (Hall, 2022). Although

Cowan's play, in general, harbours a provocative potential against the patriarchal system, the ending is quite bleak; it is unclear if Maggie's narrative goes beyond hysteria in her conversations with the doctor (off-voice) at the end of the play. Even though this approach can be considered as an emphasis on the destructiveness of capitalism, it seems to undermine the aggressive and motivational power of the play on the audience. While the ambiguity of the end of the play undermines its aggressiveness, Cowan provides a powerful monologue which captures the spirit of our age.

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İnceleme Makelesi/Review

Carol Ann Duffy's *Everyman* (2015), A Contemporary Morality Play

Çağdaş Bir Ahlak Oyunu Olarak Carol Ann Duffy'nin *Everyman* (2015)
Adlı Oyunu

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Abstract

Morality is a particular system that regulates human relations, and in this respect, moral behaviour is one of the most necessary attributes of humankind as a social being. A myriad of philosophers, writers and playwrights from various societies has tried to establish moral codes of conduct that individuals must obey in order to lead them to a better world. Emerged in the fifteenth century, morality plays still have a significant role in contemporary discussions on morality by the use of characters personifying moral qualities or abstract concepts. This review examines today's concept of morality in Carol Ann Duffy's *Everyman* (2015), an adaptation of a medieval morality play of the same name, which provides striking examples from the consumerist and materialist lifestyles of modern people.

Keywords: Morality Play, Adaptation Studies, Ecocriticism, Carol Ann Duffy

Öz

Ahlak, insan ilişkilerini düzenleyen bir sistemdir ve bu yönüyle ahlaki davranış, sosyal bir varlık olan insanın en belirleyici özelliklerinden biridir. Çeşitli toplumlardan sayısız filozof, yazar ve oyun yazarı daha yaşanabilir bir dünya oluşturmak için bireylerin uyması gereken ahlaki davranış kuralları oluşturmuşlardır. On beşinci yüzyılda ortaya çıkan ahlak oyunları, ahlaki nitelikleri veya soyut kavramları kişileştiren karakterlerin kullanımıyla ahlak üzerine yapılan çağdaş tartışmalarda hala önemli bir role sahiptir. Bu çalışma, günümüzün ahlak kavramını, modern insanların tüketici ve materyalist yaşam tarzından çarpıcı örnekler sunan, aynı adlı Orta Çağ ahlak oyununun uyarlaması olan Carol Ann Duffy'nin *Everyman* (2015) adlı oyununda incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ahlak Oyunları, Adaptasyon Çalışmaları, Eko-eleştiri, Carol Ann Duffy

Review

God/Good Deeds. The angels weep to see the ruin of the earth:

the gathered waters, which I called the seas,
unclean, choking on themselves.

The dry land – fractured, fracked. The firmament so
full of filth,

my two Great Lights, to rule the day and night, have
tears in their eyes. (Duffy, 2015, p. 3)

Commissioned by the National Theatre, *Everyman* (2015), one of the few plays of Carol Ann Duffy, premiered at the National Theatre under the direction of Rufus Norris, the artistic director of the theatre. Performance notes in this review are based on performance of the play available online on the National Theatre at Home platform.

Even though Carol Ann Duffy is famous for her poetry as the first woman Poet Laureate of Britain, she has also produced plays such as *My Country* (2017), *Everyman* (2015) and *Grimm Tales* (2010). In *Everyman*, which is an updated version of the fifteenth-century morality play with the same title, Duffy actually touches on contemporary issues like the fast pace of corporate lifestyle, the dissolution of the nuclear family, and environmental issues like the annihilation of nature. As the epigraph, which in the play is the opening remark made by God, implies, this story asserts an environment-conscious morality that removes religion from moral teaching by establishing moral responsibility we should have for all life, the universe, and our planet. This contemporary adaptation of a medieval morality play questions modern life from an ecocritical perspective. The setting of the play which is a bar, portrayal of the characters as personifications of materialism, and use of techno and rap music are elements that make this story a contemporary morality play for all people.

The play begins with the fortieth birthday party of Everyman who is an abstract figure representing all humanity. Together with his guests, they drink alcoholic beverages, dance in an intimate way, and use drugs during the party. Suddenly, the audience is confronted with God, who, appears to be a woman sweeper working at the club in this adaptation. God complains about human individualism and lack of responsibility to nature and other creatures. She talks about how all elements of creation, like rivers and fruits, are destroyed by these 'selfish' creatures and as a punishing God, she summons Death who is represented by a man with a shopping bag, to take Everyman on his final journey. Everyman's confrontation with death is highly ironic. As a representative of all humanity, he tries to bribe Death into postponing

his end. It is a very suitable action for Everyman, a member of our capitalist society, to act as if money was able to buy everything. However, in this case it does not work. Everyman falls on the stage in slow motion, dies, and his spiritual journey begins.

As in the original text, Everyman searches for a companion in the allegorical characters of Fellowship, Kindred, Goods, and Good Deeds. Although the characters and the ultimate aim of the play are the same as the adapted text, there are many contrasts between the medieval text and the new version. In the original play, Everyman is judged by his seven deadly sins which are determined by the Bible. However, it is not plausible for Duffy to write a morality play in the same religious context for modern audiences. Therefore, she does not try to pass religious messages to the audience but rather aims to raise awareness of moral conscience and responsibility for all beings in the world. All the characters in the play from whom he seeks help in his spiritual journey draw attention to the way he, and every human, devotes their time to materialistic things only.

The audience firstly observes his consumerist lifestyle at his birthday party. His friends and Everyman have no intimate connections with each other. They just have full enjoyment of the party by consuming alcohol, drugs, and food. The songs played at the party also draw a picture of humanity in a capitalist society. These songs thematise human hegemony over nature and other beings by calling them masters of the universe (Duffy, 2015, p.4) . His meeting with his family members also tackles one of the major problems in a capitalist society: the dissolution of the family. Everyman's father has dementia and his mother has cancer, but he is disinterested in them and their health problems. We are informed that he visits them only when he needs them and the only way for him to show his affection is to send them money. His parents also reject to accompany him in his journey. These elements of the story show the destructiveness of capitalism.

Duffy seems to argue for a fundamental change in the way of living that prioritises money and consumerism which is based on human superiority over animals, plants, and natural resources. The use of costumes and stage props also appeals to the modern audience. Goods, as a group of characters, have no religious connotation. In the new version, they are portrayed as wearing luxurious gold dresses and pieces of jewellery. They seem to obey Everyman and accompany him. However, the

audience soon realises that in fact Everyman is the one to obey them by turning into a vehicle for capitalism. Everyman's striking conversations with Goods represent his ignorance of the fact that the materialist attitudes he has taken are destroying nature on which the life of humanity and all other beings depend.

The most memorable moment of the play in which Everyman makes a progress in his spiritual journey from ignorance to awareness is when a large pile of rubbish is trundled onto the stage. In this scene, Good Deeds, which is the only character who can help him reach salvation enters the stage struggling to survive in a polluted environment. This touching scene creates an awareness of environmental issues for both Everyman and the audience.

Accordingly, as Duffy aims to write a morality play for every human in the contemporary world, she does away with many social and moral rules that religious people consider essential. Religion has no longer the primary position for determining moral qualities. Sacred books like the Bible and the Quran lost their importance for a good life. In contrast, the religious faith in the adapted version is replaced by an environmental conscience which orients moral values for creating an awareness and concerns towards ecological degradation in the Anthropocene Epoch or Era of Man in which everything on Earth such as nature, and animals serve the needs of humanity. In this way, the concept of being human is questioned by God/Good Deeds through Everyman's relationship with the planet.

In other words, Everyman's good and bad behaviours are determined by environmental concerns, not religion. For instance, although there are many references to the cardinal sins of pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth committed by Everyman in the play, the main point is to develop a perspective of these sins in relation to environmental problems. All in all, to raise environmental consciousness among people, *Everyman*, as a modern morality play, now adopts an eco-centric mind-set versus an anthropocentric one as this appears to be the most pressing moral problem today.

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