



T.C

**YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**FUNCTION OF VIOLENCE ON BRITISH STAGES AFTER 1990 FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF SIX CONTEMPORARY PLAYS**

By

Özge BOZKURT

**Submitted to the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of English Language and Literature**

ISTANBUL, 2010



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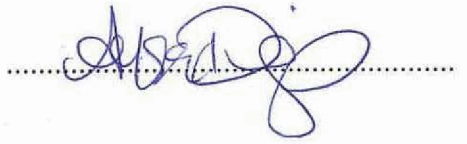
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I met so-called movement 'In-Yer-Face' when I was at university. The plays caught my attention with their unusual styles. They were different from the ones I had read. They were full of violence. To that moment, violence just meant a fragmented world and desperation of humanity for me. But in these plays, violence was used not only to display fragmented world and desperation of humanity but also to display atrocities of the modern world. They were shocking and disturbing. The playwrights did not hesitate using the most vicious and obscene scenes besides slang language which made the plays challenging. They challenge the norms, discourses, taboos. They push the audience to think twice. Those playwrights create their own modern tragedy in their own modern world. They not only brought a change on stages but also challenged the death theatre.

When I decided to work on contemporary theatre, I was a bit suspicious and anxious because I was at the beginning of the way. It was a long and difficult way. I am grateful the ones who support me in this way.

My heartfelt thanks go to my supervisor, Prof Dr Ayşın Candan, for giving me opportunity to work in the field of contemporary theatre and to write my thesis under her direction. I am indebted to her for her valuable advice, continuous guidance and support.

I give my thanks to my friend, H. Gökçin Köksal, for helping me to find out the articles I need and for her support.

ABSTRACT

In 1990s, The British Theatre met a new movement. Young playwrights, who were supported by various theatre companies, shocked people by their different and harsh style. In small studios, they staged their plays which were full of violence. Violence had an important element in their plays because violence became an indispensable part of life and they preferred displaying the reality of the world by violent images. They were severely criticized because of the atrocities in their plays. Sometimes they were accused of using violence to sell. But their aim was not only sell but also make audiences feel and respond the things around. While they were writing their plays, they were inevitably influenced by Antonin Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty. In *Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud suggested using cruelty to reach the depths of unconscious and confronting the spectator to real himself. In this way, the spectator experienced a catharsis and purified with violence. In 1990's, new playwrights tried to reach the audience by violence. Their aim was to shake and shock the audience and made them question not only themselves but also society. In their plays, they dealt with personal feelings and dilemmas besides social hypocrisy and problems.

Key Words: British Theatre, Violence, Antonin Artaud, Theatre of Cruelty

ÖZET

90'lı yıllarda İngiliz Tiyatrosu yeni bir akımla tanıştı. Çeşitli tiyatro kuruluşları tarafından desteklenen genç oyun yazarları, farklı ve sert üsluplarıyla insanları şaşırttılar. Küçük stüdyolarda şiddet dolu oyunlarını sahneye koydular. Şiddet oyunların önemli bir unsuruydu çünkü şiddet hayatın ayrılmaz bir parçasıydı ve hayatın gerçeğini şiddet görüntüsüyle yansıtmayı tercih ettiler. Oyunlarındaki vahşet öğelerinden dolayı acımasızca eleştirildiler. Bazen de satış konusunda da şiddeti kullanmakla suçlandılar. Fakat amaçları sadece satmak değil aynı zamanda seyirciye çevrelerinde olan biteni hissettirip seyircilerin buna tepki vermelerini sağlamaktı. Oyunlarını yazarken kaçınılmaz olarak Antonin Artaud ve onun Vahşet Tiyatrosundan esinlendiler. *Tiyatro ve İkizi*'nde Artaud şiddeti kullanarak seyircinin bilinçaltının derinliklerine ulaşmayı ve seyirciyi gerçek kendisiyle yüzleştirmeyi önermişti. Böylece seyirci katarsis yaşayacak ve şiddetle arınacaktı. 90'lı yıllarda yeni oyun yazarları seyirciye şiddet öğeleri kullanarak ulaşmaya çalıştı. Amaçları seyirciyi sarsmak ve şok etmektir böylece seyirciye kendisini ve içinde bulunduğu toplumu sorgulatmayı amaçlamışlardır. Oyunlarında, toplumsal problemler ve ikiyüzlülüğün yanı sıra kişisel hislere ve çıkmazlara da yer vermişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Tiyatrosu, Şiddet, Antonin Artaud, Vahşet Tiyatrosu

1. INTRODUCTION

The writer defines the Britishness of British theatre. What characterizes British theatre during its golden ages of creativity- Elizabethan and Jacobean, Restoration, Edwardian, and postwar- is not its actors, nor its directors, nor its theorists, but its writers.¹

The playwrights have had a deep influence on British theater throughout the ages. When the point question is theatre, playwrights write for many reasons: to entertain, to teach, to criticize, to shock and to make feel.

British theatre flourished when the censor was abolished. The writers began to write freely. Social and political problems were discussed and criticized by variety of theatre groups. Ethnic groups and minorities worked on their own problems while gay/lesbian and feminist groups fought for their own right and place in the society on the stage. In his plays, Samuel Beckett discussed ‘the question of perception and awareness’². John Osborne opened a new era in British theatre with his *Look Back in Anger* in which he dealt with class distinction and desperation of new generation. Harold Pinter with his Pinteresque style and experiments with interior monologue created a new style in drama. Edward Bond chose different styles in his plays to criticize social violence. And *Saved* criticized harshly in his time because of the stoning scene of a baby though in the future many young playwrights are influenced by this play. Tom Stoppard, on the other hand, was interested in intellectual drama. He dealt with serious topics but he used jokes, puns and multiple settings. And Caryl Churchill’s works ‘centres on psychology rather than society’ and they were ‘increasingly imagistic and surreal.’³ These playwrights with many others helped the development of British theatre. But after a time, theatre began to become dull. So, to revive British theatre, many theatre companies like Royal Court and Bush Theatre supported young writers. Aleks Sierz quoted from Dominic Dromgoole who was an artistic director of Bush theatre.

¹ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. xi.

² Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century*, p. 307.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

‘In the eighties, most theatres wanted well-meaning, well-reasoned, victim-based plays,’ he says. ‘But in the nineties, some theatres gave young writers complete freedom. There were no ideologies, no rules, no “taste” - writers were free to follow their imagination.’⁴

Born of a new theatre was felt with the writers like Philip Ridley, Antony Neilson, Phyllis Nagy and Tracy Lett. These playwrights were using violence but they were either praised or attacked by the critics. They didn’t make tremendous impact until 1995. In Royal Court upstairs, a new play named *Blasted* by a 23 year old woman was staged in that year. It was so brutal and meaningless that though it was the least seen play, it got the harshest criticism. The play is full of atrocities like abuse, rape, murder, cannibalism and etc. Such a violent play disgusted the critics. In his book, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, Aleks Sierz mentioned some of headlines about the play: “... driven into the arms of Disgusted of Turnbridge Wells’, ‘This Disgusting Feast of Filth’, ‘aimless, brutish, barren, cannibalistic, prurient, diseased and terror-stricken’”⁵ But after the first impression and shock passed, it was understood that *Blasted*, which was written with a poetic style, was the metaphor of the things happened in Bosnia. Actually Sarah Kane did the same thing that John Osborne had done thirty-nine years ago: the opening of a new path to British theatre.

Sarah Kane believed that “If theatre can change lives, then it can change society. Theatre is not external force acting on society, but a part of it. It’s a reflection of the way people within that society view the world.”⁶ So in her theatre, she reflected the world she saw and the playwrights that followed her did the same thing, to reflect the world around them. The plays began gradually more violent. On the stages, violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, rape, murder, masturbation, male sexuality, slang language and etc. were often used. In small studios for twenty or thirty people, the effects of violence increased and began shocking and disturbing more than ever.

But why such violence is used in theatre? Why is it needed?

Is it because violence always sells or has violence got another function?

⁴ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94-96.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

2. WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

Oxford English Dictionary describes violence as ‘violent behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill somebody and physical or emotional force and energy.’⁷ *Babylon English* on the other hand, describes violence as ‘rough unwarranted force; injurious treatment; vehemence of expression.’⁸

Though many other descriptions like these, according to Mark Hobart, violence is a phenomenon which is wrong to describe. Mark Hobart emphasizes that what important is not what in reality violence means but how violence is performed.⁹

Performance of violence changes country to country, person to person and situation to situation. But when the performance of violence is mentioned in theatre, with his *Theatre of Cruelty*, Antonin Artaud first comes into mind. In his *Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud suggested to use violence and purified with it. In our time in which violence becomes a part of our life, theatre uses violence as a means to reach and purify its spectators. To do this, playwrights take Artaud as an example and adapt his ideas to reality of our time.

2-1. Antonin Artaud- Theatre of Cruelty

The last of the living are in a frenzy: the obedient and virtuous son kills his father; the chaste man performs sodomy upon his neighbors. The lecher becomes pure. The miser throws his gold in handfuls out the window. The warrior hero sets fire to the city he once risked his life to save. The dandy decks himself out in his finest clothes and promenades before the charnel houses. Neither the idea of an absence of sanctions nor that of imminent death suffices to motivate acts so gratuitously absurd on the part of men who did not believe death could end anything.¹⁰

On the first pages of his work, Artaud associated theatre to a plague in which chaos rules the people and reveals the insanity in an individual. According to Artaud, theatre should be

⁷ The description is taken from Oxford Dictionary.

⁸ The description is taken from Babylon English.

⁹ *Cogito*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, Volume: 6-7, 1996, p.51-52.

¹⁰ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p.24.

like a plague that ‘disturbs the senses’ repose, frees the repressed unconscious, incites a kind of virtual revolt.’¹¹

.... the theatre is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction. It invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies; and we can see, to conclude, that from the human point of view, the action of theatre, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and the hypocrisy of our world.¹²

Artaud believed the conversion power of theatre. The theatre should be like a disease that change people and make them see themselves as they are. It should reveal the repressed feelings and unconsciousness of human. To do this, it has to destroy all traditional forms. It has to revolt against accustomedness and re-create itself. When Artaud mentioned about this kind of theatre, he was heavily influenced from Balinese theatre which was based on jest and mimics, music and postures. He refused the psychological theatre of West which was far from reaching the audience, let alone unconscious. On the other hand, Oriental theatre created its own magic and it reached the deeper feelings.

So Artaud, to create its own ritual theatre, created his Theatre of Cruelty and stated, ‘I propose then a theatre in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theatre as by a whirlwind of higher forces.’¹³

But Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty was not a theatre of physical cruelty. It was rather moral and psychological. Artaud described cruelty as ‘rigor, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and absolute determination.’¹⁴ In his letter to his friend, Artaud clarified his idea of cruelty.

There is in life’s flame, life’s appetite, life’s irrational impulsion, a kind of initial perversity: the desire characteristic of Eros is cruelty since it feeds upon contingencies; death is cruelty, resurrection is cruelty, transfiguration is cruelty, since nowhere in a circular and closed world is there room for true death, since ascension is a rending, since closed space is fed with lives, and each stronger life tramples down the others, consuming them in a massacre which is a transfiguration and a bliss. In the manifested world,

¹¹ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p. 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.82-83.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

metaphysically speaking, evil is the permanent law and what is good is an effort and already one more cruelty added to the other. Good is always upon the outer face, but the face within is evil. Evil which will eventually be reduced, but at the supreme instant when everything that was form will be on the point of returning to chaos.¹⁵

As it is understood, Artaud's notion of cruelty is something that is related to freedom. It is not sensual pain but an internal feud. Artaud stated that we should be purified with cruelty and this was the aim of Theatre of Cruelty: to display real us to us and to treat the society. For Artaud, 'the theatre must give us everything that is in crime, love, war, or madness, if it wants to recover its necessity,'¹⁶ but this aim of theatre can not be achieved by spoken language.

Dialogue- a thing written and spoken- does not belong specifically to the stage, it belongs to books, as is proved by the fact that in all handbooks of literary history a place is reserved for the theatre as a subordinate branch of the history of the spoken language. I say that the stage is a concrete physical place which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak. I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has first to satisfy the senses that this concrete physical language to which I refer is truly theatrical only to degree that the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language.¹⁷

Influenced by Balinese theatre, Artaud suggested that theatre must create its own language which is based on elements of theatre. He claimed that spoken language was not enough to convey the feelings. According to him, 'speech in the Occidental theatre is used only to express psychological conflicts particular to man and daily reality of his life.' But for Artaud, object of theatre 'is not the resolve social or psychological conflicts, to serve as battlefield for moral passions, but to express objectively certain secret truths, to bring into the light of day by means of active gestures certain aspects of truth that have been buried under forms in their encounters with Becoming.'¹⁸

¹⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p.103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

His aim was to reach the depths of the unconsciousness and he defended that theatre should not deal with the psychology of the characters or the society. It should rather show the reality inside us. Unless it dealt with it, theatre could never find its true value.

The theatre will never find itself again except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste of crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even cannibalism, pour out on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior.¹⁹

To reach his aim, Artaud offered different techniques in the Theatre of Cruelty. He got rid of the notion of stage and put the audience in the middle which is still heavily used today.

We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theatre of the action. A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it.²⁰

It is a very effective technique. In this way, audience is included to the play. They do not just watch but also psychologically participate in. They easily get the feelings of the actor and effect of the play doubles itself.

As for the theme, Artaud stated that ‘the Theatre of Cruelty will choose subjects and themes corresponding to the agitation and unrest characteristic of our epoch.’²¹ It is a general fact for the theatre. Theatre has been feeding from society through ages. It always reflects the reality of its time.

Artaud’s ideas about theatre were not taken into consideration or understood in his time. His real value was understood many years after his death. Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty

¹⁹ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p. 92.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

became a current issue with the works of Peter Brook and many writers and directors took him as a model as Brook stated 'everything you do is based on Artaud!'²²

In 1990's, Artaud was reborn from his ashes. New, young writers modernized his Theatre of Cruelty and as Artaud clarified in his *Theater and Its Double*, they reflected the pain of individuals. They aim to reach unconscious and leave the spectators with their self and their conscience. With violence and pain, they shocked, with sexuality; they shook the intimacy of the spectator. So, in a way, they achieved the aim of Artaud: to create a catharsis to purify.

2-2. NINETIES'

In the nineties, a host of plays by young writers used explicit and directly confrontational material to explore the way we live and feel. Never before had so many plays been so blatant, aggressive or emotionally dark. The decade witnessed more and more new writers being drawn to the extremes of experience. If drama dealt with masculinity, it showed rape; if it got to grips with sex; it showed fellatio or anal intercourse; when nudity was involved, so was humiliation; if violence was wanted, torture was staged; when the drugs were the issue, addiction was shown. While men behaved badly, so did women. And often the language was gross, the jokes sick, the images indelible. Theatre broke all taboos, chipping away at the binary oppositions that the structure our sense of reality. Although drama has always represented human cruelty, never before had it seemed so common.²³

In his quotation, Aleks Sierz actually asserted the situation of drama in the nineties clearly. These changes and breakthroughs altered the way of drama in Britain. However, its effects were not limited to boundaries of Britain and spread around the world. In Turkey, we witness the effects of contemporary British theatre thanks to the Dot Theatre Group that has been staging contemporary plays since 2005. With the plays they have staged, they have brought about a change Turkish theatre; moreover they grab the attention of young spectators.

²² Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: Theatre, Film, Opera: 1946-1987*, p. 41.

²³ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p.30.

If we turn to British theatre, what happened in 90's was a change in theatre. When theatre lost its old effect and became monotonous, theatre companies headed for new and young writers and they heavily supported them. But there were other factors, as well. Why did such a movement emerge in 90's? The best reply was given by Aleks Sierz.

Why did happen in nineties? The short answer is that the decade was characterized by a new sense of possibility that was translated into unprecedented theatrical freedom. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the exit of Margaret Thatcher showed under twenty-five that, despite the evidence of political ossification, change was possible; the end of Cold War ideological partisanship freed young imaginations. Youth could be critical of capitalism without writing state-of-the-nation plays; it could be skeptical of male power without being dogmatically feminist; it could express outrage without being politically correct. Picking among the tattered remains of modernism, and encouraged by postmodernism's notion that 'anything goes,' theatre shook off the style police and began to explore a new-found freedom.²⁴

A playwright and a director, Ken Urban's reply to this question is a bit different from Sierz. According to Urban, this movement was related to the 'cultural history of the country.'

This latest 'golden age' of British drama arose during a unique moment in the cultural history of the country- the reign of 'cool Britannia', when Britishness became Britain's favoured fetish. In the mid- 'nineties, London became ground zero for a revitalization of British art and culture. In the theater, music, and art that 'twists' the cool Britannia phenomenon, coolness, cruelty, and nihilism come together to form an ethical vision, as opposed to a moral one, and in the process cruel Britannia conjures a contemporary experience of the *tragic* for audiences at the end of the bloodiest of centuries.²⁵

So whatever the reason, a worldwide movement was born and its nihilistic, violent, bloody style influenced not only notion of theatre but also its audience.

²⁴ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 36.

²⁵ Ken Urban, 2004, "Towards a Theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, Cruelty, and the 'Nineties'", p. 355.

2-2-1. New Movement Was Born

Old sensibility was past its sell-by date and that the times were crying out for something new.²⁶

When came to 'nineties, whatever cultural, political or research for a new in the air directed people to look for a new. From this research, was born the contemporary theatre. Most of the new playwrights were young and they could achieve to reach young people. They had in their hands the vast valuable past of British theatre and the American movies. Aleks Sierz commented that "Most new writers were responding directly to the new cultural climate of nineties. Wanting to criticize the world, they soon found the language, in the widest sense, to do it. After all, compared to television or film, you could say or do almost anything onstage."²⁷

They not only criticized social conditions, personal relationships, world issues but they also re-found Artaud. The role of violence was a kind of uniting element in these plays that the aim was to shock the audience but as Ken Urban stressed 'mere representation of violence renders them one-dimensional; they become about shock and shock alone.'²⁸

It was not only the theatre of violence but besides violence, there were deep humanly feelings and conditions that were hidden among violent scenes.

It is a theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm. Often such drama employs shock tactics, or is shocking because it is new in tone or structure or because it is bolder or more experimental than what audiences are used to. Questioning moral norms, it affronts the ruling ideas of what can or should be shown on stage; it also taps into more primitive feelings, smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, creating discomfort.²⁹

Artaud, in *Theatre and Its Double*, resembled theatre to a plague and suggested that theatre had to be like a plague 'not because it is contagious, but because like the plague, the

²⁶ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 34.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁸ Ken Urban, 2004, "Towards a Theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, Cruelty, and the 'Nineties'", p. 361.

²⁹ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 4.

essential theatre is the revelation, the bringing forth, the exteriorization of depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind, whether of an individual or a people, are localized.³⁰ Aim of the new movement is to reach the cruelty of the mind which creates violence in personal relationships and in the world. Artaud wanted to reach unconscious with his Theatre of Cruelty and young playwrights, in a way, tried to do what Artaud wanted. Artaud suggested purifying with cruelty and young writers tried to do this by using violence. They led audiences to find their own and question themselves.

2-2-2. Features of the New Movement

Peter Brook commented ‘ crack the spectator on the jaw, then douse him with ice-cold water, then force him to assess intelligently what has happened to him, then give him a kick in the balls, then bring him back to his senses again.’³¹ This is the exact description what new movement tries to do the spectators; to shake, to feel, to realize and to respond. Aleks Sierz stated that “they helped exploring new areas of expression and suggesting daring new experiments. What they did was to transform the language of theatre, making it more direct, raw and explicit. They not only introduced a new dramatic vocabulary, they also pushed theatre into being more experiential, more aggressively aimed at making audiences feel and respond.”³² To achieve this effect, playwrights used every kind of violence, from domestic violence to physical ones because violence or cruelty has the power of transformation as Ken Urban stressed.

Cruelty is a very different effect. Although it may appear cold, cruelty carries with it the possibility of transformation. Using the shock of consciousness that cruelty sets in play, the culture of cruel Britannia takes up an ethical struggle and, far from ‘giving up’ on political engagement or demonstrating reactionary tendencies, as Gottlieb suggests, the art that aligns itself with this cruel undercurrent is invested in social concerns, in issues of life and death.³³

³⁰ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p. 30.

³¹ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 18.

³² Aleks Sierz, “Still In-Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation”, p. 20

³³ Ken Urban, 2004, “Towards a Theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, Cruelty, and the ‘Nineties’”, p. 363.

They used extreme sexuality besides male sexuality. They used cannibalism or torture. They blurred the line between being normal or abnormal, being victim or guilty. They used the language in extreme, full of slang words. Though some violent scenes were off-stage, they were narrated to the spectators through language. So language became a kind of shocking device. Besides, plays being staged in small studios increased their effect because the spectator and the spectacle were together. When these elements were united, there occurred a different taste that the spectator could not help tasting though they were seriously disturbed. Experience of violence and pain on theatre; create different feelings in the spectators as Urban implied.

The experiential quality of this drama, its use of the black-box space and its relationship with the audience, returned a tragic sensibility to the theatre. It gives no ideological certainty; it does not seek to be in complete opposition or outside of commodity culture. But what it does is provide the possibility for ethical change in the light of the suffering that the spectator has undergone.³⁴

The new drama is totally different. It is challenging, disturbing, destroying, annoying and disgraceful as 'it is about intimate subjects, it touches what is both central to our humanity and most often hidden in our daily behaviour.'³⁵ Though we are disgusted or disturbed, we can feel and respond, we can question the unquestionable, because 'what most affronts us can sometimes be what most fascinates us.'³⁶

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

³⁵ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

3. USAGE AND FUNCTION OF VIOLENCE IN SIX CONTEMPORARY PLAYS

Do we bear monsters?

Or do we create them?

3-1. *Normal* by Anthony Neilson

Most in-er-face theatre challenges the distinctions we use to define who we are: human/animal; clean/dirty; healthy/unhealthy; normal/abnormal; good/evil; true/untrue; real/unreal; right/wrong; just/unjust; art/life. These binary oppositions are central to our worldview; questioning them can be unsettling.³⁷

Normal or *The Düsseldorf Ripper* is the first major play of Anthony Neilson. It was written before *Blasted* which started the In-Yer-Face movement. Though it isn't included In-Yer-Face movement, with its style, plot and language, it is one of the pioneers of this movement.

In *Normal*, Anthony Neilson pokes up the notion of normality, normality of society and people. He touches very essence of us and asks who is normal according to whom? To question this notion, he uses a serial killer and makes his audience to look from his perspective. Along with a serial killer, he uses society's man, a lawyer. The ideas of these two men collide harshly throughout the play and help the playwright criticize the hypocrisy of the society.

The play is about a serial killer who killed and injured many people between the years 1929 and 1930 in Germany. The play has three characters: the serial killer Peter Kurten, his defence lawyer, Justus Wehner and Kurten's wife, Frau Kurten. Wehner, who is brought to be loyal to norms of society and law principles, tries to prove his client's insanity. Kurten, on the other hand is totally different from Wehner. He acts according to his instincts and questions the norms and ethics Wehner believes to be true. In this point

³⁷ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 6.

two different worldviews collide to each other and this builds up the twist of the play. According to Aleks Sierz, this twist raises one of the “main” questions in the play, that is, “How do you live in the knowledge that some people have moral views that are completely opposed to yours?”³⁸

So two completely different men meet in a cell and change their future. In these two different perspectives, Neilson intrigues and criticizes us, our ideas and society. The play is opened with a memory of Wehner, also the narrator of the play, about Kurten.

Wehner: Of course rarely a day had passed that I had not thought of him. But time left only the memory of a memory and it seemed to me that the chill he had placed in my soul had finally thwarted.³⁹

Wehner remembers with agony that this case is like a gift for him and he begins to narrate his story. What Wehner has to do is to prove the insanity of Kurten. So, Wehner tries to find out the motives of his murders and questions his childhood. But what he finds is nothing more than a dreadful childhood. This raises another important point to question, that is, whether our childhood affects our future self? Anthony Neilson says that “if you bring people up in a completely brutal environment, they will take that as the norm.”⁴⁰ As a child, Kurten is brought up not only in an abnormal environment but also in a horrible family that characterizes his future self.

Kurten: Family. My mother was an average woman of unexceptional stock.
My grandfather was a thief, a simpleton and violent alcoholic. As were his children.
Wehner: Your father was imprisoned for attempting to rape one of his daughters.
Did you also attempt to rape her?
Kurten: Rape? Living in one room, Dr Wehner, there is little space for Inhibition.
Most of my sisters made advances towards me and only on that one occasion did I reciprocate.
Are you a virgin Dr Wehner? Did your parents tell you what goes where?
Did you all undress in separate rooms? Were you ashamed when you got hair on your balls?

³⁸ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 72.

³⁹ Anthony Neilson, *Normal*, Scene I, p.3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Were you frightened by the noises that came from their room? Did you ever see your mother's cunt? You see, Dr Wehner, when my father wanted to take my mother he took her in that room in full view of us all. That was my family. I was never an innocent.
Wehner: *hangs his head in pity.*
Kurten: Don't. On the whole it was to my advantage.
There is no place for innocence in this world.⁴¹

To Wehner, Kurten's childhood and his family is the reason of his being a murderer. Because according to social norms and discourses, Kurten has an abnormal, corrupted family and this causes abnormality and corruption in Kurten's nature. But the real question here, do Kurten or his family want to live such a life? Being a murderer is his fault or are there other motives behind it? For Wehner, Kurten's being a murderer is not his fault but his upbringing.

Wehner: He has indeed endured an insufferable upbringing.⁴²

Wehner sees the case as victory because Kurten has indeed unhealthy childhood and this makes him insane. But for Kurten, this perspective is totally different. So Kurten who is opposite of Wehner, interrogates Wehner and catches him from his weakest side: understanding of love as he claims "I knew everything of law. Little of life and less of love."⁴³

Kurten: Have you ever been in love?
Wehner: *(pause)* I don't believe so, no.
Kurten: How, then, would you define love?
Wehner: *(thinks)* Selflessness. Trust. Understanding. Affection. Happiness-
Kurten: And how have you arrived at this definition? From books, from art? From dictionary?
Wehner: From observation.
Kurten: Did your parents love each other?
Wehner: Yes.
Kurten: How do you know?
Wehner: They must have.
Kurten: They must have?

⁴¹ Scene V, p.8-9-10.

⁴² Scene V, p.10.

⁴³ Scene III, p.5.

Wehner: How does this answer my question?
Kurten: *(pause)* I don't suppose it does.
Wehner: Because what your parents had doesn't sound like love, it sounds more like brutality.
Kurten: Brutality belongs to love. ⁴⁴

Kurten believes that brutality is a part of love because though Kurten's father beats him, he has happy memories with his father. Anthony Neilson claims that "How to love from relationships we see around us-if you are taught that love is beating the shit out of someone, then beating the shit out of someone may well become your expression of love."⁴⁵

For society, this notion is not acceptable; love is something pure and belongs to goodness. But how do we define love, horror or happiness? These are feelings that are abstract and their expressions change from person to person. They are created by language which is changeable. When something is good for someone else, it can be bad for another. For Kurten's condition and upbringing, brutality is love and murder is happiness. Kurten realizes that he takes pleasure from murdering when he is a child and he admits it to Wehner that "the spilling of blood caused a pleasing sensation in my crotch." This admittance is the sign of insanity but Kurten has his own morality.

His childhood and his pleasure from murdering are the motives that beget his being a murderer but there are other motives, too.

Kurten: All told I spent twenty-seven years of my life in prison. And never more than petty theft. I was unjustly persecuted. So if I then went on to unjustly persecute others, it is the State that is directly responsible. ⁴⁶

Kurten spends twenty-seven years in prison for trivial crimes and for his twenty-seven years, he accuses the state. So he kills people, in a way, to take revenge and this becomes his excuse for murdering. Kurten believes that as he is in prison, he is different from the rest. He feels himself special as he is imprisoned to be afraid but at the same time he feels humiliated.

⁴⁴ Scene V, p.8.

⁴⁵ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 72.

⁴⁶ Scene VII, p.15.

Kurten: Isn't that the purpose of prison? But humiliation gave way to pride, and the more that they attempted to erode my dignity, the more determined I became that I would have my revenge.⁴⁷

In this way, his murderer side is activated by taking revenge from the state and the society. The fifteenth scene "To love is to need", supports his revenge against the state. When Wehner questions Frau Kurten, it is revealed that Kurten is actually 'normal' for few years.

Frau Kurten: For the first few years it was stable at least. He worked as a moulder in Altenberg and became an active Union member, always home promptly from work and content to stay home. We were content. But in 1925, he was redundant, and that was when things began to change.⁴⁸

While Kurten has a job, he has a normal life. But when he becomes redundant, he accuses the state and his revenge is reborn. Though his motives for murder seems sexual as his taking pleasure from blood, his pleasure "fucking dogs and sheep and pigs whilst sticking them with knives" or his "thought of killing to keep him hard", his disbelief and hatred against society motivates his murders. As Kurten states in the twelfth scene, he believes that "there is no such thing as society."⁴⁹

On the contrary to Kurten, Wehner is brought up in a "normal" family. They are like Freud's id and super ego. Kurten behaves just according to his instincts and motives and Wehner guards the rules of the society, believes good and evil, trusts the law. Wehner is in his twenties and he is inexperienced as he says in the beginning of the play he 'knew everything of the law. Little of life and less of love.' At first, Kurten is just a case for him and he sees Kurten as a monster. He believes the insanity of Kurten and if he proves this, he thinks of winning the case. But as he begins to know Kurten, his feelings gradually change. His bewilderment is echoed in his letters he sent to his family. While he is captured by Kurten's weird self-confidence, he is deeply affected by the victims and the sadness of their parents. So he is trapped and his feelings are ambiguous. In his second

⁴⁷ Scene VII, p.15.

⁴⁸ Scene XVII, p.31.

⁴⁹ Scene XII, p.25.

letter he admits that he needs his parents; ‘feels myself floundering in this case.’⁵⁰ Wehner’s spiritual change starts in the nineteenth scene “The reign of terror”. While Kurten narrates one of his murders with action, Wehner participates to him and, in a way, he loses himself. After that, in his third letter, it is obvious that Wehner is totally distracted and disillusioned about the system.

Wehner: It’s all so easy, isn’t it?! We say killed. We say dead. We recount the atrocities like we would a shopping list and we find excuses, causes, loopholes, technicalities. People live and die by slip of the tongue, but we can still laugh about it over a drink and commend ourselves for our cleverness.⁵¹

He questions the meaning of death of those people to his family and to society. While the system executes the guilty, it does not think about the victims and their families, what is their lost meant to them. And as he is in a dilemma, he desperately reproaches to his family.

Wehner: Well damn you and your morals! Left, right, it’s all the same. What’s true is that you USED me, Mama, you USED me, Papa, and where are you now, now that I need you, what am I to do WHY DON’ T YOU WRITE!⁵²

In the twenty-fifth scene “Destruction”, Wehner, through Kurten’s inducement, seduces Frau Kurten and thinks he falls in love with her. But to Wehner’s realization, it is designed by Kurten. Kurten implies that his wife does this because she loves Kurten and she wants death after him so she uses Wehner. This raises the emotional violence in Wehner who is deserted by his family and who never tastes love. Kurten gives a hammer to Wehner and orders him to kill his wife. When he refuses, Kurten despises him and irritates him, so Wehner ‘brings the hammer down on Frau Kurten’s head.’ This actually happens as a dream, and Kurten sets the scene. In a dream, Wehner, in a moment of anger, loses his innocence. “The art of murder” is the murder scene of Frau Kurten by Wehner. This scene is different from other scenes as it is made up of stage directions. At the same time, it is the

⁵⁰ Scene XVIII, p. 34.

⁵¹ Scene XX, p.39.

⁵² Scene XX, p.40.

most violent scene of the play because before this scene, murders are just narrated by Kurten and Wehner and let the audience imagine the murders. But in this scene, we witness the performance of a real murder.

*Frau Kurten totters around for a while. Her fingers touch her head, and it is only when she sees the blood that she realizes what has happened and falls. Wehner strikes her again. She lies still. Wehner stares at his handiwork with a mixture of horror and exhilaration. And then, suddenly, Frau Kurten escapes, invading the audience space. Wehner bolts after her, catches her and drags her kicking and screaming back to stage. He strikes her again....*⁵³

The crucial thing is: it is acted among the audience. Hereto, the play continues under the Brecht's alienation-effect, but this short moment destroys the thread between fiction and reality. Frau Kurten helplessly agonizes among the audience. But nobody helps her. Here, Neilson demolishes the boundary. About this scene, Aleks Sierz points out that "Neilson's version shows how hard it is to kill someone."⁵⁴

In the end, Peter Kurten is found guilty and 'the judge said Peter Kurten is normal.' In the twenty-ninth scene 'Two dying men in a room' is very meaningful as there are two men dying, Kurten and Wehner. Kurten is executed and Wehner is metaphorically dead. He is not the same Wehner anymore. He learns from Kurten to follow his own heart and to live his own morality. He realizes the hypocrisy of the society.

Throughout the play, Neilson criticizes the society and touches upon the issue of normality. In the last scene of the play 'Epilogue', Neilson makes a good criticism about being normal and implies that society changes its morality and normality according to its own benefits.

Wehner: In the years that followed Peter's execution I and a great many 'normal' men were to do things we had never thought ourselves capable of.⁵⁵

⁵³ Scene XXVI, p.52.

⁵⁴ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Scene XXXI, p.58.

From the beginning, time and the place of the play, Düsseldorf, implies the Nazi regime. During the Nazi regime, millions of Jews were massacred. Those, who joined the massacre, were also 'normal' men. Aleks Sierz comments, "Although Kurten was executed, his spirit leaked into the German nation. Under Nazism, abnormality became normal. In a sense, the play is about how atrocities can be rationalized."⁵⁶

Even though society converts us according to its needs, as Wehner states in the last scene of the play "come the day of judgement, he will judge us not as the monsters we have become but as the children we once were."⁵⁷

Neilson deliberately chooses a serial killer. His aim is to criticize the state and the society from the perspective of a murderer. Violence, from sexual to psychological, is used in the play to attack and disturb. Society creates its own violence and so murderers. Violence is the basis of the society and when it is needed, it can be easily normalized.

If there could have been more moments like this

3-2. *Phaedra's Love* by Sarah Kane

Sometimes we have to descend into hell imaginatively in order to avoid going there in reality. For me, it's crucial to commit to memory events we haven't experienced- in order to avoid them happening. I'd rather risk overdose in the theatre than in life. *Sarah Kane*⁵⁸

Phaedra's Love is Kane's second play which is an adaptation from Seneca's ancient tragedy *Phaedra*. As a forerunner of In-yer-face movement, Sarah Kane continues her tradition of violence in her play. But this time, by using tragedy, she discusses her utmost theme 'love'. Instead of using violence off-stage like ancient tragedies, she uses violence clearly on stage and creates her own modern tragedy of humanity. In Kane version, Phaedra continues to have passion for his stepson but when Kane is the issue, nothing is

⁵⁶ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 73.

⁵⁷ Scene XXXI, p.58.

⁵⁸ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 111.

simple and pure. As Sarah Kane stresses she “wanted to keep the classical concerns of Greek theatre- love, hate, death, revenge, suicide- but use a completely contemporary urban poetry.”⁵⁹ Like Kane states, *Phaedra’s Love* is not only about love but also about severe depression which is narrated as humorous but still poetic style that turns to play to tragic dark comedy.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, there are two tragic characters; Phaedra and Hippolytus. The title of the play is a cunning coinage that is; Phaedra’s love is both Hippolytus and the tragic end of Phaedra and Hippolytus. Phaedra and Hippolytus are the two faces of the coin; they are like yin and yang. They represent the deeper contrasting emotions of humanity, that is, passion and despair. Kane uses violence of passion, desperation and nihilism which is harsher and more destructive, that leads to unavoidable destruction of Phaedra and Hippolytus.

Kane chooses Phaedra character to stay the same while she plays with the character of Hippolytus and turns him to a modern tragic hero. In Seneca’s *Phaedra*; Hippolytus is a virtuous man who hates women whereas Kane’s Hippolytus is lazy, fat and depressed, using women only for sex.

The play is opened in Hippolytus room where he “sits in a darkened room watching television”, eating hamburger and masturbating “without a flicker of pleasure”. Phaedra, very anxious for Hippolytus who sleeps, eats, watches TV and has sex all day, calls the royal doctor to examine him and the doctor concludes that “there is nothing wrong with him medically, he is just very unpleasant and therefore incurable.” As she cannot help Hippolytus, Phaedra is on the verge of despair. Her passion and love for Hippolytus is killing her. She confesses her misery to her daughter Strophe who sees the disastrous side of Hippolytus and the situation.

Strophe: He’s not nice to people when he’s slept with them. I’ve seen him.
Phaedra: Might help me get over him.
Strophe: Treats them like shit.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Phaedra: Can't switch this off. Can't crush it. Can't. Wake up with it, burning me. Think I'll crack open I want him so much. I talk to him. He talks to me, you know, we, we know each other very well, he tells me things, we're very close. About sex and how much it depresses him, and I know-

Strophe: Don't imagine you can cure him.

Phaedra: Know if it was someone who loved you, really loved you-⁶⁰

Phaedra is totally blind with her love to Hippolytus. She deludes herself by imagining there is a bond between her and Hippolytus and thinking Hippolytus loves her. But as Strophe can, Phaedra cannot see the darkness of Hippolytus. Her passion is the hamartia of Phaedra which drifts her to the end. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche stresses that chorus is the representative of Dionysus. In this play, chorus is replaced by Phaedra and Hippolytus who are driven by Dionysian urges. She believes desperately that she can cure Hippolytus with her love. Phaedra is defeated by her passion and reveals her feelings to Hippolytus. But she confronts with the cruel reality of Hippolytus who asks the reason of that love.

Hippolytus: Why?

Phaedra: You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night; you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and not a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you.

Hippolytus: Not very logical.

Phaedra: Love isn't.⁶¹

Love is not logical for Phaedra but for Hippolytus it is nothing because like love, life does not interest him as he sees himself as someone just "filling up time, waiting." His life is a vicious circle so love, life, sex are all meaningless. He is the ultimate nihilist. While Phaedra is dying from her passion for Hippolytus, Hippolytus is tortured by his nihilistic feelings. As Phaedra still cannot understand the reality, she thinks her love is a present for Hippolytus and she performs oral sex on him while he just watches TV throughout and eats his sweets. It is a sign of love for Phaedra whereas it has no meaning for Hippolytus as he mocks "there. Mystery over." Moreover, he ironically advises her to see a doctor as he has gonorrhoea. Hippolytus is unattainable and Phaedra bitterly understands that like himself and everyone else, Hippolytus hates her too. This is destruction for Phaedra and leads her

⁶⁰ Sarah Kane, *Phaedra's Love*, Scene III, p.71

⁶¹ Scene IV, p.79.

to suicide but she chooses to take away Hippolytus to death with herself as a punishment. But Hippolytus gets excited when Strophe says her mother accuses him of rape and he will be lynched. He sees this as a present from Phaedra while Strophe wants him to deny it:

Hippolytus: Not many people get a chance like this. This isn't tat. This isn't bric-a-brac.
Strophe: Deny it. There is a riot.
Hippolytus: Life at last.⁶²

Though he is innocent, he accepts the accusation of Phaedra. Because it is the chance he waits for dying. When the priest comes to save his soul, he refuses to confess because there is nothing to confess for Hippolytus. As for him, he is 'doomed' to this and he feels 'no remorse' but joy. Priest insists that he should confess as there is no 'repentance in the next life' but there is no God for Hippolytus, neither in this life nor in the next life. Like many other things, he is honest about this; "Die as if there is a God, knowing that there isn't? I've lived by honesty let me die by it."⁶³ He does not believe in God and he despises priest because of his hypocrisy. Sarah Kane here, from the mouth of Hippolytus, severely criticizes religious institutions and belief;

Hippolytus: I know what I am. And always will be. But you. You sin knowing you'll confess. Then you're forgiven. And then you start all over again. How do you dare mock a God so powerful? Unless you don't really believe.⁶⁴

Hippolytus neither believes God nor the life after death. He does not believe life, too. Because being alive means nothing for him. But on the other hand death is something new and exciting that is to be experienced.

While Phaedra's passion is her tragic mistake, 'free will' is the tragic mistake of Hippolytus. As Aleks Sierz comments "If the violence of Phaedra's emotions shows the irrationality of desire, Hippolytus' truth-seeking is an essay in confrontation. In the end,

⁶² Scene V, p.90.

⁶³ Scene VI, p.95.

⁶⁴ Scene VI, p.96.

both choose self-destruction.”⁶⁵ Hippolytus’ self-destruction comes in the ‘shape of mob’ as Saunders stated.⁶⁶ He is torn by the mob; his genitals are cut off and thrown on the barbecue. Children play with them like toys by throwing them to each other. Theseus cuts his son ‘groin to chest’ and so on. But death, turn to void is the happiest moment for Hippolytus who says “if there could have been more moments like this.”⁶⁷

In contrast to Phaedra and Hippolytus, Strophe is the voice of the logic. She is the realistic one who sees the end. She says “if anyone were to find out, we’d be torn apart on the streets”, and tries to prevent this end. Her only aim is to protect the royal family. To do this, she tries to persuade Hippolytus to deny the rape and save the family. Her endeavor is mocked by Hippolytus:

Hippolytus: Strange. The one person in this family who has no claim to its history is the most sickeningly loyal. Poor relation who wants to be what she never will.
Strophe: I’ll die for this family.⁶⁸

She dies for the sake of the royal family. As she knows the innocence of Hippolytus, she defends him and she is raped and killed by Theseus. Her fury comes in the shape of Theseus because of her crimes. She sleeps not only Hippolytus but also Theseus on his wedding night with her mother. Strophe is the victim of her affection to royalty.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, Kane uses extreme emotions which “are the problems we have as human-beings.”⁶⁹ Violence is accompanied by emotions this time. Passion of Phaedra tortures her and leads her to death. Desperation tortures Hippolytus though Phaedra’s accusation becomes his salvation, and addiction kills Strophe. Kane, like in *Blasted*, continues using sexuality and physical torture. But this time, what deeply affects the audience is not sexuality or physical torture but the cruelty of emotions which bring Antonin Artaud and his description of cruelty in mind.

⁶⁵ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 110-111.

⁶⁶ Graham Saunders, *‘Love Me or Kill Me’: Sarah Kane and The Theatre of Extremes*, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Scene VIII, p.103.

⁶⁸ Scene V, p.88.

⁶⁹ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 111.

From the point of view of the mind, cruelty signifies rigor, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and absolute determination. Cruelty is above all lucid, a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity. There is no cruelty without consciousness and without the application of consciousness. It is consciousness that gives to the exercise of every act of life its blood-red color, its cruel nuance, since it is understood that life is always someone's death.⁷⁰

It is our emotions and our choices that lead us. Phaedra's passion rules her and determines the fate of her, Hippolytus and the royal family. Along with Phaedra, Hippolytus' choice determines his fate and saves him from the torture of nihilism. Strophe's decision to defend Hippolytus so the royal family, drags her to death. They are all consciously done that draw the destiny and it can be said violence is actually inside us.

Money is civilization!

3-3. *Shopping and Fucking* by Mark Ravenhill

Shopping and Fucking is the second important example of In-Yer-Face trend after *Blasted*. The play has shocking tone and violent images, seriously criticizes the society somewhere mocks with it. It is disturbing as the sexuality is bluntly used. It is suitable to Sierz's definition of In-Yer-Face theatre, that is:

It is a type of drama that uses explicit scenes of sex and violence to explore the extremes of human emotion. It is characterized by stage images that depict acts such as anal rape, child abuse, drug injection, cannibalism, and vomiting. It also has a rawness of tone, a sense of life being lived on the edge.⁷¹

But is it really violent? My answer is, not as much as Kane. Ravenhill uses sex and anal rape to disturb us and our intimacy, maybe just simplifies the notion of taboos but violence is always behind the scene, it is narrated, it is hinted with the words and actions, it is not dictated but it leaves a bitter taste in the spectator.

⁷⁰ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, p. 101.

⁷¹ Aleks Sierz, "Still In Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation", p. 19.

Mark Ravenhill, in his conference in Istanbul, stressed the differences between our experiences and the experiences of 60's and 70's. Ravenhill expressed that, in order to convey our differences, it was needed to talk about the world from the different perspective.⁷² According to Ravenhill, "the starting point for a young contemporary dramatist is something that is quite sardonic, quite ironic, quite cynical, because that's the predominant sensibility of the generation that's under thirty."⁷³ New generation playwrights, like him, wrote their own plays which were staged in small studios where a new kind of writing was evolved.

Shopping and Fucking, like *Blasted*, was the outcome of this new research. Sarah Kane described new writing as "purely speculative theatre" and so Ravenhill's play, as it is obvious from its title, is not only speculative but also extremely confrontational.

When first encountered with the title, it is inevitably thought the relationship between "shopping" and "fucking". "Shopping" is something related to consumerism so capitalism but what is the aim of "fucking" in the play? Is it something that is used for disturbing the intimate feelings of the spectator? Maybe. It is true that "fucking" is used totally to cause disturbance and for Luc Gilleman "'Fucking' is escaping from the burden of being human, an attempt at becoming elemental and joining the material universe- as simple and devastating as a chemical reaction."⁷⁴ What important here is "becoming elemental and joining the material world" which is similar to the function of "shopping".

The play is opened at in a 'flat – once rather stylish, now entirely stripped bare' which is the sign of a loss. The play shares similarity with *Look Back in Anger*. In *Look Back in Anger*, "the scene is a fairly large attic room, at the top of a large Victorian house. The ceiling slopes down quite sharply from L to R down R down R are two small low windows. In front of these is a dark oak dressing table. Most of the furniture is simple and rather old," which is a kind of description that signals the lost power and glory of the Victorian period. There is a yearning for past and disillusion of present in *Look Back in*

⁷² It was taken from Mark Ravenhill Conference of Dot Theatre Group in 2009.

⁷³ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 124.

⁷⁴ Luc Gilleman, "'In Yer Face' Theatre: Purely Through Image and The Collapse of Language", *Western Drama Through Ages: A Student Reference Guide*, Volume 1, Ed. Kimball King, p. 450.

Anger while in *Shopping and Fucking* there is indifference and apathy of young generation, neither yearning for the past nor for the future. In their world, money rules. They are lost and deserted generation in a capitalist world so they define themselves according to system they live in. Ravenhill stressed that “Characters whose whole vocabulary had been defined by the market, who had been brought up in a decade when all that mattered was buying and selling. The market had filtered into every aspect of their lives. Sex, which should have been private, had become a public transaction.”⁷⁵

The place of Jimmy, Cliff and Alison is taken by Mark, Robbie and Lulu who are the symbol of not only isolated but also cynical generation. Ravenhill, to criticize the capitalism and our dependence to capitalism, gives personal feelings by blending it with popular culture.

The play can be separated into six parts according to relationship between Mark, Lulu and Robbie; Lulu and Brian; Lulu and Robbie; Mark and Gary; Brian, Lulu and Robbie and finally Mark, Robbie, Lulu and Gary.

The first scene is opened with Mark, Lulu and Robbie. Robbie and Lulu try to feed Mark who gets ill because of heroine. Mark announces that he goes away for a while for treatment which causes disappointment and apprehension in Robbie and Lulu. Robbie, who longs for past, says: “Good times. The three of us. Parties. Falling into taxis, out of taxis. Bed.”⁷⁶ But for Mark “that was years ago. That was the past.” Contrary to Robbie, Mark is aware of the changes in their life. Robbie, on the other hand, thinks Mark does not want them and love them any more. Lulu, to calm down the boys, wants Mark to narrate ‘shopping story.’

Mark: It's summer. I'm in a supermarket. It's hot and I'm sweaty. Damp. And I'm watching this couple shopping. I'm watching you. And you're both smiling. You see me and you know sort of straight away that I'm going to have you. You know you don't have a choice. No control. Now this guy comes up to me. He's a fat man. Fat and hair and lycra and says: See the pair by the yoghurt? Well, says fat guy, they're both mine. I own them. I own them but I don't want them- because you know something? - they are trash. Trash and I hate them. Wanna buy them?
How much?

⁷⁵ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Scene I, p.274.

Piece of trash like them. Let's say.... twenty. Yeah, yours for twenty.
So, I do the deal. I hand it over. And I fetch you. And I take you both away and I take you
to my house. And I've been keeping a room for you and I take you into this room. And
there's food. And it's warm. And we live out our days fat and content and happy.⁷⁷

But Mark feels obligated to go which cause frustration in Lulu and she reproaches Mark as
“what are you waiting for? A taxi? Or maybe you haven't got the money? You are going to
ask me for money? Or maybe just take the money? You've sold everything. You've stolen.
You don't own us. We exist. We're people. We can get by. Go.”⁷⁸

In order to prove they can live without Mark, Lulu goes to a job interview with Brian who
is the only grown-up in the play. During the interview, Brian wants Lulu to take off her
jacket. When she takes off her jacket, “two chilled ready meals fall to the floor” which let
Brian to question Lulu;

Brian: Look me in the eyes. Did. You. Pay?
Lulu: No
Brian: Stolen goods.
Lulu: We have to eat. We have to get by. I don't like this.
I'm not a shoplifter. By nature. My instinct is for work. I need a job. Please.⁷⁹

She is broke, she needs money and food. Her desperation is Brian's benefit. He exploits
her weakness; she takes the job which is selling ecstasy, but the interview ends Lulu's
striptease to Brian. What is significant here is Lulu's quotation from *Ivanov*; “One day
people will know what all this was for. All this suffering. There'll be no more mysteries.
But until then we have to carry on living. We must work.”⁸⁰

The third scene is among Robbie, Lulu and Mark. Robbie tells Lulu that he is sacked but it
is not a big deal for Robbie how they pay for everything because there is Lulu who “sorts it
out.” She is like a mother; she gets the job, she brings food and cares the boys.

⁷⁷ Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and F******, Scene I, p. 275.

⁷⁸ Scene I, p.277.

⁷⁹ Scene II, p.282.

⁸⁰ Scene II, p.281.

The fourth scene is between Mark and Gary. Mark, who is dismissed because of his sexual relation with another patient, comes to Gary for sex which is “an interaction that was sexual but not personal, or at least not needy” while Lulu witnesses an attack in a shopping center in the fifth scene. This is a real shock for Lulu, she oscillates between indifference and regret because she just watches the incident and shoplifts a chocolate. She criticizes herself for this: “I took the bar of chocolate. She’s being attacked and I picked this up and just for a moment I thought: I can take this and there’s nobody to stop me. Why did I do that? What am I?”⁸¹

The seventh scene opens in an emergency room. We learn that Robbie scatters the ecstasy pills, which Brian gives for Lulu to sell, for free to see people “just really really happy” and then he is beaten up and snatched all of them. When Lulu doesn’t want to understand such a stupidity, he explains his ideals.

Robbie: I was looking down on this planet. Spaceman over this earth. And I see this kid in Rwanda, crying, but he doesn’t know why. And this granny in Kiev, selling everything she’s ever owned. And this president in Bogota or....South America, And I see the suffering. And the wars. And the grab, grab, grab. And I think: Fuck Money. Fuck it. This selling. This buying. This system. Fuck the bitching world and let’s be.....beautiful. Beautiful. And happy.⁸²

It is the reality of the 90’s generation, much more cruel and blunt. This is why young generation breeds its own apathy and indifference because there is nothing but suffering. But for Lulu, what Robbie does is a childish thing because what is real for her is the situation they are in. So she reproaches and says “boys grow up you know and stop playing with each other’s willies. Men and women make the future. There are people out there who need me. Normal people who have kind tidy sex and when they want it. And boys? Boys just fuck each other.” According to Aleks Sierz, “the play’s gender confusion are about definition of maleness: Gary, the abuse victim who wants to die; Mark, the emotional dependent who is also a junkie; Robbie, the bisexual and when boys won’t grow up, the

⁸¹ Scene V, p.299.

⁸² Scene VII, p.308.

only woman in the cast is forced to play mummy.”⁸³ Lulu is the only woman in the play and she is the one who takes care of everything, finds a job and shoplifts takeaway food to feed the boys. As Sierz stresses she is attributed mother-like role. Michelene Wandor argues this situation as “the relative absence of women and total absence of meaningful heterosexuality might imply that women have less of a problem than men.”⁸⁴ Actually, women do not have fewer problems than men. The playwright puts forward homosexuality deliberately. It is a kind of challenge because the play, in a way, criticizes male-dominated society. Gay-issue and its weakness is a huge blow to this society, to patriarchy. And symbolically, Lulu fulfills the mission that is attributed to woman in male-dominated society, that is, “feeding and caring men”. So, as in the real life, the woman is omitted in the play.

The only representative of male-dominated society is Brian; at the same time the only mature play. When Robbie snatches all the “E’s”, he and Lulu confront the boss, Brian. Brian inserts a video to show Robbie and Lulu in which a schoolboy plays a cello. They watch for some time and Brian begins to weep, because the boy who plays the cello is his son. According to Brian, his son is gifted, a gift from God. But “behind it all is effort, his efforts-of course- but also Brian’s efforts.” And Brian asks the inevitable question to Lulu and Robbie, “because, at the end of the day, at the final reckoning, behind beauty, behind God, behind paradise, peel them away and what is there?” The answer comes from Robbie, who despises money as “fuck money” in the previous scenes, “Money!” Behind all of the beauty, there is money; the rule of the capitalism; without money, nothing is possible. Without money, this boy cannot play cello because he cannot go to school, he cannot take lessons, and he cannot buy a cello to play. In a capitalist world, you cannot live if you do not have money. After this emotional video, comes a torture scene which happens to Lola and Robbie if they do not compensate the loss of Brian. So Robbie and Lulu begin to sell phone sex in order to save their life and continue to live and Mark and Gary go to Harolds for shopping. Mark, who does not want intimate relationship, falls in love with Gary but Gary refuses his love because he is after his lost father.

⁸³ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 130.

⁸⁴ Michelene Wandor, *Post-War British Drama: Look Back In Gender*, p. 228.

Gary: I'm not after love. I want to be owned. I want someone to look after me. And I want him to fuck me. Really fuck me. Not like that, not like him. And, yeah, it'll hurt. But a good hurt.⁸⁵

Gary, who is just a fourteen year-old kid, focuses on this feeling “to be owned” because he never experiences the father-son relationship and he is never protected by his mother. So he does not know the meaning of love. What he knows is just abuse and he wants to be abused harshly. He desperately needs to be protected and he wants this;

Gary: I want a dad. I want to be watched. All the time, someone watching me. Do you understand?⁸⁶

In return Gary asks what Mark wants and it is revealed desperation of youth because Mark “wants to find out, wants to know if there are any feelings left.” Like Sarah Kane’s character Hippolytus, he is in nothingness and this feeling of numbness creates a kind of psychological torture and like Hippolytus, Mark is filling time with sex but contrary to Hippolytus, Mark does not give up and searches for the feelings.

Mark is after feelings; Gary needs a man which does not exist, so Robbie says:

Robbie: I think...I think we all need stories; we make up stories so that we can get by. And I think a long time there were big stories. Stories so big you could live your whole life in them. The Powerful Hands of the Gods and Fate. The Journey to Enlightenment. The March of Socialism. But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we're all making up our own stories. Little stories. It comes out in different ways. But we've each got one.⁸⁷

There is nothing left for the new generation. It is the end of grandnarratives or the new generation loses its sense of history and the feeling of belonging. Everything changes; development in technology and some political approaches make the person lonely and selfish breaks his connection to society and history. Mark Ravenhill stated that it was a kind of criticism of Thatcherism and Aleks Sierz stressed that: “... if her idea “There is no

⁸⁵ Scene XI, p.325.

⁸⁶ Scene VI, p.302.

⁸⁷ Scene XIII, p.335

such thing as society” was true, this is what you got, ‘a cynical and hardened’ attitude, angry that a ‘sense of society has disappeared’. *Shopping and Fucking* captured the ‘low level anger of the twenty to thirty generation.’⁸⁸

Robbie offers help to Gary to give him what he wants in return for money that saves his and Lulu’s life. They play a game which Gary narrates and Robbie and Mark do. Towards the end of the game Gary tells what he really wants:

Gary: It doesn’t end like this. He’s always got something. He gets me in the room, blindfolds me. But he doesn’t fuck me. Well not him, not his dick. It’s the knife. He fucks me-yeah-but with a knife. So...⁸⁹

His wish means death and this isn’t acceptable for Robbie and Mark. But Gary insists.

Gary: When someone’s paying, someone wants something and they’re paying, then you do it. Nothing wrong. It’s a deal. So then you do it. I thought you were for real. Pretending, isn’t it? Just a story. ... You can do it. Because he’s not out there. I’ve got this unhappiness. This big sadness swelling like it’s gonna burst. I’m sick and I’m never going to be well.⁹⁰

He is an abused child and its burden destroys Gary. He is a deserted child both by his mother and officials that leaves him in great misery and desperation. His only salvation in this world is death. So his wish comes true. The killing scene does not materialize on the stage, though it is hinted by Mark.

Mark: All right. You’re dancing and I take you away.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 132.

⁸⁹ Scene XIII, p.352.

⁹⁰ Scene XIII, p.353.

⁹¹ Scene XIII, p.354.

The last scene is like a main theme of the play. Robbie and Lulu gives the money to Brian and he gives a speech that stresses the importance of money.

Brian: Tell me, son, says my dad, what are the first few words in the Bible? ... And he looks at me, he looks me in the eye and he says: Son, the first few words in the Bible are... get the money first. Get. The Money. First. It's not perfect, I don't deny it. We haven't reached perfection. But it's the closest we've come to meaning. Civilization is money. Money is civilization. And civilization- how did we get there? By war, by struggle, kill or be killed. And money-it's the same thing, you understand?⁹²

It is morals of the grown-ups and the spirit of the era: Money is everything. Aleks Sierz interpreted this as:

Here is a nation where grown-ups, represented by Brian, have a vestige of old values but also advocate the most excessive spirit of the capitalism, whose moral lesson is 'Get the money first.' When Gary complains about being abused, his social worker, another grown-up, offers him a leaflet. Young people have been abandoned. However funky and uninhibited, they are dazed, confused and boiling over. With all adults corrupt, there is little to relieve the pain and tedium except shopping and fucking.⁹³

Even though the play seems like a dark and desperate comedy, its end leaves the feeling of hope. Ravenhill added some optimism to the end of the play similar to that of Edward Bond. In *Saved*, the mending of the chair is a kind of symbol of hope. And here, three friends' feeding each other is a kind of hope and the sign of their sorting things out and Mark narrates the shopping story he tells in the first scene but this time he adapts it to future.

Mark: It's three thousand AD. Or something. It's the future. The Earth has died. Died or we killed it. The ozone, the bombs, a meteorite. It just doesn't matter. But humanity has survived. A few of us... jumped ship. And on we go. I'm standing in the market, some sort of bazaar. A little satellite circling Uranus. Market day. And I'm looking at this mutant. This fat sort of ape-thing comes up to me and says See the mute with the three-foot dick?
Yeah. I see him.

⁹² Scene XIV, p.355.

⁹³ Aleks Sierz, Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 132.

Well, he's mine and I own him. I own him but I hate him. If I don't sell him today I'm gonna kill him.
So a deal is struck, a transaction, I take my mutant home and I get him home and I say: I'm freeing you. I'm setting you free. You can go on. And he starts to cry. I think it's gratitude but it's ...
He says- well he telepathises into my mind- he doesn't speak our language- he tells me: Please. I'll die. I don't know how to ... I can't feed myself. I've been a slave all my life. I've never had thought of my own. I'll be dead in a week.
And I say: That's a risk I'm prepared to take.⁹⁴

It is a kind of allegory of personal relationships which is shaped by the market. Mark wants to attach to someone emotionally but he realizes that without giving something, you cannot take anything. Mark loves Gary but Gary is after his absent father. So to gain Gary's love, Mark has to do what he wants. Robbie distributes E's free to make people happy but in return he is beaten up. Lulu just wants a job to feed herself and Robbie but to get this job she has to do striptease. In a consumption society, you cannot take anything if you do not give from yourself.

The beauty queen of Leenane says goodbye.

3-4. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* by Martin McDonagh

Ireland's most celebrated playwrights- Samuel Beckett, Sean O'Casey, and John Millington Synge- have all delighted in creating laughter in darkness and finding humor in the pain and torture of living. In their comedy, laughter is never very far from tears. Much of contemporary Irish drama seems to follow this same tradition of using comedy to explore the darker side of human experience. This is certainly true of the plays of Martin McDonagh, the most celebrated Irish playwright of the last decade. "I walk that line between comedy and cruelty," McDonagh declares, "because I think one illuminates the other."⁹⁵

As Castleberry states, Martin McDonagh is very successful in mixing the comedy and violence. In each of his plays, it can be easily sensed the darkness of violence in comedy and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is no exception. The play is about a cruel and torturing

⁹⁴Scene XIV, p. 358

⁹⁵ Marion Castleberry, "Comedy and Violence in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*", *Martin McDonagh: A Casebook*, Ed. Richard R. Russell, p. 41.

conflict between mother and daughter which leaves the spectator in between, in shock and in pity.

The play is opened in a kitchen of a rural cottage in the West of Ireland. The issue of “killing father” in *Playboy of the Western World* turns to “killing mother” in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. From the beginning of the play, violence intermixes with comedy and irony.

The setting gives the sense of darkness and grotesque air and the minute; violence makes itself perceived with the red hand of Mag Folan. Mag Folan is an old woman who abuses her daughter and does not care of her happiness and her needs as a woman as long as her own needs are met. On the other side, Maureen, her daughter who is forty and single, is tired of looking after her mother and wants to live her own life. These two humanly desires- Mag’s demand of care and Maureen’s desire for freedom- clash and create a sado-masochist relationship between mother and daughter. The play develops as attack and counter-attack of the mother and the daughter. Maureen’s desire to get rid of her mother is reflected by her actions and language and Mag’s counter-attacks create tension which leads to violence. When they are talking about news which is about a man who killed an old woman, Maureen expresses her wish to her mother which is shocking.

Maureen: ... If he clobbered you with a big axe or something and took your oul head off and spat in your neck, I wouldn’t mind at all, going first. Oh, no, I’d enjoy it, I would. No more oul Complán to get, and no more oul porridge to get, and no more...

Mag: (interrupting, holding her tea out) No sugar in this, Maureen, you forgot, go and get me some.⁹⁶

Such a plot of murdering displays the real hatred and weariness of Maureen but for Mag; it is an ordinary dialogue which she does not care. What she cares is the taste of her tea.

The tension of the play rises with the coming of Ray who is a young boy aged twenty. He brings an invitation for Maureen from his brother Pato. Ray, instead of giving the message to Maureen herself, gives it to Mag who reads and then burns it. But Maureen sees Ray and

⁹⁶ Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Scene II, p.7.

gets the message. When she comes home, she taps her for Ray's message and in order to make her speak, she "turns on the kettle" that creates fear in Mag and tortures her with a "lumpy" Complan.

Maureen: The lies of you. The whole of that Complan you'll drink now, and suck the lumps down too, and whatever's left you haven't drank; it is over your head I will be emptying it.... Interfering with my life again? Isn't it enough I've had to be on beck and call for you every day for the past twenty year? Is it one evening out you begrudge me?
Mag: Young girls should not be out gallivanting with fellas...!⁹⁷

In order to rescue from the torture of Maureen, Mag forges an excuse. But the motives of her actions are based on her need of taking care and her fear of losing her caretaker Maureen. Mag has other two daughters who are married and away. They neither take care of their mother nor call her. All the responsibility is on Maureen and she feels like trapped that makes her fiercer to her mother and it is reflected in her sentence; "Do you think I like being stuck up here with you? Like a dried up owl..." And she tells her dream to her mother in which her desire continues.

Maureen: I have a dream sometimes there of you, dressed all nice and white, in your coffin there, and me all in black looking in on you, and a fella beside me there, comforting me, the smell of aftershave off him, his arm round me waist. And the fella asks me then if I'll be going for a drink with him at his place after.
... I say "Aye, what's stopping me now?"⁹⁸

But Mag simply answers back to Maureen as "I will be hanging on forever." Like Maureen tortures mother with her harsh words, her mother tortures her psychologically and the war between mother and daughter continue until the coming of Pato. What comes after that is a moment of happiness for Maureen, a slight fear for Mag and the end for two women.

After the party, Maureen brings Pato to come and they have the night together. The next morning, when Mag wakes up, she sees the dress and pours her urine into the sink. She starts to speak loudly to wake up Maureen but instead of Maureen, Pato enters which

⁹⁷ Scene II, p.14

⁹⁸ Scene II, p.17.

makes Mag shocked and the conflict between mother and daughter is getting harsher when Maureen comes in the room in half naked. Mag accuses Maureen of scolding her hand and Maureen embarrasses Mag by telling that she pours her urine into the sink. But Mag strikes Maureen with her past and her bad days in Diffold Hall.

Mag: It's a nut-house! An oul nut-house in England I did have to sign her out of and promise to keep her in me care.⁹⁹

Maureen works in England for a while and the bad experiences she has there causes a breakdown and she is given under the protection of her mother which in time turns to a kind of slavery. She is humiliated in front of the man she likes but Pato tries to relieve her while Mag brings the paper to prove her insanity. What she wants is to make Pato away from Maureen because Pato is a kind of danger for Mag. Pato promise to write to Maureen. As a winner of the attack Mag says "he won't write at all. And I did throw your oul dress in that dirty corner too!" and as if nothing happened she says loudly that her porridge is gone cold. But Maureen instead of attacking her mother stares out blankly which is the sign of her desperation and coming insanity.

On the contrary to Mag's expectation, Pato writes to Maureen and offers her to come to America with her and warns Ray to give the letter to Maureen but Ray leaves the letter on a cellar and goes. Mag takes the letter, reads and then burns it. But this action shapes her fate. While she talks to Maureen, she blabs about the things between Maureen and Pato which makes Maureen suspicious. To learn the reality, she consults her own torment methods; she boils oil, turns the radio up, stares at Mag who is terrified. She confesses the letter but Maureen continues to torment her as she takes her mother's shriveled hand and slowly pouring some of the hot oil over it. She torments her mother until she gets the reality. In pain, Mag confesses.

Mag: (through screams) Asked you to go to America with him, it did! But how could you go with him? You do still have me to look after.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Scene IV, p.30.

¹⁰⁰ Scene VIII, p.48.

Mag sacrifices her daughter's happiness to her own selfishness. Her daughter is the person who has to look after her and it is the only thing that is important. It is at the end of Maureen's tether. She goes to catch up Pato as soon as she learns.

This is the last blow of Mag to her daughter. Maureen, on the verge of desperation, can't discern the reality and dream. We see Maureen idles around the room, poker in hand and Mag is in her rocking chair, unmoving. Maureen catches Pato in the station and they agree to meet in Boston, 'kiss out the window, like they do in films.' Meanwhile Mag having a 'red chunk of skull' falls to the floor, dead. But Maureen is at a loose end that she looks the corpse of her mother, 'somewhat bored, taps her on the side with the toe of her shoe, then steps onto back and stands there.' Maybe she still can't realize what she has done but what real is, it is over for Maureen, there is nothing to stop her anymore. She is free now. After the funeral, she lights a fire and burns the boxes of Complian and porridge. They belong to her bad past, and she gets rid of them like her mother. While she packs her suitcase, Ray comes in and he offers his and Pato's condolence to Maureen. Maureen says she sees him in the station but Pato denies her by telling he leaves with a taxicab which reveals that actually Maureen can't see Pato, she just imagines that. She loses the line between real and dream. When Pato tells the engagement of Pato, Maureen totally loses herself, her sanity. She sends her last message to Pato.

Maureen: *Goodbye. Goodbye.* 'The beauty queen of Leenane says *goodbye.*'¹⁰¹

When Ray goes, Maureen confuses his name and calls him as Pato who in return says "the exact fecking image of your mother you are, sitting there pegging orders and forgetting me name!" Maureen sits her mother's chair and her mother's song 'The Spinning Wheel' which is from her sisters for their mother's birthday, starts to play.

¹⁰¹ Scene IX, p.59.

In the end of the play, Maureen becomes the exact image of her mother with a slight difference as now she has no one to look after her. The song 'Spinning Wheel' in the end of the play is a kind of sign that Maureen's life repeats itself like a wheel and it is as if there is no escape.

Even though the weird and cruel relationship between mother and daughter is in the center of the plot, Irishness and Irish issue come as a subplot in the play because social conditions sometimes create and support violence voluntarily. When Mag and Maureen discuss about speaking English, Maureen burst.

Maureen: If it wasn't for the English stealing our language, our land, and our God-knows-what, wouldn't it be we wouldn't need to go over there begging for jobs and for handouts.
102

Losing their identity makes the Irish dependent. They need jobs in order to continue their life and for this, they go to England where they aren't welcomed well. Maureen is one of them. She goes to England when she is young but she is despised there which causes mental breakdown. So she turns to Connemara but this time, she is trapped in this small county and abused by her mother which leads to another breakdown.

Martin McDonagh's *Leenane* is a kind of microcosm. In a house of a small county, we witness the clashing of needs and being trapped that cause a murder and insanity. The violence here, Aleks Sierz said "expresses the mistrust and malevolence of people trapped in a hopeless life bursting out in blatant aggression."¹⁰³ And what we have in outer world is violence bursting out from houses to streets.

McDonagh's usage of violence is ordinary, that is, he uses 'everyday objects, such as Complan, cooking oil and a heavy poker as instruments of torture and murder'¹⁰⁴ which makes the play more realistic. As a result, the effect of violence on the spectator is felt

¹⁰² Scene I, p.5.

¹⁰³ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

densely. His using of humour has the Checkov effect. Checkov's plays are humorous, but there is an indefinable pain in his plays that makes his reader speechless. McDonagh weaves violence with humour; while the spectators laugh, they are also stunned with the violence. This makes the play true to life and it leaves the spectators alone with their own thoughts and pain.

Scissor-Paper-Stone....

3-5. *The Country* by Martin Crimp

Crimp's play *The Country* comes to us different from that of so-called in-er-face plays. There is no bloodshed or sexual violence that makes the audience shock or disgust but the violence of modern world. To display the violence of the modern world, Martin Crimp benefits from Pinteresque style. He uses witty dialogues throughout the play that accommodate doubt, anger, fear and desperation which make the tension higher sentence by sentence. Unorthodoxly, he dismisses the speaker, makes it depersonalized so the personas and their feelings are mingled. The whole play turns to a bobble reminding the modern world where feelings and relationships are intricate. Besides, the playwright refers to a play at the end of the each scene which is called 'Scissor-Paper-Stone'. What is crucial in this play is that it is a kind of vicious circle, that is, there is no winner.

In *The Country*, we witness "the issue of revelation of sexual infidelity in marriage" which is one of the problems of modern world. Aleks Sierz states that "Crimp's work is characterized by its vision of contemporary society as a place of social decay, moral compromise, and barely suppressed violence"¹⁰⁵. The play is simply about marital dysfunction of Richard and Corinne who move to country to save their marriage. Richard is a doctor and at the same time a drug addict. At first glance, his addiction draws him and his family to the country but through the play it is revealed that there is another factor his coming to the country.

¹⁰⁵ Aleks Sierz and Martin Crimp, "The Question Is the Ultimate in Discomfort", it was taken from abstract.

The play is opened in a country house and it is 'night' which is symbolic actually. It is the symbol of the darkness in their life. The tension in the atmosphere is perceived through the dialogues. In order to hide her unease, Corinne cuts some pictures that are 'stimulating' but she can't help asking questions about the strange woman her husband found lying on the road and brought at their home.

This person. Is she asleep? When will she wake up? Did you give her something?
Something what?
Something to make her.
Not to make her but to help her.
Because why did you bring her here? Why ever did you bring her here?
It's my job to bring her here.
Your *job*? It's your job to bring a strange woman into our house in the middle of the night?
106

Corinne feels threatened by the presence of the young woman her husband brought. This feeling of threat and at the same time suspicion makes Corinne obsessive about her. Martin Crimp prefers to give this tension and suspicion through language. Jeanette R. Malkin stressed that; "Mamet himself claimed that 'the language we use, its rhythm, actually determines the way we behave rather than the other way around'"¹⁰⁷. Intonation, pauses and dashes in the play reflects the tension and they are like forerunners of a coming storm. Corinne persistently asks questions about her, she dashes her bag; she wants to wake up to ¹⁰⁸learn who she is and she couldn't help but wonder if this person is a man, her husband is solicitous like that. In the view of his wife's verbal traps, Richard begins to reveal reality.

Well all right then- not crawling but unconscious. You round the bend and instead of that, that person, it's a man who's drunk himself into a stupor and he's lying there in his own sick and wet himself. Would you really have lifted this man into your car? Would you have driven him all this way to your own house where your children are sleeping?
She resumes cutting.
That's all I meant by solicitous.
I can't help what sex she is. ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Martin Crimp, *The Country*, Scene I, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Jeanette R. Malkin, *Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama: From Handke to Shepard*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁸ Scene I, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Scene I, p. 16.

Her husband's elusive answers make Corinne more suspicious and tense that she 'accidentally cuts herself with the scissors' and decides to look for clues about this young woman that her husband seems to care. So when Morris, apparently the boss of Richard, calls Corinne tells her husband to tell about the girl and brings her bag which she finds in the car under the seat.

I found it in your car. I found it under the seat. You obviously *did* pick it up. It's just that I suddenly feel lost. I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. Because I thought you'd stopped. But if you've stopped why are there needles in her bag? Whose needles are they? Did she *pay* you for these things? *How* did she pay you? ¹¹⁰

During the quarrel with Corinne, Richard, in a moment of anxiety, slips out the reality about the event that she gets into his car. But his story is quitted by a call from Morris and he has to leave. So Corinne and the strange girl are left alone.

In the third scene, we see the girl whose name is Rebecca wakes and talks to Corinne. She talks about the things before she faints and through their disconnected talk, Corinne realizes that Rebecca knows the name of her husband and Morris and Morris's Latin love. It is obvious that this is not an ordinary girl that passes by which makes Corinne protective. From the beginning, Corinne is disturbed by the presence of this young outsider; she feels that her domestic environment is threatened by that woman so she behaves overprotective.

This is where we live. This is where our children will live. This *is* our home. ¹¹¹

Rebecca, on the other side, is disturbed by Corinne's anxious behaviour and comes over her deliberately to damage her protectionism.

Your ... husband- almost killed me tonight. Back there on the track. Or did he not mention that? (*Lights cigarette.*) Oh man, that was something. That was quite something. That was a *hit*.

¹¹⁰ Scene II, p. 22.

¹¹¹ Scene III, p.35.

Pause.
I thought I had *died*. Or did he not mention that? ¹¹²

Though Corinne knows her husband's addiction problem, though they move to country in order to start a new life, though she feels that this woman is a danger to her, she instinctively supports and protects her husband, her ideal life and marriage but most importantly her family.

And perhaps- I don't know- but perhaps you gave him a sign, unwittingly gave him a sign which he misread. who maybe can't read these signs- because *he is a man* maybe can't read these signs? Yes?
His ignorance- yes- stupidity- yes, accepted. But to do you harm, I will not believe. You will recover. For you it's just one afternoon, one night, from which you will soon recover. Whereas for us- and this what I mean by honest- it's our life together- that has been jeopardized. ¹¹³

But Corinne's attachment to her home and her over protectiveness infuriates Rebecca who has her own secret. So she shatters Corinne's defence mechanism by telling the truth about herself and her husband and she even threatens Corinne to go to Morris.

(*quite and intense*) But what d'you mean, 'just for an afternoon'? D' you really have no inkling? And yet you condescend to me. You patronize me. With your house, your land, your children. And accuse *me* of sentimentousness?
Just for an afternoon?
He came to the country *to be with me*.
Because of his longing to be with me.
Because of his greed to be with me.
'A man she's never met'? How can you *deceive* yourself? And then apologize to me- on his behalf in your house? ¹¹⁴

This reality is a big hit for her ideal life in the country that she believes they come to the country to save their marriage which turns to be a big lie.

¹¹² Scene III, p.37.

¹¹³ Scene III, p.40.

¹¹⁴ Scene III, p.40.

In the fourth scene, Rebecca is alone with Richard who is anxious about whether Rebecca sees and talks to Corinne. But Rebecca lies to him. Richard behaves cautiously, he tries to prevent her from meeting his wife as he does not know they have already met and the truth is revealed. Rebecca wants to meet his children and tells them a story, a story about the sick girl and the doctor which enlightens their relationship.

The treatment was wild, children. It could take place at any time of the day or night. In any part of the city. In any part of her body. Her body became the city. The doctor learned how to unfold her- like a map. Until one day the bright young girl decided the treatment would have to end- and besides, she was leaving for the country. Now this made the doctor very angry. Because he'd broken all the rules-as he saw it- for her. You bitch, he said. Because you see there'd been a terrible misunderstanding. Since the thing the bright young girl bitch called treatment, the doctor- who of course was sick himself- who craved medicine himself- imagined to be -what?- something personal. Something human. Which is why he followed her. He followed her. He brought his/ *family*.¹¹⁵

Richard actually does not give up his drug addiction instead he maintains his weakness but in order to do this, he brings his family to the country under the pretence of saving the marriage. What he sustains not only his addiction but also his secret love affair. He deceives not only Corinne but also Rebecca.

She's actually quite attractive. Why did you always say how unattractive she was? How you had to turn the light out? (*Slight pause.*) You/ lied to me.¹¹⁶

Though Richard deceives Corinne, he neither gives up his addiction nor his family. When he learns Corinne left the home with children because of Rebecca, he kills her though it is not displayed in action but implied.

Oh, don't worry. She's gone. Some while ago. She took the kids and left.
Pause.
They don't move.
Don't hurt me.
I'm not hurting you.
Pause.
He looks at her.

¹¹⁵ Scene IV, p. 54.

¹¹⁶ Scene IV, p.56.

Then don't look at me.
I'm not looking at you.
Then don't look at me.
They stare at each other. ¹¹⁷

The fifth scene is opened two months later, in the same place in the first scene but this time it is daylight not night. Daylight is a kind of sign that there is a new hope in their life and marriage. On the contrary to first scene, in this scene we see Corinne opening envelopes and reading cards which are celebrating her birthday. Richard gives her a present which has something unsettling.

Inside the wrapping paper is a cardboard box. Inside the box is a pair of shoes. The shoes appear quite sober and elegant, but at the same time there is something unsettling about them- and this may not be apparent until Corinne puts them on. Perhaps, for example, they are a little too high for her. ¹¹⁸
You look... transformed.
(laughs) Transformed? Into what?
Don't you like them? ... They suit you.
Do they?
Very much. You look quite different.
Is that what you want?
What? Yes. No. I just want you to be happy. ¹¹⁹

Richard wants Corinne to resemble to Rebecca by instinct and he displays this urge with the choice of a shoe which reflects Corinne 'sober and elegant' but at the same time reflects Rebecca by its highness.

Though everything seems normal, tension and disbelief are detected on Corinne. She seems happy but at the same time she wants to get rid of the burden of infidelity. So she says to her husband "... to reverse. I needed to reverse. Reversing gave me enormous pleasure."¹²⁰

Although Corinne returns to Richard and her cottage in the country, her conscience disturbs her as she is the woman who is convinced to come to country to save the happiness of her

¹¹⁷ Scene IV, p.57.

¹¹⁸ Scene V, p.67.

¹¹⁹ Scene V, p.69.

¹²⁰ Scene V, p.77.

family but she is deceived. So she finds the track and in this track, she confronts with herself.

Well *I* was there, obviously. I was human, but nothing else was. I looked out for human things. Because I thought I might see -you know- a piece of wire or a spent cartridge with the top blown out. I thought I might see a plastic bag snagged in a hedge. Only there was no hedge. I thought I might see a needle or a piece of brick. I longed -you know- to see something human like a needle, or a piece of brick mixed with the shale. Or to hear- even to hear something human other than myself. Other than my feet. Other than my heart. A plane. Or children screaming. Only there was nothing.¹²¹

And then she sees the stone which is like a chair and which is cold 'like ice'. To her surprise, Morris appears and produces a gold watch with 'golden strap' which probably belongs to Rebecca and he says 'dropped this'. Suddenly, she realizes that pain of her conscience and she desperately says:

Well yes, Morry, I'm afraid. I don't seem able to move and this stone is devouring my heart. When I get up from this stone, what if my heart has gone? What if I have to spend the rest of my life simulating love? And Morris said, 'I'm sure you simulate love very well. I'm sure the two of you will simulate love immaculately.' (*faint laugh*) He's a character.¹²²

Last words "simulate love immaculately" is significant actually. When it is looked outside, there is a happy couple who have everything. They love each other, they have children, and the man is a prestigious doctor. Everything seems clear from outside. But in reality, they are not happy at all, they just act. The man is a doctor but at the same time he is a drug addict. He comes to the country to save his career as a doctor and his wife comes with him to save their marriage. But he continues his addiction in the country with his lover who is a drug addict like him. He deceived both of the women. He deceived his wife about his addiction and his lover about his wife. But in the end no one wins the game 'Scissor-paper-stone'. Richard probably kills Rebecca and he loses the faith of Corinne and Corinne loses her own values and beliefs.

¹²¹ Scene V, p.79.

¹²² Scene V, p.81.

This is the violence of the modern world where everything is delusion even relationships. The playwright implies that it does not matter whether it is city or country which has the purity and innocence in itself, the man brings his own violence with himself as violence is his own inseparable part.

Our boys! He wants to kill our boys! He wants to kill them to save them! To save them from this terrible place.

3-6. *Mercury Fur* by Philip Ridley

In Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Agamemnon is faced with a gut-wrenching choice. He must sacrifice his teenage daughter, Iphigenia, if the gods are to grant his fleet the fair winds needed for victory against Troy. In Philip Ridley's latest play, *Mercury Fur*, there is a similar but far more desperate dilemma.¹²³

Mercury Fur is maybe the most eventful play of Philip Ridley, it is refused to be published as, by nature, it is disturbing and bothersome, the one that questions the limit of being a human. In his every interview, Ridley draws attention to his being a storyteller. In his conference at Pera, Ridley who came as a guest of Dot theatre group says that he is a storyteller and by telling stories, he tries to understand the world and relationships which are chaotic and difficult to understand. In *Mercury Fur*, he tells another heart-breaking story to his audience to warn them about 'the sins of the fathers catching up on their kids.'¹²⁴

The play is about four youngsters who prepare fantasy parties to wealthy clients to bring their wildest fantasies to life. Ridley narrates his story like a tragedy, modern tragedy and sets it in a post-apocalyptic world. The play is opened in "a derelict flat in a derelict estate in the east of London." The playwright partly abides the Aristotelian three unities. But unlike ancient tragedies, he prefers using violence deliberately like many of his

¹²³ Lyn Gardner, "The Devil Inside", *Guardian*, 9 February 2005. Available on site ><http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2005/feb/09/theatre><

¹²⁴ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 45.

contemporaries. But if the point issue is violence of youngsters to a kid with a meat hook, this kind of atrocity makes the people feel disturbed. But on the other hand this kind of approach makes Ridley upset as he states in his interview;

Why is it that it is fine for the classic plays to discuss - even show - these things, but people are outraged when contemporary playwrights do it? If you go to see *King Lear*, you see a man having his eyes pulled out; in *Medea*, a woman slaughters her own children. The recent revival of *Iphigenia* at the National was acclaimed for its relevance. But when you try to write about the world around us, people get upset. If I'd wrapped *Mercury Fur* up as a recently rediscovered Greek tragedy it would be seen as an interesting moral debate like *Iphigenia*, but because it is set on an east-London housing estate it is seen as being too dangerous to talk about. What does that say about the world we live in? What does it say about theatre today?¹²⁵

Unlike ancient times, the world we live in loses its innocence. Violence is everywhere and it is a part of our lives, ourselves. There are wars, there is misery, and there is cruelty in the world. By the means of media, we witness our own tragedy. Surely, in outside there are millions of people who give harm to protect themselves and their families, their beloved. In the meantime, life's double intervenes, that is, theatre. Because nothing is more powerful than theatre as it presents people something alive. As a result, some playwrights like Ridley who knows the power of theatre, use violence in theater to lead people stop and think what they do to themselves, their world and their beloved. Philip Ridley expresses in his conference at Pera that art tries to find a way of expressing the inexpressible. Ridley and his contemporaries express the inexpressible with the help of theatre. Ridley, who believes the power of theatre, emphasizes that:

Theatre itself is very ritualized; I've always seen theatre as a piece of alchemy. You know, it's like a tribe in the middle of the jungle being afraid of the forest because of the monsters or wild animals. And it's the witch doctor's job to tell a story to make them less afraid, or at least feel that they can deal with the monsters. I'm the witch doctor and the story around the tribe's camp fire is theatre. The story aims to make sense of fear. And so it's a very simple kind of ritual; theatre for me is very primeval activity. It's very sweaty, bloody, and I'm really fascinated by that kind of alchemy. In theatre I want to see something extraordinary. I want to feel something extraordinary.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Lyn Gardner, "The Devil Inside", *Guardian*, 9 February 2005. Available on site ><http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2005/feb/09/theatre><

¹²⁶ Philip Ridley and Aleks Sierz, "Putting a New Lens on the World: The Art of Theatrical Alchemy", p. 112.

Ancient tragedies' aim is to create catharsis in its audience to cure them and Ridley states 'the story aims to make sense of fear' which leads its audience to catharsis and reaches their id to free them, to make them look from different perspective. Ridley says on this issue:

We must all have had that experience that you go along to see a play or a film and then when you come out the world looks a bit different. You're suddenly noticing things you hadn't noticed. And that for me is the height of theatricality, the height of art; it's about putting a new lens on the world so we see it in a slightly different way.¹²⁷

So in *Mercury Fur*, Philip Ridley uses violence deliberately to shock their audience, to irritate them, to disturb them and make them realize. Aleks Sierz states "Never politically correct, all of Ridley's plays used shock, but always with a reason. 'The violence towards animals, for example, is just a device, often used in fine art, to question mortality in a godless world.'" ¹²⁸

In *Mercury Fur*, we witness a brotherhood. Elliot and Darren, in a derelict apartment, start the preparation of a party. Elliot is nineteen years old and he is limp. He is also the seller of butterflies, a kind of drug which creates hallucination when it is taken and erodes the memories. Darren is sixteen years old and he is a bit naïve and at the same time a butterfly addict which makes his brother angry. While they prepare for the party, Elliot realizes that Darren behaves forgetful and silly and he understands that Darren takes a butterfly and he gets angry.

Elliot: Know what you're like? A fucking anvil round my neck. The lifeboat's sinking and I'm bailing it out like a good 'en and I've got this fucking anvil getting heavier and heavier dragging the whole thing down.

Darren watches. Pause.

Darren: I remembered the wooden guns. The wooden guns. Dad made 'em. He carved our names in the handles. Know what I liked best? Watching telly late at night. That musical Mum and Dad liked. We'd all sit on the sofa. Me in the middle. Mum on this side. Dad on that. Dad would order a big takeaway pizza. Dad would cut it up into four equal parts so we wouldn't argue. We'd eat it out with our hands. Mum would say, 'Don't wipe

¹²⁷ Philip Ridley and Aleks Sierz, "Putting a New Lens on the World: The Art of Theatrical Alchemy", p. 112.

¹²⁸ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 47.

your hands on the sofa.' I loved the way the whole room was lit just by the light of telly. Remember? Curtains pulled. No outside. Just the smell of pizza.¹²⁹

The past, happy memories creep into the present. Though Darren is naïve, what make him alive in this terrible life are his memories and his love for his brother. As they are just kids, they begin playing with their imaginary guns and in a way; they turn to their peaceful childhood where they are happy. Actually what Darren narrates as a happy memory is very akin to our everyday life but we can not realize this happiness. Ridley by creating post-apocalyptic world gives the audience bitterness of lost.

But the past does not always consist of happy memories. Naz, who is fifteen-years old, has memories which belong to his childhood but not happy ones like Darren. When he talks to Darren, he remembers that he has a sister.

Naz: We was in the supermarket. Me, mum. And..... Stacey! That's her name! She is younger than me. Mum still calls her 'baby'. There's not much food on the shelves. I hear a noise. A gang' rushing down the aisle. Couple are about my age. They've got paint or something like on their faces. Bits of meat hanging round their necks. They're screaming and waving these big knife things. My mum grabs me by the hair. Mum pulls Stace by hand. We run back down the aisle. I slip in something. It's red. Blood. There's blood pouring from under the shelves. Next thing I know the gang is all around us. They're all laughing. Mum is screaming, 'Don't hurt me kids.' Lots of blades go swish. Stuff gets in my eyes. Blood. Look up and see one of the gang holding Mum's head. He's cut it off. Can hear Stace crying but I can't see her. The gang has stomped on her head. One of her arms is gone. The gang drags her away and pull off her knickers. I get right to the back of the shelf. I stay there for ages.¹³⁰

Though it is a shocking event, Naz can not remember it at first. It is because he does not want to remember it or it is because of the butterflies. Naz, like Darren, is a butterfly addict and butterflies' biggest effect is to erode the memories by making people living in a fantasy world. What Naz experiences, for a kid, is extremely depressing but what depressing more is that the gang also compromise of kids that gone crazy in a way.

¹²⁹ Philip Ridley, *Mercury Fur*, p.12.

¹³⁰ p.34.

Naz is not the only kid that has bad memories. Elliot has, too. When he and Lola, who is a boy in nineteen years old and apparently the lover of Elliot, argues about the appearance of the Party Piece, Elliot remembers the day that they meet.

Elliot: I saw one of the nurses go over to a window and look out. They were worried about something. The noise outside got louder and louder. And then-bright orange! The windows light up! A car's on fire! The street's full of people. They're all holding weapons. Sticks, metal bars, guns, knives. My knee is throbbing like fuck but I know I've got to run. Run down the metal stairs. I'm on the main road. Whitechapel. It's on fire. And there! People have raided an electrical shop. They're carrying tellies. I wanna get home but everything keeps stopping me. I'm heading for Brick Lane. What's that? A horse. No. It's a zebra. How's that get here? Kids are chasing it. Corner it. Stab it with knives. Someone throws petrol. Someone strikes a match. The zebra bursts into flame. It runs down the Brick Lane. My leg hurts so much. It's bleeding. I'm stumbling. Everything's a blur and spinning.¹³¹

What happens is terribly shocking. What is done is pure violence by kids. The situation is apocalyptic. People and children get crazy, forget their humanity and act as lunatics. Civilization is lost and replaced by primitivism. When the civilization is destroyed, people turn to their 'heart of darkness'. They lose their humanity and become a thing lower than an animal. It is similar to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or *Lord of Flies*. Kuntz, a civilized man, loses his humanity and civilized being in the depths of the forest. Similarly, in *Lord of Flies*, a group of children who are besieged in an island, become cruel than their grown-ups and kill each other. So when civilization gets lost, humanity gets lost, too.

Kids are not the only ones who have bad memories in this play. Only grown-up of the play, Duchess, who is the mother of Darren and Elliot, has also a bad memory of her past.

Duchess: Nazis! Fucking blackshirt fucking Nazis! Distant bombs. People being cooked in ovens. Lampshades of human skin. My husband gets more and more depressed. The world is turning into a terrible place. The white cliffs of Dover are swarming with butterflies. They stand on the cliffs and their tongues shoot out like frogs. My husband loves our boys so much. He tells our boys not to eat the butterflies. My husband is taking his tablets. They're supposed to make him better but they're making him worse. My husband is so sad. Screams! I hear screams! My husband is attacking our children! Our boys! He wants to kill our boys! He wants to kill them to save them! To save them from this terrible place. No! My boys are in the corner of their bedroom. The big one trying to protect the little one. My

¹³¹ p.54.

husband is hitting them with a hammer. He's hitting my eldest on the leg. The little one's been hit on the head! oh, the look on their faces. I grab my husband round the neck. He hits me on the head. Everything goes dark. II can't see. I can't move.... I can hear my boys crying. I hear my husband run down the stairs. He's in the pub! Burning! Screaming! It's my husband. He's he's set fire to himself.....¹³²

The father can not endure the terrible situation of the world and the people. That world is not suitable for himself and his family so he chooses to kill them to save them. He is in desperation and only sensible decision is to disappear. It is very familiar scene from our everyday life. We witness such events in news; the father or mother who goes mad and kill his/her family and himself/herself later. Dead becomes hope to survive from evilness. The father tries to kill his family before they get hurt by other people, in a way he tries to save them. Elliot sees death as power in their hand.

Elliot: But if things if things got so bad I was afraid people might hurt you... Hurt you and Darren and I couldn't stand that.... You know, I made a promise to Darren. I'd kill you both before I let anyone to hurt you. I'd shoot you while you slept or something. It' like a.... like a comfort to think of it. The power's still in our hands, Lol. Don't you see? *We* can decide ... not to carry on. We can decide to ... disappear.¹³³

This is what the father did and Elliot can do in order to save them. What can you do for the sake of your beloved? Answer is you can do everything you can not imagine. You can kill them or kill others to protect them. This is what Elliot, Darren, Lola and Spinx do. To kill others to save themselves.

They have parties to wealthy customers to satisfy their sexual fantasies and in these parties; there is one to be sacrificed. Elliot brings the Party Piece who is 'an unconscious ten-year old boy.' As he is unconscious, he is delirious.

Party Piece: Flash! Boom! I'm in the garden. I play with crocodile. Sparkles crocodile blood on my face like rain. Darren! You see my sister? She hold bag of shopping back from

¹³² p. 88-89.

¹³³ p. 66.

the market. Flash! Boom! My sister head go weee- Flash! Boom! (Etc.) Where Mum? Mum? Mum? Dad! Dad! (Etc)¹³⁴

He is prepared for the party by Lola who brings a gold lame suit for him. Towards the end of party preparation, Spinx, who is twenty-one years old, comes with the Duchess. Spinx is the leader of the gang and the brother of Lola. He is the one who have the power and the rest believes to need him.

Elliot: He's kept us alive, Lol. Selling the butterflies. All this. We wouldn't last two minutes out there without Spinx telling us what to do. You know that.¹³⁵

And Spinx believes that he does everything for the benefit of the group.

Spinx: Jesus Christ. The way you look at me. All of ya! I'm doing this for all of us, for fuck's sake! I'm trying to hold it all together. Hold us together. It ain't fucking easy!¹³⁶

But when the Party Guest comes, the things begin to change. This time, their decision determines their futures.

Party Guest, twenty-three, wearing a neatly cut, shot-silk, light grey suit, white shirt, top button undone, loose tie, with a black bag over his head, comes to the party to perform his 'the horniest fucking fantasy' of his life. He changes his clothes and wears 'Vietnam-style and jungle-camouflage make up.' He revises his fantasy to prevent any fault.

Party Guest: It's Vietnam. Think jungle. Think helicopters. Think sweat. Think big insects big as me fist and poisonous fucker snakes. Think being there for fucking ages. We wake

¹³⁴ p. 62-63.

¹³⁵ p. 67.

¹³⁶ p. 95.

up in the morning and there's the smell of napalm. Helicopters like a swarm of something. We've killed lots and lots of enemy fucking scum. We've got a necklace made out of human ears. I call the company together and say; 'Men!' there's a traitor somewhere in the jungle! That's why so many of us brave soldiers have been killed. The two-faced traitorous, lying Judas is someone in the entertainment corps. One of those singing- dancing entertainment cunts is passing on information to fucking enemy! Elvis fucking Presley! But it's the kid Elvis. A Paki kid. And we've got to use every means at our disposal to make him fucking talk- Ya, bring the meat hook? I'm gonna stick that meat hook in him and I'm gonna twist it.¹³⁷

By looking his appearance, one can think that the Party Guest is a normal, good-looking man. But inside, he is totally degraded and decayed as a human. This is a kind of fantasy both include war which affect the psychology of a nation and a star who becomes the lover of nations. He is affected by Vietnam films as what he describes as a fantasy resembles to ordinary American kind of Vietnam film and probably he desires a child in the form of Elvis Presley. He mixes these two as a sexual fantasy with a meat hook. He does not care whether the Party Piece is a child or not. What he cares is the film that he plays the leading role while he fulfills his desires.

Party Guest: The film's not gonna come out properly, is it? I wanna see things, ya know! I wanna play it back afterwards and see everything.¹³⁸

So action starts and they make the Party Piece sing the song they teach to condition the Party Guest.

Party Piece: Tender

Party Guest stares at the Party Piece and listens to sounds. He starts rubbing his crotch, getting more and more turned on.

Party Piece: Love ...

Party Guest: I'm gonna hurt you ...

Party Piece: True ...

Party Guest: I'm gonna hurt you ...¹³⁹

¹³⁷ p. 98-99.

¹³⁸ p.105.

¹³⁹ p.108.

The song, the Party piece tries to sing, is *Love Me Tender* which is a love song that mentions true love and in the mouth of Party Piece, this song becomes more innocent. But this innocence makes the Party Guest more willing to do his deed.

But the Party Piece can not stand long and he dies when the torture begins which makes the Party Guest angry. So they have to make a decision among themselves. To continue this party, Spinx offers Naz to his customer while Darren and Elliot protest it.

Elliot: (at Spinx) There's no shortage of people like him! *Indicates* Party Guest. We can arrange other parties. Darren and me can work like fuck over the next few weeks to make up for it.

Spinx: We ain't got 'the next few weeks.' ¹⁴⁰

So Spinx tells the truth that he learns from the Party Guest.

Party Guest: The bombing' gonna start. There'll be three days of non-stop bombing. Fire bombs. Napalm. Technology we ain't even heard of. Everywhere's a valid target. Civilian. Military. After three days the soldiers will move it. They'll be here to help. Elliot: Help?!

Party Guest: Open ya window, for fuck's sake. It's a shithole out there. Riots. No law. We need the fucking bombs and soldiers to bring some fucking order back. I'm all for it.

Elliot: Especially as you ain't gonna be here, right?

Party Guest: I ain't part of this shit.

Elliot: But ya don't mind having fun in the shit before you fuck off! ¹⁴¹

In order to restore, bombs and soldiers are used. What disturbing is, we are familiar to it. Simply, the things happen in Iraq. Fire bombs, napalm, etc to all to keep the order of Iraq. What is more disturbing is someone who has a sexual fantasy of killing a child, mentions the order and law and defends these. Still, this information drifts the friends to a payoff with the past.

¹⁴⁰ p. 112.

¹⁴¹ p. 112.

Spinx: Have ya forgotten? What you were like when first saw ya? You were a fucking wreck! Ya shit yourself if someone slammed a door to hard.

Darren: He was ill. He'd been in hospital.

Spinx: You were there too, you stupid fuck. In bed. Helpless. Did big brov Elliot take you with him when he fucked off to safety?

Darren: I ... I was in a different ward.

Spinx: Intensive care! You and your mum. And he panicked and left you there. And who went back for them? Eh? Who went back and saved this fucking halfwit and the Duchess. Who?

Elliot: You.

Spinx: Me! The hospital was a fucking slaughterhouse. I was slipping in the fucking blood. And who looked after all of ya after that? Who got medical supplies and stuff? Who fed ya? Gave ya somewhere to live? Who taught ya how to survive in this fucking hellhole? Do ya know what'll happen if we don't have this party? We'll be stuck here! We'll be bombed! If we survive the bombs- not very likely- there'll be the soldiers. Do ya know what soldiers will do to the Duchess? Jesus Christ, what about Lola? You any idea what fun they'll have with someone like her? You wanna leave Lola for the soldiers?¹⁴²

That is the question, in that situation what can you do to protect yourself and your beloved. In this dilemma, Elliot and Darren choose to sacrifice their friend and the party start again. On the contrary to Sarah Kane, Ridley chooses the violence off stage. But from stage directions and noises, it is understood that it is completely bloody. Stage directions as:

Darren comes out of bedroom, obviously shaken. He is splashed with blood. **Elliot** comes out of bedroom, obviously shaken. He is splashed with blood. The noise from bedroom gets louder and louder. We hear crashing against the door and much commotion. Then- The bedroom door bursts open and **Naz** staggers out. The gold- lame jacket is ripped and covered with blood. **Naz**'s face is a mess.¹⁴³

So Elliot and Darren have to give a decision and they choose to save their friend though this costs their lives. Darren shoots the Party Guest and kills him. For the first time, they refuse to obey Spinx. They vacate the apartment. While they begin to fire it, the bombing starts.

Darren: Space explorers! That's what you said. And we're exploring this ... new planet.

Elliot: To see if it's fit for human life.

Darren: But ... it's not. Is it Ell?

Elliot: No. I guess not.

¹⁴² p. 114.

¹⁴³ p. 117.

Darren: We've got to find another planet, brov? There's millions of planets. Billions. Trillions. One of them will be safe to live on. I know it. One of them will be safe. It's started, Ell!

Elliot *stares at fire*.

We see the light of the fire. We hear the sound of the fire. The fire gets louder and louder.

Elliot *looks at Darren, takes gun from pocket and stares at it*.

Darren: No, Ell! Put the gun away. We've got to get out! We'll be okey. We'll survive. We can do it. It's not the way. I know that now. Ell! Ell! I love you so much- Say it Ell!

*The fire gets louder and brighter. The sound of bombing gets louder. **Darren** can barely be heard.*

Say it!¹⁴⁴

The play ends with the harsh sounds of fire and bombing. For them, there is no hope for escaping or saving. So Elliot gives another radical decision for himself and his brother. In one of the interviews, Philip Ridley expresses that what happens in the play is not just violence or full blood; there is also love and sacrifice.

The things that happen in *Mercury Fur* are not gratuitous. They are heart-breaking. The people may do terrible things but everything they do is out of love, in an attempt to keep each other safe. The play is me asking, 'What would I do in that position?' If you knew that to keep your mother, brother and lover safe, you would have to do terrible.¹⁴⁵

Besides violence, besides blood and filthy language, there are important points that the playwright takes attention: What are we doing to our future and our children. Except *Duchess*, all of the characters are very young, even kids. Their situation, their killing each other to survive, is appalling. But it can not be awesome. This is the result of war. A child even an adult who experiences a war can not be the same and healthy again. So Ridley who gives important to children and their education, warns his audience.

¹⁴⁴ p. 123.

¹⁴⁵ Gardner, Lyn. "The Devil Inside", *Guardian*, 9 February 2005. Available on site ><http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2005/feb/09/theatre><

3-6. Common Conclusion of the Plays

Violence becomes impossible to ignore when it confronts you by showing pain, humiliation and degradation. Violence feels primitive, irrational and destructive.¹⁴⁶

We witness violence in everywhere. It is like a part of us and belongs to our everyday life. As a result, as Sierz stresses, it is impossible to ignore it. Theatre is the part of a culture and each play is influenced by social conditions of that time. And in our time, violence is the inseparable part of our life and consequently, contemporary playwrights do not fear using different kinds of violence in their plays. Their aim is to lead audience to question themselves. Violence becomes a mean to shock the audience. It creates emotional changes in us and forces us to question ourselves and our feelings. It challenges the taboos to destroy and create new notions. To do these, the contemporary playwrights develop a new kind of writing that can express the reality of their time.

According to Müller, essential reason of pursuit of novelty is the inexpressibility of new contradictions with the old forms.¹⁴⁷

In his conference in Pera Auditorium, Mark Ravenhill stresses the same idea with Müller. According to Ravenhill, experiences of new generation are different from that of 70s and 80s. As a result, theatre has to use different forms to express the reality of the new generation.

With the development of new writing, theatre begins to narrate modern world which is full of violence. Though violence has been within life, it never comes out like that. So playwrights use violence without hesitation. Actually what they do is to stage and criticize social problems. To increase the intensity of the plays, they use bloodshed, sexual violence, cannibalism, drug addiction and slang language that are disturbing and shocking.

¹⁴⁶ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p.8.

¹⁴⁷ Süreyya Karacabey, *Modern Sonrası Tiyatro ve Heiner Müller*, Trans. Özge Bozkurt, p. 10.

In this way, they shatter the intimacy of the audience. These plays, as Aleks Sierz states, give “the feeling that your personal space is threatened.”¹⁴⁸

The first condition of drama is the opinion of individual who gets rid of destiny and the celestial powers and only communication instrument of interpersonal world is dialogue.¹⁴⁹

In these plays, dialogue continues its function as fragmented. Dialogues are not only means of communication, but also the way of self-expression and shock. They are full of slang, hatred, suspicion, fear and disillusion that violence is felt clearly. The aim is to shock to audience to feel and realize. In the plays like *Mercury Fur*, *Shopping and F****** and *Phaedra's Love*, slang language hints at terror, cruelty, sexuality, desperation while in the plays like *The Country*, *Normal* and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, language, though purer, holds disillusion, desperation, injustice and depression; These deep feelings in the dialogues become the expression of self and the society.

It is a type of drama that uses explicit scenes of sex and violence to explore the extremes of human emotion. It is characterized by stage images that depict acts such as anal rape, child abuse, drug injection, cannibalism, and vomiting. It also has rawness in tone, a sense of life being lived on the edge.¹⁵⁰

These kind of elements of shock are mainly in *Mercury Fur*, *Shopping and F****** and *Phaedra's Love* and partly in *Normal*. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *The Country*, there is a black comedy. They display violence with ordinary things by comparison.

It is crucial that while such plays might contain shocking scenes, the really disturbing thing about them is the bleakness, nihilism, or despair of the emotions of their characters.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Aleks Sierz, “Still In- Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation”, p.18.

¹⁴⁹ Süreyya Karacabey, *Modern Sonrası Tiyatro ve Heiner Müller*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Aleks Sierz, “Still In Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation”, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Phaedra's Love is full of sexuality and violence like the end scene of Hippolytus' dismemberment but what disturbs is the morbid emotions of the characters. While Phaedra's passion tortures her, Hippolytus' nihilism gnaws him. In *Normal*, Wehner's desperation and dilemma tortures him and in the end, these emotions create a new Wehner who has his own morality. In *Mercury Fur*, in an apocalyptic world, there is the idea of survival. A group of teenager, who has no idea of history and society, kill other children to save themselves. Like *Mercury Fur*, in *Shopping and F******, besides the idea of survival, there is also emotional dependence clashing with materialism. Mark's emotional dependence, Lulu's stealing food, Robbie and Lulu's attempts to survive and Brian's materialism affect the audience deeply. *The Country* and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* shock the audience with their domestic violence. Corinne's tension and annoyance to stranger woman and her learning infidelity of her husband gives the feeling of pity while the torturing mother and daughter relationship shocks and disturbs the audience.

What the best young writers of the past ten years did was to transform the language of theatre, making it more direct, raw, and explicit. They not only introduced a new dramatic vocabulary, they also pushed theatre into being more experiential, more aggressively aimed at making audiences feel and respond. What characterized cutting-edge theatre in the 'nineties was its intensity, its deliberate relentlessness, and its ruthless commitment to extremes.¹⁵²

These plays use extremes to the end and develop a new language. With their obscenity and violence, they aim at shocking to audience and making them to think once more. In *Phaedra's Love*, Kane uses obscenity to display both passion and desperation. Hippolytus' masturbation, Phaedra's and the priest's performing oral sex to Hippolytus are confrontational things on stage which aim at drilling the intimacy of the audience. Hippolytus' dismemberment in the last scene, grilling of his organs is extremes that are used deliberately by Kane to shock the audience but they are also symbolic. In *Shopping and F******, Ravenhill uses male sexuality on the stage besides slang language by blending them with materialism. In *Mercury Fur*, Ridley uses verbal violence. Choosing kids as his characters raises the intensity of violence. Kids killing other kids to live, bloodshed, and filthy language on stage become a real blow for the audience. McDonagh

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

uses verbal violence with black comedy in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. Ironic dialogues between mother and daughter, their counter-attacks to each other, Maureen's torturing her mother with boiling oil and killing her and losing her sanity in the end awaken different feelings on stage. In *Normal*, Nielson also uses verbal violence. Peter Kurten narrates his murders while animates them and what striking for the audience is the imaginary murdering scene of Frau Kurten which is performed among the audience.

Instead of a simple division between perpetrators and victims, 'nineties theatre saw human-beings as capable of becoming both.¹⁵³

In *Normal*, Peter Kurten becomes both perpetrator and the victim. He is the victim of society as he murders many people to take revenge in response to humiliation. But on the other side, he is the murderer of many who are innocent. In *Mercury Fur*, the kids are the victims of the society. In a world like that, they turn to be as perpetrators. They are the victims and perpetrators of each other. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Maureen is the victim of her mother and the social conditions that confine her to her mother. And in that closed environment, she becomes the perpetrator. As she can not stand the tortures of her mother anymore, she kills her. But she turns to the victim of herself. In *Phaedra's Love*, Phaedra and Hippolytus become the victims of themselves and their free will.

They explore personal pain rather than public politics, but it's worth stressing that most of them are passionately interested in staging critiques of modern social conditions, focusing on the problem of violence, the horror of abuse, the questioning of traditional notions of masculinity, the myth of post-feminism and the futility and injustice of consumerism. In a sense, these writers are firmly in the great tradition of romantic sentimental and utopian rebels.¹⁵⁴

In *Normal*, Anthony Neilson questions the normality and morality from the perspective from a murderer and a lawyer. The playwright, through the play, criticizes the hypocrisy of the society which uses discourses according to its benefits. In *Phaedra's Love*, Sarah Kane dwells on the issue of love and free will. Besides narrating deep emotional psychology of

¹⁵³ Aleks Sierz, "Still In Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation", p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

human, she criticizes benefits of institutions over the Priest and Strophe. In *Mercury Fur*, the teenagers are the victim of the society and in order to survive, they become the perpetrator. In *Shopping and F******, Ravenhill heavily criticizes consumerism. The deserted generation becomes the victim of capitalism and there grows a 'takeaway' generation that is far from history and culture. And besides capitalism, he questions the notion of masculinity by using homosexuality. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, McDonagh displays domestic violence and the cruelty of colonization that affect the psychology of the people that are exposed to that violence. In *The Country*, Crimp criticizes the violence of modern world over a couple. Husband's addiction and infidelity, wife's disappointment efforts to save their marriage is a story that is similar to everyday life that we witness.

The settings of the plays are gloomy and depressing. In *Normal*, the setting is a cell. In *Phaedra's Love*, the setting is a palace but mainly the dark and dirty room of Hippolytus. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the setting is the kitchen of a small country house is not pleasant at all. In *Shopping and F******, the setting changes in accordance with the scenes. In *The Country*, the setting is a country cottage which is small and depressing. In *Mercury Fur*, the setting is a derelict apartment flat. Such settings, suitable to pattern of the plays, increase the effect of violence. Because they alone create the feeling of desolateness and desperation.

Language, on the other side, is an inseparable part of these plays. Because though it is said that these plays are very violent, it is not witnessed such violent actions. Violence is conveyed to the spectator through language. Most of the playwrights used the daily and local language. But the language is disturbing because it accommodates itself verbal violence and the usage of slang words are inseparable. In *Mercury Fur*, all violence is narrated by the kids and in *Shopping and F******, sexual themed vocabulary is eye-catching. Like in *Shopping and F******, in *Phaedra's Love*, Sarah Kane uses sexuality but on the contrary to other writers, she uses brutal scenes as well. She is unique in this issue and using violence to far-edge is her style. In *The Country*, language has a different place. In this play, the menace is in the language. All violence is hidden in it. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, language is the torturing device between mother and daughter. In *Normal*, language reveals the reality and the hypocrisy. Though Artaud believed that

spoken language was not enough to convey deeper meanings, together with action, it is very effective.

To make people feel is violence necessary on stage? Aleks Sierz notes the quotation of Edward Bond, who was the first stoned because of the violence in his play *Saved*.

As Bond noted: 'I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society....' Laurence Olivier defended *Saved* because he saw theatre as a place that could show us how to comprehend cruelty, 'teaching the human heart the knowledge of itself.' But the main reason for *Saved*'s impact was, as Tynan wrote, that 'the image of violence' confronts us with 'our own complicity' making 'us face the fact that something in us responds to it', forcing us 'to admit that violence is not foreign to our nature.'¹⁵⁵

As theatre is something very alive, its effect on people is much more than a film or a book or news. Whatever the play is, it inevitably affects us. But contemporary plays have different taste which is actually bitter. While watching these kinds of plays, sometimes we become numb sometimes we are shaken deeply. As Aleks Sierz stresses, 'unlike the type of theatre that allows us to sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, the best in-*yer-face* theatre takes us on an emotional journey, getting under our skin.'¹⁵⁶ After watching these plays, we begin to question ourselves and our beliefs. We are never the same, we change.

3-8. Is It Really Violence?

Whether violence become a part of our life or is it actually inside us? We ignore violence in the world and refuse to be violent because we are the cleverest creature and through time, with the help of our intelligence we not only civilize ourselves but also our world. As a result, we cannot accept violence as an inner part of us. When we see or read fights, tortures, rape or murders we label people who do these as insane, abnormal, psychologically disturbed or psycho. But are they really abnormal or is violence inside us?

¹⁵⁵ Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The sixth issue of *Cogito* which was published in 1996 was about violence. The editor, Özlem Solok wrote a foreword which actually clearly exemplified painful reality of violence. She mentioned an event that happened in England. She said that the writer of *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding's winning Nobel Prize disturbed many people in England. Violent events that were narrated in the novel were seen as 'nonsense' because children were the symbol of goodness and purity. But England was shocked when she was confronted real *Lord of the Flies* event. Two boys, who were six and eight years old, took five years old boy, who lost his mother in one of the busiest shopping mall in Liverpool, by telling him they took him to his mother. They took him an obsolete railway station which was a bit far from the city center. They killed him by torturing. It was not reported details like how the child was killed or the type of torturing. But a senior official, who was in shock, slipped out the word: 'mutilated'. All England was in silence. People could not know how to react except Liverpool people. Because they wanted revenge and cursed the families of the children by forgetting that they were just kids. When the corpse of the kid was found, the police was expecting to find out a child murderer who was a ravenous psycho. But when the video captures were inspected, the reality came to light. After long interrogation of the children by psychologist, they accepted the murder. What more horrible than the event was that when the children were brought to the court, Liverpool people attacked to the armored vehicle and they cried that they wanted to tear the children. Throughout the court, the press was not let in. But in the composite pictures, the two children were seen while they were with their teddy bears and crying. Before a decision, scientists researched the reason of why these children killed the other child. But they could not explain it. Consequently, as the event could not be explained, it was decided that the children were 'dangerous for the society'. They were so young that the law was not enough. But there was always an exit in democracies so they were sentenced to life imprisonment. They are isolated from other people until they die. After this event, on television, radios and in the press, violence was discussed, researches were done about violence but no scientific explanation could be enough to explain the reason. Solok stressed that human-beings who always try to reach the top point of civilization ask themselves: "I was a primitive animal but now I am a civilized man. I am not burning women alive by claiming that they are witch, I demolished the Inquisition, I do not spend

most of my time fighting, my execution techniques are more civilized, I promise quick death by atom bomb, I can deal with my aggressive behaviors and I can describe violence as a concept.” Eventually Solok asked, “Can human-being tame his instinct of exterminating and aggressiveness?”¹⁵⁷

In 2008, a similar event shocked Turkey. A well-known professor was found out death in her house. Her daughter claimed that a thief had killed her mother and attacked her. But police investigation and contradictory statements of the daughter revealed the harsh truth. A daughter killed her own mother. It was said that the daughter was psychologically disturbed and she was a drug addict but at the same time, she was a young law student. She was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment. But the motives behind her killing her own mother were not clearly explained.¹⁵⁸ Did she feel trapped like Maureen in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*? Whatever the reason was violence of matricide is as harsh as homicide of a child.

Violence cannot be explained clearly as it has many reasons that lie beneath our subconscious. Violent events that are shocking like these can be increased. But these cannot shock us to feel and question. After the event, we read it, the press discuss it a while and then it is forgotten. But when we experience it, it is impossible to forget. Theatre becomes a part in this point. By displaying violence on stage, playwrights make people realize the dimension of the violence. The things we experienced on the stage shake us deeply and make us inevitably question and respond.

Playwrights are criticized because of violence they use in their plays. Sarah Kane was severely criticized as her plays were full of atrocities, cannibalism and harsh sexuality and Philip Ridley’s play *Mercury Fur* was refused to be published because it was heavily disturbed people. But what they wrote in their plays was not totally imagination. They are inspired by real life. Aforementioned event that happened in England is not it similar to Ridley’s play *Mercury Fur*. A daughter who killed his mother is not it akin to *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*? We can see rape events, drug addict youngsters or murders because of jealousy or unrequited love.

¹⁵⁷ Solok, Özlem. 1996, “Foreword”, *Cogito*, p. 5–6. It was translated to English by Özge Bozkurt.

¹⁵⁸ The event was taken from different newspapers.

These plays present real life events to us to make us really realize and violence on theatre is not just used for selling; though it is horrible, it is the reality of life.

4. CONCLUSION

In his work *Performance Studies, An Introduction*, Richard Schechner exemplified philosopher Susanne K. Langer as she argues that ‘in life people may endure terrible experiences, but in art these experiences are transformed into “expressive form”’.¹⁵⁹

One of the differences between “art” and “life” is that, we do not experience the event itself but its representation. So in her work she stresses that “every good work of art is beautiful, beautiful works may contain elements that, taken in isolation, are hideous. The emergent form, the whole, is alive and therefore beautiful, as awful things may be- as gargoyles, and fearful African masks, and the Greek tragedies of incest and murder are beautiful. Beauty is not identical with the normal, and certainly not with charm and sense appeal, though all such properties may go to the making of it. Beauty is expressive form.”¹⁶⁰

The new writing, which was started in 90’s by young playwrights, displayed sometimes extreme violence to narrate itself to its audience. Its aim is to express the pain and violence in the modern world sometimes we choose to ignore or to smash taboos and discourses which direct our lives. Theatre is a best place to do this as Richard Schechner stated.

Play gives people a chance to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risky. You may never be Oedipus and Electra, but you can perform them “in play”. Ritual and play both lead people into a “second reality,” separate from ordinary life. This reality is one where people can become selves other than their daily selves. Thus, ritual and play transform people, either permanently or temporarily.” same source.¹⁶¹

Theatre gives a chance to experience the inexperienceable. This is maybe why these kinds of plays, which contain atrocities and extremities, attract the audience because they cannot help it, they are fascinated. What they experience is not similar to the ones they read or watch everyday. What happen, happens in front of them. Because these contemporary plays are staged in small studios, the spectator and the spectacle are one to one, interbedded and it

¹⁵⁹ Schechner, Richard, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, pp. 41-44.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41-44.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41-44.

is interaction with the spectator. This is the technique which Artaud suggested in his Theatre of Cruelty to reach the unconscious of the spectator.

Artaud resembled theatre to a plague and defended that theatre has to have a power of awareness. Cruelty is a way to reach this awareness. But cruelty for Artaud is not something bloody; rather it is moral and internal feud. With cruelty, Artaud suggested to purify. Because with cruelty, it is reached the depths of unconsciousness and reveal true self which is hidden.

In 90's young playwrights revived Artaud again. They benefitted from his ideas about cruelty and by using violence in their plays; they not only criticize social problems and taboos but also they dealt with personal feelings and issues. Besides violence, language is important in these plays. The playwrights discovered the power of language and they conveyed violence to the audience through language. The plays disturb the spectator though many violent scenes are off-stage or are just narrated, because language creates the picture in the mind of the spectator.

It is said that these plays are commercial because violence and sex always sell. But this notion just limits the function of these plays. Though they are full of violence, they are like taken from real life. News and papers are full of atrocities that are unbelievable; a daughter who kills her mother, a husband who cheat his wife, lost children, serial murderers and so on. These become ordinary things in real life we witness everyday. But we cannot understand tragedy beneath these events. Theatre helps us to understand because while we are watching a play, we cannot be indifferent to them. Voluntarily or involuntarily, we question ourselves, our thoughts and after the play we change, our perspective change. We can see or understand things more clearly. These plays actually materialize Artaud's dream by using violence, by hitting our face the truths we ignore, by shaking us, by shaming us. We experience a catharsis and in a way, we purify.

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