



T.C.

EGE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

**REPRESENTATIONS OF UNCONVENTIONAL
MOTHERHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY
BRITISH THEATER**

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Nazlıhan KOLAŞINLI

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

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Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğüne sunduğum Representations of Unconventional Motherhood in Contemporary British Theater adlı yüksek lisans tezinin tarafımdan bilimsel, ahlak ve normlara uygun bir şekilde hazırlandığını, tezimde yararlandığım kaynakları bibliyografyada ve dipnotlarda gösterdiğimi onurumla doğrularım.

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ÇAĞDAŞ İNGİLİZ TİYATROSUNDA GELENEK DIŞI ANNELİĞİN TEMSİLİ

ÖZET

Annelik kavramı İngiliz tiyatrosunda sıklıkla işlenen konulardan biri olmuştur. Annelik kavramı sosyal olarak inşaa edilmiş bir kavram olarak, uzun yıllar boyunca idealize edilmiş ve “ideal anne” miti İngiliz tiyatro oyunlarında temsil edilmiştir. Daha sonraları, bu mite çağdaş İngiliz oyun yazarlarının çabalarıyla farklı alternatifler sunulmuştur. Anneliğin tek düze temsili yerini gelenek dışı temsile bırakmıştır. Bu çalışma, çağdaş Britanya tiyatrosunda anneliğin gelenek dışı temsilini incelemektedir. Annelik kavramının geleneklerin dışına çıkması incelenirken, yirminci yüzyılda Britanya’da yaşanan çeşitli sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve politik değişimlerin annelik kavramına etkisi, ve bu değişen dinamiklerin annelik kavramını yeniden yapılandığı üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu tezde feminist hareketlerin hızlanmasına neden olan yüzyılın sosyal, politik ve ekonomik yönlerini olumsuz etkileyen savaşların annelik kavramı üzerindeki etkileri, Çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosu’ndan seçilen üç oyun üzerinden incelenmiştir. Yüzyılın sonuna doğru eser veren Sarah Daniels (1957- ...), Charlotte Keatley (1960-...) ve Marina Carr (1964-...) gibi Britanyalı kadın oyun yazarları, toplumun da seyirci olduğu değişen annelik kavramını eserlerinde yansıtmışlardır. Bu tez için seçilen üç oyunda: *Neptune* (1986), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1987) ve *By the Bog of Cats* (1998): sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve politik değişimlerden etkilenecek yeni bir boyut kazanan ve geleneksellikten uzaklaşan annelik kavramı, zamanın değişen dinamiklerine uygun olarak farklı nesiller aracılığıyla gözler önüne serilmiştir. Bu bağlamda bu tez yirminci yüzyılın sonlarına doğru Britanya’da sahnelenen *Neptune* (1986), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1987) ve *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) oyunlarında temsil edilen annelik kavramından yola çıkarak, anneliğin feminizmin dinamikleri çerçevesinde mevcut sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve politik durumdan etkilenecek gelenekselliğin dışına çıktığını ortaya koymayı amaçlar. Bu kapsamda, bu tezde seçilen oyunlar, toplumsal cinsiyet söylemlerini deşifre eden ve bu söylemleri yeniden yapılandırmayı misyon edinmiş Feminist Eleştiri kapsamında

incelenmiştir. Mevcut tezin ilk bölümünde annelik kavramının İngiltere'deki karşılığı tarihsel süreç göz önünde bulundurularak derinlemesine incelenmiş, anneliğin tiyatro sahnelerindeki yansımaları çeşitli oyunlar üzerinden örneklendirilerek aktarılmıştır. Tezin ikinci bölümünde, Sarah Daniels'ın *Neaptide* oyunu anneliğin değişen dinamikleri üzerinden değerlendirilmiş, oyundaki farklı nesilden annelerin karşılaştırılmasıyla anneliğin geleneksel pratiklerden uzaklaştığı ortaya konmuştur. Üçüncü bölümde ise Charlotte Keatley'in *My Mother Said I Never Should* oyununda annelik üç farklı nesilden kadın aracılığıyla incelenmiş ve annelerin romantize edilmek yerine, "gerçek" anneler olmaları üzerinde durulmuştur. Dördüncü bölümde gelenek dışı anneliğin İrlanda'daki temsili Marina Carr'ın *By the Bog of Cats* oyunu ile incelenmiş, oyundaki annenin şiddet ve intihar meyilinin geleneksel annelik anlayışını yıkması üzerinde durulmuştur. Sonuç bölümünde, mevcut tez için seçilen üç oyunun etrafıca incelenmesinin ardından, Sarah Daniels, Charlotte Keatley, Marina Carr gibi yazarların betimledikleri gelenek dışı annelik temsilleriyle annelik kavramının yeniden yapılarak ideal anne mitinden uzaklaşıp gelenek dışına çıkması vurgulanacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngiliz Tiyatrosu, Annelik Kavramı, Feminist Eleştiri, Marina Carr, Charlotte Keatley, Sarah Daniels

REPRESENTATIONS OF UNCONVENTIONAL MOTHERHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH THEATER

ABSTRACT

The concept of motherhood is a frequent theme that is represented on British stage. Motherhood, as a socially constructed concept, has been idealized and mythicized for many years, thus the myth of the "ideal mother" has left a mark in British Theater plays. Later, different alternatives were offered to the motherhood myth by the efforts of contemporary English playwrights. The monotonous representation of motherhood has been replaced by unconventional representation. This thesis examines the unconventional representation of motherhood in contemporary British Theater. While doing this, the effects of various social, cultural, economic, and political changes in Britain, that occurred in the twentieth century, on the concept of motherhood, are emphasized and stressed that the changing dynamics restructured the concept of motherhood. In the current thesis, the effects of wars, which negatively affected the social, political, and economic aspects of the century and ironically caused the acceleration of feminist movements on motherhood were examined through three plays selected from the Contemporary British Theater. British playwrights including Sarah Daniels (1957- ...), Charlotte Keatley (1960-...) and Marina Carr (1964-...), who produced plays towards the end of the century, reflected the changing concept of motherhood in their plays. In the three plays selected for this thesis: *Neaptide* (1986), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1987) and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998): the concept of motherhood, gained a new perspective and moved away from conventional aspects by being influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political changes, presented through different generations in accordance with the changing dynamics of time. In this regard, by considering the motherhood concept in the plays, *Neaptide* (1986), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1987) and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), which were staged at the end of the twentieth century, this thesis aims to prove that within the dynamics of feminism, the concept of motherhood by being affected by current social, cultural, political situations,

becomes unconventional. In this context, the plays selected in this thesis were analyzed within the scope of Feminist Criticism, which decodes but at the same time encodes the gender discourses. In the first chapter of the current thesis, the British reflections on the concept of motherhood have been examined in-depth, by considering the historical process, and the reflections on the concept of motherhood on the Theater stages have been exemplified through various plays. In the second chapter of the thesis, Sarah Daniels' play *Neaptide* has been evaluated through the changing dynamics of motherhood. By comparing mothers from different generations in the play and it has been revealed that motherhood has moved away from traditional practices. In the third chapter, the concept of motherhood in Charlotte Keatley's play *My Mother Said I Never Should*, has been examined through women from three different generations and it has been emphasized that mothers who are exposed to idealization, now becoming real mothers with real emotions and weaknesses. In the fourth chapter, the representation of unconventional motherhood in Ireland has been analyzed with Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats*, and it was emphasized that the violence and suicidality of the mother in the play destroyed the conventional percept of motherhood. In the conclusion part, after analyzing the three plays selected for the current thesis in detail; with the unusual representations of motherhood presented by playwrights such as Sarah Daniels, Charlotte Keatley and Marina Carr it is emphasized that the concept of motherhood and mothering practices evolve into unconventional practices.

Keywords: British Drama, Concept of Motherhood, Feminist Criticism, Marina Carr, Charlotte Keatley, Sarah Daniels.

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INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this thesis is to emphasize the unconventional representation of the concept of motherhood in contemporary British Theater by analysing the change of the concept of motherhood over time. Besides its biological aspect, motherhood, which is also socially constructed, is responsive to political, social, economic, and cultural changes. For this reason, motherhood has been a frequent theme on Theater stages for ages. Although there are exceptions, such as in Euripides' *Medea*, until the post-war period, motherhood was represented as a conventional concept in theatre but particularly in the twentieth century, social, cultural, economic, and political changes that happened around the world also affect the concept of motherhood. Thus, the concept of motherhood was reshaped within these changes. Especially in the twentieth century, as women began to play an active role in the public sphere, identity of mothers as the primary caregivers, was replaced by the new identity of mothers who could exist in the public sphere. In this context, the active role of women in the public sphere has removed the concept of motherhood from patriarchal traditionalism. The society, which adopted motherhood within the scope of sharp boundaries through ages, witnessed the unusual versions of motherhood towards the end of the twentieth century. In this regard, by analysing the concept of motherhood in the plays: *Neaptide* (1986), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1987) and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) that were staged through the end of the century, this thesis aims to ascertain that by being influenced by the current social, economic, cultural, and political situation within the scope of feminism, the concept of motherhood goes beyond the conventions.

In addition to reflecting their identity as women into their creative processes, the playwrights selected for this thesis are also mothers. In this context, the concept of motherhood in the selected plays is introduced to the audience not only through playwrights, but also through the perspective of mothers. Since the transformation of the concept of motherhood into unconventional one requires a process, it is beneficial to examine the mother-child relationship in-dept, and it is also useful to examine the changing and transforming dynamics of motherhood. For this reason, in the first part of this thesis, it is aimed to focus on the historical background of the concept of

motherhood and to reveal the change that motherhood has experienced over time by focusing on the historical process of motherhood. In this thesis, which examines the plays produced by woman playwrights and which centre on motherhood, the historical process of motherhood in Britain will be examined by shedding light on the period of the first professional female playwright, Aphra Behn.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the concept of motherhood in Britain will be examined in depth by shedding light on the sixteenth century when women were able to start producing Theater plays and the seventeenth century. Then, it will be discussed how religious and socio-economic events such as the Reformation and Industrial Revolution affect the performance of motherhood. It will also be discussed that how these events give birth to the ideal mother concept. In the continuation of the first chapter, it will be stated that the concept of ideal motherhood created by patriarchal discourses, permeated all segments of society during the Victorian era, and it will be emphasized that; the identities of mothers during the Victorian era were restricted to only 'angel in the house'. In the sequel, the effects of wars on motherhood, will be discussed, and it will be stated that, ironically, a phenomenon with devastating consequences such as war, contributes to the expansion of the boundaries of the concept of motherhood. In the second part of the first chapter, the concept of motherhood in Post-War Britain will be examined in-depth, and the transformation that the concept of motherhood goes through in decades will be presented through the social, economic, and political-cultural changes of the period that laid the groundwork for the transformation of the concept of motherhood. After examining the historical process of the mothering in Britain, the reflections on the concept of motherhood in British Theater will be analysed. In this context, the staging of the mothers in English Theaters will be presented by starting from the first examples until the 1990s, that plays constituted the subject of the current thesis were written. It will be determined that by destroying social normative values over time, through the end of the century, mothers in British Theater are represented as unconventional mothers.

The removing of the concept of motherhood to be a myth over time and its going beyond conventions will be examined through three important plays in British Theater. In the second part of the thesis, the *Neaptide* which was written by Sarah Daniels, an

important play in the representation of motherhood will be examined. In *Neaptide* the concept of motherhood is presented to the audience in the form of a modern adaptation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone. In this context, the myth of Demeter and Persephone stands for a functional instrument in conveying that motherhood is a myth. By revisioning a myth Daniels presents that the concept of motherhood is also a myth that has been inherited through generations for many years. In this context, in the second chapter of the thesis, by closely examining the female characters who are mothers, it will be revealed that motherhood is a myth that is created by the society, which romanticized and sanctified the concept of motherhood. In doing so, the maternal performances of mothers such as Joyce, Val, Jean, and Claire will be examined comparatively. Thus, the maternal performance of four women of different ages will be evaluated within the scope of social, economic, political, and cultural factors of their periods, and the concept of motherhood will be analysed in depth through the mother-child relationship. In the play *Neaptide*, the evolution of motherhood from a conventional one into the unconventional one by crossing social boundaries is presented by the unusual practices of motherhood. For example, unlike Joyce, who wants to raise conventional mothers in the way she inherited from her mother, Val is a mother whose psychological problems are clearly expressed. While Jean is represented as a violent mother, Claire is represented as a lesbian mother who opposes all social taboos. In this context, the change in the angelic role of motherhood over time will be examined through the aforementioned maternal characters and the redefinition of motherhood over time and the transformation of motherhood will be emphasized.

In the third part of the thesis, the playwright Charlotte Keatley's play *My Mother Said I Never Should*, which was first staged at Manchester's Contact Theater in 1987, will be examined. As in the *Neaptide*, which will be examined in the second chapter, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, also motherhood has been presented through generations. In the play, Keatley presents the concept of motherhood with four generations of women belonging to the same family. Keatley reflects the impact of significant social changes of the twentieth century on the concept of motherhood with the play's female characters Doris, Margaret, Jackie and Rosie. The first and most important of these changes is the Second World War. The impact of the destructive

aspect of the war on human psychology and maternal performance will be evaluated through Doris and Margaret's mother-daughter relationship. In this context, it will be concluded that a phenomenon such as the Second World War, which led to dramatic changes in human life and psychology, also deeply affected the performance of motherhood, and the reflection of the concept of motherhood in 1940's Britain will be focused. The impact of the post-war period on maternal performance will be analysed. The fact that mothers have acquired new identities, albeit limited ones, by replacing men in the war, will manifest itself in the post-war period, and their maternal performances will reshape in the hope that mothers will restrain and independent. In this context, Margaret's motherhood performance in the play will be examined by comparing Doris's motherhood performance and it will be emphasized that motherhood is a process that evolves into an unconventional practice. In the continuation of the chapter, the maternal performance of Jackie, the third-generation mother of the play, will be examined. In the play *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Jackie is unable to care for her daughter Rosie, born in 1971, and delivers the baby to her mother Margaret. In this context, Jackie's pre-marital childbearing will evaluate through the concept of lone motherhood and the representation of motherhood among four generations of women will discuss in the play. Relations of maternal performances of mothers from different generations are shaped within the framework of social events of the period. Throughout the play, it can be observed that the social and economic changes experienced in Britain in the twentieth century: including the devastating impact of war, the radical changes in the post-war period, to the 70s, and the concept of lone motherhood freed the concept of motherhood from conventions. In this context, the third chapter of the current thesis is aimed to discuss the stereotypical roles of motherhood in the 50s, were replaced by scattered families, as families in *My Mother Said I Never Should* which Rosie is a member.

In the fourth part of the thesis, the concept of motherhood will be analysed through Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats*. Irish playwright Marina Carr, like Daniels and Keatley, also deals with the reshaping of the concept of motherhood through the dynamics of modern world. Inspired by the classic myth of *Medea*, her play *By the Bog of Cats* was first staged in 1998. The 90s were very important to Irish

history. The developing economy of Ireland causes the role of women in society to change, so mother-child relationships manifest themselves in different ways that are far from traditional within the scope of economic changes. *By the Bog of Cats* reflects the performance of an extraordinary mother, Hester Swane. While doing this, Hester Swane's absence of her mother and her longing for her mother will be evaluated within the framework of Bowlby's attachment theory, and the effects of inadequate attachment on the mother-daughter relationship and the identity of mother will be mentioned. In *By the Bog of Cats*, Hester Swane's motherhood performance will be compared with the other female characters in *By the Bog of Cats*, and it will be emphasized that although Hester adopts the roles attributed to motherhood, unlike her mother, she is an unconventional mother. In this context, the reflections of the concept of motherhood in Ireland will be presented through Hester Swane, a violent mother.

The major focus of the thesis is to reveal the unconventional representations of the concept of motherhood by analysing *Neptune, My Mother Said I Never Should*, and *By the Bog of Cats* through feminist critical approach. Mentioned plays have been deeply investigated by considering the political, social, economic, and cultural events of the periods that the plays were written. By considering the previous studies carried out on the concept of motherhood, this thesis examines the representations of the concept of motherhood at both individual and trans-generational levels. This examination enables the reader to investigate how a mother's identity is constructed in British culture. Moreover, the close analysis of plays, also enables the readers to discover the transformation of idealized motherhood into unconventional representations of British mothers who are oppressed by the patriarchal discourse.

CHAPTER I:

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF MOTHERHOOD IN BRITAIN

All human life on the planet is born of woman.

--Rich, *Of Woman Born*

The womb, which is the first home of humanity, is considered sacred throughout history. Each culture has its own beliefs, norms, rituals, and myths, in British culture, motherhood is often associated with morality, sacrifice, loyalty, protection, and devotion. Throughout British history, women's identities, including Virgin Mary's and Lady Diana's, were defined, and glorified through motherhood. Although motherhood is biologically related to femininity, it is a concept that contains political and cultural qualities. For a long time, women were defined by their bodies, moreover biological processes such as birth and breastfeeding were considered a necessity of women's nature. This perception transforms femininity from being a historical and social concept, into a fixed, gender-based identity. Contrary to popular belief, being a “good” mother is not something instinctual but culturally derived. Like every constructed concept, the concept of motherhood has been influenced by political, economic, and cultural dynamics and redefined. In this regard, motherhood in Britain, which had come a long way since the Middle Ages, was reshaped within the early modern period. Ideal motherhood is constructed in the early modern period and deconstructed in the late twentieth century.

Due to the medical insufficiencies of the early modern period, giving birth was very dangerous for women in Britain who experienced it five or six times more in their lifespan. While giving birth was physically risky and challenging for working class and upper-class women, motherhood as performance did not present a problem for upper-class Tudor women. Until the advent of the reformation and the decline of feudalism, noble Tudor mothers, by contradicting the traditional understanding of motherhood,

perceived motherhood as an instrument for their status. Diana Gittins, in *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*, states that "[h]aving children also brings status. It is, more than marriage even, the principal way in which a woman becomes socially recognized as being a 'real' woman, a woman who has fulfilled her 'true' destiny and role in life" (95). As fertility functions as a social acceptance mechanism for women whose role is giving birth to an heir, in the Tudor period, it was not possible to encounter a conventional motherhood concept that includes sacrifice towards the child. For noble Tudor mothers, the motherhood concept was limited to giving birth to an heir. Nursing tasks such as breastfeeding, rocking the baby, and diapering were not included in the maternal process. In *The Hidden Lives of Tudor Women: A Social History*, Elizabeth Norton states "Carefully wrapped and only a few minutes old, Elizabeth of York's second daughter was handed to her nurse. . .[T]he woman who first swaddled the tiny princess was not her mother. . .[I]nstead, it was probably the child's wetnurse, Cecily Burbage" (15). Like Cecily Burbage, whom Norton mentioned, many wetnurses perform as biological mothers in the Tudor period. For this reason, it was hardly possible to examine those specific bonds between noble mother and child that would express today's motherhood practice. However, poorer Tudor women had little chance but to take care of their children for themselves.

In the sixteenth century, the concept of motherhood was transforming and Elizabeth I, was a part of the transformation. As the queen, she represented the maternal identity embracing specific forms of power. Adrienne Rich states that "The male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of dependence on a woman for life itself, the son's constant effort to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is of woman born" (11). Although the male mind rejects that he is 'of woman born' the virgin queen Elizabeth rejected the male gaze and proved that Britain is also of woman born. As a childless queen, she declares that she is the mother of Britain, and by transcending the boundaries of motherhood, Elizabeth Coch, in 'Mother of My Contreys': Elizabeth I and Tudor Constructions of Motherhood", states that Elizabeth I "freed her maternal identity from myriad outside constraints and contingencies: the dangers of childbirth, alienation from body and child, the dissonance between public and private roles, and patriarchal control" (425). Although queen Elizabeth frees

motherhood from its assigned roles, religious, economic, and social changes that occur in the next centuries make motherhood the focus of patriarchal discourses.

The drastic changes in religion characterized the concept of motherhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the end of the period, the unconventional motherhood performed by the noble Tudor mothers, was replaced by the concept of 'ideal' motherhood. As Reformation spread across Europe, a Protestant impulse for childbearing redesigned the concept of motherhood. Protestants proclaimed that both women and men were equal before God. Ironically by elevating the status of women, Protestants created the "ideal mother" by imposing domestic roles on women. If mothers were fertile, obedient, pious, and chaste, they were ideal mothers. According to Luther, women are naturally intended to be mothers. They are created for sitting at home, bearing, and bringing up children whereas "men were created more intellectual endeavors" (O'Faolain and Martines 196). As O'Faolain and Martines point out, patriarchal discourses that limit women's roles and treat men as the superior gender have existed for a very long time; however, reformation reinforced these patriarchal discourses by stereotyping motherhood. Maternity was a moral sign in post-Reformation British society. Ideal mothers who gave birth, nursed, and raised children were praised and, through patriarchal hegemony, motherhood became the essential role for women.

Along with religious changes, economic changes in Britain also characterized the concept of motherhood. The Industrial Revolution is the most influential of these economic changes. The Industrial Revolution refers to the expanded production of machine-made goods that started in England during the eighteenth century, and it impacted every aspect of life including reproduction. The impact of the industrial revolution on the role of women in society has often been discussed by historians. Historians' arguments have varied as to optimistic and pessimistic impacts. Those who think that women's role in society has dwindled emphasize that diminishing job opportunities, seasonal employment, poor working conditions, unfavourable wages, daily chores, and working in factories negatively impact women's lives. In *The Living Standards of Women during the Industrial Revolution*, Nicholas, Stephen, and Deborah Oxley state that:

Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor, Anna Wheeler, and William Thompson believed that an unequal sharing of unpaid family responsibilities prevented women from competing equally with men, intensifying female oppression in an era of individual competition. (724)

Similarly, Jane Humphries in "*Lurking in the Wings...*": *Women in the Historiography of the Industrial Revolution* states that "pessimists have argued that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries women's access to resources was unequal. Market, state, and familial processes of distribution discriminated against them. Moreover, these processes are not constant in the face of economic change" (36). Although there are pessimistic views, there are also optimistic views that argue The Industrial Revolution had a positive impact on the role of women in society. The Industrial Revolution introduced vital changes for women. With the development of industries women stepped into public sphere. They were taken from home. Although the changes at first seemed to influence many women adversely, there are some optimistic historians who advocate that The Industrial Revolution does not have adverse influences on women. Ivy Pinchbeck, in *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* states that:

Despite much distress which accompanied the transition—due in part to reorganisation, in part to the dislocation produced by the French Wars—the Industrial Revolution has on the whole proved beneficial to women. It has resulted in greater leisure for women in the home and has relieved them from the drudgery and monotony that characterised much of the hand labour previously performed in connection with industrial work under the domestic system. (15)

Although there are diverse ideas, by encouraging separate spheres, the Industrial Revolution promotes figurative use of maternity, which has been widely embraced by patriarchy, to apply to the industrial process, from which especially upper-class women are for the most part, excluded.

With the emergence of separate spheres, motherhood is limited to domestic spheres. However, "[t]he public and private spheres were not discontinuous: the private, domestic woman served as the caretaker and inculcator of moral value, and as she wielded influence over the members of her household, she indirectly shaped society" (Francus 4). As Francus states in *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture*

and the Ideology of Domesticity, mothers indirectly shape society. Mothers, who were previously regarded as silent, obedient, and productive members of the household began to be represented as mothers with a significant burden for the fate of the family, the welfare of the class, and even the future of the empire. However, this burden is also constructed by patriarchal hegemony. By putting heavy burdens on mothers' shoulders, patriarchy limits mothers' roles. Mothers, by accepting what patriarchy imposes on them, believe domesticity is the most fitting position for the woman's 'duties' to her children, God, society, and country.

Another phenomenon that had an impact on the concept of motherhood in the eighteenth century, is the Enlightenment. Age of Enlightenment promises various new ideas centered on the sovereignty of reason including equality, tolerance, and rational thinking. However, even in a just and utopian world controlled by rational thinking where social equality and freedom prevail, it is not possible to talk about the same equality for the position of women in society. Shari Thurer, in *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother*, states that, contrary to common belief,

With the Enlightenment, a rational approach to religion gained acceptance; the bite of seventeenth-century Puritanism was gone. Reliance on God gradually gave way to the secular belief that a child's welfare lay primarily in the hands of loving, watchful mothers. (198)

Therefore, in the eighteenth-century mothers were prescribed as domestic women who care for their children, humble, modest, and well behaved. Rousseau, one of the Enlightenment age philosophers, reflects the general view of society on women and motherhood. He points that "without mothers, the race would necessarily diminish; all things considered, for its preservation each woman ought to have about four children. . . [i]s it any the less a woman's business to be a mother?" (343). Rousseau's statements about women are directly linked to the place and role of women in family and society. For Rousseau, the position of the woman in the family should be determined by the patriarch. According to him, patriarchal power is bestowed on man by nature, and the family is a natural state. Therefore, a woman is obliged to give birth and to take care of her children. As the child's well-being depends on loving, and careful mothers, with the

Enlightenment, wet nurses, which appeared in previous centuries, went out of fashion.

The transition of Britain into an industrialized country had significant implications for the aspects in which women were idealized in the Victorian era. By enabling new job opportunities, industrialization encouraged new kinds of urban living and prompted a shift in the ways in which female roles were perceived. With the changing living conditions, the differences between domestic and public spheres became clear in the 19th century. While middle-class women, in particular, lived a caged life, men who could exist in the public sphere were able to engage in politics, business, and social life. Ruskin represents a Victorian angel in the house as "the queen of the garden, ruler, and creator of her miniature Eden, possessor of a power, if she would wield it, over [her child], and over its father, purer than the air of heaven, and stronger than the seas of the earth" (93). Since motherhood and womanhood are attributed to an angelic role by patriarchal discourses and glorified, Tallya states that "[w]omen were made to believe that they must remain inside the protective domestic sphere, both because their duties were to be performed there and because the outside world might somehow damage their ability to perform those duties" (17). The moral duty, that nineteenth-century convention assigned to women, was linked to women's fertility.

In her book, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, published in 1861 to teach women the details of domestic life, Beeton asserts: "[a]s with the Commander of an Army, or the leader of any enterprise, so is it with the mistress of a house" (7). In this sense, the queen of the period, Victoria, was also a moral and domestic commander of both her house and country. By adopting both family life and all the taboos of the period about how an ideal mother should be, Victoria became a symbol of 'ideal' motherhood, and accompanied by her husband Albert, she gave birth to nine children. As an 'ideal' mother, the queen became a role model for all women in Britain. In the nineteenth century, the concept of motherhood was practiced as a part of patriarchal manipulation. Mothers, who thought their duties to be sacred, were restricted to domestic areas. In this sense, Beeton glorifies the roles attributed to motherhood in the Victorian period as follows:

She is, (mother) therefore, a person of far more importance in a community than

she usually thinks she is. On her pattern her daughters model themselves; by her counsels, they are directed; through her virtues, all are honoured; —‘her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband, also, and he praised her. (29)

Ideal mothers are not only essential for the household, but also the future of the nation. For this reason, domesticity manifests itself in Victorian novels, news as well as in the columns of magazines. In these novels, home is presented as a place that women are born to shine. However, the shine appears only through reproduction. In terms of the Victorian ideals of femininity, Abrams states that “for a woman not to become a mother meant she was liable to be labeled inadequate, a failure or in some way abnormal. Motherhood was expected of a married woman and the childless single woman was a figure to be pitied” (5). Consequently, in the Victorian era, the pressure on women to be mothers was fierce.

Throughout history, motherhood has been presented as a class-conscious concept. As a natural consequence of industrial growth, in Victorian Britain, there was an extreme inequality between the upper-class and working-class both in economic and social terms. The disparity between classes directly affected the concept of motherhood, and in return, motherhood became a more fragile concept, especially for working-class women. For many feminist critics, also, the fragility of the Victorian mother, which emphasized the sacrifice that childbirth required, was linked to social class. Claudia Nelson in her book *Family Ties in Victorian England* states that in the Victorian Period pregnancy and childbirth were regarded as the proof of an innate tendency of women to sacrifice for others. However, this sacrifice was more challenging for working-class mothers. Many working-class women were not able to afford the needs of their newborn babies, as most of them struggled to make enough money for living, for their husbands and other children. Ellen Ross, who contributed the representation of motherhood in the Victorian era in her book *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London*, states that in the nineteenth century, the main responsibility of the mothers from the working-class was to guarantee the survival of her children, which was no easy duty considering the other responsibilities of women including daily chores and house management with an inadequate budget. Abortion was not an option for the Victorian woman, who was unable to support children. The Offences Against the Person Act,

enacted in 1861 in Britain, laid the groundwork for an abortion ban. With this law, abortion, which was previously not approved by the authorities and even thought to be a great sin, became almost impossible. Therefore, in the Victorian era, many women who were not allowed to have an abortion were forced to send their babies to be taken care of by other women. Ross states,

This practice, normally netting the nurse mothers about 5 shillings a week for a new baby for most of the period we are discussing, had an evil reputation because of a few notorious trials of 'baby farmers' who took dozens of infants simultaneously and had clearly murdered a succession of infants in their charge, sometimes with the tacit consent of their parents. (135)

In *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London*, Ross writes that baby farming, became popular in the 1870s and '80s since many working-class mothers could not afford enough money and time for the responsibility of an infant. Baby farms functioned as both a way for women who do not want and afford to bear a child, as well as a job opportunity for some who make money from taking an infant in. However, some of the women in the baby farming business were neglectful in their duties thus, under bad conditions, the infants of the working-class families had very little chance to survive.

Although the concept of motherhood was shaped by patriarchal discourses in the Victorian era, and motherhood was positioned in an angelic place, it is not possible to say that especially working-class mothers took advantage of being angels in the house. Throughout the period, mothers were made to believe that if they acted according to the roles assigned to them, for example, if they were pure, moral, and obedient, their children would be the same, and they would be beneficial to the country as mothers. However, towards the end of the period, as Garry Kelly states in *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft*, when the first steps of feminist movements were taken by Mary Wollstonecraft, mothers used their maternal identities to justify their participation in public spheres.

Motherhood, as a concept, differs according to the political, economic, and social events women have experienced. For example, political systems such as fascism, wars, economic depressions can have a radical effect on women's childbearing. In every century, there have been notable events that determine the mother's role. In the first half

of the twentieth century, mothers were far from the stereotypical image of ideal motherhood of the Victorian era. There are multiple reasons that explain why mothers lose their angelic role. Science is the first reason that caused the fundamental change of motherhood as a concept. As a result of the discoveries in the twentieth century, maternal instinct, which is claimed to be inherent in every woman, is regarded as insufficient in childcare. Therefore, Shari Thurer states, “the impetus for mother’s fall from grace was the rise of science” (Thurer 228). In the twentieth century women were freed from their angelic roles thanks to science, but this time patriarchal discourses exposed themselves through science. Thurer also states, “scientific motherhood undermined mothers’ confidence in themselves; and it placed mothers under the thumb of self-appointed –usually male- experts” (229). In that sense, the mothers were still under the patriarchal control even in the twentieth century. It was the First World War weakened the patriarchal control that had manifested itself over the centuries.

During the First World War, British mothers emerged not only as women giving birth and raising children but as women rearing soldiers for war. Therefore, in the war period, motherhood functioned as the primary way to describe female identity. Like imperial motherhood in the nineteenth century, motherhood in the twentieth century was also a matter of national importance. During World War I, reproduction and motherhood were praised by social and political authorities. So much so that, in World War I, motherhood became the influential concept of war propaganda and manifested itself in many war posters. Ann Taylor Allen in *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe 1890 -1970: The Maternal Dilemma* argues that in the war, mothers are presented as “the misguided allies of militarist politicians whose aim was the production of cannon fodder” (8). As Allen states, mothers being allies of the military politicians can be observed in British wartime recruitment posters in which mothers try to encourage their sons to be part of the war. In these posters, it is presented that women’s “duty”, as the producers of soldiers, is to remind men of their responsibility to their nation. In this period, many feminists asserted their concern about women’s new role as producers of soldiers. Thus, Grayzel, in “The Mothers of Our Soldiers’ Children’: Motherhood, Immorality, and the War Baby Scandal, 1914-18”, states: “motherhood came to represent for women what soldiering did for men: a gender-specific experience

that could provide social unity and stability during a time of unprecedented upheaval" (120). Thus, motherhood as a gender-specific experience becomes one of the main concerns of the first wave of British feminism.

During the Great War, the first wave of feminists in Britain dissented over the issue of motherhood. Some feminists have asserted that motherhood can be an influential concept for the glorification of women and their rights. Elizabeth Wolstenholme, one of the advocates of the British feminist movement of the early twentieth century, stated that the mothers risk their life "because women are resolved to be mothers in the highest, and no longer in the noblest sense of that term, that they now demand for themselves, and for each other, the fullest opportunity of self-development" (6). Accordingly, motherhood in the Great War became an influential concept, putting women in a powerful ideological role as they are responsible for the nation's prosperity.

Unlike the feminists who glorified the wartime position of women as mothers, some feminists of the period criticized the war and wartime discourses of motherhood. During wartime, as it was a matter of national importance motherhood was positioned as the tool of empire, especially by patriarchy and the middle-class women. Mulhearn states that: "such societies as the Women's Guild of Empire placed patriotic imperial concerns at its heart and kept alive the dominant ideology of woman as 'child-rearer' and 'homemaker' and 'imperial propagandist'" (202). It was precisely the positioning of women's identity as a means of imperial propaganda that some feminists of the period heavily opposed. Although motherhood as a concept is celebrated by a patriarchal society and some first-wave feminists, Ann Taylor Allen writes about the wartime discourse of motherhood: "wartime discourses on motherhood often mixed exaltation with indignation, triumph with mourning, patriotism with dissent" (115). For example, Sylvia Pankhurst and Helena Swanwick, first-wave feminists, focused on the effects of war on motherhood. Swanwick declares if men are asked to sacrifice their lives on fronts, women are asked to sacrifice their lives by giving birth to the next generation to compensate for the waste. However, as Swanwick pointed out, women bear a great responsibility to compensate for the losses in the war, it is also possible to indicate the positive outcomes of the Great War for women and especially mothers.

Although the war was terrible and added new burdens on the shoulders of

mothers, the Great War helped mothers penetrate the public sphere. Since men were at war, women took the place of men and entered the public sphere. Hughes and Meek, in *State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood*, state that “the history of women’s experiences during World War I has mainly been evaluated through the prism of their entry into what had been considered men’s jobs and, in their role, and efforts in the medical profession during the conflict” (365). Women started to exist in the public sphere and replaced men. “The Representation of the People Act passed in 1918 women over the age of 30 gained the vote” (UK Parliament 2022). In this way, suffragette movements became a turning point for mothers who were previously unable to make their voices heard. In wartime, mother lived individually, did the work of a man by replacing empty positions of him, protested for her rights in the streets, and often rejected her traditional role.

By the end of the war when British soldiers came home, many women left the public sphere where they had just taken steps and returned to their homes. Through the Great War, women gained not only new roles but also new personal freedoms. Nevertheless, these gained freedoms did not persist for many women in the interwar period. In the absence of men, women, who broke social taboos and worked in the "male" job, were forced to return to their traditional roles as housewives and caregivers when the war ended. Although a small minority persisted in continuing to do "male" jobs, these working minorities of women also became targets of patriarchal discourses during the Great Depression. Working mothers were forced to return to their "home" during the interwar period. In *The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism*, Susan Kingsley Kent states that “after the partial enfranchisement of women in 1918, public anxiety about women's place in society centered on work persuade women to recognize the inevitability of sex differences and to give up their wartime jobs” (237). As Kent states, patriarchy's efforts to keep women away from the public sphere and prioritizing their maternal identities continued until the approaching World War II.

Although World War II caused widespread destruction in Britain just like the First, when evaluated from feminist perspectives, it is possible to state that it had positive consequences for women. With the outbreak of World War II, women said "we

can do it" by doing the work left behind by men, consequently in the war women worked in various "male" jobs as mechanics, engineers, drivers, and re-entered the public sphere. British mothers, in World War II, were more advantageous than their counterparts who experienced the First World War. First of all, British mothers have the right to vote in World War II. Additionally, unlike the past centuries, in the second half of the twentieth century, motherhood ceased to be a practice carried out with old rituals and traditions, by becoming an experience involving scientific methods. In this regard, especially towards the end of the war, many psychoanalytical and social studies have been carried out on the implementation of motherhood and child development, and the researchers working on child development such as Bowlby and Winnicott have examined the effects of World War II on mother and children. Besides, the British government realized that dealing with post-war depression and destruction would only be possible with a potent new generation and took steps to improve maternal and child health in Britain. Davis, in *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, C.1945-2000*, states "At the end of World War Two, in 1945, there were 11 nurseries in Oxford with 530 places" (122). Placing motherhood on a scientific basis reshaped the traditional perception of motherhood as a concept. However, history was repetitive, and just like in the First World War, at the end of World War II, women and especially mothers returned to their traditional roles. In the 1950s, mothers became the consumer "angel in the house" within slight differences from Victorian mothers.

I. I. The Concept of Motherhood in Post-War Britain

World War II led to the establishment of a new order, and radical changes in social life in Britain. Although the war caused a lot of physical, psychological, social and economic damage and destruction for the British, the period after the end of the war has been the golden age of family. In this context, the 1950s was a throwback to the Victorian era in terms of gender roles. Just like in the Victorian era, women in 1950s Britain, were full-time domestic housewives. Although they could be a part of the workforce compared to Victorian women, women of the 1950s worked part-time jobs due to patriarchal pressure and argued that motherhood was the most important job of womanhood. The vast majority of women studying at university during this period, did not have career goals. Many sought to marry and have children after graduation, as masculine ideology expected from them. In the transforming Britain of the 1950s, there were working mothers. Although there were working mothers, they were few in number, and publicly ostracized by society. The disapproval and the stigma were so prominent that Thrurer, summarizes the perception of the period for working mothers as follows: "A working wife was not something to brag about: she signaled her husband's inadequacy as a breadwinner. Indeed, working wives and child-care centers were denounced as Communist ideas" (250). Thus, although women continued to exist symbolically in the workforce, they were accepted and praised by society as "angels in the house".

In the 1950s, goods became a status symbol, consumption gained great importance, individuals started to consume more and more, and they became obsessed with the material objects that they possess. As they consume more and more women, especially housewives, were trapped in a more lonely, isolated life. During this period, magazines popular among women, encouraged the consumption. Many of these magazines praised the domestic role of women as caregivers and maintained that women's place was their home. Spencer states that in the "Parents Magazine" published in 1957, the ideology about women's participation in the workforce is expressed as follows: "family life should be your first consideration. And no part-time job should be taken which demands more of your time and energy than the family can spare" (116). In this context, rather than an identity, motherhood in these magazines is reflected as a role

that every woman should naturally adopt. In addition to magazines that idealize motherhood and the family, the Queen and her family also idealized the traditional concept of motherhood by displaying a "perfect" family concept in the 1950s. Although motherhood in the 1950s was firmly linked to traditional gender roles, as in the Victorian era, feminist movements that gained momentum in the '60s, transformed the motherhood concept from being a mere necessity and the natural role of women.

Many profound changes occurred in Britain's social climate in the 1960s. In this period, new laws and regulations were created as an outcome of social, cultural, and political changes, and the concept of motherhood was reshaped within the scope of these changes. Especially when birth control pills became legal in Britain in 1961, contraception became more common and reliable. With this development, women gained the freedom to decide for themselves whether to adopt the maternal identity or not. Davis, in *Modern Motherhood Women and Family in England C. 1945-2000*, states that, with the Family Planning Act enacted in 1967, doctors contributed to family planning by providing birth control pills to women, albeit only to married women. In this context, the 1960s have been the years in Britain that paved the way for women to decide on their own bodies. With the Abortion Law enacted in 1967, women guaranteed to have the sole right over their own bodies. By these regulations and laws, the discourse of the Second Wave Feminism removed motherhood from being a "natural" role of women to an identity that women can adopt because of their free will and choice. Starting from the 1960s, Second Wave Feminists argued for by decades that women should live a fully independent life, free from masculine views and ideologies. In addition to the new regulations on contraception, abortion, and divorce, in the 1960s, women's full-time participation in the workforce caused the traditional maternal roles to change. Knott presents these changes by saying: "in the post – Second World War English Midlands, breastfeeding was on the decline. In the 1960s a pair of sociologists learned that perhaps sixty percent of Nottingham mothers bottle-fed at four months, ninety percent at six months" (156). These changes will become more evident in the following years.

It was the 1970s when women were fully organized and started fighting for their rights. Since the mid-'70s, both women's demand to be heard and feminist discourses

have become widespread, consequently, many women's organizations have been established in Britain in the 1970s. This period of radical changes has also hosted important changes in terms of gender roles. For example, women's participation in the workforce increased in this period. Moen states "[b]y the 1970s, employment for wives and mothers was no longer negatively sanctioned. Different cohorts of women in mid-life in the 1970s confronted the changing options available to them from distinctive perspectives" (136). Therefore, in this period, women were a part of the workforce, and they were able to define their own identities.

The 70s were a period when baby-boomers transcended their mothers. Some of the babies born in the baby boom of the 50s became mothers in the 70s, and they rejected the traditional maternal roles which had been clearly defined by masculine ideology. In this context, in the 1970s women's relations with their mothers were crucial in understanding the transformation of the motherhood concept through different periods. Karen Payne, in *Between Ourselves: Letters between Mothers and Daughters 1750-1982*, states that "it is only during the most recent wave of feminism in the 1970s that a woman's relationship with her mother has been seen as such a crucial issue in her journey toward liberation" (139). Considering the generational difference within the concept of motherhood, women who became mothers in the 1970s, despite economic, social, and political problems of the period, redefined being good mothers by shifting the focus from traditional roles. In this sense, in the '70s women and especially mothers broke the gender taboos through the influence of the second wave of feminist discourses.

The 1980s were influential years for Britain. During these years conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher wanted to revive the old powerful Britain. While some feminists of the period embraced Thatcher, who was the first female prime minister of the UK, by considering the sisterhood concept, which is one of the key features of Second Wave Feminism, others criticized Iron Lady for her conservative politics. The Thatcher era is also influential in terms of feminism and the concept of motherhood. As the mother of two, Thatcher, dreamed of creating a new Elizabethan era, however, in the period many gender roles that started to diminish, revived. In the 80s, people give concrete support to conservative policies and traditional gender roles so that NatGen

Social Research states:

In 1984, for instance, 43 per cent agreed with the view that “a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”, but now only 13 per cent take this view. And while in 1989, 42 per cent thought that “family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job” and two-thirds (64 per cent) that a mother with a child under school age should stay at home rather than go out to work. (Park et al. 144)

Although it was stated in the social attitudes research that traditional gender roles were adopted by most of the society in the 1980s, some feminists harshly criticize gender roles, especially idealized motherhood. Criticism of motherhood as a tool of politics, and patriarchal order, continues until the mid-80s. Thus, in “Feminist Perspectives on Motherhood and Reproduction,” Neyer and Bernardi claimed that “the mainstream feminist discourse up to the mid-1980s took a critical approach to motherhood and regarded the rejection of motherhood as a pre-requisite for overcoming women's subordination and for gaining equality” (166). As Neyer and Bernardi mentioned, although feminist discourse welcomes an anti-maternal attitude for a while, it turns into a discourse that embraces and celebrates all women and motherhood after the '80s.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the gap between the rates of male and female workforce is narrowed; therefore, women's chance to express their identities expanded. Women, who can divorce, use contraception, and have fewer children, are no longer mythical characters. At the end of the century, mothers, who are influenced by social, economic, political, and cultural events for centuries, and attributed the role of "angel" that is imposed by the patriarchal gaze, became subjects rather than a mythical object. In this context, with the dramatic changes that develop within years in Britain, and most importantly, with the feminist movements that gained momentum in the 60s, mothers have become "real" mothers who put aside the concern of being perfect while raising children.

I. 2. Mothers in British Theater

As a biological and cultural concept, motherhood is receptive to political, social, economic, and cultural changes. For this reason, motherhood has been a recurrent theme in theater stages since drama existed. From Ancient Greece to the contemporary British Theater, it is possible to find the concept of motherhood in every period where drama is performed. Felicity Dunworth, in *Mothers and Meaning on The Early Modern English Stage*, states that “the dramatised mother operates emblematically as a rhetorical and visual signifier of a complex set of ideas: she is the embodiment of conflicting discourses, re-presenting them as spectacle” (13). As she is a signifier of the discourses and ideologies, the mother stands for a myth in many dramas. Although there are exceptions, such as in Euripides' *Medea*, representations of mothers in English Theater are often devoted and ‘ideal’ mothers, like Shakespeare's mother character Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. In this context, the representation of motherhood on Theater stages presented as a conventional concept until the post-war period.

In Britain, female playwrights have produced for Theater since the 17th century. However, female playwrights led by Aphra Behn avoided "woman" issues until suffragette movements. Although the preceding playwrights avoided women's issues, with the Actresses' Franchise League established before the First World War, the drama functioned as a supportive tool for the suffragette movements. Although female playwrights produced new plays during this period, most of the plays were not accepted by society and press. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. Aston and Reinelt in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* state that "Cicely Hamilton's 1909 *A Pageant of Famous Women* provided an endless stream of star performers representing positive images of, amongst other things, exceptional women from history" (45). Although there are exceptions, female, especially mother representations in British Theater were not free from masculine oppression until the Second World War. Until then motherhood was presented as a mythical object in these plays.

It is impossible to think of the concept of motherhood independently from

feminist movements. World War II was a turning point for the feminist movements that will provoke the concept of motherhood to change and transform. After the Second World War women's participation in the workforce disturbed the masculine authorities. Thus, mothers aiming to take the seats in the absence of men during the war become the target of the patriarchal structure, in the post-war period, and they are told to be traditional. Although women became the focus of masculine ideology in the 50s, the post-war period is influential for British Theater. Keyssar states that "it was not until the 1950s when a resurgence of experimentation in the Theater brought renewed energy to the ensemble concept, that concern with the structure of theatrical production began to make conscious links to women's roles" (25). Proto-feminist plays based on the changing dynamics of motherhood in English Theater were also written during this period, such as Enid Bagnold's *The Chalk Garden* (1956), Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958), Doris Lessing's *Play with a Tiger* (1958) and Ann Jellicoe's *The Sport of My Mad Mother* (1958) offer problematic alternatives to the traditional domestic, altruistic, and protective roles of motherhood.

The breaking away of the motherhood concept from the traditional aspects in Britain, progressed with the emergence of contraception pills in 1961, and several law regulations including the Family Planning Act and the Abortion Act. Within these acts, the concept of motherhood, which is accepted as sacred by society, is re-shaped. New laws and regulations laid the groundwork for the Women's Liberation Movement. Aston, and Harris, state that the slogan "personal is political" summarizes the discourse of the feminist movement that started in the 1960s. This slogan is also closely related to the concept of motherhood. Feminists of the period reveal that the maternal roles that women have traditionally been condemned were dependent on political intervention. In this context, Theaters were areas where women could shout "personal is political" and present alternative version of which is different from traditional perspectives. The changes in the motherhood concept are also presented in British Theater. In some plays staged during this period, for example, Maureen Duffy's *Rites* (1969), Jane Arden's *Gas Oven* and *Vagina Rex* (1969), women's maternal identity was no longer 'ideal', and it is not represented as

the only role of women. Furthermore, Keyssar states “By the late sixties, Megan Terry's *Calm Down Mother* and *Comings and Goings*, as well as Caryl Churchill's radio dramas, had growing audiences among women and men who were 'raising their consciousness'" (104). So much so that, in the late 60s, British Theater witnesses unusual versions of the concept of motherhood.

The seventies represented a decade of transformations from the perspective of women's voice in the public sphere. Following the first major conference of British feminists at Ruskin College in Oxford in 1970, Women's Liberation demonstrations – for abortion rights and equal opportunities and payment – occurred on a regular basis. (Komporalý 35)

As Komporalý states, in addition to the demonstrations on the streets, women also stand against gender boundaries through Theater. With the Women's Liberation Movement, Theater groups, where women could raise their voice, were established in Britain in the 1970s. The Women's Theater Group, which staged many plays that deal with the problems that women experience in business life due to their sexual identity, sets an example for the functions of the established women's Theater groups. The Women's Theater Group was founded in 1974 and preferred a collective and egalitarian structure without a 'writer' or 'director'. In the plays that are created by the Women's Theater Group, the group dealt with problems such as sexual education, insufficient job opportunities, and the need for equal pay for men and women. Theater plays written in this period generally examined the women's roles through Marxist ideology. Another influential materialist feminist group known in Britain was the Red Ladder Theater Company which is established in 1972. In the plays written and staged by this group during the period, motherhood was examined and criticized in terms of class. For example, the play *Strike While the Iron Is Hot* (1972), staged by the Red Ladder Theater Company, examined gender roles by evaluating the difference between classes.

When the shifting roles of the concept of motherhood are examined, Pam Gems's plays, which are produced in the late 1970s, attract attention. Unlike the feminist playwrights who produce plays in the '70s, Gems states that her plays have an artistic purpose rather than a political or feminist stance. Although Gems stated that she did not have feminist concerns in her plays, most of her plays are centred around a female

protagonist. Gems adopts an experimental style in some of her plays and provides a historical perspective to the processes of creating women's identities. For example, in her plays *Piaf* (1977) and *Queen Christina* (1977), Gems sheds light on the roles of famous female figures in history. For example, in the play *Piaf*, she tells the struggle of the French singer Edith Piaf as a woman in society. When Gems' plays are evaluated in terms of motherhood, the playwright first represents mothers in stereotypical gender roles, but then transforms them into characters whose voices can be heard. So much so that "plays from this period focus more directly on the practice of mothering — how characters can or cannot, do or do not, perform the job of mother according to their culture's definition of the role" (Savilonis 166). In this context, *Queen Christina* exemplifies motherhood as a role that is constructed by society.

In the 80s, although Thatcher policies encouraged the "have it all" woman who could participate in the workforce and achieve material success at home, the real-life practice of Thatcher ideology and politics was different. In the 1980s, very few women were able to balance work and family life, whereas many of them lived depending on gender roles. During the period, there was also a regional inequality among women in addition to gender inequality. For example, while women in the South were relatively prosperous financially, working-class women in the North hardly made both ends meet due to the industrial unrest. Thus, as they experienced many economic challenges, women of Northern cities had not benefited from the feminist movements properly. Traditionalist gender roles are criticized in the dramatic works of the era by considering the class issue. Aston states that the plays of the period including *Red Devils* (1983) by Debbie Horsfield, *About Face* (1985) by Cordelia Ditton and Maggie Ford, *Thatcher's Women* (1987) by Kay Adshead, present the gap between Southern and Northern women.

Another playwright that presents unconventional motherhood concept in British Theater was Carly Churchill. Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982) functions as a manifestation in representing changing dynamics of motherhood. Churchill's *Top Girls* embraces many different types of mothers. For example, contrary to the patriarchal perspectives, Marlene, who is one of the mothers in the play, evaluates motherhood as a kind of burden. Although the mothers of the play vary in terms of

ideologies, Marlene goes against the idealized concept of the nuclear family of the Thatcher era. Therefore, as she has career goals, Marlene does not want to take care of her child. For Marlene, her career is paramount, so she asks her sister to take care of her child. Through Marlene, Churchill states that motherhood, idealized by the patriarchy, limits women.

Women have lived under masculine oppression for centuries. The patriarchal structure did not allow women to create their own identities, and women had to adopt the roles assigned to them by men. In this sense, the concept of ideal motherhood, which celebrated and encouraged by the masculine ideology, is a myth that prevents women from having equal rights with men. Besides, this myth has led to criticism of mothers who are not 'ideal'. In this context, women have been criticized and marginalized over their motherhood practices. In this regard, altruistic, obedient, and domestic mothers were presented as 'ideal', and mothers whereas women who took part in the public sphere and struggled for equal rights with men were condemned. As a socially constructed concept, motherhood is sensitive to social, cultural, economic, and political changes. In this respect, the concept of motherhood has been affected by dramatic changes throughout the ages and has moved back and forth over time.

The fragility of the concept of motherhood and its being responsive to the changes around it, have become an important theme of the British Theater. Therefore, female playwrights that were interested in the identity of a woman as a mother, presented the journey of mothers through the stages and they managed to find a place for themselves within the public sphere. In this sense, the concept of motherhood, which is weaving between conventional and unconventional over time, is presented as unconventional practices in Contemporary British Theater. In contemporary British Theater, mothers presented as women who were affected by the dramatic changes of the post-war period and turned into "real" mothers who, contrary to the patriarchal discourses, could make their voices heard and did not hesitate to make mistakes. Mothers of the Contemporary British Theater mirrored the deconstruction of the ideal mother myth. In this sense, as a product of Contemporary British Theater, in Sarah Daniels' *Neaptide*, which constitute the

subject of this thesis and will be examined in detail in the second chapter, unconventional representation of the concept of motherhood in the 1980s is presented by considering the differences through generations.



CHAPTER II:

SARAH DANIELS' *NEAPTIDE*

There were many changes in Britain in the 1980's. In 'Violence, Abuse, And Gender Relations In The Plays Of Sarah Daniels' Griffin states that "governed by the conservatism of Thatcherite politics in Britain in which women were simultaneously encouraged to participate in the economy and reviled for it, this period saw the rise of a number of British women playwrights" (195) One of the British women playwrights that Griffin also mentions is Sarah Daniels, whose play *Neaptide* will be analyzed in this chapter. Sarah Daniels is a playwright who has succeeded in the representation of feminist subjects in Contemporary British Theater. Born in London in 1956, the playwright started to produce plays in the early stages of her life. Although her works are widely acclaimed, the way she represents women criticized especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Although she does not define herself as a radical feminist, through the plays she started to produce in the 80s, Daniels, as a prolific writer, emphasized how women were oppressed by the politics of the period and patriarchal ideology in general. In this context, in her interview with Pamela Bakker, Daniels states, "I didn't set out to further the cause of Feminism. However, I am proud if some of my plays have added to its influence" (4). Although she did not aim to produce feminist plays, through her plays, Daniels has emphasized various challenging issues for women, such as rape, pornography, lesbianism, and violence. Thus, she promotes feminism in her plays rather as women's challenge to the patriarchal order. In this sense, Bakker says "certainly the notion of 'challenge' has become one of the hallmarks of Daniels' Theater. Her plays consistently challenge society's systems or institutions of male violence, control, or authority over women" (5). Women's standing against the status quo has been scrutinized in many of Sarah Daniels' plays.

Sarah Daniels has reached the mainstream audience as her plays are based on controversial themes. Lorna Carswell writes in her study 'Rattling The 'Iron Lady' that, Daniels "offers the option of an alternative life and existence for women through the strength of communal bonds and sisterhood. Furthermore, she discusses an alternative

to the heteronormative nuclear family designated by capitalist patriarchal structures” (17). As Carswell states, by discussing the alternative family concept and being a provocative voice against the politics and patriarchal ideology of the period, Daniels' play *Ripen Our Darkness*, staged in 1981, is one of the most important works she produced in the early period of her career. In *Ripen Our Darkness*, Daniels reflects her hatred of patriarchal oppression by representing the devastating consequences of it. In the play, by presenting the ordinary lives of women surrounded by the patriarchal ideology, the playwright offers the opportunity to observe the dramatic impact of patriarchal oppression, especially on motherhood.

With the diversification and expansion of feminist perspectives, contemporary British feminist playwrights started to focus on serious issues that permeate every layer of society. As a result, these feminist perspectives pave the way for contemporary British female playwrights and influence them to express their opinions on unspoken topics. Morrissy states, in “Materialist-Feminist Criticism and Selected Plays of Sarah Daniels, Liz Lochhead, And Claire Dowie”, that contemporary women's playwrighting is "interested in how far deep underlying political systems can be confronted” (17). As a contemporary playwright, Sarah Daniels is sensitive to political events as well as to women's issues. As a playwright, Daniels' understanding of the world around her is part of her creative process. Therefore, in the creation process of her plays she intermingles the criticism of patriarchy with political issues. For example, in *The Devil's Gateway* staged in 1983, women's growing awareness in society is reflected in their protests of nuclear war. Daniels, through her plays that focus on women-centred issues ranging from lesbian motherhood to violence, mental illness, pornography and political issues, including: *Masterpieces* (1983), *Byrthrite* (1986), *Neaptide* (1986), *The Gut Girls* (1988), *Beside Herself* (1990), *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992), *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994), openly dramatized the problems that the audience is uncomfortable with but cannot stop being a part of at the same time. Although this unapologetic representation of women in her plays caused Daniels to receive a lot of criticism, her plays were inspiring for women to have their voices heard and raise awareness. Daniels, has managed to stage plays at the Royal Court Theater since 1984, won the George Devine Award for her play *Neaptide* in 1982 and was selected as the Most Promising

Playwright by the London Theater Critics in 1983. *Neaptide*, which constitutes the subject of this thesis, serves as a means of making women's voices heard in corrupt institutions and in the male-dominated world in general, goes one step beyond just voicing the women's issues and dramatizes motherhood, which has been considered the natural complement of female identity for ages, through generations. In this regard, *Neaptide* is an important play in understanding the changing dynamics of motherhood in contemporary English Theater.

Before examining the play in detail, it may be convenient to give a summary of *Neaptide*. The play revolves around Claire, a history teacher and lesbian mother, and her 7-year-old daughter, Poppy. By revealing the mother-daughter relationship, the play explores how the concept of motherhood is handled by different generations. The play is set in a London suburb, and the events take place in 1983. In the opening scene of the play Claire's sister Val, who is struggling with mental problems, is introduced to the audience. She ends up in a hospital and, her mother, Joyce, is accompanying her. Then, a flashback to Mother's Day, which was two days ago, is presented. In this scene, Claire tells her daughter Poppy a bed-time story about the myth of Demeter and Persephone by saying that Demeter stopped the world to protect her daughter Persephone from Hades. Then Joyce and Val join Poppy and Claire. Joyce complains about her daughters and granddaughter's inappropriate remarks and states that she wants her daughters to be like the Brontë sisters. Although Joyce wants her daughters to be like the Brontë sisters, Val portrays a depressed and mentally challenged mother, while Claire as a lesbian single mother, is far from the society's 'ideal' motherhood concept. Claire's father Sid, as a true patriarch, also supports these statements of Joyce, thus he does not want Claire to raise Poppy like her. Then, Claire's ex-husband Lawrence comes to the house where Claire lives with her roommate, Jean, and threatens Claire to take custody of Poppy. Confronting patriarchal discourses in the private sphere with her own methods, Claire encounters these discourses also in the public sphere. However, Claire is not free in public as she is at home. At school, she disguises her sexual identity. In scene six, two lesbian students are prosecuted by headmistress Bea Grimble for their sexual orientation. At this point, Claire advises her student, who came out of the closet, to keep her sexual orientation secret and she also advises them to see a psychologist. But at the

end of the first part, Claire, like Diane, comes out of the closet and tells the headmistress, Bea Grimbles, that she is a lesbian.

In the second part Daniels presents the custody battle. As a lesbian and single mother, Claire goes through many challenges fighting her ex-husband for custody of her daughter. Claire realizes that her sexual orientation will be used by her ex-husband as a trump in court, and she won't get custody of her daughter. Meanwhile, Joyce crosses boundaries of traditional gender roles, which she seems very pleased to be in throughout the play and suggests that Claire to flee to America to join her sister Sybil for a better life. That way, Claire won't have to give up on her daughter. Meanwhile, Diane and Terrie learn that Bea Grimbles is a lesbian too, and they offer her to testify for Claire in court. In the last part of the play, the court gives the custody of Poppy to her father, but Claire, does not give up on her daughter just because she is not the 'ideal' mother. By revisioning a myth, the play introduces the audience to the unconventional motherhood concept, in which, despite all the impositions. Mothers like Claire, Joyce, and Val practice motherhood with their own unique styles.

In *Neptune*, Daniels revives a myth and transforms an ancient mother and daughter story to the modern one. In, *Re-visioning Myth: Feminist Strategies in Contemporary Theater*, Frances Babbage says that "on one level, all feminist Theater deals with the re-visioning of myth, given that a key motivation for the work is the need to interrogate models of femininity and female behavior which support, and are supported by, a patriarchal ideology" (3). Although myths offer a clear set of meanings, when their subtexts are examined, they give important clues about the functioning of patriarchal ideology. In this regard, the role of a myth in the raising of consciousness has been crucial for feminist research. Feminism appreciates the purpose of myths in conveying a society's beliefs but claims that apparent or subtextual messages that are provided through myths should be analyzed with doubt because shared knowledge can be ideologically offensive. In this sense, myths reveal the ideal woman created by patriarchal ideologies for centuries. Undoubtedly, ideal motherhood is also a product of the shared knowledge and patriarchal ideology. In this sense, Daniels uses a myth in the play *Neptune* to indicate the sociocultural roots of ideal motherhood, which is a product of shared knowledge and patriarchal ideology.

In *Neaptide*, the myth of Demeter and Persephone is not predominant; however, the myth is interwoven into the play. Although the myth is not directly enacted in the play, there are several purposes for the inclusion of the myth. First, as a mother-daughter story, the myth of Demeter and Persephone in *Neaptide* highlights the bond between the lesbian single mother Claire and her seven year old daughter Poppy. Second, since the myth talks about Persephone's abduction, in parallel with Poppy's custody battle, the myth prepares the audience to wait for the mother-daughter bond to be broken by the male stranger. In this regard, the myth of Persephone and Demeter is presented as a parallel to the plot and applied as an expression of the custody battle. Frances Babbage writes that instead of connecting directly with the myth and giving a clear message to the audience, Daniels included it as the favourite bedtime story of Claire's daughter, Poppy. In Daniels' interpretation of the myth, Demeter has four daughters. By identifying his family with the characters in the myth, Poppy gives some clues about the author's intention to suggest a connection between the myth and its relevance to the play. Poppy casts all her relatives. For example, she calls her grandmother Joyce as Demeter and casts her grandfather as Zeus. In this reinterpretation of the myth, when the characters in the myth are identified with the people in the current situation, it is revealed that Poppy/Persephone is kept safe in a supportive female environment, although women are oppressed by male domination as stated in the myth.

The female environment is revealed at the end of the play, with Joyce protecting her daughters. Although Claire and Val were criticized by Joyce for not being 'ideal' mothers at the beginning, at the end of the play, they formed a bond just like the strong mother-daughter bond represented in the Demeter and Persephone myth. Christine Downing, in her book *The Long Journey Home: Re-Visioning the Myth of Demeter and Persephone for our Time*, states that rather than being a simple mother-daughter bond in general, the mother-daughter relationship between Demeter and Persephone, represented in the myth, symbolizes how women can stand up to male domination when they are united.

The play, aims to resist prejudice against mothers, especially lesbian mothers, by deconstructing stereotypes such as that: ideal motherhood can be practised only by the heterosexual domestic woman. At the same time, the play investigates the common

ground between lesbian and heterosexual women, as in the case of Joyce and Claire. The emphasis on the bond between mothers and daughters - driven by the myth of Demeter-Persephone - helps this deconstruction and investigation. Lizbeth Goodman, in *Feminist Stages: Interviews with Women in Contemporary British Theater*, states that “[a] play can certainly challenge assumptions and encourage audiences to examine the way they think or feel about certain issues, and indeed about other people” (101). Based on the quote, Daniels' reference to the myth of Demeter and Persephone in *Neptune*, aims to encourage the audience to re-question these diverse "assumptions". In the play Daniels's play, a mother completely tries to protect her daughter from the male gaze and prejudices which jeopardise her. In this context, the play focuses on motherhood and homosexuality based on the Demeter and Persephone myth, allowing the audience to question their thoughts and feelings on these issues and concepts.

As mentioned before, “in *Neptune*, the myth is transposed to modern-day London where the abduction of Persephone becomes a custody battle between a lesbian mother, Claire, and her erstwhile husband, Lawrence, over Poppy” (Bartleet 148). As Bartleet mentions, in addition to the modern-day adaptation of a classical myth, ideal motherhood, as a myth, is also adapted to the modern-day in *Neptune*. This chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the women characters of the *Neptune* as mothers. In this context, it may be practical to start the analysis with Joyce, who stands for the ‘ideal’ mother in the play. In the play Joyce, as a traditional altruistic, possessive, and devoted mother, represents the ideal motherhood. Joyce, who is an important character in observing the change in the concept of motherhood between generations, expects her daughters to be ‘ideal’ mother figures like herself. Because within the family, which is the smallest unit of society, women consciously or unconsciously transfer to the next generation a lot of information about the definition of ideal motherhood, mothering experiences, duties and responsibilities of women, and their place in society through traditional gender roles. So, the obligations of being the ideal mother determined from a male point of view, are internalized by the daughters to whom these obligations will be transferred, and they are also internalized by the mothers, for example, the phrases ‘women do housework and women give birth to children’ become normative sentences as “the woman must do the housework, and the

woman must bear children”. To Joyce what is ‘natural’ is for a woman to get married, give birth to a child and continue her marriage happily. In this context, Joyce promotes her daughters to maintain the traditional family structure. For example, according to Joyce, there is no reason for her daughter Val to be depressed. According to her, as a married woman with children, Val has everything a woman should have in life. Joyce evaluates Val's marriage as follows:

JOYCE. Colin is a very decent man and he's done the best thing by you, he has. You have a marvelous husband and a lovely family, sometimes I think you don't realise how lucky you are, I don't. (Daniels 248)

Joyce considers Val lucky to have a traditional nuclear family which is celebrated by patriarchal ideology and turns a blind eye to her daughter's psychological problems. Joyce, who wants to impose the conventional role of the mother that she has learned from the previous generation to her daughters, expresses the identity she fancies for her daughters as follows:

JOYCE. My God, I wanted three daughters like the Brontë's, and I ended up with a family fit for a Channel Four documentary. (Daniels 247)

Although she would like to have daughters like the Brontë sisters, both Val and Claire fall short of the conventional mothering practices. In this context, Wan Yahya writes:

Joyce is a mother who continues to deceive herself and her children by failing to recognize that her children lack the ability to be a phallic mother like her, an omnipotent maternal figure who can cope with everything. She is able to care for all her offspring and also maintains a good marriage with her husband. Here, Daniels is saying that a heterosexual mother expects her daughters to experience the same life that she has gone through - the experience of getting married, having children, and caring for the family; and that no other life is considered possible. (Yahya 80)

Joyce wants her daughters to have motherhood practices like hers, since motherhood is a fragile concept that is open to all kinds of political, social, and cultural changes, Joyce's daughters Claire and Val were affected by these changes, which are the necessities of modern times, and shaped their identities as a mother because of these changes. Bakker claims that “much of *Neaptide* addresses the notion of 'fit' or 'normal'

motherhood and, in particular, the need for new definitions of this concept” (Bakker 38). In this context, Claire and Val are not the "normal" mothers that the patriarchal order, including Joyce, said they should be. When she visits Val at the hospital, Claire explains that she needs to protect herself and her daughter Poppy from the male dominance that has permeated all the institutions of society, while suggesting that they should swap places by Val, who is hospitalized for psychological reasons. In response to Claire's suggestion, Val says:

VAL. Maybe we're in the same boat.

CLAIRE. Here I am trying to prove what a normal mother I am.

VAL (*raising her voice*). Where are the 'normals'?

CLAIRE. Shush, keep your voice down.

VAL. Where are they, this invisible minority who can put their hands together and thank God every morning that they were born one of the great, white, washed normals?

CLAIRE. They sit in judgement, perched on benches, tightly permed, decaying wigs balanced on their heads. Looking like ten-stone owls. (Daniels 294)

As can be deduced from the quotation, both Claire and Val criticize the ‘ideal’ and "normal" motherhood that society wants them to perform. According to Claire and Val, ‘ideal’ and ‘normal’ motherhood imposed by patriarchal discourses is made up like fairy tales. When Val and Claire's being ‘unfit’ mothers, and their unconventional motherhood practices are examined, it can be clearly observed that, unlike traditional mothers, Val openly expresses her psychological problems although her husband, Colin, in a sense stands against the male identity that has been transferred through the generations. Colin, who tries to be a supportive and caring husband describes his point of view in these words: "I love you because you're strong. I never wanted a woman at home who was little more than a servant because that's all my dad knew of marriage. I don't want a wife, not in that sense" (Daniels 280). Despite having an ‘ideal’ family with a supportive and caring husband and kids, she is not satisfied with her life, on the other hand as a lesbian and single mother, Claire struggles for custody and fights against patriarchal discourse in both private and public spheres.

Even though she is presented as an ‘ideal’ mother, who wants her daughter to

maintain 1950s conservative lifestyle by celebrating marriage, motherhood, and family bonding, when the custody case is concluded, Joyce, for the first time, raises her voice against patriarchy. For the well-being of her daughter and grandchild, she supports Claire in reconstructing the traditional family structure which she glorifies in every situation. In this sense, Joyce becomes an important part of the matriarchal unity in the play. As she is a defender of the 'ideal' motherhood concept, Claire and Val do not expect their mothers will support them. So much so that in the first scene of the second part of the play, Poppy says to Claire:

POPPY. "Why don't you and Nan have a fight with Dad? Nan would win 'cos she told me she keeps a Jif lemon in her handbag for muggers". (Daniels 302)

Claire, who thinks that her mother will always be a supporter of the patriarchal order, states:

CLAIRE. "Sometimes I don't know whose side she's on" (Daniels 302).

Claire is fed up with Joyce's prejudices however, as the following quote implicates, she learns that for Joyce the bond between mother and daughter is stronger than the need to accept or even appreciate Claire's sexual identity.

JOYCE. [...] But when all's said and done, I'm still your mother and nothing is going to be able to change that for either of us.

CLAIRE (smiles). No.

JOYCE. And sleepless nights won't change anything, so I said to myself, Joyce, I said, worrying won't make it go away, get off your behind and do something, so I went to the top set of chambers they call them to find a solicitor. (Daniels 317-18).

Though she sees her daughters as an extension of herself and wants them to become 'ideal' mothers, through the end of the play, Joyce realizes that there are generational differences between her and her daughters. Joyce's acceptance of her daughters being unconventional mothers and her support of her daughters who are obviously not like Victorian mothers proves Joyce's importance in the matriarchal alliance. Joyce, as a traditional conservative mother, helped her daughter, Claire, to kidnap Poppy to America, and to take care of her daughter Val, whom she accuses of not realizing how lucky she is, in a way, resists against patriarchal discourses. Joyce's stepping out the

boundaries of patriarchal discourses can be ironically associated with the concept of the 'ideal' motherhood as she continues to sacrifice for her daughters. In this context, although she seems to oppose the patriarchal ideology, due to the sacrifices she made, Joyce continues to be a traditional mother.

In the current thesis, it is mentioned that the identification of women as mothers by patriarchal discourses gives birth to the concept of 'ideal' motherhood. As the concept of ideal motherhood is deconstructed in the play, Daniels ascertained that practices that can be considered as 'ideal' and "normal" can be misleading in motherhood performance. In this context, when examined in terms of her relationship with her sons, Jean who is Claire's roommate in the play, seems "normal" as a heterosexual mother. Here Jean as a character stand for Daniels' critique of how misleading idealized roles in patriarchal discourses can be. As the mother of two sons and an educational psychologist, Jean is not as affectionate towards her sons as Claire is to Poppy. For example, in the breakfast scene in part one, while Jean tries to cut her son's hair, she can't help with her nerves when her son does not stand still, and the following dialogue takes place between them:

JEAN. Just piss off. (*She puts the scissors down and sits to eat her own cereal.*)

JUSTIN (*to SPENCER*). She told you to piss off. Piss off. (*He puts his tongue out.*) She told you to piss off.

POPPY (*telling CLAIRE*). Jean said 'Piss off.

CLAIRE. Morning isn't the best time for any of us. (Daniels 255)

Although Jean is a heterosexual mother celebrated by society, she speaks menacingly against her children. As a result of this communication, Poppy, who has not faced such a manner before, is surprised, while Jean's son Spencer continues to act as if nothing has happened, and the tension between mother and son gradually rises,

JEAN (*rounds on SPENCER and grabs the scissors*). Behave or I'll cut your head off.

JUSTIN. She's going to do a Henry the Eighth on you.

JEAN. Justin, shut up. (Daniels 255)

As it can be clearly observed in the quote, Jean verbally abuses her children. The ideal woman image, constructed by society, includes stereotypical features related to

motherhood such as forgiveness, patience, and supportiveness. It embodies all the characteristics of a symbolic mother, whereas it excludes the negative features that characterize women, for example, the ideal mother cannot be selfish and violent. For this reason, unlike Claire, Jean, as a heterosexual "normal" mother, does not have the characteristics that patriarchal ideology uses to define her ideal mother identity. So that Jean's verbal violence is carried forward in the continuation of the breakfast scene and turns into physical violence:

SPENCER *and JUSTIN continue to prod and pinch each other until*

SPENCER *bangs his spoon into JUSTINE bowl of Rice Krispies.*

JEAN, *in response, flicks a spoonful of her cereal into SPENCERS face.*

JUSTIN (*laughs*). You got paid back.

SPENCER. What did you do that for, Mum? Mum? What did you do that for?

(Daniels 256)

Although there is a strong bond between mother and child, in moments when the responsibility of taking care of the child, which continues for a long time, becomes a routine chore or emotional torment; anger, disappointment can overwhelm mothers. For this reason, mothers, as Jean does, express their anger and frustration through violence.

CLAIRE. Jean?

JEAN (*foul mood*). I haven't got three degrees and spent seven years training to be an educational psychologist not to know how to treat my kids.

SPENCER (*wingeing*). You said you would cut my head off.

JEAN. Spencer, talk properly.

SPENCER. And you said 'piss off.

JEAN. If I hear one more word out of you, you'll be reading about how you drowned in a bowl of Rice Krispies in next week's Beezer. (Daniels 256)

During the rest of the breakfast, the raising tension and it's turning into a vivid violence, disturbs Claire. Although she is not a mother that fits the unrealistic standards of the society, Daniels in *Neaptide*, underlines that Claire is a much more "normal" mother than Jean who is heterosexual. In this sense, in the play, crossing the boundaries of motherhood as a concept and presenting the ideal mother concept as a delusion are represented by Claire's motherhood performance. Claire as a mother that indicates how

a lesbian and unfit mother like her can actually be an 'ideal' mother.

In this part of the thesis, it will be useful to examine homosexuality in England in general terms, and then Claire's unconventional motherhood performance as a lesbian mother. According to Hammack, dominant discourses which are socially constructed and fed by patriarchal ideology presents a cultural scenario and define how the world works. The cultural scenarios presented by these discourses become a part of the collective memory over time. The concepts, institutions, and beliefs are shaped and idealized by dominant discourses. For example, the concept of family is considered sacred in many cultures. In this context, the "other" concepts, institutions, and beliefs that are not covered by the dominant discourse cannot fit well with society. Homosexuality is one of the concepts that has not been accepted in most societies for a long time. When the subject of this thesis, the British theater, is examined, it becomes clear that homosexuality has been considered a taboo in British society for many years. Justin Bengry, in his work "Queer Profits: The Homosexual Scandal and the Origins of Legal Reform in Britain", emphasizes that homosexuality is considered a concept that is contrary to the norms of society and current rhetoric. Although homosexuality has become a subject of debate in the UK, especially with the radical transformations taking place in the postwar period, homosexuality in general has been criminalized by the influence of conservative politics and the media and has remained taboo for many years.

Homosexuality, which is already a taboo in British society, is practised by women who are frequently targeted by patriarchal discourses, making homosexual women a potential danger to British society. While women's coming out of their kitchens and participating in business life contradicted the ideal woman and motherhood concepts created by patriarchal discourses, the homosexual woman image was completely against the ideal woman and mother myth. Andrew Wyllie, in his study *Sex on Stage Gender and Sexuality in Post-War British Theater*, states "throughout its history, the Theater has been a contentious space – one in which society has aired its anxieties, calming them or fomenting crises, which have enabled progressive or reactionary alterations in the prevailing ideology to occur" (11). In this context, the destruction of the myths of the ideal woman and mother, became a sincerely represented topic in British Theaters in the post-war period.

The period from 1950 to 2000, saw the emergence of gay and lesbian plays in a process. The development of homosexual Theater from a polemical position, into the mainstream, indicates that; there is a parallelism between the plays, which were produced during this period and contain homosexual elements, and the state of public opinion regarding homosexuality. Wyllie states that homosexual traces are more visible in Theater, especially since the dissolution of the censorship function of the Lord Chamberlain's Office in 1968 and the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. It took until the 1980s for homosexual issues to be met with gradual tolerance in British Theaters. Homosexuality has become questionable again in Britain, with AIDS erupting in the 1980s. Although it had ups and downs, the issue of homosexuality continued to be represented in British Theaters.

When the homosexuality-based plays that are performed in Britain, are examined, it can be observed that the number of gay plays is greater than the number of lesbian plays due to the lack of female playwrights who produce for Theater during the period. As a natural consequence of the roles such as women's place, duties and responsibilities assigned to women by patriarchal ideologies; it was challenging enough for women to take part in any play as actresses, however, it was even more challenging for them to become playwrights and even produce lesbian plays in a public space such as Theater.

Although it is painful for female playwrights to produce plays on issues that are not accepted by society, such as lesbianism, the early feminist Theater has taken crucial steps in this sense and given hope to future female playwrights. Sarah Daniels, one of the playwrights who constitute the subject of this thesis, contributed to the presentation of issues such as gender and homosexuality on the British stage. In *Neaptide*, Daniels focused on lesbianism and tried to contextualize the prejudices against lesbian mothers, and she tried to raise awareness in society about this issue. In the play lesbianism, parallel to the concept of motherhood, is presented through generational differences. Daniels presents cross generational relation of lesbians through three women: Diane, Claire, and Bea. Christine Dymkowski, in her study "Breaking the Rules: The Plays of Sarah Daniels" states that

Claire is not alone in her difficulties, as *Neaptide's* dramatis persona . . . boasts

many other lesbians: the headteacher, . . . the physical education teacher Linda Fellowes, students Diane and Terri, and other unseen schoolgirls who take part in an offstage meeting. Daniels's refusal to represent lesbianism in its usual theatrical guise as an isolated and individual problem challenges the audience to accept it as the part of everyday life it so manifestly is for a significant proportion of the population. (69)

As stated in the quotation, the fact that Daniels' not presenting lesbianism to the audience as an individual "problem", reveals her criticism of the prejudices that exist within patriarchal pressures in institutions such as schools. Lesbianism at the institution is unfolded after a schoolgirl named Diane kissed her same-sex friend. Homophobic speeches in the teachers' room openly display the oppression of patriarchy on lesbians, which determines the ideal. Even the headmistress, Bea, who is also a lesbian, accuses her lesbian students of being "perverts" and says:

BEA. God help us all. Is that rife, as well? It would seem that this institution is nothing but a hotbed of perverted promiscuity. (Daniels 289)

The "other" women, who are excluded and despised by the male gaze which impacts institutions, beliefs, and culture by idealizing and glorifying traditional gender roles, prefer to be a part of the system, as Bea does. Because they are worried about being wasted in the system. Pressures on women push them to stay in their closets. By observing these pressures, in *Neaptide* the school as an institution stands for an influential symbol in which one can observe the suppressions towards homosexual mothers. Bakker, in "A Critical Analysis of The Plays of Sarah Daniels", states that:

This environment, the school where Claire teaches, acts not only as a forum for the expression of these prejudices, but as a setting for the play's major subplot. In this subplot, Daniels dramatizes a secondary witch hunt in which the "culprits" are similarly tried in a pseudo-court scene. By linking the events of this subplot both in theme and in action to the primary narrative, Daniels intensifies her portrait of a society where the freedom of lesbians, whether in private or in public, is constantly under attack. (41)

Although, as stated in the quote, all three women became targets of witch hunts due to homophobic oppression, women's stances against this injustice differ through

generations. Considering their lesbian identities in a cross-generational way, schoolgirl Diane never hesitates to step outside the closet, while teacher Claire hesitates to reveal her sexual identity so that it won't be used against her in court. Headmistress Bea, on the other hand, is determined not to reveal her sexual identity, which she has been hiding for 27 years. Just as motherhood performances which differ through generations, lesbianism in play also varies through generations. However, just like the concept of motherhood, lesbianism is also under the pressures of hetero-patriarchal culture. Brewer, in *Race, Sex, and Gender in Contemporary Women's Theater*, discusses that *Neaptide* reflects how the patriarchal discourse, which permeates every layer and institution of the society and determines the ideal, tries to despise and push a lesbian mother out of the society. It's not always the institutions but the individuals that target women whom they think "unfit". In the *Neaptide* Claire's ex-husband Lawrence and her father, Sid attempt to interfere with Claire's life by reshaping her in a normative way. Sid as a patriarch, fearing that Poppy might end up like Claire, threatens Claire by saying:

SID (to CLAIRE). If that kid grows up with any weird ideas, I'll kill you.
(Daniels 250)

Although heteropatriarchal pressure is represented on an individual basis, it can also be institution-based. In the play, school isn't the only institution where patriarchal pressures are performed. Claire has to face the same problems in court. Initially, Claire who was afraid of losing her job and her custody case didn't talk about her lesbian identity, but then she comes out of her closet and explain her identity to Headmistress Bea by saying:

CLAIRE. I left my husband to live with a woman. Anyway, it's not a disease of any description. (Daniels 298)

Although the play focuses on lesbian motherhood, lesbianism is represented as an identity with many layers rather than just sexual practices. In this context, Rapi, in "Hide and Seek: The Search for a Lesbian Theater Aesthetic", states that in Daniels' *Neaptide*, representation of the body and sexual practices is not on the focus. Instead, Daniels focuses on how lesbians struggle with the hetero-patriarchal oppressions on institutions. Obviously, in the play, some hints indicate sexual relationship between women, but this relationship is not presented explicitly. Bartleet, in

her study “Sarah Daniels: Feminist Enque(e)ry within the Mainstream”, states that:

Daniels’s writing creates a theatrical space for lesbian experiences without subordinating them to heterosexual voyeurism. Crucially, Daniels’s dramaturgy is a feminist negotiation of lesbian desire in its resistance to the possible readings of lesbianism as voyeuristic spectacle within mainstream theatrical structures. (150)

As it might be observed in the quote, Daniels’ representation of lesbians in a secluded way, in terms of sexuality, enables the play not to be the direct target of “heterosexual voyeurism”. In this regard, Claire's coming out of her closet and claiming that being a lesbian is not a disease; demonstrates her resistance to heteropatriarchal discourse. As an "unfit" mother who is stereotyped, othered, and marginalized, Claire challenges individuals and institutions. As it was mentioned, the ideas and presumptions that creates the concept of a good mother is socially constructed. In this context, lesbian mothers, like Claire, who do not conform to normative motherhood standards, are often stigmatized as bad or inadequate mothers. Yet Claire knows that she is a good mother despite all the stigma, and humiliation. In her conversation with Headmistress Bea, Claire expresses:

CLAIRE. I've got a lot on my side, a good home and career and, if I say so myself, I'm a very good mother.

BEA. You're not going to be judged on the quality of your parenting but on the basis of your sexuality. (Daniels 324)

Although Claire is a good mother, she realizes that society's norms will not embrace her as a "good enough" mother. She also realizes that she does not have the power to decide within the system and to live a life as she wishes. As Headmistress Bea said, Claire knows she might lose the custody battle in court because of her sexual identity. Just like the school, the court is an institution where the pressure of patriarchal discourse on women is vivid. For women, especially women who are homosexuals like Claire, justice is only possible to the extent that men allow women. In this context, Claire expresses her anger at the system as follows:

CLAIRE (*furious*). Wreck it? Wreck what? Something I've got very little hope of and absolutely no control over when the system dictates the outcome before

the ushers clapped eyes on you. When welfare officers write down the names of books with the word * woman' in the title and incriminate you. To be humiliated and ridiculed by a group of men and to gradually believe that the only thing that would change them is a bullet through the head. What sort of world is it where I have to plead for my own daughter? (Daniels 314)

While it is difficult for women to live in a system where their identity and roles are determined by their husbands, lovers, brothers and fathers, mothers are exposed to a double oppression. Yet for centuries, female identity has been associated with motherhood; motherhood has been regarded as the core of femininity. In this way, idealized and romanticized mother identity became the direct target of the male gaze, while lesbian mothers like Claire felt this pressure more severely.

By analyzing Sarah Daniels' *Neaptide*, it can be concluded that Daniels' by introducing mothers like Claire, who is accepted unfit by the ones who have the power to decide which one is "good" or 'ideal', challenges the hetero-patriarchal male ideology which despises a woman if she is not "good" enough. By presenting a homosexual mother who challenges the institutions, individuals, and ideologies in general, Daniels states that with the changes on the economic, educational, and political levels, the concept of motherhood which has been romanticised for ages, started to be performed less traditionally. Mothers like Claire, Val, Jean, and even Joyce by forming a matriarchal unity against the institutions which are under the influence of patriarchal discourse, proves that they are no longer silenced, obedient mothers.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLOTTE KEATLEY'S *MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD*

Charlotte Keatley, who held the title of the most widely performed play ever written by a woman with *My Mother Said I Never Should*, until recent years, was born in London in 1960. Keatley's interest in drama manifested itself throughout her life. Keatley, who wanted to escalate her interest in theater to professional levels, received decent education on Theater. Between 1979 and 1982, she studied drama at the University of Manchester. As Bush mentioned in Keatley's biography, Keatley took part in various festivals as an actress during her years as a Drama student. While writing critique for student newspapers, Keatley had close contact with every aspect of the theater. Bush writes that: "as a students, she also wrote and directed her first play, *Underneath the Arndale*, which was staged at Manchester's Contact Theater". (Bush 2) Keatley, who took her passion for theater beyond being a pastime to professional levels, took an MA in Theater Arts at Leeds University after graduating from the University of Manchester. She continued to write, perform and improve herself in all areas related to theater.

Keatley, whose passion for Theater continues to intensify gradually, started producing plays during her student years. Her first play, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, which she wrote when she is 25, attracted great attention. The play, which was first staged at the Manchester Contact Theater in 1987, managed to reach considerable audiences in a short time. However, the success of the play was not limited to huge crowds. The play was awarded by many authorities. *My Mother Said I Never Should* "won both the Royal Court/George Devine Award and the Manchester Evening News Theater Award for Best New Play" (British Council). Keatley was nominated for the Most Promising Newcomer category in the Laurence Olivier Awards, one of Britain's most prestigious awards, in 1990 with, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, which was also performed at the Royal Court Theater. The play, which has made a name for itself on the Theater stages for many years, has been translated into twenty-three languages and performed all over the world, from Australia to Israel (Bush 1). The play, which was also examined in the Theater departments of universities, "in the process it became the

most performed drama by a female playwright (an achievement only recently overtaken by *The Vagina Monologues*)” (British Council). Clearly, the success of the play, its widespread evaluation and reaching the mainstream audience and earning the title of 'most performed drama' was not a surprise. Keatley explains the reason for the success of the play as follows:

I had been making musical plays and performance art as an actor, director and designer for about four years [including student productions and a Community Play in Warrington, Lancashire]. I had watched about 250 plays a year as a Theater critic [for the *Yorkshire Post* and *Financial Times*]. ‘I had sat in dressing rooms thinking how there were a great many kinds of women whom I had not seen in contemporary plays’, adding that ‘In this play it is women who represent us all, and the massive social changes of the twentieth century. I wanted to show how hugely dramatic the "ordinary" lives of women have been’. Also, ‘I wrote this play in about three weeks, and spent three years re-writing it. (Keatley)

It is stated by Bush in the introduction to the play *My Mother Said I Never Should* that by starting from *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Keatley has continued to produce plays for the stage, radio, and screen. Keatley's plays have been produced by decent institutions of Britain including BBC Radio (*My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Citizens*, *Is Green the Same for You?* *North and South*), Granada Television (*Badger*), Leeds Theater Workshop (*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*), Contact Theater (*The Singing Ringing Tree*), the Young Vic (*You're a Nuisance Aren't You*) and Watford Palace Theater (*Our Father*). In addition to these, Keatley continues to produce plays for schools, universities, workshops. Keatley has also worked as an art critic and journalist, writing for the *Guardian*, *the Observer*, *the Financial Times*, *the Yorkshire Post*, *the Scotsman* and *Performance Magazine*.

Although she continues to produce plays for theater, television, and radio, Keatley has long made her name with her play *My Mother Said I Never Should*. This success of Keatley is conferred. In 2000, the Royal National Theater named *My Mother Said I Never Should* one of the hundred important plays of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, this success of Keatley is not a coincidence. Keatley, who is closely

related to all aspects of theater, reflected on how women, but especially mothers, are pressured by patriarchal discourse in the play *My Mother Said I Never Should*, which constitutes the subject of this thesis. Keatley expresses her aim to write the play *My Mother Said I Never Should* as following: "I wrote this play of how intensely women are judged, as both mothers or in public roles, on every aspect of their behaviour and appearance; society is far less forgiving of women than men" (Keatley 14). In this regard, the success of *My Mother Said I Never Should* means a lot to each woman and mother who is oppressed by patriarchal discourses.

Before making comprehensive analysis of the play, it will be reasonable to give a summary of the play at this point. *My Mother Said I Never Should* is about four women named Doris, Margaret, Jackie, and Rosie, more importantly, the play is about four different generations of mothers. In the play, Keatley moves back and forth in time with the kaleidoscopic time structure technique and juxtaposes different periods and enables the audience to observe the change that the concept of motherhood has been through. It opens in the waste ground. In waste ground, which Keatley describes as a "magic place where things can happen", all the characters are presented together and in their childhood. Indeed, "these are girls out the sight of family or society, not obliged to be nice, or to disguise their horror and intrigue at what they discover about being female" By having a place where characters do not heed the social discourses of their own age, the characters freely express themselves so that the true personalities of these four mothers are revealed.

In the first scene, Jackie and Margaret are nine years old, Doris is five, and Rosie is eight. The four of them sing together: "My mother said I never should, play with gypsies in the wood, if I did, she would say, naughty girl, to disobey". (Daniels 3) Then Jackie comes up with the idea of killing their mothers. Children other than Jackie aren't keen on a plan to kill their mother. When Jackie realizes that Margaret and Doris don't like her plan to kill their mother, she tries to cooperate with Rosie and keep Margaret and Doris out of his plan. In the continuation of the scene, Rosie tells Margaret that she can get pregnant without getting married, which shocks her. Through the end of this scene after being proposed by Jackie, to "call up the spirit of Granny". (Daniels 10) They saw adult Doris' approaching, and all three run away.

The second scene takes place in 1940. In this scene, Doris is forty and Margaret is nine. Margaret plays with her doll under the piano while Doris dusts off the piano. In this scene, through Doris's ignoring of Margaret's questions, the distant relationship between mother and daughter is presented. Since they don't have close connections, Doris doesn't let her daughter call her mommy. As an ideal mother, Doris wants her daughter to be 'ideal' and be good at what she does. Doris criticizes her playing piano by saying that she plays nursery rhymes instead of Beethoven. The tension created by the second world war is felt on the scene. When Margaret and Doris are preparing to go to sleep, the distant grunt of airplanes is heard. The fear of Hitler is vivid for Margaret, a child who is too young to have much of a connotation in her mind when it comes to war. In the sequel, Jackie is now under the piano, and questions Doris as Margaret did. Although Doris is not eager to answer questions, she is more affectionate and patient towards her grandchild. When Jackie breaks a mug and instead of shouting, she breaks two more.

The third scene takes place in the waste ground, but this time only Doris and Rosie are children. In this scene, the children argue that their mother has some kind of curse. In the fourth scene, Margaret is 48 and Jackie is almost 18 years old. This scene reveals the mother-daughter relationship and the generation gap between Margaret and Jackie. Jackie has been to a party and tells her mother that she has had sex. In contrast to her mother, Jackie thinks that it is okay to have sex on her age, then she and leaves the scene to phone her boyfriend. After she leaves, Margaret remembers the old good days, as she reminisces about a secret lover that she had. Scene 5 is set in 1961, in Doris's garden. In this scene, Doris is 61, Margaret is 30 and Jackie is 9. This scene presents Margaret having a miscarriage and being frustrated. Scene 6 takes place in 1971 Manchester. In this scene, Rosie is 3 months old, Margaret is 40, and Jackie is 19 years old. In this scene, Jackie tries to take care of her baby Rosie. Jackie shouts at Rosie when she cries. When Jackie tries to calm Rosie down, Margaret arrives and immediately disapproves of her daughter's mothering performance. She collects up the baby items and determines to raise Rosie as her mother. Jackie doesn't want Rosie to be raised without knowing who her real mother is. However, Margaret convinces Jackie that, she will raise Rosie without knowledge.

Scene 7 flashes back to 1951. In this scene, Doris is 51 and Margaret is 20 years old. They talk about the war and Margaret mentions that she will move to London, with a soldier named Ken, where she will live and work. However, Doris states that Margaret will not be able to work and run the household. In a retrospective manner she complains that she once had a job but left it for her family. Margaret, who does not dream of a traditional family like her mother, mentions that Ken and she will not have children. In this scene, the perspectives of women from two different generations are represented. Scene 8 takes place on the same day as scene 6 in 1971, and it involves a phone conversation between Doris and Margaret. Margaret is attempting, but failing, to hide the fact that Jackie is pregnant and now she is mothering the baby. Although Margaret tries to hide, Doris only talks about Jackie. At the end of the call Margaret expresses her frustration with Jackie as she had to lie to protect her.

Scene 9 is set in 1979 on Rosie's eight birthday. Rosie's monologue starts the scene, and she talks of burying Sukey because "Eight is too old for doll's" and wants to replace her with a "sex pistols tee shirt". She talks to Sukey before Jackie enters with the birthday cake. Rosie compares Jackie to her mother, and then Margaret enters. Rosie shows her admiration for his sister by remembering exactly how long it had been since she last saw her, and by sticking up for her in an argument. However, she shows her actual preference when giving her painting to Margaret instead of Jackie. Margaret tries to get Jackie to marry and have children while Rosie is off-stage, and when Rosie returns, Jackie expresses her concern by yelling at her to be careful against cars. Rosie is unhappy, and she defies her biological mother by abandoning her on stage to hunt for the doll which is buried. Jackie's maternal impulses are still evident; she misses Rosie and is holding the socks that Rosie wore before she left.

Act 2 opens in 1982, with the four characters cleaning Doris's house following Jack's death. When Rosie is alone, she tries to communicate with her grandfather. It is realized that Jack has left the house to Jackie and that the rest of the family are not happy with this decision. Doris is particularly unhappy, she says: "It seems that sixty years of housewifery counted for nothing", and seems resentful, while the others try to be more optimistic, they talk about how rarely they meet Jackie, and Rosie, ironically, says it's because "she doesn't have any kids." Margaret gets pain spasms, which she blames on the menopause, but it's suspected that there's something more severe going on. In this part of the play, we learn that

Doris is an illegitimate child. When she has learnt the truth about her grandmother, Jackie gets upset that she had to give Rosie. Doris disapproves when Jackie informs her that she plans to tell Rosie about her true mother after she becomes sixteen. Act two concludes with Doris' speech, which she delivers while speaking to her deceased husband, before Rosie breaks.

Act 3 scene 1 takes place in 1987, with Doris being 87 and Margaret being 56. They mention Jackie and Rosie's being on vacation, and we realize that Ken may have abandoned Margaret, not for "another woman" but because she is a working mother. Doris claims that, Margaret and Jackie had all set unrealistic expectations of motherhood, and that happiness was not promised. Scene 2 takes place at Margaret's office. Rosie and Jackie enter the scene. Margaret doesn't say the truth to Rosie, telling her that Ken has "gone away for the week." (Daniels 70) Rosie says that she is moving to Manchester to live with Jackie, even though she "can't think of someone less like a mother." (Daniels 72) Margaret is pessimistic, and she feels Jackie is unable to care for Rosie, just as she did in Act One, Scene 6. She says: "It's an adventure with you." (Daniels 78) Margaret envies Jackie and she resents Rosie's desire to live with her biological mother, saying, "Those are my years." (Daniels 83) Scene 3 opens back in the waste ground, with all of the children except Margaret. They pretend to be saying a spell to kill their mothers. Scene 4 takes place in the hospital. Margaret's confusion is reflected through her monologue. Rosie and Jackie are in the backyard of Ken and Margaret's house in scene 5, which takes place in 1987. It becomes evident that Rosie criticizes Jackie for not being around when Margaret died.

"Now I know," (Daniels 85) Rosie says, revealing that she has found Jackie is her biological mother. Jackie attempts to hit Rosie, but she stops herself. Jackie delivers a long speech in which she attempts to justify why she gave up her daughter; that is the first time Jackie has been able to open up about it. Margaret and Jackie are back in the waste ground in Scene 6. They act as if they're crossing the "Golden River." Jackie claims that 'the others' have rejected her. Scene 7 sets in Doris' house when Rosie has moved in. Doris appears with a kite that she and Rosie have been working on as Rosie is trying to finish the solitaire game. Jackie is referred to as Rosie's mother by Doris, and Rosie appears a lot more at ease with the notion than she did in scene 5. Jackie sent a letter to Rosie after she was born, which Doris shows her. She tosses the letter on the floor, and then picks it up. Scene 8 takes place in

1923. It's Doris' quote, in which she addresses Jack's recent proposal to her. Despite her promotion, she will have to leave her career to become an angel in the house.

My Mother Said I Never Should represents mothering experiences through different generations of mothers. Keatley, in the introduction of the *My Mother Said I Never Should* writes her putting mothers in the centre of the play as follows:

Mother is an iconic role in myths, and an emblem or symptom of a country's ideals and politics, as well as being a day-to-day occupation for millions. This makes it even more remiss that there have been so few mother characters in plays across the centuries. There are still pitifully few plays in which the central characters through whom we view society are mother and daughter, rather than father and son or father and daughter. The lives of women are still subtly perceived as being of interest mainly to women, the lives of men as universal and political. We can change that. (15)

Just like in *Neptune*, in Keatley's *My Mother Said I Never Should*, the motherhood performances of women, including Doris, Margaret, and Jackie, have been presented to the audience by addressing the differences between generations. In this way, the transformation of the concept of motherhood over time and the reproduction of the ideal motherhood, which is created by patriarchal discourses to label and control women, stands at the core of *My Mother Said I Never Should*. Reproduction stands for as a keyword in the play *My Mother Said I Never Should* because the views that promotes the most basic requirement of being a woman is to be a mother, are being reproduced every single day. To ensure this reproduction, the existing conditions must also be reproduced. Althusser describes this reproduction process as follows: "the ultimate condition for production is the reproduction of the conditions of production"(47). This reproduction takes place through discourses and practices that include ideological, economic, and political factors.

In this part of the current thesis, the ideological, economic, and political practices that contribute to the reproduction of the concept of motherhood will be examined through the play *My Mother Said I Never Should*. Motherhood is a complex concept that has been romanticized in many societies for ages and is considered the

main duty of being a woman. Birns and Hay explain the complexity of the concept of motherhood as follows:

Motherhood wears different faces. The experience of being a mother is affected by a woman's personal history, by the position she holds in her society, and by the social and economic forces operating in her culture. The experience of motherhood is also affected by the mother's health and present circumstances, by the quality of her relationships with family and friends, and, not least important, by the unique characteristics of her children. (1)

As it is clearly stated in the quote, the faces worn by motherhood or 'forced to be worn' are influenced by many factors. Since motherhood is presented through generational differences in the play *My Mother Said I Never Should*, the reproduction of the concept of motherhood in British society is determined by different mothers, years, and therefore different political, economic, and ideological practices. In this part of the thesis, although the play has a kaleidoscopic structure that goes back and forth in time, chronological analysis of the play, to understand the transformation of motherhood into unconventional performance, will be useful to examine how mothers in the play are influenced by the political, economic, and ideological practices of their periods.

When the play is analyzed in a chronological order it is convenient to start with Doris because Doris is the eldest of the women in the play. She was born in 1900 and at the end of the play she becomes a woman who has witnessed almost a century of change. Although she has witnessed dramatic changes over ages Doris can't free herself from the stigmatization of the society. In his study "Women, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview", Rosaldo claims that since women in many traditional societies spend a large part of their adulthood giving birth or raising children, their devoting themselves to their children, is important in shaping many related aspects of human life and psychology. Although women's giving birth and raising children is considered a natural requirement of being woman, this fact has limited the role of the woman in society at home. Women, due to their maternal role, are primarily engaged in household activities. The economic and political activities of women are limited by their childcare responsibilities, and their feelings and interests are focused on a certain point and ultimately directed to the child and the home.

In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Doris' identity is also limited to her mother role. Women like Doris, who make all kinds of sacrifices for their children and family, and who can only exist in social life as a mother, are both celebrated and condemned. Glenn, in "Social Construction of Mothering: A Thematic Overview", states that "Mothers are romanticized as lifegiving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving and demonized as smothering, overly involved" (Glenn 11). In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Doris as the woman who performs motherhood during the second world war, presents romanticized and demonized woman. Through a character like Doris who performs mothering during the Second World War, Keatley depicts the challenges that mothers go through to create a place for themselves in the society. Joshi and Hinde, in their study "Employment after Childbearing in Post-War Britain: Cohort-Study Evidence on Contrasts within and across Generations", state that: "Immediately before the Second Word War, female employment behavior was still class specific and, despite a slight increase during the 1930's, participation rates were at levels not substantially above those recorded 40 years earlier" (205). Although female employment was limited, Doris was one of the few women who shows a presence in the public sphere. She works as a primary school teacher until her marriage to Jack, however, at the end she ends up with being the angel in the house.

In Act one Scene seven Doris mentions about her job by saying that:

DORIS. I had a job once too. I know it was only teaching, but... Father has absolutely no idea. One would never. There wasn't any choice, then; so, I don't know whether it was my -need to love him, if you know what I mean... or his desire – for a son. (Keatley 49)

Doris' generation were not expected to work if their husband could earn enough to support the family. Instead, they made a career of 'housewifery' which includes the tasks connected running at home and providing for the physical and emotional needs of their husband and children. Many women considered this work as a valuable occupation and many others had a little choice but to accept it whether they wanted to or not. Doris didn't have many choices as well. As an illegitimate child, she tries to replace the missing male figure in her own life with Jack. Although she shows potential in her job, Doris argues that running a house is a more important task. In Act one Scene seven,

Doris expresses her concerns about how she will manage to work and run a household as follows:

MARGARET. I'm in love, Mother.

DORIS. It's not going to hold.

MARGARET. And I'm going to learn to type! Ken says it will be helpful if we need a second income. Typing's far more useful than all those stupid school certificates. I'll get a proper job.

DORIS. What do you call running a home? (Keatley 48)

Although Doris seems to have willingly sacrificed herself for her daughter and husband, Doris's being a mother is questionable whether she is her true choice. Although Doris is portrayed as a character who gives up her career for her family, and who devoted herself to her child, Doris' frustration can be observed in every scene. Not being able to give her husband Jack a son in the first place, is a valid reason for Doris to be frustrated with her life. In addition, although she sacrifices herself, Doris is disappointed that her husband thinks that she is inadequate and expresses her reproach as follows:

DORIS. It seems that sixty years of housewifery counted for nothing, in Jack's eyes. (Keatley 67)

The fact that motherhood is not a fulfilment for Doris, but it is actually a forced choice can also be observed when examining Doris's relationship with her daughter and her motherhood performance. Doris often finds it difficult to communicate with her daughter Margaret. Rozsika Parker, who is a psychotherapist and also a writer, coined the concept of "maternal ambivalence", which explains the situation that Doris is in. Maternal ambivalence refers to "a complex and contradictory state of mind, shared variously by all mothers, in which loving and hating feelings for children exist side by side". (17) Even though a mother feels connected with the child, it is inevitable to overcome by feelings of anger, frustration and violence at the moments in which the burden of caring for children can become routine drudgery or emotional torment when it is done constantly, repeatedly, because of one's obligations, and when it consumes nearly all of one's energies and time, as when a mother does nothing else than care for children and household [. . .]. (Held 11). Parker explains that "[c]ultural expectations are partly responsible for the times when the anxiety associated with ambivalence becomes

unbearable and anxiety on behalf of the child transforms into aggression against the child or the self” (34). In this context, Doris cannot establish close relations with her daughter. The traditional mother-daughter bond does not exist between Doris and Margaret. The wall between Doris and Margaret is revealed in the following scene:

DORIS. I shall have to tell father

MARGARET. (Pause)... Sorry.

DORIS. Pardon?

MARGARET. I’m very sorry Mummy.

DORIS. Mother.

MARGARET. (Pause)...Mother. (Keatley 26)

Although Doris does not show any physical aggression towards Margaret, she avoids physical and emotional contact with her. Doris, who gave her husband a daughter instead of a son, and pursues a marriage where Jack constantly reads the news and does not care about her, feels disappointed and devastated because she gave up her career and sacrificed herself for all this. The inability to make the necessary emotional connection is presented in Act one Scene two with the words Margaret, a child about to fall asleep, said to her baby:

MARGARET. Sssh Suky Ssh! -No, I won’t hold you. You ought to go to sleep now, by yourself. You don’t need your Mummy to kiss you. You’re eight years old. (Keatley 30)

It’s inevitable that Doris experiences maternal ambivalence as she performs mothering amid the social, economic, and political pressures of the Second World War. Donnelly, in *Britain in the Second World War* writes that:

The most powerful and enduring images of Britain in the second world war are associated with the home front: blitzed cities, communal air-raid shelters, the munitions factories of Britain’s industrial heartlands and crowds of evacuees waiting for trains which would take them to the relative safety of the countryside. These are the most familiar symbols of the concept that became known as the ‘people’s war’. (33)

In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, the effects of the war can be clearly observed in the dialogues between Doris and Margaret. The gloomy weather created by the Second

World War in the play is reflected by Margaret, who was a child in the years of the war, with the search for a gas mask which has become a symbol of the second world war. In this regard Moshenska states that: “[t]he British government’s decision in 1935 to create and store enough gas masks for the entire population should be understood in this light: during the 1938 Munich Crisis more than 35 million of these masks were distributed” (34). In the first Act Scene five the dialogue between Doris and Margaret reveals the reality of war.

DORIS. Put your nightdress on.

MARGARET. Where’s my gas mask?

DORIS. Here, see I’ll put it by the bolster.

MARGARET. Where will you and Father sleep?

DORIS. In the hall.

MARGARET. Why?

DORIS. I think the ground floor is safest.

MARGARET. Why?

DORIS. Sometimes the bombs make the houses shake a little. They make holes in the roof. Nothing will fall on you there. (Keatley 28)

As it can clearly be observed from the quotation, the fear that Second World War creates was vivid even for a child who is 9 years old. Instead of asking for her doll before she sleeps, Margaret asks for her gas mask. In addition to the gas masks, which are the symbols of the second world war, the fear of Hitler is also reflected in the play.

DORIS. No. Pine needles cause a mess. Besides, candles are dangerous.

MARGARET. Can Hitler see them?

DORIS. You never know. (Keatley 29)

The ‘people’s war’ and its impact on mothers were doubled. In Second World War, British women in the absence of men, they have become both mothers and fathers, taking on the roles of men. Instead of being angel in the house, mothers in home front, became the new fathers of the family. Although Second World War caused great destruction, irremissible change of women’s role, contributed women’s participation in the workforce. Women’s participation in workforce was abrupt. Macnicol, in “The Effect of the Evacuation of Schoolchildren on Official Attitudes to State Intervention”,

states that during the Second World War people from priority classes started to move to safer places. It was a social turmoil in Britain because “[b]y the end of the war approximately 4 million city dwellers had spent some time in the country evacuation was the crucial life-event for millions during the war, temporarily separating families while supplementing households in the host areas” (Macnicol 15). In addition to the priority class that evacuated during the Second World War, women especially working-class women were also taken away to replace the men in the workforce. Sheridan, in “Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain”, writes that:

They were taken away from home, separated from the authority and control of their families and communities. They were (relatively speaking) financially independent. They lived with other women of their own age rather than with children or parents in situations which emphasized sociability and minimized privacy. They were domestically supported -meals cooked and other needs met in a variety of ways- by military organization. They were expected to learn new skills and tackle new kind of work, some of it previously designated ‘men’s work’. (33)

Although mothers lived independently of their children and families, the view was adopted that working mothers during the second world war would not be able to be both a good mother and contribute to the workforce. Wilson, in his study “A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain”, mentions that

“It has not been easy to adopt the views that a mother is enough to work and be a good mother. Opinions that the work of the mother will harm the child have been accepted by the authorities. Nevertheless, women have tried to create a new mother image instead of the ideal mother myth by joining the labor force. In the image of the new mother they created, a good mother was not just a woman who sacrificed herself for her children and her family, but an independent woman who could provide the necessary economic and emotional support for her family and her children”. (Wilson 18)

Donnelly writes that “by 1943 the compulsory recruitment of females into the women’s services, civil defence or munitions factories had helped to increase the number of women in the workforce by approximately 1, 500,000 compared with 1939”

(39). Not only did women become more involved in the wartime workforce, but the jobs they did also changed over time. In this context Donnelly also states that: “a major contribution to this process was made by the Extended Employment of Women Agreement of May 1940, brokered by Bevin and signed by the employers and trade unions in the engineering industry” (39). The agreement meant that women could be employed in jobs previously reserved for male workers, but only for the duration of the war. This has helped to increase the number of women traditionally employed in the “male” sectors, whereby many lines of work that they attribute to as “men's work” have been opened to women's employment. In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Margeret in Act one Scene expressed the new identity that loving women gained in the Second World War as follows:

MARGARET. Well, I'm going to be different! Women did so much during the war there's nothing to stop us now. (Keatley 49)

During World War II, many women worked in what was previously considered men's work. So, when men are at war, there was a great energy and enthusiasm among the women who realized their potential and who don't want to go back to their old lifestyles. Although women replaced men during the war, Myrdal and Klein state that mothers that called up to replace men's place, realized that that paid work was an addition, not a replacement, to domestic responsibilities such as running a household. As it is stated by Myrdal and Klein that women's inability to replace domestic responsibilities with 'men's work', proved that women especially mothers in the Second World War experience double burden.

Carruthers, in “Manning the Factories”: Propaganda And Policy on The Employment of Women”, states that “mothers with young children were specifically excluded from the recruitment drive on the grounds that their first duty was to home and family” (248). In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Doris was one of the women who was excluded from the recruitment. Doris surrendering to social taboos, as expected from the mythicized and romanticized "ideal mother", sacrificed herself for her family and child and quit her job where she showed potential. However, it can be explained with the following dialogue that doing housework and bearing and raising children are not the result of Doris's free will:

DORIS. What makes you think I wanted children? (Keatley 49)

Like Joyce in *Neaptide*, Doris, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, is also performed motherhood under the influence of the ideal mother identity imposed by society. Both Joyce and Doris struggle to bond with their daughters in the represented mother-daughter relationship. Doris has difficulty even meeting Margaret's emotional needs. However, both Joyce and Doris develop themselves in the face of the change they witness. Through the end of the play Doris develops a much warmer relationship with her granddaughter Jackie.

Chodorow's work, "The Reproduction of Mothering", combines sociology and psychoanalysis with a feminist approach in her theoretical analysis of the reproduction of motherhood. By putting the concept of "motherhood" at the center of her theory, she examines how a woman becomes a mother and in what conditions motherhood is reproduced. The mother-daughter connection, according to Chodorow, is both a product of the patriarchal society in which it was born and an attachment pattern that reinforces that structure: patriarchy tries to control the concept of motherhood to meet its own demands. As women become mothers, they embrace this concept, which they subsequently transmit on to their daughters. Daughters learn to be a mother from both their mothers and patriarchal culture, therefore. Many academics now consider that the political climate, in which Chodorow produced her work, influenced her decision to establish that motherhood is a social construct rather than a natural condition.

According to Rosaldo and Ortner, women's motherhood and heterosexual marriage are a central and defining feature of the social organization of gender and are reflected in the establishment of male dominance. In Chodorow's thought, following the aforementioned theoretical views, the basis of the gender-based division of labor is the mother identity of women: Chodorow, in "The Reproduction of Mothering", states that "Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of forms of labor power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction". (11)

Ortner in her article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?", questions the subordinate position of women in the nature-culture axis. And by pioneering

Chodorow's theories, Ortner emphasized the direct relationship of motherhood with this secondary position. The role of babysitting and nurturing undertaken by the postpartum mother has resulted in the positioning of women's social roles in the domestic sphere over time, in short, "a woman's place is at home." According to Ortner, however, at the same time, private sphere socializing has made women a strong member of the cultural process, and thanks to her ability to transform natural resources into cultural products, women have stronger and more direct connections with nature, as well as a powerful transmitter of culture. Although this cultural transfer continues throughout the ages with the ideas and practices inherited from mother to child, the ideas and practices that are transferred do not remain the same, on the contrary, they change.

For example, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Margaret sometimes shows a motherhood performance inherited from her mother, but mostly reflects the changes created by her age on her motherhood performance, therefore, in this section, it will be convenient to examine another mother, Margaret, who helps us to perceive that the concept of motherhood has moved away from tradition over the years. Margaret's life is presented from her youth in the 1940s until her untimely death in 1987 from stomach cancer. Margaret had a difficult childhood due to the hardship and stress of wartime and postwar life, as well as her parents' indifference. Margaret, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, receive little attention from her mother, Doris, and her father, Jack. For Motherhood was not Margaret's free choice. In a memoir with her father, Margaret describes this distant treatment as follows:

MARGARET. 1937. I remember father kissing me that day, and saying, 'You are nearly grown-up no.' He didn't kiss me after that. If you left a bit of butter on your plate, it was either mother on at you about rationing, your father will tell us again, how he started his business with a tin of boot polish, cleaning gentlemen's shoes on the steps of Royal Exchange, what that had to do with butter, I really don't know. (Keatley 70)

Unable to establish close connections in her own nuclear family, Margaret as a young woman, she aspires to a successful job and marriage, and she is determined about not adding children to this picture. However social taboos on motherhood expect Margaret to do the opposite. Douglas and Michaels, in *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of*

Motherhood and How It has Undermined All Women, explain that: “[t]he maternal instinct is supposed to be so wired into mothers that motherhood is not some role they perform; they just are mothers” (164). As it can be deduced from the quotation that motherhood is associated with instinctive feelings that enable women to develop unconditional love for their children, and therefore the love expressed in the mother's bond and communication with her child is accepted to be the essence of motherhood. However, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Margaret seems to refuse the maternal instinct. In act one scene seven, Margaret claims that:

MARGARET. I'm not wasting my life... I'm not going to have a family, babies, and all that. Ken and I have decided. (Keatley 48)

As it can clearly be observed from the quotation, Margaret does not dream of being a mother. In this regard, Woollett and Phoenix in “Psychological Views of Mothering” by reasoning the lack of the desire to be a mother argue that:

[T]he desire to be a mother is not so much a part of women's 'natural' biological inheritance but is learned, along with the skills of motherhood, as women grow up. Women learn that being a mother is a normal and proper part of being adult for women and that, for those in heterosexual relationships, motherhood is an integral part of their relationships, even though becoming a mother may trigger development crises. (41)

Although the desire to be a mother is not a 'natural biological inheritance', it is culturally derived. In *My Mother Said I Never Should*, the following dialogue between Doris and Margaret proves that 'the desire' to be a mother differs through generations.

DORIS. I'm talking about the desire... for little arms reaching up and clinging round your neck...

MARGARET. 'Little arms clinging'.... There, see, that's what I don't want. That's the difference between our generations. Mother. (Keatley 49)

Margaret, who is an adult in the post-war period, does not like the idea that motherhood is the only concept that defines her identity, unlike the previous generation. For this reason, she associates her attitude towards motherhood being different from her mothers with the generation gap between her and her mother. So, in the continuation of the scene, Margaret states that:

MARGARET. You want a nice snapshot for the family album, don't you? Proof, to show neighbours. Well, I'm going to be different! (Keatley 49)

Margaret's desire to be different from the previous generation can be explained by the fact that she saw a chance to independently create their own identities by displacing men during the war and partly moving away from a full-time job that requires self-sacrifice such as motherhood. Although Margaret has stated that she does not want children and that she will be 'different' from the previous generation, she gives birth to her daughter, Jackie, in the first year of her marriage to Ken. But unlike her mother, Margaret is a working mother. Similarly, to Claire in *Neptune*, in *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Margaret tries to balance her career and her responsibilities as a mother. This is not portrayed as a simple task, and Margaret is usually presented overworked and anxious. Although she is different from her mother and exists not only at home but also in the public sphere, Margaret applies the motherhood practices she inherited from her mother to her daughter. In Act one Scene four, Margaret finds out that her daughter had sexual intercourse. Margaret responds this by saying that:

MARGARET. I should never have let you go to that party in Hammersmith!

JACKIE. Please, Mummy, leave me alone.

MARGARET. You said you were staying with his parents!

JACKIE. We were. But they didn't mind us sleeping together. Not everyone has your hang ups.

MARGARET. Oh, you can wound me sometimes, Jackie!

JACKIE. You sound like Granny now. (Keatley 37)

Margaret, who was right to worry about her daughter, agrees to take on Jackie's illegitimate daughter Rosie who Jackie is struggling to raise alone. Once she has Rosie Margaret fully assumes the role through mothering telling Jackie that Rosie must grow up believing Jackie is her sister. By doing this, Margaret's may gain her much longed for second child, but doing so, she effectively loses her relationship with her first child, which never really recovers. The breaking point of the mother-daughter relationship between Jackie and Margaret can be observed in the following quote:

JACKIE. I can make up for it -somehow-

MARGARET. You can't. Those are my years.

JACKIE. She must remember - I visited!

MARGARET. Treats, she's had with you. A day here and there. that never fooled her. But I let it fool you. I'm the woman who set up all night with the sick child, who didn't mind all her best crockery getting broken over the years. (Keatley 99)

Margaret's mothering of her granddaughter, and the fact that her connection with her daughter was not close, reminds the relationship between Doris and Jackie. Just like Doris, Margaret, unable to bond with her daughter, establishes close relationships with her granddaughter. By building such relationships Keatley presents that; women inherit a lot of thoughts and practices from the previous generation. However, despite the baby booms of the 1950s and women devoting themselves to domestic work, Margaret is able to create an identity except being the angel in the house.

Jackie as being one of the mothers in *My Mother Said I Never Should* presents that motherhood as a concept and mothering practices change through ages. Jackie is presented as a bold and creative child, creating a contrast with the less confident child Margaret. As a child, Jackie unlike her mother's relationship with Doris seems to enjoy a warm relationship with both her mother and grandmother and shows considerable artistic talent from an early age. However, as she grows up, Jackie clashes with her mother, particularly over their differing attitudes to sex and relationships. Unlike her mother Margaret and grandmother Doris' performance as a mother, Jackie is an independent woman who can make her own decisions. Unlike her grandmother, who can only exist as a mother, and her mother Margaret, who was abandoned by her husband because she was a working mother, Jackie is a working and self-sufficient woman. In this context, Jackie's maternity performance is very different from that of her mother and grandmother because she gives birth to an illegitimate daughter.

In the first months after birth, Jackie is represented as the lone mother, which Doris could not imagine, and Margaret would disapprove of. In *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes: Shifting Policy Logics*, Lewis states that,

Since the beginning of the 1970s, there have been marked changes in marriage patterns: substantial declines in marriage rates, less marriage and older marriage; a dramatic rise in divorce rates that levelled off from the 1980s; and the

emergence of widespread cohabitation. (54)

Based on the quote, it can be said that these changes were also effective on Jackie. Unlike the previous generation, Jackie chooses to build a life in which she exists as an individual instead of taking part in the family institution, which is blessed and romanticized by the society. In this sense, although she breaks traditional taboos by stating that she does not want to be a mother, Margaret criticizes Jackie's lifestyle and motherhood performance as follows:

MARGARET. He should be here with you, your – (stuck for word.)- Rosie's father. – you in these flats...

JACKIE. Mummy, I told you. He visits and sends money. It was my decision. (Keatley 45)

As can be observed in the quote, Jackie is represented as an independent woman who makes her own decisions. The change in the concept of motherhood over time is conveyed through Jackie's ability to exist as an independent woman and her being a lone mother. So, there wasn't any name to characterize unmarried, widowed, or divorced women until the 1970s. However, with the changes in motherhood, divorced, widowed, and unmarried women started to be defined as lone mothers over time. Until relatively recently, lone mothers were hidden away. Lone mothers have been sheltered until lately. When pregnancy of an unmarried woman was considered by many a significant deviance that could only be clarified by psychological issues. However, by the mid-twentieth century, lone mothers were no longer at the risk of imprisonment. Although single motherhood was not life-threatening as it used to be, it continued to attract the reaction of society. In *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes: Shifting Policy Logics*, Lewis also writes that:

The extraordinary backlash against lone mothers spearheaded by politicians and large tracts of the media is founded on anxieties about the end of marriage and the traditional family, the sexual autonomy of women and the irresponsible behavior of men, which results, it is believed, in the failure adequately to socialise children. (50)

Throughout her limited 'lone mother' performance, Jackie is represented as a mother loaded with anxiety, frustration, and not knowing what to do, as opposed to the angelic

roles attributed to motherhood such as self-sacrifice, understanding, caring. Contrary to the views that say that motherhood is instinctive and that every woman is born with maternal instincts and that motherhood performance naturally exists in women, in the play, Jackie does not know how to look after Rosie, and sometimes she says words that the 'ideal mother' should not say. For example, Jackie's ignorance when dealing with Rosie is conveyed in the following scene:

JACKIE. (*hits transistor, which goes off*) Ssh, Rosie, please-

ROSIE. *yells.*

JACKIE. Shut up!

ROSIE. *stops crying abruptly.* (Keatley 42)

After three months of trying, she has no option but to give Rosie up to be raised by Margaret. Jackie is reluctant to accept Margaret's condition that Rosie will grow up believing that Jackie is her sister and Margaret is her mum. The loss of Rosie gives Jackie's career huge momentum, both because she is relieved of the responsibility of caring for a child and because she throws all the energy into her work. The fact that Jackie clings to her job and succeeds after Rosie's departure proves that Jackie is not a mother who cannot live apart from her child and dedicates her life to her child. In this context, Jackie is never able to win back her place as Rosie's mother, but a relationship based on a more mutual affection and respect may be possible.

As a result, when the concept of motherhood in *My Mother Said I Never Should* is examined through women from three different generations such as: Doris, Margaret, and Jackie; the mothers in the play performed motherhood in Britain during the Second World War, the post-war period and the 70s, it can be clearly said that while performing motherhood, they were influenced by the social, economic, political and cultural events of their period. So, the mothers represented in the play revealed their unconventional identities of motherhood by going beyond the patterns attributed to motherhood over time.

CHAPTER IV

MARINA CARR'S *BY THE BOG OF CATS*

Marina Carr who was born in 1965 is one of Ireland's prolific contemporary playwrights. Through her works, she presents the Irish history, culture, and myths, by concentrating on gender issues. Her unique style can be observed in her plays that focus on women. In her plays, she reflects on many emotions that women face in Ireland. Sihra, in the "Introduction of Figures at the Window" states that Carr, through "her evocative mingling of every day with the other-worlds of myth, folk-tales, ghosts and fairies". (19) Carr offers new perspectives, particularly on gender issues. As she raises her innovative voice in her plays, Carr presents unpleasant aspects of being a woman, by criticising the conventional practices of motherhood associated with national Irish ideals. In that sense, Matt O'Brien, states in "Always the Best Man, Never the Groom: The Role of the Fantasy Male in Marina Carr's Plays", Marina Carr: "reveals herself to be an anti-romantic poet, recognizing the folly of hopes and 'happy' endings for those who lay victim to their own longings, and presenting audiences with a challenge to reconsider the 'ideal' characterizations of women" (214). By presenting being a mother and woman in Ireland in a dark way, as O' Brien suggests, Carr enables audience to question what is 'ideal' for women.

While Carr's counterparts were producing plays that praise motherhood by romanticizing it and placing it in a holy position, Carr rejected the mythical representations of motherhood, and she presented dark aspects of being a woman and mother by framing her work using violence. Instead of presenting the unrealistic angelic roles that are attributed to women, Carr contributed to the Irish stage with her unconventional mothers. In *Contemporary Irish Drama*, Roche writes that as Carr was born in Dublin and raised in the Irish Midlands, the struggles that Irish women go through becomes the primary inspiration of her works. Carr was graduated from university and Dublin in 1987 and her interest in Theater promoted her career as a playwright. Carr moved to the United States after graduation and worked as a teacher for a year. Then she involved in the postgraduate studies in Trinity College, Dublin. She started to study on Samuel Beckett, but she never finished her thesis. (244) Although

unable to complete postgraduate studies, Carr continued to work and produce for the Theater. Sierz, in “Marina Carr.” *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary Irish Playwrights*, states Carr becomes “a writer-in-residence at the Abbey” in 1996 (37). After becoming the resident in the Abbey theater, she made a name for herself in the Abbey theater for many years. Howard, in “Audacious Ireland”, also states that with her unique style and perspective on the issues that is not spoken out loud, Carr has become “one of a host of contemporary Irish iconoclasts whose works have flouted literary convention, subverted the pieties of church and state, and exposed the darker side of Irish life” (403). While exposing the ‘darker side’ of the life in Ireland, Carr discusses universal themes and topics including gender, violence, and sexuality, even though she thematically focusses on the Irish female identity. By referring diverse sources including Greek mythology, Shakespeare, Irish myths and Becket's absurdist plays, Carr creates versatile plays. As mentioned, her versatile writing of plays, inspired by major authors and works, makes Carr a successful playwright around the world. In this regard Sihra, in “Introduction: Figures at the Window”, states that,

[h]er award-winning dramas have been translated into many languages and produced in places as diverse as Siberia, Estonia, Korea, Japan, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Iceland, Brazil, Germany, The Netherlands, and the Czech Republic, as well as in the United States and *London's West End*. (19)

After this part, in which the author's life, the importance of Irish Theater and her style is mentioned, it would be appropriate to articulate her works. Her early works including *Low in the Dark* (1989), *The Deer's Surrender* (1990), *This Love Thing* (1991) and *Ullaloo* (1991) deal with trauma and loss in Carr's unique satiric and dark style. Starting from her early works, Carr creates dark alternatives to the tedious identity of the woman. Through her works, Carr indicates that women, particularly mothers, can show aggression. In contrast to the female identity that is created by patriarchal ideology, in Carr's work mothers are presented as self-destructive, dark characters. In these unconventional plays Carr concentrates on female identity and redefines the entrenched notion of 'ideal' and 'holy' Irish motherhood. Leeney, in “Marina Carr: Violence and Destruction: Language, Space, and Landscape”, writes that by focussing on the issues of identities of mothers, marriage, and violence Carr touches on the issues that cause

severe issues in Irish society, such as the influence of religion on social life in Ireland, the control of fertility by the government, the prohibition of abortion and the identity of the woman as a mother. Particularly, these plays, in which Carr emphasises 'unmotherly' aspects of mothers, are an endeavour to question the idealized concept of motherhood in Ireland.

The Midlands trilogy, which included *The Mai* (1995), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), brought Carr to popularity, and success. In these plays, she emphasized the significant impact of mental aspects on dark mother characters. Trotter, in "Translating Women into Irish Theater History", states that Carr secured her position in Irish Theater stages by redefining the attributed ideas about motherhood in Ireland by "reclaiming an aspect of Irish existence – women's [motherhood] – which has been alternately idealized and ignored in the Irish mainstream tradition" (164). *The Mai* (1995), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) are three plays in Carr's oeuvre that need to be appreciated for their portrayals of three major female characters —The Mai, Portia Coughlan, and Hester Swane. Through these women characters Carr presents how the Irish female identity is constructed. The female characters are represented as unmotherly mothers because instead of sacrificing themselves for their children, mothers in the Midlands trilogy suffer from psychological issues and commit suicide.

In *By the Bog of Cats*, which constitutes the subject of this thesis, Carr revisions the myth of Medea in her own unique and presents an unconventional mother Hester Swane, with psychological problems. Hester struggles after her boyfriend, who is also her daughter's father, abandons her and marries another woman. Hester did not want to leave the place where they live, and she does not want to be separated from her daughter. As a solution, she decides to murder her daughter and commit suicide. Finn, in "Theater in Eleven Dimensions: A Conversation with Marina Carr", writes that Carr "artfully blends contemporary and the classic, the mythic and the real, frequently revisiting the tragedies of Shakespeare and ancient Greece," (Finn 3) and he maintains that "themes of family dysfunction, self-destruction, and redemption." (Finn 3) As it is also stated by Finn, Carr's combining various conflicts in her works, makes her works unique. Furthermore, her plays explore human nature and inner problems, while also

expressing societal themes and highlighting social issues in Irish society. Carr in her works mainly concentrates on the dark aspects of female identity especially the identity of mothers. In her later works Carr continued to use similar themes for example: in *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) she focused on violence, and in *Ariel* (2002) she concentrated on the corruption of the politics. Carr's later works following her Midlands plays are *Marble* (2009), *Possible Glimpses* (2011), and *The Map of Argentina* (2015). Carr in her plays, portrays ambivalent mothers. She does not only portray mothers who experience ambivalence but also Irish people who caught in the between of convention and modernization. Marina Carr's plays demonstrate how individual and national identities are trapped in between by referring to both patriarchal limitations and feminist movements.

Before starting to analyze the play in detail, in this section, it would be useful to examine the atmosphere and perspective of women in Ireland at the time the play was written. Although there are patriarchal restrictions on women, there was a drastic change in women's socio-cultural roles, particularly in Ireland. As the division of spheres impact women in Ireland in the early twentieth century, Irish women continued to experience economic, social, individual, and domestic challenges. Biletz, in "Women and Irish-Ireland: The Domestic Nationalism of Mary Butler", asserts that,

In twentieth-century Ireland, there were two approaches to define women's identity: traditional and modernist. The first approach is concerned with the formation of Irish national identity, whereas the second is concerned with Ireland's modernization process. In the early twentieth century, Traditional and patriarchal ideologies dominated the economic, social, family, and cultural spheres, especially in rural Ireland. The modernist approach, which encompassed feminist movements and the promotion of women's rights, first emerged in the 1950s. Women had greater control over their economic, political, and social life as a result of these advancements, and they grew more independent and self-sufficient. (14)

Jenny Beale, in her book *Women in Ireland: Voices of Change*, writes through the process of modernization, one of the changes was "women's perceptions of themselves". Women who convinced that being a mother is not their destiny and it is

not the only way that defines their identity, women with "a stronger sense of identity;" became to make decisions on their lives "rather than simply accepting a predestined role" (1). Women began to question patriarchal norms and conventional gender roles and by questioning, they started to be involved in their own lives.

In Ireland, women's entrapment into private spheres persisted to impact Irish women on economic, domestic, social, and individual levels. Jenny Beale also states that because of strict religious practices of the Irish culture, division of the spheres and patriarchal discourses; women, whose identities are limited to being just mothers become disadvantageous in "education, employment, and tax and welfare systems" (3). According to MacPherson, existing in the separate spheres had a continuous impact on determining "the boundaries between men's public world in business and politics and women's private domain of family and domesticity" (2). As it can be deduced from the quote the separate spheres limit women to exist only indoors and compel them to focus only on domestic duties.

Women in Ireland are systemically oppressed in a cis-gendered, male-centred, culture due to the absence of economic freedom and social rights. Additionally, marriage also oppressed women. Walter, in "Irishness, Gender, and Place", states that marriage, "prevented married women from participating in most forms of paid work, punitive sanctions on unmarried motherhood, the banning of contraception, and low pay and status for single women" (21). In this regard marriage as an institution limited women to decide on their bodies and sexual intercourses. Despite protests against patriarchal discourses that limit women, Irish women were nevertheless subjected to gender discrimination until the mid-twentieth century. In the second half of the century, with the radical changes experienced, women in Ireland started to raise their voices for their rights. In this regard, Kilfeather in "Irish Feminism" states that "women began to develop a renewed consciousness of the wrongs by which they were oppressed" (108). Especially in the 1960s, women's voices began to be heard in real terms. Along with social changes, women began to stand against patriarchal oppression in Ireland, just like in England and managed to control their lives. The awareness of women naturally necessitated the redefinition of the concept of motherhood.

With the help of feminist movements, women in Ireland started to fight for their

rights. For example, as Kilfeather points out in 1971, the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) was formed by "the meetings of women radicals and activists" (108) and enabled women to express themselves and ask for their rights. It was thanks to such feminist movements that the improvement of women's lives in terms of modernity, became visible in the late twentieth century. In the 1980s, as there was a conflict between traditional and modernist views, both traditional values and radical changes were encountered in families in Ireland. Women decided to have fewer children, work in the public sphere, and raise their voices against patriarchy. Thanks to modernization process women have grown more individualistic, involved in public life, and conscious of their rights. In twentieth-century Ireland, this developing consciousness affected not just the position of women in the public sphere, but also their role on a national level. In this context, women's becoming more conscious towards the end of the century was reflected in the Theater plays of the period. Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats*, which constitutes the subject of this thesis, is a manifesto opposing the patriarchal discourse.

The last play of Midlands trilogy, Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*, staged in Abbey Theater in 1998. The play which premiered at the Dublin Theater Festival, was a hit. The play's fame and success crossed the boundaries of Ireland's. *By the Bog of Cats* that reaches the mainstream audience staged in many countries. Consisting of three acts, *By the Bog of Cats* opens with Ghost Fancier's arrival when Ghost Fancier visits Hester Swane to take her life, Hester was about to bury a black swan named Black Wing, which she found dead in the early morning. As Ghost Fancie got confused, she fades away, apologizing for her mistake, while Hester refuses to die because she has a daughter to care for. Then, Hester's neighbour Monica appears on the scene and asks if she will leave the bog that day. She advises Hester to leave the bog, but Hester is determined to stay in the bog. While Hester buries the dead swan, Catwoman, the prophet who ate a blind rat, shows up. She proclaims that the swan has placed a curse on Hester, because of which she will live as long as the swan lives. As she foreshadows Catwoman asks Hester to leave the bog. She says it will be disaster for Hester if she resists. Meanwhile, Hester's seven-year-old daughter, Josie spends time with her grandmother, Mrs Kilbride. The old woman does not accept Josie as her

granddaughter and claims that Josie is a Swane and not a Kilbride. Josie expresses that she wants to attend her father's and Caroline's wedding but realizes that she has to convince her mother to do so. However, enraged by Carthage's betrayal, Hester fights with him; Carthage makes it clear that he won't abandon the bog, no matter how determined he is to erase him from his life.

In the second act, Catwoman helps Joseph to visit Hester. While all this is happening, Carthage and Caroline's wedding happens at the same time. But instead of being happy, Caroline is nervous. At the wedding, Mrs Kilbride also wore white dress that symbolizes the bride. In this scene, Mrs Kilbride's flirting with one of the guests at the wedding creates funny atmosphere. At the end of the second act, Hester comes in a wedding dress and ruins the wedding.

The final act of *By the Bog of Cats* starts with Hester's setting fire to Carthage's house. As she burns the house, the ghost of his brother Joseph, whom Hester killed, visits him. Even though it is still unknown if Hester killed her brother or not, it is stated in the scene that Hester murdered Joseph because she was envious of the relationship he has with his mother. Hester was waiting in the bog for her mother's return because before Big Josie left, she promised Hester that she would return to the bog. Later, Monica arrives and backs Hester even though she doesn't approve of her actions. When Josie comes to Hester to ask her to go on vacation with her father and Caroline, Hester petrifies Josie by threatening her. She says if Josie leaves her, she will die. She quickly regrets her words, though. Xavier who is annoyed by Hester's attitude threatens her by pulling his gun. Hester, on the other hand, does not wimp out; rather, her overreaction scares Xavier. Hester insists Carthage let her stay in the bog, but Carthage determines to take Josie from her. Caroline arrives and asks Carthage to not separate Josie and Hester. Hester takes a blade and tests its sharpness after he's gone. Josie is terrified of her mother's attitude. When Hester informs Josie, she's going somewhere she'll never return, she changes her mind. Now she doesn't want to go with her father and insists on travelling with Hester. Hester attempts to push Josie away from herself, but she recognizes the little girl will have the same destiny as her and kills her by slitting her neck. Hester makes a dreadful moan, terrified by her actions. Catwoman seeks aid after witnessing Hester's acts.

Following the pattern of Neoptolemos, *By the Bog of Cats* reflects the motherhood myth by reinforcing a real myth. *By the Bog of Cats* is inspired by Euripides' *Medea*. Although there is no mother-daughter relationship in *Medea*, motherhood is conveyed through deprivation in the play *By the Bog of Cats*. At this stage before Hester's bond with her mother is examined it would be useful to talk about Bowlby's attachment theory. John Bowlby, the theorist of attachment theory, in his work, *Attachment and Loss: Attachment*, defines "any behavior that an infant displays to establish and maintain the desired closeness to its primary caregiver figure/mother as attachment behavior and argues that attachment behaviors aim to protect the infant from dangers in evolutionary terms" (205). It's also stated by Bowlby that when the mother is sensitive and responds to these signals of her baby, the baby perceives her mother as a safe place, so she learns to trust others and can turn to explore the environment. However, when this process is interrupted, that is, when the mother is unable to consistently respond to her baby's signals, the baby cannot develop a secure bond with its mother. According to the attachment theory, the absence of the attachment figure may be a determinant of anxiety or discomfort in both children and adults, because the attachment system cannot fulfill its protective role and the child who cannot receive support does not feel safe. For this reason, children who cannot develop secure attachment perceive the world as a dangerous place full of unexpected threats (Bowlby 205). Based on this theory, Hester Swane's lack of a mother figure in *By the Bog of Cats* explains her traumas.

Big Josie's absence also affects Hester's mothering performance. In this context, Hester is obsessed with the concept of motherhood. In the play, Hester, who is constantly waiting for her mother and in search of a mother figure, assigns temporary mothers to herself, including – Monica, Mrs Kilbride and Catwoman – these 'fake' mother figures cannot replace Big Josie. Lacking a mother figure, Hester's life is focused on her daughter, Josie, named after her mother. Hester, who does not want her daughter to experience the traumas she has experienced, is possessive towards Josie. Another reason Hester is so possessive towards her daughter is her family background. Hester, whose mother is a traveler and father is a settled person, is caught in the middle. Since people who lead a nomadic lifestyle in Irish society are marginalized, Hester has had her share of this marginalization. She reveals it to Monica that

They never axed us to stay, these people, to sit down and ate with them, just lapped up her songs, gave her a bag of food and a half a crown and walked us off the premises, for fear we“d steal somethin“, I suppose. I don’t think it bothered her, it did me – and still rankles after all these years. But not Josie Swane, she’d be off to the shop to buy cigars and beer and sweets for me. (Carr 61)

In this context, her ambivalent cultural identity is also reflected in Hester's character. Trench, in *Reimagining Ireland: Bloody Living: The Loss of Selfhood in the Plays of Marina Carr*, states that “Hester [has] a liminal position between the two cultures, [. . .] [and] she does not fully belong to either, yet she is part of both (due to her mixed parentage). (24) Hester's inability to feel belonging to either side made her even more vulnerable to the negativities around her. As Hester's parents abandoned her, Hester feels insecure as a daughter. Her father was absent from the very beginning, and her mother abandoned her at a young age, so she grew up without knowing the warmth of a family. Even though she has never longed for a father figure, she still waits for her mother's return, which Hester believes she promised would happen. Hester feels lonely without her, so she hopes to return to the bog. The only thing that remains to Hester after the leaving of her mother is the hope that she will be back. For instance, her hope can be observed in the following quote:

JOSEPH. Death is a big country, Hester. She could be anywhere in it.

HESTER. No, she’s alive. I can smell her. She’s coming towards me. I know it. Why doesn’t she come and be done with it! If ya see her tell her I won’t be hard on her, will ya? (Carr 60)

Although Hester longs for her mother and feels her absence all the time, Big Josie, Hester's mother, is not an 'ideal' mother. In this context, Big Josie does not conform to Irish motherhood ideals by displaying behaviors contrary to the angelic roles attributed to motherhood. She is portrayed as a smoking mother. Hester remembers her mother's odd way of waiting and smoking, at the same time Hester tells Catwoman about her mother:

G“wan to bed, you, “ she’d say, „I’ll just be here pausin“.“ And I’d watch her from the window. (Indicates window of caranavan.) Times she’d smoke a cigar

which she had her own particular way of doin'". She'd hould it stretched away from her and, instead of takin' the cigar to her mouth, she'd bring her mouth to the cigar. And her all the time pausin'. What was she waitin' for, Catwoman? (Carr 13)

Although Hester does not criticise Big Josie's motherhood, other characters of the play accuse Big Josie as being a bad mother. For example, Xavier argues that Hester's mother was not a good enough mother, and she lacked a feeling of parental duty, implying that he had a sexual connection with Hester's mother. Despite the fact that Hester does not want to listen to him, Xavier remembers the former days by saying that:

Ya [Hester] say ya remember lots of things, then maybe ya remember that that food and money I used lave was left so ya wouldn't starve. Times I'd walk by that caravan and there'd be ne'er a sign of this mother of yours. She'd go off for days with anywan who'd buy her a drink. She'd be off in the bars of Pullagh and Mucklagh gettin' into fights. Wance she bit the nose off a woman who dared to look at her man, bit the nose clean off her face. And you, you'd be chained to the door of the caravan with maybe a dirty nappy on ya if ya were lucky. [. . .] Often times I brung ya home and gave ya over to me mother to put some clothes on ya and feed ya. More times than I can remember it'd be from our house your mother would collect ya, the brazen walk of her, and not a thank you or a flicker of guilt in her eye and her reekin' of drink. Times she wouldn't even bother to collect ya and meself or me mother would have to bring ya down to her and she'd hardly notice that we'd come and gone or that you'd returned. (Carr 32)

Xavier's recall of the memory underlines that Josie was not an ideal mother. In this regard, Martinovich, in *A Poetics of Ghosting in Contemporary Irish and Northern Irish Drama*, states that: "Big Josie, as a woman uninterested in the role of mother, not only embodies the monstrous image of mother but also defies Irish society's patriarchal values. The relationship between mother and daughter was fraught with mistreatment . . . and abuse" (235). Big Josie's portrayal as a terrible mother, as the quote implies, has little to do with Ireland's idealized concept of motherhood, since Big Josie denied Hester's needs, followed her dreams, and lived an indecent life.

When the female characters of the play are analyzed, it can be concluded that, they stand for Hester's mother Big Josie. Monica is one of them for Hester. As she is a lonely woman who lives also in the bog, Monica is presented as Hester's alternative mother. Like a maternal figure, Monica tries to protect Hester. In contrast to Hester, she is presented as a conventional mother who is caring and protective. In the following scene Monica's says to Hester that,

Hester, I know what it's like to wait for somewan who's never walkin' through the door again. But this waitin' is only a fancy of yours. Now I don't make out to know anythin' about the workin's of this world but I know this much, it don't yield aisy to mortal wishes. And maybe that's the way it has to be. You up on forty, Hester, and sitll dreamin' of storybook endin's, still whingin' for your mam. (Carr 61)

As the quote suggests, Monica by comforting Hester, presented as a good mother who has the motherly attributions. Kilbride tries to assert influence over her son's life by interfering with her son's life regularly. Although she is presented as a maternal figure who tries to control his son's life, she is also presented as a comic character. As Carthage had a relationship with Hester, it can be said that Mrs Kilbride is not able to control her son's life all the time. As she couldn't prevent her son's affair with Hester, this defeat leads her to reject Josie and Hester. She doesn't want to have a close connection with Josie; therefore, she tells her to call her merely Grandmother instead of Granny:

MRS KILBRIDE What did I tell ya about callin' me Grandmother.

JOSIE (*defiantly*) Granny.

MRS KILBRIDE (*leans over the table viciously*) Grandmother! Say it!

JOSIE (*giving in*) Grandmother. (Carr 16)

As can be clearly observed from the quote, Mrs Kilbride does not have the characteristics of sacrifice, compassion and warmth associated with motherhood. In this context, it is possible to say that Mrs Kilbride, unlike Monica, is an unconventional mother.

Stone in *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*, claims that "maternal experience is shaped by the mother's history of being the daughter of her own

mother” (108). As Stone suggests, the impact of the absent mother defines Hester's maternal role in the play. As she lone for a mother, she is obsessed with mothering, she even babysits Caroline, who is her ex-partners wife now. Finn in “*Make me Human and Then Divine*” points out that Caroline is:

[r]epresentative of the oppression that women in Ireland have historically been subjected to under the patriarchal rule of the Church. Stripped of her power and having lost the influence of her mother after her death in Caroline’s childhood, she is utterly dominated by her father Xavier. (92)

In this sense, *By the Bog of Cats* decodes how the absence of the mother figure and most importantly how the patriarchal discourses influence women’s life.

When Hester’s motherhood performance is analyzed; as a traumatic person, Hester’s identity as a mother is presented as unsettled. As she experiences traumas due to the absence of her mother, Hester’s relationship with her daughter Rosie becomes complex. In addition to her traumas, Hester also experiences lone motherhood. As a lone mother, her maternal identity is not approved by the religious and moral authorities of the society. In Irish culture giving birth to an illegitimate child was not accepted by the Irish authorities. Luddy, in “Magdalen Asylums, 1765-1992”, states that, the Irish authorities used to keep lone mothers out of public in Magdalen asylums, which were founded by the Catholic Church in 1766 in Dublin to rehabilitate prostitutes and lasted until the end of the twentieth century. (736) Luddy also points out:

The function of Magdalen asylums was to change significantly in the twentieth century when they became homes for unmarried mothers and ‘wayward’ daughters, rather than for prostitutes. These institutions became increasingly used by the public to shield their families from the shame it was believed non-conformist daughters or female relatives were likely to inflict on them. Both the Catholic public and the religious communities colluded in removing these ‘shameful objects’ from public view. (737)

Although Magdalen asylums have lost their function and been closed over time, the society's perspective on lone mothers has not changed much. In this context, Hester has been marginalized by society by not conforming to the traditional family structure that society embraces.

Although Hester is portrayed as an unconventional mother whose psychological traumas are openly expressed rather than a married woman who is devoted to her family as the society adopts, the bond she establishes with her daughter becomes an obsession and affects Hester's motherhood performance. Hester's cherishing her daughter like traditional mothers is presented in the following dialogue:

JOSIE What's wrong of ya, Mum?

HESTER Ah go 'way, would ya, and lave me alone.

JOSIE Can I go down to Daly's and buy sweets?

HESTER No, ya can't. Go on off and play, you're far too demandin'.

JOSIE Yeah, well, just because you're in a bad humour it's not my fault.

I'm fed up playin' on me own.

HESTER You'll get a clatter if you're not careful. I played on me own when I was your age, I never bothered me mother, you're spoilt rotten, that's what ya are. (*in a gentler tone*) G'wan and play with your dolls, give them a bath, cut their hair. (Carr 28-29)

As can be observed from the dialogue that although Josie pushes Hester's limits, Hester tries to control herself. Josie, on the other hand, wants to accompany her father and Caroline on their vacation, and she is looking forward to see the sea for the first time. When Hester realizes her daughter's willingness to go, she gets worried about losing her and starts to insult Carthage. Hester then scares Josie by coming up with a curse:

HESTER (*pulls Josie's hands from her ears*) You'll listen to me, Josie Swane, and you listen well. Another that had your name walked away from me. Your perfect daddy walked away from me. And you'll walk from me too. All me life people have walked away without a word of explanation. Well, I want to tell ya somethin', Josie, if you lave me, ya'll die.

JOSIE I will not.

HESTER Ya will! Ya will! It's a sourt of curse was put on ya be the Catwoman and the black swan. Remember the black swan?

JOSIE (*frightened*) Aye.

HESTER So ya have to stay with me, d'ya see, and if your daddy or anywan else axes ya who ya'd prefer to live with, ya have to say me. (Carr 64)

As it can be observed in the dialogue Hester's making up a curse indicates her fear of being abandoned. Since she has a trauma, she fears going through the same painful experience with her daughter. Thus, when Josie informs Hester that she will accompany her father on his vacation with Caroline, Hester informs Josie that she would also go to a place where she will never come back, and the following dialogue leads the play to reach the climax:

JOSIE Well, can I go with ya?

HESTER No ya can't.

JOSIE Ah, Mam, I want to be where you'll be.

HESTER Well, ya can't, because wance ya go there ya can never come back.

JOSIE I wouldn't want to if you're not here, Mam.

HESTER You're just bein' contrary now. Don't ya want to be with your daddy and grow up big and lovely and full of advantages I have not the power to give ya?

JOSIE Mam, I'd be watchin' for ya all the time „long the Bog of Cats. I'd be hopin' and waitin' and prayin' for ya to return. (Carr 74-75)

At this point, Hester is afraid of her daughter's experiencing the same destiny with her and she tries to distance Josie from herself. Josie insists on going with her mother, even though she forces her daughter to distance herself. The fact that this insistence of Josie leads to a tragic disaster in as follows:

JOSIE (*struggling to stay in contact with Hester*) No, Mam, stop! I'm goin' with ya!

HESTER Would ya let go!

JOSIE (*frantic*) No, Mam. Please!

HESTER Alright, alright! Shhh! (*Picks her up.*) It's alright, I'll take ya with me, I won't have ya as I was, waitin' a lifetime for somewan to return, because they don't, Josie, they don't. It's alright. Close your eyes. *Josie closes her eyes.* Are you closed tight?

JOSIE Yeah.

Hester cuts Josie's throat in one savage moment. (softly) Mam – Mam – (And Josie dies in Hester's arms.) (Carr 75)

Hester's act of murdering her own daughter is analyzed by Harrower, in *The Performance of Critical History in Contemporary Irish Theater and Film*, as follows:

Hester kills Josie because Hester is unable to separate Josie's feelings from her own feelings toward the mother that abandoned her decades earlier. . . [S]he immediately couples Josie's fears with her own sense of longing for mother. Hester kills Josie to save the girl from the torment Hester assumes her daughter will face in the future. The act of killing, in Hester's damaged mind, is merciful because the unfulfilled longing for inadequate mothering is worse than death. (149)

Although Hester's murder of Josie is related to the trauma caused by her mother's absence, Hester opposes the stereotypical concept of the ideal mother through her mothering performance. In this context, Hester reshapes the concept of motherhood, which has been romanticized and idealized for centuries and identified with Ireland, with her unusual motherhood performance. Hester's maternal performance confirms that there may be different alternatives to motherhood, that the concept of an ideal mother is just a myth.

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to analyze the representations of unconventional motherhood concepts in contemporary British Theater in accordance with the feminist approach. Representations of the unconventional motherhood concept are analyzed in contemporary plays, including Sarah Daniels' *Neaptide*, Charlotte Keatley's *My Mother Said I Never Should* and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*, to present how the unconventional mother identities are constructed. By considering the historical and the cultural background, each chapter discovers how the social, political, economic, and cultural events influenced the transition process of the concept of motherhood in which 'ideal' motherhood is replaced by unconventional motherhood. In all the three plays that constitute the core of this thesis, the mothers who are the protagonists, represented as the unconventional mothers. Mothers of *Neaptide*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, and *By the Bog of Cats*, presented as women who are oppressed by the patriarchal ideology and discourse. However, the mothers of the *Neaptide*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, and *By the Bog of Cats*, dared to exist without succumbing to these pressures. In addition to women's fighting about not to kneel against patriarchy; issues including myths, sexual preferences, lone motherhood, and the attachment theory have also been examined as the supporting elements. Hereby, by deeply analysing the cultural, social, economic, and political factors that led to the transformation; this thesis offers an insight into how the concept of motherhood transformed into an unconventional concept over time drawing attention to these aspects of motherhood.

The presence of unconventional mothers, who deny self-sacrificing and idealized maternal stereotypes, is considered inappropriate in different cultures. As mother's identity is limited to the overreaching essentials of being the ideal mother, the aspirations, demands or personal expectations of mothers, are not taken seriously by the patriarchy. Thus, by transforming into unconventional mothers, mothers found a way to create their own identity. While stories of unconventional mothers can be found in many cultures all around the world, plays that are selected for this thesis –*Neaptide*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, and *By the Bog of Cats* – seems to be distinct as they deal with unconventional identities of mothers from various generations. In this pursuit, the

plays of this thesis -*Neptune, My Mother Said I Never Should, and By the Bog of Cats*- are selected not only for their emphasis on the concept of motherhood, but also for their richness in diversified identities of women. Women playwrights of the selected plays, concerned with the life experiences of mothers and highlighted the challenges of being a mother by depicting female characters of different generations. In each play that is selected for this thesis, the concept of motherhood is scrutinized. Through these plays, that contemporary British playwrights produced, it can be provided that how issues such as, female bodily processes; including menstruation and birth, determine the identity of the mother, particularly for those who combine paid work, career options and motherhood. While exploring the factors that shape the identity of mothers, playwrights including Daniels, Keatley and Carr ensure that: each mother in their plays has an individual voice. The way each mother expresses herself is highly affected by the cultural background, place, and period in which they grew up.

As mothers' identity is shaped by the cultural background, in the first chapter of the current thesis, major events that give birth to drastic changes in Britain including reformation, the industrial revolution, the enlightenment, world wars and feminist movements are analyzed, and it is manifested that mentioned events, by influencing culture, economy, social life, and politics, help motherhood concept transform into an unconventional concept. In addition, in the first part of the current thesis, the reflections on the concept of motherhood in English Theater were examined and it is revealed that as the requirements of being an ideal mother is reshaped, instead of being a myth, motherhood is represented as the unconventional concept in contemporary British plays and Theater stages.

In *Neptune, My Mother Said I Never Should, By the Bog of Cats*, mothers are assigned as multilayered characters. In each of the plays, mothers are presented as neither exactly angels nor exactly devils. To clarify it, if the mothers are analyzed in the *Neptune*, Joyce is represented as a woman who lives under the influence of social taboos however, at the end of the play, she stands against these taboos. Similarly, although Claire's being a mother is not approved by society as her sexual orientation does not fit into the ideal patterns of motherhood, she performs as an ideal mother who makes sacrifices for her child. In parallel with *Neptune*, mothers are also represented in

My Mother Said I Never Should in a multi-layered way. For example, Doris is represented as a woman who could not establish a close relationship with her daughter, nevertheless she managed to establish close contact with her granddaughter Jackie. Just like *Neaptide* and *My Mother Said I Never Should*, Carr in *By the Bog of Cats* also emphasized that motherhood is a complex concept to fit into single patterns. Through various characters, including Hester, Monica, Kilbride, and Big Josie, who can be considered maternal figures in the play, it has been proven that there is not a single attribution that motherhood can be idealized in the way it is socially constructed.

When the plays selected for this thesis were analyzed, the word “change” became one of the keywords. Thus, the change in the concept of motherhood over time is evaluated not only through the identity of the mothers, but also through the factors that influence the creation of the identity of the mothers. In this context, the change in the concept of motherhood has been examined by considering the culture, place, and history in which the concept exists. In *Neaptide*, *My Mother Said I Never Should* and *By the Bog of Cats*, political, social, economic, and cultural changes in British culture and history have been focused to present how these changes reconstructed the identity of motherhood. The motherhood performance represented in all three selected plays conveyed the mother-daughter relationship through different generations. Therefore, the evolution of motherhood from being a myth to unconventional practices has been analyzed through the change experienced by different generations.

In this thesis, close analysis of each mother offers a different perspective that indicates how the concept of unconventional motherhood is created. For example, by analyzing the Joyce character in *Neaptide*, it is emphasized that patriarchy creates a pressure on mothers and women are overwhelmed by this pressure. On the other hand, through Val, Daniels provides the idea that a mother may have psychological problems. Through Jean it is presented that mothers may show aggression in some cases, and it is underlined that mothers will not always adopt homosexuality, through Claire. In parallel with *Neaptide*, in *My Mother Said I Never Should* while the devastating impacts of war on motherhood are discussed and reflected in Doris’ identity, it is discussed that whether it is possible to both work and fulfill the requirements of being a caregiver, through Margaret. Finally, Jackie's lone mother performance in *My Mother Said I Never*

Should showcases the transformation of motherhood. Just like in the two plays, the lack of a single definition of motherhood is reflected in the play *By the Bog of Cats*. For example, mothers can be materialistic like Mrs Kilbride, protective like Monica, and murderous like Hester. All three plays offer different alternatives to the concept of motherhood with the mothers they represent.

In conclusion, the thesis offers an insight into the transformation of the concept of the motherhood from the 'ideal' to the unconventional one, by analysing Sarah Daniels' *Neaptide*, Charlotte Keatley's *My Mother Said I Never Should* and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* with particular references to the social, politic, economic and cultural events that occurred in twentieth-century Britain. In general, in the three plays that constitute the subject of the thesis, not only the transformation of the concept of motherhood in contemporary British culture is presented, but also the process of creation of the identity of the mothers is also analyzed. While examining the transformation of the motherhood concept, feminist theories are adapted to the plays, and by focusing on the keyword of "change", it is concluded that by influenced social, cultural, political, and cultural domains, the concept of motherhood in the twentieth century Britain have changed and started to be presented as an unconventional concept.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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