



# THEATRE ACADEMY

JOURNAL OF WORLD THEATRE

◊ E-ISSN 2980-1656 ◊ VOLUME 1 ◊ ISSUE 2 ◊ YEAR 2023 ◊



---

**ATATÜRK ÜNİVERSİTESİ**

**EDEBİYAT FAKÜLTESİ**

**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BÖLÜMÜ**

**THEATRE ACADEMY DERGİSİ**

---

**ATATÜRK UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF LETTERS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**THEATRE ACADEMY JOURNAL**

---

**ULUSLARARASI HAKEMLİ DERGİ/INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL**

**CİLT/VOLUME: 1**

**SAYI/ISSUE: 2**

**EYLÜL/SEPTEMBER 2023**

---

**ERZURUM**

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/theatreacademy>

---

**Yayımlayan/Publisher**

Atatürk Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü  
Atatürk University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature

**Dergi Sahibi/Owner of the Journal**

Prof. Dr. Dilaver DÜZGÜN / Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dekanı

**Editör/Editor-in-Chief**

Doç. Dr. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ

**Yardımcı Editor/Co-Editor**

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tuğba AYGAN

Arş. Gör. Yavuz PALA

**Oyun/Kitap İncelemeleri Editörü /Reviews Editor**

Florentina GÜMÜŞ

**Yabancı Dil Editörü/Editor of Foreign Language**

Arş. Gör. Mehmet ÜNAL

**Teknik Redaksiyon/Technical Redaction**

Arş. Gör. Esmâ SEÇEN HINISLIOĞLU

**Dizgi/Typesetting**

Arş. Gör. Yavuz PALA

**Kapak Tasarım/Cover Design**

Atatürk Üniversitesi Marka Yönetim Birimi

**Kapak Görseli/Cover Image**

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi S. Yenal VANGÖLÜ

**Yazışma Adresi/Correspondence Address**

Atatürk Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü 25240  
ERZURUM

THEATRE ACADEMY DERGİSİ uluslararası hakemli bir dergidir. Mart ve Eylül aylarında yayımlanır. Yayımlanan yazıların bilimsel ve hukuki sorumlulukları yazarlara aittir.

THEATRE ACADEMY JOURNAL is an international refereed journal. It is published in March and September. Writers are solely responsible for the content of their articles.



### **Danışma Kurulu**

Prof. Dr. Dilek İNAN	İZMİR DEMOKRASİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ, TÜRKİYE
Prof. Dr. İhsan Kerem KARABOĞA	İSTANBUL ÜNİVERSİTESİ, TÜRKİYE
Prof. Dr. Dimitris KARGIOTIS	UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA, YUNANİSTAN
Prof. Dr. Mark TAYLOR-BATTY	UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK
Doç. Dr. Tom SIX	RCSSD, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK
Doç. Dr. Jacqueline BOLTON	UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN, BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK
Aleks SIERZ	BOSTON UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD, BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK

### **Advisory Board**

Prof. Dilek İNAN	İZMİR DEMOKRASİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ, TÜRKİYE
Prof. İhsan Kerem KARABOĞA	İSTANBUL ÜNİVERSİTESİ, TÜRKİYE
Prof. Dimitris KARGIOTIS	UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA, GREECE
Prof. Mark TAYLOR-BATTY	UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, UK
Reader Tom SIX	RCSSD, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, UK
Senior Lecturer Jacqueline BOLTON	UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN, UK
Aleks SIERZ	BOSTON UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD, UK



**Sayı Hakemleri/Reviewers of This Issue:**

Prof. Dr. Amy LEE	Hong Kong Metropolitan University
Prof. Dr. Mehmet TAKKAÇ	Atatürk Üniversitesi
Doç. Dr. Mehmet Fikret ARARGÜÇ	Atatürk Üniversitesi
Doç. Dr. Zeynep Zeren ATAYURT-FENGE	Ankara Üniversitesi
Doç. Dr. Kubilay GEÇİKLİ	Atatürk Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tuğçe ALKIŞ ÖZDEMİR	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Serap ATASEVER BELLİ	Erzurum Teknik Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İsmail AVCU	Atatürk Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Muzaffer Zafer AYAR	Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Baturay ERDAL	Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Turan Özgür GÜNGÖR	Kafkas Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Arzu KORUCU	Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Gamze ŞENTÜRK TATAR	Munzur Üniversitesi
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi M. Başak UYSAL	Atatürk Üniversitesi
Dr. Gonca KARACA	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi



## THEATRE ACADEMY DERGİSİ

### YAYIN İLKELERİ

#### Hakkında:

Theatre Academy, Atatürk Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü tarafından Mart ve Eylül aylarında olmak üzere yılda iki kez yayımlanan hakemli elektronik bir dergidir. 2023 yılında kurulan Theatre Academy, dünya çapında tiyatro ve performansın tüm yönlerini ele almakta ve araştırma makaleleri, kitap ve performans incelemeleri, röportajlar, sempozyum ve konferans raporları yayımlamaktadır. Editörlerin tiyatro alanına büyük ölçüde katkıda bulunduğuna hükmetmeleri halinde tercüme de yayına kabul edilecektir. Dergi hem Türkçe hem de İngilizce yayın kabul etmektedir. Dergide yayımlanan yazılara <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/theatreacademy> adresinden ücretsiz olarak ulaşılmaktadır.

#### Amaç ve Kapsam:

Theatre Academy, dramatik edebiyat ve performans alanlarına katkıda bulunmak suretiyle teori ve uygulama araştırmalarını teşvik etmektedir. Dergi, tiyatro ve drama alanında yeni tartışmaları körükleyebilen ve son gelişmeleri takip eden akademik araştırmaları yayımlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Theatre Academy, araştırma makaleleri, kitap ve performans incelemeleri ve röportajların yanı sıra konferans ve sempozyum raporları da yayımlamaktadır. Dergi yenilikçi ve eleştirel çalışmaları ve dünya sahnelerinde ortaya çıkan eğilimlerin tartışılmasını teşvik etmeyi amaçlar. Yazarlar, makalelerinin daha önce yayımlanmış olması veya özgün olmaması durumunda, akran incelemesi için değerlendirmeye alınmayacaklarını bilmelidirler.

#### Etik İlkeler ve Yayın Politikası:

Dergiye gönderilen yazılar ulusal ve uluslararası yayın etiği kurallarına tabidir. Dergiye gönderilen yazıların yayın etiği açısından sorumluluğu yazarına aittir. İki ve daha fazla yazarlı yazılarda sorumluluk tüm yazarlara aittir. Yazılarda ifade edilen görüş ve görüşler yazara/yazarlara aittir ve derginin ve kurumun görüşlerini yansıtmaz.

-Yazarlar, yazılarında kullanılan verilerin doğru olduğundan emin olmalıdır.

-Yazarlar, yazılarının başka bir yerde yayımlanmadığından veya başka bir dergide yayımlanmak üzere kabul edilmediğinden emin olmalıdır.



- Yazarlar, çalışmalarını hayvan ve/veya insan denekleri içeriyorsa, ilgili ulusal ve uluslararası Kural ve düzenlemelere uymak zorundadır (örneğin, WMA Helsinki Deklarasyonu, Laboratuvar Hayvanlarının İnsani Bakımı ve Kullanımına İlişkin PHS Politikası, Hayvanların Kullanımına İlişkin AB Direktifi). Ayrıca yazarlar gerekli izin ve onayların sağlandığını kanıtlamak zorundadır ve deneklerin/ katılımcıların mahremiyetine saygı duymalıdır.
- Yayımlanmak üzere gönderilen yazılar çıkar çatışması veya ilişkilere konu ise editör ile paylaşılmalıdır. Gerekli görüldüğünde, yazarlar tarafından açıklayıcı bir ek veya hata bildirimini sağlanmalı veya makale geri çekilmelidir.
- Hakem değerlendirmesi sürecinde yazarlardan çalışmalarında kullandıkları ham verileri Yayın Kurulu'na sunmaları istenebilir. Yazarların ilgili verileri Yayın Kurulu ile paylaşmaları ve ilgili tüm verileri en az beş yıl boyunca güvende tutmaları beklenir.
- Yazarlar erken yayımlanma ya da yayımlanma sürecinde olan yazılarında bir hata görürlerse dergi editörüne haber vermeli ve düzeltme ya da geri çekme sürecinde editörlerle iş birliği yapmalıdır.
- Bilimsel özgünlük, kalite ve intihal olup olmadığının tespiti için makaleler Turnitin veya iThenticate programları aracılığıyla intihal incelemesine tabi tutulur
- Yazılarda başkalarının fikir ve sanat eserlerinin kullanılması telif hakları düzenlemelerine uygun olmalıdır.



## **THEATRE ACADEMY JOURNAL**

### **PUBLICATION POLICY:**

#### **About:**

Theatre Academy is a peer-reviewed electronic journal published twice per year in March and September by Atatürk University's Department of English Language and Literature. Founded in 2023, Theatre Academy covers all aspects of theatre and performance across the world and publishes research articles, book and performance reviews, interviews as well as symposium and conference reports. Translations may also be accepted for publication if the editor(s) rule that they contribute largely to the field of theatre. The journal accepts manuscripts both in Turkish and English. The articles published in the journal are available free of charge at <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/theatreacademy>.

#### **Aim & Scope:**

Theatre Academy aims to stimulate research on theory and practice with contributions in the fields of dramatic literature and performance. The journal seeks to publish academic research which is invigorating and cutting-edge in its arguments and sheds a new light on discussions of theatre and drama.

Theatre Academy welcomes research papers, book and performance reviews, and interviews besides conference and symposium reports. It encourages innovative and critical works and discussion of emerging tendencies on world stages. Authors should note that if the manuscripts are not of utmost originality or formerly published, they will not be considered for peer review.

#### **Ethical Principles and Publication Policy:**

Manuscripts submitted to the journal are bound by national and international publication ethics. The responsibility of the articles sent to the journal in terms of publication ethics rests with the author. In articles with two or more authors, the responsibility is on all authors. The views and opinions expressed in the manuscripts belong to the author/authors and do not reflect the views of the journal and the institution.

-Author(s) must ensure the accuracy and truthfulness of the data used in their manuscript.

-Authors must ensure that their manuscript has not been published elsewhere or has not been accepted for publication in any other journal.





- Authors have to follow the related national and international rules and regulations, if their studies include animal and/or human subjects (for example, WMA Helsinki Declaration, PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, The EU Directive on the Use of Animals); to prove that the necessary permissions and approvals are provided; to respect the privacy of subjects/participants.
- If the manuscripts submitted to be published are subject to conflicting interests or relations, these must be shared with the editor. If it is seen necessary, provide an annex or error proclaim or withdraw the manuscript.
- During the peer-reviewing process, authors might be required to provide the raw data they used in their studies to the Editorial Board. They are expected to share the relevant data with the Editorial Board and to keep safe all relevant data at least for five years.
- Author(s) must inform the editor of the journal if they notice a mistake in their manuscript which is in the early release or publication process and to cooperate with the editors during the correction or withdrawal process.
- In order to determine scientific originality, quality and whether there is any plagiarism, articles are subject to plagiarism review through Turnitin or iThenticate programs.
- The use of intellectual and artistic works of others in the manuscripts must be in compliance with the copyright regulations.



### **Editörden**

Dergimizin ikinci sayısı dört araştırma makalesi ve bir oyun incelemesi ile okurla buluşuyor. Bu sayıda İngiliz tiyatrosunun farklı dönem ve yazarları üzerine dört çalışmanın yanı sıra bir de Toronto'da oluşmakta olan yerli tiyatrosu kültürü üzerine bir çalışma bulunuyor. Shakespeare'den günümüze, Britanya'dan Kanada'ya uzanan bu çalışmaları okurlarımızın zevkle okuyacağını umuyoruz. Başta Arş. Gör. Yavuz PALA ve Arş. Gör. Mehmet ÜNAL olmak üzere bu sayının yayına hazırlanmasında katkı sunan herkese teşekkürlerimizi sunuyoruz.

**Doç. Dr. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ**

### **Editor's Note**

The second issue of our journal presents the readers with four research articles and a play review. In this issue, there are four studies on different periods and writers of British theatre, as well as a study on the newly-forming indigenous theatre culture of Toronto. Spanning from Shakespeare's age to the contemporary times and from Britain to Canada, these articles will, hopefully, be received well by the readers. We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the publication process of this second issue, especially to Research Assistant Yavuz PALA and Research Assistant Mehmet ÜNAL.

**Assoc. Prof. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ**



## İçindekiler/Contents

**Editörden/ Editor's Note ..... i**  
**Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ**

**“They willfully themselves exile from light”: Exile in Space, Stage and Metatheatre in William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* ..... 93-115**  
(“İşıktan kaçıp bile isteye sürgün ederler kendilerini”: William Shakespeare’in *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası*’nda Mekânda, Sahnede ve Metatiyatroda Sürgün)  
**Zied BEN AMOR**

**Indigenous Theatre as Resistance: Toronto as a Nexus for Canada’s Burgeoning Indigenous Theatre Scene from Late 1980s to Early 1990s ..... 116-134**  
(Direniş Olarak Yerli Tiyatrosu: 1980’lerin Sonundan 1990’ların Başına Kanada’nın Gelişmekte Olan Yerli Tiyatro Sahnesinin Bir Merkezi Olarak Toronto)  
**Raphaela PAVLAKOS**

**Dördüncü Dalga Feminizm ve 21. Yüzyıl İngiliz (Feminist) Tiyatrosunda Görülen Etkileri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme: #MeToo Örneği ..... 135-161**  
(An Evaluation of Fourth-wave Feminism and its Effects on 21<sup>st</sup>-Century British (Feminist) Theatre: The Example of #MeToo)  
**Nursen GÖMCELİ**

**“If you don’t care you’ll die”: The Concept of “Liveness” in Arnold Wesker’s *Chicken Soup with Barley* and John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*..... 162-179**  
(“Umursamazsan öleceksin”: Arnold Wesker’in *Arpalı Tavuk Çorbası* ve John Osborne’un *Öfke* Adlı Oyunlarında “Canlılık” Kavramı)  
**Sarah-Jane COYLE**

***Truth’s a Dog Must to Kennel* by Tim Crouch..... 180-184**  
(Tim Crouch’ın *Truth’s a Dog Must to Kennel* Adlı Oyunu)  
**Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ**



# Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 18.05.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 15.08.2023

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

**“They willfully themselves exile from light”:  
Exile in Space, Stage and Metatheatre in  
William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream***

“İşıktan kaçıp bile isteye sürgün ederler kendilerini”:  
William Shakespeare’in *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası*’nda  
Mekânda, Sahnede ve Metatiyatroda Sürgün

Zied BEN AMOR

University of Sousse, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sousse, English Department

[ziedamor@yahoo.com](mailto:ziedamor@yahoo.com), [zied.benamor@flsh.u-sousse.tn](mailto:zied.benamor@flsh.u-sousse.tn)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3138-0088>

## Abstract

Exile runs throughout William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Transformed characters are exiled from the human world when they change shapes. Others are forced to leave their countries and worlds to enter magical ones. Personalities and feelings shift because of magic. Examining the dichotomy between Athens and the forest and the theatrical transformations shows that exile is geographical, emotional and spatial. Exile is also endowed with a transmigrant dimension. The study of metatheatre in the play corroborates the presence of an exilic dimension. Finally, the application of Nathaniel C. Leonard’s and Robert Weimann’s fundamental notions of *platea*, *locus*, *meta-platea*, and *meta-locus* in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* enables us to reach the finding that the Spectrum of Dramatic Layering hosts exilic manifestations. The research merges semantic investigations with the semiotics of theatre. Dealing with the matter of exile both from the lenses of literary and theatrical studies offers broader perspectives to understand the play’s nuances and complexities.

**Keywords:** Metatheatre, Exile, Transformation, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare, Mise En Abyrne, Spectrum of Dramatic Layering

## Öz

Sürgün, William Shakespeare’in *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası* adlı oyununun bütününde karşımıza çıkar. Dönüşen karakterler şekil değiştirdiklerinde insan dünyasından sürgün edilirler. Diğerleri ise büyülü dünyalara girmek için kendi ülkelerini ve dünyalarını terk etmek zorunda kalırlar. Kişilikler ve duygular büyü sayesinde değişir. Atina ile orman arasındaki ikilemi ve teatral dönüşümleri incelemek sürgünün coğrafi, duygusal ve mekânsal olduğunu gösterir. Sürgün aynı zamanda göçebe bir boyuta sahiptir. Oyundaki metatiyatronun incelenmesi, sürgün boyutunun varlığını desteklemektedir. Son olarak, Nathaniel C. Leonard ve Robert Weimann’ın *platea, locus, meta-platea ve meta-locus* gibi temel kavramlarının *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası*’na uygulanması, Dramatik Katmanlama Spektrumu’nun sürgün tezahürlerini barındırdığı sonucuna ulaşmamızı sağlar. Bu araştırma, semantik incelemeleri tiyatro göstergebilimi ile birleştirmektedir. Sürgün meselesini hem edebiyat hem de tiyatro çalışmalarının merceğinden ele almak, oyunun ayrıntılarını ve karmaşıklıklarını anlamak için daha geniş perspektifler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Metatiyatro, Sürgün, Dönüşüm, *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası*, Shakespeare, Mise En Abyme, Dramatik Katmanlama Spektrumu

## Introduction

Exile refers to being forced or choosing to live away from one’s native country, often due to political, social, or religious reasons or as a punishment. It involves being banished or deported from one’s homeland and living voluntarily or involuntarily in a foreign land or country. Exile can be a harrowing experience, as it often involves leaving behind loved ones, cultural ties, and familiar surroundings. It can also affect psychologies and balance, resulting in a loss of identity and a sense of displacement. Exile has always been a central concern for numerous significant writers. The theme was always present in ancient Greek and Roman literature. For example, Homer dwelled on the exile of Odysseus in his famous epic poem, *The Odyssey*. As for the Roman poet Ovid, he did relate his experience as a victim of exile through his famous poem *Tristia*. Exile remains today a central concern. Many Contemporary critics, philosophers, directors, and writers tackled the issue of exile in their works. One can mention Edward Said in his *Reflections on Exile* (2002) and the Italian philosopher and political theorist Antonio Negri, who has written extensively about exile and politics.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Cadell, Francesca (2006). “Exile: Interview with Toni Negri.” *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 353–66.

From another perspective, exile is intrinsically connected to theatricality and theatre-making, as both involve the idea of displacement and the creation of new identities, new stages, and new theatrical spaces. In theatre, actors take on roles often different from their own identities and create characters that exist in fictional worlds. Similarly, in exile, individuals are forced to leave their homes, constantly creating new identities and living in unfamiliar places. Thematically, the experience of exile is a rich source of inspiration for playwrights. Many plays have been written about the experiences of exiles and refugees, including works by Bertolt Brecht<sup>2</sup>, Samuel Beckett<sup>3</sup>, and Athol Fugard<sup>4</sup>. These writers, among others, explore themes of displacement and identity; they offer a powerful reflection on the human experience of exile.

Exile runs throughout William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600/2016). Transformed characters are exiled from the human world when they change shapes. Others are forced to leave their countries and worlds to enter magical ones. Personalities and feelings change because of magic. The play explores the idea of banishment and separation from one's home or community. Various forms of exile are theatricalised, including individuals' physical and emotional displacement and the consequences of such separation. Roles, spaces and stages are multiple; they are sometimes homely but, in many cases, exilic.

The present research proposes to study the concept of exile in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from a plethora of perspectives. The first part of the analysis examines space and geographical locations as exile sites and alienation areas. A scrutiny of the dichotomy between Athens and the forest is displayed to study the manifestations of exile. Additionally, the present research investigates some cases of theatrical transformations to draw the correlation between physical and emotional transmigrant identities and exile. From another perspective, the article tries to detect and corroborate the presence of an exilic dimension within metatheatrical sequences in the play. The last part of the article applies Nathaniel C. Leonard's and Robert Weimann's

---

<sup>2</sup> Johannes F. Evelein (2021) specifies a book chapter analysing the concept of exile in Brecht's literature. His "Brecht and Exile." *Bertolt Brecht in Context*, edited by Stephen Brockmann, portrays Brecht's exile as it manifests itself in his written works, from his letters and journal entries to his poems, which provide incisive insights into the trajectory of the exile.

<sup>3</sup> See Wheatley, David (2012). *Samuel Beckett: Exile and Experiment*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> See Krueger, Anton. (2011). "A White Man in Exile: The Failure of Masculinity in Athol Fugard's *Sorrows and Rejoicings*." *South African Theatre Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 119–28.

fundamental notions of *platea*, *locus*, *meta-platea*, and *meta-locus* on the Shakespearean play to prove that the Spectrum of Dramatic Layering in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* represents exilic spaces.

### Space as a Form of Exile

Exile in its relation to locations is intrinsically linked to different forms of isolation. When characters are forced to move to remote spaces far away from their homes or communities, their isolation is bodily. Physical alienation could affect characters’ emotions, psychology, and behaviours. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has two different settings: The prosperous walled Athens and the forest, a space beyond the city’s walls. Theatrically, the Elizabethan audiences are presented with two physical stages and three theatrical ones. Athens represents the main scene; meanwhile, the forest represents the stage beyond and the space of exile. These two dichotomic settings are thematically and theatrically significant because Athens is commonly known as a place of culture, strict rules, and justice. At the same time, the forest is portrayed as a place of banishment, wilderness, lawlessness, mayhem, and anarchy.

In the time of Shakespeare, the forest had a complex set of connotations that varied depending on the context and the audience<sup>5</sup>. The contemporaries of Shakespeare considered the forest as a place of mystery, legends, darkness, and ambiguity where social standards and strict order were overturned. It was a place of dusk where travellers could quickly become lost and where robbers, outlaws, and other criminals were known to lurk and cause harm. At the same time, the forest was also associated with magic, mystery, and the supernatural. In Shakespeare’s plays, the forest often serves as a symbolic space where the characters can undergo transformation or self-discovery. Apart from the play under study, in *As You Like It* (1600/2019), the forest of Arden is a space where the characters escape from the constraints of courtly life and discover a simpler and more natural way of living. Moreover, the forest is often associated with the idea of the wild or the uncivilised, contrasting with the city or court’s more orderly and civilised world. This contrast is explored in many of Shakespeare’s plays, including *The Tempest* (1611/2016), where,

---

<sup>5</sup> See Barton, Anne. (1972). *The Shakespearean Forest*. Cambridge University Press, 2017, Theis, Jeffrey S. *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England: A Sylvan Pastoral Nation*. Duquesne University Press, 2009, and Young, David. *The Heart’s Forest: A Study of Shakespeare’s Pastoral Plays*. Yale University Press.

according to specific readings, the character of Caliban could represent the untamed nature, and in *Macbeth*, where the Witches gather in a dark and mysterious heath to plot their schemes.

The play accentuates the contrast between the city as a place of justice and the forest as a space of flight and banishment; it juxtaposes the logical world of Athens with the dream world of the woods. The opening scene involves an Athenian citizen, Egeus, rendering a legal dispute before his leader, the Duke of Athens, who is responsible for ensuring the city's supremacy of order and laws. Theseus calls for the respect of customary laws whether they are practised or not. His insistence on Hermia's marriage to Demetrius instead of Lysander stems from his belief that the city must strictly adhere to the law. In contrast, the forest is a space where no laws are written and where the social norms of the city break down. The forest is the space of fairies that use tricks and practise mischief. As a space of exile, the forest affects characters, changes their attitudes, and forces their transformation. For example, the Athenian lovers Titania and Nick Bottom are affected by the chaos and confusion afflicting the forest<sup>6</sup>.

However, the exilic space offers release and helps restore order. At the same time, order rhymes with punishment. Theseus' severe threats to Hermia are disproportionate to her act of loving Lysander, which is taken as a crime according to Athenian law. Egeus and the patriarchal rule he represents can be seen as cruel and absurd. In contrast, despite its chaos, the forest offers a space of release; it restores proper order among the young lovers and ensures their safe return to Athens. Thus, while Athens represents law and order, the forest ultimately succeeds where Athenian law fails.

### **Transformation and Exile**

Character transformation through theatrical artifice is a form of exile. It involves displacing the self and creating a new transcendent and transmigrant<sup>7</sup> identity, whether

---

<sup>6</sup> Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, is ensnared in the chaos caused by her dispute with Oberon, the Fairy King; their quarrel has led to a mix-up of lovers. Titania becomes infatuated with Bottom, a comical weaver transformed into a donkey-headed creature by Puck, Oberon's mischievous servant. This chaotic spell distorts Titania's perception of reality, leading her to form an unconventional romantic attachment to Bottom.

<sup>7</sup> Zied Ben Amor (2020) explores concepts like transmigration and the transmigratory nature of the dramatic text in his articles "Mapping Sight and Blindness in *King Lear* (s) of William Shakespeare and



theatrical or mental. Through cross-dressing or roles-within-roles, characters undergo a transformation that alters their appearance, personality, or circumstances, often leading to a sense of dislocation and a loss of initial identity. Cross-dressing, disguise, gender, and species transformation are common devices in Shakespearean theatre. To give but one example, in Shakespeare’s play *Twelfth Night* (1602/2004), the character Viola disguises herself as a man to enter the service of Duke Orsino. Through her transformation, Viola, who becomes Cesario, adopts a new identity, name, clothing, and behaviour. This transformation can be seen as a form of exile, as Viola is displaced from her original identity and forced to navigate a new world.

In the play, magic love potions are theatrical devices that enhance confusion via transformations. The transformation of the comic character of Bottom into an ass by the mischievous fairy Puck is a form of banishment and a manifestation of exile. This physical metamorphosis results in Bottom being separated from his community and, thus, exiled from his former identity. As an animal, he cannot communicate appropriately with those around him. This form of exile represents the loss of individual identity and the disorientation resulting from such separation. Before his transformation, Bottom is a member of the Mechanicals, a group of amateur actors preparing to perform a play for the duke’s wedding.

As soon as the playful Puck uses an enchantment to turn Bottom’s head into an animal’s, fright and disorder break out. Exile can cause various psychological and emotional effects, including fear and disorder. The experience of exile can be traumatic, unpredictable, and isolating, leading to disorientation and distress. Even though Bottom tries to keep cheerful by singing and insinuates that his companions try to frighten him, he feels frightened and bewildered: “I will walk up and down here, and will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.” (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 3. 1.120).

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* substantially inspired Shakespeare in his treatment of transformation. However, the play draws heavily on the intrinsic transformative qualities proper to the theatre. In his article “Transformational Processes:

---

Roberto Ciulli: Towards a Poly-optic Reading” and “‘Santiago Matamoros’ or Saint James the Moor Killer: Who Wants to Kill the Moor in William Shakespeare’s *Othello*?”.

Production/Reception”, Jean Alter explains how transformation is intrinsic to the theatrical operation. He claims that any

public performance constitutes the central manifestation of theatre, associating actors and spectators in a single event. However, for most types of theatre, it forms only one stage in a complex process that involves a series of production and reception sequences. A semiotic theory that views theatre as a total process must no doubt first focus on the performance, as I have done here, establishing its nature, its referential and performant functions, and its use of signs (Alter, 1990, p. 149).

In another article entitled “Playwrights, Directors, Actors, and Their Work”, Jean Alter explains that transformations define theatre. For him, theatre is a process with interlinked stages such as convention and text productions (Alter, 1990, p. 213). From the convention to the production, Alter believes in “transformational activities” (Alter, 1990, p. 231) that echo the personal experience of playmakers about life and art. He also acknowledges the weight of ideology within this process (Alter, 1990, p. 231). What is essential in the ideas of Jean Alter is the acknowledgement of this transformative process. My focus on the transformation process goes a step further than Jean Alter’s views since it is crucial to believe that the idea of transformation is not only experiential but also inherent to the dramatic text and the essence of theatre.

Enchantment is one of the tools of transformation. Although it references traditional mythology, Bottom’s transformation is the product of fairy magic, leading to his friends’ amusing misinterpretation of the occurrence as a demonic curse and Quince’s desire to bestow blessings. It is, most importantly, the product of the inherently theatrical motif of transformation.

[Snout] O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

[Bottom] What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?

[Quince] Bless thee, Bottom; bless thee. Thou art translated. (Shakespeare, 1600/2016 3. 1. 11-113)

The above quotation includes a syntactic register and a choice of lexemes like “changed” and “translated”, which are indicators of an exilic transformation, a form of banishment that exiles Bottom from a human to a non-human to the point that Quince invokes heavenly blessings to stop such a metamorphosis. During his time as an ass, Bottom is reunited with his fellow actors preparing for their play. Initially, they are terrified of him but soon recognise him and begin to mock him. As an exiled

transformed creature, Bottom’s fellows see him as an outsider in their environment. Despite his new appearance, Bottom remains cheerful and excited to participate in the play, even though he knows he is an ass. Bottom’s transformation into an ass is a humorous subplot in the play, and it serves to highlight the magical and unpredictable nature of the fairy world. While his time as an ass is undoubtedly strange and surreal, Bottom remains a beloved character throughout the play, and his transformation adds to the story’s whimsical tone.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, exilic transformation is not only physical; it is also emotional and psychological. The emotional toll of being separated from one’s lover is as intense as being exiled from homeland and community. Emotional distress heightens due to the uncertainty and the instability of changing situations. Helena becomes emotionally exiled from her love interest, Demetrius, who has abandoned her for Hermia. Demetrius’ rejection deeply hurts Helena; it heightens her feeling of alienation and accentuates her isolation in her unrequited love. Similarly, Hermia’s refusal to marry the man her father has chosen for her leads to her exile from her family and community.

The play also touches upon themes of displacement and dislocation through magical transformations. The fairy queen Titania, for instance, is emotionally exiled from her husband, Oberon, when they disagree about the custody of a changeling child. As a result of their conflict, Oberon sends his servant Puck to use a magical potion on Titania that causes her to fall in love with an ass-headed character, Bottom. This emotional exile causes Titania to be displaced from her normal emotional state, leading her to act uncharacteristically. The ongoing conflict between the fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania, is exilic. Their separation creates a rift in the natural world, leading to disruptions in the balance of nature and the behaviour of the mortal characters. This form of exile demonstrates the broader implications of individual conflict and separation.

One can talk about psychological or emotional exile related to departures from societal norms and expectations. As a female, Hermia is an evident example of a woman subjected to physical exile from her community due to her refusal to subdue and marry the man her father has chosen for her. As a victim of the patriarchal hegemonic realm, she is forced to flee to the forest to escape the consequences of her

disobedience. Her escape is, thus, a form of banishment from her societal role as a meek daughter and potentially submissive wife. Exile, in this case, is both a punishment and a release.

### **Metatheatre as Exile**

One of the primary purposes of theatricality and on-stage games is to entertain audiences. As a continuation of certain performance traditions, such as the troubadours and the performances of the Middle Ages, Early Modern England theatre kept the tradition of theatrical merriment. The performances of Shakespeare and his contemporaries included singing, music, dancing, and all other sorts of entertainment known as the Elizabethan theatrical mirth<sup>8</sup>. The idea of mirth and merriment goes beyond the classical on-stage slapstick comic sequences and puns to inject humour, direct contact with the audience, and all activities of amusement before, during, and after the performances. The stages of the period resonated with witty and cryptic exchanges, slapstick comedy, puns, dumbshows, masques, pageantry, and wordplay. These elements were used to engage the audience and to provide a momentary escape from the daily struggles of life. In addition to humour, Elizabethan theatre often featured music, dancing, elaborate costumes, and stage design, contributing to the theatre's overall festive and joyful atmosphere.

Within such an atmosphere, metatheatre<sup>9</sup> emerged as an essential concept and technique in Early Modern English theatre during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This period saw the rise of Shakespeare and other prominent playwrights who used metatheatre to challenge audience expectations and explore the nature of theatre itself. One of the most common devices used in metatheatre during this period was the play-within-a-play, which allowed playwrights to draw attention to the artificiality of theatre and explore the relationship between art and reality. Early Metatheatre also includes self-referentiality since characters in performance refer to other plays or to the theatre itself. Metatheatre refers to the theatrical devices and techniques that draw attention to the fact that the play is a performance, not reality. It

---

<sup>8</sup> See Lin, Erika T. (1989). "Popular Festivity and the Early Modern Stage: The Case of *George a Greene*." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2009, pp. 271–97, and MacLean, Sally-Beth. "Drama and Ceremony in Early Modern England: The REED Project." *Urban History Yearbook*, vol. [16], pp. 38–46.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed definition of metatheatre, Ben Amor, Zied. (2003). "When Doctor Faustus Fails, Irony Prevails: The Spectacle of Blindness in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*."

consequently creates an exilic space that goes beyond the conventional theatrical one. In the same way, the theme of exile highlights the play’s exploration of the boundary between reality and fantasy; metatheatre explores the boundary between the theatrical and the illusory since it suggests that theatre is a performance and not reality.

Metatheatre can be described as a mode, a convention of theatrical performance, and a writing technique. As a mode, metatheatre refers to how a play draws attention to its theatricality, breaking down the illusion of reality and reminding the audience that they are watching a performance. As a convention, metatheatre involves specific devices or techniques used to achieve this mode. Examples include play-within-a-play, self-referentiality, direct address to the audience, and breaking the fourth wall. As a writing technique, metatheatre deliberately uses these devices to create a self-referential and self-aware theatrical performance that comments on itself and its relationship to the audience.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries excelled in resorting to various methods for the service of metatheatre merriment exercises, such as the staging of plays-within-plays, where the characters in the main play often become spectators who comment on the action of the play-within-a-play, drawing attention to the fact that they are watching a performance of an illusory nature. Shakespeare’s plays often refer to themselves, with characters alluding to other plays or theatre in general. For example, in *Hamlet*, the prince describes actors as “the abstract and brief chronicles of the time” (Shakespeare, 2014/1603, 2.2.522). Other methods are also used, such as directly addressing the audience, where characters directly address the audience, acknowledging that they are watching a performance. By doing so, actors on stage create a sense of intimacy and communion with the audience. One can state that playwrights were aware of the necessity of breaking the fourth wall since actors acknowledge the audience’s presence by speaking directly to them or stepping out of the frame of character.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example, Puck metatheatrically addresses the audience directly; he refers to the play as a “dream”, accentuating, thus, its artificiality. In the play, metatheatre takes different forms<sup>10</sup>. The play-within-the-play is

---

<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare displays many examples of metatheatre in the play. The space of the forest itself is metatheatrical since it is a dreamy mirror of the world of Athens, where the fairies become metatheatrical

the most evident token of metatheatrical manifestations. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a parody of a tragic love story and a comical performance by a group of amateur actors known as the Mechanicals. The performance is conceived as part of the wedding festivities for the characters Theseus and Hippolyta. Six Mechanicals: Peter Quince, Nick Bottom, Francis Flute, Tom Snout, Snug, and Robin Starveling become parodic figures who perform the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, two lovers forbidden from being together by their families. Bottom plays the role of Pyramus, and Flute plays the role of Thisbe. The other Mechanicals play various supporting roles, such as the Wall, the Moon, and the Lion. The play is filled with intentional and unintentional humour as the Mechanicals struggle to remember their lines, deliver their utterances with the proper inflexion, and perform their roles convincingly. The audience, including the main plot characters, reacts with laughter and ridicule during the performance. The play-within-the-play reaches its climax when Pyramus discovers what he believes to be the dead body of Thisbe and commits suicide. Thisbe then awakens, finding Pyramus dead, and she, too, commits suicide. The play concludes with the characters from the main plot reacting to the performance with amusement and appreciation despite its shortcomings. The space allowed to the play-within-the-play, which serves as a comedic interlude in the larger plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a space of *mise en abyme*. It is as if the theatrical performance becomes a space located between two mirrors. The reduplicated stage and characters belong to a space of banishment; they are, thus, exilic par excellence.

What reinforces these sub-divisions is also semantic. Indeed, the Mechanicals' performance highlights the play's theme: the transformative power of love and the irrationality of human behaviour. During this parodic performance, characters comment on the nature of theatre and the role of the performer:

A play there is, my Lord, some ten words long,  
Which is as brief as I have known a play;  
But by ten words, my Lord, it is too long (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 5.1.82-85).

---

representatives of the Athenians. Apart from the example of the play-within-the-play, one can observe the breaking of the fourth wall from the fact that characters, such as Bottom and Puck, directly address the audience, reminding them that they are watching a play. Also, the use of elaborate props and costumes, especially while dealing with the fairy world, draws attention to the artifice of the performance and the actor's role in creating an illusion. The play's use of magic and illusions alters the characters' perceptions and emotions, highlights love's arbitrary and deceptive nature, and further contributes to the play's metatheatrical quality.

It is worth noting how the comment shows awareness of different spatial dimensions, such as words on pages, performance time, and stage qualities. Not only do characters comment on how to act and conceive a play, but they also add humour and self-awareness to the overall story. Self-reflexivity permeates since characters break the fourth wall, addressing the audience directly and acknowledging their presence. Indeed, metatheatre emphasises the idea of performance and the relationship between the actor and the audience. It allows the characters to comment on the nature of theatre and the role of the performer.

Metatheatre in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is of an exilic dimension. The metatheatrical space departs from the original Shakespearean text and the initial stage performance. The *mise en abyme* creates new exilic stages, such as the forest as a stage of banishment and distancing<sup>11</sup>, and the *Pyramus and Thisbe’s* stage, which is detached from the worlds of Athens and the forest. Even the transformation of Bottom is a metatheatrical allusion to costume change and disguise proper to the making of plays. Props and costumes create a metatheatrical layer to the play by drawing attention to the artifice of the theatrical performance and encouraging the audience to reflect on the actor’s role in creating the illusion. Props are theatrical artifices that reinforce the play’s overall theme of the playfulness and whimsical nature of love. The illusions they create emphasise the importance of artifice and illusion in shaping our perceptions and experiences. In the play, the use of the flowers with which Puck sprinkles the sleeping Titania accentuates the magic enchantment of the world. The fairies’ costumes, such as the gossamer wings and diaphanous clothing, distinguish them from the human characters and create an atmosphere of magic. By using fantastical costumes and props, the play stresses the artificiality of the world and strengthens the actor’s role in creating the illusion.

Illusion creates an exilic dimension since it allows the audience to be transported into a different world that is not theirs. Audiences are temporarily removed from their familiar surroundings and immersed in the play’s fictional world. The illusory experience is both disorienting and exhilarating as the audiences discover new ideas

---

<sup>11</sup> My use of “distancing” does not correspond to Bertolt Brecht’s expression that creates a distance between audiences and drama space through various means such as detached narration, songs, or ironic digressions by actors. The term distancing here refers to the *stage en abyme* since the forest is a metaphorical parodic stage to Athens.

and perspectives. At the same time, performers themselves experience exile through illusion. Indeed, from the moment they inhabit the characters they portray, performers leave their identities behind and become different personas with different exilic selves. Consequently, performers navigate the emotional and psychological complexities of the characters they endorse while remaining grounded in reality.

The play teems with theatrical devices that distance the audience from events. By drawing attention to the artificiality of the play and the fact that it is a performance, Shakespeare creates a sense of detachment that can be seen as a form of exile from the world of the play. The play-within-a-play is a comic parody that exaggerates the conventions of tragic romance. Similarly, the presence of the fairies and the magical forest creates a sense of unreality that distances the audience from the world of Athens and the social norms that govern it. Exile created by metatheatre can be seen as a way of exploring the limitations of human perception and understanding. By showing the audience that the play's events are a performance, Shakespeare encourages us to question the reality of what we see and experience. In this way, metatheatre can be seen as a way of exploring the ideas of transformation and change central to the play. Through metatheatre, Shakespeare highlights how our perceptions of reality are shaped by the social and cultural norms that govern us. At this level, theatrical devices distance the audience from the events.

Exile appears through the play's exploration of reality and fantasy boundaries. The space of fantasy is a space of exile where imagination triumphs and certitudes are mocked. From that perspective, the play-within-the-play transcends an act of simple burlesque merriment to create a space endowed with imaginative power. The metatheatrical performance becomes an exilic space that mocks audiences and actors and their incapacity to cope with the importance of imagination in theatrical performances and dramatic action. The dialogue between Bottom and his fellow mechanicals reflects their worry, as actors, that their audiences could mix up between the real world, on the one hand, and play-acting, on the other. Ironically speaking, they express their worry that audiences would take the on-stage lion as the real one or that they would believe that Bottom playing the role of Pyramus would really perish. In a metatheatrical outfit, and to avoid any risk, they magnify and overdo their performance to emphasise theatricality and heighten the audience's disbelief. This self-reflexivity creates a new metatheatrical space, which is a space of banishment and exile.



Shakespeare attributes this power to mix play-acting, fictional performance, and reality to the metaphorically exiled characters. The mechanicals, characters in transformation, are different from both audiences and performers since they do not abide by the stage conventions and the need to be naturalistic. Their performance is, consequently, remote from homely presentations. It is situated at a level of a stage beyond a new theatrical space that echoes the forest as a space of exile. As a result, the over-explanations and the digressions given by Quince prove that the metatheatrical stage is far away from the homely stage: “Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show/But wonder on, till truth make all things plain”. (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 5.1.131-132).

The metatheatrical stage becomes a space of exile where imagination becomes a powerful theatrical instrument, another magic trick that prevents the audience from taking the play’s space as a real one. Metatheatre becomes a space of exile, which is present to theatricalise events once audiences suspend their belief in theatre as real.

### **Stages Beyond and Exile: The Layers of Metatheatre**

The metatheatrical as an entity is situated at a level beyond. Metatheatre can occur on several different levels. One can introduce different layers of reality varying from a basic primary one moving to a secondary, then a tertiary reality. At the most basic level, there is the primary reality of the play, which refers to the fictional world created by the playwright and brought to life by the actors. The play’s overall structure is situated at the level of the primary reality. Precisely, the opening scene describing the rationality of Athens and the world or order stands also for this primary reality.

However, metatheatrical occurrences can also happen on a secondary reality level, in which the actors acknowledge that they are performing in a play and break the fourth wall to address the audience directly. This level of metatheatricality can be used to create a sense of intimacy or connection between the actors and the audience and comment on the artifice of the theatrical performance. Puck’s closing monologue in Act 5, Scene 1 is an excellent example of this secondary reality:

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended:  
That you have but slumbered here,

While these visions did appear (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 5. Epilogue. 1-4).

In the play, there are some other examples of this secondary level, such as the speech of Peter Quince in the prologue of Act 5, Scene 1<sup>12</sup>. The secondary level brings the first hints of the illusory; it starts to pave the way for creating an exile space embodied by the metatheatrical occurrences.

The idea of the *mise en abyme* could include other layers, such as the tertiary reality one, in which the play comments on its theatricality through self-reflexive devices such as plays-within-plays or characters who comment on the performance itself. This level of metatheatricality can be used to create a sense of irony or self-awareness within the play and comment on the larger cultural or historical context in which the play is being performed. My previous analysis of the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play-within-the-play corresponds to this tertiary reality. Those multi-layers and theatrical realities offer new exilic spaces because they create a sense of distance, isolation, and displacement for the characters involved. The unseen represents a physical or emotional rupture. It emphasises the characters' feelings of being removed from their familiar theatrical environment or disconnected from the audience's expectations.

In this vein, Nathaniel C. Leonard builds a theoretical framework for understanding metatheatrical staging in an approach that highlights the various layers of performance existing within a single theatrical production. His approach emphasises how a production can comment on its own theatricality, blurring the lines between the play's fictional world and the audience's real world. In *The Reflexive Scaffold: Metatheatricality, Genre, and Cultural Performance in English Renaissance* (2013) and "All 'Metatheatre' is Not Created Equal: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Navigation of the Spectrum of Dramatic Representation" (2018), Nathaniel C. Leonard introduces several fundamental notions, including what he calls *audience*, *platea*, *locus*, *meta-platea*, and *meta-locus*. Some of these concepts, such as *locus* and *platea*, have been used by Robert Weimann in

---

<sup>12</sup> If we offend, it is with our goodwill  
That, you should think: we come not to offend  
But with goodwill. To show our simple skill (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 5.1.109-111).

*Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (1987). In this vein, Leonard clarifies that:

in order to describe this spectrum of dramatic layering, I am appropriating Robert Weimann’s concepts of *locus* and *platea*, but I am using them to describe the representational nature of these dramatic layers as opposed to the spatial relationships of those layers (Leonard, 2013, p. 10).

Each concept reveals a level of metatheatricality and how theatrical performances can comment on their artifice and construction. The concept of the *audience* refers to the group of people present at a theatrical performance and engaged in a process of interpretation and meaning-making. The *audience* is an integral part of the theatrical experience, as they bring their perspectives and understandings to the performance and can be influenced by how metatheatrical elements are incorporated into the play. As for *platea*, it refers to the stage or performance space itself and the various theatrical elements that make up the physical environment of the performance. *Platea* also designates the overlap between the real world of the audience and the dramatic action. According to Leonard, *platea* can always include sets, props, and costumes<sup>13</sup>. *Locus* refers to the fictional world, which is the real world of the play, including the setting, characters, and plot; it is about the ensemble of the play as the audience perceives it. It designates “a self-contained mimetic virtual world” (Leonard, 2013, p. 11). This level of metatheatricality involves how the play comments on its fictional world<sup>14</sup>. One can claim the existence of two *loci* in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Athens and the humans represent the first locus; the magical world of the forest and its fairies is the second one. Puck emphasises the dichotomy between these two *loci* when he declares, “Shall we their fond pageant see? / Lord, what fools these mortals be!” (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 3.2.116-117). Like Oberon and Puck, actors from the fairy world become spectators and audiences who observe actors from the real world. At the same time, their forest action is a mimicry of the human world. The multiplicity of *loci* suggests that,

---

<sup>13</sup> “The *platea*, on the other hand, is the layer of performance that permeates that illusory barrier. Weimann describes it as the “theatrical dimension of the real world”, and it is where the action of the play and the audience have direct contact” (Leonard, 2013, p. 10).

<sup>14</sup> “The *locus* is what Weimann sees as the precursor to the realistic dramaturgy of the nineteenth century, characterised by a more distinct separation of the action in the locus from the audience. The locus is characterised by the “element of verisimilitude”) and is where “illusion and interpretation first begin to assert themselves” (Leonard, 2013, p. 10).

in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we have two plays-within-a-play, one performed by the fairies in the forest and the other by the mechanicals on stage.

*Meta-platea* refers to how the *platea* can become part of the performance, for example, by breaking down the fourth wall and engaging with the audience directly. This level of metatheatricality can create a sense of intimacy and connection between the actors and the audience; it also comments on the artifice of the theatrical performance itself. The *meta-platea* refers explicitly to the stage-within-the-stage that requires an awareness of the audience that the *meta-platea* is a stage beyond. Thus, when Theseus comments on the required exemplary attitude of the audience during the performance of the Mechanicals, we understand that he locates himself on a stage within the initial stage:

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake;  
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
Takes it in might, not merit (Shakespeare, 1600/2016, 5.1.94-99).

Finally, *meta-locus* refers to how the performance can comment on the larger cultural or historical context in which it is being performed. This level of metatheatricality can address issues such as politics, social norms, and cultural traditions and challenge the audience's assumptions and beliefs.

*Meta-locus* and *meta-platea* effectively stack a new world of the play within the play's existing structure. Thus, these dramatic layers move from the world of the play (the *locus*) to the space between the play and the world of the play's staging of a cultural performance (the *meta-platea*) to the restaged cultural performance itself (the *meta-locus*) (Leonard, 2013, pp. 11-12).

The *meta-locus*, which mainly operates at the level of the play-within-the-play, is in total harmony with the *meta-platea* since the latter represents this theatricalised stage necessary for the *meta-locus*, which is the ensemble of the play-within-the-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Leonard proposes a diagram that portrays the different layers of the dramatic with what he calls "proximal" and "distal" dimensions<sup>15</sup>. The proximal dimensions can be observed graphically; they pertain to the realm of the verisimilitude; meanwhile, the distal dimensions pertain to the realm of *the mise en*

---

<sup>15</sup> See Fig.1 below.

*abyss*, which means its virtual dimension. As for the *platea*, it refers to the way the audience observes a stage, with its props and all the stagecraft. The *locus* represents the play’s plot, action, characters, and dramatic stories. Both *platea* and *locus* are observable and detectable without ambiguity. However, audiences need to reflect on the stage of the play-within-the-play, which is a stage-within-a stage as a *meta-platea* and on the ensemble of the play-within-the-play as a *meta-locus*.

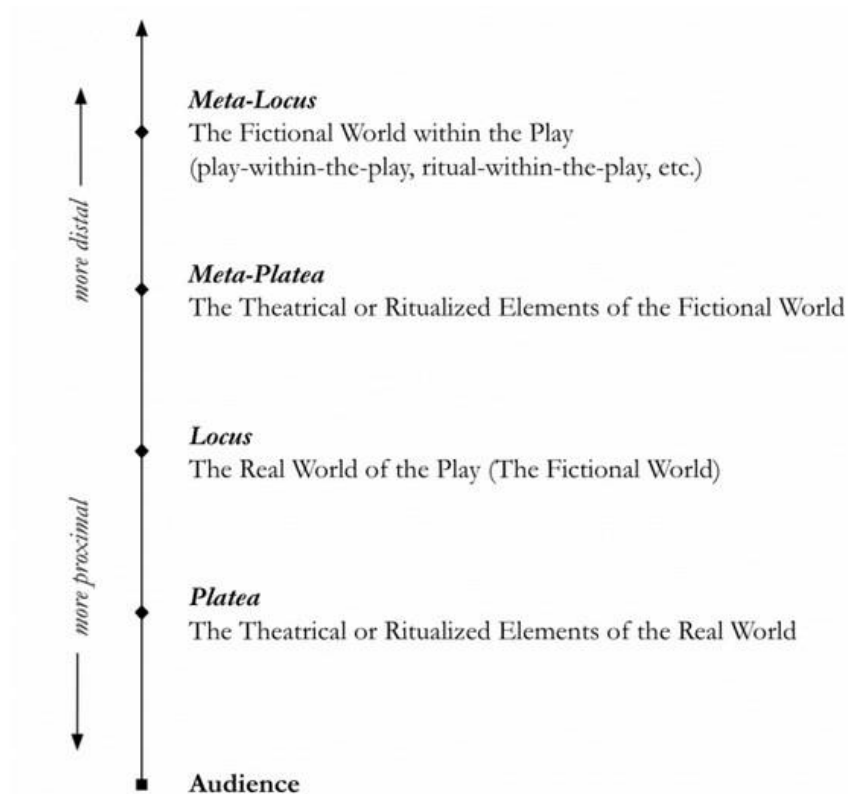


Figure 1: Spectrum of Dramatic Layering. (Leonard, 2013, p.11)

The application of Leonard’s spectrum of dramatic layering in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* proves that metatheatre is multi-layered; it accentuates the legitimacy of considering multi-theatrical spaces. In this vein, Leonard claims, in “All ‘Metatheatre’ is Not Created Equal: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the Navigation of the Spectrum of Dramatic Representation” (2018), that the Shakespearean play

uses the parallels between scenes to evoke the metatheatrical, which consistently asks the viewer to re-imagine their relationship to the staged action and to live performance more generally. The “tragical mirth” (Shakespeare 5.1.57) of the play-

within asks the viewer to reevaluate their categorisation of *Midsummer* as simply a comedy, instead suggesting that a play's position in a genre or between genres has as much to do with its execution in performance as its plot (Leonard, 2018, p.50).

In addition to the multi-layered subdivisions of metatheatrical occurrences suggested by Leonard, the present analysis claims that the above-explained layers are spatial and theatrical dynamics that resonate an exilic dimension. The enchanted forest that makes part of the locus is a space of exile. It serves as a refuge or escape for characters who seek freedom from societal constraints or oppressive situations. Characters like Hermia and Lysander flee to the forest to pursue their love, finding themselves in a realm outside the structured Athenian society, symbolising a temporary exile from societal norms. The play-within-the-play of *Pyramus and Thisbe* represents escapism; it offers a temporary departure from reality. The amateur actors engage in a self-aware performance that allows them to transcend their everyday lives, creating a realm where they can momentarily shun and undermine their mundane existence. They, consequently, step into a different role or identity. In addition, the self-reflexive exchanges between the Mechanicals, who form a distinct group, often ridiculed, underestimated and excluded, are metatheatrical opportunities offered to characters in exile. From another perspective, the interactions between the fairies and the human characters create bridges between different realms and realities. The notion of liminality is a metaphorical representation of being in an exilic state—existing in between worlds, not fully belonging to either the mortal or the magical realm. Finally, the character of Puck, as a mischievous and shape-shifting sprite, embodies this sense of being betwixt and between, often operating in a liminal space. *In A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Leonard's theatrical layers highlight displacement, marginalisation, and the search for alternative spaces.

## Conclusion

Exile in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is geographical, emotional, spatial, and metatheatrical. The scrutiny of geographical location shifts shows how behaviour, temper, and moral codes alter. The forest offers a space of exile and banishment as opposed to Athens, the space of order and rules. Exilic manifestations are not only geographical; theatrical transformations show that artifice in theatre creates alienation, isolation and psychological transformations, as is the case for Puck. The analysis traces the typical dynamics between physical and emotional transmigrant identities

and exile. Moreover, the present research has proven the presence of an exilic dimension within metatheatrical sequences in the play. The application of Nathaniel C. Leonard’s and Robert Weimann’s fundamental notions of *platea*, *locus*, *meta-platea*, and *meta-locus* in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* allows us to reach the finding that the Spectrum of Dramatic Layering hosts exilic manifestations.

Exile created by metatheatre can be seen as a way of exploring the limitations of human perception and understanding. By showing the audience that the play’s events are a performance, Shakespeare encourages us to question the reality of what we see and experience. Negotiating the real from the lens of theatre is a form of exile from our everyday experience, highlighting the gaps between our perception of reality and reality itself. In this way, metatheatre can be seen as a means of exploring the themes of transformation and change central to the play. By drawing attention to the artificiality of the play, Shakespeare creates a sense of exile that allows us to see the world of the play from a different perspective, highlighting how our perceptions of reality are shaped by the social and cultural norms that govern us.

Finally, the illusion created in theatre can be seen as an exilic space in terms of its potential to challenge the dominant cultural narratives of society. Through metaphor, symbolism, and other theatrical devices, plays can subvert traditional power structures and offer alternative perspectives on important issues. Such an experience is liberating for audiences who feel marginalised by mainstream culture, as they can see their own experiences and beliefs reflected back to them in a new and powerful way.

The present research merges semantic investigations with the semiotics of theatre. Dealing with the matter of exile both from the lenses of literary and theatrical studies is challenging. It offers broader perspectives to understand the play’s nuances and complexities. It allows for a comprehensive exploration of dramatic texts and performances, enabling a deeper understanding of the interplay between written works and their theatrical realisation. By combining these disciplines, the present study gains a holistic perspective on storytelling, character development, and the artistic elements involved in both literature and theatre. This interdisciplinary approach fosters the present analysis to interpret and engage with the play and prove that exile is not only

detectable in spatial and temporal banishment but also within the multi-layers of theatre.

## References

- Alter, J. (1990). Transformational Processes: Production/Reception. In *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (pp. 149–230). University of Pennsylvania Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv4t811z.7>
- Alter, J. (1990). Playwrights, Directors, Actors, and Their Work. In *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (pp. 231–270). University of Pennsylvania Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv4t811z.8>
- Barton, A. (2017). *The Shakespearean forest*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ben Amor, Z. (2003). When Doctor Faustus Fails, Irony Prevails: The Spectacle of Blindness in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. *English Studies Series*, 3, 116-126.
- Ben Amor, Z. (2020). Mapping Sight and Blindness in *King Lear(s)* of William Shakespeare and Roberto Ciulli: Towards a Poly-optic Reading. *International Review of Literary Studies*, 2(2), 10–23. Retrieved from <http://irlsjournal.com/ojs/index.php/irls/article/view/21>
- Ben Amor, Z. (2022). 'Santiago Matamoros' or Saint James the Moor Killer: Who Wants to Kill the Moor in William Shakespeare's *Othello*? *Eurasian Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 2, Nov. 2022, pp. 144–74. [dergipark.org.tr](https://dergipark.org.tr), <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jell/issue/73334/1124745>.
- Cadel, F. (2006). Exile: Interview with Toni Negri. *Rethinking Marxism*, 18(3), 353–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935690600747985>
- Evelein, J. F. (2021). Brecht and Exile. In S. Brockmann (Ed.), *Bertolt Brecht in Context* (pp. 89–96). Chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://doi.org/10.1017/9781108608800.013>
- Homer, Fagles, R., & Homer. (1997). *The Odyssey*. Penguin.



- Krueger, A. (2011). A white man in exile: The failure of masculinity in Athol Fugard’s *Sorrows and Rejoicings*. *South African Theatre Journal*, 25(2), 119–128.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10137548.2011.636974>
- Leonard, N. C. (2013.). *The Reflexive Scaffold: Metatheatricality, Genre, and Cultural Performance in English Renaissance Drama*. <https://doi.org/10.7275/2K8X-0X71>
- Leonard, N.C. (2018). All ‘Metatheatre’ is Not Created Equal: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the Navigation of the Spectrum of Dramatic Representation. *Shakespeare Bulletin* 36(1), 49-67.  
[doi:10.1353/shb.2018.0004](https://doi.org/10.1353/shb.2018.0004).
- Lin, E. T. (2009). Popular Festivity and the Early Modern Stage: The Case of *George a Greene*. *Theatre Journal*, 61(2), 271–297.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40587393>
- MacLean, S. B. (1989). Drama and ceremony in early modern England: the REED project. *Urban History Yearbook*, [16], 38–46.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44610110>
- Ovid, Green, P., Ovid, & Ovid. (2005). *The poems of exile: Tristia and the Black Sea letters*. University of California Press.
- Said, E. W. (2002). *Reflections on exile and other essays* (1. paperback ed). Harvard Univ. Press. Shakespeare, W. (2014). *The tragedy of hamlet, prince of Denmark* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.; Updated edition). Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. (Original work published 1603).
- Shakespeare, W. (2016). *A midsummer night’s dream* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.; Updated edition. Simon&Schuster paperback edition). Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. (Original work published 1600).
- Shakespeare, W. (2016). *The tempest* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.; Simon & Schuster paperback edition January 2016). Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. (Original work published 1611).

- Shakespeare, W., Mowat, B. A., & Werstine, P. (2019). *Twelfth night, or, What you will*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. (Original work published 1602).
- Shakespeare, W., Mowat, B. A., & Werstine, P. (2019). *As you like it* (An updated edition). Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. (Original work published 1600).
- Theis, J. S. (2009). *Writing the forest in early modern England: A sylvan pastoral nation*. Duquesne University Press.
- Weimann, R., & Weimann, R. (1987). *Shakespeare and the popular tradition in the theater: Studies in the social dimension of dramatic form and function* (R. Schwartz, Ed.; Johns Hopkins paperback ed). Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.
- Wheatley, D. (2012). *Samuel Beckett: Exile and Experiment*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199561247.013.0009>
- Young, D. (1972). *The heart's forest: A study of Shakespeare's pastoral plays*. Yale University Press.



# Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 27.07.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 14.09.2023

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

## Indigenous Theatre as Resistance: Toronto as a Nexus for Canada's Burgeoning Indigenous Theatre Scene from Late 1980s to Early 1990s

Direnış Olarak Yerli Tiyatrosu: 1980'lerin Sonundan 1990'ların Başına  
Kanada'nın Gelişmekte Olan Yerli Tiyatro Sahnesinin Bir Merkezi Olarak  
Toronto

Raphaela PAVLAKOS

McMaster University, Department of English and Cultural Studies

[pavlakor@mcmaster.ca](mailto:pavlakor@mcmaster.ca)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7036-3980>

### Abstract

The late 1980s and early 1990s were times of great development for the Indigenous Theatre scene in Toronto, Canada's largest city. This paper seeks to provide a closer look at the development of an Indigenous Theatre scene, a space on the fringes of traditional and hegemonic Canadian cultural production. This space, created by and for Indigenous creatives, made space for Indigenous voices and storytelling that did not yet exist to such a degree across Canada. The creation of this space led to the expansion of Indigenous Theatre across Canada and North America, as well as established mainstream interest and space for Indigenous voices, something that was felt through Indigenous activism of this time. By taking a closer look at Canada's first Indigenous Theatre company, Native Earth Performing Arts, which is based in Toronto, as well as analyzing two fundamental texts, Drew Hayden Taylor's (Curve Lake First Nations) *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* and Daniel David Moses' (Delaware/Tuscarora) *Almighty Voice and His Wife*, this paper will trace the common themes in these two texts that were prevalent in the work of this time, as well as unpack the connection these plays have to place, specifically in their relation to Toronto and the Indigenous Theatre scene there.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Theatre, Canadian Theatre, Toronto (1980-1990), Native Earth Performing Arts, Theatre as Resistance

## Öz

1980'lerin sonu ve 1990'ların başı, Kanada'nın en büyük şehri olan Toronto'daki Yerli Tiyatro sahnesi için büyük bir gelişme dönemi idi. Bu makale, geleneksel ve hegemonik Kanada kültürel üretiminin sınırlarında bir alan olan Yerli Tiyatro sahnesinin gelişimine daha yakından bakmayı amaçlamaktadır. Yerli yaratıcıların kendileri için oluşturduğu bu alan, Kanada genelinde henüz bu ölçüde yer alamayan Yerli seslere ve hikâye anlatımına yer açmıştır. Bu alanın yaratılması, Yerli Tiyatrosu'nun Kanada ve Kuzey Amerika'da genişlemesine yol açmış ve aynı zamanda Yerli aktivizmi aracılığıyla hissedilen Yerli seslere yönelik ana akım ilgi ve alan oluşturmuştur. Bu çalışmada Kanada'nın ilk yerli tiyatro topluluğu olan Toronto merkezli Native Earth Performing Arts daha yakından incelenerek, Drew Hayden Taylor'ın (Curve Lake First Nations) *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* ve Daniel David Moses'ın (Delaware/Tuscarora) *Almighty Voice and His Wife* adlı oyunları analiz edilecektir. Ayrıca bu makale bu iki metinde o dönemin çalışmalarında yaygın olan ortak temaların izini sürmeyi ve bu oyunların özellikle Toronto ve oradaki Yerli Tiyatro sahnesiyle olan ilişkileri bağlamında mekânla olan bağlantılarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yerli Tiyatrosu, Kanada Tiyatrosu, Toronto (1980-1990), Native Earth Performing Arts, Direniş Olarak Tiyatrosu

## Introduction

Prolific Cree playwright, Tomson Highway, once described Indigenous Theatre as “the articulation of the dreamworld of [Indigenous] people” (Highway, 2016, p. 24). Theatre's capacity for interaction between actor and audience, ability to mimic or transcend real life, and the creative playing with time make it a unique mode for Indigenous writers to capture their community-specific epistemology for an audience. One of the largest theatre movements arose out of Toronto. The encompassing Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) comprises nearly a quarter of the country's population and has become both an urban centre and the locus for hegemonic cultural production in what is colonially called Canada. It was and continues to be home to some of Canada's largest publishing houses and theatre companies. Specifically, the Indigenous Theatre scene, defined by Highway as being “theatre that is written, performed, and produced by Native people themselves and theatre that speaks out on the culture and the lives of this country's Native people” (Highway, 2016, p. 22), found its footing in Toronto in the early 1980s.

The work of playwrights such as Tomson Highway (Cree), Daniel David Moses (Delaware/Tuscarora), and Drew Hayden Taylor (Curve Lake First Nations), among so

many others, was crucial to this burgeoning theatre scene from the late 1980s to early 1990s. Stemming from this was the inception of Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA), the first Indigenous Theatre company in Canada, which was based in downtown Toronto. Also around this time, the Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster (CRET) was founded by Highway, Moses, and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (Neyaashiinigmiing), also in Toronto. These writers and playwrights were all seeking new spaces for their work outside mainstream creative outlets in the Canadian writing scene, where there was such little space for Indigenous voices. Opportunities on the fringes of these mainstream structures allowed these writers to create space and have the freedom to write, perform, transmit, and workshop their creative materials. At this time, some common themes in these works included: land sovereignty and Indigenous land rights, the aftermath of colonial imposition (including the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, addiction, and intergenerational trauma), as well as the importance of community. While these foundational writers engaged in other genres, drama was particularly prevalent among them for its ability to encapsulate story through movement, performance, and the dynamism of live theatre.

This work's hyperfocus on place is necessary since land is at the centre of Indigenous-settler relations. The main epistemological difference between these two groups stems from how they view their relationship to the land. Land is also central to conversations of colonialism as "the land is what colonialism seeks to turn into a commodity for power and profit" (Barker & Battell Lowman, p. 84). Before settler imposition in Southern Ontario, both the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe had a claim to the land that would later become the City of Toronto. Some oral histories consider the Mississaugas' claim to this land as "based on their leasing the area from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy" since this "sharing space was a normal thing to do" (p. 109). Southern Ontario, but especially the City of Toronto, is a unique place. Hayden King (Beausoleil First Nation) sees it as "the heart of empire in Anishinaabe Aki [land], [and a] source of the flood of colonialism that moved through time and across space, bringing a physical infrastructure with it, but also a narrative of radiating 'progress'" (King, 2021, p. 9).

While considering early Indigenous Theatre in Toronto, I will use questions to guide my thinking such as: How can creative production create space for Indigenous voices, presence, and resistance? How can Indigenous authors make space for their

work within dominant hegemonic cultural frameworks that are inherently oppositional to their Indigenous worldviews? In what ways are politics and the arts enmeshed? How can I look at Indigenous texts as a settler-scholar ethically and in a way that honours Indigenous voices and their community-specific contexts?

## **Methodology**

To situate myself in this work, I am a settler-scholar of Greek decent and Canadian citizenship. I am conducting this research and writing in Mississauga and Hamilton, Ontario, two cities within the GTHA that have been built on the displacement and disenfranchisement of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. Acknowledging my position as a settler-scholar, ethical scholarship is at the fore of my research praxis, as I take care to read these texts within their own community-specific frameworks so as to not exert scholarly 'authority' over them, but rather listen to what they might teach me and broker a conversation between other regional texts.

I am constantly looking for ways to make my work more ethical, to keep myself distant but engaged with Indigenous texts, and to find community-specific frameworks to analyze Indigenous texts with, rather than pulling them out of their context and applying my Euro-Western belief systems and generic conventions to them. Willie Ermine (Cree) asks "how do we reconcile worldviews?" when considering his concept of the ethical space of engagement as a mode for "configuring ethical/moral/legal principles in cross-cultural cooperation" (Ermine, 2007, p. 201). One way to do this is to keep stories grounded in cultural perspectives and to offer space for Indigenous peoples to tell their own stories, as Lisa C. Ravensbergen (Ojibwe/Swampy Cree) suggests (Robinson, 2016, p. 189). There is a need for cultural specificity; non-Indigenous scholars can participate in this kind of scholarship through frameworks that make this space possible. It is necessary, especially when engaging in decolonial practices of literature studies, that you "enter into an ethical relationship that requires respect, attentiveness, [and] intellectual rigor" (Justice, 2004, p. 9, qtd. from McKegney, 2008, p. 64).

Returning to the suitability of theatre to do this work, I would like to centralize the uniqueness of theatre as a genre in its ability to combine the written, oral, and performative aspects of creative production, while also making space for playwrights and actors to break the form. We can connect the importance of Indigenous Theatre

to what Lee Maracle (Stó:lō) sees as an Indigenous North American “oral story or performance art and poetic tradition that precedes [Indigenous] literary tradition” (Maracle, 2010, p. 77). In this way, theatre is connected to and building from Indigenous oral traditions, while also acting as a kind of resistance to the Euro-Western form and history of theatre.

### ***Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA) and Indigenous Theatre in Toronto***

In the 1980s, Highway and Daniel David Moses (Delaware/Tuscarora) were living, writing, and producing their work in Toronto through Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA), an Indigenous Theatre company that was created in 1982 (“History,” 2019). In Canada, this was a time for collectivizing of minds, drawing together artists who fit into Canada’s hegemonic ideal of what an artist is and what they can make art about. For those in the margins of hegemonic creative production, they had to fight to get a seat at that table. To combat this, Indigenous creators took it upon themselves to create spaces for their voices to be heard. Keeshig-Tobias rejects the appropriation by non-Indigenous authors who “construct[ed] Native voices, by speaking for the other, she argues, they co-opt the other, and their subtexts remain those of mainstream culture” (New, 1990, p. 6-7). Pushing this further, we can see Indigenous Theatre taking shape and carving out spaces for Indigenous voices and representation that go against the grain of hegemonic writing spaces. We can see this as a decentralizing of the writing community in Toronto, but as something that will eventually trickle across Canada and North America.

By 1991, Moses was acting as Playwright-in-Residence at NEPA to produce *Coyote City*, a title Highway previously held when writing *The Rez Sisters* (1986) and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989) (Preston, 1992, p. 154). By the time Moses was writing in 1991, “contemporary Native theatre was less than a decade old” (Nolan, 2009, p. i). Indigenous Theatre became an outlet for Indigenous artists to express their worldview and transcend some of the limitations of other genres. Highway felt that the stage was best suited for this work, over any other kind of creative production, because he felt that “oral tradition translates most easily and most effectively into a three dimensional medium . . . taking the ‘stage’ that lives inside the mind, the imagination, and transposing—using words, actors, lights, sound—onto the stage in a theatre” (Highway, 2016, p. 22). Since much of Indigenous Theatre deals

with significant spiritual elements, the stakes for this work are high. For Indigenous playwrights, it is their job to articulate a specific epistemological framework while making it digestible and entertaining for an audience, all while not overselling or commodifying their culture, spirituality, or peoples' experiences. It is the space of the theatre that these stakes can be raised effectively and ethically. Highway believes "the mythology of a people is the articulation of the dreamworld of that people; without that dreamlife being active in all its forms . . . [the] culture of that people is dead" (p. 24). It is through theatre where this dreamworld can temporarily exist, maybe only for the space of a single show, but it is the implications of this work that lives on in the audience, the actors, and the creators for a lifetime.

Indigenous Theatre is inherently steeped in story. What makes playwrights like Moses, Highway, and Hayden Taylor so successful at this time is their connection to their material. It is this connection that Maracle believes stories are born from, as she sees "stories arise out of social engagement or praxis" (Maracle, 2010, p. 89). In her Stó:lō context, Maracle sees "Art [a]s a reflection of Stó:lō national and social being, expressed as an imagined state of human collaboration with the world" (p. 90). I think that this can also be expanded to extend into other Indigenous communities. Art, like story, reflects what is important about a community back to them. This is partially why I think Indigenous Theatre is so effective—it can make political commentary, provide a venue for authentic Indigenous portrayal, and provide a stage (both literally and metaphorically) for Indigenous voices.

At the time Moses, Highway and Hayden Taylor were cracking open spaces for Indigenous voices, Indigenous Theatre was gaining a lot of attention in both Toronto and Canada's national theatre scene. Highway's play, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, won the prestigious Chalmers Award in 1989 (Nothof, 2019), was a finalist for the Governor General's award, and premiered at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre in 1991 ("Dry Lips," n.d.). It was the first time ever that an Indigenous play was staged at Canada's oldest theatre ("Dry Lips," n.d.). Indigenous Theatre, through the success and high-profile staging of *Dry Lips* in Toronto, was becoming increasingly more present among mainstream thespians and theatregoers across Canada.

Maracle is not the only Indigenous scholar who sees the connection between drama and story. Keeshig-Tobias also highlights the importance of storytelling in



relation to promoting Indigenous literatures, noting storytelling's three purposes since time immemorial, those being to entertain, educate, and heal (Moses, 2004, p. 238). In the case of Indigenous Theatre, all three of these elements are important and are present, but with the deeply political nature of some plays, like those of Highway, Moses, and Hayden Taylor, it is the "healing laughter of stories" we see as being most readily effective to do this work (p. 239). These playwrights have the ability to heal because they acknowledge the value of stories, the potential and the power they hold, and through this, give that power back to the communities and people they represent. They not only heal through hearing, but also through the creation of a platform for Indigenous voices to be heard.

The need for Indigenous Theatre spaces, not just in Toronto but across Canada and North America, stems from Indigenous Theatre's ability to enact Indigenous worldviews and overcome the limitations of other textual art forms. Theatre's ability to encapsulate Indigenous stories and worldviews in ways other genres and media cannot highlights what Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō/Skwah) believes to be theatre's particular suitability to "represent story through the combination of the embodied, the visual, and the aural" (Robinson, 2016, p. 185). Ravensbergen sees Indigenous Theatre as a site for resistance to colonial erasure of Indigenous voices and stories. She says that "the accepted national narrative seems to believe that [Indigenous] collective trauma is the only thing we—Indigenous people and artists—think or care about. This perpetuates the larger myth that [Indigenous peoples'] worth lies only in the story that includes settlers" (p. 182). When this myth of Indigenous stories only beginning at the moment of colonial contact persists, it frames Indigenous peoples' existence and worth as hinging on colonial presence. Ravensbergen also says, "this kind of recalcitrance becomes performance—a performance that defines a narrative that for generations has invisibilized [Indigenous peoples] . . . [and] decolonizes what some might call the heart of theatre: dramatic action" (p. 182). The dynamic of the theatre-space, that positions the audience and the actors across from one another, sets up the space for dialogue, for witnessing, and ultimately, for testimony and activism.

Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Chippewas of Nawash) believes that "aesthetics are not extraneous to politics" (Akiwenzie-Damm, 1996, p. 25) and that the artistic elements of Indigenous cultural production are inherently political because Indigenous

presence is a political act. Storytelling is inherently connected to the colonial project. Stories contain important elements of a culture, act as tools of cultural transmission, and provide a way to maintain and educate a culture. This is intrinsically tied to language. If stories are a community's cultural vessels, then "the voice and spirit of a people are dependent on its literature" (Ruffo, 1997, p. 1). When balancing the aesthetic and political capabilities of theatre, we can turn back to Robinson's interview with Ravensbergen, particularly when Robinson asks, "what does theatre do for us?" (Robinson, 2016, p. 190). Ravensbergen sees theatre as having the power to "reveal us. It makes us visible" which reminds her of her younger years, when she was "told the fact that [she] exist[s] is a political act," and extends this further, understanding that "it's a political act to be *seen*" (p. 190, italics in original).

### **Adjacent Contexts: The Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster (CRET) and the Kanesatake Resistance**

Around the same time as NEPA and Indigenous Theatre were finding their feet in Toronto, in 1986, Highway, Moses, and Keeshig-Tobias came together in Toronto to create the "political-sounding literary/cultural organization" they called the Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster, or CRET (Moses, 2004, p. 237). With their diverse community and creative backgrounds come divergent foci on what they feel is most important in Indigenous Literature. For Highway, it was beauty, for Keeshig-Tobias, lessons of their traditional stories, and for Moses, it was trying to find the meaning of it all (p. 237). Despite being "at odds often," according to Moses, they were also "laughing almost always" (p. 237). CRET was not some lofty, idealistic space or a recapitulation of an Enlightenment-era salon, but rather a productive space that offered ways for Indigenous writers (and those interested in the general writing community) to connect and create a space to have their voices heard. CRET put together "lectures and workshops . . . [and] even put out a couple issues of a little magazine dedicated to the idea that the Trickster is emblematic of [their] different worldview and the different literature connected to it" (p. 238). These "intensive workshops in Native cultural production" (Godard, 1990, p. 184) allowed for the ideas circulating between Highway, Moses, and Keeshig-Tobias to create community by finding their way onto the ground and into practice by the rest of the writing community. They were actually creating tactile change, setting up learning spaces where writers could take what they learned and put it to work.

CRET's focus on reinvigorating the presence of the Trickster in the Indigenous literary writing scene stemmed from "the need to open up a space for Indigenous cultural production" and the Trickster "provided a strategic rallying place for Indigenous artists across Canada to make strong political points in a way that was healing for them and their communities" (Fee, 2010, p. 59). One such workshop, put together by Keeshig-Tobias, "posits the word as a process of knowing, provisional and partial, rather than as revealed knowledge itself, and aims to produce texts in performance that would create truth as interpretation rather than those in the Western mimetic tradition that reveal truth as pre-established knowledge" (Godard, 1990, p. 184). These artists and creators who imbue their work with their own community-specific history, spirituality, teachings, and stories, become powerful figures, putting into practice what Maracle believes by seeing Indigenous individuals with traditional knowledge as kinds of "power brokers" (Maracle, 2010, p. 80).

Other kinds of grounded change are happening across Canada in the late 80s and early 90s. Looking back to early Indigenous Theatre in Toronto in the 1980s, just before and during the Kanehsatake Resistance\*, we can see that many Indigenous writers turned to drama as a way of telling their stories as it allowed for storytelling, language, and the embodiment of their worldview to be performed in a way that written (as in, traditionally accepted Euro-Western forms, like the novel) narratives were unable to. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg) reminds us that the Kanien'kehá:ka offer an example of Indigenous resistance through generative refusal in 1990 during the Kanehsatake Resistance, by participating in "both an intense sacrifice and a resurgent mobilization" (Simpson, 2017, p. 233). Through this generative refusal and alongside embodied resistance, Simpson sees "Indigenous peoples with radical imaginations and desires for freedom" as necessary to "create collective, private physical spaces where we can come together and think . . . organize and build resurgent movements" in the present and that have lasting reverberations into the future (p. 234). In many ways, I think this is also the work of Indigenous

---

\* In an attempt at highlighting Indigenous activism and resistance, I am turning to the work of Mohawk activists like Ellen Gabriel who deliberately shift towards Indigenous-positive naming by using the term 'Kanehsatake Resistance' when referring to the event known in mainstream media and discourse as the 'Oka Crisis.' In this intentional choice, I hope to elevate the activism of the Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake, reject narratives that position Indigenous resistance as a kind of problem or 'crisis' that requires the Canadian government, military, or police to 'fix,' and instead celebrate Indigenous resistance.

Theatre, where Indigenous actors and playwrights came together to create a physical and metaphorical space for Indigenous voice as resistance, but to also assert their continued and active presence as a kind of generative refusal among dominant Canadian society. Here, I am reminded of Gerald Vizenor's (*White Earth Minnesota Chippewa*) concept of survivance, which calls for a renouncing of "unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry" when it comes to Indigenous stories and narratives (Vizenor, 2010, p. 1). Survivance becomes the active reversal of narratives that position Indigenous peoples and communities as victims, rupturing the stereotyping of Indigenous stories as tragedies, and works to resist and reframe Indigenous perspectives as ones of hope and positivity, foregrounding Indigenous presence and power.

### **Drew Hayden Taylor and Daniel David Moses: A Glimpse into Early Theatre in Toronto**

Taking a look more closely at two examples from this time, Drew Hayden Taylor's *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock*, and Daniel David Moses' *Almighty Voice and His Wife*, which both premiered in 1991, we can see some common themes in the work being done at this time. While these plays are set in different places and time periods, each play deals with themes of addiction, identity and belonging, traditional languages, and the importance of dreams. Since much of the research that looks at this time in Indigenous Theatre is centred around Tomson Highway's Rez Cycle plays, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, I am choosing instead to study two works by other prominent playwrights of this time that are just as important and impactful on Toronto's Indigenous Theatre scene as Highway's work.

Hayden Taylor's play, *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock*, is about a real spiritual site located on Manitoulin Island. The one-act play is designed to be performed in one setting, using the confines of the stage to amplify the "action and interrelation of the characters" of this dialogue-oriented play (Taylor, 1990, p. 10). In the play's preliminary note, we are reminded that "Dreamer's Rock is a real place with real power. It's located beside a highway on the Birch Island" in Northern Ontario (p. 10). Because this play is about and set on a real sacred site means that the stakes are higher for Hayden Taylor as well as the theatre company producing the production, unlike Highway's work, for example, since Highway's Rez Cycle plays are set on fictional reservations in Ontario

rather than being accountable to real communities and places. This play is rich with palpable irony from this opening production note, highlighting the juxtaposition between the sacredness of Dreamer's Rock and the highway that is right beside it, as if the place has already resisted an attempt at colonial overwriting of Indigenous presence.

In the initial scene, when Rusty (the boy from the present) and Keesic (the boy from the past) meet on Dreamer's Rock across time, the dramatic action unfolds when they touch, as if the "moment contact is made, the magic happens" (p. 16). This physical touch allows the boys to connect across time and space, creating another kind of sacred site within the bodies of these Anishinaabe boys. Later in the play, Keesic tells Rusty that they are in "the Place of Dreams" and one "can never be alone [there]" (p. 19). In this sacred space, the boys stand at a physical, temporal, and spiritual intersection. Keesic breaks the fourth wall at this moment by also speaking to the audience. At this moment, the theatre has been transformed into Dreamer's Rock and has also (albeit temporarily) become a place for dreams and community, where Indigenous epistemology is enacted and those within the community can never be alone. We are reminded in a stage note that Rusty "collapses into the indentation in the rock, a place worn away by the generations of boys who have gone to the rock for their vision" (p. 14). This sacred site is a place where time does not participate in linear, Western-accepted modes, but rather acts as a palimpsest, a place where—through generations of vision quests—the land itself has become imbued with power that supersedes the bounds of time and space. Michael (the boy from the future) explains to both Rusty and Keesic, that "over those thousands of years that boys had their vision quests here, this area amassed a tremendous reservoir of power," which made this encounter possible (p. 35).

In the way Hayden Taylor plays with time in *Dreamer's Rock*, Moses is similarly interested in playing with space across time in his play, *Almighty Voice and His Wife*. At the outset of the play, we meet White Girl, who believes that she has "bad medicine in [her]" after she was forced to attend Residential School by a treaty agent (Moses, 1992, p. 7). Recalling her time in the Residential School, White Girl remembers her first encounter with a glass window. She describes it as "a wall you can see through" on which she "banged [her] face. The glass broke. Sharp pieces, too. That's what [a scar on her hand] is from" (p. 13). We can imagine a young and confused White Girl

finding herself faced with the possibility of escape in the form of a portal to the outside world, then being confronted violently with the transparent but still physically-present barrier of the glass window pane. This encounter is one that scars White Girl, physically in the form of a cut on her hand, but also psychologically, as she holds this memory with her. This is a lesson that she literally wears on her skin, reminded of the violent encounter of the colonial attempt to control and confine her. This is one divergence between these two plays; while *Dreamer's Rock* mentions the layers of trauma and violence that colonialism caused for Indigenous peoples, the play never mentions Residential Schools or the impact they had on Indigenous peoples across Canada. Both of these plays were published in the early 90s, a time when Residential Schools were still open and operational in Canada. The last Residential School to close was the Gordon Reserve Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan, which closed in 1996 (Hanson, 2020), five years after these plays were first published. Moses, however, makes the Residential School an important backdrop to the events and trauma that his characters experience in both acts of his play.

In the second act of *Almighty Voice*, Ghost and Interlocutor return to the play transformed, signified in their change of guise and both characters wearing whiteface. This act begins with the characters performing a play within the play, called "The Red and White Victoria Regina Spirit Revival Show," which takes place on the "auditorium stage of the abandoned industrial school at Duck Lake" (p. 31, p. viii). We must ask ourselves who the audience of this play within a play is. We can read the metaphorical audience as the ghosts that linger in the abandoned Residential School, but perhaps Moses has also broken the fourth wall, allowing the audience to stand in as witness of both plays. The Interlocutor, the character that White Girl transforms into for the second act, responds to Ghost's (*Almighty Voice*, post-transformation) question by saying, "How do I feel? With my hands! . . . I feel this evening like the moon . . . envious and pale of face and alone" (p. 54). Not only do we have Interlocutor trying to lighten the situation with an attempt at glib humor, but Interlocutor reveals a truth to Ghost—at this moment, they feel alone as the moon, paralleling the isolation they felt as White Girl in the Residential School.

Both Hayden Taylor and Moses are concerned with language and the power of names in their respective plays. Hayden Taylor's *Keesic* asks "What power does a name have if it doesn't have a purpose or meaning?" (Taylor, 1990, p. 22). Language

has the ability to shape the way a culture sees the world, highlighting the things they value and believe in. The more important something is, the more words a group will come up with to describe it. Anishinaabemwin is no different, and Keesic highlights the power of this language for the Anishinaabe people, saying that their “language is formed by [their] thoughts. [Their] thinking forms [their] worlds” (p. 66). Since being in the ‘present,’ Keesic has been forced to speak English through the power of Dreamer’s Rock. Keesic, however, does not like English, saying “there is no beauty in it. In [Anishinaabemwin], when you talk about the earth or the forest, you can smell the leaves around you, feel the grass beneath your feet. Until [their] language is spoken again and rituals and ceremonies followed, then there are no more Odawa” (p. 66).

Similar thoughts on the words we use to name and describe things can be found in Moses’ *Almighty Voice*. In this play, White Girl encourages Almighty Voice to use English names for each other when they meet in secret as a form of protection, believing that the God of the colonizers “won’t know it’s [them] if [they] use their names” (Moses, 1992, p. 9). They will be able to hide from the colonizers in this way by blending in with them. This gets complicated later on in the second act when Almighty Voice dies and is transformed into Ghost, a character Interlocutor taunts with stereotypical and racist iterations of Indigenous characters in popular media and history. The use of whiteface in this act has a multi-resonant function. In a way, the use of whiteface is reminiscent of the “minstrel traditions of nineteenth-century America” and vaudeville performances where white actors used race as a comedic costuming device (Wright, 2014, p. 194). Whitewashing can also symbolize the whitewashing and erasure of Indigenous peoples’ culture through the imposition of Residential Schools. The masking effect symbolizes different things for each character, acting as a mask for Ghost to hide behind while representing Interlocutor’s internalized racism. In the final scene of the play, Interlocutor begins wiping off her whiteface and “unmasking the woman inside” (Moses, 1991, p. 56). When Ghost does the same, both characters literally and metaphorically crack through the whiteness that seeks to suppress them.

Moses takes advantage of the activist potential in the theatre space. He makes strong political statements that go against government policies, like Residential Schools and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police being used to subjugate and control Indigenous peoples, using this safe space to critique colonial erasure of Indigenous

history and problematize the way Indigeneity gets re-presented in contemporary iterations.

In *Dreamer's Rock*, we have a similar layering of meaning onto names in the use of "Toronto" throughout the play. Toronto, the capital city of Ontario (the province where *Dreamer's Rock* is located) and Canada's largest city and metropolitan area, are at the forefront of an audience's mind since the play places Toronto in relation to *Dreamer's Rock* through the phrasing of the title. We get another meaning for 'Toronto' in the play, when Keesic tells the boys that his "people are great traders" and "those people to the south have a word for when people gather to trade, but it covers any place where important things happen. It's called 'Toronto'" (Taylor, 1990, p. 37). The boys see 'Toronto' as a metaphorical space where trade and important knowledge are exchanged, rather than solely a physical place. As the three boys meet across time on *Dreamer's Rock*, the space becomes 'Toronto' because of the connection they make and the trading of knowledge and information they partake in, but when they all go back to their respective times, *Dreamer's Rock* will cease to be 'Toronto.' Hayden Taylor takes creative liberties with the language here, as the boys are all Anishinaabe and the word 'Toronto' is actually an Iroquois word (from the Haudenosaunee language family). In Iroquois, Toronto is understood to mean "where there are trees in water" (Government, 2021), but an audience is asked to suspend their disbelief for the moment of the play, creating their own kind of 'Toronto' through the connection and knowledge-sharing that happens between the actors on stage and the audience in the theatre.

## Conclusion

I would like to return to Armand Garnet Ruffo's landmark essay, "Why Native Literature?", specifically Ruffo's belief that "the voice and spirit of a people are dependent on its literature" (Ruffo, 1997, p. 1). In all forms of Indigenous literature, Indigenous voice and beliefs are central to the spirit imbued in the work. Indigenous Theatre is in many ways the most suited to describe and perform Indigenous worldviews because of theatre's capacity for polyphonic voicing, staging, lighting, movement, as well as the use of figurative language and Indigenous traditional languages. Indigenous Theatre in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Toronto was essential in embodying Indigenous cosmology outside of traditional Western forms,



like the novel for example. Despite the Western roots and flare of Canadian Theatre, Indigenous Theatre re-purposes and deviates from these traditions to make space for Indigenous worldviews and voices.

Overall, Native Earth Performing Arts as well as other Indigenous led creative groups, like the Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster, were integral to the development of the Indigenous Theatre scene that found its roots in Toronto before spreading across Canada. These spaces also led to necessary critique of Canadian artistic spaces that largely lacked Indigenous and minority representation.

The Indigenous Theatre scene has grown, making space for Indigenous voices and worldviews in a way that ruptures dominant settler-Canadian views. In a few decades, Indigenous Theatre has gone from being a fringe community in Toronto's theatre scene to a thriving and revolutionary community of its own. Toronto's Native Theatre School grew from the small initiative that offered workshops and summer programs starting in 1974 (Johnston, 2005) to the creation of the Centre for Indigenous Theatre (based in Toronto) ("Our Beginning," n. d.), one of the first Indigenous Theatre schools in North America. This program offers training by Indigenous industry professionals and degrees in theatre. Indigenous Theatre continues to flourish in both mainstream and independent theatre communities, where Indigenous playwrights and actors can find community and stage their worldviews in and around Toronto and its surrounding area.

## References

- About: Our Beginning* (n.d.). Centre for Indigenous Theatre. Retrieved on March 3, 2023, from <https://www.indigenoustheatre.com/about>
- Akiwenzie-Damm, K. (1996). We belong to this land: A view of 'cultural difference.' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 31(3)21-28. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.31.3.21>
- Barker, A.J., & Battell Lowman, E. (2015). *Settler: Identity and colonialism in 21st century Canada*. Fernwood Publishing.

Dry Lips Ought to Move to Kapuskasing (n.d.). *Mirvish*. Retrieved on March 3, 2023, from <https://www.mirvish.com/learn/show-archives/dry-lips-oughta-move-to-kapusksing#:~:text=In%201991%2C%20Dry%20Lips%20Oughta,were%20lo%20udly%20and%20passionately%20lauded>

Ermine, W. (2007). The ethical space of engagement. *Indigenous Law Journal*, 6(1)193-203. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ilj/article/view/27669>

Fee, M. (2010). The trickster moment, cultural appropriation, and the liberal imagination in Canada. In D. Reder and L. Morra (Eds) *Troubling tricksters: Revisioning critical conversations* (pp. 59-76). Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Godard, B. (1990). The politics of representation: Some Native Canadian women writers. *Canadian Literature* [special issue: Native writers and Canadian writing], 124/125, 183-225.

Government of Canada. (2021, September 14). *Origin of the names of Canada's provincial and territorial capitals*. Natural Resources Canada. Retrieved on June 30, 2023 from <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/earth-sciences/geography/origins-canadas-geographical-names/origin-names-canadas-provincial-and-territorial-capitals/9188>

Hanson, E., Gamez, D., & Manuel, A. (2020). *The residential school system. Indigenous Foundations*. Retrieved on September 5, 2023, from <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/residential-school-system-2020/>

Highway, T. (1988). *The rez sisters*. Fifth House Publishing.

Highway, T. (1991). *Dry Lips oughta move to Kapuskasing*. Fifth House Publishing.

Highway, T. (2016). On Native mythology (1987). In H. Macfarlane and A. G. Ruffo (Eds.) *Introduction to Indigenous literary criticism in Canada* (pp. 21-24). Broadview Press.

*History* (2019). Native Earth Performing Arts. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.nativeearth.ca/about/history/>

Johnston, B. H. (2005 March 19). Association for Native Development in the Visual and Performing Arts [meeting notes]. Basil H. Johnston fonds (Fonds RC0038, box 21, folder 16). William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON.

Justice, D. H. (2004). Conjuring marks: Furthering Indigenous empowerment through literature. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(1-2)2-11. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4139037>

King, H. (2021). Rising like a cloud: New histories of 'old' Toronto. In D. Bolduc, M. Gordon-Corbiere, R. Tabobondung, & B. Wright-McLeod (Eds.) *Indigenous Toronto: Stories that carry this place* (pp. 9-14). Coach House Books.

Maracle, L. (2010). Towards a national literature: 'A body of writing.' In P. DePasquale, R. Eigenbrod, & E. LaRoque (Eds.) *Across cultures/across borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American literatures* (pp. 77-96). Broadview Press.

McKegney, S. (2008). Strategies for ethical engagement: An open letter concerning Non-Native scholars of Native literatures. *Studies in American Indian Literature* (ser. 2), 2(4)56-67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20737443>

Moses, D. D. (1992). *Almighty Voice and his wife*. Playwrights Canada Press.

Moses, D. D. (2004). The trickster's laugh: My meeting with Tomson and Lenore. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28 (1/2), 107-111.

New, W. H. (1990). Editorial: Learning to listen. *Canadian Literature* [special issue: Native writers and Canadian writing], 124/125, 4-8.

Nolan, Y. (2009). Introduction, In *Almighty Voice and His Wife* (pp. i-ii). Playwrights Canada Press.

Nothof, A. (2019, October 18). *Dry Lips oughta move to Kapuskasing*. Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia. Retrieved on March 3, 2023, from <https://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Dry%20Lips%20Oughta%20Move%20to%20Kapuskasing>

*Our beginning* (n. d.) Centre for Indigenous Theatre. Retrieved on March 17, 2023, from <https://www.indigenoustheatre.com/about>

Preston, J. (1992). Weesageechak begins to dance: Native Earth Performing Arts Inc. *The Drama Review*, 36(1)135-159. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1146184>

Robinson, D. (2016). Acts of defiance in Indigenous Theatre: A conversation with Lisa C. Ravensbergen. In K. Martin & D. Robinson (Eds.) *Arts of engagement: Taking aesthetic action in and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (pp. 181-192). Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Robinson, D. & Martin, K. (2016). Introduction: 'The body is a resonant chamber.' In K. Martin & D. Robinson (Eds.) *Arts of engagement: Taking aesthetic action in and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (pp. 1-20). Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Ruffo, A. G. (1997). Why Native literature? *American Indian Quarterly*, 21(4)663-673.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1185718>

Simpson, L. B. (2017) *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. University of Minnesota Press.

Taylor, D. H. (1990). *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock/Education is our right: Two one-act plays*. Fifth House Publishing.

Vizenor, G. (2010). Aesthetics of survivance: Literary theory and practice. In *Survivance: Narratives of Native presence* (pp. 1-23). University of Nebraska Press.

Wright, K. (2014). Performing cultural crossroads: The subject-making functions of "I am" declarations in Daniel David Moses's *Almighty Voice and His Wife*. *Theatre Research in Canada*, 35(2), 185-202. [https://link-gale-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/apps/doc/A404275793/AONE?u=ocul\\_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=e11d3e7a](https://link-gale-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/apps/doc/A404275793/AONE?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=e11d3e7a)



# Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 04.09.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 14.09.2023

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

## Dördüncü Dalga Feminizm ve 21. Yüzyıl İngiliz (Feminist) Tiyatrosunda Görülen Etkileri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme: #MeToo Örneği

An Evaluation of Fourth-wave Feminism and its Effects on 21<sup>st</sup>-Century British (Feminist) Theatre: The Example of #MeToo

Nursen GÖMCELİ

Klagenfurt Üniversitesi, Kültür ve Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi, İngiliz ve Amerikan Çalışmaları Bölümü

[nursen.goemceli@aau.at](mailto:nursen.goemceli@aau.at)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4807-0484>

### Öz

İngiliz *The Guardian* gazetesi yazarı Kira Cochrane'in 2013'te paylaştığı "Feminizmin dördüncü dalgasına hoş geldiniz. [...] Şu anda olanlar yine yeni bir şeymiş gibi görünüyor. Bu yeni şey, teknoloji tarafından belirlenip şekillendiriliyor" gözleminde hareketle bu araştırmanın amacı gücünü dijital teknolojiden alarak büyüyen ve halen devam etmekte olan dördüncü dalga feminizmi ve feminist hareketin bu evresinde yaşanan gelişmelerin köklü bir feminist tiyatro geleneği olan İngiltere'de nasıl bir etki yarattığını incelemektir. Bu çalışmada disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla dördüncü dalga feminizmde belirleyici rol oynayan hashtag aktivizmi ve #MeToo örneği incelenecek ve bu çevrimiçi feminist aktivizme İngiliz tiyatrolarının nasıl bir tepki verdiği ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılacaktır. Elde edilen bulgular ve varılan sonuçlarla bu inceleme gelecekte bu alanda çalışmalar yapacak araştırmacılara ışık tutmayı ümit eder.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dördüncü Dalga Feminizm, Hashtag Aktivizmi, #MeToo, İngiliz (Feminist) Tiyatrosu

## Abstract

Starting out with Kira Cochrane's observation in *The Guardian* in 2013, where she wrote: "Welcome to the fourth wave of feminism. [...] What is happening now seems to be something new again. It's defined by technology", the aim of this study is to examine the fourth wave of feminism, which is still developing and has grown taking its strength from digital technology, and to explore what impact the developments in this current phase of the feminist movement have had on the UK, which has a long-established feminist theatre tradition. In this study, with an interdisciplinary approach, hashtag activism that has played a determining role in fourth wave feminism and the example of #MeToo will be examined and it will be endeavoured to reveal how British theatres have responded to this online feminist activism. With its findings and conclusions, this study hopes to help future researchers who will do further research in this area.

**Keywords:** Fourth-wave Feminism, Hashtag Activism, #MeToo, British (Feminist) Theatre

## Giriş

Feminist hareketin İngiltere'de toplu bir hareket olarak 19. yüzyıl sonları ve 20. yüzyıl başlarında ortaya çıktığı dönemden bu yana kadın hakları hareketi yaygın olarak kabul gördüğü şekliyle dört ayrı 'dalga' halinde gelişerek günümüze kadar uzanmıştır. Feminist hareketin tarihsel gelişimini bu çalışmanın kapsamında ayrıntılı olarak ele almak elbette mümkün değildir ancak halihazırda yaşanmakta olan 'dördüncü dalga' feminizmi daha iyi anlayabilmek adına feminist ideolojinin gelişimini gösteren ve bir bütünün temel taşlarını oluşturan ilk üç feminist dalga hakkında kısa bir özet sunmak yerinde olacaktır.<sup>1</sup>

Bugün yaygın olarak 'birinci dalga' olarak da adlandırılan fakat esas olarak kadınların oy hakkı mücadelesine odaklanması nedeniyle 'Süfraj Hareketi' olarak bilinen 'birinci dalga feminizm' kadınların "toplumsal hayatta erkeklerle eşit olmak uğruna vermiş oldukları bir mücadeledir" (Gömceli, 2019, s. 101). Eğitim hakları, iş imkanları, çalışma koşulları ve ücret bağlamında talep ettikleri eşitliğe ancak yasal olarak seçme ve seçilme hakkını elde etmeleri sayesinde ulaşabileceklerinin bilincinde olan kadınlar uzun bir mücadelenin sonunda hedeflerine ulaşmış ve nihayet 1928'de bu haklarını elde ederek yasalar önünde kamusal alanda erkeklerle eşit olmayı

---

<sup>1</sup> Konu hakkında geniş kapsamlı bilgi Gömceli (2010), *Timberlake Wertenbaker and Contemporary British Feminist Drama* başlıklı çalışmada ele alınmıştır.

başarmışlardır (Gömceli, 2019, s. 102). Anlaşılacağı üzere daha çok 'eşit haklar' üzerine odaklanmış bu hareket, feminist hareketin birinci dalgasının literatürde 'eşit haklar feminizmi' olarak da yer almasını sağlamıştır.

'İkinci dalga' feminizmde ise 'eşitlik' vurgusunun yanı sıra 'özgürlük', ve hatta ataerkil düzenin tümünden yıkılması ve yerine salt kadınların egemenliğinde yeni bir toplumsal düzenin kurulması görüşünü savunan radikal feministlerin dillendirdiği 'kurtuluş' kavramı da kadın hakları mücadelesinin merkezine yerleşir. İngiltere'de feminist harekette ikinci dalganın 1960'lı yıllarda ortaya çıkması tesadüf değildir, zira aynı dönemde Amerika'da ve çeşitli Avrupa ülkelerinde Sivil Haklar Hareketi, İşçi Hareketi ve Öğrenci Hareketi gibi haklar ve özgürlükler mücadeleleri gerçekleşmektedir. 1968'de Londra merkezli 'Kadınların Özgürlük Hareketi' (Women's Liberation Movement) bu atmosferde başlatılmış ve 1990'lara kadar sürecek olan 'ikinci dalga feminizm' devreye girmiştir.<sup>2</sup> Feminist hareketin bu döneminde kadınlar yine genişletilmiş ve eşit eğitim ve iş olanakları, eşit ücret politikası gibi konular üzerinde durmuşlar fakat burada birinci dalga feminist hareketten farklı olarak kadın bedeninin özgürleştirilmesinin gerekliliğini vurgulamış, medyada ve toplumsal alanda erkeklerin göz zevki ve arzuları için kadın bedeninin bir cinsel nesne olarak kullanılıp teşhir edilmesini şiddetle protesto etmişlerdir. Kadın bedeninin özgürleştirilmesi bağlamında ücretsiz doğum kontrolü, kürtaj kararı ve cinsellik için özgürlük ve yirmi dört saat açık kreşler gibi talepleri de seslendirmişlerdir. Bu sayede, kadın bedeninin erkek egemenliğinden çıkarılıp kadınların hem kamusal alanda hem de özel alanda görebilecekleri ayrımcılık, baskı ve şiddetten kurtarılarak kendi istek ve tercihleri doğrultusunda özgür bir şekilde varlıklarını sürdürmeleri amaçlanmıştır. Yine bu dönemde, Amerikalı radikal feminist yazar Carol Hanisch'in 1970'de yayımlanan "The Personal is Political" ("Kişisel Olan Politikadır") başlıklı makalesinin uyandırdığı etkiyle 'her özel alan meselesi aynı zamanda güç ve iktidar ilişkilerini gösteren politik bir meseledir' düşüncesi feministler tarafından benimsenmiş, "kişisel olan politiktir" söylemi Amerika'dan sonra İngiltere'de de 'ikinci dalga' ile özdeşleşen bir slogan haline

<sup>2</sup> 'Kadınların Özgürlük Hareketi' Türkçede bazı kaynaklarda 'Kadınların Kurtuluş Hareketi' olarak da geçer. Bu çalışmada ikinci dalga feminizmde kadınların ataerkil düzenden 'kurtuluşu' düşüncesinin ağırlıklı olarak sadece radikal feministlerin söylemlerinde vurgulandığı, liberal ve sosyalist feministlerin ise bu görüşe katılmadıkları düşüncesinden hareketle 'Kadınların Özgürlük Hareketi' versiyonu kullanılmıştır.



gelmiştir.<sup>3</sup> İkinci dalga feminist hareket, dönemin yankı uyandıran yazarlarından Betty Friedan, Simon de Beauvoir, Kate Millett ve Shulamith Firestone gibi öncü kadın hakları savunucularının eserleri sayesinde feminist ideolojinin yaygınlaştırılarak geniş kitleler üzerinde etkili olmasına tanıklık etmiş ve İngiltere’de feminist hareket ilk defa bu evrede kadın ve erkek eşcinsellerin de haklarını savunarak toplumsal cinsiyet kavramını tartışmaya açmıştır. Ne var ki, bu dönemin feminist hareketi 1970’li yıllardan itibaren çok sesli bir hareket şeklinde ilerliyor olmasına rağmen kadınlar arasındaki ırk, din, etnik kimlik ve sınıf gibi farklılıkları göz ardı ederek tüm kadınları homojen bir grup olarak görmüştür.<sup>4</sup> Bu görüşün bir uzantısı olarak ikinci dalga feminizmin kadın meselesi konusunu ağırlıklı olarak orta sınıfı temsil eden Beyaz batılı kadınların hakimiyetinde, evrensel bir bakış açısıyla irdemesi neticesinde 1980’lere gelindiğinde hakları için mücadele eden kadınların kendi aralarındaki sınıf, ırk, cinsiyet kimlikleri gibi farklılıklar nedeniyle maruz kaldıkları ötekileştirme ve ayrımcılık, feministler arasında bölünmelere yol açmış ve ikinci dalganın 1970’li yıllardaki etkisini kaybetmesine neden olmuştur.

İngiltere feminist hareketinde ‘üçüncü dalga’ olarak değerlendirilen yeni akım ise 1990’lı yıllarla birlikte ortaya çıkar. Postmodern düşüncenin hâkim olduğu ve tüm büyük kavramların sorgulanmaya başladığı bu dönemde feminizm ve özellikle artı ve eksileriyle ikinci dalga feminist hareket de sorgulanmaya başlar ve literatürde ‘backlash’ olarak bilinen anti-feminist ‘ters tepki kuramları’ ortaya çıkar (Butler, 1990; Wolf, 1991). Feminizme karşı atak olarak gelişen bu söylemlere cevaben Susan Faludi’nin kaleme aldığı ve üçüncü dalga feminizmin en önemli kaynaklarından biri sayılan *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991) adlı kitabı büyük ses getirerek feminizmde yeni bir bakış açısının gelişmesinde ve bazı farkındalıkların ortaya çıkmasında önemli bir rol oynar.<sup>5</sup> Yazar bu eserde ikinci dalga feminizmin başarısız olma sebepleri arasında kadınların özgürleşme hareketinin kadınlar arasında var olan farklılıkları göz ardı ederek çok sesliliği yok saymış olmasını,

---

<sup>3</sup> Yazar Carol Hanisch 2006’da katıldığı bir söyleşide bahsi geçen makalesinin başlığının kendisine ait olmadığını, bu başlığın makalenin yer aldığı *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation (İkinci Yılda Notlar: Kadınların Özgürlüğü)* adlı kitabın editörleri Shulamith Firestone ve Anne Koedt tarafından verildiğini belirtir (s. 1).

<sup>4</sup> İkinci dalga feminist literatürde sık karşılaşılan ve esas olarak radikal feministler tarafından ortaya atılan ‘kız kardeşlik’ (‘sisterhood’) kavramı ataerkil düzende erkek hegemonyası altında tüm dünya kadınlarının aynı sorunlarla mücadele ettiklerini ve bu yüzden birbirlerinden farklı olmadıklarını savunmuştur.

<sup>5</sup> Eser henüz Türkçeye çevrilmemiştir.

medyanın da büyük etkisiyle, yapılan sokak gösterilerinde hem feminist kadınlar hakkında negatif bir imaj oluşturulduğunu hem de yanıltıcı şekilde kadınların istedikleri özgürleşmeyi gerçekleştirmiş oldukları izleniminin verilmiş olmasını sayarken tüm bunların sonucunda yeni nesil genç kadınların feminist bir amaç gütmeye ihtiyaç duymadığını ve böylece ikinci dalga feminist hareketin başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmış olduğu görüşünü vurgular (Faludi, 1991).

Daha çok akademiyle sınırlı kalan ve kuramsal tartışmaların yapıldığı 1990'lı yılları kapsayan üçüncü dalga feminizmde kadınlar arasında bireysel farklılıklar, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kimlik kavramları, ırk ve toplumsal sınıf, üreme hakları ve annelik, her türlü cinsiyet ve kimlik farklılıklarına saygı ve kadınlar arasında farklılıkları reddetmeden daha geniş ve kapsayıcı söylemlerin geliştirilmesi gibi konular ele alınmıştır (Jordan, 2016; Showden, 2009). Üçüncü dalga feminizmin 'aktivist' bir yönünün olmaması, yani önceki iki dönemde görülen durumun aksine kaynağını sokak ve meydanlarda gerçekleşen toplu kadın hareketlerinden değil de çoğunlukla akademiyle sınırlı kalan yazar ve entelektüeller arasında tartışılan düşünce ve kuramlardan alması sebebiyle, feminist hareket 2000'li yıllarda önceki dönemlere kıyasla sessiz bir döneme girmiştir. Fakat 2000'li yılların ikinci on yılı içerisinde dünyanın farklı yerlerinde peş peşe yaşanan bazı gelişmeler kısa sürede feminist harekette 'dördüncü dalga' olarak tanımlanacak yeni bir kadın hareketini başlatmıştır (Chamberlain, 2016; Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013).

### **Feminist Harekette Dördüncü Dalga ve #MeToo Aktivizmi**

Dördüncü dalga feminizmin başlangıcı olarak kesin bir tarih belirlenememiş de olsa feminist kuramcılar ve tarihçiler çoğunlukla yeni dalganın başlangıcı olarak 21. yüzyılın ikinci on yılını, yani 2010'lu yılları kabul ederler (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013). Halen devam eden ve gelişme döneminde olan 21. yüzyıl dördüncü dalga feminist hareket kimi söylemleri ve başkaldırı konuları açısından özellikle ikinci dalga ve üçüncü dalga feminizm söylemleriyle benzer özellikler taşırken bazı yönleriyle yeni yüzyılın dinamiğini yansıtır şekilde tamamen kendine özgü, yepyeni bir feminist aktivist hareket olarak tanımlanabilir. Feminist hareketin dördüncü dalgasında ortaya çıkan ve önceki hiçbir feminist dalga ile benzeşmeyen en temel özelliği dördüncü dalganın sadece sokakta değil, aynı zamanda göz ardı edilemeyecek derecede dijital teknolojiden güç alarak gelişiyor olmasıdır. Çoğu feminist kuramcının hemfikir olduğu bu görüşü ilk dile

getiren kişilerden biri İngiliz *The Guardian* gazetesi yazarı Kira Cochrane (2013) olmuştur. 10 Aralık 2013'te kaleme aldığı "The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women" ("Feminizmin Dördüncü Dalgası: İsyankâr Kadınlarla Tanışın") başlıklı bu yazıda Cochrane dördüncü dalga'nın başlamış olduğunu şu satırlarla anlatır: "Feminizmin dördüncü dalgasına hoş geldiniz. [...] Şu anda olanlar yine yeni bir şeymiş gibi görünüyor. Bu yeni şey, teknoloji tarafından belirlenip şekillendiriliyor: Kadınlara güçlü, halk tabanlı, tepkisel bir hareketi çevrimiçi inşa etmelerine olanak sağlayan araçlarla" (2013, s. 1).<sup>6</sup> Yazısını "kadın düşmanları, dikkatli olun" (s. 6) sözleriyle bitiren Cochrane, hızla büyüyen bu yeni hareketin ele aldığı meselelerin çok değişken olacağı fakat öncekilerden daha cesur olan yeni nesil dördüncü dalga feministlerin elinde güçlü bir şekilde gelişmeye devam edeceği öngörüsünü paylaşır (2013, s. 6).

Gerçekten de dünyanın başka yerlerinde de olduğu gibi, İngiltere'de 2000'li yıllardan başlayarak dijital dünyada ses getiren onlarca çevrimiçi feminist kampanya düzenlenmiş, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* gibi sosyal medya kanalları üzerinden etki gücü yüksek pek çok çevrimiçi feminist aktivizm örnekleri verilmiştir. Bu sayede, feminist örgütlenme dijital platformlarda hızlı bir şekilde gerçekleşerek çevrimiçi metotların kullanımıyla bir yandan dördüncü dalga feminizmin meseleleri hakkında bilinç yükseltme ve farkındalık yaratılabilmiş, diğer yandan da çevrimiçi feminist aktivistlerin katkı ve paylaşımlarıyla dördüncü dalga feminizmin ana meseleleri belirlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda birkaç örnek vermek gerekirse, kullanıcılarına kendi kampanyalarını başlatma ve feminist gruplarını oluşturma olanağını veren ve kadın-erkek eşitliğinin kalıcı olarak sağlanabilmesi hedefiyle her türlü ticari amaçlı cinsel sömürü ve okullarda karşılaşılabilecek cinsiyetçilik ile mücadele etmek amacıyla 2010 yılında kurulan web platformu *UK Feminista*; 2012'de İngiliz feminist yazar Laura Bates'in girişimiyle iş yerinde maruz kalınan cinsiyet ayrımcılığı, dışlanma, her türlü cinsel taciz ve cinsel saldırı deneyimlerinin paylaşılması amacıyla kurulan ve büyük başarı elde etmiş olan web sitesi *The Everyday Sexism Project (Gündelikçi Cinsiyet Projesi)*; yine 2012'de İngiliz tabloid gazetesi *The Sun* editörlerinin gazete üçüncü sayfasında üstsüz kadın modellerin resimlerini yayımlamaya son vermelerini sağlamak amacıyla oyuncu yazar Lucy-Anne Holmes tarafından başlatılan ve istenen sonucu sağlayan *No More Page 3 (Bundan Böyle 3. Sayfa Yok)* isimli dijital imza kampanyası sayılabilir. Aynı şekilde, 2010'dan beri aktif olarak faaliyetlerini sürdüren ve düzenlediği

---

<sup>6</sup> Başlık ve makalede yer alan tüm alıntı çevirileri yazar tarafından yapılmıştır.

çevrimiçi kampanya ve etkinlikler yoluyla toplumsal cinsiyet ideolojisine, bir sömürü çeşidi olarak taşıyıcı annelik uygulamasına, medya yoluyla ve ticari amaçla kadın bedeninin bir nesneye indirgenerek metalaştırılmasına karşı mücadele amaçlı kurulan dijital platform *Object! (İtiraz Et!)* İngiltere’de dördüncü dalga feminizmin başladığı dönem olarak kabul edilen yıllarda öne çıkan en etkili dijital feminist aktivizm örneklerinden olmuştur.<sup>7</sup>

Dördüncü dalga feminizmin varlığını yine çevrimiçi olanaklarla güçlü bir şekilde göstermesine imkân tanıyan bir diğer dijital feminist aktivizm metodu ise sosyal medya kullanıcıları arasında hızla büyüyen ve ‘hashtag feminizmi’ olarak da bilinen ‘etiketleme’ hareketidir. Candemir’in tanımıyla etiketleme, “[b]elirli bir kelime veya cümlenin hashtag (etiket, #) kullanımı yoluyla sanal uzamda dolaşıma girmesine ve verileri birbirine bağlayarak yüksek düzeyde etkileşim almasına imkân veren bir aktivizm biçimidir” (2021, par. 1). ‘Hash (#)’ sembolü ile etiketleme ilk olarak 2007 senesinde sosyal medya kanalı *Twitter* için ürün tasarımcısı olarak çalışan Chris Messina’nın bir tweetinde, kullanıcılara kolaylık olması açısından, tematik olarak ilişkili mesajları aynı başlık altında toplamak için ‘hash’ sembolünü kullanma önerisiyle başlamıştır (India Today, 2023). Kısa sürede viral olan bu öneri, *Twitter*’ın yanı sıra *Facebook* ve *Instagram* platformlarında da benimsenmiş ve böylece hashtag kullanımı sosyal medya uygulamalarının ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Bilinen ilk feminist hashtag ise bu gelişmenin hemen akabinde, Aralık 2008’de, feminizmin geleceği üzerine yapılan tartışmaların yer aldığı makale ve konuşmaların görünürlüğünü artırmak ve hızla yayılmalarını sağlamak adına #Fem2 başlığı ile *Twitter*’da kullanılmıştır (Blay, 2016; Hesse, 2018). Gerek *Huff Post* gazetesi yazarı Zeba Blay ve kadın hakları aktivisti Ashley Hesse’nin birbirinden bağımsız olarak oluşturdukları 2000’li yılların en önemli feminist hashtaglerini gösteren listelerden anlaşılacağı üzere, gerekse Zeba Blay’in kişisel gözlemlerine dayanarak belirttiği gibi sosyal medya platformu *Twitter* üzerinde feminist hashtaglerin gücü 2013 yılı itibariyle belirgin şekilde fark edilmeye başlanmıştır.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Burada adı geçen dijital platformlara şu bağlantılardan ulaşılabilir:

*UK Feminista*: <https://ukfeminista.org.uk/>; *The Everyday Sexism Project*: <https://everydaysexism.com/>; *No More Page 3*: <https://twitter.com/NoMorePage3>; *Object!*: <https://objectnow.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Blay (2016) ve Hesse’nin (2018) oluşturdukları listelere sırasıyla şu bağlantılardan ulaşılabilir:

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/21-hashtags-that-changed-the-way-we-talk-about-feminism\\_n\\_56ec0978e4b084c6722000d1](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/21-hashtags-that-changed-the-way-we-talk-about-feminism_n_56ec0978e4b084c6722000d1)  
<https://yourdream.liveyourdream.org/2018/02/feminist-hashtags-metoo-timesup/>

Bu veriler ışığında bakıldığında, bu araştırma da 21. yüzyıla girdiğimizde feminizmde dördüncü bir dalganın 2010'lu yılların başlangıcıyla birlikte ortaya çıktığı değerlendirilmesinde bulunan görüşlerle hemfikirdir. Yukarıdaki gözlem ve bulguların da gösterdiği şekilde, 1990'lı yıllardan 2000'li yılların başlarına kadar akademiyle sınırlı kalarak sessiz bir döneme girmiş olan ve hatta feminizme karşı ters tepki söylemlerinin yoğunlaştığı 'üçüncü dalga' döneminden beri, ilk kez bu dönemde yaşanan ve 'dördüncü dalga' olarak varlığını kabul ettiren bu hareketlenme dijital ve çevrimiçi metotlar aracılığıyla giderek büyüyen yeni bir tür feminist aktivizme dönüşmüştür. Kadınların kamusal alanda karşılaştıkları cinsiyetçi tutumlara ve eşitsizliklere karşı dikkat çekecek ölçüde geniş ve halk tabanlı olan bu feminist hareketlenme içerik ve yöntem açısından dijital çağın getirdiği olanaklarla birlikte, Dixon'un adlandırdığı gibi, özellikle "hashtagci feministler" tarafından adeta "yeniden tanımlanmıştır" (2014, s. 35). Bu bağlamda *Twitter*'da bulunduğu destekle öne çıkan kadın hakları odaklı hashtag konuları 2012'de başlatılan #GirlsLikeUs (#BizimGibiKızlar) etiketinde görülen ırk ayrımı gözetilmeksizin tüm trans kadınların haklarının korunması ve tek bir bireyin bünyesinde farklı cinsiyet, sınıf ve ırk kimliklerini barındırabileceği düşüncesinden hareketle kesişimsel bir feminist bakış açısının önemi; 2014'te yine bir *Twitter* kullanıcısı tarafından başlatılarak kısa bir sürede çok büyük bir kampanyaya dönüşmüş olan #YesAllWomen (#EvetTümKadınlar) etiketiyle birlikte gündeme getirilen, erkeklerin sebep olduğu kadın cinayetleri ve kadına duyulan nefretin yol açtığı şiddet; 2015'te büyük beden modeli Tess Holliday tarafından Beden Olumlama Hareketi çerçevesinde #EffYourBeautyStandards (#GüzellikStandartlarınıDefEt) etiketiyle başlatılarak reddedilmek üzere tartışmaya açılan güzellik standartları ve kadınların boy ve beden ölçüsü, ten rengi gibi fiziksel özellikleri ne olursa olsun bedenleriyle barışık yaşamaları öğretisi; ve 2018'de #WomensReality (#KadınlarınGerçekliği) etiketi ile gündeme getirilen kadınların yasal hakları ile yaşadıkları gerçeklik arasındaki uçurum ve tam cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması için halen yapılması gerekenlerdir.

Dördüncü dalga feminizmde hem feminist ana gündemleri belirlemede etkili olan hem de bu konular hakkında farkındalık kazandırmada çok önemli bir yer tutan çevrimiçi hashtag feminist aktivizmde bugüne kadar başlatılan kampanyalar içerisinde belki de global düzeyde en büyük yankıyı yapan hashtag aktivizmi ise yine *Twitter*'da başlatılan #MeToo (#BenDe) etiketi olmuştur. *Twitter*'dan sonra *Facebook* ve

*Instagram*'da da milyonlarca sosyal medya kullanıcısı tarafından karşılık görerek 24 saat içinde küresel boyutta viral olan bu etiketin dördüncü dalga feminizmin dönüm noktalarından biri olarak kabul edebileceğimiz 2017 yılında kadınlar arasında 'sessizliği kıran' büyük bir feminist harekete dönüşmesi tesadüf değildir. Zira, global olarak baktığımızda, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde dönemin başkanı Donald Trump'ın cinsiyetçi söylemlerine ve politikalarına karşı başkent Washington DC'de başlatılan kadınlar arası dayanışma yürüyüşü "Women's March"; kadın yönetmen Patty Jenkins tarafından filme alınan ve sürpriz bir şekilde 2002 yapımı *Örümcek Adam* filmini de geride bırakarak süper kahraman temalı filmlerin içerisinde tüm zamanların en büyük hasılat rekorunu elde eden *Harika Kadın* filmi (Guerassio, 2017); tarihinde bir ilk olarak Suudi Arabistan'da kadınlara araba kullanma serbestisinin yasal olarak sağlanması; cinsel istismar davalarıyla suçlanarak hapse mahkum edilen Amerikan film yapımcısı Harvey Weinstein olayının patlak vermesi; ve son olarak, 2017 senesinin dördüncü dalga için bir dönüm noktası olduğu görüşünü adeta kanıtlar şeklinde 'feminizm' kelimesinin *Merriam-Webster Online* sözlüğünde Yılın Kelimesi ilan edilmesi de 2017 senesinde gerçekleşmiştir (2023). İşte tüm bu gelişmelerin yaşandığı sene içinde #MeToo etiketinin büyük ses getiren bir çevrimiçi aktivist harekete dönüşmüş olması şaşırtıcı değildir.

'Me too' ifadesi esasen ilk olarak 2006'da kendisi de cinsel tacize maruz kalmış olan Amerikalı sivil haklar aktivisti Tarana Burke tarafından özellikle siyah kadınlara yönelik cinsel tacize ve şiddete kamuoyu dikkati çekmek ve aynı deneyimleri edinmiş kadınlara yardım etmek amacıyla başlatılan bir kampanyada kullanılmıştır (Burke, 2023). Burke'ün açıkladığı gibi, cinsel tacizden ziyade güç meselesi ve gücün kullanımı ile ilgili olan ve "empati yoluyla güçlendirme" (Ohlheiser, 2017, par. 7) olarak tanımladığı bu kampanyanın çok büyük bir global feminist harekete dönüşmesi ise 15 Ekim 2017'de oyuncu Alyssa Milano'nun bir tweetinde Burke'e ait olan 'me too' ifadesini etiketleyerek *Twitter* üzerinden tüm cinsel saldırı veya tacize maruz kalmış kullanıcıların kendisine cevap olarak 'me too' yazmalarını istemesiyle gerçekleşmiştir (Italie, 2017; Ohlheiser, 2017, par. 3). Bir gece içerisinde viral olan ve hızla büyüyen bu kampanyayı başlatan Milano'nun ise Burke'den farklı olarak amacı Harvey Weinstein davasının gündemde kalmasını sağlamak ve faillerden ziyade mağdur olan kurbanların seslerini duyurabilmeleri için bir yol açmak olmuştur (Italie, 2017).

Geniş çapta yankı uyandırmış bu çevrimiçi hareketin bugünkü durumuna baktığımızda devam etmekle birlikte 2017'deki kadar aktif bir hareket olmadığını görebiliriz. Ancak sosyal medya yoluyla büyüyen diğer pek çok dijital feminist aktivist hareketin de gerçekleştirdiği şekilde, dördüncü dalganın ağırlıklı olarak dijital feminizm ayağındaki #MeToo Hareketi, işlevselliği açısından değerlendirildiğinde günümüz feminist hareketinde çok önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu noktada, bu hareketin kadınlar arasında bir birliktelik ve ortak hedef platformuna dönüşerek 1970'lerde ikinci dalgada, özellikle radikal feministler arasında büyüyen ve kadınların özel alanlarda toplanarak karşılaştıkları her türlü cinsel istismar ve cinsel taciz deneyimlerini de paylaştıkları, feminist 'bilinç yükseltme grupları' ('consciousness-raising groups') ile benzer rol üstendiği söylenebilir. #MeToo kapsamında, sosyal medya kullanıcılarının aynı mesele etrafında birleşerek özel alan deneyimlerini bir anlamda kamusal alana taşımaları, ağırlıklı olarak kadın bedeninin sömürülmesi, kadınların uğradığı şiddet, cinsel taciz, cinsel saldırı gibi konularda kişisel deneyimlerini ortak alanlarını oluşturan sosyal medya platformlarında seslendirmeleri ve bu yolla kadınlar arasında dayanışmayı büyüterek feminist bilincin yükselmesini sağlamaları bu benzerliğin en açık örneklerindedir. Bu sayede, feminist aktivist Tarana Burke'ün de ifade ettiği ve sağlamayı hedeflediği şekilde, 2017'nin en büyük feminist kampanyası olarak görülebilecek #MeToo hareketi mağdur olan kadınlar ve marjinal gruplar arasında 'empati kurma yoluyla güçlendirme' fonksiyonunu da yerine getirmiştir.

### **#MeToo Hareketi ve İngiliz Tiyatrosu**

*Twitter*'ın verilerine göre oyuncu Milano'nun 15 Ekim 2017'de başlattığı kampanyanın karşılık bulduğu 145 ülke içerisinde bu harekete en yüksek katılım Amerika'dan sonra Britanya'da görülmüştür (Mitra, 2019, s. 20). Sadece kadınların cinsel sömürüsü, kamusal alanda, yani iş ortamında karşılaştıkları taciz ve saldırı, kurumlarda ve her türlü toplumsal alanda var olabilecek kadın-erkek eşitsizliğine karşı değil, aynı zamanda güç dinamiklerindeki dengesizlik ve hak ihlallerine karşı da bir tepki anlamına gelen #MeToo hareketine gösterilen bu ilgiye pek çok ülkede olduğu gibi İngiltere'de de kurum ve kuruluşlar kayıtsız kalamamış, özellikle film, tiyatro ve eğlence sektöründe yıllardır görmezden gelinen cinsel istismar konusuna karşı kurumsal düzeyde düzenlemeler yapmak durumunda kalmışlardır. Araştırmacı Mark Thomas'ın "Rita, Sue and #Metoo: The Royal Court Theatre, London, and Liberalism" başlıklı makalesinde de belirttiği gibi, "kurumların, içinde bulunan çoğu kişinin de rahatsızlık

duyacak şekilde kendilerini suç ortağı hissettikleri ve farklı şekillerde sistemsel istismarın var olduğu bir sektörün üzerine ışık tutmuş olan #Me too hareketine bir cevap olarak ortaya koyabilecekleri politika ve eylemler arayışı içinde oldukları” bu dönem “2017’nin sonu ve 2018’in başı[na]” (2022, s. 172) tekabül eder. Gerçekten de bu dönemde kurumsal düzeyde somut girişimler için yapılanlar incelendiğinde İngiltere’de en hızlı hareket eden kurumun ülkenin önde gelen yenilikçi tiyatrolarından biri olan Royal Court Tiyatrosu olduğu görülür. Bu doğrultuda, #MeToo hareketinin hemen akabinde, 28 Ekim 2017’de, Royal Court Tiyatrosu Sanat Yönetmeni Vicky Featherstone’un girişimiyle “tiyatro sektöründe yıllardır süregelen güç istismarlarıyla yüzleşmek amacıyla” Jerwood Theatre Upstairs’de iki oturumda gerçekleşecek ücretsiz bir etkinlik düzenlenmiş, katılımcılar “cesur olun ve bize neler olduğunu anlatın” çağrısıyla, tıpkı çevrimiçi #MeToo aktivist hareketinde olduğu gibi, kendi istismar edilme öykülerini anlatmaya teşvik edilmişlerdir (Royal Court, 2017a). Katılımın büyük olduğu bu etkinliğin sonucunda elde edilen veriler tiyatro sektöründe yaşanan cinsel istismar, cinsiyetçi tutum ve gücün kötüye kullanımı olaylarının ne kadar büyük bir boyutta olduğunu göstermiş ve kuruluşu 1870’e dayanan Royal Court Tiyatrosu bu verileri de paylaştığı web sayfasında “cinsel taciz ve güç suistimallerinin önlenmesi” ve “kültür değişimi için bir teklif, bir provokasyon, bir umut” vurgusuyla beş ana madde altında topladığı “Davranış Kuralları” önergesini ilan etmiştir (Royal Court, 2017b). Aynı şekilde, yine İngiltere’nin köklü tiyatrolarından olan, kuruluşu 1894 yılına giden UK Theatre ve ‘kardeş kuruluş’ olarak tanımladığı SOLT (Society of London Theatre (1908)) #MeToo hareketine cevaben tüm Birleşik Krallık tiyatrolarına yönelik bir rehber hazırlamışlardır. Tiyatro sektöründe güvenli, kapsayıcı ve eşitlikçi bir iş ortamının sağlanabilmesi için geliştirdikleri on ilkedен oluşan ve bugün çoğu tiyatronun da web sayfasında yer verdiği bu rehber *Encouraging Safer and More Supportive Practices in Theatre (Tiyatroda Daha Güvenli ve Daha Destekleyici Uygulamaların Teşvik Edilmesi)* başlığıyla Haziran 2018’de yayımlanmıştır. Bu çerçevede iş birliğiyle hareket eden bu iki köklü tiyatro kurumu, UK Theatre ve SOLT, bununla da kalmayıp aynı amaç doğrultusunda bir de Tiyatro Yardım Hattı’nı kurmuşlardır. Neticede, tüm bu ve benzeri gelişmeler sonucunda Britanya tiyatro sektöründe iş ortamında hedeflenen ayrımcılık ve cinsiyetçilikten uzak, eşitlikçi politikalar yolunda somut gelişmeler görülmüştür. İstatistiksel olarak, tiyatro dünyasından haberler üzerine yoğunlaşan İngiltere’nin köklü yayın organlarından *The Stage*’in yaptığı bir araştırma 2018 yılı



içerisinde Birleşik Krallık tiyatrolarının %84'ünün taciz ve suistimale karşı ilke ve prosedürlerini yeniden düzenlemiş veya değiştirmiş olduğunu göstermiştir (Massie-Blomfield, 2018, s. 7). Görüldüğü gibi, #MeToo hareketi öncelikle tiyatro sektörünün kendi içinde revize edilmesini sağlamış, kadınların karşılaştıkları cinsiyetçi tutumlar karşısında sessizliğini kırmakla kalmayıp erkekler arasında da bir bilinç yükseltme, farkındalık yaratarak en köklü tiyatrolarda dahi etik değerler ve davranış kurallarının yeniden düzenlenmesine yol açmıştır.

Ele aldığı konular açısından doğrudan feminist tiyatronun ilgi alanına giren #MeToo hareketi ve ortaya koyduğu sonuçlar kısa bir süre içerisinde İngiliz feminist tiyatrosunda da beklenen gelişmelerin yaşanmasına yol açmıştır. Feminist tiyatro geleneğinin köklü bir geçmişe dayandığı ve özellikle 1970'lerden günümüze kadar ana akım tiyatrolarda da varlığını kabul ettirmiş olan Caryl Churchill, Winsome Pinnock ve Timberlake Wertenbaker gibi pek çok kadın oyun yazarının gelişimine yön verdiği İngiliz feminist tiyatrosu 2018 yılından itibaren bu global hareketin etkisiyle Britanya sahnelerinde yeni bir 'teatral feminist dalga'nın oluşmasına öncülük etmiştir. Kaynağını içinde bulunduğumuz dördüncü dalga feminizminin şu ana kadar görülen en geniş kapsamlı feminist aktivizmi olan #MeToo temalarından almış olan bu yeni oluşum çoğunlukla "#MeToo konulu oyunlar" olarak sınıflandırılırken kimi tiyatro araştırmacıları ve eleştirmenler tarafından da "#MeToo Tiyatrosu" veya "#MeToo Oyunları" (Akbar, 2019c; Rudakoff, 2021) olarak anılır. Çoğunlukla monolog, kısa oyun ve tek kişilik oyunlardan oluşan ve feminist tiyatro geleneğine uygun olarak politik yönü de olan bu oyunlar bu araştırmanın yürütüldüğü an itibarıyla henüz kapsamlı olarak ele alınmamıştır. Fakat gelecekte İngiliz 'dördüncü dalga' feminist tiyatrosunun gelişim sürecinin izlenmesi açısından önemi yadsınamayacak olan ve oluşumu henüz çok kısa bir geçmişe dayanan bu oyunların ilerleyen yıllarda feminist tiyatro çalışmaları kapsamında daha fazla araştırmacı tarafından ele alınarak literatürde yerini alması beklenmektedir.

#MeToo oyunları tahmin edilebileceği gibi (özellikle başlangıç yıllarında) Harvey Weinstein davasına bir tepki olarak film yapımcısı Weinstein ve kurbanlarını oyunların merkezine almış, bu oyunların içerisinde öne çıkan örnekler de Weinstein'ın işlediği suçlarla ilgili doğrudan deneyimleri olan kadınların kişisel anlatılarına dayanan oyunlar olmuştur (Martens-Fox, 2022, par. 3; Play's The Thing, 2022). Örneğin, BBC ve Royal Court Tiyatrosu iş birliğiyle Royal Court Tiyatrosu sanat yönetmeni Vicky Featherstone

küratörlüğünde ilk olarak 11 Haziran 2018’de sahnelenen ve tanınmış feminist oyun yazarlarından Zinnie Harris ve Tanika Gupta’nın da katkıda buldukları on beşer dakikalık sekiz kısa monologdan oluşan *Snatches: Moments from 100 Years of Women’s Lives* başlıklı çalışmanın açılışını yapan monolog *Compliance* genç bir oyuncunun güç sahibi film yapımcısı ile otel odasında buluşmasını konu alır (Royal Court, 2018; BBC Four, 2018).<sup>9</sup> BAFTA (Britanya Film ve Televizyon Sanatları Akademisi) ödüllü ve 2015 yapımı *Suffragette* filminin de yazarı olan İngiliz yazar Abi Morgan tarafından kaleme alınan *Compliance*, İngiliz oyuncu Romolo Garai’nin film yapımcısı Harvey Weinstein’la gerçek deneyimini anlatırken cinsel taciz, cinsel istismar, güç ve gücün kötüye kullanımı temalarını işler. Kadın mücadelesinin yüz yıllık geçmişinden seçkilerin sunulduğu bir çalışmada açılış oyunu olarak belirlenen monoloğun bu temalar üzerinde duran *Compliance* olması sadece ana akım tiyatrolardan Royal Court Tiyatrosunun #MeToo hareketine verdiği tam desteği göstermesi açısından değil, 21. yüzyıla girdiğimizde kadının cinsel açıdan sömürülmesi ve baskı ve şiddete uğramasına göz yuman ataerkil düzenin hâlâ kadın güvenliğine karşı bir tehdit unsuru olduğunu göstermesi açısından da anlamlıdır.

Londra merkezli İngiliz tiyatrolarında yine kaynağını #MeToo hareketinden almış olan ve bu feminist harekete verilen en hızlı cevap olarak örneklendirilebilecek bir diğer çalışma ise daha çok yeni yetişen oyun yazarlarına destek veren, ana akım tiyatro olmasa da yenilikçi ve toplumsal olaylara verdiği hızlı tepki ile tanınan Theatre 503 tarafından sahneye koyulan *The Words Are Coming Now* (2018) isimli çalışmadır. “Bir aydan daha kısa bir süre içinde tamamlanan” (Wyver, 2018, par. 1) ve 25 Ocak 2018’de tiyatro izleyicilerle buluşmuş olan bu çalışma kapsamında sipariş usulüyle yazılmış onar dakikalık on kısa oyun sahnelenmiştir. #MeToo hareketinin bir sonucu olarak cinsel politikalarda kurumsal düzeyde kayda değer değişimlerin görülmeye başlandığı bir dönemde “güç ve rıza kavramlarını farklı perspektiflerden ele alan” (Greenstreet, 2018) Theatre 503’ün bu projesinde daha çok yeni yetişen yazarlara yer verilmiş, içlerinde erkek oyun yazarlarının da bulunduğu on ayrı yazar projeye katkıda bulunmuştur. Fergus Church (*Nightstand*), Amy Evans (*To Be My Eyes*), Elise Van Lil (*Flamingo*), Kevin Forde (*Talk Tonight*), Patrick Russell (*Sorry Not Sorry*) ve Deidan

<sup>9</sup> BBC4’te de yayınlanan seride bulunan çalışmalar gösterim sırasıyla *Compliance* (Abi Morgan), *Outside* (Teresa Ikoko), *Bovril Pam* (Vicky Jones), *Pig Life* (EV Crowe), *Reclaim the Night* (Charlene James), *Pritilata* (Tanika Gupta), *Multiples* (Zinnie Harris) ve *Tipping Point* (Rachel De-lahay) adlı monologlardır.

Williams (*#Shhh\_Timetolisten*) gibi genç kuşak yazarların yanı sıra çağdaş oyun yazarlarından Dipika Guha (*Ask Me Anything*), Chris Bush (*Speaking Freely*) ve feminist yazar April de Angelis (*Words*) ile Richard Bean (*Hotel Du Vin*) gibi İngiliz tiyatrosunun önde gelen yazarları da oyunlarıyla bu projeye destek vermişlerdir (UK Theatre Web, 2023). Çoğunlukla olumlu eleştiriler almış olan proje, *The Stage* tarafından “politik angajmanlı yeni yazının güçlü bir vitrini olarak hizmet eden nüanslı bir antoloji” (Fagnoli, 2018, “Production Details”) olarak tanımlanırken *The Guardian* yazarı Kate Wyver, Theatre 503’un projesi hakkında “kolay çözümler sunma iddiasında değil, ancak [...] hayati bir proje ve Tiyatro 503’ün bir çığır açarak bu çetrefilli, acil meseleler hakkında konuşması takdire şayan” (2018, par. 7) değerlendirmesinde bulunur. Benzer bir eleştiri de tiyatro eleştirmeni ve akademisyen Hannah Greenstreet tarafından yapılmıştır: “Değerli bir proje ve tiyatro endüstrisinde ve ötesinde kültürel değişim yaratmak amacıyla [#Metoo temalı] bu konuşmaların ivmesini devam ettirmek için iyi programlanmış. Kelimeler yeterli olmayabilir ama iyi bir başlangıç” (2018, par. 7). Projede yer alan oyunların temaları göz önüne alındığında #Metoo hareketi kapsamında ele alınmış konuların yanı sıra o dönemde ses getirecek şekilde gündeme gelmemiş olan konuların da değişik boyutlarda ve farklı perspektiflerden incelendiği görülür: Tek mağdurun kadınlar olmadığı gibi tek suçlunun da heteroseksüel erkekler olmadığı (*Nightstand*); kadınların yaşadıkları taciz ve istismar hakkında seslerini yükseltmeleri ve açıkça konuşmaları yönünde üzerlerinde giderek artan baskı ve bunun oluşturabileceği psikolojik sorunlar (*Speaking Freely*); bedensel engelli kadınların da cinsel deneyimleri hakkında konuşma hakkı (*To Be My Eyes*) gibi konular bu proje çerçevesinde tiyatro izleyicilerinin dikkatine sunulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, *The Stage* yazarı David Fagnoli’nin “politik angajmanlı yeni yazı” olarak tanımladığı ve #Metoo oyunlarının ilk örnekleri olarak kabul edilebilecek bu kısa oyunların bir amacı da toplumda yerleşmiş olan cinsiyetçi söylemler ve güç dengeleri üzerine daha yapıcı bir bakış açısı geliştirmek ve topluma da bu yönde bir farkındalık kazandırmak olmuştur denilebilir.

Britanya tiyatrolarının #MeToo hareketine verdiği açık destek ve hızlı tepki ağırlıklı olarak monolog veya kısa oyunlardan oluşan bu ilk örneklerle sınırlı kalmamıştır. #MeToo kapsamında kadınlara yönelik baskı, şiddet, taciz, ayrımcılık, cinsiyetler arası eşitsizlik, cinsel politika, güç ve rıza gibi meseleleri ele alan oyunlara daha geniş izleyici kitlesine sahip Londra merkezli tiyatrolarda ve Britanya’nın

uluslararası düzeyde en geniş katılımlı ve kapsamlı sanat ve kültür festivali olarak kabul edilen Edinburgh Fringe Festivali gibi platformlarda da yer verilmiştir. Dördüncü dalga feminizminin bu çok önemli feminist aktivist hareketinin ivmesiyle tiyatro severlerle buluşan tam uzunluktaki bu oyunların içerisinde dikkat çeken örnekler sahnelenme tarihlerine göre sırasıyla genç oyun yazarlarından Liv Warden'ın The Old Red Lion Tiyatrosunda sahnelenen oyunu *Anomaly* (2019), Katie Arnstein'in oyunu *Sexy Lamp* (2019), daha yeni örneklerden birisi ise tiyatrocunun yazar ve feminist aktivist Hannah Phillips tarafından yazılıp yönetilen *Badass Medusa #MeToo* (2022) oyunudur. Warden'ın Ocak 2019'da sahnelenen tek perdelik ve üç kişilik oyunu *Anomaly*, Harvey Weinstein olayını farklı bir açıdan inceler. Oyun boyunca sahnede aynı anda görülen üç kadın karakter birbirinden bağımsız olarak monologlar halinde konuşurken oyunda yer alan diğer karakterler (örn. baba ve medya temsilcileri) ses kaydı/ses efektiyle veya (anne karakterinde olduğu gibi) sessizlikleriyle görünür kılınır. Oyun bu yönüyle karakterler arasında duygusal etkileşimi yeterince iyi sağlayamadığı için yetersiz görülmüş fakat içerik açısından “#MeToo hareketiyle yapıcı bir şekilde etkileşime giren çok doğru zamanlı ve isabetli bir oyun” (Everything Theatre, 2019, par. 7) olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Oyunun odak noktası üç yetişkin kız çocuk sahibi ünlü medya patronu bir babanın karısını defalarca aldatıp sonunda uyguladığı ağır fiziksel şiddet nedeniyle tutuklanmasının akabinde kızlarının bu olaya nasıl tepki verdiği ve yıllardır ailelerinde yaşananları bildikleri halde aile şirketinin namını korumak adına sessiz kalmış olmaları sonucunda duygusal dünyalarında neler yaşadıkları üzerine kuruludur. Yazarın bir röportajında aktardığı gibi, *Anomaly* Harvey Weinstein olayından etkilenerek yapımcının istismar ettiği kadınların kariyerleri uğruna sömürülmelerine göz yumarak yıllar boyu sessiz kalmış olmalarının bu suça ortaklık etmeleri anlamına mı geldiği yoksa yaşanan şey kadının sessizliğinin güç unsuru tarafından suistimal edilmesi midir sorusunu irdelemeyi amaçladığı bir oyundur (Everything Theatre, 2018). “Bu geçmişe dönük bir hikâye değil, şu anda yaşanıyor. Duygusal, politik ve acı hissettiriyor” (Everything Theatre, 2018, par. 13) diyerek oyunun politik mesajlı bir çalışma olduğunu da vurgulayan Warden, cinsel istismar karşısında kadınların sessizliğinin veya gerçeği inkâr etmelerinin erkek egemen toplumda otomatikman rıza göstermek ve suça ortaklık etmek olarak yorumlandığı, halbuki bu sessizliğin “kurban olmanın ayrılmaz bir parçası” (Akbar, 2019a, par. 7) olduğu düşüncesini ileri sürer. Yazarın oyunda vurguladığı nasıl ki erkeğin güç kullanarak sebep olduğu aile içi

tahribat ailenin kadınları tarafından tamir edilmek durumunda kalıyorsa erkeğin işlediği suçun utancının da kadınlar üzerinde kaldığı mesajı oyunun feminist eleştirel yönünü de güçlü kılar.

Katie Arnstein'in komedi türünde tek kişilik gösterisi *Sexy Lamp* ise bu çalışmada yer verilen #MeToo oyunlarının içerisinde bugüne kadar en çok sahnelenmiş olan ve Nisan 2021'de Wolverhampton Arena Tiyatrosunda dijital olarak da gösterime girmiş olan örnektir. Genç oyun yazarının ilk olarak Ağustos 2019'da Edinburgh Tiyatro Festivalinde izleyenlerle buluşan çalışması Arnstein'in 2018'de yazdığı *It's a Girl!* üçlemesinin (*Bicycles and Fish*, *Sexy Lamp*, *Sticky Doors*) ikinci oyunudur. Oyun adını, Arnstein'in bir röportajında açıkladığı şekilde, başlığını Amerikalı çizgi roman yazarı Kelly Sue DeConnick'in -her ne kadar espri amaçlı başlamış da olsa ciddiye alınarak zamanla sinema filminde kaliteyi ölçmek amacıyla kullanılan- Bechdel Testine bir göndermede bulunarak eleştirel bir şekilde uyarladığı Seksi Lamba Testinden almıştır (Thefry, 2021). Kadının temsili açısından bir filmin kalitesini ölçmek için o filmde kadın karakterlere ne kadar ve ne şekilde yer verildiğinin incelenmesini öneren Bechdel Testine atfen DeConnick de, feminist eleştirel bir yaklaşımla, bir filmde kadın karakterlerin ne derece gerekli olduğunu anlamak için o filmin bir sahnesinde görünen kadın karakteri çıkarıp yerine güzel bir çift bacağın üstüne oturtulmuş bir lambayı koyduğunuzda filmin akışında hiçbir şey değişmiyorsa o film cinsiyetçi ve kadını sadece bir nesneye indirgeyen bir filmdir görüşünü ortaya atmış ve çok dikkat çekmiştir (DeConnick, 2016). Arnstein da bu düşünceye ithafen oyunun açılışında fonda Seth McFarlane'in "We Saw Your Boobs" ("Göğüslerini Gördük") şarkısı çalmaktayken sadece bedeni görünecek şekilde kafasına bir abajur geçirmiş olarak sahneye çıkar (Wiegand, 2019). "Bu oyun benim kendi #MeToo hikâyemdir" (Akbar, 2019c, par. 2) diyen yazar oyuncu kimliğiyle kendisinin de oyunculuk sektöründe karşılaştığı cinsiyetçi yaklaşımları, 29 yaş ile nasıl 'yaşı geçmiş oyuncu' muamelesi görerek yaş ayrımcılığına maruz kaldığını, ilk oyunculuk deneyiminde yapımcılar için yeteneğinden ziyade fiziksel özelliklerinin önemsenmiş olduğunu mizahi bir dille anlatırken sahne gösterisinde teknik olarak müzik ve hikâye anlatımından yararlanır. Kadınların güç karşısında korkmadan, çekinmeden 'hayır' deme hakkını kullanmalarının onları güçlendireceğinin vurgulandığı bu tek kişilik gösteride sektörde yaşanan sistemsel cinsiyetçilik, gündelik yaşantıda kadınların karşılaştığı her türlü cinsiyetçi tutum, iş yerlerinde ve kamusal alanda kadını bloke eden erkek

hegemonyası ve kadın bedeninin bir cinsel nesneye indirgenmesi gibi temalar işlenir. Bu özellikleriyle ve Harvey Weinstein olayının patlak vermesiyle birlikte sahne, film ve eğlence sektöründe kadınların uğradığı cinsel istismarın ne denli yaygın olduğunun global düzeyde gözler önüne serildiği bir dönemde Arnstein'in oyunu #MeToo aktivizmini adeta sahnede devam ettiren ve canlı tutan bir oyundur. Tiyatro eleştirmeni Ella Dorman-Gajic'in ifadesiyle, kişisel bir anlatı olmasına rağmen "inkâr edilemeyecek biçimde evrensel" nitelikli olan *Sexy Lamp* kadınların sanat ve eğlence sektöründe "nasıl manipüle edildiğini ve sömürdüğünü hassas bir şekilde gösteren hayati bir feminist tiyatro" (2019) örneği olarak öne çıkan '#MeToo oyunları' arasında yerini almıştır.

Ele alacak olduğumuz diğer oyun, *Badass Medusa #MeToo* ise prodüksiyon yılı açısından #MeToo oyunlarının art arda sahnelenmiş olduğu 2018-2019 yıllarında değil, 'post-#MeToo devri' olarak tanımlanan 2022 senesinde İngiliz tiyatro izleyicileriyle buluşmuş bir oyundur. İçinde bulunduğumuz zaman dilimi itibariyle bu nitelendirme hakkında bir genelleme yapmak şu an için erken olacaktır fakat oyunun içeriğine bakılırsa bu tanımlamanın #MeToo konusunu bitmiş bir mesele olarak konumlandırmaktan ziyade (bir süre daha) bu akımın yeni bir boyutta gündemde kalmaya devam edeceğine işaret eden bir ifade olduğu görüşü ileri sürülebilir. Tiyatrocu yazar ve feminist aktivist Hannah Phillips'in Mobilise ve Worcester Tiyatroları iş birliğiyle Mart 2022'de Swan Tiyatrosu ve Birmingham Midlands Sanat Merkezinde sahnelenen oyunu *Badass Medusa #MeToo*, başlığının da yansıttığı gibi, Yunan mitolojisinde çok bilinen Medusa'nın hikâyesini #MeToo etiketiyle birleştirerek (queer) feminist bir hikâye olarak yeniden yorumlar. 2022 Dünya Kadınlar Günü çerçevesinde izleyicilerle buluşan oyun içerik açısından olduğu kadar teknik özellikleri bakımından da yenilikçi 21. yüzyıl tiyatrosunu sergileyen bir oyundur. Sahneleme tekniği olarak canlı (fiziksel) ve sanal (dijital) performans metotlarını birleştirerek dijital tiyatronun sağladığı olanaklardan da yararlanan interaktif oyun, Mobilise (2022) web sayfasında görülebileceği üzere, diyalogların yanı sıra müzik, şarkılar, dış çekimleri sahneye getiren filmler, Powerpoint sunumu ve sarmalayan (immersive) teknoloji yöntemlerini bir arada kullanarak izleyicilere üç boyutlu bir tiyatro deneyimi sunar. Önceki iki oyundan farklı olarak, Phillips'in bir saat on beş dakika süren tek perdelik ve dört kişilik bu oyununda tamamı kadınlardan oluşan oyuncu kadrosunda farklı ırklardan gelen kadınlara yer verilir. Bu sayede oyunda dördüncü dalga feminizmde önemi vurgulanan

kesişimsel (intersectional) ve kapsayıcı (inclusive) feminist yaklaşım da öne çıkar ve oyun tam da Tarana Burke'ün hedeflediği şekilde cinsel şiddet, cinsel istismar konusunun sadece beyaz ırk kadınlarının değil, global düzeyde tüm kadınların meselesi olduğuna dikkat çeker. Bu oyunda "Medusa'yı #MeToo'nun kolektif öfke ikliminde kadın bakış açısıyla yeniden hayal etmek istedim" (Birmingham Press, 2022) diyen Phillips klasik mitolojide Poseidon'un arzularına yenik düşerek tecavüz ettiği Medusa'yı ötekileştirdiği ve canavara dönüştürdüğü bir efsaneyi altüst ederken cinsiyetler arası eşitsizliği sorgular. Birinin Medusa diğer üçünün de koroyu (chorus) canlandırdığı karakterlerin her biri hem Medusa'nın hikayesini hem de kendi güncel hayatlarında ataerkil bir sistemde yaşadıkları cinsel istismar, cinsel saldırı, şiddet gibi travmatik olayları anlatırken oyun #MeToo hareketi kapsamında çok tartışılmış olan toplumsal cinsiyet kavramı, kadınların cinsel kimlikleri nedeniyle küresel boyutta karşılaştıkları adaletsizlikler, ayrımcılık ve şiddet temaları üzerinde kesişimsel bir bakış açısıyla durur. Oyun tanıtımlarında da vurgulandığı gibi, "kadınlara ve kız çocuklarına yönelik şiddet ve istismar konusunda farkındalık yaratmak" (Mobilise, 2022) amacını güden yapının sonunda "izleyiciler, cinsiyet, cinsellik, ırk ve arzuya dair alternatif perspektifler sunan bir gelecek ütopyasını kolektif ve dijital olarak yeniden yazmaya davet edil[irler]" (Facebook, 2022). Bu özelliğiyle oyun Mobilise ve Phillips'in gerçekleştirmeyi hedefledikleri şekilde tiyatroyu toplumda olumlu yönde bir değişim yaratabilmek amacıyla bir araç olarak kullanır (Mobilise, 2022). Bu da hem oyunun politik yönden gücünü gösterir hem de –#MeToo hareketi söylemlerine ve amacına uygun şekilde—izleyicileri nasıl daha iyi ve daha adaletli bir toplum yaratabiliriz noktasında düşünmeye teşvik eder.

İngiliz tiyatrosunun içinden çıkan ve #MeToo hareketinin etkisi sonucunda yazılmış oyunlar arasında az sayıda da olsa erkek yazarlar tarafından yazılmış oyunlar da vardır. Bunlar İskoçyalı yazar Anthony Neilson'ın 2018'de Royal Court Tiyatrosunda sahnelenmiş olan komedisi *The Prudes*, İngiliz oyun yazarı ve tiyatrocusu Steven Berkoff'un Şubat 2019'da Playground Tiyatrosunda gösterime giren oyunu *Harvey* ve İngiliz-Danimarkalı genç yazar Theo Togsvik-Stewart'ın Ağustos 2019'da Theatre 503 ve Cut The Cord iş birliğiyle Edinburgh Fringe Festivalinde sahnelenen *Endless Second* isimli oyunudur. Bu oyunlardan ilki (ve şu an itibarıyla basılı kopyası bulunan tek oyun) *The Prudes*, evli bir çiftin monoton giden evliliklerini canlandırabilmeleri adına fiziksel birlikteliklerinde neler yapabileceklerini tartışırken #MeToo hareketi

kapsamında çok konuşulmuş olan rıza ve cinsellik temalarını oyunun erkek karakterini (Jimmy) merkeze koyarak ele alır. Çocukluğunda yaşamış olduğu cinsel saldırının neticesinde kocasıyla yakınlaşmayı reddettiğini öğrendiğimiz ve #Metoo hareketinin etkisiyle görüşlerinde daha katı ve duygularında daha hassas olan diğer karakter Jess'in bu nedenle kocası Jimmy'yi kurban konumuna getirdiği mesajını veren Neilson'ın bir saat on beş dakika süren tek perdelik ve iki kişilik komedisini ağırlıklı olarak feminist kadın eleştirmenler olumsuz yönde eleştirmiş, #MeToo hareketinin rıza ve cinsel politika, eşitlik, eşit fırsatlar gibi temel konularına inemeyip yalnızca yatak odasında olanlarla sınırlı kaldığı görüşünden hareketle oyunu #MeToo kapsamında yetersiz görmüşlerdir (örn. Lyn Gardner (*The Guardian* (2018)) ve Sarah Hemming (*Financial Times* (2018))).

Neilson'ın oyunundan farklı olarak Steven Berkoff'un yazdığı, yönettiği ve oynadığı tek perdelik ve tek kişilik oyun *Harvey* (2019) ise zamanlaması ve #MeToo mağdurları arasında oluşmuş hassasiyetlere saygı göstermemiş olması nedeniyle oldukça sert eleştiriler almış bir oyundur. Londra'nın Batı yakası dışında kalan tiyatro mekânlarından olan ve repertuarında yeni oyunlara yer veren Playground Tiyatrosunda kendine yer bulabilmiş bu oyun başlığından da anlaşılacağı gibi işlediği cinsel istismar suçlarının kesinleşmesi sonucu hapse mahkûm edilen film yapımcısı Harvey Weinstein'ı anlatır. *The Guardian* gazetesi tiyatro eleştirmeni Arifa Akbar'ın da oyunla ilgili yazısında vurguladığı şekilde, 45 dakikalık bir dramatik monolog olarak kurgulanmış olan *Harvey*, #MeToo hareketinin etkisinin devam ettiği bir dönemde mağdur taraf olan kadının psikolojisinden ziyade erkek bakış açısıyla Weinstein'ın ruh halini irdeleyen, öfke, kendine acıma, suçu inkâr etme döngüsünde geçen misojinist bir içerikle basında çıkan haberlerin ötesine geçemeyen bir oyundur (2019b). Şaşırtıcı olmayacak şekilde olumsuz eleştirilerle İngiliz #MeToo oyunları arşivinde yerini almış olan Berkoff'un bu oyunu ile birlikte 'erkekler #Metoo oyunu yazmalı mı?' konusu da gündeme gelmiştir. Kimi görüş kimsenin sansür edilemeyeceğini, kurbanların olduğu kadar istismar suçundan kurtulanların perspektifine de yer verilmeli düşüncesini savunurken (örn. Royal Court Sanat Yönetmeni Vicky Featherstone (Akbar, 2019b)) kimi görüş de #MeToo hikâyesini ancak bir kadın yazarın derinlemesine ve tam empati duygusuyla anlatabileceğini savunmuştur (örn. *The Stage* yazarı Lyn Gardner (2019)).



Bu grupta yine kısaca tanıtılacak üçüncü oyun *Endless Second*, #MeToo oyunları kadın yazarların mı yoksa erkek yazarların mı kaleminden çıkmalıdır ekseninde dönen tartışmaya da farklı bir boyut getirebilir. Oyuncu ve yazar Theo Togsvik-Stewart'ın kendisinin de rol aldığı bu oyunu bir saat süren tek perdelik ve iki kişilik bir oyundur. Kaynağını #MeToo hareketinin en karmaşık temalarından biri olan cinsellikte rıza meselesinden alan ve zamanlaması açısından doğru bulunan oyun 2021'de BBC 4 için sipariş usulüyle radyo oyunu olarak da uyarlanmış ve en son Mart 2023'te Amsterdam CC Amstel Tiyatrosunda sahnelenmiştir (CC Amstel, 2023). Oyunda W ve M olarak adlandırılan ve tiyatro-oyunculuk eğitimi alan iki üniversite öğrencisinin karşılıklı sevgi ve güvene dayanan ilişkisinde W'nun bir akşam rızası olmadan M ile yaşadığı fiziksel birliktelik nedeniyle karşılaşılan sorunlar hem kadın hem de erkek açısından ele alınırken erkeklerin #MeToo hareketinin neresinde durdukları da izleyicilerin dikkatine sunulur. Oyun bu çerçevede istismar edilen pozisyonunda olan kadını (W) suçlayıp yargılamadan rıza ve cinselliğin ne anlama geldiği, kadını istismar eden ve travma yaşamasına neden olan erkeğin işlediği suçun farkına varma ve sorumluluk almada hangi noktada olduğu, sessiz kalmanın rıza anlamına gelip gelmediği ve sessizliğin de suistimal edilebildiği gibi konuları işler. Bu özellikleriyle ve tartışmaya açtığı konulara kadın-erkek bakış açısı dengesini de sağlayarak kalıplaşmış düşüncelerin ötesinde bir perspektif katması nedeniyle Togsvik-Stewart'ın oyunu *Endless Second* "Bizi pek çok açıdan doğru yöne götüren muhteşem bir tiyatro oyunu", "Tecavüz ve cinsel şiddet hakkındaki tüm klişeleri yerle bir ediyor", "Bu yılki Fringe'in en iyi, en düşündürücü gösterisi" gibi beğeni gösteren olumlu eleştiriler almıştır (Cut The Cord, 2021).

Görüldüğü gibi #MeToo hareketine az sayıda erkek yazar tarafından verilen tepki, Togsvik-Stewart örneğinin haricinde, #MeToo hareketinin felsefesini dikkate almayan ve hareketin etik değerlerini göz ardı ederek konuları basite indirgeyen oyunlar olarak literatüre geçmiştir. Bu yazıda bu oyunlara yer verilmesinin amacı İngiliz tiyatrosunda #MeToo aktivizmi ile birlikte başlayan hareketliliğe az sayıda da olsa erkek yazarların da katıldığını ve yapıtlarıyla #MeToo hareketi kapsamında ele alınmış konuların neresinde durmuş olduklarını göstermektir. Bu bağlamda değerlendirildiğinde erkek oyun yazarları tarafından yazılmış #MeToo kaynaklı oyunların (belki de 2018'den beri görülen tek örnek olarak bir istisna olarak kalacak Togsvik-Stewart'ın *Endless Second* oyunu dışında) çoğunlukla erkek egemen bakış

açısını tekrar üreten ve katkı sunmanın ötesinde #MeToo hareketinin amacına da uymayan oyunlar olduğunu söylemek yanlış olmaz.

## Sonuç

Dördüncü dalga feminizmde bir dönüm noktası olarak kabul edilebilecek #MeToo aktivist hareketinin İngiliz tiyatrolarında yarattığı etkileri inceleyen bu çalışmanın sonunda elde edilen bulgular ışığında görülmüştür ki #MeToo hareketi İngiltere’de bir bilinç yükseltme ve farkındalık kazandırma hareketi olarak bir yandan tiyatro kurumlarını cinsiyetçi politikalarını gözden geçirerek daha önce benzeri görülmemiş şekilde ivedilikle eşitlik ve etik ilkeler konusunda yenilenmeye sevk etmiş diğer yandan da İngiliz tiyatrolarında yeni bir feminist akımın oluşmasına yol açarak özellikle 2018 ve 2019 yılları içerisinde birbiri ardına gelen #MeToo konulu oyunlarla tiyatrolarda yeni bir feminist duruşun da sesi olmuştur. Yapılan incelemede özellikle genç kuşaktan yeni kadın yazarların katkılarıyla büyüyen #MeToo oyunlarının ele aldıkları konuları queer feminist, kesişimsel feminist, radikal feminist gibi çeşitli perspektiflerle harmanlarken kadınların cinsel istismar, şiddet ve baskıcı gücün karşısında sessiz kalmama konusunda güçlendirilmelerini de hedeflemiş oldukları görülmüştür.

Bu araştırmanın yürütüldüğü dönemde Grace Thomas’ın (2023) *Socially Minded Theatre: When Verbatim Theatre and the #MeToo Movement Intersect* başlıklı çalışması dışında #MeToo hareketinin İngiliz tiyatrosunda nasıl bir karşılık bulduğu konusunda kapsamlı bir çalışma veya İngiliz #MeToo oyunları üzerine ayrıntılı bir inceleme tespit edilememiştir. Bunda belki sahnelenen oyunların zamanlamasının Covid-19 pandemi dönemine yakın bir tarihe denk gelmiş olması ve/ veya oyunların henüz basılmamış olmalarının da etkisi olabilir. Ancak Londra Bush Tiyatrosu Sanat Yönetmeni Lynette Linton’ın da bir söyleşide öngördüğü gibi, gelecekte MeToo hikayeleri daha fazla kadın yazar tarafından anlatılmaya devam edecektir (Akbar, 2019c, par.18). Sonuç olarak, dördüncü dalga feminist tiyatronun kayda değer örnekleri olarak kabul edebileceğimiz ve kaynağını dördüncü dalga feminizmin (şu an için) en geniş katılımlı çevrimiçi feminist aktivizmi #MeToo’dan alan bu oyunlar muhtemelen gelecekte daha fazla örnekleriyle izleyici karşısına çıkacak ve dördüncü dalga feminist tiyatro çalışmalarının tartışılan oyunları olacaktır.

## Kaynakça

- Akbar, A. (2019a, Ocak 11). Anomaly review –How a movie mogul's misconduct impacts his family." *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/jan/11/anomaly-review-old-red-lion-theatre-london-liv-warden>
- Akbar, A. (2019b, Şubat 13). Harvey review –Steven Berkoff explores Harvey's psyche. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/feb/13/harvey-review-steven-berkoff-harvey-weinstein-playground-theatre-london>.
- Akbar, A. (2019c, Ağustos 27). Theatre and #MeToo: 'There's a new anger in women's stories.' *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/aug/27/women-theatre-metoo-movement-sexy-lamp-bitter-wheat-harvey>
- BBC Four. (2018). *Snatches: moments from women's lives*.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b7pfcr/episodes/guide>
- Birmingham Press. (2022, Şubat 15). Medusa reimagined for international women's day *Medusa. Birmingham Press*.  
<https://thebirminghampress.com/2022/02/medusa-reimagined-for-international-womens-day/>
- Blay, Z. (2016, Mart 21). 21 hashtags that changed the way we talk about feminism. *Huff Post*. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/21-hashtags-that-changed-the-way-we-talk-about-feminism\\_n\\_56ec0978e4b084c6722000d1](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/21-hashtags-that-changed-the-way-we-talk-about-feminism_n_56ec0978e4b084c6722000d1)
- Burke, T. (2023). History and inception. Me Too. <https://metoomvmt.org/get-to-know-us/history-inception/>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Candemir, M. D. (2021, Nisan 2). Hashtag feminizmi. *Feminist Bellek*.  
<https://feministbellek.org/hashtag-feminizmi/>
- CC Amstel. (2023). *Endless Second*. <https://ccamstel.nl/programma/endless-second/>

- Chamberlain, P. (2016). Affective temporality: towards a fourth-wave. *Gender and Education*, 28(3), 458-464. doi:10.1080/09540253.2016.1169249
- Cochrane, K. (2013, Aralık 10). The fourth wave of feminsim: Meet the rebel women. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women>
- Cut The Cord. (2022). *Endless Second*. <https://www.cutthecordtheatre.com/endless-second>
- DeConnick. (2016, Mart 12). Kelly Sue DeConnick explains the sexy lamp test. *YouTube*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_TAG8Pd20DY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TAG8Pd20DY)
- Dixon, K. (2014). Feminist online identity: Analyzing the presence of hashtag feminism. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(7), 34-40. doi.org/10.18533/journal.v3i7.509
- Dorman-Gajic, E. (2019, Ağustos 24). Review Sexy Lamp. *ThreeWeeks*. <https://threeweeksedinburgh.com/article/sexy-lamp-katie-arnstein-and-victoria-gagliano/>
- Everything Theatre. (2019, Ocak 21). Anomaly review. <https://everything-theatre.co.uk/2019/01/anomaly-the-old-red-lion-theatre-review/>
- Everything Theatre. (2018, Aralık 21). 'Anomaly': Liv Warden on putting women's stories centre stage. <https://everything-theatre.co.uk/2018/12/liv-warden-anomaly-old-red-lion-theatre-metoo/>
- Facebook. (2022, Mart 10). Badass Medusa #MeToo. Basın Bülteni. *Facebook*. [https://www.facebook.com/events/4483259465118009/?active\\_tab=discussion](https://www.facebook.com/events/4483259465118009/?active_tab=discussion).
- Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York: Crown.
- Fargnoli, D. (2018, Ocak 28). The words are coming- review. *The Stage*. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/the-words-are-coming-now-review-at-theatre503-london--thought-provoking-nuanced-new-writing>
- Gardner, L. (2019, Şubat 4). Review -Back off, Berkoff (and Mamet) –Women own the #MeToo story. *The Stage*. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/opinion/lyn-gardner-back-off-berkoff-and-mamet--women-own-the-metoo-story>

- Gardner, L. (2018, Nisan 26). The Prudes review- A couple's very public attempt to revive their sex life. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/apr/26/the-prudes-review-a-couples-very-public-attempt-to-revive-their-sex-life-anthony-neilson>
- Gömceli, N. (2010). *Timberlake Wertenbaker and contemporary British feminist drama*. Palo Alto, California: Academica Press,
- Gömceli, N. (2019). Süfraj hareketinin İngiliz tiyatrolarındaki yansımalarına bir örnek: Elizabeth Robins ve *Votes for Women!* (1907). *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 59(1), 100-24.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.33171/dtcjournal.2019.59.1.6>
- Greenstreet, H. (2018, Ocak 29). Review- The words are coming now at Theatre 503. *Exeunt Magazine*. <https://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-words-coming-now-theatre503/#author-info>
- Guerassio, J. (2017, Kasım 3). 'Wonder Woman' is now the highest-grossing superhero origin movie of all time. *Business Insider*.  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/wonder-woman-highest-grossing-superhero-origin-movie-2017-11>.
- Hanisch, C. (2006). The personal is political.  
<https://webhome.cs.uvic.ca/~mserra/AttachedFiles/PersonalPolitical.pdf>
- Hemming, S. (2018). The Prudes, Royal Court Theatre, London — sexual politics in the age of #MeToo. *Financial Times*.  
<https://www.ft.com/content/a5aa141a-4c7d-11e8-8a8e-22951a2d8493>
- Hesse, A. (2018, Şubat 5). Every feminist hashtag you need to know, from #Metoo to #Timesup. *Your Dream*. <https://yourdream.liveyourdream.org/2018/02/feminist-hashtags-metoo-timesup/>
- India Today Information Desk. (2023, Nisan 23). Meet the man who invented the #hashtags. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/information/story/meet-the-man-who-invented-hashtags-2363569-2023-04-23>

- Italie, L. (2017, Ekim 17). Me Too: Alyssa Milano elevates Harvey Weinstein conversation. *WHSV3*. <https://www.whsv.com/content/news/Me-Too-Alyssa-Milano-elevates-Harvey-Weinstein-conversation-451297233.html>
- Jordan, A. (2016). Conceptualizing backlash: (UK) men's rights groups, anti-feminism, and postfeminism. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(1), 18-44. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/614548>
- Martens-Fox, E. (2022, Nisan 7). Still a work in progress: What has #MeToo done for women in theatre?" *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/apr/07/me-too-have-things-changed-for-women-in-theatre>
- Massie-Blomfield, A. (2018, Ekim 15). A year on from #MeToo - How much has theatre really changed? *The Stage*. 1-23. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/a-year-on-from-metoo-how-much-has-theatre-really-changed>
- Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. (2023). Merriam-Webster's 2017 words of the year. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/word-of-the-year-2017-feminism>
- Mitra, S. (2019). Analyzing the global diffusion of the #Metoo movement using Twitter data. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi. North Carolina Üniversitesi. <https://repository.charlotte.edu>. PDF.
- Mobilise. (2022). *Badass Medusa #MeToo*. Mobilise Arts Centre. <https://www.mobilisearts.co.uk/badass-medusa-metoo>.
- Munro, E. (2013). Feminism: A fourth wave? *Political Insight*, 4(2), 22-25. doi:10.1111/2041-9066.12021
- Ohlheiser, A. (2017, Ekim 19). Meet the woman who coined 'Me Too' 10 years ago — to help women of color. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-me-too-campaign-origins-20171019-story.html>
- O'Thomas, M. (2022). Rita, Sue and #Metoo: The Royal Court Theatre, London, and liberalism. *Comparative Drama*, 56 (1-2), 157-178. doi:10.1353/cdr.2022.0006

Play's The Thing. (2022, Mayıs 2). What has happened since #MeToo? *The Play's the Thing Theatre*. <https://playsthethingtheatrecompany.co.uk/news/what-has-happened-since-metoo>.

Royal Court Theatre. (2017a). No Grey Area: Your Stories Heard. <https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/no-grey-area-your-stories-heard/>

Royal Court Theatre. (2017b). A Code of Behaviour. <https://royalcourttheatre.com/code-of-behaviour/>

Royal Court Theatre. (2018). Snatches: Moments from 100 years of women's lives. <https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/snatches/>

Rudakoff, J. (Ed.). (2021). *Performing #MeToo: How not to look away*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Showden, C. (2009). What's political about the new feminisms? *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 30(2), 166-198. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40388740>

Thefry, C. (2021, Nisan 23). Interview—Katie Arnstein. *Centre Stage*. <https://cfrycentrestage.wordpress.com/2021/04/23/interview-katie-arnstein-sexy-lamp/>

Thomas, G. (2023). *Socially minded theatre: When verbatim theatre and the #MeToo movement intersect*. Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi. Edge Hill Üniversitesi. <https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/socially-minded-theatre-when-verbatim-theatre-and-the-metoo-movem>

UK Theatre, & SOLT. (2018). Encouraging safer and more supportive working practices in theatre. <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Handbook-Encouraging-Safer-More-Supportive-Working-Practices-in-Theatre-v2.pdf>

UK Theatre Web. (2023). Archive listings for the words are coming now. <https://www.uktw.co.uk/archive/Play/The-Words-are-Coming-Now/S0150219339/>

Wiegand, C. (2019, 18 Ađustos). Sexy Lamp review – actor shines stark light on the misogyny of her industry. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/aug/18/sexy-lamp-review-edinburgh-2019>

Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth*. New York: W.Morrow.

Wyver, K. (2018, 26 Ocak). The words are coming now review – urgent responses to the #MeToo moment. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jan/26/the-words-are-coming-now-review-theatre-503>





# Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 31.07.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 18.09.2023

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

## “If you don’t care you’ll die”<sup>1</sup>: The Concept of “Liveness” in Arnold Wesker’s *Chicken Soup with Barley* and John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*

“Umursamazsan ölürsün”: Arnold Wesker’in *Arpalı Tavuk Çorbası* ve John Osborne’un *Öfke* Adlı Oyunlarında “Canlılık” Kavramı

Sarah-Jane COYLE

Queen’s University Belfast, School of Arts, English and Languages

[scoyle15@qub.ac.uk](mailto:scoyle15@qub.ac.uk)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8352-8844>

### Abstract

The concept of “liveness” has a long-standing relationship with theatre and performance studies. This relationship has primarily been limited to questions of ontology; namely, what constitutes the ephemeral nature of theatre and what counts as “liveness” in performance in an increasingly digitized age. By contrast, this article will consider “liveness” as a doctrine and pervasive ideology in two landmark plays of 1950s Britain, Arnold Wesker’s *Chicken Soup with Barley*, and John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*. Both plays represent dramas of emotion and were written by members of the Angry Young Men movement, a term denoting a group of working-class dramatists, who used their work to express frustration with Britain’s outdated class system and post-war society. By employing close reading alongside literary and historical analysis, this article will argue that the “anger” of the Angry Young Men is not just a descriptor for disaffected liberals but is part of a wider movement in these plays emphasizing the importance of embodying “liveness” and vitality as a means of resisting the standardized culture of everyday capitalist life.

**Keywords:** Liveness, Working-class, Affect, Socialism, Crisis, Feeling

---

<sup>1</sup> Wesker (2011), p.76. All numerical references are to quotations from this edition of the play.

## Öz

“Canlılık” kavramının tiyatro ve performans çalışmalarıyla uzun süredir devam eden bir ilişkisi bulunmaktadır. Bu ilişki öncelikle tiyatronun geçici doğasını neyin oluşturduğu ve giderek dijitalleşen bir çağda performansta neyin “canlılık” sayılacağı gibi ontolojiye dair sorularla sınırlı kalmıştır. Buna karşın bu makale, 1950’lerin Britanya’sının iki önemli oyununda, Arnold Wesker’in *Arpalı Tavuk Çorbası* ve John Osborne’un *Öfke* adlı oyunlarında “canlılığı” bir doktrin ve yaygın bir ideoloji olarak ele alacaktır. Her iki oyun da duygu dramlarını temsil eder. Onlar, Britanya’nın köhneleşmiş sınıf sistemi ve savaş sonrası toplumuna dair hayal kırıklıklarını ifade etmek için oyun yazan bir grup işçi sınıfı tiyatro yazarını tanımlayan bir terim olan Öfkeli Genç Adamlar hareketinin üyeleri tarafından yazılmıştır. Bu makale, edebi ve tarihsel analizin yanı sıra yakın okumayı da kullanarak, Öfkeli Genç Adamlar’ın “öfkесinin” sadece hoşnutsuz liberaller için bir tanımlama olmadığını, bu oyunlarda gündelik kapitalist yaşamın standartlaştırılmış kültürüne direnmenin bir aracı olarak “canlılığı” ve canlılığı somutlaştırmanın önemini vurgulayan daha geniş bir hareketin parçası olduğunu tartışacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Canlılık, İşçi Sınıfı, Duygulanım, Sosyalizm, Kriz, Duygu

## Introduction

The 1956 premiere of John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court Theatre in London is thought to have heralded a “revolution” (Taylor, 1968, p.32) in British theatre history. Reflecting on this revolution, which was supposedly marked by a change in post-war attitudes and a willingness to confront one’s material and ontological existence, Rebellato remarked:

Life [was] the crucial word. It is part of a cluster of terms that are distributed equally through the works of the New Left and the New Wave: the variant forms, ‘live’, ‘living’, ‘alive’, the antonyms, ‘dead’, ‘death’, the synonyms, ‘vital’ and ‘vitality,’ and the related term ‘feeling’ (1999, p.21).

Indeed, initial reviews of *Look Back in Anger* (hereafter, “*Look Back*”) pointed out the production’s “evident and blazing vitality” (Tynan, 1956) and branded its protagonist, Jimmy Porter, as “simply and abundantly alive” (Tynan, 1956). Subsumed within the overarching media label attached to the rising young (predominantly left-wing) playwrights and intellectuals of 1950s Britain – the Angry Young Men – Arnold Wesker was not immune to this sense of vitality. Wesker’s 1958 play, *Chicken Soup with Barley*, the first in his *Wesker* trilogy (hereafter, “*Chicken Soup*”), explored the lives of the Kahn family to directly confront the question of communism as a sustainable political ideal, and its ability to alleviate the crises of everyday living.

Recognizing the abundance of literature on the politics of the Angry Young Men, this article seeks to explore this notion of "liveness" or "a-liveness" in *Look Back in Anger* and *Chicken Soup with Barley*, as an alternative approach. In these plays, "liveness" is handled in a phenomenological context, implicitly rejecting Cartesian attempts to understand the world as a logical place, where perception exists without feeling. Whilst Raymond Williams remarked on the difficulty of getting hold of the "felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time" (1961, p.63), I will argue that the concept of "liveness" in these plays conjures the effort to deride and resist the homogeneity of a post-world-war II world, where "nobody thinks, nobody cares. No beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm."<sup>2</sup> In doing so, this article will combine critical theory with an exploration of the historical context of both plays to posit them as critiques of linear capitalist narratives of social progress.

By employing a three-act structure and the conventions of fourth-wall naturalism, both *Look Back* and *Chicken Soup* can be termed "old-fashioned plays" (Taylor, 1968, p.49). Their realist and domestic settings also situate them within the genre of "Kitchen-Sink Drama" – a label which connotes the foregrounding of "ordinary" working-class people, in contrast to the landed gentry (situated in on-stage drawing rooms) (Wandor, 2001, p.41). As such, the plays' attitudes to mass culture and working-class life will be examined in turn. However, in tracing their theoretical underpinnings, this article will infer that both plays internalize a more *absurdist* approach than previously thought, by re-inscribing "liveness" as something that is inherently unstable, and which, certainly in the case of *Look Back in Anger*, necessitates a compromise, bordering on delusion, to maintain.

## Liveness

"Liveness" is a crucial concept for performance studies. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin lamented that "[e]ven the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space," which he termed its "aura" (1969, p.50). Similarly, Phelan remarked that "performance's only life is in the present... [it] becomes itself through disappearance" (2003, p.146). In literary criticism, the term "life" largely derives from the commentary

---

<sup>2</sup> (Osborne, 1996, p.7). All numerical references are to quotations from this edition of the play.

of FR Leavis. Leavis believed that if literature is great, it should embody life and exhibit “a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life and a marked moral intensity” (qtd. in Rebellato, 1999, p.38). Rebellato distilled Leavis’ historical view into “a belief that at one point thought and word, feeling and expression, style and sensuousness were unified, before being torn asunder” (p24). TS Eliot, who praised the metaphysical poets for their ability to unite thought and feeling (1951, p.286), ultimately became dismayed by later generations of poets who practiced a loss of sensation united with thought.

Therefore, just as “liveness” is the descriptor of theatrical performance, it is also the descriptor of affect; a notoriously elusive term Spinoza understands as “states of a body by which its power of acting is increased or lessened, helped or hindered, and also the idea of these states” (2004, p.51). Therefore, it is suggested that the value of the anger expressed in *Look Back* and the disillusionment of *Chicken Soup*, lies not in their direction against human targets (Jimmy’s tirades against Alison and the Khans’ condemnation of Sarah’s continuing communism, respectively) but in their very *expression* (Rebellato, p.31). As Massumi remarked, “[affect] is nothing less than *the perception of one’s vitality, one’s sense of aliveness, of changeability*” (1995, p.97). I suggest that such “perception” arises through the plays’ internalization of the *absurdity* of post-World War II living – a world in which having ideological freedom was denied by a capitalist and consumerist society.

### **The Good Life**

MacNicol (1999, p.69) remarked that the 1950s may be regarded as Britain’s least typical decade due to the novelty of full employment and steady economic growth in a century marked by recession, unemployment, and military conflict. The election of Conservative governments presided over an “age of affluence” (Lacey, 1995, p.10) where successful economic policies meant that “a comfortable, consumer-bound and increasingly privatized domestic life was [supposedly] accessible to all” (Langhamer, 2005, p.341). Indeed, Britain witnessed a doubling in average earnings between 1951 and 1961, alongside a 40 percent increase in total production (Hobspawn, 1969, p.263). In 1957, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan implored “Let’s be frank about it; most of our people have never had it so good” (Leader’s Speech, Brighton), establishing a tone of success.

Yet the domestic setting of *Look Back*: a rented flat in a large Victorian house in the midlands, seems symptomatic of 1956; when comfortable Victorian Britain had "corroded, its prosperous houses now chopped up for occupation by less-wealthy tenants" (Shepherd, 2009, p.141). The considerably longer arc of *Chicken Soup*, tracing twenty years in the life of the Jewish Khan family, begins with a thriving, lively family home in 1936. Act One is set in a basement (in the play's original version, an attic) in London's East End, which is "warm and lived in" (Wesker, p.5). Indeed, the home serves as a kind of military base in the first scene, allowing young communists to discuss their strategies for blocking an anti-Fascist march; "Sarah, you seen the streets yet? Mobbed Mo-opped! The lads have been there since seven this morning" (p.9).

In *Chicken Soup*'s second act, when World War II has "come and gone" (p.31), the Khans have moved into an isolated LCC council house, and the mood has dampened. The absence of familial and neighbourly connection mirrors the termination of political purpose in the Khans' lives, symbolising their move from the "secure anti-fascist Communism of the 1930s to the bewildered and disaffected leftism" (Wandor, 2001, p.55) accelerated by the mass culture of the late 1950s (Hoggart, 1957, p.247). On a visceral level, it depicts the loss of the "positive practice of neighbourhood," which Raymond Williams credited as key to the working classes' sense of "life" and "collectivity" (1933, p.134). Harry's sister, Cissie Khan remarks, "these flats are a world on their own. You live a whole lifetime here and not know your own next-door neighbour" (Wesker, p.67). In this way, Wesker has arranged the "scenic images in *Chicken Soup*" so that "one can almost chart the regression – of both the family and the society" (Adler, 1979, p.432). Similarly, in *Look Back*, Osborne's references to war, suffering, death, and miscarriage are eventually subsumed by the play's lasting motif of a make-believe game, which demarcates Jimmy and Alison as living outside of society, under their own rules and removed from adult responsibilities.

The structure of both plays therefore highlights the frequently fantastical nature of political rhetoric. Following Slotkin's (1986) definition of myths as the narratives used to naturalize ideology in every human culture (pp.70-91), Macmillan's words seem mythical in how they promulgate the idea of a new Britain, close in nature to the

infamously unattainable “American Dream” across the pond in the United States. Indeed, the simplistic meta-narrative of social and economic “progress” in 1950s Britain concealed a darker reality. Post-war progressivist developments, and the new welfare state had not delivered and Shepherd notes that there was a growing realisation that public platitudes were hollow (p.138). In Macmillan’s speech one can detect an underlying discourse of power; people are instructed to observe positive changes in society, and therefore are *told* how to feel. This personifies the effects of a consumerist society, which produced not only *goods*, but standardised *people*, “systematically forming the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p.49). Clearly, “ordinary” language needed challenging (Shepherd, p.138). Luckily, Wesker and Osborne took “the pursuit of vibrant language and patent honesty” as their intention from the outset (Osborne, Introduction, p.viii).

For Coppieters (1975, p.38), “Wesker furthers the belief that by and large everyone is born not just with the ability but also with the desire to be active.” His play is united by matriarch Sarah Kahn, who is described at the outset as a “*small, fiery woman,*” whose “*movements indicate great energy and vitality*” (Wesker, p.5). Interestingly, Wesker’s play is never overtly political; whilst tracing the decline in socialist ideals, he couches them in familial terms. As Ponnuswami suggests, “Sarah’s continuing devotion to socialism is both problematised and redeemed by the fact that she is seen to remain ‘a simple, old-fashioned humanist,’” (1998, p.242) as Wesker dubbed himself (qtd. in Ponnuswami, 1998, p142.). Sarah’s political commitment is depicted as simple, logical, and pragmatic; she remarked: “[t]he only thing that mattered was to be happy and eat. Anything that made you unhappy or stopped you eating was the fault of capitalism” (Wesker, p.61). In this sense, politics is used in the play insofar as it is useful. Thus, marches occur offstage, rendered subservient to the family unit. In alignment with Arendt’s view of the Jewish family circle as the “last fortress” in the preservation of the race (1976, p.27), the East End is conceptualised as a “big mother,” (Wesker, p.61) and Sarah its sustenance. This conflation of the personal and the political is shown at the very outset of *Chicken Soup*:

Sarah. (*from the kitchen*) You took the children to Lottie’s?  
 Harry. (*Taking up book to read*) I took them.  
 Sarah. They didn’t mind?  
 Harry. No, they didn’t mind.

Sarah. Is Hymie coming?

Harry. I don't know.

Sarah. (*to herself*) Nothing he knows! (*to Harry*) You didn't ask him? He didn't say?

He knows about the demonstration, doesn't he? (p.5)

Harry continues to evade Sarah's questions by discussing a book instead. Describing Harry as Sarah's "*antithesis*," (p.5) Wesker portrays a marriage in crisis; bearable only via the semantic release of speaking about the other in the third person – "Nothing he knows!" (p.5); "She's such a funny woman" (p.10). For Wandor, by directly subverting the gender stereotype of the all-powerful, articulate male (demonstrated forcefully in *Look Back*), Wesker sows the seeds of the Khan's family's destruction – "the centre of power is the woman – Sarah – and it seems to be the very nature of her strength and power which necessitates creating her opposite: the physically weak, frail, intellectual, cinema-loving Harry" (p.52). However, I suggest instead that Harry's disintegration emanates from his engagement with the "deadening" elements of mass culture. Indeed when the group return from the march against the "black shirts," Harry is uncharacteristically invigorated – "I tell you, show young people what socialism means and they recognize life!" (p.27) Yet this is ironically undercut by the fact that he did not march at all, but only waved a banner for a short period before going to his "mother's place" (p.27) for tea.

In this way, Harry personifies what Raymond Williams regards as the poisonous effects of mass culture – dismantling the "common culture" of the working class and hampering their means of communication (p.336). Lacey (p.6) notes that British culture was "transformed" by consumerism in the 1950s, as the UK adjusted to a post-imperial reality of subordination to US interests, such as pop culture and film. The shift from popular culture (free to be chosen) to an ideologically imposed mass culture, can be considered in terms of Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, whereby ideological power is exercised in a given society by the ruling class (bourgeoisie) via cultural domination.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer referred to the "culture industry" as a capitalist system of production, wherein standardized cultural goods manipulate people into becoming compliant and docile (1997, p.137). Whilst Marx may have regarded religion as the opiate of the people (subtly referenced in *Look Back* by

Jimmy's distaste at Alison's churchgoing), in the 1950s, amusement under late capitalism emerged as "the prolongation of work" (Adorno, 1997, p.137), sedating the population to remain in their allotted social sphere. For all Jimmy's histrionics, lamenting how "My heart is so full, I feel ill" (p.57), his life is ultimately one of hedonism which keeps him rooted in the proletariat. For Pattie, the set of *Look Back* is more bohemian than working class, representing "Jimmy Porter's space, with 'a jungle of newspapers and weeklies' to feed his brain, a marital bed to fulfil his sexual needs and a gas stove with food cupboard to still his hunger (p. 5)" (2012, p.148). As with Harry Khan's preference for cinema over politics, mass culture emerges as an Althusserian ideological state apparatus, leading to the manufacturing and manipulation of consent where ideas embedded in the actions or practices governed by rituals (1971, p.158).

In *Chicken Soup*, Harry's demise can therefore be seen as a powerful symbol of Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility" (1951), a phrase referring to the loss of fusion between thought and feeling. By Act Three, having suffered two strokes, he is reduced to a baby-like figure: mute, occasionally soiling himself and requiring Sarah's full-time care. As Innes (2002, p.10) summarised, this decline symbolically derives from Harry's cultural conditioning and a corresponding inability to care: "apathy...is indistinguishable from mortal illness." By contrast, Sarah "*retains much of her energy*," (Wesker, p.55) with "thought and feeling" united in her efforts to "fight everybody who doesn't care" (p.75), including her son, Ronnie, to whom she warns, "if you don't care you'll die." (p.76)

In *Look Back*, Alison remarks to her father who served in Imperialist India, "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same." (Osborne, p.68) Jimmy Porter recognised that oppression does not end; it merely changes its form. Indeed, the monotony of working-class living that belay the consumerist age and other UK cultural outputs in the late 1950s and 1960s similarly exposed the repetitiveness of factory life and the turn to sexuality as a means of escape. As Camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955):

Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, according to the same rhythm - this path is easily followed most of the time, but one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement (2013, p.15).



The absurdism of *Look Back in Anger* comes through interrogating this "why." As Shepherd summarises, the opening "has the two men reading Sunday newspapers; one complains of boredom and the woman irons. This belongs generically with images of a society where people 'do nothing;' where they are caught up into meaningless and low-level activity – alienated" (p.145). Indeed, the opening exhibits an ontological toing and froing between disparaging cultural symbols, yet participating in them regardless:

*Jimmy and Cliff are seated in the two armchairs...All that we can see of either is two pairs of legs, sprawled way out beyond the newspapers which hide the rest of them from sight...Beside them, and between them, is a jungle of newspapers and weeklies...*

Jimmy: Why do I do this every Sunday? Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last week's. Different books – same reviews. Have you finished that one yet? (Osborne, p.5)

In a feat of meta-theatre, Jimmy's repetitive frustrations – "God, how I hate Sundays!... We never seem to get any further, do we? Always the same ritual" (Osborne, p.11) – mirror the play's "asymmetrical symmetry" (Fletcher & Spurling, 1972, p.66). All three Acts begin on a Sunday evening, "with the sense of it being the fag-end of an uneventful day, spent on banal rituals of passing time, before it is back to the treadmill of work the following day" (Gieseckam, 2000, p.93). This sense of entrapment, and the turn to cultural sedatives as a futile way out, dramatizes Nietzsche's concept of nihilism – the idea that life has no value or meaning (1882). In effect, it also enacts a phenomenological understanding of temporality. Whilst René Descartes argued that the categories of mind and body are distinct, Jimmy's anger uproots the notion that time gains meaning via its logical, Cartesian measurement in minutes and seconds. As Husserl argued, phenomenal consciousness cannot be naturalized (Welton, 1999) thus, for Jimmy, time gains meaning only when he realizes what it is set against: the repetitive nature of capitalism. In *Chicken Soup*, this sense is communicated by the fact that the entirety of the first act (and the political excitement it entails) is set over a single day, whereas Acts 2 and 3 move from 1946 to 1956, suggesting that the days of contemporary capitalist life are interchangeable and unworthy of documentation. For Jimmy, time moves slowly when he is "alive" but helpless, and quickly and pointlessly for the Khans when the "liveness" of socialism has been extinguished.

## Resistance and Fantasy

The taut atmosphere of both plays also symbolizes the playwrights' recognition that "something was banking up under the stodgy surface of life in mid-century England" (Kitchin, 1962, p.99). Just as Ada Khan in *Chicken Soup* comes to recognize that "the only rotten society is an industrial society" (Wesker, p.38), Jimmy in *Look Back* demonstrates how "liveness" is not something that can be bought, but requires individual agency; a self-raising from the pervasive "delicious sloth" (Osborne, p.8) of the 1950s. Problematically, however, Jimmy roots his offensive not in planning the future, but in sentimentalizing the past; lamenting that there "aren't any good, brave causes left" (p.83). Whilst Stuart Hall (1981, p.217) praised this as a sign of the re-awakened liberal conscience: "the dead thing which drives Jimmy to distraction within Alison...is also the dead heart of England, the 'bloody unfeeling core'" – *affectually*, it seems that Jimmy's anger – doggedly pursuing Alison and picking fights – result from a crisis of self-definition. Jimmy fetishizes the past to the extent that his present becomes paralysed. Like a child, he wants to play the soldier, idealising his father's death in the Spanish Civil War as an example of noble suffering, and himself as the dutiful mourner – "But *I* was the only one who cared" (p.56).

Unlike Sarah in *Chicken Soup*, Jimmy's narrative of "caring" does not underscore his "liveness," emanating as it does from "a profoundly solitary experience" (Worth, 1968, p.105). Like Eliot's and Leavis' conception of liveness as a union between mind and body, I build on Williams' notion of a "common culture" to suggest that human vitality is constituted through *communal* experience (echoing the "communitas" which Dolan (2010, p.11) regards as the cohesive feeling of belonging that bathes a theatre audience when watching a play). As a classic maternal figure, Sarah comes into being through her responsibilities – the ground of her being is not herself but others (Levinas, 1989, p.83). This is shown through the play's focus on her multi-tasking "as a wholesome unity of feeling and physical expression" (Rebellato, 1999, p.29), as evidenced through the stage directions – she is repeatedly "*preparing things as she talks*" (p.7) and "*bringing in tea*" (p.8). Whilst Jimmy is impulsive, incessant, and undeniably "present" throughout *Look Back* (Osborne described his tirades as "arias" (Introduction, p.xi) a notion heightened by the fact that he plays the jazz trumpet throughout "as if he wanted to kill someone with it" (Osborne, p.38)) he seems to be shouting into *nothingness*. As Innes (2002, p.98) summarises: "the

movement in the play is one of progressive isolation, with the protagonist driving each of his companions away." Whilst Osborne may utilise this as a wry attempt to illustrate society's destruction of personal relationships (Shepherd, p.148), the irony lies in the fact that, in a consumerist age, anger itself had "become a highly saleable commodity" (Maschler, 1957, p.8.). Indeed, the "Angry Young Men" label endures today as the skewed branding of an era that included other individuals practicing societal critique, such as the seminal female playwright, Shelagh Delaney. This highlights how singular emotions like anger are claimed by capitalist structures. "Liveness," which I understand as a "practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity" (Williams, 1958, p.132) would appear to be the only way to break out of such ontological limitations.

The mind-body dialectic can be seen as the central difference between Wesker and Osborne's plays. Whilst Osborne emphasised the emotional, remarking elsewhere, "I want to make people feel; to give them lessons in feeling" (Osborne, 1957, p.55). Wesker made clear that he believed people "have to think as well" (Wesker, 2003). Whilst anger does give a sense of vitality and *liveness*, the growing realisation that Jimmy "doesn't know where he is, or where he's going" (Osborne, p.88) renders him doomed to the realm of fantasy to achieve a vicarious *affect*. Thus, in the first scene, he exclaims:

Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm... I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah! (*He bangs his breast theatrically.*) Hallelujah! I'm alive! I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we're actually alive (p.11).

Jimmy's mood in this passage is deadly serious. Despite the flippant tone and histrionics; banging his breast in a kind of patriotism to the gospel singer as the embodiment of "natural" humanity ("Hallelujah!") (Sierz, 2008, p.30), his use of the word "ordinary" before "human enthusiasm," suggests that there is something fundamentally lacking in his life. Furthermore, the use of the verb "have" as opposed to the more common "*play*" a game, implies that this is not mere entertainment, but a serious coping mechanism to thwart what Berlant (2011, p.10) termed the "crisis ordinariness" of living. For Berlant, "crisis ordinariness" is the way in which crisis operates in the ordinary through embedded conditions of precariousness (2011, p10). In both plays, capitalism enacts the precariousness of "living socially," with the

characters' lives "always in some sense in the hands of the other" (Butler, 2004, p.14) against their will. Jimmy Porter's penchant for melodrama and Harry Kahn's passion for film highlight how feelings, even if fake, trump *thinking* about reality in this world.

Indeed, Jimmy and Alison's marriage can only work through fantasy; playing games of squirrels and bears; "a silly symphony for people who couldn't bear the pain of being human beings any longer" (p.45). Therefore, despite Jimmy's curse on Alison: "If you could have a child, and it would die" (p.34), which prophetically comes to pass, her response is a release of "feeling" (p.94) which enables her to participate once more in this sadistic universe, and ironically pity *him* – "Oh, poor, poor, bears!" (p.95) Like Ronnie in *Chicken Soup* who cannot answer his mother's entreat to care – "I-I can't, not now, it's too big, not yet – it's too big to care for it, I-I..." (Wesker, p.76) – Jimmy cannot answer Alison's visceral suffering – "Don't. Please don't...I can't [...] Please, I-I..." (Osborne, p.94) In this regard, *Look Back* which "started by calling for a celebration of life, in the end, stands revealed not just as a humble acceptance of the complexity of existence but as a ritual exorcism of female fertility and motherhood" (Gilleman, 2002, p.60), disrupting its supposed "revolutionary" effect.

Whilst Osborne's characters may find some sort of depraved reconciliation, *Chicken Soup* is marked by the Khan family's implosion, as they become dejected and disillusioned by "the news about Hungary" (Wesker, p.74) (i.e., the Russian government's violent suppression of the peoples' revolt). Ronnie, in particular, is disgusted by his mother's blind devotion to communism, yet Sarah refuses to be silenced in a speech that Wesker (cited in Drabble, 1975, p.28) referred to as the crux of the play:

All my life I worked with a party that meant glory and freedom and brotherhood. You want me to give it up now?...If the electrician who comes to mend my fuse blows it instead, so I should stop having electricity? I should cut off my light? Socialism is my light, can you understand that? A way of life (p.74).

Unlike Ronnie's former idealism, Sarah's communism is instinctive. Whilst some critics have thought her deluded, leaving the play in a dramatic and intellectual impasse (Hall, p.217), I support Shepherd's view that:

this alliterative gathering up – light, life, love – gives emotional solidity to the political rebalancing that is going on [...] group organization is replaced, in a backlash

against post-war dreams of a remodeled society by...*affirmation of that polemical term of the 1950s 'life,' emphasis on the inner person* (p.148).

Indeed, the metaphor of "light" symbolises Sarah's self-awareness, in contrast to the flippancy of her family's black-and-white thinking. Rather than turning her back on the socialist cause, Sarah admits to a fraught and complicated relationship with socialism. Considering Wesker's own difficulties; signing the *New Left May Day Manifesto*, whilst struggling to let the "Old Left" go (Ponnuswami, p.138.), it is argued that this posits Sarah as a *realistic* figure of what it meant to be a working-class Jew in the 1950s. Furthermore, whilst she stands alone at the play's close, Sarah refuses to let the ideological collectivity of the working class die, by praising the communist "brotherhood." As Shepherd summarised: "[c]onsistency, right or wrong, and a politics that is emotionally certain: these are the features of the woman at the centre" (Shepherd, p.148). In this sense, it is precisely because "head and heart come into collision and neither is the victor" (Billington, 2005) that Wesker's writing is abundantly *alive*, enacting a rejection of Cartesian dualism and an existential phenomenology that posits feeling as central to our experiences of the world.

## Conclusion

In 1954, theatre critic Kenneth Tynan (p.32) called for "plays about cabmen and demigods, plays about warriors, politicians, and grocers." This article suggests that by 1960, Osborne and Wesker had answered his call vehemently, by creating realistic characters forced to navigate the failures of post-war promises and cultural change. I have sought to argue that both *Look Back in Anger* and *Chicken Soup with Barley* internalize performative, affectual and literary concepts of "liveness" within their characters' struggles in a capitalist age. In a meta-theatrical sense, these plays resist the linear narrative of social progress and the supposedly innocuous rise of mass culture by instigating a "revolutionary" Angry Young Men movement in British theatre, just as they trace mass culture's "deadening" effects on characters such as Harry Khan, and (to a lesser extent) Jimmy Porter.

In this way, I have suggested that the theoretical consequences and underpinnings of both plays should not be overlooked. The emphasis on "liveness" and feeling in both plays suggests that existential phenomenology is the only way to

resist the standardization imposed by capitalism, and emerges as a means, however small, of asserting our capacity for individualized experience. Whilst ultimately, Alison and Jimmy turn to fantasy as a way of evading the monotony of working-class living, and Ronnie Khan retreats politically, Wesker's matriarch Sarah is posited as the phenomenological heroine, exhibiting *liveness* in her actions and ideology. As such, Wesker's play exemplifies what is perhaps the message of the age; Nietzsche's oft-cited observation that "what matters is not eternal life but eternal vivacity" (quoted in Camus, 2013, p.69).

## References

- Adler, T. P. (1979). The Wesker Trilogy Revisited: Games to Compensate for the Inadequacy of Words. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 65, 429-38. Doi: 10.1080/00335637909383493.
- Adorno, T., Horkheimer, M. (1997). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. (John Cumming, Trans.). London, England: Verso. Originally published 1944.
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In L. Althusser (Ed.), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York, USA: Monthly Review Press.
- Arendt, H. (1976). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, NY: Harcourt.
- Benjamin, W. (1969). *Illuminations*. (Harry Zohn, Trans. Hannah Arendt, Ed.) New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Billington, M. (2005, April 9). The party's over. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/apr/09/theatre>
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London, England: Verso.
- Camus, A. (2013). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. London, England: Penguin. (Original work published in English in 1955).
- Coppieters, F. (1975). Arnold Wesker's Centre Forty-two: A Cultural Revolution Betrayed. *Theatre Quarterly*, 18, 37-54.

- Dolan, Jill. (2010). *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Drabble, M. (1975). Arnold Wesker. *The New Review*, 11, 25-30.
- Eliot, TS. (1951). *Selected Essays* (3rd ed.). London, England: Faber and Faber.
- Fletcher, J., Spurling, J. (1972). *Beckett: A Study of His Plays*. London, England: Methuen.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Gieseckam, G. (2000). Waiting for Webster – Look Back in Anger and the Absurd. In AR Corseuil and JM Caughie (Eds.), *Estudos Culturais* (pp. 93-116). Florianopolis, Brazil: Digitalixa Conteudo.
- Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gilleman, L. (2012). John Osborne: the drama of emotions. In David Pattie (Ed.), *Modern British Playwriting: The 1950s* (pp.146-170). London, England: Methuen.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (1971). (Geoffrey N Smith and Quintin Hoare, Trans.) London, England: International Publishers.
- Hall, S. (1981). Beyond Naturalism Pure: The First Five Years. In Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne and Owen Hale (Eds.), *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties: Selections from Encore Magazine 1956-1963* (pp. 212-220). London, England: Methuen.
- Heidegger, M. (1967). *Being and Time*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Hobspawn, E. (1969). *Industry and Empire*. Middlesex, England: Pelican.
- Hoggart, R. (1957). *The Uses of Literacy*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Husserl, E. Welton, D. (Ed.) (1999). *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*. Indianapolis, USA: Indiana University Press.
- Innes, C. (2002). *Modern British Drama*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Kitchin, L. (1962). *Mid-Century Drama*. London, England: Faber.
- Lacey, S. (1995). *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in Its Context 1956-65*. London, England: Routledge.
- Langhamer, C. (2005). The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40(2), 341-362. Doi: 10.1177/0022009405051556.
- Leavis, FR. (1948). *The Great Tradition*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Levinas, E. (1989). *The Levinas Reader*. (Seán Hand, Ed.) Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Lyotard, J. (1986). *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.
- Macmillan, H. (1957). *Leader's Speech, Brighton*. Retrieved from <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=107>
- Macnicol, J. (1999). From Problem Family' to 'Underclass', 1945-95. In Rodney Lowe and Helen Fawcett (Eds.), *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945* (pp. 66-93). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave.
- Maschler, T. (1957). *Declaration*. London, England: MacGibbon & Kee.
- Massumi, B. (1995). The Autonomy of Affect. *Cultural Critique*, 31, 83-109. Doi: 10.2307/1354446.
- Nietzsche, F. (2006). *The Gay Science (1882)*. Thomas Common (Trans.). New York, USA: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Osborne, J. (1957). They Call It Cricket. In Tom Maschler (Ed.), *Declaration*. London, England: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Osborne, J. (1991). *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography, 1955-66*. London, England: Faber and Faber.
- Osborne, J. (1996). Look Back in Anger. In *Plays One* (pp. 2-95). London, England: Faber and Faber. (Originally performed in 1956).
- Patterson, M. (2009). *Struggles in British Theatre: post-war British Playwrights*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.



- Pattie, D. (2012). *Modern British Playwriting: the 1950s*. London, England: Methuen.
- Phelan, P. (2003). *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ponnuswami, M. (1998). Histories of the New Left. In Reade W Dornan (Ed.), *Arnold Wesker – A Casebook* (pp. 136-162). London, England: Garland.
- Rebellato, D. (1999). *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London: Routledge, 1999)
- Russell Taylor, J., Osborne, J. (1968). *Look Back in Anger - A Casebook*. London, England: Macmillan.
- Shepherd, S. (2009). *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Sierz, A. (2008). *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger*. London, England: Continuum.
- Slotkin, R. (1986). Myth and the Production of History. In Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (Eds.), *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (pp. 70-91). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Spinoza, B. (2004). *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order* (Jonathan Bennett, Trans.) London, England: Early Modern Texts. (Original work published 1665).
- Tynan, K. (1956, May 3). The Voice of the Young. *The Observer*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/1956/may/13/stage>
- Tynan, K. (1964). *Tynan on Theatre*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Wandor, M. (2001). *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender*. London, England: Routledge.
- Wesker, A. (1981). 'A Sense of What Should Follow': Interview with Simon Trussler. In Simon Trussler (Ed), *New Theatre Voices of the Seventies* (pp. 145-156). London, England: Methuen.
- Wesker, A. (2003). Interview Transcript with Ewan Jeffrey (Theatre Archive Project, British Library). Retrieved from: <https://sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/Theatre-Archive-Project/024M-1CDR0025463X-0100V0>

Wesker, A. (2011). *Chicken Soup with Barley*. London, England: Methuen. (Originally performed 1958).

Williams, R. (1958). *Culture and Society*. London, England: Hogarth Press.

Williams, R. (1961). *The Long Revolution*. London, England: Pelican Press.

Wilson, C. (2007). *The Angry Years: The Rise and Fall of the Angry Young Men*. London, England: Robson Books.

Worth, K. J. (1968). The Angry Young Man. In John Russell Taylor (Ed.), *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger - A Casebook* (pp. 101-117). London, England: Macmillan.



# Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 10.05.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 28.08.2023

Oyun İncelemesi/Play Review

## ***Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* by Tim Crouch**

*Tim Crouch'ın Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* Adlı Oyunu

Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ

Atatürk University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature

[yeliz.biber@atauni.edu.tr](mailto:yeliz.biber@atauni.edu.tr)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2117-7812>

### **Abstract**

This is a review of *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* (2022) by the contemporary British theatre practitioner Tim Crouch. Premiered at the Royal Lyceum Theatre as a part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2022, the play is a direct outcome of Crouch's experience, both as a human being and a theatre maker, of the COVID-19 pandemic and his thoughts on the death of theatre as an art form during the pandemic. This review is based on the stage production of the play at York St John Creative Art Centre as a part of York International Shakespeare Festival in 2023.

**Keywords:** Tim Crouch, *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel*, *King Lear*, COVID-19 Pandemic

### **Öz**

Bu yazı, çağdaş İngiliz tiyatro uygulayıcısı Tim Crouch'ın *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* (2022) adlı oyununun bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. İlk gösterimi 2022'de Edinburgh Fringe Festivali kapsamında Royal Lyceum Tiyatrosu'nda yapılan oyun, Crouch'ın hem bir insan hem de bir tiyatro yapımcısı olarak COVID-19 salgınına ilişkin deneyiminin ve pandemi sırasında bir sanat formu olarak tiyatronun ölümü üzerine düşüncelerinin doğrudan bir sonucudur. Bu inceleme, oyunun 2023 yılında York Uluslararası Shakespeare Festivali kapsamında York St John Creative Art Center'daki gösterimine dayanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tim Crouch, *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel*, *Kral Lear*, COVID-19 Pandemisi

## Review

Tim Crouch's *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* (2022) arrived at York St John University's Creative Art Centre to be staged for a single evening on April 29, 2023 as a part of the York International Shakespeare Festival. The impressions and views expressed here are based on this particular performance as well as the published text of the play. Written and performed by Crouch himself, the play, an absorbing 70-minute piece, is a response to the times of COVID-19 pandemic during which theatre "kind of effectively died or went into hibernation" (Lyceumtheatre, 2022). Crouch uses the theatrical space to inquire into the art form's survival in a world struck with diseases, a world where it has become a challenge to see a play in the presence of hundreds of others, a world in which technology allows people to stay indoors as they are urged to spend their money in the comfort of their homes to engage in daily activities. It is also a world which depends largely on a capitalist economy wherein the theatre ushers receive only £9.75 an hour when the premium central bank stalls are sold for as much as £95 and the pre-theatre dinner package for £135.50. As Crouch gives a verbal outline of how the auditorium is economically structured, he manages to enlighten and disturb, inviting thought about the theatre as an industry.

The play pulls together two different realms by applying the simple trick of the performer putting on a VR headset which does not really work but is rather used as a metaphorical device to transport him to a virtual theatrical universe where a modern-dress performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is in progress. While the headset metaphorically enables the writer/performer to switch between theatrical spaces, it also creates a dimension of possibility for the audience to be able to develop new insights into the issues raised by Crouch. Essentially a performance comprised of several layers based on storytelling and chatting, the play could perhaps best be described as a stand-up tragicomedy marked with sharp transitions between the real and different levels of the imaginary. In order to be able to make sense across these transitions, the audience has to actively think deeper about what is presented to them and piece them together in their own ways.

The play opens with the writer/performer Crouch appearing on a bare stage, which, as he explains in the 'Q&A' session afterwards, is all that is needed to open up a space of communication between the play/playwright/performer and the audience. To Crouch, "the best form of seeing is 'anti-retinal' (a Marcel Duchamp phrase)" and

therefore in his theatre “the visual aspect exists in tandem with the internal aspect” (as cited in Cleaves). This tendency towards simplicity seems to be set against the daily bombardment of our eyes and minds with an endless line of visual images through television, social media and internet. On the stage, there is only a microphone stand, a microphone and a stool with a glass of water on it and there is also some, though quite minimal, use of sound and lighting facilities throughout the performance. The auditorium remains well-lit throughout the play, which, along with the other dramaturgical choices (such as Crouch reminding us of the length of the play or that there is actually nothing to see in the headset), turns the whole play into a metatheatrical piece. Through the zigzags between the real theatrical space of the performance and this other virtual space which seems to start with the chaotic third act of *King Lear*, the audience is presented with glimpses of what goes on during the performance of Shakespeare’s play after the Fool abruptly leaves to come back no more.

The Fool, we are informed, is Crouch himself. He explains that “This is a live, interactive and immersive experience about my character the Fool abandoning the world of the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare” (Crouch, 2022, p. 8). That is not all, however. Crouch/the Fool is actually talking about our world too when he says, “Abandoning the world, leaving it all, getting out, unable to endure it any longer, having had enough of it, in no fit state to continue with it” (p. 8). He tells us on more than one occasion that there are no more jokes nor anything that could be funny anymore. It is against this background that he tells the audience jokes and stories, which are, at times, quite tragic and yet they somehow also manage to be funny in a most peculiar way. One such example is when he says “We were poor growing up. So poor we had to melt the goldfish down. So poor the dog only got one rabie. I was so ugly my mum breast-fed me through a straw. So ugly everyone died. So bullied I still wash my face in the toilet” (p. 8). On hearing these jokes, the audience is left in a state of uncertainty not quite knowing if they should laugh at them; some uneasy laughter comes out, which seems to be in line with Schopenhauer’s idea of laughter as a “sudden apprehension or perception of some kind of incongruity” (Lewis, 2005, p.37). Crouch’s acting performance also echoes this style of juxtaposed opposites; this is a style that combines scenes in which the solo performer directly faces and addresses the audience members with scenes in which he steps to the far end of the stage and turns

his back to the auditorium as he gets preoccupied with *King Lear's* performance universe. All these opposing elements seem to be a reference to the chaotic and fearful state of the world after going through the pandemic and being largely exposed to and controlled by technological advancements of the day.

Crouch's stories, jokes or more generally points of discussion are delivered through a loose rap style of talking at times and at other times, slow-paced revelations. He sometimes addresses the audience directly by engaging with the individuals present there but he also sometimes stands right in front of them, talking about theatre or audiences by pointing at specific members of the audience but talking more generally about modern stereotypes that visit theatre. In these moments, he asks the audience to believe that he is referring to this other theatre where Shakespeare's play is being produced. This is another complex and experimental piece of theatre by a theatre practitioner who keeps reinventing the form in daring and refreshing ways. As with his 2007 show, *ENGLAND*, this play is a product of "Tim Crouch's fascination with the nature of the theatrical experience; the communication of an idea from performer to audience – and back again" (Tim Crouch Theatre). On that note, however, one shortcoming – equally, an achievement – of the play must be mentioned: at times, the communication between the performer and the audience felt not well-established, which is probably due to the structure of the play which rests on a mobility between various fragments and layers, sometimes rendering the connective tissue way too loose. While this is probably an intended effect, on Crouch's part, to keep the audience in a questioning mode, it causes confusion and exclusion from the world created by the play at times. But, then again, perhaps we should not feel distraught as the play simply pushes us to confront the chaotic world that surrounds us already.

Crouch makes a valid point when he expresses his concern that theatre as an art form is dying in a world tightly sealed all around by technological advancement, pushing people into the comfort of their homes to watch digitised theatre instead of making the effort to get dressed, go outside and see a play in a theatre. It has become more preferable, indeed, to satisfy one's ocular needs through streaming services which offer all kinds of entertainment while at the same time being able to order one's dinner on one's mobile phone. Yet, as Mark Fisher (2022) rightfully observes, "Theatre has a way of reinventing itself and *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel*, ironically, demonstrates the case". Despite the current state of the world threatening the

existence of theatre more than ever before, as long as theatre practitioners like Tim Crouch keep expanding the borders of theatre by unearthing new folds and layers, theatre will survive; it will be mutated, perhaps in ways we may not always foresee, but there is a good chance it will survive.

## References

Crouch, T. (2022). *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel*. London: Methuen.

Cleaves, P. (interviewer) & Crouch, T. (Interviewee). (n.d.). *Tim Crouch* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from Essential Drama website: <https://essentialdrama.com/practitioners/timcrouch/>

Fisher, M. (2022, August 12). Tim Crouch: Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel Review – Virtual King Lear. *Guardian*. Retrieved May 07, 2023, from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/aug/12/tim-crouch-truths-a-dog-must-to-kennel-review-virtual-king-lear>

Lewis, P. B. (2005). Schopenhauer's Laughter. *The Monist*, 88(1), 36-51.

Lyceumtheatre. (2022, July 26). Tim Crouch, Truth's a Dog Interview [Video File]. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae\\_YvG5nLeI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae_YvG5nLeI)

Tim Crouch Theatre. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/shows-2/england>