

T.C.
İSTANBUL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
KARŞILAŞTIRMALI EDEBİYAT
ANA BİLİM DALI

DOKTORA TEZİ

**(RE)DEFINING MIMESIS THROUGH ANTI-REALIST
APPROACHES IN POST-WAR THEATRE**

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2520160144

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İSTANBUL, 2018



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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



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ÖĞRENCİNİN;

Adı ve Soyadı : Mehmet Zeki GİRİTLİ Numarası : 2520160144

Anabilim Dalı /
Anasanat Dalı / Programı : Karşılaştırmalı Ed. Anabilim Dalı Danışmanı : Prof. Dr. Hürriyet Özden SÖZALAN

Tez Savunma Tarihi : 13.07 Saati : 14:00
.2018

Tez Başlığı : "(Re)Defining Mimesis Through Anti-Realist Approaches in Post-war Theatre."

TEZ SAVUNMA SINAVI, İÜ Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim Yönetmeliği'nin 50. Maddesi uyarınca yapılmış, sorulan sorulara alınan cevaplar sonunda adayın tezinin **KABULÜNE** OYBİRLİĞİ / OYÇOKLUĞUYLA karar verilmiştir.

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ÖZ

SAVAŞ SONRASI TİYATRO YAZININDA KARŞI GERÇEKÇİ YAKLAŞIMLAR ARACILIĞIYLA MİMETİK GERÇEKÇİLİĞİN YENİDEN TANIMLANMASI

MEHMET ZEKİ GİRİTLİ

20. Yüzyıl boyunca Avrupa ve Türkiye tiyatrosunun baskın yönelimi Aristoteles'in Poetika'sı ve Plato'nun Devlet'inde tanımlanan haliyle "gerçekçilik" olagelmıştır. Mimetik gerçekçilik, hem tiyatro yazınında, hem sahneleme biçimlerinde hem de oyunculuk yöntemlerinde başat akım olarak, çok da fazla sorgulanmadan kabul edilmiştir. Bununla bağlantılı olarak, Moskova Sanat Tiyatrosu'nun anlayışının devamı niteliğinde tiyatroya seyirciyi eğitme, seyirciye politik ve/veya sosyal mesajlar verme görevi yüklenmiştir. Kuşkusuz bu dayatmanın ardında sanatsal itkilerden ziyade politik ve ideolojik sebepler yatmaktadır. Savaş sonrası dönemde Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov ve Genet gibi yazarların başını çektiği karşı gerçekçi akım bazı çevreler tarafından fazlasıyla bireysel bulunmuş ve "absürd tiyatro" olarak adlandırılan bu dönemin geçici ve belirli bir coğrafyaya ait bir sanatsal akım olduğu algısı oluşturulmaya çalışılmıştır. Oysa ki karşı gerçekçi tiyatro yazını, Türkiye de dahil olmak üzere dünyanın dört bir yanında kendi gerçekçiliğini oluşturabilmiş yazarlar doğurmuş ve mesaj kaygısının tiyatronun ana işlevlerinden birisi olmadığını kanıtlamıştır. Bu bilgilerin ışığında 21. Yüzyılda tiyatro eleştirisinde gerçekçilik/politik olma kriteri tamamen işlevini yitirmiştir. Hem tiyatrocuların hem de tiyatro eleştirmenlerinin karşı gerçekçi tiyatro yazınında kullanılan biçimsel öğelere eğilmesi ve gerçekçilik kavramını sorgulaması çağı yakalayabilmek için bir zorunluluk haline gelmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: gerçekçilik, karşı gerçekçilik, Stanislavski, Moskova Sanat Tiyatrosu, Absürd, modernizm, biçimsel öğeler

ABSTRACT

(RE)DEFINING MIMESIS THROUGH ANTI-REALIST APPROACHES IN POST-WAR THEATER

MEHMET ZEKİ GİRİTLİ

The prevalent approach in both European and Turkish theater during the 20th century, has been “mimetic realism”, as defined in Aristotle’s Poetics and Plato’s Republic. Mimetic realism has been adopted, without much questioning, in playwriting, staging, and acting methods. With regards to this, as the continuation of the ideals of Moscow Art Theater, theater has been attributed the function of conveying political/social messages to the audience, and of educating the audience. Obviously, under this imposition lie political and ideological reasons rather than artistic concerns. Anti-realist movement led by playwrights such as Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, and Genet in the post-war period was found “too individualistic” by some and a false perception that this theater movement which was called “the theatre of the absurd” was limited to a certain period and place was intentionally created. Contrarily, anti-realist theater gave birth to the rise of playwrights who were able to create their own reality in theater, in various parts of the world including Turkey, and proved that conveying messages cannot be a concern of theater. In the light of these, being realistic/politic has lost its function as a criterion in the 21st century theater. It is now an obligation for both the theater people and the critics to focus on formalistic elements used in anti-realist theater writing and to question the meaning of realism to be able to catch the era.

Key Words: realism, anti-realism, Stanislavski, Moscow Art Theater, Absurd, Modernism, formalist features

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the product of a five year study and research; thus, I feel that I need to thank the people who have contributed to it through this period. Firstly, of course, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. H. Özden Sözalan. It would have been impossible to complete this study without her support and encouragement. Of course, I am also grateful to my committee members Prof. Hasine Şen Karadeniz and Assoc. Prof. Gülşen Sayın. I would also like to commemorate with gratitude Dr. Clare Brandabur, the first advisor of this study, who passed away in 2015. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Şahika Tekand, who opened new ways in my life by introducing me to anti-realist theater, and to Prof. Yıldız Kenter, who taught me the basics of acting and theater, as well as Prof. Oya Başak, who has influenced all my life. Last but not least, I would like to thank Senem Didar Kaynar, whose emotional support I have always felt beside me since my freshman year at Boğaziçi University. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

If nineteenth century was a time of revolution in the history of art and literature, 20th century was certainly a counter revolution, which is quite understandable when considered that the world went through two world wars in the first half of the century. The effects of the two world wars were more than devastating and could be felt in every part of people's lives ranging from political foundations to everyday life conditions, and certainly in philosophical approaches to life and the field of arts and literature.

Nineteenth century art and literature was mostly a continuation of Platonic mimesis which depends on the representation of the real world in arts. In his famous definition of art and poetry, Plato says that all forms of art are *mimetic*, and thus poetry should be banished from the ideal society. However, due to the difficulties of translating this Greek word *mimesis*, its meaning had been mostly debated throughout centuries. One of the pioneer scholars, who put forward the idea that what Plato meant by the word *mimesis* was not merely a copy of the nature was Hermann Koller. In an article on Hermann Koller, Gerald F. Else explains Koller's approach to the word *mimesis*:

According to the prevailing view, *mimesis*- or *mimeisthai* – began by meaning “imitation” “Nachahmung”, and then took on other senses by extension or adaptation, for example, in the *Poetics*, where it clearly denotes something more than a mere copying of nature. Koller maintains, on the contrary, (1) that the original sense was not “imitation” but “Darstellung” “Ausdruck(sform)” “Formwerdung des Seelichen” (2) that the ambit of the word was originally limited to music and dancing, denoting the expressive power of *mousike* in its primeval unity; and (3) that the meaning “imitation” is a later development, a watered-down application of the idea to fields (e.g. painting) where it did not properly belong. (Else, 1958: 73)

Else does not agree with Koller's theory in his article and refers back to the works of fifth century Greece. We are not going to delve into the discussion between Koller and Else here, but it is important to underline the fact that Koller was one of the first scholars who challenged the general belief about the meaning of the word *mimesis* in Plato's work. There is still, after 2400 years, not a consensus on the meaning of the word in the way Plato used it but it is widely accepted that *mimesis* refers to a “representation” rather than a “copying”; and thus, the word will be used with this

meaning hereafter: “re-presentation of the real world via imitation on the artistic production”. My reference point on this definition is the definition of *mimesis* on Britannica:

Mimesis, basic theoretical principle in the creation of art. The word is Greek and means “imitation” (though in the sense of “re-presentation” rather than of “copying”). Plato and Aristotle spoke of mimesis as the re-presentation of nature. According to Plato, all artistic creation is a form of imitation: that which really exists (in the “world of ideas”) is a type created by God; the concrete things man perceives in his existence are shadowy representations of this ideal type. Therefore, the painter, the tragedian, and the musician are imitators of an imitation, twice removed from the truth. Aristotle, speaking of tragedy, stressed the point that it was an “imitation of an action”- that of a man falling from a higher to a lower estate. Shakespeare, in Hamlet’s speech to the actors, referred to the purpose of playing as being “...to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature.” Thus, an artist, by skillfully selecting and presenting his material, may purposefully seek to “imitate” the action of life (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Quite interestingly, this theory of art was widely and firmly adopted by artists until the middle of the twentieth century and became a standard in evaluating artwork.

This “imitation” approach came to a peak in the nineteenth century with the rise of “realism” as a reaction to “romanticism” of the eighteenth century. Although the term slightly differs in different cultures and countries, realism in literature is generally based on the understanding that literature should reflect the real life and everyday issues in all details. Honoré de Balzac in France can be considered as the pioneer of the movement in literature in 1820s. In terms of theater, Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879) and the plays of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov were exemplary of the realist movement. Common characteristics of these plays were that they had a plot with a certain beginning, denouement, and end. The audience could observe a development and/or change of characters throughout the course of events in the play, and generally the play had a message for the audience at the end.

In the *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory* of Penguin Reference Library, realism in literature and the role of the realist artist is defined as below:

It is clear that, according to the realist, an artist should concern herself with the here and now, with everyday events, with her own environment and with the movements (political, social, etc.) of her time. The anti-Romantic movements in Germany also concentrated attention on the lot of the common person and on the need to present life with all its warts. In general, we can see clearly

enough in the works of Immermann, Balzac and Dickens, for instance, what forms the realist attitude was likely to take. (Cuddon, 2000: 591)

As it is clear from the definition, the realist artist was expected to say something about her specific environment and political and social conditions. Most of Charles Dickens' novels, for instance, are records of Victorian society and social ideals as well as criticism to the values of the time.

This rise of "realism" in art was of course directly related to the philosophical approaches of the period, specifically Auguste Comte's ideas on positivism. In *The History of Theater*, Oscar G. Brockett attributes realism to Comte's ideals:

Realism owed much to the "positivism" of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), author of *Positive Philosophy* (1830-1842) and *Positive Polity* (1851-1854). Comte classified the sciences according to their relative simplicity, placing sociology at the apex as the most complex and important of the sciences. Since to him the ultimate aim of all knowledge was the betterment of society. Comte argued that all the sciences must contribute to sociology, which, when it rigorously applied scientific methodology, would be able to discover the causes of social problems and the remedies needed to bring about desirable change. Above all, Comte demanded that metaphysical explanations of events and behavior be abandoned in favor of material explanations based in observation and analysis. Comte's arguments fell on willing ears, not only among scientists and philosophers, but also among many artists, who sought to make art "scientific". Out of these attempts, realism emerged (Brockett, 1995: 382)

This turning point in art is quite significant because it became the role or the duty of the artist (in our case the playwright or the theater director and even the actor) to have a political/social concern and to convey a message to the audience through his artistic work, which eventually led to the use of artistic creation for the sake of conveying messages. This message turned out to be a political message with the rise of "socialist realism", which emerged as a different form of realism in the first half of the twentieth century.

Actually "socialist realism" is a term which can be specifically attributed to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. However, some of the ideals of "socialist realist" theater of the Soviet Union were also effective in European drama, and even in the 21st century theater. *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory* defines "socialist realism" in theater:

What is known as socialist realism in the theatre is largely a Russian phenomenon. Anatoli Lunacharsky (1875-1933) invented the theory of it. This

involved the development of specifically Soviet theatre. Classics were to be interpreted in contemporary terms so that they became more relevant to the people. New plays should be about life lived by ordinary people. The effects of his teachings in Communist countries have been considerable, even where the Kremlin faith has been thrown over with consequent excommunication – as in Albania. Now, socialist realism suggests the committed propaganda of writers submissive to a particular political regime. (Cuddon, 2000: 593)

Actually, it is clear that the playwright in Russia had no other option but to write in a socialist realist style, and that theatre was now a medium of political propaganda rather than an artistic form.

The most debatable figure in the history of Russian Theater, who was also most probably the most influential figure in the whole history of theatre was director and actor Konstantin Stanislavski. Moscow Art Theater (Moskovskiy Chudojestvennyy Teatr- 1898), which was founded by Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovič-Danchenko, was the cradle of realism in theater in terms of both staging techniques and playwriting.

Danchenko explained the purpose of their theatre on the opening day with the words below:

Theatre should address to the psychological requirements of the audience. Theatre either fulfills the demands of the audience or directs the audience to new purposes and tendencies if possible... A good theater should only stage classical plays which represent the sublime ideals and/or problems of their period. (Danchenko, 1898)

As it is clear from what Danchenko believes to be good theater, Stanislavski and Danchenko attribute a social role to theater, namely to represent the ideals of their society and to change people in accordance with these ideals. It should be noted that, quite surprisingly, Danchenko is not underlining the artistic quality of theater when he is defining what kind of plays should be staged, but rather he is interested in the social messages conveyed by the plays they are staging. Of course this does not mean that Stanislavski and Danchenko did not have any artistic concerns, but we understand that the primary purpose of the theater for these people was to represent social ideals and issues, and the ideal way for doing this was to attribute a primary role to realistic plays.

The most important playwright of the Moscow Art Theater was of course Anton Chekhov. Highly disappointed with the failure of his play *The Seagull* in St.

Petersburg, Chekhov returned to writing plays for Moscow Art Theatre after a long period of silence, and remained as the most important playwright of the theater until his death in 1904.

Chekhov is a highly significant figure not only for the Moscow Art Theater or Russia, but also for the whole history of theater in the west. His highly realistic (time to time naturalistic) technique focusing on the psychological depth of the characters and plots based upon the social conditions of his time is still followed by many playwrights even in the year 2018. Thus, it wouldn't be wrong to say that realism in theater as we know it today, is a creation of Stanislavski and Chekhov collaboratively. This is important because throughout this dissertation, the term "conventional realist theater" will be used repetitively; thus, it is necessary to underline that what I mean by "conventional realist theater" is the theater created by Stanislavski and Chekhov and extended over the whole twentieth century western theater.

While describing Chekhov's playwriting and the acting style required for such plays, Stanislavski uses these words:

Actors who are concerned with "acting" merely in the plays of Chekhov fall into a trap. It is necessary, in his plays, to "exist" "to be that person" and to experience the inner depths of the character's soul. (Çalışlar, 1996: 28)

This description of an "actor" and acting style became the basis of the famous acting methodology of Stanislavski and is still being adopted by actors who follow a realist acting style.

Before going into the reasons why this approach to acting and playwriting is problematic, we should first understand the basics of Stanislavski's acting methodology. Stanislavski is the first person in the history of theater who composed the rules of acting in his books *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*. However, long before the publication of his first book on acting methodology *An Actor Prepares*, he had already been using his methodology in the plays he directed.

His methodology of acting and staging is totally "realistic" and his acting basically depends on "being" the character in the play through the use of psychological methods. This is quite understandable as this was also a period when psychology emerged as a new field of study and the role of subconscious was realized.

In terms of staging, Stanislavski believed in re-creating the real life in all details on stage via the use of costumes and décor and obviously Chekhov's plays were the most suitable for that purpose. It is impossible to talk about all the details of Stanislavski's artistic approach in this study but Oscar G. Brockett, in *The History of Theater*, gives a list of 7 items which make up Stanislavski's theater and it would be useful to underline these points to be able to make a comparison between "realist" theater and "anti-realist" theater:

- 1) The actor's body and voice should be thoroughly trained so they may respond efficiently to all demands
- 2) Actors should be schooled in stage techniques, so they can project characterization to an audience without any sense of contrivance
- 3) Actors should be skilled observers of reality as a basis for building a role
- 4) Actors should seek inner justification for everything done on stage. In doing so, actors depend in part on "the magic if" (that is, the actor says "If I were this person faced with this situation, I would...") and "emotion memory" (a process by which actors relate the unfamiliar dramatic situation to some analogous emotional situation in their own lives, although Stanislavski was eventually to downgrade the importance of emotion memory)
- 5) If actors are not merely to play themselves, they must make a thorough analysis of the script and work within the "given circumstances" found there. The actor must define a character's motivations in each scene, in the play as a whole, and in relationship to each of the other roles. The character's primary "objective" becomes the "through line" of the role, around which everything else resolves
- 6) On stage, actors must focus attention upon the action as it unfolds moment by moment. Such concentration will lead to the "illusion of the first time" and will help actors to subordinate their own egos to the artistic demands of the production.
- 7) Actors must continually strive to perfect understanding and proficiency. (Brockett, 1995: 441)

However, before listing these points of Stanislavski's method, Brockett warns us that Stanislavski has never been understood and analyzed correctly due to translation constraints, and refers to intentional distortions of translation:

It is now acknowledged that neither the English language nor the Russian language version of Stanislavsky's writings is reliable. Since the USSR did not subscribe to the International Copyright Agreement when Stanislavsky's works were published in the West, they were copyrighted under the name of the American translator, Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. Thus, she, and subsequently her estate, controlled the international rights. Unfortunately, her versions considerably distorted Stanislavsky both through many

mistranslations and through considerable cutting and rearrangement. Similarly, the Soviet versions altered the texts to make them conform to official ideology. (Brockett, 1995: 441)

Even in this explanation of Brockett, it can be clearly seen that the primary purpose of art then was political propaganda, and that mimetic realism or “conventional realism” was a means to serve this purpose at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Stanislavski’s acting methodology and the realist playwriting in accordance with this remained dominant for a very long time and became the benchmark for theater. Aristotelian mimetic reality was formulized in theater for the first time by Stanislavski and thus Stanislavski’s method was accepted ultimate. Even today, most of the acting departments at conservatories and nearly all of the private acting schools base their acting training on Stanislavski method or his American follower Stella Adler. Similarly, when people criticize a play, they tend to use phrases such as “The performance was so realistic” or “Everything was like real on stage”.

There is no doubt that Stanislavski opened a very important path in the history of theater, which affected not only Russia but also the whole West. However, due to misinterpretations of Stanislavski, as well as some inherent characteristics of his methodology and artistic stance, mimetic “realism” turned out to be a problematic approach.

The first point is Stanislavski’s approach depends on a re-creation of reality on stage. He believes that it should be so detailed and close to the real world that the audience should feel as if they are seeing something real but not a play. However, this approach basically suggests “cheating” the audience downgrading theater to merely “make-believe”. Moreover, what he is trying to do is basically impossible because in real life people do not memorize a written text prior to their actions. And on the side of the audience, the audience is quite aware of the fact that the cherry orchard on the stage is décor and the people on stage are actors.

Another problem is about the slippery nature of reality. In our lives, we never experience the moments in a linear order. Real life consists of ups and downs as well as vicious cycles. However, what realistic plays suggest is that there is always a beginning, a middle, and an end of the events, and a certain character development.

Thus, once more Stanislavski's claim to reflect the real world on stage turns out to be a problematic and impossible attempt.

Let alone the impossibility of reflecting reality on stage, a very important question to ask is why it should be the ultimate goal of theater or art. Why should "resemblance" to real life be a criterion when we are evaluating a play? Or, very basically why should the artist (in our context playwright or theater director) try to merely recreate what can already be seen by everyone in real life rather than unchaining the boundaries of his artistic skills and suggest a completely new reality?

Although this dissertation focuses more on the anti-realistic approaches beginning in the post-war era, these questions were actually being asked much earlier in the East. The Eastern and Asian Theater had already proven long ago that mimetic realism did not have to be a criterion in theater. It is impossible to go into the details of Eastern and Asian theater traditions in this dissertation but some examples, at least, would help to understand why it is problematic to be obsessed with mimetic realism.

One very good example of this is Indian Sanskrit Drama, which rejected realism and focused on the spiritual. Brockett explains Sanskrit Drama's rejection of realism:

Since Hindu drama was most concerned with the emotional and spiritual, rather than the external and material, it avoided realistic production practices. Its spiritual inspiration was always recognized in an elaborate preliminary ceremony preceding the play to acknowledge the gods and to prepare performers and spectators for the drama to come.

No scenery was used (but the stage was further divided into two equal parts, one to be used as acting area, the other as backstage space. Two doors led from backstage to the acting area; between them was the place reserved for the vocal and instrumental musicians. (Brockett, 1995: 597)

It may be thought that Sanskrit Drama was a traditional form which died in the twentieth century; however, this is not the case. Although traditional Sanskrit Drama died in the thirteenth century, its successor *kuttiyattam* extended over the twentieth century when the West was obsessed with mimetic realism.

Although Western drama affected China in the form of "spoken drama" in the twentieth century, traditional Chinese theater was also an anti-realist theater. Beijing Opera was a unique Chinese theatrical style:

Unlike its predecessors, Beijing Opera is primarily a theatrical rather than a literary form; its emphasis is upon rigidly controlled conventions of acting, dancing, and singing rather than upon the text. Instead of a single work, an evening's program in Beijing Opera is usually made up of a series of selections, many of them acts or portions of longer works intermingled with acrobatic displays. There are no intermissions and usually the scenes are arranged to ensure that the best actors are saved for the final episodes. (Brockett, 1995: 607)

When talking about anti-realist theater approaches in the East and Asia, the most important theatrical style is of course Japanese Noh Theatre. Having emerged in the late fourteenth century, Noh Theatre is basically a ritualistic form of theater which rejects the conventions of realist theater or representation of outside world on stage. Brockett describes the ritual of Noh theatrical tradition:

Noh dramas are classified into five types: *kamimono*, or plays praising the gods; *shuramono*, plays about warriors; *kazuramono*, plays about women; *kuruimono*, miscellaneous plays, most often about mad persons or spirits but sometimes about unmasked "living persons"; and *kirinomono*, plays about demons, devils, or other supernatural beings. Traditionally, a program is made up of one play of each type performed in the order listed above, making up a pattern which shows, first, the innocence and peace of the world of the gods; then human error, repentance, and possibility of redemption; and, finally, the glory of defeating those forces that stand in the way of peace and harmony. Since World War II, programs of five plays have been considered too lengthy, and now they are usually made up of two or three plays, although still chosen to provide some sense of older scheme. (Brockett, 1995: 617)

It is important to note that in this description Noh Theatre is a ritualistic as well as symbolic form of theater. Noh Theatre artists do not have a concern to reflect the outside world on stage; rather, they are interested in supernatural elements, and a stylistic approach on stage. In that sense, it wouldn't be wrong to say that Noh Theatre follows the tradition of the ritualistic roots of theater. To remember, according to the ritualistic origin theory of theatre, the roots of theater lie in rituals.

Another important point about all these forms of anti-realistic theater is that these forms require the intellectual participation of the audience in the play, rather than downgrading the status of the audience to merely "viewers" as in the realist plays. Referring back to Brockett's interpretation of the relationship between theater and audience:

Because it relies on indirectness, suggestion, simplicity, and restraint, Noh makes great demands on its audience, for it is not easy to comprehend fully or to enter the realm it embodies. It is not essentially storytelling; rather, it seeks through retrospection about some past event to evoke an emotional state or mood. (Brockett, 1995: 617)

Thus, the audience of anti-realist theater is not a “passive viewer” who only watches what is presented to him; but rather someone who has to draw wise conclusions using his intellect to be able to comprehend what is happening on stage. This approach would be adopted by anti-realist playwrights of the post-war period, as well.

Just as the theatres of the East and Asia, African theater also depended on ritualistic and performative grounds rather than merely story-telling or reflecting the real world. Brockett underlines the difference between the two theatres:

It is difficult for Westerners to gain an understanding of indigenous African performance as a total experience. Those who write about it often take it out of its cultural context or tend to divide it into its components, each studied in isolation from the rest, a practice that disturbs the totality forged by the several “languages” of performance as they work off each other, often improvisationally. (Brockett, 1995: 667)

The purpose of talking about all these examples from the theatres of the East, Asia, and Africa is not to suggest that one form of theater was better than the other; but to challenge the idea that theatre should reflect the reality to the greatest extent possible, and the primary purpose of the theater should be to convey messages to the audience, either political or social, and to underline that the latter approach is predominantly “Western”. And, thus it is required once again to underline that this approach to theater was an intentional result of political conditions in the west at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, rather than an artistic preference.

If we turn back to the Western theater, although anti-realist approaches were recognized widely following the World War II, the roots go far back to the beginning of the twentieth century. When Stanislavski’s realist method was at peak and unquestionably accepted as the ultimate form of theater, there were some attempts of anti-realistic theater in different parts of Europe, such as Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* in France (1896), and the works of German playwrights Hofmannsthal and Wedekind,

and of course aesthetic plays of Oscar Wilde in England; however, the biggest challenge to realism would rise from Russia again, the cradle of realist theater.

Once a member of Stanislavski's group, Meyerhold left Moscow Art Theater and started to establish his innovative anti-realistic theater around 1910s. Meyerhold's technique is described by Brockett:

Between 1910 and 1914 Meyerhold also established studios where he experimented with circus and commedia dell'arte techniques. In one studio the entire auditorium was treated as a performance space which intermingled actors and spectators. Actors evolved their own scripts and experimented with geometrically patterned movement, improvisation, and rhythm. Meyerhold also began to turn the scenic background into a mere apparatus for acting- a collection of steps and levels. Meyerhold was the first major director to believe that the director is the major force in the theatre and that a script is simply material to be molded and reworked as the director wishes. (Brockett, 1995: 456)

Meyerhold's artistic stance was revolutionary for his time when it was believed that theatre should be a representation of real world and actors should try to "be" as some other characters on stage. Quite naturally his ideas were not welcomed easily, and maybe the biggest objection came from his former teacher, Stanislavski.

Stanislavski was aware of the fact that anti-realist approaches were flourishing in different parts of the world; however, he never accepted such a theatre although he made some trials. Brockett says that Moscow Art Theater produced some non-realistic plays such as Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* and Leonid Andreyev's *The Life of Man*, however Stanislavski gave up these trials and ultimately rejected anti-realism. Brockett explains what happened after the production of *The Life of Man*:

Stanislavsky staged it against black curtains, on which windows, doors, and walls were outlined in white rope. Although the production was popular, Stanislavsky withdrew it because he felt the acting was too abstract. In 1911 the Moscow Art Theatre established the First Studio, under the direction of Leopold Sullerzhitsky system but also to encourage nonrealistic approaches. Here a number of future leaders, notably Richard Boleslavsky, Mikhail Chekhov, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov, received their training. But, if Stanislavsky experimented with nonrealistic approaches, any marked departure from realism was ultimately unacceptable to him since all tended to "dematerialize" the actor. (Brockett, 1995: 455)

Stanislavski and Meyerhold remained rivals for nearly thirty years. Their rivalry was in a sense the embodiment of the rivalry between realist and anti-realist

approaches. However, always in opposition to the Russian state, Meyerhold was executed in 1940 by the state following a series of tortures. However, anti-realist theater would continue flourishing.

The biggest problem with the realism in the second half of the twentieth century was that realist theatre depended on the recreation of outside reality on stage; however, after the two world wars it was obvious that there was nothing in this world to be recreated. Millions of people died, countries were destroyed completely, all ideals of humanity proved to fail. It was a time of chaos, depression, and disappointment. Recreating this reality was meaningless. Moreover, conveying messages or giving lessons to the audience, which was the basis of realist theater, proved to be a futile attempt. Thus, theatre had to find new ways to create another reality on stage which depended on neither political nor social concerns but on artistic grounds. This led to the emergence of a new term: anti-theater. *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory* defines anti-theater:

Anti-theatre: The term was devised sometime in the 1950s and denotes any form of drama which is not naturalistic, traditional, conventional or “legit”; thus, theatre which disobeys or actively goes against accepted laws and rules of dramaturgy. It has been used to describe the Theatre of the Absurd. (Cuddon, 2000: 45)

In accordance with anti-theater, a new form of playwriting was unavoidable, which turned out to produce anti-play:

A dramatic work which not only ignores the traditional conventions but actively distorts them. There is no observable plot and little development of character. Dialogue is often inconsequential or totally disconnected. Playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd have used anti-play techniques. Sometimes they have been very successful. (Cuddon, 2000: 44)

Of course, anti-theater and anti-play approaches are directly related to the philosophical thought of “existentialism”, and most of the time the birth of The Theatre of the Absurd is attributed to existentialism. Thus, it would be impossible to analyze the attempts of anti-theatre and anti-play without the knowledge of existential thought. To start with the dictionary definition of existentialism:

In philosophy, the term *exist* and *existence* denote something active rather than passive and thus are closely dependent on the Latin root *ex*, “out” + *sistere* from *stare*, “to stand”. The term existentialism means “pertaining to existence”; or, in logic, “predicating existence”. Philosophically, it now applies

to a vision of the condition and existence of man, his place and function in the world, and his relationship, a lack of one, with God. It is generally agreed that existentialism derives from the thinking of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55), and especially in his books *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *The Concept of Dread* (1844) and *Sickness Unto Death* (1848)... Jean-Paul Sartre is the hierophant of modern existentialism and his version, expressed through his novels, plays and philosophical writings, is the one that has caught on and been the most widely influential. In Sartre's vision man is born into a kind of void, a mud. He has the liberty to remain in this mud and thus lead a passive, supine, acquiescent existence (like Oblomov and Samuel Beckett's sad tatterdemalions) in a "semiconscious" state and in which he is scarcely aware of himself. (Cuddon, 2000: 260)

As stated previously, the feeling of disappointment and chaos following the World War II was basically the reason for the flourishing of modern existentialism, which unavoidably affected the world of theatre and art.

Actually, I prefer to avoid the use of the word "Absurd" to describe the theatrical movement which emerged in the post-war period, and which was led by Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, Genet, and Albee, as the word generally holds a pejorative connotation, and implies an outdated movement in theatre. Instead, I prefer to use "anti-realist approaches" or "anti-theatre" for this movement.

Anti-realist playwrights were aware of the fact that the world after the World War II was not the same place with the world before the War, thus demanded a different artistic style and approach. As underlined before, nothing remained in the real life to be recreated on stage, and recreating the outside reality was, in a way, dignifying the outside reality, and normalizing its negative aspects. Moreover, conveying messages either social or political was not the primary task of art. The audience may draw some conclusions through the works of art, but this is not the starting point of the artist when creating an artwork. An artist's primary concern should be to create his own reality on stage rather than imitate the outside reality which is already accessible to the audience.

Another problem with the realistic approach is on the side of the acting style. A Realist director would want his actors to "be" the character they are acting, and all the acting techniques of Stanislavski and other realist directors depended on this criterion; however, it is obvious that this is psychologically impossible, and unhealthy, as well. You can never "be" another person no matter what technique you use and this

results in serious psychological damage on the actor. Moreover, in that kind of acting, the director forgets about his artistic position and acts as a psychologist or a life coach (in the context of 21st century). For example, one of the most renowned acting trainers of the 21st century Eric Morris, wrote a series of books on his acting methodology, which are more like psychological techniques to reach the subconscious of the actor; however, for us, this is not the task of the director. This was one of the points anti-realist approaches were criticizing. Of course, it is vital to quote Martin Esslin's definition of anti-realist theater here as he is the first critic who founded the term. Esslin states:

The hallmark of the Theatre of the Absurd is its sense that certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that they have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions...

This sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition is, broadly speaking, the theme of the plays of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Genet, and the other writers in this book. But it is not merely the subject-matter that defines what is here called the Theatre of the Absurd ... (That Theatre also) strives to express its sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought ... (It seeks) to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which they are expressed. (Esslin, 1973)

A very significant common point of all the works of anti-realist theater is that they actually give the audience an active, intellectual role. In conventional realist theatre, the audience is in a passive "viewer" position. The audience is presented with all the details and required merely to "view" what is presented to him without a need to intellectually get involved in the play. And, obviously in the realist theater, what matters is the playwright's point of view either social or political, as the playwright is trying to convey his message to the audience. Thus, the audience is totally passivized. It is not difficult to understand the reason for this deliberate preference if the political conditions of the period when realism flourished are taken into consideration. However, in anti-realist theater, there should always be an intellectually active audience who question, and challenge the ideas of the playwright; very basically, who try to interpret what he sees on stage. This is due to the fact that anti-realist theatre is an open-ended form, and the primary purpose of the anti-realist playwright is not to

dictate his personal view on the audience but to create question marks in the minds of the audience.

Of course, anti-realist approaches in theater were faced with serious objections at the beginning by both the critics and the audience. It was something completely different and shocking for the audience and they complained that they couldn't understand the "message" of the play. On the other hand, there were the critics who believed that modernism and a stylistic theatrical form was in no way acceptable as the primary purpose of theater should be social and political.

The biggest objection to anti-realist theater came from Marxist critic Georg Lukacs. His criticism against anti-realist theater basically constitutes the starting point of this dissertation as most of the other critics who were opposed to anti-realist approaches in theater and who intentionally tried to label anti-realist theater (or "the theatre of absurd" in their words) as outdated have been influenced from Lukacs' ideas to a great extent. In his article *The Ideology of Modernism*, Lukacs, who claims that anti-realist approach is a bourgeois approach, explains the basis of his objection to anti-realist approaches:

What must be avoided at all costs is the approach generally adopted by bourgeois-modernist critics themselves: that exaggerated concern with formal criteria, with questions of style and literary technique. This approach may appear to distinguish sharply between "modern" and "traditional" writing. In fact, it fails to locate the decisive formal problems and turns a blind eye to their inherent dialectic. We are presented with a false polarization which by exaggerating the importance of stylistic differences, conceals the opposing principles actually underlying and determining contrasting styles. (Lukacs, 1962: 17)

In another part of the same article, he claims that ideology of the artist is the primary criterion that determines the artwork:

What determines the style of a given work of art? How does the intention determine the form? (We are concerned here, of course, with the intention realized in the work; it need not coincide with the writer's conscious intention). The distinctions that concern us are not those between stylistic "techniques" in the formalistic sense. It is the view of the world, the ideology or *weltanschauung* underlying a writer's work, that counts. And it is the writer's attempt to reproduce this view of the world which constitutes his "intention" and is the formative principle underlying the style of a given piece of writing. (Lukacs, 1962: 19)

Lukacs' position here is quite problematic for us because he finds a direct link between the ideology of the artist and the purpose for his artwork, and at the same time blaming modernist writers for having ideological concerns in the rest of his article. His another claim is that all literature should have a perspective as a rule and believes that modernist writers do not provide the reader with that perspective:

I think, that modernism must deprive literature of a sense of perspective. This would not be surprising; rigorous, modernists such as Kafka, Benn, and Musil have always indignantly refused to provide their readers with any such thing. I will return to the ideological implications of the idea of perspective later. Let me say here that, in any work of art, perspective is of overriding importance. It determines the course and content; it draws together the threads of the narration; it enables the artist to choose between the important and the superficial, the crucial and the episodic. The direction in which characters develop is determined by perspective, only those features being described which are material to their development. The more lucid the perspective- as in Moliere or the Greeks- the more economical and striking the selection. Modernism drops this selective principle. (Lukacs, 1962: 33)

Lukacs' understanding of *perspective* finds its roots in the art of Renaissance and depends on the worldview or *perspective* of the artist alone. What Lukacs misses here is that this understanding of *perspective* passivizes the audience and imposes the artist's truths or point of view on the reader or the audience. When Lukacs claims that this should be the basis of all forms of art, he cannot go beyond declaring his personal opinions, and fails to explain why this should be a rule in art. Moreover, it is not fair to claim that modernist literature does not have a *perspective*, instead modernist literature including drama depends on multiple perspectives of the audience rather than the single and overruling perspective of the artist.

Lukacs is totally an opponent of abstraction and believes that abstraction in modern art and literature disintegrates the society and it is the artist's task to unite society by providing them with the correct messages and *perspective*. And the only way to do this, for him, is the use of mimetic realism which depends on outer reality.

This idea is still being adopted by the followers of realism in theater. To give an example, "in-er-face (in-your-face)" theater" which emerged in England in 1990s basically adopts the same principles with the realism understanding of Lukacs. Theatre practitioners who are in "in-your-face" movement believe that it is the theater's primary responsibility to show the real life on stage in its harshest, most extreme form,

and to shock the reader with the realities of everyday life. In-your-face is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* as below:

A term coined and energetically promoted by Aleks Sierz in his book *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (2001) and in an accompanying website (see below), to refer to a new wave of British drama of the 1990s that was notable for its provocative uses of obscene language, nudity, violence, and taboo subject-matter. This feature of new 1990s drama had been noted before, and referred to by theatre critics as ‘the new brutalism’ among other labels. (Baldick, 2008).

Actually, in-your-face theatre, for us, was very similar to the Gladiator wars of the Ancient Romans in terms of their motivation. Both of them aimed to shock the audience with the harshness of real life, using similar methods. For example, it is very common to see a scene of rape, vomiting, or brutal violence on the stage if you are seeing an in-your-face play. That is not to say that there should be a limit to what is shown on the stage but the point of criticism here is the rationale behind this artistic stance.

In-your-face and conventional realist theater in broader terms, aim to “show” something to the audience, or convey a message. Practitioners of in-your-face claim that showing the brutality and harshness of life on stage would increase awareness towards these issues, which is basically a false assumption. Contrarily, what in-your-face and realist theater do is to normalize the harshness and brutality of real life and in that way passivize the audience by recreating the reality again and again. This is the major point that anti-realist theater is against. Anti-realist theater believes that recreating the reality is actually attributing a sublime role to the outside reality, which is not the purpose of art. Art is expected to create its own reality, which is higher than the outside reality.

Having defined the two arguments, the starting point of this dissertation was to argue that the main purpose of theatre should not be to recreate reality on stage or to convey a social or political message to the audience, and that the political and social concerns may be the result of the artistic work produced, not the motivation to create. The playwrights discussed in the study have been chosen in accordance with the innovative stylistic techniques they brought to theater, to prove that, contrary to what Lukacs believes, what should matter in theater is the artistic technique rather than the

social/political message of the play, and that an artist (a playwright) can have a political stance without being explicitly political.

When I first proposed my title to my first PhD committee, one of the professors who was studying postcolonial literature, objected harshly saying that everything had been studied about Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd, and that this is an outdated field of study in academia. I heard similar comments when I was staging and acting in Beckett plays. Actually, these comments acted as motivation for this dissertation. First, to challenge the term “Theatre of the Absurd” by offering a broader term “anti-realist theater”, and second to show that anti-realist theater was not a particular point in the 50s and 60s but that it is a tradition which has remained updated for over 50 years, but which has been intentionally neglected by the followers of the conventional approaches. I hope this study will be a step in restoring the honor of anti-realist theater.

CHAPTER I: PIONEERS OF A NEW MOVEMENT IN THEATER: BECKETT AND IONESCO

“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”
Samuel Beckett

There would be no other writer who is more suitable than Samuel Beckett to start a study on anti-realist playwriting. It is a doubtless fact that the world of theater can be divided into two periods now being “Before Beckett” and “After Beckett”. He was one of the most influential figures to challenge the understanding of conventional realist theater through both his playwriting and directing.

The roots of anti-realism in the Western theater is sometimes traced back to the end of the nineteenth century to August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*, with the playwright’s stylistic techniques and symbolism; however, I would prefer to categorize *Miss Julie* as a symbolist play rather than an anti-realist play.

Beckett’s influence for the world of theater has been in two ways. First, he has revolutionized the method of playwriting which had been based on story telling. Second, after Brecht, the director became the leading figure in theater once again. Although Stanislavski was also a very influential director, his theater had mostly created a star system which put the actors to the forefront.

If Beckett’s world was the relatively darker side of the anti-realist theater, Eugene Ionesco’s was the funnier and ironic one. Born in Romania, Ionesco influenced the whole history of theater with his universal style combining the elements of irony and his unique symbolism. The common point of these two writers was that they did not believe in the preset conventions of the theatre, and proved that another reality was possible. Most of the other playwrights of the movement followed their path, each contributing their unique characteristics to the movement.

Thus, in the first chapter of the study, Beckett’s and Ionesco’s works will be analyzed in terms of the new artistic style they offered to the world of theater, and the stylistic features used by two playwrights will be compared and contrasted where relevant.

1. Eugene Ionesco and Anti-Realist Theatre

Eugene Ionesco is not reticent in terms of revealing the sub meanings and motives of his works, as well as his opinions on art and theater. He is also a good critic of his own works, which makes it easier for the reader to contrast traditional theater and avant-garde theater. Interestingly, Ionesco did not start his career as a playwright and even detested theatre for a period of time. He starts his work "*Notes&Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre*" by explaining his motives for being a playwright:

When I am asked the question: "Why do you write plays?" I always feel very awkward and have no idea what to answer. Sometimes it seems to me that I started writing for the theatre because I hated it. I used to enjoy reading literature and essays and I used to go to the movies. Occasionally I would listen to music and visit the art galleries; but I almost never went to the theatre. (Ionesco, 1964: 15)

The main reason why Ionesco used to hate theatre so much was that he thought everything about theatre was "*arbitrary*". This also explains the reason why he pioneered the way for a new form of theatre. Indeed, what Ionesco found arbitrary, was the conventions of the traditional realist plays. He believed that it was impossible for an actor to be someone else. It was only possible to pretend to be someone else and pretending was a "*dishonest*" act for Ionesco. Ionesco believed that "pretending" limited the imaginary world of the artist and imagination was the only reality and truth for him. Thus, he based his artistic works on imagination rather than representation of the outside world.

Being based on imaginary worlds is one of the aspects of Ionesco's theatre which puts it under the category of anti-realist theater. Another significant aspect is Ionesco's approach to political theater. As most of the anti-realist playwrights, Ionesco does not believe in the requirement for the playwright to hold a political stance in his works. On the contrary, he believes that theatre for the sake of political purposes is not art at all. He positions art and theatre to a higher level than worldly matters such as politics. In "*Notes&Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre*" he says:

The themes chosen by many authors merely spring from a certain ideological fashion, which is something less than the period it belongs to. Or else these themes are the expression of some particular political attitude, and the plays that illustrate them will die with the ideology that has inspired them, for ideologies go out of fashion. (Ionesco, 1964: 21-22)

Ionesco believes that a theatre based on the ideology of the author is destined to die soon due to the nature of ideologies. Therefore, an artistic form is the characteristic which would immortalize the theatrical work. The playwright who can create such a form would be able to transfer his artistic work throughout generations. As an example for such a playwright, he talks about the works of Pirandello. Pirandello's works, according to Ionesco, are based not on his ideology, but on his dramatic technique and this makes them immortal and universal.

Another point Ionesco emphasizes about his artistic stance is the significance of discovery over second-hand knowledge. He thinks that all the political works are based on second-hand knowledge and they are written in order to serve to a greater purpose, which is to make a propaganda of the political worldview of the playwright. Ionesco is right to a great extent on this idea, especially when socialist-realist plays and playwrights are taken into consideration. However, it must be questioned whether a good play can be defined as one which reflects the political stance of its playwright as far as possible. The same question can be asked the other way around. Are we supposed to consider a play as a masterpiece if it has the great power to inflame its audience's political feelings? These are the questions Ionesco would certainly respond negatively.

There is a common false belief among the modern theatre audience and professionals about this political stance of the playwright. Most of the time, it is believed that when a playwright does not voice any concerns over the current political issues, his/her works lack essence. However, Ionesco invalidates this perception through a new approach to art and theatre, as well as Beckett, Genet, Adamov and others. About the use of theatre for other purposes, Ionesco says:

Theatre can be nothing but theatre, although some contemporary specialists in "theatrology" consider it not true that a thing can be identified with itself- which seems to me the most bewildering and unlikely form of paradox. For these "specialists" the theatre, being something different from the theatre, is ideology, allegory, politics, lectures, essays on literature. This is as much an aberration as it would be to claim that music was archeology, that painting was physics or mathematics; and tennis anything you like but tennis. (Ionesco, 1964: 34)

His views on the political aspect of theatre have been widely criticized by critics who have a profound belief in the concept of reality imposed upon us by

socialist realism. In a review of two of his plays (*The Chairs* and *The Lesson*) Kenneth Tynan accused him of escaping from realism and not being on the main road. In reply to Tynan, Ionesco underlines the common false perception of “reality”:

As for the idea of reality, Mr. Tynan seems (as he also made clear in an interview published in *Encounter*) to acknowledge only one plane of reality: what is called the “social” plane, which seems to me to be the most external, in other words the most superficial. That is why I think that writers like Sartre (Sartre the author of political melodramas), Osborne, Miller, Brecht, etc. are simply the new *auteurs du boulevard*, representatives of a left-wing conformism which is just as lamentable as the right-wing sort. These writers offer nothing that one does not know already, through books and political speeches. (Ionesco, 1964: 91)

The idea “to be able to offer something new” constitutes the basis of Ionesco’s theatre as he repeatedly underlines the significance of this in all his interviews and writings on theatre. He believes that “political” or “ideological” theatre (he refers to the socialist realist playwrights mostly) does not reflect the deep reality of the world contrary to the common belief and it is rather stuck in a superficial reality. Besides, all the subject matters of ideological theater are already available to everyone through books and political talks. So, why should someone go and see a play instead of taking part in a political propaganda or joining to a political party?

Ionesco’s own explanation of avant-garde theatre is also of great importance in evaluating his artistic work. Obviously, Ionesco is not satisfied with the established conventions of realist theatre as he finds them “*arbitrary*”. This led him to seek alternative ways in playwriting. However, rather than offering a strict definition of avant-garde theater, he emphasizes the fact that every piece of writing which opposes to the established conventions may be considered as avant-garde regardless of the period it was written. The basic principle of avant-garde is that it questions and deconstructs the traditional approach:

I prefer to define the avant-garde in terms of opposition and rupture. While most writers, artists and thinkers believe they belong to their time, the revolutionary playwright feels he is running counter to his time. As a matter of fact, thinkers, artists, and so on, after a certain time only make use of ossified forms; they feel they are becoming more and more firmly established in some ideological, artistic or social order which to them seems up to date but which in fact is already tottering and yawning with unsuspected cracks. By the very force of circumstances any system, the moment it is established, is already outworn. As soon as a form of expression becomes recognized, it is already out

of date. A thing once spoken is already dead, reality lies somewhere beyond it and the thought has become petrified, so to speak. (Ionesco, 1964: 41)

He also identifies an avant-garde man as “*an opponent of an existing system*”. Thus, avant-garde is not limited to a time period for Ionesco, but it is rather a stance which opposes the traditional conventions.

Most of this is what Ionesco reveals about himself in his writings and speeches; however, the best source to understand the playwright and his art deeply, without doubt, is his plays.



1.1. Anti-realistic elements in “The Bald Soprano”

The Bald Soprano is Ionesco’s first play, which he wrote just after the end of the Second World War, in 1948. The play emerged from Ionesco’s attempt to learn English, and thus has been widely recognized as a satire on the English middle-classes. He had been practicing with an English Manual when he came up with the characters of Smiths and Martins and suddenly found out that the dialogues between these two families were genuinely dramatic. This was how he started writing *The Bald Soprano*. Even this starting point is quite revolutionary in the history of playwriting. A traditional playwright often decides on a synopsis before writing a play and knows beforehand how he will end his play. On the contrary, it seems that Ionesco started writing his play without a strict opinion about how he would finalize it. Process rather than the end product is what matters for the artist, which is one of the milestones of anti-realistic approaches to art.

Another anti-realistic element in the play is its unexpected title. In conventional realist theatre, the title of the play always has a connection with the synopsis of the play. It offers something to the audience about the content and story of the play. To give an example, in the plays of Chekhov, this connection is obvious. *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya* all of these titles are revealed in the synopsis of the plays. On the contrary, in Ionesco’s play, there is nothing about a singer without hair. The title *The Bald Soprano* has nothing to do with the synopsis of the play. The original title for Ionesco’s play was *English Without Toil*, but then it was changed into *The Bald Soprano*. Ionesco, in an interview with him explains why he chose this title for the play:

That’s a well-known story, and I’ve told it many times. It happened by pure accident. Nicolas Bataille, my director, did not like the original title. During a rehearsal one of the actors flubbed his lines. In the text I had something about a blond prima donna, but he said ‘bald prima donna’. We all laughed, and the mistake became the title of the play. Of course, we also changed the reference within the play. This made it even wilder- which is exactly what I was aiming for. (ed. Wager, 124)

This story is quite similar to how Ionesco came up with the idea to write a play at the beginning. Both the idea of the play and its title emerged by coincidence. This is a significant point to underline as this is not very possible for a traditional realist

playwright. A conventional realist playwright usually sets up his mind strictly beforehand about what he is going to say in his play. In a sense, such a playwright writes his plays to say something, mostly to voice his own worldview, and he seeks for the most efficient way possible to do so during the process of writing his work. On the other hand, an anti-realist playwright such as Ionesco, is an experimentalist. He would neither say nor teach something in his plays. He is a seeker whose main purpose is not to find an ultimate artistic form but to deconstruct all the established forms for the sake of trial and process.

It may sound like Ionesco was accepted as a revolutionary playwright at once and his plays were widely acclaimed when they were first produced. On the contrary, it took him two years to find a theatre which would stage *The Bald Soprano*, and it was a great failure with a total of twenty-five performances in six weeks. Moreover, according to Walter Wager, the editor of *The Playwrights Speak*, only three to ten seats were filled in most of these twenty-five performances.

Ionesco aimed to write a tragedy over language and communication; however, he was surprised to find out that the audience regarded the play as a comedy. The play is based on dialogues rather than actions as in the conventional realist theater. As mentioned before, there is neither a chronological nor a logical sequence of events. Thus, as Dr. Abdullatif Acarlioglu suggests, it is possible to start reading the play from any part of it. The subheading of the play also attracts attention at first sight. Ionesco prefers to use the word “*anti-play*” for his work, which suggests a further deviation from realist theatre.

The play starts with somewhat weird stage directions:

A middle-class English interior, with English armchairs. An English evening. Mr. Smith, an Englishman, seated in his English armchair and wearing English slippers, is smoking his English pipe and reading an English newspaper, near an English fire. He is wearing English spectacles and a small gray English mustache. Beside him, in another English armchair, Mrs. Smith, an Englishwoman, is darning some English socks. A long moment of English silence. The English clock strikes 17 English strokes. (Ionesco, 2015: 3)

The directions are somewhat weird because it is impossible to understand what is meant by “*an English evening*”, “*an English fire*”, or “*an English silence*”. This is quite contrary to the stage directions in conventional realist plays. In a realist play, the

playwright would aim to give all the details of the stage true to the outside world as much as possible. He would never use any directions which are not concrete enough or open to interpretation. He wouldn't leave anything to be completed by the intellect of the reader. However, Ionesco, even from the very beginning of his play, deconstructs this rule. This may be because of an attempt to make a parody of conventional theatre or merely a coincidence just as in the case of the title of the play.

This deviance from the realist theatre is also apparent in the other stage directions throughout the play. There are some directions such as "*a pause*" or "*another moment of silence*", which would seem meaningless in a realist play. However, in a play such as *The Bald Soprano*, which focuses on the impossibility of communication, these moments of pauses or silences are of great significance. On page twenty of the play when four characters try to communicate with each other through meaningless utterances, there is a "*silence*" direction after each sentence. These pauses would be inherited by Pinter within ten years after Ionesco and would constitute the basis of Pinteresque style.

Ionesco is also quite strict in stage directions. About the strike of the clock, the stage directions are "*The clock strikes seven times. Silence. The clock strikes three times. Silence. The clock doesn't strike*". These kinds of directions are not very familiar to the reader and audience of realist plays. Ionesco doesn't use the stage directions to imitate the outside world exactly but to create a unique reality on stage which is thought-provoking for the audience. However, interestingly it is also possible to come up with a few obscure directions in the second half of the play, such as "*The striking of the clock underlines the speeches, more or less strongly, according to the case*". It may seem difficult to understand the reason why Ionesco, a playwright who is very strict in stage directions, left them obscure in some places. However, it makes sense when the experimentalist nature of the playwright is taken into consideration.

The characters in the play are also extremely different from the characters of a realist play. There are six characters in total: Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Martin, Mary the Maid, and The Fire Chief. Mary and The Fire Chief suddenly appear only in some parts of the play. Smiths and Martins are two couples who seem very similar to

the characters of a realist play; however, when the (un)communication among them is taken into consideration, it can obviously be seen that these couples have very limited resemblance to the couples in realist plays.

The names of the characters suggest an insight into Ionesco's approach to Character. Smiths and Martins are very widely used names in English. Ionesco does not prefer to use rare or specific names for his characters. The reason behind this must be to emphasize the insignificance of the specific characters in the play. They can represent any Smiths or Martins. They are not individual characters unlike the ones in the realist theater, but somewhat representational. By doing so, Ionesco invalidates the strong emphasis on individual lives in the realist theatre, and focuses on the concept of communication rather than the individualities or the psychological backgrounds of the characters.

Just as their names, their conversations are also very similar to the conversations between couples who have been living together for a long time. Especially the first scene of the play resembles the setting of a realist play in that sense. Mrs. Smith gives a long speech to her husband but it is obvious that the husband is not listening to his wife; however, he continuously clicks his tongue to cover his indifference. Even from this first scene, the reader is faced with the failure of language to communicate. Mrs. Smith's speech continues for a very long time, around a number of unrelated topics ranging from to whom their children resemble more to the Rumanian grocer advised by a neighbor. Mr. Smith gets interested only when Mrs. Smith starts to talk about Doctor MacKenzie King, who tries everything on himself before prescribing it to his patients. From that spot on, the conversation turns into a one which can never be found in a realist play. Ionesco shocks the reader/audience by a switch from the realist setting.

Around the middle of the scene, the audience meets the third character Mary the Maid. However, this servant is extremely different from the ones in realist plays. Mary first introduces herself to the audience by saying *"I'm the maid. I've spent a very pleasant afternoon. I've been to the cinema with a man and I've seen a film with some women."* This is quite unfamiliar to the audience of realist theatre. In the realist

theatre, a character does not introduce herself to the audience in the middle of the play, while the other two characters are continuing their conversation. This somewhat reminds of Brecht's alienation effect. Another striking part of Mary is when she welcomes the Martins. Normally, in a realist play, a maid would be expected to behave decently to the visitors. However, Mary says to the Martins "*Why have you come so late! You're not very polite. People should be punctual. Do you understand? But sit down there, anyway, and wait now that you're here*". This is a shocking attitude for the audience of the conventional theatre. Obviously, Ionesco is making a parody of hierarchical relationships here.

The other couple The Martins are also an embodiment of non-communication from the very first moment they enter the stage. Mr. and Mrs. Martin start a very long and weird conversation on where they met each other. We know that they are married but they can't even remember each other for a very long time. They are able to find out that they are married only after discussing a series of coincidences. The conversation between them is also shocking because at a point Mr. Martin claims that he has a daughter with a white eye and a red eye, and Mrs. Martin says she also has such a daughter. Most probably, they can't even remember the real eye color of their daughter, which is a great parody on the limitations of human mind. Throughout this weird conversation, they continuously use some words such as "*how bizarre! How curious!*" to express their bewilderment, which can be regarded as a mockery of coincidental turning points which are very common in realist plays.

The last character of the play is the Fire Chief. Previous to his appearance on stage, the other characters go into a meaningless argument on who knocked the door or whether there would be someone on the door or not. The Fire Chief is also an unfamiliar character because he has an order to extinguish all the fires in the town and thus looking for a fire everywhere. This is also exemplary of how language can fail to communicate. Someone ordered him to extinguish all the fires but there should be some fires to be able to extinguish them. This misunderstanding leads to a humorous conversation with the Fire Chief:

FIRE CHIEF: It's because – pardon me- I have orders to extinguish all the fires in the city.

MRS. MARTIN: All?

FIRE CHIEF: Yes, all.

MRS. SMITH (*confused*): I don't know...I don't think so. Do you want me to go and look?

MR. SMITH (*sniffing*) : There can't be one here. There's no smell of anything burning.

FIRE CHIEF (*aggrieved*) : None at all? You don't have a little fire in the chimney, something burning in the attic or in the cellar? A little fire just starting, at least?

MRS. SMITH: I am sorry to disappoint you but I do not believe there is anything here at the moment. I promise that I will notify you when we do have something.

FIRE CHIEF: Please, don't forget, it would be a great help.

MRS. SMITH: That's a promise. (Ionesco, 2015: 29)

Especially the last part of the conversation is quite funny and anti-realistic. What kind of a realist character gets unhappy and feels guilty because there is no fire nowhere?

There is another character in the play who is never seen on stage but who gives the reader a significant clue about Ionesco's approach to Character. Mr. and Mrs. Smith start talking about Bobby Watson who has been dead for two years; however, it is obvious that Mrs. Smith doesn't even remember that he is dead. When they talk about Watson it turns out that there is not a single Bobby Watson but all the people in this family were called as Bobby Watson. This is another harsh attack to realist theatre in which the lives of specific characters are of great importance. Ionesco emphasizes the fact that he is not interested in individual lives but in universal conditions which are common to all people.

"The Bald Soprano" is an anti-realistic play or "anti-play" as Ionesco puts it also in terms of plot. Above all, there is no plot in the play. In a realist play, the plot would consist of an introduction, a climax, and a denouement; however, it is not

possible to talk about such an order in “The Bald Soprano”. There is no climax, no rising action, and no final at all. The question here is why should there be? Realist plays claim that they imitate our lives as truly as possible, but in our lives we do not experience the events in the same order all the time. Our lives may consist of eclectic parts without a certain beginning and end. Besides not having a strict plot, the play does not have an ending either. It turns back to the beginning of the play again, which suggests a recurring flow of non-communication. However, Ionesco himself suggests a completely different reason for this ending in a 1959 talk:

I had imagined a more shattering ending. Two, even, whichever the actors preferred. During the quarrel between the Smiths and the Martins the maid would make a fresh appearance and announce that dinner was served; all the action would cease, the two couples leaving the stage. as soon as it is empty, two or three accomplices in the audience start catcalling, kick up a row, shout protests and invade the stage...I was well aware that it was rather complicated to bring about an ending like this...And it was because I did not find another ending that we decided not to finish the play at all, but to begin it again. To emphasize the interchangeability of the characters I had the simple idea of replacing the Smiths by the Martins in the repetition of the opening scene. (Ionesco, 1959: 184-85)

Most of the time, the plot in realist plays develop in such a way because the playwright usually aims to give a lesson to the audience at the end of the play. Ionesco also makes a great parody of this “enlightening” the audience or giving them a lesson by using some fables in the play. The Fire Chief tells some fable-like stories to the other characters; however, they do not make any sense at all. He starts with the story of “The Dog and The Cow”:

Once upon a time another cow asked another dog “Why have you not swallowed your trunk?” “Pardon me?” replied the dog, “it is because I thought that I was an elephant”. (Ionesco, 2015: 30)

Normally that kind of a story means to give a lesson to the reader but the story and all the others told by The Fire Chief and The Maid are so nonsense. Ionesco is obviously making fun of writers who aim to give a lesson to the reader by deconstructing these fables.

Ionesco also uses some objects in *The Bald Soprano* as symbols which are of

great significance in evaluating the play. The most prevalent of these is of course the clock in the house. At the beginning of the play, the clock strikes for seventeen times, as indicated in the directions and then the play starts with Mrs. Smith's opening words. It is obvious that the time indicated by the clock in Smiths' house differs from the one in a realist play. Although the clock strikes seventeen times, Mrs. Smith says "*There, it's nine o'clock*"; thus suggesting a time concept different from realist plays. Then, on page 11, it is indicated in the directions that "*the clock strikes seven times. Silence. The clock doesn't strike*" and just after this direction Mr. Smith starts talking again. In a sense, the clock represents a signal for the characters to speak. Ionesco also uses the clock to somewhat awaken the audience in the middle of the play as the direction on page 19 suggests "*The clock strikes once very loud. This striking of the clock must be so loud that it makes the audience jump. The Martins do not hear it.*" It is also important here to note that the striking of the clock which makes the audience jump is not heard by the Martins, which suggests an idea about the characters. Dr. Acarlioglu suggests that Ionesco uses the clock also to criticize the fact that modern life people depend too much on time. This is somewhat another parody of bourgeois society. The first example of this appears at the very beginning of the play. The first words of Mrs. Smith are:

There, it's nine o'clock. We've drunk the soup, and eaten the fish and chips, and the English salad. The children have drunk English water. We've eaten well this evening. That's because we live in the suburbs of London and because our name is Smith. (Ionesco, 2015: 9)

It is obvious that time is like a big brother who controls the actions of our characters. They feel that some certain actions must be completed before it is nine o'clock, and they feel satisfied with the situation. This is how modern people, who are continuously faced with deadlines, usually feel throughout their lives. Another example of this can be seen in the words of Fire Chief when he says "*Excuse me, but I can't stay long. I should like to remove my helmet, but I haven't time to sit down.*"

In brief, Ionesco attacked the long believed conventions of realist theatre about what theatre and reality should be in various ways in this first play. *The Bald Soprano* is a play of futility of life and beliefs imposed upon us, meaninglessness, and failure

of language in communication. Although it has turned out to be a classic piece of theatre enduring more than fifty years, it was one of the most significant pioneers of a new and innovative approach to theatre and reality.



1.2 “The Lesson” as an Anti-Realist Play

The Lesson is another early play of Ionesco, which was written in 1951. Just like *The Bald Soprano*, it is a one-act play. Ionesco started writing full length plays only in the later part of his career. Although some critics have associated *The Lesson* with the political environment of Nazism and consider it as a political play, there is not a clear evidence to prove this within the play; however, it is obvious that Ionesco makes use of the elements of conventional realist theatre much more in this second play when compared to *The Bald Soprano*. This doesn't necessarily mean that Ionesco changed his style in his second play; but rather he improved his style by combining the elements of realist and anti-realist playwriting.

The basic difference between *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* is that it is somewhat possible to talk about a character development in the latter. There are three characters in total: the teacher, the girl pupil, and the maid again. However, unlike in *The Bald Soprano* the reader is faced with a transformation of characters throughout the play. The teacher is a very naïve and extremely kind character at the beginning of the play, giving private lessons at his home. This time, Ionesco gives the exact age of each character. The Teacher is between fifty and sixty, the girl pupil is eighteen, and the maid is between forty-five and fifty. When the professor meets the student, he is over polite:

Good. Yes, that's very good. Thank you. But you shouldn't have hurried too much, you know. I don't know quite how to apologize to you for having kept you waiting... I was just finishing...you understand, I was just... er... I do beg your pardon... I hope you will forgive me... (Ionesco, 2015: 184)

It is not very usual for a professor to apologize so many times from his student for just making her wait a few minutes. Thus, it is quite obvious even from the very first pages that we are not faced with a teacher and a student character in conventional terms. Following this first meeting, they start to talk about whether the student was able to find the house easily and she liked the place or not. All this dialogue suggests that the teacher is a very understanding person who is closely interested in the problems of his students; however, it would turn out to be the opposite at the end of the play. While teaching his lesson, the professor demonstrates a similar attitude,

encouraging the student in the best way possible. When the student says that Paris is the capital of France, which is a very basic information indeed, the professor displays an extreme approval by saying “*But yes, of course, yes! Bravo! That’s fine! That’s excellent! I congratulate you. You have the geography of your country at your fingertips. Your chief towns.*” (Ionesco 184) In a few lines below, when the student can count the names of the four seasons, the professor shows a similar reaction by saying:

That’s quite right. Mademoiselle. A very good answer. Excellent indeed. I am positive you will prove a very good pupil. You will make good progress. You are intelligent, you seem well-informed, good memory. (Ionesco, 2015: 185)

The point where we see the first hints of change in the professor’s character is when he tries to teach subtraction. This part of the play can also be considered as a criticism of the education system. The student does not have any problems with adding numbers. During the practice, the professor is astonished with the knowledge of the student:

PROFESSOR: What do one and one make?

PUPIL: One and one make two.

PROFESSOR (*astounded by his pupil’s erudition*): But that’s very good indeed! You’re extremely advanced in your studies. You’ll have very little difficulty in passing all your Doctorate examinations.

PUPIL: I’m very pleased to hear it, Sir. Especially from you.

PROFESSOR: Let us proceed a little further. What do two and one make?

PUPIL: Three.

PROFESSOR: Three and one?

PUPIL: Four.

PROFESSOR: Four and one?

PUPIL: Five.

PROFESSOR: Five and one.

PUPIL: Six.

PROFESSOR: Six and one?

PUPIL: Seven.

PROFESSOR: Seven and one?

PUPIL: Eight.

PROFESSOR: Seven and one?

PUPIL: Still eight.

PROFESSOR: Very good answer. Seven and one?

PUPIL: Eight again.

PROFESSOR: Excellent. Perfect. Seven and one?

PUPIL: Eight for the fourth time. And sometimes nine.

PROFESSOR: Magnificent! You're magnificent! Sublime! My warmest congratulations, Mademoiselle. There's no point in going on. You're quite first-rate at addition... (Ionesco, 2015: 190)

Indeed, this long part of the play is quite exemplary of anti-realist theatre. It is not very possible to come up with such a dialogue in a realist play. Although the questions are extremely easy, the professor claims that the student would be very successful in Doctorate exams. Not only the quality of the questions and the professor's reactions but also the dialogue's being open to various interpretations are components of an anti-realist play.

When it comes to subtraction, the reader is surprisingly faced with the failure of the student although the questions are still too easy. She can't even subtract three from four although the professor provides her with various examples throughout pages. This shows that the student is possibly a victim of the education system based on memorization. She memorized all the answers for addition and thus could answer all the questions, but she can't do it in subtraction because it requires her to use logical reasoning. Even if there is a criticism as suggested, this is not a criticism specific to a culture or a country but Ionesco focuses on a more universal issue here, which differs it from realist plays.

The student's problem with subtraction ends with a transformation of both characters. The professor gets angrier every minute and starts to torture the student

psychologically after a point. He doesn't stop imposing his power, based on his knowledge on the student, although the student repeats many times that she has severe toothache. On the other side, the student loses her confidence more in every wrong answer.

Failure of language in communication appears as a theme again just as in *The Bald Soprano*. After the failure in practice with subtraction, the professor decides to continue with linguistics and comparative philology. However, this is even more confusing for the student. The professor suggests that all languages are distinguished from each other by their striking resemblance to one another, which is quite an anti-realist remark. How could two things be so different from each other because they look like so similar? The professor continues lecturing without any empathy for the student who suffers from severe toothache, as he is the dominant one now due to his higher position. Although some critics have claimed that this is a criticism of the rise of Nazism, there is no obvious clue of this in the play.

The professor, extremely kind and naïve at the beginning of the play, turns into a cruel monster at the end, who murders his student. He aims to teach the difference among languages with a knife and this is the most tragic part of the play:

PROFESSOR: Ah! (*He goes quickly to the drawer and finds a big imaginary knife; he takes hold of it and brandishes it exultantly.*) Here's one, Mademoiselle, here's a knife! It's a pity this is the only one; but we'll try to make it serve for all the languages! All you need to do is to pronounce the word Knife in each language, while you stare closely at the object and imagine it belongs to the language you're using. (Ionesco, 2015: 212)

After making this explanation, he becomes more and more furious and tells the student that he would have her ears off if she couldn't pronounce the word correctly.

There is an important detail about the knife here. Ionesco suggests that the knife may be an imaginary one. The reason for this is that if the knife were a real knife, it would be the director's preference but if it were an imaginary one, the audience would be more free to create it in their mind. This freedom provided to the audience is also an important component of anti-realist playwriting. In a realist play, the playwright would most probably have given all the details of the knife which would be on stage.

Although there is somewhat a transformation of characters in *The Lesson* different from *The Bald Soprano*, we see at the end that it is not a transformation in conventional sense. The professor doesn't kill the student as a natural consequence of the events during the play, but he already knows that he is going to kill the student even from the very beginning of the play. We can easily deduce it from the maid's words:

And it's the fortieth time today! And every day it's the same story! Every day! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, at your age too! ... but you'll go and make yourself ill! There soon won't be any more pupils left. And a good thing, too. (Ionesco, 2015: 215)

We understand that the maid also knows the end of the day from the very beginning; however, she doesn't oppose to him killing the pupil before the murder is executed. This recurring event theme is also apparent in *The Bald Soprano*, as mentioned before. Just as *The Bald Soprano* ends by turning to the starting point, *The Lesson* ends by the maid's voice welcoming a new student. Thus, there is no resolution part in the plot in both plays contrary to realist plays.

Turning back to the characters in the play, Ionesco's characters have limited resemblance to the characters of the realist theatre despite the transformation they go through in the play. In a realist play, the playwright is mostly interested in the psychological background of the characters and their motives behind their actions; however, Ionesco's plays have nothing to do with the psychological conditions of the characters. That is, an actor who prepares for the role of the professor in *The Lesson* or any other part would fail if he preferred to approach the character through analyzing his psychological background. Thus, avant-garde theatre or anti-realist theatre requires an innovative style of acting and directing as well.

As suggested in the analysis of *The Bald Soprano*, stage directions in these first plays of Ionesco give significant hints about his theatrical approach. At the beginning of the play it is said in the stage direction:

The stage is empty when the curtain goes up, but will not long remain so. The doorbell rings and the voice of the Maid is heard off-stage. (Ionesco, 2015: 181)

In realist plays, it is not very usual to meet the audience with an empty stage. When we think about Chekhov productions, for example, everything on stage is ready for the audience in every detail so that a realist effect can be provided; however, Ionesco is not interested in that kind of an effect. The audience should be quite aware of the fact that there is an artistic event on stage rather than an imitation of a part of outside life. Another important point to be taken into consideration here is that Ionesco makes use of emptiness of the stage as a theatrical tool just as Pinter would use silence and pauses in his plays ten years later. These anti-realist playwrights are aware of the fact that they should look for new ways and medium to create an artistic language on stage.

On page 192, the stage direction says:

Neither the matches, nor any of the objects in question are visible: the professor will get up from the table, write on an imaginary blackboard with imaginary chalk, etc. (Ionesco, 2015: 192)

This is also quite contrary to realist theatre as actors in a realist play people use concrete objects during the play; however, Ionesco, by suggesting to use imaginary objects on stage, brings a new breath to his style. He would make use of this in “The Chairs” as well. This is innovative because it offers a room for the audience to use his own intellect to fill in the blanks in the play. Thus, Ionesco’s audience is not a passive audience who only gets what he is offered by the director or the playwright.

The Lesson has been reviewed as a political play of Ionesco by some critics who have claimed that Ionesco is criticizing the rise of Hitler in the character of the professor. Although it cannot be denied that “The Lesson” is somewhat more political when compared to “The Bald Soprano” in terms of the system criticism, the way Ionesco criticizes the system puts the play under a different category. That is, the topic may be conventional to a degree but the way it is handled is totally innovative.

Ionesco is never politically explicit as Brecht or socialist-realist playwrights but he leaves his works open-ended. Only in one of the stage directions about the Maid, he says: *bringing out an armband bearing a device, the Swastika perhaps*. He refers to Swastika here but this doesn’t necessarily mean that this play has been written for anti-Nazism purposes because by saying “*maybe*” Ionesco underlines the fact that

Swastika is just a symbol for him which is interchangeable with another one. What he is against here is the fascism in a more universal sense independent of any political parties or institutions, which constitutes the basis of Ionesco's theatre.



1.3 Anti-realist elements in “The Chairs”

“The Chairs” is most probably the most stylistic play of Ionesco which reminds of Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” or “Happy Days”. It is quite innovative and anti-realistic in terms of characters as except the two main characters, the old man and the old woman, all the other characters in the play are invisible. This is a further attempt of Ionesco to provide the audience with an opportunity to use their imagination and actively participate in the artistic production.

The two main characters in the play are a couple in their nineties, and it is obvious that the couple have been living together for a very long time and are trapped in the void of their long existence. They have become so interdependent on each other that The Old Man sits on the lap of The Old Woman and they call each other “*my pet*”. However, this interdependence is not a consequence of a big love between them; but rather they are suffering greatly from the repetitive nature of their relationship. For example, The Old Woman wants The Old Man to imitate February and he does so:

OLD MAN: I’m so tired of everything.

OLD WOMAN: You were more cheerful when you were looking at the water...Just to cheer us up, let’s pretend, as we did the other night.

OLD MAN: Pretend yourself, it’s your turn.

OLD WOMAN: It isn’t, it’s yours.

OLD MAN: It isn’t.

OLD WOMAN: It is.

OLD MAN: It isn’t.

OLD WOMAN: It is.

OLD MAN: Semiramis, drink your tea. (*naturally there is no tea*)

OLD WOMAN: Imitate February, then.

OLD MAN: I don’t like the months of the year. (Ionesco, 2015: 129)

As it is obvious, the old man and the old woman are in such a tragic situation that they have had to create games such as imitating months to cope with their

existence. We also understand that they are not very happy with that but they continue doing it just for the sake of spending their time. After a while The Old Woman wants The Old Man to tell a story but we understand that it is the same story which has been told many times by The Old Man:

OLD WOMAN: Tell me the story. You know, the story: and then we arri...

OLD MAN: What again?... I'm tired of it...and then we arri? That one again? You always ask me for the same thing!... "And then we arri..." it's so boring...Every evening, every evening, without exception, through seventy-five years of married life, you make me tell the same story, imitate the same people, the same months... always the same... let's change the subject... (Ionesco, 2015: 130)

This repetitive nature of the present time is also found in the stage décor, which is designed as a semi-circle. Thus, Ionesco finds an innovative way to combine the visual medium of theatre with the plot of the play. He continues using the circularity of life theme in this play too. In "The Bald Soprano" and "The Lesson", the plays turn back to the beginning at the end, referring to the vicious cycle of life. Similarly, in "The Chairs", we are faced with the couple who have been doing the same acts throughout their lives.

"The Chairs" is not only about the emptiness of existence in present time, but it also offers an obsession with past. The Old Woman always talks about what the old man could have done when he was young and how he could have been at a higher degree in his career. She continuously says:

If you'd had just a little ambition in life, you might have become a General Editor, an Attorney-General, a General Postmaster-General... Oh dear, all swept away under the bridge... under the great black bridge of time ... swept away, I tell you. (Ionesco, 2015: 138)

However, the old man doesn't seem unhappy about that and advises his wife to be content with their present situation. On the other hand, he also has an obsession with past. He suddenly remembers his mother and starts crying, saying that he is an orphan. Of course, it is not surprising to cry for a dead mother but he shows an extreme reaction for a person at his age: "Oh! Where are you, mommy? Mummy, where are you? ... hee, hee, hee, I'm an orphan. (groaning)... an orphan, a norphan..." (Ionesco,

2015). Although the Old Woman tries to console him saying that she is his mother now, he doesn't stop crying for a long time. It is obvious that both the man and the woman have a longing for inaccessible past.

At the end of this dialogue, the old woman talks about some guests who would arrive soon and the big message the old man is supposed to give. An audience of realist theatre would expect to see some more characters entering the stage but it is not the case in "The Chairs". We surprisingly understand that the guests the old woman is talking about are all imaginary and invisible guests. They welcome the guests and show them seats but we, as the audience and the readers, never see them. In this way, Ionesco brings another innovation to his theatrical work by using invisible characters in the play. This is also quite tragic as the couple have been hosting these imaginary guests for such a long time that they both know who is supposed to sit where and to talk about what. We see that this is another game they play together to cope with the futility of their existence.

Although the play seems quite dark and desperate up to this point, there is somewhat a turn of mood here as they start talking about the old man's message which would change the world. They have been waiting to deliver this message for a very long time, which adds a characteristic of hope to the play. Although their present situation seems so boring and futile, they still have a purpose in life.

When the guests start arriving to hear the old man's message, another interesting point about the couple is also revealed. Although the couple have been living together throughout all their lives, we see that they may not know about each other's hidden feelings and desires. Ionesco suggests this point in the stage direction when The Old Woman meets the Photographer:

Mincing grotesquely. She should become more coquettish as the scene goes on: showing her thick red stockings, lifting her numerous skirts, revealing a petticoat full of holes, uncovering her ancient breasts; then, throwing her head back, hands on hips, uttering erotic cries, thrusting her pelvis forward, standing with legs apart, she laughs like an old whore. This aspect of the old woman is quite different from anything we have seen up to now or are to see later; it should suggest something in the old woman's character that normally remains hidden and it vanishes abruptly. (Ionesco, 2015: 147)

Although it seems like a funny scene, a woman in nineties flirting in such an obscure way, indeed is one of the most tragic scenes of the play. It reveals how a person is forced to hide her feelings even from herself throughout her life. We are faced with the tragedy of self-alienation in the character of the old woman.

When we turn back to the message delivered by the old man, this is also another way for them to find a meaning in their life. If the old man can deliver this message to the guests, he would save the world and thus their life would have a meaning. However, at the end it turns out to be the opposite. The Orator comes in to deliver the message but it is totally meaningless as the Orator is deaf and dumb, making some unintelligible sounds. This is also directly related to the theme of futility and meaninglessness of existence. The couple wait for the message to be delivered throughout all their lives, but at the end it is not possible to deliver it. The play ends in a very tragic way:

The old couple at one and the same time both jump through their windows, crying "Long live the Emperor!". A sudden silence; the firework's glare has gone, an "Ah" is heard from both sides of the stage, and the glaucous sound of bodies striking water. The light is no longer coming through the great door and the windows: there is only the dim light there was at the beginning; the wide-open windows gape black, the curtains flapping in the wind. (Ionesco, 2015: 175)

The end of the play is like a scenery from a painting. The stylistic aspect of the play is quite obvious once again. Another important point to be considered is the emphasis on circularity. As in the other plays, the stage at the end turns back to its state at the beginning of the play, which suggests an open-ended final.

The last actions of the Orator after the old couple's suicide attract attention to the failure of language as a means of communication, as usual in all Ionesco plays.

Again the Orator turns to the audience and smiles questioningly, as though he hopes he has been understood, has really said something: he points out to the empty chairs what he has just written; he waits, quite still, for a moment looking fairly pleased and a little solemn; then gradually when the hoped-for reaction is not forthcoming his smile disappears...(Ionesco, 2015: 176)

We understand that the Orator expects the audience to understand him but the

way he communicates does not reach the audience, which is an indicator of how people fail to communicate with each other. For some critics, the character of the Orator represents the actors in Ionesco's plays, who fail to pass the playwright's message to the audience.

Another significant point about the Orator is that he is the only visible character in the play except the old couple. Although many critics have offered various interpretations for this, Ionesco himself explains that the only reason was a technical requirement:

Why can one see the Orator and not those other characters who crowd upon the stage? does the Orator truly exist, is he real? Answer: he exists neither more nor less than the other characters. he is as invisible as the others, he is as real or as unreal, neither more nor less. Only one cannot do without his visible presence. He must be seen and heard because he is the last to remain on stage. But that he should be visible is a purely arbitrary convention, the only way of overcoming an otherwise insoluble technical problem. (Ionesco, 2015: 189)

Just as the decision about the title for *The Bald Soprano*, this decision about the Orator being visible is also arbitrary, which is a basic aspect of Ionesco's anti-realist theatre.

The Bald Soprano, *The Lesson*, and *The Chairs* are the most experimentalist and innovative plays of Ionesco, which proves that a theatre which does not imitate the outside life is also possible. The later full-length plays of the playwright are somewhat more conventional; however, Ionesco's own words below on what he is trying to do in his artistic works indicate that conventional approaches and the role of the artist are to be questioned in the modern age:

At certain moments the world appears to me emptied of meaning, reality seems unreal. It is this feeling of unreality, the search for some essential reality, nameless and forgotten and -outside it I do not feel I exist-that I have tried to express through my characters, who drift through incoherence, having nothing of their own apart from their anguish, their remorse, their failures, the vacuity of their lives. Human beings saturated in meaninglessness cannot be anything but grotesque, their sufferings cannot be anything but derisively tragic. As the world is incomprehensible to me, I am waiting for someone to explain it... (Ionesco, 2015: 18)

2. Samuel Beckett and Anti-Realist Theater

Samuel Beckett's significance in the whole history of theater lies under the fact that he was able to create a new style, a new reality on stage by using the conventional elements from time to time. However, he strongly challenged the idea that theater should "say" something to the audience and that a theater play is merely "storytelling". John Fletcher, one of his recent biographers, explains Beckett's influence and the eclectic feature of his theater in the book "About Beckett":

What makes Beckett a great dramatist, not only of the twentieth century but of all time, is not that he presided over the demise of the "well-made play" – that was largely a coincidence- but that his contribution is fundamental and original in a way few others' have been. He is not, of course, on a par with the towering geniuses of the medium, Sophocles and Shakespeare, but is certainly comparable with the French playwright Molière and the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen. Like Molière in the seventeenth century and Ibsen in the nineteenth, he perceived instinctively the way things were going and helped them along. Such prescience involves technical innovation, certainly, but is not limited to it... Likewise, "Waiting for Godot" has traditional elements (derived mainly from popular forms such as the music hall and the circus), but these are transcended in a play that stands, fifty years after its first production, as the most apt dramatic image yet created of our situation in a world without God, deprived of the transcendent confidence that belief in the existence of God confers. (Fletcher, 2003: 15-16)

Actually, for us, the most important aspect which Beckett realized different from his predecessors was the fact put forward by philosopher Johan Huizinga in his widely reclaimed work "Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture". Huizinga analyzes the relationship of "the play element" to various fields of culture in his work and puts forth the idea that "the play-element" is inherent in all areas of culture, and that it is not an imitation of culture but all forms of culture have "the play-element" in them. He says:

Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing. We can safely assert, even, that human civilization has added no essential feature to the general idea of play. (Huizinga, 1980: 1)

Based on this understanding, Beckett emerged as the pioneer of the anti-realist movement in theater, which understood the fact that "mimesis" is not an intrinsic value of the art of theater.

2.1 “Waiting for Godot” in terms of anti-realist theater

“Waiting for Godot”, besides being one of the masterpieces of twentieth century theater, is also a turning point in terms of the expectations from the art of theater. The play was written in Paris, in French, between the years 1948-1949. It was translated into English by Beckett himself in 1953. When it first appeared on the French stage after so many refusals, the common point of most of the critics was that the play was a profoundly original work which would change everything that had been known so far about the theater. The play was thoroughly a refreshing experience for the whole art of theater and since then theater has never been the same.

There are so many reasons why “Waiting for Godot” was a revolutionary movement in theater. However, while analyzing these reasons separately, the reader should always keep in mind that it is an impossible and undesirable attempt to try to understand “Waiting for Godot” through the established rules of conventional realist theater. Thus, the initial point for a journey to the world of Beckett requires an understanding of what Beckett’s theater was not instead of what it was, which leads us to a deep comprehension of the basics of theater before Beckett.

In the conventional realist theater of the nineteenth century, the playwrights’ main concern was to create a reality on stage which was true to life. The productions of Moscow Art Theater, specifically the plays of Anton Chekhov were prototypes of this approach. Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was the representative of this movement in Europe. This movement dominated the world of theater for over a century from 1870s until 1960s. Besides being true to life on stage, this movement believed in the obligation of theater to better the world and humankind.

Samuel Beckett was surely one of the first artists who challenged this approach and emphasized the need for a new theatre, along with Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, and Jean Genet. This new movement was generally associated with Existentialism of Sartre and Camus, which focuses on the meaninglessness of life. In the most general sense, this new approach placed art to a superior position than life itself, and thus did not believe in the requirement of art to be true to life. *Waiting for Godot* stands as the most prominent example of this movement in many aspects.

The play was written after the completion of “Molloy” and “Malone Dies” and before “The Unnamable”. Beckett described this turn to drama as “a relaxation, to get away from the awful prose I was writing at that time” (Cohn, 2001: 138). As the play was written in between the novel trilogy, straight links can easily be observed between the novels and the play. Mark Taylor-Batty and Juliette Taylor-Batty explain this relationship in these words:

It is impossible to summarize the trilogy in any satisfactory way, in part because these novels all deal in some way with the desire to find meaning and the impossibility of ever doing so. The novels, like the play, resist any neat ‘meanings’ or definitions that we might try to assign to them. Even the characters that we meet are not presented as stable identities: they tend to mutate, disintegrate, and at times seem to blend into each other (indeed, the narrative voices of these novels make it very difficult to use traditional notions of ‘identity’ and ‘character’ as ways of considering what Beckett is expressing). A key concern of these works is the human desire to express- to use language to describe experience, the world, identity - and the inadequacy of language as a means of doing these things. (Taylor-Batty, 2008: 12)

One of the reasons for Beckett’s turn to theater was a relaxation from prose as he himself suggests, but it can also be claimed that Beckett was trying to find a medium where “the artistic form” was sublimed instead of “meaning” and “intellectualism”. Theater was a more proper place to create an artistic reality not bound with the conventions of the real life. He once told a group of students that:

I want neither to instruct nor improve nor to keep people from getting bored. I want to bring poetry into drama, a poetry which has been through the void and makes a new start in a new room-space. I think in new dimensions and basically am not very worried about whether I can be followed. I couldn’t give the answers that were hoped for. There are no easy solutions. (Knowlson, 2014: 477).

As clear from the quotation, Beckett’s main purpose was neither to be understood by other people nor to direct his readers to a better world. This is the principal factor which positions Beckett in a totally distinct point from his predecessors.

Likewise, trying to “understand” “Waiting for Godot” would be a futile attempt as it is not a play which was written to be understood, and the term “anti-realist” in the subheading refers to a work of art which does not imitate the real life but rather creates “a new form” on stage which is not necessarily true to life. The task of the scholar

should be to understand the elements of this created reality instead of finding the parallels between the real world and the art work. I use the term “created reality” here on purpose because we must make a distinction between Beckett’s art and “surrealism”. Beckett’s characters are not from a “surreal” world but they are the characters from the real world within a “new form” which is different from everyday life. The first director of “Waiting for Godot” Roger Blin quotes Beckett’s words on his play:

I know no more about this play than anybody who might manage to read it carefully. I do not know in what spirit I wrote it. I do not know any more about the characters than what they say, what they do, and what happens to them. Of their appearance, I had to describe what little I could perceive. Their bowler hats, for example. I do not know who Godot is. I do not even know if he exists - especially not that. And I do not know if they believe in him or not, the two men who are waiting for him. As for the other two who pass by towards the end of both Acts, that must be to break the monotony. Everything I could have known, I have shown. It is not much. But it is enough for me, amply enough...I am not in that world anymore and I never will be again. Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, Lucky, their time and their space - I was able to get to know them a little but only from the perspective of not needing to understand. They owe you something, perhaps. Let them sort things out themselves. Without me. They and I are done with each other. (Trincal, 1995: 2)

Beckett kept this stance for all his works throughout his life. He always rejected to explain what his works are “about”, which should be the starting point to approach a Beckett work. In another case, when his American director Alan Schneider asked him the question “Who or what does Godot mean?” he answered “if I knew, I would have said so in the play” (Calder, 2002: 38). This approach is highly representative of the “New Criticism” which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, and which suggests that a work of art has a self-referential nature.

Trying to analyze “Waiting for Godot” using the media of realist theatre would lead us to nowhere. For instance, “plot” which is the most prominent medium of a realist play is totally absent in Beckett. “Waiting for Godot” is a plotless play because it was written as a reaction to realist “plot” where events happen in a linear flow. Indeed, “Waiting for Godot” is a play in which “nothing” happens. None of the expectations of the audience are met at the end of the play. That is because Beckett, as a modernist/postmodernist, is an artist who refuses the understanding of real world in realist theater. As the other modernist writers do, he believes in the fact that the form

of art presented to the audience as “real world” is in fact an “artificial world” because it is just a false imitation of what we perceive as “real”. Apollinaire says “when man wanted to imitate walking he created the wheel, which does not resemble a leg” (Schumacher, 2016: 147). So, in order to be “real” and “functional” you do not have to imitate the “real” you see around you but to create your own “real”. And the new “real” you create can be much more efficient than its representation. Thus, Beckett and other modernist writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and Marcel Proust are yearning for a higher reality in art which does not use “imitation” as its medium but instead form, concepts, and language itself. Virginia Woolf explains this contradiction in the following quote:

If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. (Woolf, 1925: 150)

What Woolf says directly applies to “Waiting for Godot”. There is no plot, neither comedy nor tragedy in the accepted style. There is only the “artistic form”, the “grammar of the play”, and “language”. And to explain “form” in Beckett’s own words:

What I am saying does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos, and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist. (Driver, 1961: 23)

Two characters Vladimir and Estragon are on a nearly bare stage, having an absurd conversation and waiting for someone/something called Godot (we do not even know whether it exists or not). Two other characters Lucky and Pozzo enter and exit the stage at the end of the both acts. None of these characters are conventional theatrical characters. They do not offer any hints about either their past or background different from the characters in realist plays. However, this does not mean that these characters have been formed just randomly. Taylor-Betty suggests that even the names of the characters have been chosen on purpose:

Estragon is the French word for the herb Tarragon, and is never usually employed as a person's name. Perhaps the name serves to associate its character with the soil, the earth to which he is attracted to sit and sleep, and with the kind of scant nourishment that the characters gain intellectually and emotionally (herbs in themselves provide flavour but little nutrition) (Taylor-Batty, 2008: 24)

The characters are also called as “Didi (Vladimir)” and “Gogo (Estragon)” in the play, which suggests a childishness and sincerity. Indeed, the common point all the names in the play share is that they sound like clowns' names.

Vladimir and Estragon are like two complementary pieces of a whole, which cannot be separated from each other, just as Lucky and Pozzo. Taylor-Betty explains that

Vladimir is clearly the thinker, the philosopher, the intellectual of the two, while Estragon is more concerned with bodily comfort, including sleep and food (Beckett, 2006: 25).

Thus, they are not “individual” characters but rather the different faces of the humanity in general. This is one of the factors which differentiates *Waiting for Godot* from conventional realist theater in the sense that realist characters have their own individual lives and backgrounds whereas the characters of modern theater are more like representations of the whole humanity. This results in the fact that Realist Theater serves more to the needs of bourgeois society where the individual is in the center whereas “anti-realist” theater prioritizes the artistic form and “art” itself rather than the lives of individuals.

Another important point about the characters of Vladimir and Estragon is that, throughout the play Estragon is busy with his boots. The play starts with this direction:

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before. (Beckett, 2006: 11)

Even from the very beginning Estragon is preoccupied with his “boots” and “sitting on the mound” which suggests that he is tied to the earth. On the other hand, Vladimir is always busy with his hat, which refers to his philosophical side. When the critic Vivian Mercier pointed out that Vladimir and Estragon sound as though they had PhDs, Beckett replied as “How do you know they hadn't?” (Brater, 2012: 75). They surely have a philosophical side which is more obvious in Vladimir. However, Beckett

does not explain this explicitly as realist playwrights do. Instead, the reader infers that information by reading between the lines. This places the reader in a more active and dominant position while freeing the “artistic work” or “text” from any boundaries of its creator.

Just as Vladimir and Estragon, the other two characters of the play Pozzo and Lucky are complementary and interdependent characters free of any personal background. Although one can easily judge Pozzo as a representative of brutal bourgeois society in the first reading of the play, it would be an over simplification of Beckett’s art as Beckett was never engaged in political rhetoric in his works. Taylor-Betty emphasizes this through the character names again:

The word “pozzo” is Italian for a well, a deep hole, but may have been chosen for no other reason than its phonic similarity to Godot (to permit Didi and Gogo’s initial optimistic misunderstanding), to sustain the two-syllable convention, and to sound clown-like as those other names do. In choosing an Italian sounding name, Beckett also effectively reduced any ability easily to locate the play, suggesting instead a generic wilderness that was at once Slavic (Vladimir), Gallic (Estragon), Anglo-Saxon (Lucky) and Roman (Pozzo). (Taylor-Betty, 2008: 33)

This suggests that to judge Beckett’s characters and images as “symbols” of some higher categories would be to deemphasize the play. However, Taylor-Betty puts a quite interesting interpretation on the character of Lucky:

Of all four, only Lucky has found a position that offers him some sense of satisfaction, or comfort even. He even violently defends his own subjugation, kicking Estragon when he attempts to console him. Perhaps, even in his tethers, or because of them, he has a position in the world which is knowable, consistent and patterned. Indeed, Lucky was, for Beckett, perhaps the “luckiest” character of the play: ‘I suppose he is lucky to have no more expectations’, he told Colin Duckworth. (Taylor-Betty, 2008: 32)

Another significance of the character of Lucky in the play is his long speech, which comprises the most enigmatic part of the play. Towards the end of Act I, Lucky gives this very long speech of about two pages, upon the order of Pozzo to think. The content of speech is not clear and easy to follow, but what really matters is the language Beckett uses in this speech.

According to both Taylor-Betty and Enoch Brater, the speech requires a knowledge of French. Brater says:

In English his extended monologue can become progressively maddening and alarming-‘quaquaquaqua’ - if not downright frightening, while on the French stage it plays itself out as an elaborate and hilarious parody of the well-worn *philosophe* tradition, Descartes to Derrida. Other contrasts are the result of inherent linguistic differences, and a writer such as Beckett can be relied upon to put them to quick use: French can be by its very nature a more playful language for the belletrist, whereas English, steady as it goes, is always in love with the practical and the concrete. (Brater, 2012: 23)

The monologue’s theme is summarized by Beckett as "to shrink on an impossible earth under an indifferent heaven" (Graver, 2004: 49-50). And Beckett divided the speech into three parts in his notes: "Indifferent heaven", "Dwindling man", and "Earth abode of stones" (Knowlson, 2014: 291). The monologue is basically uncertain, ambiguous, and unknowable. And "quaquaquaqua" which is repeated through the monologue is an indication of this ambiguity. According to Beckett, Lucky is trying here to say "Quaquaquaquaversalis" (meaning ‘a god who turns himself in all directions at the same time’) (Knowlson, 2014: 133). However, he ends up saying ‘quoi’, the French word for ‘what’, or the sound of duck.

Lucky’s monologue can also be considered as a challenge to all kinds of attempts to define human existence. When considered from this point of view, the monologue is the heart of the play. Taylor-Betty also emphasizes the fact that all the monologue refers to an incompleteness:

The work of all the named researchers is explicitly ‘unfinished’ or is in some way inconclusive, and the most repeated phrase in relation to their work (and indeed throughout the passage) is, tellingly ‘for reasons unknown’. Lucky’s key message is that, in spite of theological questioning, scientific research, advances in medicine (‘peniciline and succedanea’, the drug or any substitute) and healthy living (‘alimentation’, ‘physical culture’ and ‘sport of all sorts’), man nonetheless ‘is seen to waste and pine’ and ‘shrink and dwindle’ (43-4) ‘Progress’ is merely an illusion, and, apart from the inevitable decline, nothing really changes. (Taylor-Batty, 2008: 48)

Another important aspect of Lucky’s speech is the literary devices used in the speech. All the phrases in the speech are tetrameters, made up of a combination of iambic and anapestic feet. They are predominantly in triple meter, creating a rhythm of 1-2-3. So, Lucky’s monologue is also a poetic monologue where Beckett uses the medium of language. This use of poetry and rhythm provides the audience to

experience a feeling while watching the play instead of seeing a false representation on the stage. This music is a part of stage reality that Beckett and modernists are after.

Beckett was never interested in using symbols in his works; however, there are always some certain objects in his plays which are open to various interpretations and which have been commented upon in all works on Beckett's art. In "Waiting for Godot" the first of these that we encounter in the first page of the play is "boots". As suggested before, "boots" may be related to Estragon's engagement in earthly matters when compared to Vladimir who is more philosophical. However, to add an interesting point, the renowned Serbian playwright and director Dusan Kovacevic wrote a play in 2011 titled "Life in Tight Shoes", in which he makes a harsh criticism of bourgeois society through the lives of proletariat who always have to wear smaller size shoes which hurt their feet. This reminds of the dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir in the second page of the play:

Estragon: Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?

Vladimir: Boots must be taken off every day. I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?

Estragon: (*feebly*) Help me!

Vladimir: It hurts?

Estragon: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts! (Beckett, 2006: 12)

And this dialogue continues for a while on boots through which Estragon repeats the phrase "Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!".

Just as Estragon's boots, Vladimir's hat is another object of significance in the play. Vladimir recursively peers inside his hat throughout the play, which may suggest a philosophical side to Vladimir's character as pointed out previously. However, from a different angle, the boots and hats together make up the circus like nature of the play.

The tree in the play is both a reference to crucifixion (as there is also a reference to Bible) and a parody of the religious significance. Beckett uses the religious symbols not for the sake of writing a religious play but on the contrary to emphasize the futile nature of these. However, Vladimir and Estragon can also be linked to the two thieves one of which is saved and the other is damned. This story is told by Vladimir in details and constitutes an important part of the play. The blooming of the tree may sound like a positive and hopeful image at first but indeed although the tree blooms, nothing changes in Vladimir's and Estragon's position.

The last object which needs attention is the carrot. At first reading, they may seem meaningless but carrots and turnips together contribute to Beckett's desire for "form". There are no realist characters in the plays before modern theatre, who feed on carrots and turnips. This tiny distinction suggests that Beckett's characters are not "characters" in the sense we understand the term, but they are rather "anti-characters". Carrots also suggest the impossibility of progress and the inevitability of fall in the dialogue below:

Estragon: Fancy that. (*He raises what remains of the carrot by the stub of leaf, twirls it before his eyes*) Funny, the more you eat the worse it gets.

Vladimir: With me it's just the opposite.

Estragon: In other words?

Vladimir: I get used to the muck as I go along. (Beckett, 2006: 22)

One of the issues dealt throughout the play is "death". Vladimir and Estragon repeatedly talk about committing suicide; however, different from realist theater; in Beckett this is not a tragic end but a humorous process:

Estragon: (*looking at the tree*) Pity we haven't got a bit of rope.

Vladimir: Come on. It's cold.

(*He draws Estragon after him. As before*)

Estragon: Remind me to bring a bit of rope tomorrow.

Vladimir: Yes. Come on.

(*He draws him after him. As before.*) (Beckett, 2006: 51)

This is certainly not a tragic dialogue. Beckett uses this image of the impossibility of death in "Act Without Words I" too. Michael Worton in his essay "Waiting for Godot" and "Endgame": *theatre as text*, points out the position of "death" as a theme in the play in a very clear way:

There is the abiding concern with death and dying, but death as an *event* (i.e., actually becoming 'a little heap of bones'; *WFG*, 9) is presented as desired but ultimately impossible, whereas dying as a *process* is shown to be our only sure reality. Beckett's characters are haunted by 'the sin of having been born' (PTD, 67), a sin which they can never expiate. (ed.Pilling, 1994: 70)

As in all modernist writing, Beckett is more keen on the *process* rather than *events* or *ultimate resolutions*. This is also valid for his approach to death. And the most notable part of the play on this is surely Pozzo's words:

Pozzo: (*suddenly furious*) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind,

one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (*He jerks the rope*) On! (Beckett, 2006: 83)

As seen from Pozzo's remarks death is not an "end" in Beckett; moreover, there is not a "final" for Beckett. There is only "process" and waiting for nothing at all. This is also valid for what *Godot* means indeed. There have been many debates about the meaning of *Godot* and what it refers to; however, the point is that *Godot* refers to "nothing" and "everything" at the same time. It does not hold a single meaning, which is one of the most prominent characteristics of Beckett's art, as well as the modern art. Everything in Beckett has multiple meanings, which provides the reader or the audience with an opportunity to choose from. Michael Worton explains this in his essay with the words below:

Much has been written about who or what Godot is. My own view is that he is simultaneously whatever we think he is and not what we think he is; he is an *absence*, who can be interpreted at moments as God, death, the lord of the manor, a benefactor, even Pozzo, but Godot has a *function* rather than a *meaning*. He stands for what keeps us chained to and in existence, he is the unknowable that represents hope in an age when there is no hope, he is whatever fiction we want him to be - as long as he justifies our life-as-waiting. (ed. Pilling, 1994: 71)

The last thing I would like to focus on in *Waiting for Godot* is the stage instructions of Beckett. The words in parentheses give us a lot about Beckett's art, characters, and "form" as well as the subtext.

"A country road. A tree. Evening." This is how Beckett starts "Waiting for Godot". These instructions are quite different from the extremely detailed stage directions common in realistic plays such as the plays of Chekhov. Beckett does not give any details about the decor. He explains everything in three words and leaves the rest to the imagination of the audience. Of course, this is directly related to the minimalism of Beckett. A realistic writer would have explained every detail of the tree; its kind, length, color, leaves etc. unlike Beckett who finds it enough to write "a tree".

The stage directions belonging to Vladimir and Estragon are indicatives of the love-hate relationship between them. They also refer to the instant changes in the

moods of the characters. Beckett uses the words “gloomily” and “cheerfully” one after another for Vladimir within the same sentence. The words “gloomily”, “musingly”, “reflects”, and “meditates” are used recurrently for Vladimir, which may refer to his thoughtful and philosophical nature. The act of “rummaging” is also used for Vladimir while he is trying to find something from his pockets, which may refer to a more general meaning such as a search for a goal. On the other hand, Beckett describes Estragon’s actions as “feebly” most of the time. Although being more philosophical, Vladimir’s actions are also more clown like from the very beginning. His entrance to stage is described as “advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart”, and on page 13, his smile is described with the words “he smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly”. However, the stage direction “legs wide apart” has sometimes been attributed to Vladimir’s difficulty in walking due to his prostate.

“Waiting for Godot” stands as one of the most important masterpieces of modern theater, indeed the inception of modern stage. It eradicated the fossilized rules and elements of the realist theater, which had relied upon a linear flow of actions and a false imitation of the real world for centuries. It created its own world on stage which consists of “nothingness” at all. It de-emphasized the story element but drove forward the importance of a “stage reality” and a “stage grammar” which focuses on the “present” rather than narration by using the ways discussed so far. Most important of all, it restructured the expectations of the modern theater audience by attributing him an active part in the art work. Last but not least, Beckett proved to the whole world that an “anti-theater” which is not bounded by the rules of the “real” world and political concerns of the author is possible.

2.2 Elements of “anti-theater” in the short plays of Beckett

Beckett wrote a number of shorter plays which he himself called as “dramaticules” both for radio and stage. The most important aspect of these shorter plays was that they initiated a new “form” on stage by questioning the limits of dramatic representation and the dominance of the canonical full length dramatic texts. Beckett’s shorter plays were more like fragments rather than a full length story which had a beginning, a climax, and a resolution. This enabled the reader and the audience to actively take part in the creative process by filling in the gaps in the artistic work via individual reasoning. None of these texts are longer than eight pages or thirty minutes of performance time.

Written in 1965, “Come and Go”, is one of the most outstanding examples of these “dramaticules”. The play is innovative in many aspects including the symbolic subtext, stage directions, and lighting. There are three women on stage with abbreviated names (Vi, Ru, Flo). The women are sitting “very erect, facing front, hands clasped in laps” (Beckett, 2010: 195). Unlike conventional and canonical dramatic texts, Beckett does not give any clues about the backgrounds of these three characters, but rather merely the stage directions. The audience is expected to interiorize the play through the actions (comings and goings of the women) and the positions of the characters on stage, which makes the play completely dependent on a “form” rather than a story.

Through the play, we see repetitive actions and an absurd dialogue going on among the three women and sometimes between the two of them. The women leave the stage one by one and when one of them exits, the other two start commenting on her although we do not know what they are talking about:

FLO What do you think of Vi?

RU I see little change. (*Flo moves to center seat, whispers in Ru’s ear. Appalled*) Oh! (*They look at each other. Flo puts her finger to her lips.*) Does she not realize?

FLO God grant not. (Beckett 195)

A similar dialogue and action is repeated when the second woman exits:

RU How do you find Flo?

VI She seems much the same. (*Ru moves to center seat, whispers in Vi's ear. Appalled*) Oh! (*They look at each other. Ru puts her finger to her lips.*) Has she not been told?

RU God forbid. (Beckett, 2010: 196)

Just three sentences which can be interpreted in hundreds of ways, or maybe Beckett does not expect the reader or the audience to make any interpretation at all, but to experience a feeling or a situation. As in “Waiting for Godot” what is important in Beckett is not the stories but the concepts, which is also the basis of anti-theater movement.

Beckett gives all the lighting and costume directions in the last page of the play, which constitute the infrastructure of Beckett's stage reality. Lighting is “soft, from above only and concentrated on playing area. Rest of stage as dark as possible” and characters are wearing:

full-length coats, buttoned high, dull violet (Ru), dull red (Vi), dull yellow (Flo). Drab nondescript hats with enough brim to shade faces. Apart from colour differentiation three figures as alike as possible. Light shoes with rubber soles. Hands made up to be as visible as possible. No rings apparent.” (Beckett, 2010: 197)

All these detailed directions serve a purpose; to create a Beckettian world on stage rather than a world of imitation. None of these details are true to real life; though they are more real than real life. To achieve this goal and impact, Beckett depends upon the media of theatrical form: lightning, costumes, and postures instead of a real life-like story with an opening, a climax, and a resolution, which is the medium of conventional theater and staging.

Keir Elam's article titled “The Dramaticules” also emphasizes the significance of symmetry in *Come and Go*. Elam says:

The unnamable object of Flo's discourse, foregrounded by her very evasiveness, is, we are left to infer, the imminent death of the third party, the absent Vi. The same pattern of whispered revelation and appalled reaction is repeated twice, with each of the women playing in turn the parts of revealer, listener, and doomed third person. By means of these symmetrical variations, Beckett succeeds in creating, in eighteen minimal speaking (or better, non-speaking) turns, a triple dramatic irony worthy of Greek tragedy, whereby each character knows the fate of the other two, but not her own. Death, the ineffable, is Other, or at least Others. (Elam, 1994: 144)

Beckett also makes use of symbolism to create his world on stage. The rings which all three women have hold a symbolic meaning for the end of the play. Together with many other options, they may be a symbol for the circular form of the play (women going and coming in a circular form). So again, Beckett is after finding a unique “form” on stage rather than a “story”. The circularity of the play and the rings as well, is also apparent in the form the characters hold hands at the end of the play. Beckett’s directions are as such:

After a moment they join hands as follows: Vi’s right hand with Ru’s right hand. Vi’s left hand with Flo’s left hand, Flo’s right hand with Ru’s left hand, Vi’s arms being above Ru’s left arm and Flo’s right arm. The three pairs of clasped hands rest on the three laps. Silence”. (Beckett, 2010: 196).

There is also a very technical and detailed drawing in the notes part of the play which shows how the characters should hold each other’s hands. It is obvious that all these details and theatrical form are not only for the sake of aesthetic values. Beckett uses this “form” to tell something to the audience but the difference is that what he says is not limited to a single interpretation as in the realist staging, and the author himself is not after a fundamental meaning, but a chaos instead. This is worth mentioning because even today Beckett is sometimes blamed for being too “elitist”, “pessimistic” or “personal” by some scholars trying to underrate him. However, it should be noted that having nothing to say and running after merely personal satisfaction has nothing to do with creating your own way to say things.

Another striking shorter play of Beckett in which he mostly uses the elements in “Come and Go”, is “Not I”, where the only real actor on stage is the mouth of a woman doomed to speaking. There is a

stage in darkness but for Mouth, upstage audience right, about 8 feet above stage level, faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow. Invisible microphone. (Beckett, 2010: 206)

“Not I” seems to differ from its counterparts in certain aspects, one of which being its dependence upon a “so-called” story or plot. When the audience hears the fragmented pieces of the Mouth’s story, he intends to perceive the play as a narrative. However, this is just an illusion as the story goes nowhere throughout the play. It is a story without a beginning, a climax and a denouement; thus it is not a real story indeed.

Beckett, once again, achieves to create a feeling of the whole on the audience via using fragments. Just like “Come and Go”, “Not I” is also a play of “form” rather than a story. Beckett creates some patterns on the stage, which are not incidental at all, but based on the stage reality. In “Come and Go”, for instance, women come to and go from the stage in a predetermined way of circle, which constitutes an aesthetic form on the stage. We are not interested in the background stories of the characters any more, but just watch the flawless movements of the characters on the stage. The audience is there not to understand or draw conclusions about the lives of these characters outside of the stage, but just to watch what is happening on the stage at exactly that moment.

Beckett, who uses the circling movements of the characters to create this effect in “Come and Go”, makes use of some other stage devices in “Not I”, the most prominent of which is the lightning. Lightning has also a significant role in “Come and Go”, but it is the protagonist in “Not I”. The stage is completely dark and the only thing the audience can see is a mouth. There is also another actor in front of the mouth but it is of secondary importance. The first stage direction of Beckett in “Not I” is

Stage in darkness but for Mouth, upstage audience right, about 8 feet above stage level, faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow. Invisible microphone (Beckett, 2010: 206).

Darkness, as well as the Mouth, is an actor in this play. Beckett makes use of another stage device here. However, not only darkness, but also the position of the mouth has great importance. The Mouth is not located in the center of the stage as expected, but on the upstage right. This is also a part of Beckett’s form on stage. Junko Mataba emphasizes a very interesting reference about this use of stage in his article on Beckett’s later short plays. He says that these kinds of features such as the darkened stage are “qualities of the Chinese originated monochrome paintings of Japan called Sumi-e”. This tradition goes further back to 12th century. It is an interesting fact to show that Beckett does not create his stage form out of nothing; but is inspired by different cultures and forms. According to Gontarski:

Such worlds as Beckett creates are thus virtual worlds that include past and present, material figures, imagination and memory; off-stage or what appears to be empty space is thus a virtual whole, a nothing full of possibilities, including all possible actions and movements. In this regard Beckett’s theatre

runs contrary to that described by Peter Brook in his famous theatrical treatise *The Empty Space* (1968); for Beckett the stage is never empty but full of the potentially possible. (Gontarski, 2013: 8)

Moreover, it was stated most of the time by Beckett himself that the inspiration for the mouth in “Not I” was Caravaggio’s painting “*Decollation of St John the Baptist*”. It is obvious that Beckett depends on various cultural and social sources to create his artistic form on stage, which makes his art unique and universal. The last stage direction of “Not I” also depicts how he makes use of all the possible devices on stage:

Curtain fully down. House dark. Voice continues behind curtain, unintelligible. 10 seconds, ceases as house lights up. (Beckett, 2010)

Beckett is fully aware that “light”, “voice” and such devices alone are also actors on stage and they are the real constituents of the dramatic form.

Another short of Beckett in which light&darkness and voice are major characters on stage is *Footfalls*. The stage directions are quite mathematical and are in service of the form on stage:

Strip: downstage, parallel with front, length nine steps, width one metre, a little off center audience right. Pacing: starting with right foot (r), from right (R) to left (L), with left foot (l) from L to R. Turn: rightabout at L, leftabout at R. Steps: clearly audible rhythmic tread. Lighting: dim, strongest at floor level, less on body, least on head. Voices: both low and slow throughout. (Beckett, 2010: 237)

Beckett’s genius lies under the fact that he calculates even the slightest details on stage which would serve to his stage reality, and these details are never arbitrary. This may be perceived both as an ease and a challenge by the actor and the director. At first glance, the director or the actor may feel quite relaxed as all the details are already given in the text by the playwright; however, putting all these details on stage exactly as they are given by the playwright may, most probably, be much more challenging for an actor, who is accustomed to create a character through studying some background information. Likewise, a director who is very successful on staging realist plays thanks to his intellectual background, may get lost when staging Beckett, as neither intellectuality nor a profound skill of observation is sufficient. Both the director and the actor must be skilled enough to reach and experience Beckett’s stage

reality. In that respect, Beckett's plays are a new experience not only for the audience but also for the actors on stage and the director.

Returning to "Footfalls", there are two characters on the stage but they are not "characters" in real sense, indeed. May (M) moves like a machine throughout the play, *pacing starting with right foot (r) from right (R) to left (L) with left foot (l) from L to R. Turn: rightabout at L, leftabout at R*. Beckett uses the actor on stage just as a moving object. The audience is interested neither in the personal background of the actor nor his psychological state, rather they consider her as an object serving to the needs of the play. The second character, May's mother, is invisible. It is just a voice coming from dark upstage. Lighting has the major role again, as in the other plays. It is *dim, strongest at floor level, less on body, least on head*, suggesting a new approach to the conventional lighting of realist plays, which centralizes the actor on stage. The play is totally a musical experience, with the steps as metronome and the bell as music, and the lighting changing in accordance with this harmony. This harmony Beckett creates on stage is the reality unique to him and his art. The play creates a feeling of pity in the audience through the use of these stage tools, rather than depending merely on the emotions of the actor on stage. In that respect, "Not I" and "Footfalls" may be considered sister plays in terms of their subject matter and the use of stage tools to create an emotional impact.

Another short of Beckett which constitutes a trilogy with "Not I" and "Footfalls" is "Rockaby". All three plays were written to be performed by Beckett's favorite actress Billie Whitelaw, and they have often been staged together. "Rockaby" is the latest part of the trilogy and it was written in 1981. This trilogy differs from the other plays of Beckett in that the women characters hold a leading role in all of them, which is not very usual in other Beckett plays. Beckett had mostly been criticized for neglecting women characters or even being a misogynist. However, as Moonyoung Chung states

Finally, the women who have kept pacing, rocking, and making their own stories in darkness come true to lure Beckett and us to see them emerging from darkness, as 'the return of the repressed' in Freudian terms.(Chung 282).

Just as "Footfalls", "Rockaby" is also a play on mother-daughter relationship. In "Footfalls", the mother is invisible and we only hear her voice; likewise, in

“Rockaby” we hear the taped voice of the old woman, which makes the two plays a part of a whole in terms of the stage tools they use. The play was written in 1980 and premiered in 1981, one of the latest plays of Beckett. Similar to the other parts of the trilogy, lighting emerges as the leading actor in “Rockaby”:

Subdued on chair. Rest of stage dark. Subdued spot on face constant throughout, unaffected by successive fades. Either wide enough to include narrow limits of rock or concentrated on face when still or at mid-rock. Then throughout speech face slightly swaying in and out of light. Opening fade-up: first spot on face alone, long pause, then light on chair.”(Beckett, 2010: 271)

These are only just a part of his stage directions of lighting. However, Beckett, who defines the lighting in every detail, is not so keen on defining the character of the woman on stage. He just focuses on minute details of the rocking movement on stage and how the lighting will be positioned. The character on stage is a stage tool for him of no more importance than the others. He is aware of the fact that “stories” and “people” are not enough to create an artistic world and form on stage. Likewise, a single recurring movement on stage can create a far more effective meaning than hundreds of stories. This was a revolutionary step in the history of theater which had mostly depended on actors and plot before Beckett.

On a performance review of “Rockaby” in 2007, Rosie Millard explains what happens on stage in a Beckett play concisely:

What we have are five short plays by Beckett. The second one, “*Rockaby*”, is extremely well known- a masterpiece, even. It is performed with astonishing power by Hunter, a tiny woman with a huge voice. She is seated on a chair. That’s all there is on stage. Her body seems shrunken and vulnerable; her eyes dart, peeping out over her nose. She describes her day, telling us how she looks through her window at the windows of the buildings opposite her. Then she describes the same thing again. And again. And again. Beckett’s repetitive language and Hunter’s studied minimalism of movement somehow allow every one of her phrases to become enormous. (Millard, 2007)

Especially the last sentence of this review perfectly summarizes the genius of Beckett: repetitive language and minimalism which leads to an enormous effect. Beckett doesn’t need big productions, expensive decoration or costumes to create his world. On the contrary, just a rocking chair and effective use of lighting is more than sufficient for the stage reality. In addition, language is no more a means for communication in Beckett as it was in the realist plays; but rather stands for a lack or

impossibility of communication. Just as Peter Brook states in his book “The Empty Space”:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space, whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. (Brook, 1968: 113).

In another part of the book, Brook explains the role of fragments on stage as below:

The purpose of theatre is making an event in which a group of fragments are suddenly brought together in a community which, by the natural laws that make every community, gradually breaks up. At certain moments this fragmented world comes together and for a certain time it can rediscover the marvel of organic life. The marvel of being one. (Brook, 1968: 128)

It is obvious that, this idea of a “fragmented world” constitutes the essence of Beckett’s work, especially in terms of the language he uses. There is no wholeness in any of his work, nor a certain beginning or end. However, this is indeed what the real world is like. We don’t experience life in a chronological order although our biographies are written so; rather, our lives are a combination of, sometimes recurring, fragmented pieces. Thus, although Beckett’s world on stage doesn’t resemble or imitate the real world around us, it indeed reflects the essence of it.

“Play”, which was staged in 1964, is an interesting work of Beckett in that it focuses on a humorous woman-man relationship in a Beckettian style, a theme which is not seen a lot in the other works of Beckett. It is a one-act play, with three characters whose names are not known to the audience. They are just referred to as Man, Woman 1 and Woman 2. This is a technique which is also used by Melih Cevdet Anday in his masterpiece “Mikado”. The specific names of the characters bear no importance; they can be any man or any woman. The plot is quite simple in “Play”. There is a man who cheated his wife and the wife discovers the mistress. However, the stage tools Beckett uses makes this play a unique one in the history of theater. There are *three identical grey urns on stage about one yard high*. The audience can see a head arising from each of them, leaving the rest of the bodies invisible. M (Man) is in the middle with W2 (Woman 2) on his right and W1 (Woman 1) on his left. Beckett uses this method of showing only a specific part of the actor on stage, in “Not I” too. Not surprisingly, lighting again has the major role in this early work of Beckett. The characters are able

to speak only when a spotlight is projected on their faces. Thus, they are always in a hurry to tell the audience what happened and their feelings before their light is turned off. That means, Beckett uses rhythm and tempo most effectively in addition to his minimalist decor and lighting. At the beginning of the play, all three characters start talking at the same time with the light and the audience can only hear fragments of words, which is a great reference to the lack of communication. Moreover, although the audience can't hear full sentences but rather some recurring words, they can easily comprehend the relationship among these three characters, a perfect example for Beckett's reliance upon a fragmented world on stage.

An interesting fact about "Play" is that the characters in the play are dead indeed, which can be inferred from the urns they are in. Renée Riese Hubert finds a similarity between "Play" and Sartre's "No Exit" in that respect:

In both plays, two women and a man, presumably dead, are forced to face their past. Inez, Estelle and Garcin are cast together forever, a punishment which reproduces the false situations they had created for themselves. They do not want to reveal their life stories, their failures, their meaning. Beckett's M, WI and W2, in contrast, make no attempt at misrepresentation. Within the narrow limits of their verbal capacity or memory, they recount what happened. (Hubert, 1962: 339)

This is a good indicator of Beckett's approach to language as a means of communication. While Sartre's characters are afraid of misunderstandings and revealing themselves, Beckett's characters don't have any concern about that. There is not a precise meaning in Beckett which is to be disclosed at the end of the play. On the contrary, as in all other works of Beckett, "Play" is a play of a vicious cycle. We already see that the same pattern repeats three times throughout the play and we are sure that it would continue repeating if the play went on. There would be no end, no true meaning. Karen Laughlin refers to this role of language in *Play* as "isolation from the psychological situation of dialogue":

As they recount the story of their romantic adventures in the first part of *Play*, M, WI, and W2 are peculiarly isolated from the extra-linguistic situation suggested in the play's text. Both the lack of response by the potential listeners and the absence of any specific intention on the part of each speaker isolate the narratives from the so-called psychological situation of dialogue. (Laughlin, 1985: 330)

As it is obvious, Beckett uses language not as a means of communication but rather as a token of meaninglessness. Furthermore, he has plays in which language does not exist at all. Beckett's two mime plays "Act Without Words I" and "Act Without Words II" are strikingly innovative works both for Beckett's art and the art of theater in general. With these two plays, Beckett invalidated the maxim of conventional theater of 19th and early 20th century which had attached a prior importance to the dialogue and dramatic conflict.

Although Beckett himself calls these two plays as mimes, they are not mimes in traditional terms. A *mime* play imitates the real world without using words; however, "Act Without Words I" and "II" are impossible to be considered merely as imitation of a story. "Act Without Words I" takes place in a desert-like place with dazzling light. There is only one actor on stage; however, there is also an invisible actor off-stage, just as in "Act Without Words II". The play starts with the actor "flung backwards" on stage. When he hears a whistle, he reflects and goes out first from the right side then the left side in the second call. Every time he goes out, he is flung back on stage. This is repeated three times consecutively, and he doesn't go out in the fourth call. This is meaningful since the number "three" has a symbolic meaning in most of Beckett's works. For instance, in "Play" the same story is repeated three times likewise, a characteristic of Beckett's works which owes to Dante.

A series of actions are performed by the actor on stage following his fall. He tries to catch a carafe which descends from the flies hopelessly. Every time he is closest to reach the carafe, it is pulled up. We don't know who is playing tricks with the man on stage. It is mostly interpreted as god or a similar omnipotent force; however, this interpretation is quite possible to be an oversimplification of Beckett. This off-stage actor is also one of the reasons why "Act Without Words I" can't be considered a conventional *mime* as its author suggests. What happens on stage is far away from the imitation of real life experiences.

The play can be interpreted either as a play of hopelessness caused by a malevolent off-stage force or as a play of learning thanks to a benevolent off-stage force. It is certain that although the man can't reach the carafe at the end despite all his effort, he learns a great deal during the process. In other words, he finds out the ways

to reach the carafe by putting the cubes on top of each other. In this respect, the play compromises with Beckett's artistic motto which favors process over product.

In "Act Without Words II", Beckett this time makes use of rhythm and tempo as means of his stage reality. There are two sacks on stage at the beginning of the play with two actors inside them and the stage is "violently lit". Similar to the whistle in "Act Without Words I", a "goad" enters the stage to awaken the first actor. After the first actor completes his actions, the goad enters again to awaken the second actor. The only information we have about the characters is that:

A is slow, awkward, absent. B brisk, rapid, precise. The two actions therefore, though B has more to do than A, should have approximately the same duration. (Beckett, 2010: 178)

Only through this difference of rhythm and tempo, Beckett creates two distinct characters on stage, which certainly is his artistic genius. He proves that it is neither required nor desired to imitate real life feelings on stage for the sake of creating real characters. Thanks to the minutely estimated stage acts, it is possible to create a Reality which doesn't resemble the reality outside. Not only the audience but also the actors on stage get the chance to experience real moments and feelings during each performance unlike the realist actors who force themselves to bring back memories from their personal life onto the stage. That is to say, the actor in "Act Without Words I", for example, performs all the actions given in the play exactly at that moment, on that stage. He doesn't imitate a previously performed action on stage. Thus, what the audience sees on stage is the real and simultaneous experience of the actor. This is one of the most significant characteristics of Beckett's art, and this is why I call his art as "anti-realist". It doesn't refer to a piece of art which is "unreal" or far away from the matters of the real world; in contrast, the term is used to claim that what realists call as "real" is not Real indeed.

The last two short plays of Beckett which will be discussed in this chapter are "Ohio Impromptu" and "What Where". "Ohio Impromptu" was written in 1980, one of the latest plays of Beckett. It was written on request to be performed at an academic symposium in Ohio. There are two men on stage sitting beside a rectangular table. They look exactly similar, wearing the same long black coats, and with long white hair. They are like mirrors to each other. One of them is "The Listener" and the other

one is “The Reader”. The Reader starts reading a story and The Listener knocks on the table at certain points, upon which The Reader stops reading and repeats the last sentence. Repetition, as in the other works of Beckett, has also a significant role in this play. However, different from the other plays of him, this time the repetition takes place as a result of the interaction between the two actors on stage. In “*Play*”, there is also repetition and the whole story is repeated nearly three times; however, in “*Ohio Impromptu*”, this repetition is caused by the wish of one of the actors on stage, which means there is someone on the stage who is leading the play.

Besides the use of repetition, Beckett uses the “mirroring” and “ghost actors” techniques on stage in this late play he wrote on his 75th birthday. Through the use of mirroring, he creates a double sided world on stage. We can’t be sure whether the characters on stage are real and alive. The use of mirroring gives the audience the perception that these two people on stage may be just a single person indeed. The second person, being either The Listener or The Reader, may be an image created in the mind of his counterpart, and we may be seeing the dreams of an actor. Hoon-Sung Hwang refers to this “mirror” effect in his article and uses it to explain how Beckett differentiates from conventional theater:

This mise-en-abyme technique serves to subvert the foundation of the conventional idea of theatre based on mimesis. Conventional theatres, based on the Aristotelian idea of drama, have emphasized the mimetic aspect of theatrical representation. In *Ohio Impromptu*, however, F3, which might be called a drama performed on the stage, is not an imitation of reality but an imitation of doubly imitated reality (Fz), for Fz imitates F1, which is possibly an imitation of reality. This multiple duplication dilutes the referential significance of all three subtexts, thereby foregrounding the condition in which they are created; or as the Russian Formalists might say, Beckett attempts to “lay bare the device” with which a playwright represents reality. Likewise, Beckett’s strategy of reflexivity serves the same purpose: to encourage the spectator to be aware of the mode of relationship between the subtexts in lieu of their particular referent. (Hwang, 1993)

As in the other works of Beckett, the plot doesn’t have a significance in creating the artistic world on stage. There is a story going on throughout the play, namely the story read by The Reader, but the content of the story doesn’t have an influence on the overall perception of the play. We, just as in “*Play*” or “*Not I*”, hear fragments of a love story. Another striking point which invalidates the argument that Beckett is a

nihilist appears in Adam Seelig's article on the manuscripts of "*Ohio Impromptu*". It is obvious from the collected manuscripts that Beckett never depends on coincidences when creating his works. Everything in his works is minutely predetermined after a long sequence of trials. Even the slightest details on stage serve a purpose. H. Porter Abbott, who makes a brilliant comparison between the 19th century and 20th century theaters in terms of audience expectations, poses a response to the scholars who claim that Beckett is too personal and does not provide the audience with anything useful, by emphasizing that Beckett's works educate the audience and require direct participation of it:

Beckett did not simply replace the structured audience of theatre with the private reader of texts, but made that reader a kind of super-reader, that is, an interpretive scholar, one who reads over and over again, pausing over details, searching for "unspoken words."... In his mature work, scholarship is important not for the erudite display it makes but as a signifier of the effort of scrutiny - the constant seeking of the truth in texts. Therefore, though it is essential that the mockery of scholarship be felt in this work, Linda Ben-Zvi has the emphasis right when she asserts that Beckett "is not parodying his critics, as other playwrights might have done; instead he is empathizing with them. Both he and they struggle toward clarity and sense." The scholar, in short, is the epitome of the reader/listener - of that isolated, often rarefied and elite modernist audience whose artistic receptivity is at the opposite pole from that of the nineteenth-century bourgeois. (Abbott, 1993)

The last short play "What, Where" is obviously the one which includes the most obscure elements of Beckett's theater. Premiered in 1983 in Harold Clurman Theatre New York, the play consists of five characters "Bam, Bem, Bim, Bom, and the Voice". Not only the names but also the costumes of the characters are as alike as possible. They all wear "the same long grey gown", and all have "the same long grey hair". The character of Voice is not apparent on stage, but rather "in the shape of a small megaphone at head level".

At the beginning of the play, Beckett depicts the playing area via a drawing in every detail, which is very characteristic of Beckett's theatre. The play, as the other Beckett plays, is based upon the physical elements on stage, light and voice being the most prominent ones. Just as in "Come and Go", characters enter and exit the stage in an order with the absence of a verbal communication among them. This circularity of the stage act is accompanied by the repetitive words of the Voice, which together

create the claustrophobic atmosphere of the play. It is, indeed, what Beckett's theater does: to create an atmosphere which is based on the actual moment on stage rather than to tell a story.

Within this vicious cycle, "What, Where" also embodies the change of seasons accompanied by the change in the relationships among the characters.

Time passes...It is spring. Time passes...I am alone. It is summer. Time passes.
(Beckett, 2010)

The Voice says throughout the play, which makes the passing of time a recurrent theme in the play.

As in the other plays of Beckett, physical acts have a major significance on stage rather than the background stories of the characters. Beckett describes the exact body movements of the characters when they enter the stage and a considerable part of the play exists merely of these physical acts:

Bom enters at N, halts at 1 head bowed.
Pause.
Bim enters at E, halts at 2 head haught.
Pause.
Bim exits at E followed by Bom.
Pause.
Bim enters at E, halts at 2 head bowed.
Pause.
Bem enters at N, halts at 1 head haught.
Pause.
Bem exits at N followed by Bim.
Pause.
Bem enters at N, halts at 1 head bowed.
Pause.
Bam exits at W followed by Bem.
Pause.
Bam enters at W, halts at 3 head bowed.
Pause. (Beckett, 2010: 471)

The enter and exit assigned to each character creates the stage reality in the play. It is no more necessary to discuss what happens outside of the stage or what happened to these characters in their past. The important thing is the feeling and the atmosphere created on stage. For this, the stage directions are, as expected, given to each and every detail in a mathematical structure.

Although “*What Where*” resembles the other works of Beckett in various ways, it is still obscure compared to the others as there are some realistic elements in the play, which makes it more difficult to interpret what Beckett is trying to do. To give an example, the questions Bam asks when others enter the stage such as “*He didn’t say anything?*” or “*You gave him the works?*” suggests a kind of political interpretation of the play based on the fact that the characters are either torturers or the tortured. This explicit political element in the play puts it in a rather different position. However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that Beckett deviates from his artistic stance. To end with the words of Knowlson on *What Where*:

The enigma at the heart of *What Where* is never resolved. Indeed, Alan Schneider may well be right that its hidden theme is that of “the impossibility of understanding human existence”. So, if someone is responsible for an unnamed crime, that crime appears likely to be Calderon’s original sin of being born, which Beckett had evoked at the beginning of his career in his essay, *Proust*. (Knowlson, 2014: 604)

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CHAPTER II: FAILURE OF LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION / CHALLENGES TO THE CONVENTIONAL USE OF LANGUAGE: EDWARD ALBEE AND HAROLD PINTER

One of the most significant challenges to the conventional realist theater posed by anti-realist theater is probably the use of language in theater. Until the flourishing of anti-realist theater, language was one of the basic components of theater. It was used, in conventional realist theater, as a means for communication among the characters. Language was believed to have a primary role in setting our relationships with the world and with the people around us. In a conventional realist play, it is not very possible to come up with meaningless lines or misunderstandings (or not understanding at all), or pauses in between the dialogues.

However, anti-realist theater challenged this idealized position of language and offered the idea that language now fails to provide a communication between us and the world. It was now a means for uncommunication rather than communication, and sometimes it was possible to communicate without a need for a language. This was a challenge also posed by Beckett and Ionesco. In Beckett's "Act Without Words I" and "II", there is no verbal language at all, and the language in "Waiting for Godot" is unexplanatory and meaningless. Similarly, Genet in "The Bald Soprano" uses language as a means for uncommunication, something which was unthinkable in the conventional realist theater, which is based on conveying messages to the audience.

Two prominent playwrights of the anti-realist movement in 1960s who followed this tradition of challenging the use of language in theater were Edward Albee and Harold Pinter. Pinter's use of "pauses" and "repetitions", as well as Albee's use of an everyday conversation as a road to murder in "The Zoo Story", and his ironic use of language in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" exemplified a completely new and different approach to the position of language in theater, challenging the conventional approach to language.

1. The Anti-Realist Theater of Harold Pinter

If there is a playwright who shaped the future of playwriting and theater in the 1960's, this is no one else but Harold Pinter. Starting his career with an interest in literature, poetry, and cinema, he eventually demonstrated himself and his genius in a relatively unexpected field theater, to such an extent that a new theatrical style, Pinteresque, was named after him.

Deeply influenced by Beckett and an impenitent follower of him, Pinter was the pioneering figure to create an artistic style on stage in the post-war era. Short utterances, short and long pauses in-between the lines, use of language as a means of non-communication, hypocrite characters except the one who is set apart from the rest with a kind of tragic fall are the basic trademarks of Pinteresque theater.

Under Pinter's significance lies the fact that he brought an innovative and unprecedented understanding of reality and truth to the British stage, then to influence the whole world theater. As Mark Batty, his biographer in 2000's states:

In abusing the naturalistic form and the contract it demands of its audience in this way, Pinter was proposing a form of drama that was unprecedented on the British stage. In many ways, what he sought to do was straightforward: he clearly wished to apply a modernist principle to playwriting, one that had become established as commonplace in other arenas of artistic endeavor. The literature of Joyce or Kafka, for example, challenged the notion of there being any reliable and stable perspective upon experience that might be deemed authoritative or 'true'. Instead, multiple and oppositional perspectives might co-exist within representations of reality, and the portrayal of an individual might be coloured by an uncertainty or an insecurity over which elements of behavior, experience, or the mind constitute the 'self'. That which is held to be 'true', then, can only ever be a matter of momentary perspective. This approach makes for the creation of theater that does not tell an audience what to think, that has no direct agenda, but which is free to operate upon those who receive it on numerous metaphoric levels. What such a play 'means' is no longer a matter of what the author intended it to say, but is more a matter of the consequence of the material of the play has to the individuals that constitute an audience. (Batty, 2000: 27)

Pinter, just as Beckett and Ionesco, is not interested in either sending a message to the audience or taking a didactic position for the improvement of humankind. What he is interested in is the art of theatre itself, and to create a new form of it on stage, which he was able to achieve in the most ideal way possible. He is also the embodiment of the idea of being political without sounding so. In none of his plays does he talk

about any kind of political stance (except *Mountain Language*); however, in all of his plays, his political stance is revealed to the audience through the use of language and other theatrical means.

Although sometimes blamed for being totally a-political, it is now clear that his plays include all kinds of political elements such as the use of power and power struggles among the members of society. The only reason why he may have been considered as an a-political author is that he never explicitly states these political views in his works. His plays are truly existentialist in terms of characters who are trying to find their real places within this world, mostly trapped in a room or a restaurant etc., in a never ending but unrevealed struggle hidden behind their hypocrisy. What can be considered as more political than that?

Pinter questioned all the previously set rules of conventional realist theater in his works. His theater does not aim to send a message to the audience, his plot is mostly vague, the background and motives of his characters are not revealed and left open to interpretation, the language is used not as a means of communication but rather as a means of non-communication in his plays. All these challenges to the conventional realist theater provided the author with an unshakable position in the theater world.

1.1 “The Caretaker” as an Anti-realist Play

One of the most exemplary works of Pinter’s style, “The Caretaker”, is also his first commercial success, and the first step of his wide recognition. Written and premiered in 1960, it became one of the most significant theatrical works of the second part of the twentieth century. Sometimes mislabeled as a realist and even a naturalist play, it is obvious that Pinter detaches himself from “realism” in conventional terms using various techniques throughout the play.

The play is set in a single room, namely an attic in West London, which is densely occupied by stuff which are unrelated. On the one hand the setting is conventional as we know the time and place unlike the plays of Beckett; on the other hand, it doesn’t reveal any hint about the plot, if there is a plot at all. Thus, Pinter’s genius lies under the fact that he is able to question all the conventions of the realist theater by using those conventions in his plays.

Pinter’s characters in “The Caretaker” also look like the characters of conventional theater at first in the sense that some background information is given about the characters, especially for Davies and Aston; however, Aston’s medical background is revealed only at the end of Scene 1 with a single monologue while Davies’ stories about his background fail to be consistent.

The plot, as well, consists of a combination of conventional and non-conventional elements in that there seems to be a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end; however, the conversations among the characters make no sense from time to time, and do not serve to the plot. Pinter’s motive is to focus the audience into what is happening on stage at that specific moment of staging rather than what is going to happen at the end of the play, which is actually the basis of anti-realist theater in general. Pinter is not interested whether the audience is pleased with or has understood his work; theater, for him, stands there for the sake of itself regardless of the audience and commercial factors. At an interview he explains this as:

I don’t want people to love me, that is one thing I can say without fear or favour. But I tend to exaggerate sometimes. When I made this motif for the actors saying the one thing to remember is ‘Fuck the audience’, well what I am really saying by that is not really ‘Fuck the audience’ but ‘Do what you choose to do, what we have decided to do, and not what they want’. I think that’s the essential thing here. So don’t go out on the stage and give them what they want, because

giving them what they want is going to do serious damage to the work. (Batty, 2000: 84)

The influence of existentialism on Pinter is evident in *The Caretaker* as well as all his other plays. Pinter's characters are generally stuck in a struggle to prove their identity and existence, an attempt which, most of the time, ends up with failure. The three characters of "The Caretaker" Aston, Mick, and Davies also obviously go through an identity and existential crisis throughout the play, a struggle which is transformed into a power struggle, specifically towards the final of the play.

Pinter's characters in "The Caretaker" are not conventional ones. Aston, a man in his early thirties, is a very "slow" and mild man, who does everything slowly throughout the play. From the beginning till the final of the play, he is busy with trying to fix a toast machine, which he cannot succeed. He is so naïve that he is never able to perceive that Davies is trying to abuse his goodwill. He is extraordinarily "good" towards Davies, an old man whom he took out from a fight on the street, although the old man scorns and insults him openly. Aston is representative and personification of the "ideal good person" utopia.

Aston is a self-occupied character, who is focused only on what he is doing rather than what is happening around him. The word "self-occupied" is not used pejoratively here; contrarily, it refers to his being such a naïve and mild character, which is obvious even from the very beginning of the play. Aston brings Davies to his house in the first scene and although Davies is breathlessly telling stories about himself and talking about the other people at the café he had been fired from, Aston seems indifferent and tries to make Davies comfortable by offering him a chair and cigarette. For him, Davies is a man who needed help and Aston was the one who took the responsibility, which is the only fact that matters for the young man.

It is then revealed that the reason behind Aston's "weird" behaviour is the medical treatment, the electroshock treatment, he went through when he was a young boy. The audience learns this fact at the end of the first scene through Aston's long monologue; yet, the events which led to his having been taken to the hospital are obscure. This is one of the points which differentiates Pinter's characters from the characters of conventional theater in the sense that Pinter provides the audience with

only the vital details of his characters' backgrounds, which would serve to the needs of the play rather than to create a fake reality on stage.

Until the middle of Act 1, Aston shows nearly no existence although he is on stage with Davies. He just reacts to Davies' remarks with very short, mostly one word, replies. This is the part in which the audience is faced with Davies' character mostly, through all his stories and comments about the other people he has met so far. It is an interesting fact about the play because there are only two actors on stage for the whole act, but no meaningful conversation takes place between them, which is one of the characteristics of Pinteresque style. There seems to be a conversation but without any real communication, serving to the idea that language is not always a way of communication but it may be a tool of non-communication, as well. Totally unacceptable in a conventional realist play, this innovative approach to the function of language, is one of the reasons to consider Pinter as an anti-realist playwright.

Aston's goodwill is also apparent when Davies asks for a pair of shoes. Perplexed though by this wish, Aston tries to offer Davies a pair of shoes, which is rejected by Davies as the shoes "don't fit" him.

The only part in this act in which Aston is enthusiastic about speaking is the part where Davies asks about the Buddha statue. After telling him that he "quite liked it", he wishes to learn Davies' ideas on Buddhas, just to be met by an indifference. We understand that Aston has some kind of obsession with some objects such as the Buddha, the toast machine he is trying to fix throughout the whole play etc. All these objects can of course be interpreted in a metaphorical and symbolic way. A character who fails to build a connection with the other people around him tries to build this connection with the non-living objects, which is indeed quite tragic. In terms of using the tools of symbolist theater, "The Caretaker", once again, proves to be a non-conventional play.

The most significant symbol is obviously the shed which Aston plans to build in the garden at the back of his house. Building the shed has become the meaning of life for Aston, and the only thing which he is deeply enthusiastic about. That's why it is the only moment he gets crazy when Davies insults his shed. However, he is never able to build the shed throughout the play and most probably will not do it in

the future, as well. However, the belief that there is a possibility of his building this shed clings him to life.

This isolation from the outside world and other people is not a voluntary choice for Aston, as he really tries to communicate with Davies when Davies decides to stay in his place. We see Aston's attempts to share his life with Davies when he talks about his adventure in the pub or tries to understand why Davies wants to go to Sidcup. However, he really doesn't know how to communicate with people. He suddenly starts talking about totally unrelated issues during the conversation, which underlines his tragic past and naivety. For example, in the middle of Act 1, when Davies is talking about his previous job and how he is a bit short of money, Aston suddenly starts telling a story which happened to him the other day in the pub. This is his way of communication indeed, which makes Davies totally perplexed as Davies is not a type of person who would find empathy with another person. In a sense, the audience is presented with the conflict between naivety and pragmatism. While doing that, Pinter's purpose is not to support one side and devalue the other side in a didactic level; he just presents the two sides to the audience and leaves the rest to the intellectuality of the audience.

Another symbolic object is the jig saw Aston continuously mentions. It is not even clear what a jig saw is and he tries to explain this with words such as

It comes from the same family as the fret saw. But it's an appliance, you see. You have to fix it on a portable drill" (Pinter, 1991: 33).

He claims to have seen this jig saw at a shop and he has a great will to own it. That's because it is a tool he will use to build his dream shed, thus the first step to his dream.

Aston's naivety once again becomes apparent when he brings Davies a pair of shoes on Act Three. When Davies asks about the laces of the shoes, he says "*I just got the shoes*", and upon Davies' ungrateful whining, he still doesn't get angry and tries to find some laces for the shoes.

On the same Act, we see Aston protesting against Davies for the first time in the play, when Davies makes noises at night and disturbs Aston. This is the first point where Aston is disturbed by the violation of his privacy. Starting with this point, there emerges a cold war between Aston and Davies.

Aston's relationship with his brother Mick also bears importance. The motives of the relationship between two brothers are mostly obscure. It is evident that Aston feels a kind of resentment towards Mick because of Mick's indifference to what happened to Aston in the hospital; however, this resentment does not cause a feeling of hatred or revenge from his brother. Pinter gives the nature of the relationship between two brothers in the last Act with a single scene, where Mick and Aston look and smile at each other at the door of the room. Thus, the author is able to create the effect he wants through just a single smile on stage rather than narrating and giving all the details of characters' backgrounds.

Of course the most important and touching part of the play is Aston's monologue, one of the best monologues in the whole twentieth century theater. Not only the audience learns the reason underlying Aston's behavior but also lots of hints about the relationship between Aston, Mick, and their mother. Pinter doesn't achieve this only through the power of words and narrating; but, he bestows some qualities to the way Aston speaks, which explains everything:

The trouble was, I used to have kind of hallucinations. They weren't hallucinations, they...I used to get the feeling I could see things...very clearly...everything...was so clear...everything used...everything used to get very quiet...everything got very quiet...all this...quiet...and...this clear sight...it was...but maybe I was wrong. (Pinter, 1991: 64)

All this usage of repetitive words and three dots reveal Aston's total detachment from past, how he cannot remember exactly what he was exposed to, which makes the situation even more tragic for the audience; thus Pinter's use of language and punctuation also makes his theater non-conventional.

At the end of the play, it is clear that even a character like Aston can get mad when his dreams are touched upon. It is the only time in the play Aston loses himself when Davies scorns the shed he is planning to build, a scene which can be interpreted in a number of ways; however, a possible interpretation would be that Pinter is trying to show the audience that even "total pureness" can be destroyed.

The second character of the play Davies, is the direct opposite, the counterpart of Aston. Everything about Davies is obscure, including his real name. He claims that he has two names, Davies and Jenkins, one of which is fake; then, he starts telling stories about the places he worked at, the people he met, his papers that he gave to a friend etc.

but none of them proves to be true. Davies is the intruder in the play. He intrudes the lives of Aston and Mick. He is a real pragmatist and imposter in that he abuses anyone around him to make himself comfortable in life. He first sides with Aston, but when he learns that the house belongs to Mick, he forgets about all the goodwill of Aston and sides with Mick. However, Pinter's aim is neither to display him as a character to be criticized nor to teach a lesson to the audience through his character. He portrays his characters in an objective way and leaves the comment to the audience. This integration of the audience into the play is also a characteristic of non-conventional theater.

Another important point about Davies is that he is quite racist in his remarks although he cannot reveal where he himself was born, which is quite ironic. At the beginning of the play, when he is describing the people at the café he uses words like *"All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt."* (17). In another part where he talks about the toilet outside of the house, he is quite obsessed with the blacks who use the toilet.

The use of language in a non-conventional way is also apparent in the character of Davies. Whereas Aston speaks hesitantly with short words, Davies speaks with a jargon-like language which is specific to him. This difference is another reason why the two characters fail to communicate with and understand each other throughout the play.

Davies struggles with an identity crisis, and a will to reinforce his existence in the world. He tries to do this by scorning all other people around him as inferior to him. That's because, those people's inferiority would provide Davies with a superiority, because in reality he knows that he is useless in the world, a loser.

No matter how ungraceful Davies has been towards Aston, the audience cannot help to feel a pity for him at the end of the play, because he has to turn back to the streets for a living. He cannot achieve his biggest goal in life: to find a place to survive. This is Pinter's genius about the characterization. He succeeds in taking a distant position to the characters he himself has created.

The last character of the play Mick, is maybe the funniest and the most unexpected of the three. Totally frisky, Mick plays a game on Davies to reveal his real identity. Mick is just another character who struggles to build an identity for himself, but unlike Aston he is fond of manipulating other people while doing this. As in the other characters, Mick's background is also blurred and the audience is not provided

with any details on the events which led to the present situation of the character. Just as Davies, Mick also tells stories and talks about some people he has met continuously, but we never know if he is making up these stories.

The relationship between the two brothers Mick and Aston also bears importance. It is clear that Mick feels guilty because of his brother's situation and wants to act like a protector for him in a sense. We understand this from the fact that he has found this house for his brother and when he understands that Davies is trying to abuse Aston, he organizes his game to get rid of Davies and to show Davies' real face to Aston.

The most specific point, which reveals Mick's feelings for Aston is the point when Davies suggests Aston should "go back where he came from". At this point, Mick gets crazy and scores Davies off:

Ever since you come into this house there has been nothing but trouble. Honest, I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. (Pinter, 1991: 128)

This is the first time Mick reveals his real feelings for Davies and the first time that Davies understands he won't be able to stay at this house permanently.

As Martin Esslin (1973) states, there are no women characters in *The Caretaker* in appearance but there is the mother character whom we never see on stage, but who has had a great impact on the present situation of the brothers. This is valid especially for Aston, who experienced his biggest disappointment in life when his mother accepted to sign the papers which caused him to go through an electroshock treatment. When it was suggested that Aston should go through this treatment, we understand that, with a full trust in his mother, he thought that his mother would never allow the doctors conduct the treatment. However, she does give the permission, which left Aston in total despair.

Another character who is not apparent on stage is the father. When Mick gives a speech about his "uncle's brother", Pinter is most probably playing with the language to refer to Mick and Aston's father. Even more striking, Mick claims that Davies reminds him of his uncle's brother, which puts Davies in a father-like position

for Aston and Mick. According to Esslin (1973) the play ends with the image of two sons chasing their father out of the house.

It should be noted that unlike the case in conventional realist theater, all these are open-ended interpretations of the play. We will never be sure if Pinter really aimed at implying a mother or father. All of these interpretations are merely source-based possibilities, which is the most significant characteristic of anti-realist theater. This leads the audience to incorporate his own intellectuality and imagination into the writer's.

The Caretaker doesn't explicitly include any political elements but reading between the lines, it is nearly impossible to claim that Pinter was an apolitical playwright. The only reason why he was considered so, was that he was against the conventional ways of integrating politics in a piece of artwork. As Batty suggests "In abusing the naturalistic form and the contract it demands of its audience, Pinter was proposing a form of drama that was unprecedented on the British stage (27)."

1.2 “Celebration”

It is meaningful to include the last play of Pinter before his death, “Celebration”, in this study, to be able to evaluate the progress of his specific style. “The Caretaker” (1960) was his first great success and the first play, which carried the implications of Pinteresque style; and, “Celebration”, which was written exactly forty years after “The Caretaker”, is the embodiment of Pinteresque style in its most developed form.

Just as “The Caretaker”, “Celebration” is also set in a single place, a restaurant this time. There is not much movement on stage throughout the play, except the restaurant staff coming in and going out. In “Celebration” we see that Pinter had kept the basic elements of his theater throughout his career exceeding 40 years, which proves the fact that having a personal style in theater would make a playwright as well as the art work timeless.

We see two tables on stage, one consisting of four characters, and the other of two. The characters at the big table are in their late adulthood whereas the other two characters are relatively younger. However, in most of the productions of the play, the age of characters was not a matter, as regardless of the age of characters Pinter focuses on more universal issues through these characters.

Fake relationships, power struggles, and unexpected intruders are revealed throughout the play as the corner stones of Pinter’s theater. The couples sitting at the big table are there to celebrate the anniversary of Lambert and Julie, but it is clear that none of them is pleased to be there, even the ones whose anniversary is celebrated. There is kind of chaos even from the very beginning of the play when they cannot even decide who ordered the duck.

We understand that these people are from the bourgeois “civilized” society; however, ironically the language they use is extremely vulgar both when referring to the restaurant staff and to each other. Etiquette is no more important for any of them as they have already stabilized their positions in the society. It is evident from the very beginning of the play that the wife and the husband, Lambert and Julie have no respect for each other, and even seem like they hate from each other:

Lambert: And for me. I mean, what about me? What did I order? I haven’t the faintest idea. What did I order?

Julie: Who cares?

Lambert: Who cares? I bloody care! (Pinter, 2013: 4)

The use of language as a means of non-communication is apparent again as in the other plays of Pinter. The characters on stage talk with each other nonstop but the conversations among them do not hold a meaning. When they are talking about what *osso bucco* is, they suddenly start talking about the “Italian word for asshole”. They talk with each other just for the sake of talking and not for any communicative purposes. Language, once again, serves to non-communication.

Another humorous example of this non-communication takes place between Julie and Prue. Julie repeats three times that Lambert doesn’t listen to her and Prue replies by saying “*You mean he just doesn’t listen?*” (7). And then suddenly she turns to Lambert and scorns him saying “*Why don’t you listen to your wife?*” (7). This action indeed is not the one Prue really feels to do but the one she is supposed to do. Once again, Pinter implicitly mocks with the hypocrisy of middle-upper class bourgeois society.

The play changes direction after this point as Prue mentions that Julie has been such a faithful wife to Lambert. We then start to learn that indeed none of them have been loyal to their relationship throughout all their lives, and more surprisingly they have always been aware of this fact, which is another harsh criticism of the moral values of bourgeois society.

Pinter also makes fun of the cultural tastes of the bourgeois society through Matt mentioning such a stupid and meaningless song, and all the others joining to the song with great enthusiasm. And just after they finish the song, the conversation between Matt and Lambert reveals their obsession with social classes:

MATT: I’ve always admired that song. You know what it is? It’s a traditional folk song.

LAMBERT: It’s got class.

MATT: It’s tradition and class.

LAMBERT: They don’t grow on trees.

MATT: Too bloody right. (Pinter, 2013: 10)

The two characters at the second table are a younger couple discussing about the history of their relationship. By transitions from the first table to the second table, Pinter brings two different stories on the stage simultaneously. The quest for identity

is again apparent at this table too. Russell, the man at the second table, feels a need to emphasize continuously that other people believe in him. Suki, his partner, takes part in this and assures that she also believes in Russell. However, their conversation meets a turning point there and we understand that Russell has cheated on Suki and this is a dinner for apology. The sentence Russell uses when describing the “other” girl is also a good reference to these people’s social class obsession: “*Listen, she was just a secretary. That’s all. No more*”. For Russell, he can do anything with another girl provided the fact that she comes from a “less noble” class. However, Suki, who is quite a witty character, says that she was also a secretary, a fact which is harshly rejected by Russell.

Disrespect between the couple is also obvious for Russell and Suki. Suki easily talks about her flirtations with other men “behind the cabinets” when she was a secretary, and Russell calls her a “whore” and a “prick”. Meanwhile, this vulgar language is heard at the other table too. When Prue is talking about her mother-in-law, Julie says:

All mothers-in-law are like that. They love their boys. They don’t want their sons to be fucked up by other girls. Isn’t that right?, which is replied by Prue: “Absolutely. All mothers want their sons to be fucked by themselves”. (Pinter, 2013: 17)

And quite humorously, they start a long debate all together on fucking.

With the involvement of the restaurant staff towards the middle, the play starts to take a different direction. Coming in and going out of the restaurant staff during the play is another Pinteresque element, which I would call “the involvement of the intruder”. Just as Davies in “The Caretaker”, there is always someone who intrudes the lives of the other characters in nearly all Pinter plays. In the case of “Celebration”, we have three such characters: Richard, Sonia, and the Waiter (whose name is not revealed by Pinter).

Richard is like the embodiment of a toady who wants to please his customers by flattering them. He acts as if he were closely interested in what their customers had done before coming to the restaurant, asking them about the play they had been to. However, the four characters at the big table cannot even decide if they had seen a play or a ballet, which is quite humorous and ironic.

The only part of the play in which there is a reference to the background of the characters is when Prue talks to Richard about her relationship with Julie:

She's my sister, I've known her all my life, since we were little innocent girls, all our lives, when we were babies, when we used to lie in the nursery and hear mummy beating the shit out of daddy. We saw the blood on the sheets the next day- when nanny was in the pantry- my sister and me- and nanny was in the pantry- and the pantry maid was in the larder and the parlour maid was in the laundry room washing the blood out of the sheets. That's how my little sister and I were brought up. (Pinter, 2013: 25)

The memory Prue tells about their mother beating their daddy is quite strange, just as the stories Davies tells in "The Caretaker". In both plays, we never learn if these stories reflect any kind of reality or they are simply made up by their narrators. This open-endedness and uncertainty is another feature of Pinter's style.

After this point, the characters totally get out of control in a sense and their real identities, which is in conflict with the "modern civilized" identity they created for themselves, comes to surface in a more obscure and vulgar way when Prue asks Richard if she can kiss him on the mouth. Julie also announces that she wishes to kiss Richard on the mouth, followed by Lambert's suggestion "*to tickle Richard's arse with a feather*".

A similar scene takes place at Russell and Suki's table. This time it is Sonia who asks them about where they have been before coming to the restaurant. We learn that Russell and Suki have been to the opera but when Sonia asks more details about it, it is clear that they have no idea on what they are talking about.

The most humorous moments of the play are the scenes where The Waiter, the "strangest" character of the play, appears. Obviously, the Waiter character is in the core of the play as the intruder and with his great knowledge of literature and history. He interrupts the course of actions and talks happening on stage with the same words every time he appears on stage: "*Do you mind if I interject?*". He then suddenly claims that he has heard them talking about some literary figures, and starts giving lengthy speeches on these figures and their relationship to their grandfather. He first appears at Russell and Suki's table talking about T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, George Baker, Dylan Thomas, and all others. After he finishes his speech, he disappears from the stage until next time.

The Waiter is obviously obsessed with his grandfather and the values of his grandfather's time. He has a yearning for the past with a feeling of deep melancholy and nostalgia. However, Pinter accomplishes to create a humorous character from such a melancholic man.

The Waiter is the exact opposite of all the other characters on stage with his wit, intelligence, cultural background, and manners; however, ironically he is doomed to serve these people, who are utterly vulgar and ignorant. In some ways, he resembles Aston in "The Caretaker". He is an outsider. He doesn't belong to the world he lives in, which caused him to stick to the past. He lives in his imaginary world and claims that he has heard people talking about literature, most probably for the enthusiasm he feels to talk about these.

Although the Waiter is in a kind of identity crisis, he is in no way unhappy with the restaurant he is working at. When Russell asks him if he would like to change the place he works, he replies in a way which would reveal a great deal about him:

To be brutally honest, I don't think I'd recover if they did a thing like that. This place is like a womb to me. I prefer to stay in my womb. I strongly prefer that to being born. (Pinter, 2013: 58)

This is such a striking reply actually, because we see that he is just like an innocent child who is afraid of leaving the womb of his mother.

There is another cacophonous conversation going on at the big table. Lambert starts talking about a girl he met in the past. Julie thinks that this girl was herself, but indeed she wasn't. They start talking about different experiences simultaneously, with the involvement of Prue and Matt. Still, none of the characters at the table listen or try to understand each other. Language, which is one of the basic tools of conventional realist theater, fails once again in Pinter.

The cold war between Lambert and Julie becomes gets harsher as the play progresses. When Lambert wants to raise his glass for Julie and Julie wants to make a speech to thank him, he suddenly gets furious and shouts at her: "*Raise your fucking glass and shut up!*". Julie, in return, reveals her discontent of Lambert by making insinuation:

But darling, that's naked aggression. He doesn't normally go in for naked aggression. He usually disguises it under honeyed words. What is it sweetie? He's got a cold in the nose, that's what it is. (Pinter, 2013: 60)

Lambert is vulgar even when he is celebrating their anniversary. He says they have been married for “how many bloody years!”.

Another turning point in the play is the disclosure of the relationship between Lambert and Suki. Towards the end of the play, Lambert recognizes Suki at the other table and confesses that he slept with her when she was 18. Upon this, Suki also sees Lambert and from then on the two tables in the play intermingle. After a humorous presentation, they start a vain conversation on gardening and how much Lambert loved gardening in the past.

The characters’ jobs are also an element of humor. When the two tables come together, they start talking about each other’s jobs and Suki claims that she is a schoolteacher teaching infants while Prue says that she runs charities with Julie. Lambert and Matt’s job is totally obscure, on the other hand. They say that they are “strategy consultants” but they cannot explain exactly what they do. This most probably refers to the fact that these people have earned the money they have now through some illegal and immoral ways, and thanks to this money now they lead a so-called “civilized” life. Pinter’s criticism of the bourgeois society is revealed once again.

Ironically, when Russell and Suki are about to go into an argument as Russell mentioned the “big tits of waitresses”, Lambert and Matt warn him not to talk to his wife in that way and to have some respect, although we haven’t seen the slightest respect from them towards their wives throughout the play. They think that they have the all the right to behave as they like, but when it comes to other people they are more than didactic about morality and respect.

When Richard and Sonia enter the stage on the last scene, all the characters act as if nothing happened at this table and no secret had been revealed, and continue the celebration. Lambert’s speech to Richard is quite ironic:

This is so totally rare, you see. None of this normally happens. People normally- you know- people normally are so distant from each other. That’s what I’ve found. Take a given bloke- this given bloke doesn’t know that another given bloke exists. It goes down through history, doesn’t it? (Pinter, 2013: 63)

Lambert criticizes people's being distant from each other; however, it is obvious that he is also distant even to the people who are closest to him. He doesn't know anything about either his wife or his own brother. They are so self-centered that they are not aware of and interested in what is happening around them. The fake sincerity they display has been their lifestyle.

Following the last interjection of the Waiter, this time giving a long speech on both his grandfather and grandmother, all of them leave the restaurant happily with plans to meet for another celebration. The play returns to its beginning after all those confessions and vulgar talks. This is again quite Pinteresque. In the conventional theater, the characters have a linear flow. They are first presented to the audience with their basic characteristics, and then the audience experiences the changes in the characters throughout the play, and the play is finalized by either the death of the character, or his transformation. However, in Pinter nothing happens to the characters on stage throughout the play. They just talk with each other without a real communication and within a vicious cycle, they return to their starting point at the end of the play.

How can this be criticized for being not as realistic as the characters in the conventional realist plays? Think about the real life. Most people experience life in a similar vicious cycle. Life is not always a linear flow with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some truths are revealed and we still continue living as if nothing happened. In that sense, Pinter's theatre and characters are even more realistic than the characters of "realist" theater. By questioning the concept of "reality", he shows us that a different understanding and interpretation of reality is possible on stage, where his genius as a playwright lies. Moreover, although he criticizes the bourgeois society in various ways throughout the play, Pinter in no way, suggests that we are better than these people. Pinter doesn't aim at either teaching or showing the right way to live to his audience. What he does is to reflect his characters as objectively as possible and leave the rest to the audience itself. In that sense, he differs once again from the realist playwright in not being didactic at all.

The play ends with maybe the most sincere and real character of the play: the Waiter. After everybody leaves the stage, the waiter stands alone giving his last speech to the audience, not intending to address to the audience directly, though. This

speech is one of the most important parts of the play as it reveals the waiter's nostalgia for the past once again and underlines the fact that everything has become more deteriorated:

My grandfather introduced me to the mystery of life and I'm still in the middle of it. I can't find the door to get out. My grandfather got out of it. He got right out of it. He left it behind him and he didn't look back. He got that absolutely right. And I'd like to make one further interjection. (Pinter, 2013: 72)

This is such an unexpectedly tragic end for a play which includes so much humor. The waiter is in an existential crisis, stuck in the changing values of the world. He is similar to Sartre's characters in *No Exit*.

Talking about Pinter's style and stage technique requires to underline some points which are common to all his plays. The function of language as a means of non-communication, the vicious cycle of events, characters who do not understand each other and an intruder/outsider character can be easily observed in both plays. However, there is one more point to be emphasized, which may be the most important element of Pinteresque style, the "Pinter pauses".

Besides using language patterns which are specific to his theater, Pinter is also famous for endowing a new meaning to the silences on stage. In all plays of Pinter, there is either "silence" or "pause" given as stage directions at certain points. These silences and pauses create the basis of meaning in Pinter's theater.

The Caretaker starts with a "*silence for thirty seconds*". After Mick leaves the stage upon hearing footsteps at the door, there is another silence before the entrance of Aston and Davies. These silences refer to a change on the stage.

Similarly, within the weird conversation between Davies and Aston there are numerous pauses which suggest a strange relationship. They even give us clues about the characters at some points. For example, when Aston asks Davies if he wants to roll a cigarette Davies first refuses, followed by a pause, and then he suddenly says "*I'll tell you what, though. I'll have a bit of that tobacco there for my pipe, if you like*", which suggests that Davies is a character who likes pretending to be someone else; however, when he thinks for a short time he cannot give up the benefits he would get from Aston. Pinter is such a genius that even with a short pause, he manages to create this effect on the audience.

Pinter uses the pauses also when Davies wants to change the topic of conversation. When Davies is talking about what happened to him that night, there is a pause and he starts talking about the next door neighbors. And just a few minutes later, there is another pause and this time he starts talking about the house. These pauses in Davies' talks refer to both a change in the conversation and Davies' slippery and shifty character. Unlike the conventional realist playwrights, Pinter doesn't reveal his characters through a detailed background information, but just with the use of pauses on stage, suggesting an alternative characterization once again.

Pauses also serve to Aston's futile trials to communicate with Davies. When Davies talks about his financial problems, Aston also wants to share something with him, and after the pause starts telling a story that happened to him in the pub the other day. This pause reflects Aston's disability to communicate in a coherent way.

The interrogation between Mick and Davies at the beginning of the Second Act, is also developed by the use of pauses. This time, the pauses reveal the tricky and playful character of Mick. Pinter makes use of these pauses and sometimes slightly pauses nearly on all pages of the play.

When three characters are on stage, this time Pinter uses "silence" to establish the absurd condition they are in. Mick and Aston talk about the leak in the roof but this is such a weird talk with short sentences and repetitions, divided by pauses and silence. At the end, Davies interrupts, saying "What do you do?". The silences and pauses here represent both the humorous condition among the characters and the nature of relationship between two brothers. The two brothers cannot find anything to talk about. They have nothing in common expect trivial issues such as the leak in the roof. Pinter integrates humor within a tragic situation.

Finally, the pauses and silence at the end of the play represent Davies' desperate condition. Davies understands that he has been fired from the house and from the lives of Aston and Mick and in a total despair, asks "*What am I going to do?*" "*What shall I do?*" "*Where am I going to go?*" with all pauses between each question and following a long silence the curtains close.

Although Pinter uses these pauses and silences in *Celebration* too, we see that he has minimized the use of them in time. Compared to "The Caretaker", there are far less pauses and silences in "Celebration", which is the basic change between two plays.

This time pauses are mostly used when a secret is revealed between the characters and when they do not know how to react. For example, when Suki mentions the secretary Russell had an affair with, she says “That’s funny. I thought she twisted you round your little finger” (Pinter, 2013) there is a pause followed by Russell’s words blaming the secretary “You don’t know what these girls are like. These secretaries” Pinter, 2013).

The “silence” is used just after the first lengthy speech of the waiter at Russell and Suki’s table, which creates a humorous atmosphere offering that they have understood nothing from what the waiter has told them. Thus, Russell feels the need to ask the waiter “Have you been working here long?” (Pinter, 2013). This question which may be interpreted just as the interest of the customer in a conventional realist play, with the use of silence, bears a totally. new meaning.

We see a lot of pauses when the two tables come together and they start talking about the history of relationship between Lambert and Suki. They do not know what to talk about or how to continue the conversation, as the pauses suggest, and try to find trivial issues just for the sake of talk.

Pinter’s pauses and silences, each may be interpreted in various ways which are impossible to include completely in this study; however, the point which should be noted that Pinter was an innovator in the world of theater and proved that there are many different ways to talk about and form reality on stage. In that respect, he was and has been one of the greatest challenges to the conventional idea of “mimesis”, changing the whole world of theater in the second half of the twentieth century.

2. Edward Albee and His Anti-Realist Theater

“I tell my students, if you want to know something about the structure of a play, listen to some Bach preludes and fugues. I discovered classical music when I was eight, nine, 10 years old, and I think I learnt something about the nature of dramatic structure from the nature of the music I was listening to. I probably think of myself half the time as a composer”

Edward Albee

In a 2006 interview for *The Telegraph*, worldly acclaimed American playwright Edward Albee explains his approach to the art of theater with the words above. In another interview he gave 40 years ago in 1966 for the *Paris Review*, he gives the hints of this artistic stance:

The final evaluation of a play has nothing to do with immediate audience or critical response. The playwright, along with any writer, composer, painter in this society, has got to have a terrible private view of his own value, of his own work. He's got to listen to his own voice primarily. He's got to watch out for fads, for what might be called the critical aesthetics. (Albee, 2006)

Indeed, Albee summarizes the thesis of this dissertation in the second quotation. He had never been a playwright who wrote for the audience or for the critics. He believed, as can be seen in the quotation, the playwright should have his own values and style regardless of the critical approaches from the audience or the art critics. When we look at his works, this approach can be obviously seen as all of them were quite revolutionary and shocking.

Albee's theater is generally considered as a part of the absurd movement accompanied by Beckett, Genet, Ionesco, and Adamov. Although he has his own specific style, his genius lies under the fact that he was able to make use of various elements in each of his plays. While his “Zoo Story” is extremely harsh and tragic just like the plays of Genet which bring a harsh criticism to the society, his “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” is more like an Ionesco play depending more on irony and comedy. However, it is certain that without being didactic and realistic in conventional terms, he was able to bring the harshest criticism on American society and on the condition of humanity in a universal sense.

2.1 Anti-Realist Elements in “The Zoo Story”

Edward Albee’s “The Zoo Story” takes part in a single space on a single day, with only two characters and without much plot. The play starts on a very usual Sunday afternoon at a very usual park, but ends with an extraordinarily tragic final.

The two characters of the play are described by Albee at the beginning of the play:

PETER: A man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely. He wears tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses. Although he is moving into middle age, his dress and his manner would suggest a man younger.

JERRY: A man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed, but carelessly. What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has begun to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, it is evident that he once was. His fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness. (Albee, 1995: 5)

Even from the character descriptions, Albee gives clues about the two different personalities. It is obvious that Peter is an ordinary middle-aged middle class man without any specific characteristics. The cloth he prefers to wear “*tweeds*” is a symbol of his social class as well as the “*pipe*” he smokes. Thus, Albee makes use of symbols even from the very beginning to refer to the different social classes of the characters. Another important symbol is of course the “*horn-rimmed glasses*” he wears. “*Horn-rimmed glasses*” generally imply an educated person, who is generally from a higher part of the society.

On the other hand, Jerry’s clothes are “*careless*”. While Peter’s manners suggest a younger man, Jerry’s offer *a great weariness*. There is not much detail about what Jerry wears; however, we can easily understand that his appearance is not as decent as Peter’s, which may suggest that he belongs to a different social class.

The setting of the play is also very significant. The whole play takes part in Central Park, a place which is supposed to be full of peace, calm, and quiet. Albee’s choice of setting, without doubt, suggests a criticism to the life of the American middle class when the tragic end of the play is taken into consideration. However, it would be too simplistic to suggest that Albee’s theater is merely a social criticism. His theatre consists of symbols which suggest a social criticism but this doesn’t necessarily mean that Albee writes for underlining the social problems of his time. In that respect, his

theater has been misinterpreted by some critics. For example, on the article *The Theatre of Edward Albee* written in 1964, Charles Thomas Samuels makes a wrong assumption that Albee cannot be considered as an absurd playwright. He believes that absurd theater stems from a philosophical and metaphysical criticism and claims that Albee's theatre does neither:

Albee's play hardly fits this genre. It is formally conventional; it says nothing more general about reality than that beatniks and executives have a hard time conversing; and it neither adheres to nor derides any philosophical assumptions. It is instead a prime example of a peculiarly American genre, which I should call "social gothic." Its confusions are accidental rather than, as in absurdist theatre, willed. Structurally, it confuses naturalism and sentimental melodrama. Ideologically, it confuses hostility to public complacency (which has traditionally been the great animating force of European naturalism) and adulation of private self-pity (which has been the great animating force of our contemporary theater) (Samuels, 1964: 188)

It is obvious that one of the earliest critics of Edward Albee, Samuels fails to analyze the avant-garde or so called absurdist elements in Albee's "The Zoo Story". This review was published just five years after the first staging of the play; thus, it is a good example to show how Albee's play had a shocking effect for the critics of the time. The first point Samuels' review is not valid today is that he starts his interpretation with the wrong assumption that absurdist playwrights have a primary goal in their writings, which is to say different things about reality, and blames Albee for not saying things about reality. However, it is obvious from the works of other absurdist playwrights that these writers do not aim to "say" something but to offer a different form of stage reality and Albee has succeeded in that. Similarly, Samuels assumes that absurdist playwrights should have a philosophical concern, which is not the case indeed. They may end up with a philosophical concern but this does not necessarily have to be their primary purpose while writing. Thus, Samuels' review of *The Zoo Story* fails to analyze the play in depth due to his misunderstanding of the concepts he is talking about in his review.

Samuels then goes even further to claim that Albee's characters in *The Zoo Story* are cartoon characters:

Like all of Albee's work, *The Zoo Story* is fundamentally a piece of social criticism. It is another of those secular sermons about the businessman who won't make it through the eye of the needle and the pederast who'll inherit the

earth. As in *The Sandbox* the characters are cartoons... The executive is a liar; he represents death and the conformity of an ostrich. Albee further stacks the deck by making the businessman a more effeminate character than the beatnik, who is a self-confessed former queer (the executive's most frequent response is "oh", "my") and by showing that despite his undeserved riches, his wife, his daughters and his parakeets, the executive is truly unhappy. (Samuels, 1964: 188)

Although Samuels claims that Albee's characters are cartoon characters, he doesn't explain the rationale behind this thought. Another point is that Samuels makes a harsh distinction between absurd theater and the theater which makes social criticism, trying to find different terms to describe the latter; however, the term "absurd", although impossible to be defined exactly, is built upon the existential crisis of the humankind, and there is no reason why this crisis cannot be reflected in the society, as well. It is true that Edward Albee makes use of some clichés as symbols to underline the social classes of the characters in the play; however, this does not necessarily make the characters cartoon characters as Samuels suggests.

Contrary to Samuels' belief, Albee refrains from making his characters cartoon characters by not defining their properties specifically except a few symbols stated above. For example, he defines Peter as "*neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely*", leaving space for the imagination of the audience. Nevertheless, it is true that he specifies Peter's occupation. Peter is a publishing executive, which is another symbol for the social class he belongs to. However, this, of course, does not make his characters cartoon characters.

The play, just as the plays of Samuel Beckett, mostly depends on inner action and dialogue instead of outer action and a linear plot. There are two characters on stage talking to each other throughout the play; however, there is not a real communication between the two people. Failure of language in communication, which is a common theme in the theatre of absurd, appears once again in "The Zoo Story".

The conversation between the two people start in a rather unconventional way. Peter is sitting on a bench at Central Park, reading his book when Jerry suddenly approaches him and says "*I've been to the zoo*". As usual, it is quite weird for a person to start a conversation with another person he hasn't met before in such a way. Even this beginning invalidates Samuels' claim that Albee's play is a conventional play.

When Peter doesn't give any attention to the stranger, Jerry makes a second attempt by saying "*I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!*" Albee's use of capital letters in the second attempt of Jerry is an indicator of his desire to be heard. This desire does not only refer to that specific moment between two specific characters, but, as we will see later, the desire of Jerry to be heard by the rest of the humanity. Thus, Albee refers to a much general existential problem via a single character. This is a significant point as Samuels was blaming Edward Albee for not being interested in a general, or universal reality. The rest of the conversation also emphasizes an unconventional way of communication in Albee's play:

JERRY: I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north?

PETER: (*puzzled*) North? Why... I ... I think so. Let me see.

JERRY: (*pointing past the audience*) Is that Fifth Avenue?

PETER: Why ya; yes, it is. (Albee, 1995: 7)

Obviously, this is not a communication in conventional terms. It is more like an interrogation by Jerry. Peter's short and broken responses are exemplary of Albee's use of language as a medium of his theatrical form. Despite these formalistic characteristics and a focus on a universal reality, there have always been critics who disregard Edward Albee as a realist playwright. Mary Susan Yates, in her article "*Changing Perspectives: The Vanishing Character in Albee's Plays*" published in 1984, describes *The Zoo Story* as a "*totally realistic play*":

Albee's first play, *The Zoo Story*, is an almost totally realistic play written in the spirit of an Ibsen social drama. Like Ibsen, Albee views society as a force in building relationships, and gaining control of this force becomes the focus of Jerry's efforts throughout the play. Although Albee simplifies the problem of class structures by having only two characters in *Zoo Story*, Jerry's question about "the dividing line between upper-middle class and lower-upper-middle class" indicates an awareness on Albee's part of the issue's complexity. For Albee, like Ibsen, the solution lies in revolutionizing a society which fosters empty alliances and which sets up obstacles to meaningful relationships. (Yates, 1984: 211)

It may seem interesting to find a relationship between the theatre of Albee and Ibsen; however, it also reflects an oversimplification of Albee's theatre. This is not to say that Ibsen's theater is less valuable than Albee's theater or that Ibsen is a less skilled playwright than Albee; however, it should be noted that their approach to art

and theater are totally different in terms of playwriting. While Ibsen's primary purpose in writing is to attract the attention of the audience to certain social issues and as he constructs his plot around this purpose, this is not a reason but a result in Edward Albee. Albee's characters and plot deal with more universal themes.

Besides this, Yates has such a weird statement in saying that Albee's having two characters in the play simplifies the problem of social class. She wrongly makes a connection between the representation of social issues in playwriting with the number of characters in the play.

The meaningless conversation between the two men continue in the rest of the play with short and broken responses of Peter. After a point, Jerry suddenly starts talking about Peter's private life and at a point we understand that Jerry knows from the beginning what he would do at the end of the play. When Jerry says "*You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don't see it on your TV tonight*", we then understand that he is talking about the tragic final in the park. However, during the conversation the audience thinks that he is talking about having been to the zoo as the beginning of the conversation suggests. This is another characteristic of Albee's use of language. Albee uses the language with dual meaning, so that the statements which sound meaningless at the first hearing, gains another meaning through the course of the play. Once again, Albee plays games with the language to create a different reality on stage.

The conversation they have about Peter's private life offers new information about Peter's character:

JERRY: You have TV, haven't you?

PETER: Why yes, we have two; one for the children.

JERRY: You're married!

PETER: (*with pleased emphasis*) Why, certainly.

JERRY: It isn't a law, for God's sake.

PETER: No... no, of course not.

JERRY: And you have a wife.

PETER: (*bewildered by the seeming lack of communication*) Yes!

JERRY: And you have children.

PETER: Yes; two.

JERRY: Boys?

PETER: No, girls...both girls.

JERRY: But you wanted boys. (Albee, 1995: 14)

It is obvious that Jerry is a manipulator on the one hand, and a mirror on the other. He makes Peter face his own life and values. This also portrays the life of an upper-middle class individual and his values in more general terms. Peter is the embodiment of the American dream with his wife, two children, and parakeets.

The use of parakeets as pets also bears significance because they have a symbolic meaning in the play. One of the main themes of the play is the lack of communication or the failure of language to communicate and interestingly parakeets are the animals which are in communication with each other without the use of human language.

Throughout the rest of the play, along with Peter's character and life, Jerry's character is also revealed at certain parts of the play. For example, while the two characters are talking about Jerry's visit to the zoo, Jerry makes a philosophical statement by saying "*It's one of those things a person has to do: sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly.*" This and similar statements of Jerry throughout the play invalidate Samuels' argument that Albee's characters do not have a philosophical side; thus his work cannot be considered as a work of the theatre of absurd. However, we see that Peter is totally indifferent to these kinds of statements, which is quite ironic as Peter is the one who is educated and who is supposed to be intellectual. Allan Lewis, in his article "*The Fun and Games of Edward Albee*", as a reply to Samuels, underlines the philosophical nature of *The Zoo Story* by comparing Albee to Beckett:

It (*The Zoo Story*) was paired at the Provincetown Playhouse in a double bill with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. The combination was intentional and underscored the kinship of the two playwrights. Both adhere to a philosophy of despair and emptiness and sterility. In Beckett's brilliant *tour de force* Krapp reviews a life without meaning, fond only of his tape recorder, struggling to find contact with his youthful self. In Albee's play Jerry tries to establish contact with a person other than himself, and succeeds in the moment of death. The two characters in each play, considering the tape recorder as a character, engage in a complex skirmish which results in the self-annihilation of one. Both plays couple a sardonic view of life with pantomime, mounting tension, varying rhythms, and both are tightly drawn with an abundance of words that belies the economy of structure. Both keep jabbing away at a single point as Krapp circles around his victim. Both are realistic but leap beyond the surface revelations to a semi-abstract metaphorical quality. (Lewis, 1964: 29)

The last statement of Lewis is especially significant here in order to define the new form realism takes in Albee's play. Both Albee and Beckett go beyond the *surface reality* in their works to an abstract world, and that is the basic difference between their theater and the conventional realist theater.

After a specific point in the play, Albee's use of language takes a different direction. The short and broken statements leave their place to the long monologues of Jerry about his life. The place he lives at gives specific clues about his way of living:

JERRY: I live in a four-storey brownstone rooming-house on the upper West Side between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West. I live on the top floor; rear; west. It's a laughably small room, and one of my walls is made of beaverboard; this beaverboard separates my room from another laughably small room, so I assume that the two rooms were once one room, a small room, but not necessarily laughable. The room beyond my beaver board wall is occupied by a coloured queen who always keeps his door open; well, not always but always when he's plucking his eyebrows, which he does with Buddhist concentration. This coloured queen has rotten teeth, which is rare, and he has a Japanese kimono, which is also pretty rare; and he wears this kimono to and from the john in the hall, which is pretty frequent. I mean, he goes to the john a lot. He never bothers me, and never brings anyone up to his room. All he does is pluck his eyebrows, wear his kimono and go to the john. Now, the two front rooms on my floor are a little larger, I guess; but they're pretty small, too. There's a Puerto Rican family in one of them, a husband, a wife, and some kids; I don't know how many. These people entertain a lot. And in the other front room, there's somebody living there, but I don't know who it is. I've never seen who it is. Never. Never ever. (Albee, 1995: 17)

This quite long description of where he lives is another part of Jerry's manipulation. He knows what kind of an effect it would create on Peter, and thus he describes everything and every person in details intentionally. His purpose is to show Peter that there is another life going on outside of his isolated territory.

Jerry's long monologues continue through the rest of the play as well as Peter's short and abrupt responses. These two different uses of language are indicators of two different characters. Albee uses language in such a way intentionally, to underline the controversy between the two characters. Jerry is the one who tries to create a real communication by sharing his life whereas Peter does not know how to communicate or share emotions reflected in his broken responses. The only reaction he can show even to the most unfortunate life experiences of Jerry is restricted to the words "*Oh,*

my. Oh, my. ” Once again, Albee uses language in such a way to create his artistic form on stage. Lewis describes Albee’s use of language with musical terms:

The opening encounter, hesitant, slow-paced, and monosyllabic, mounts skillfully with the energetic flow of words, the rhythms changing from the curt staccato interplay to long confessional passages until the final physical shoving for possession of the bench. Jerry does most of the talking. He is the more articulate of the two. In Harold Pinter’s *The Dumbwaiter* another two-character play, horror is achieved through what is left unsaid, the pauses of the unknown. Albee’s play achieves horror through what lies behind what is said, particularly in Jerry’s long account of his adventure with the dog which led him to visit the Zoo to study the life force of animals. (Lewis, 1964: 30)

One of the key points of the play is Jerry’s long story about the neighbor’s dog. With regards to that Albee puts a special stage direction at the beginning of this part:

The following long speech, it seems to me, should be done with a great deal of action, to achieve a hypnotic effect on Peter, and on the audience too. Some specific actions have been suggested, but the director and the actor playing JERRY might best work it out for themselves. (Albee, 1995: 28)

This story is the key point in the play not only because of the things symbolized by the dog but also because of the turning point of the communication between the two characters. It is the turning point of the conversation because for the first time in the play, Peter shows an openly negative reaction to Jerry upon hearing the story of Jerry and the dog and thus maybe it is the first time Peter shows a humanly reaction without considering the social class he belongs to. This part is the trigger of the conversation which would lead to the tragic end of the play.

Jerry’s manipulation of Peter with words turns into a manipulation with actions after that point of the play. Jerry starts to tickle Peter’s ribs with his fingers. Upon the non-stop laughter of Peter, Jerry suddenly turns back to his story of the zoo. This is also another point where we see the philosophical side of Jerry. He explains why he went to the zoo:

I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too. It probably wasn’t a fair test, what with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals. But, if it’s a zoo, that’s the way it is. (Albee, 1995: 32)

We understand that Jerry has some philosophical and existential concerns about life. He is not a kind of person who does not question life unlike Peter. With

Jerry's account of what happened to him at the zoo, we are faced with a lot of symbolism, which is one of the most important characteristics of Albee's theater and the theater of the absurd in general. In an article titled *Symbolism and Naturalism in Edward Albee's The Zoo Story* Rose A. Zimbardo explains what the zoo symbolizes:

On the simplest level *The Zoo Story* is concerned with human isolation. The world is a zoo "with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals"; that is, men are not only separated from each other, but from their own basic animal natures (as Peter, one of "the people" is, until the end of the play, separated from his own animal nature) (Zimbardo, 1961: 10)

As Zimbardo suggests, animals and the zoo Jerry has been to are the basic symbols used by Edward Albee in the play to emphasize a much general existential crisis. Albee portrays life itself as a zoo where some people live in an isolated way and as a show material for the others. This metaphorical usage of zoo and its symbolic meaning are linked to the symbol of parakeets at the beginning of the play. The use of animals and symbols in the service of existential concerns is exemplary of Albee's anti-realist theatrical form. Zimbardo explains the use of animals as a symbol in more details:

While Peter is one of the "people" who is separated from the animal in himself and others, Jerry is an animal (he knows his own nature) who fights separation from the other animals. In part his isolation is forced upon him. But in large measure it grows out of his need for truth. He is determined to discover the essential nature of the human condition. Therefore, he strips himself of goods, things, obvious relationships. He has a strong box without a lock, picture frames without pictures, and pornographic playing cards that remind him of the difference between love and sexual need. (Zimbardo, 1961: 12)

This animalistic nature of the humankind is also revealed in the character of Peter at the tragic end of the play. We see a long part of physical manipulation by Jerry towards the end of the play which makes way to this tragic final. While he is telling the story of the zoo to Peter, Jerry pushes Peter off the bench step by step and forces him to leave the bench. An act which may be considered quite nonsense and childish in conventional realist theater, may lead to the end of a person's life. Once again we are faced with Jerry's philosophical side:

JERRY: You have everything in the world you want; you've told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo. You have everything, and now you want this bench. Are these the things men fight for? Tell me, Peter, is

this bench, this iron and this wood, is this your honor? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd? (Albee, 1995: 37)

And at that point, we see the real, humiliating personality of Peter hidden under the civilized and polite individual:

PETER: Absurd? Look, I'm not going to talk to you about honour, or even try to explain it to you. Besides, it isn't a question of honour; but even if it were, you wouldn't understand. (Albee, 1995: 37)

The physical manipulation by Jerry comes to an extreme in the last two pages. He takes out a knife, throws it to Peter's feet, grabs Peter by his collar, and starts slapping Peter. Interestingly, in spite of all these actions, Peter gets enraged when Jerry says *You couldn't even get your wife with a male child* and tries to explain that it wasn't his fault. This is obviously a criticism to the concept of "manhood" which dominates the whole world we live in. As a homosexual, Albee makes his audience face the lubricity and disingenuousness of heterosexual dominance.

In spite of all these provocations, Peter is still not a full animal at the end of the play. He holds the knife but just to defend himself rather than to attack. However, rather shockingly, Jerry impales himself on the knife, and this is his last lesson to Peter. The animal metaphor appears again in the last scene of the play:

Tableau: For just a moment, complete silence. Jerry impaled on the knife at the end of Peter's still firm arm. Then Peter screams, pulls away, leaving the knife in Jerry. Jerry is motionless, on point. Then he, too, screams, and it must be the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal. With the knife in him, he stumbles back to the bench that Peter had vacated. He crumbles there, sitting, facing Peter, his eyes wide in agony, his mouth open. (Albee, 1995: 58)

Just as it was at the beginning of the play, Peter's only reaction to this tragedy is repeatedly saying "*Oh my God!*". However, as also suggested by Jerry, Peter is not a vegetable anymore and he has gone through a transformation to a certain extent. Albee's symbols, use of language, metaphors, and use of character traits make his work an unforgettable piece of avant-garde or in the context of this dissertation anti-realist playwriting.

2.2 Anti-realist Elements in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”

If *The Zoo Story* is the beginning of Edward Albee’s character and his artistic style, the peak point is “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”, considered by many to be the most important play of the writer. In terms of the construction, there are many resemblances between the two plays; however, it is obvious that Albee’s artistic style is rather deep-seated now.

The play is basically about marriage and displays a night from the lives of two different couples George/Martha and Nick/Honey. In terms of resemblances with “The Zoo Story”, we see that both plays take part on a specific limited time period. “The Zoo Story” covers a time range of a Sunday afternoon, and similarly “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” takes part on a single night. Although there are two characters in “The Zoo Story” and four characters in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”, we generally witness the relationship between two individuals during the whole play. In terms of setting, both plays take part in a single setting; “The Zoo Story” at a park and “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” in the house of George and Martha. When these points are considered, it may be said that Albee follows the Aristotelian rule of the unity of time and place in both plays; however, his genius lies under the fact that he has been able to create his own style by combining these classical elements with his artistic stance.

Lack of communication between the characters and the failure of language appear as a theme once more in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”. It is obvious from the very beginning of the play that the first couple George and Martha have been married for a very long time and they openly hate each other; however, they cannot get separated, either. On the other side, although Nick and Honey appear to be more loving at the beginning, it then turns out that their relationship also lacks sincerity.

Albee criticizes the society and the social norms so harshly both in “The Zoo Story” and “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”; however, his criticism differs from the socialist realist criticism of conventional playwriting in the sense that Albee uses the stage techniques peculiar to him and he is never interested in the personal backgrounds of the individual characters. Through the characters of George/Martha and Nick/Honey, he is criticizing the whole concept of marriage, which puts him in a

different play from conventional realist playwrights. Allan Lewis, in his article “The Fun and Games of Edward Albee”, explains this function of the play with these words:

Many prefer to limit the play to a messy insight into domestic butchery. Were this so, it would have exhausted its potential quickly. The symbolic references are what make any play continuously intriguing. Through the poet’s metaphor, they reach beyond the immediate to the general condition of man. Ibsen’s white horses or Chekhov’s cherry orchard or Tennessee Williams’ glass menagerie are richly suggestive of human relation beyond the specific frontiers. Albee has his mythical child and his fun and games. (Lewis, 1964: 35)

When we turn back to the characters, George and Martha are an elderly couple, George at 46 and Martha six years older than him. George is a professor of history at a college, which is similar to Peter’s position in “The Zoo Story”. Both of them belong to middle-upper class of the society. Martha’s feelings towards George are not clear as they may change transiently from love to hatred. However, even from the very beginning of the play, the audience sees the tension between the two people. Martha calls George *a cluck* when they are entering the house and they suddenly start arguing about a film Martha cannot remember. This entrance to the stage is quite unconventional. The audience gets involved in the play from the middle unlike the conventional plays in which a chronological order of events is followed. Their argument continues for a very long time, which also gives clues about the personalities of both characters:

MARTHA: I can’t remember his name, for God’s sake. What’s the name of the picture? I want to know what the name of the picture is. She sits down in front of her dressing table... and she’s got this peritonitis... and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can’t... and she gets it all over her face... but she decides to go to Chicago anyway, and...

GEORGE: Chicago ! It’s called Chicago!

MARTHA: Hunh? What... what is?

GEORGE: The picture. It’s called Chicago...

MARTHA: Good grief! Don’t you know anything? Chicago was a thirties’ musical, starring little Miss Alice Faye. Don’t you know anything?

GEORGE: Well, that was probably before my time, but...

MARTHA: Can it! Just cut that out! This picture... Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store.

GEORGE: She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA: She’s a housewife, she buys things... and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotton has set her up in...

GEORGE: Are they married?

MARTHA: Yes. They are married. To each other. Cluck! (Albee, 1983: 6)

This long conversation is quite ironic because it is a direct reference to the insufficiency of language in communication, which is one of the milestones of Albee's artistic style. George can never understand what Martha really says because of the words she chooses to use, which leads to a failure of communication between the two characters. Besides, the words Martha uses reveal her character and the nature of their relationship. For example, she always calls her husband George *cluck* which indicates a kind of intolerance on Martha's side. We can guess that these kinds of conversations take place frequently between the two characters. This is another way Albee uses language to create his artistic style on stage.

In the rest of this conversation, we are faced with another stylistic element used by Albee. Quite similar to the pauses of Harold Pinter, Albee uses four pauses successively during the conversation between Martha and George:

GEORGE: (*pause*) Oh.

MARTHA: (*pause*) She's discontent.

GEORGE: (*pause*) Oh.

MARTHA: (*pause*) Well, what's the name of the picture? (Albee, 1983: 7)

The pauses obviously are reflective of the lack of communication between the two characters and the only reaction of George to all the long explanations of Martha is merely *Oh*. The words used by George are also indicative of the nature of their relationship. George says that Martha always *brays*, which is harshly opposed by Martha. Allan Lewis explains the relationship between George and Martha as a sex duel:

In the drunken orgy which follows, Martha and George engage in a harrowing battle to destroy one another, taking deliberate delight in pain and venom and cannibalism as they feed on each other's weaknesses. *The Bond* is the forerunner of Albee's play, portrayed a primitive sex struggle between equals for domination in which one triumphs. Both are contemptible, the woman more so, for Martha is coarse and obscene, as depraved as any woman in Genet, but terribly more human because she is real, and disgustingly more vulgar because she is representative of an established institution of traditional culture. (Lewis, 1964: 34)

Although it is clear in a very long part of the whole play that there is a sexual tension between both couples, Albee's play goes too much further than that, dealing

with more general existential crisis just as Sartre does in *No Exit*. Moreover, although Lewis makes a detailed analysis of certain issues in the play, he does not talk much about the stylistic elements used by Albee throughout the play, which is vital to understand Albee's world on stage.

The second couple in the play Nick and Honey represent a different angle of the existential crisis. Interestingly, George and Martha had never met this couple before that night but, nevertheless they invited them to their house. Indeed, George is not happy with this invitation but we understand that he had to comply with it as Martha's father ordered so. Albee here does not only underline the crisis between two people but also mentions the influence of the outer factors represented by Martha's father.

Even when the guests arrive, the tension between Martha and George still continues. George openly shows at the beginning that he is not happy to have guests at that hour of the night, but then they go into a conversation and drinking ceremony. We see that throughout the whole play, all the characters continue drinking. Alcohol is underlined as another of outside influences.

During the conversation with Nick and Honey, we understand that George is not happy with his life and the dominance of Martha and her father over George's life. Albee underlines George's dissatisfaction by using repetition in the dialogue:

GEORGE: (*to Nick*) Let me tell you a secret, baby. There are easier things in the world, if you happen to be teaching at a university, there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the president of that university. There are easier things in this world.

MARTHA: (*loud, to no one in particular*) It should be an extraordinary opportunity... for some men it would be the chance of a lifetime!

GEORGE: (*to Nick*) : There are, believe me, easier things in this world. (Albee, 1983: 29)

This technique used by Albee is nearly Pinteresque, reminding the conversations between the couples in Pinter's last play *Celebration*. By using repetition, Albee turns something which may have been tragic into something funny. This is very suitable with the lives of his characters, as they lead a tragi-comical life going back and forth between love and hatred. A very similar conversation takes place between Martha and George just before Martha takes Honey to the bathroom:

HONEY: (*to Nick*) We will be back, dear.

MARTHA: *(to George)* Honestly, George, you burn me up!
GEORGE: *(happily)* All right.
MARTHA: You really do, George.
GEORGE: O.K. Martha... O.K. Just... trot along.
MARTHA: You really do. (Albee, 1983: 31)

When Nick and George are alone in the room, George plays tricks on Nick using some language games, and at last Nick protests against the games of George. This “play within the play” is another aspect of Albee’s style. It should also be noted that the play is divided into three parts and this first part is titled as “Fun and Games”.

The conversation between George and Nick continue in such an absurd way in the rest of their scene. Rather than a conversation, it is more like an interrogation by George, just as Jerry interrogates Peter in *The Zoo Story*; however, this time the questions George asks have no relation to each other at all and he can never remember Nick’s answers. This conversation is quite exemplary of Albee’s style. It also reveals once more how language fails to provide communication between people. It is impossible to see these conversations in a conventional realist play:

GEORGE: ... the Biology Department. I did run the History Department, for four years, during the war, but that was because everybody was away... Your wife doesn’t have any hips... has she... does she?

...

GEORGE: What are they doing up there? I assume that’s where they are.

NICK: You know women.

GEORGE: Not one son of a bitch got killed. Of course, nobody bombed Washington. No... that’s not fair. You have any kids? (Albee, 1983: 41-42)

Although Albee makes use of these kinds of techniques intentionally to create his style, there have been some critics such as Charles Thomas Samuels who have failed to understand Albee’s purpose. Thus, Samuels wrote about *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*:

Albee’s management of plot is as ill-conceived as his theme. He violates character just as he cheapens ideas. For he is interested in neither characters nor ideas. He is interested in shocking revelations, maudlin confessions, and liberal doses of self-pity. (Samuels, 1964: 198)

Samuels is being very ironic here because what he conceives as negative is indeed Albee’s main purpose in writing. He blames Albee for not being interested in characters and plot; however, it is obvious that Samuels defines the terms “character”

and “plot” only in conventional sense, and does not consider any other possible meanings which can be attributed to these terms. Albee’s characters and plot cannot be evaluated within the boundaries of so-called “realism”, as the writer’s style is a reaction against conventional realist playwriting. Samuels continues his criticism with more misconceptions:

After attacking his listeners with three acts of nonstop bickering indulged in by wholly undeveloped characters in behalf of the latest in vulgar bogeymen, Albee muddies the waters by suggesting that all we witnessed might not, indeed, be true. George may or may not have killed his parents, Honey may or may not have had an abortion; Martha may or may not be the victim of her father’s indifference; Nick may or may not be an opportunistic stud. (Samuels, 1964: 198)

Once more, Samuels’ points of criticism are indeed intentional stylistic features of Albee’s theater and the Theater of the Absurd in general. Albee does not claim to find a solution for a problem or to propose a didactic lesson at the end of his plays. Neither does he believe that theatre and art should have such a purpose. Thus, it is not completely logical to criticize him for not reaching the exact truth at the end of the play. Besides, blurring the distinction between the real and the imaginary is another stylistic element used by many anti-realist playwrights; thus, it cannot be a point of criticism. Although Samuels criticizes Albee for not having a depth in his characters and for *three hours of nonstop bickering*, another critic of Albee, Allan Lewis replies him as:

The single theme is worked out in complex variations. The characters are arranged in all possible combinations. The deadliness of the blows intensifies from moment to moment, each precise in its trip-hammer effectiveness. The unities of time, place, and action are all carefully observed- a few hours, one setting, four characters- to permit action in depth. The language is pruned. Though the play lasts for more than three hours, hardly a phrase can be eliminated, and the language varies with the emotional quality of the scene: sharp, staccato, lean for the lightning jabs; slow, delayed, wordy for the heavier blows. (Lewis, 1964: 34)

Lewis makes a very good point here by making a connection between the plot of the play and the stylistic elements used by Albee. Once more, Samuels’ criticism of the plot and the characters is invalidated.

In the middle of the first part of the play, another significant component of the play, “the child issue”, appears. Although Nick says they do not have a child, George

continues mentioning about Nick and Honey's child, and we learn that George and Martha have a child as Martha told Honey. However, upon learning that Martha told Honey about their child, George gets furious and stressed out.

After this point, the sexual content and the attraction between the two couples of the play is also underlined. Martha starts flirting with Nick, mentioning his muscles and body while George, as a counter attack, proposes Honey to have a walk in the garden; thus the tension between George and Martha as well as Nick and Honey starts to peak. Obviously, this is another criticism to the ideal of American family.

The relationship between Martha and George is revealed more towards the end of the first part of the play. George brings a gun to the room and points it to Martha, followed by Honey's shock. We then understand that it is just a joke, a part of the game; however, when they start talking about it, George says: *Well, now, I might* (talking about killing Martha) ... *someday* (Albee 65). Thus, their relationship includes not only psychological but also physical violence. They cannot even come to a common point while they are describing their son. George claims that their son has blue eyes whereas Martha claims that he has blue eyes:

GEORGE: He has blue eyes, Martha.

MARTHA: (*determined*) Green.

GEORGE: Blue, Martha.

MARTHA: (*ugly*) GREEN! (*to Honey and Nick*) he has the loveliest green eyes... they aren't all flaked with brown and gray, you know... hazel... they're real green... deep, pure green eyes... like mine.

NICK: Your eyes are... brown, aren't they?

MARTHA: GREEN! (*a little too fast*) Well, in some lights they look brown, but they're green. Not green like his... more hazel... (Albee, 1983: 82)

It is very funny that Martha is so obstinate to claim that her eyes are also green while it is obvious that they are brown. She seems to be living in an imaginary world and does not want to comply with the reality. This blurring distinction between the imaginary and the reality is another stylistic element of Albee, as discussed before.

Not only Martha but also George lives in a world of fantasies, in which he does not wish to face the real world. When they are talking about the eye color of Martha's father, George funnily claims that it is red. Of course, these red eyes symbolize George's hatred towards Martha's father, as well as his despair and disappointment about life embodied in the existence of Martha's father.

The title of the second act is *Walpurgisnacht*, which refers to the theme of illusion versus reality once more. Indeed, all the titles in the play refer to a kind of game and illusion: *Fun and Games*, *Walpurgisnacht*, and *The Exorcism*. The act starts with a conversation between George and Nick, alone on stage, which underlines the theme of failure of language once more:

GEORGE: Where's my little yum yum? Where's Martha?

NICK: She's making coffee... in the kitchen. She... gets sick quite easily.

GEORGE: Martha? Oh, no. Martha hasn't been sick a day in her life, unless you count the time she spends in the rest home...

NICK: No, no, my wife... my wife gets sick quite easily. Your wife is Martha.

GEORGE: (*with some rue*) Oh, yes... I know. (Albee, 1983: 99-100)

Albee's stage directions imply more details about the relationship between George and Martha. When Nick says that Martha is George's wife, George replies *with some rue*, which underlines his disappointment of the marriage.

In this second part of the play, George and Nick are alone for a long time on the stage and Nick turns out to be the antagonist of the play, leaving his civilized manners behind. There is an open conflict between George and Nick throughout the act. Moreover, more details about Nick and Honey's relationship are revealed in this act, as well. We learn that Nick and Honey got married because Nick thought that Honey was pregnant; however, in fact it turned out to be a hysterical pregnancy. Thus, neither of the marriages depend on a love relationship. This makes both couples similar to each other although they seemed different in the first act.

Another similarity between George and Nick is revealed when they talk about Nick's father-in-law. Indeed, it is clear that, just like George, Nick is also not happy with his father-in-law:

NICK: He... my father-in-law... was called by God when he was six, or something, and he started preaching, and he baptized people, and he saved them, and he traveled around a lot, and he became pretty famous... not like some of them, but he became pretty famous... and when he died, he had a lot of money. (Albee, 1983: 121)

It is quite ironic that Nick's father-in-law was a man of religion and he became very rich through this. Obviously, Albee uses the father-in-law figure as a symbol to criticize the corruption of religious institutions. He does not do this openly but through symbols.

At the beginning of the play George and Nick seem to represent two different sides of the marriage but later on, it is revealed that they are not different from each other. C.W.E. Bigsby explains this similarity in his article titled *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf: Edward Albee's Morality Play*:

While George and Nick are ostensibly contrasted, on a deeper level they are painfully alike. In their separate ways they both represent forms of escapism... George, the historian, looks to the past both as protection from present reality and as a welcome relief from an enervating conformism. An intellectual, his intellect is directed, for the most part, into sterile argument which gives him the illusion of vitality and positive existence. Yet underneath this delusive animation he remains impotent and his life pointless. Nick, the scientist, represents the "wave of the future". His values are purely those of the American Dream. He is confident of inevitable success and shows himself ready to adapt his morality to the demands of expediency... For all his attractive appearance he too proves to be impotent... (Bigsby, 2002: 262)

Through the end of this act, Martha openly flirts with Nick and the two have a close dance, while George proposes Honey to dance. However, Honey is totally indifferent to what is happening around her:

MARTHA: I like the way you move.

NICK: I like the way you move, too.

GEORGE: (*to Honey*) They like the way they move.

HONEY: (*not entirely with it*) That's nice. (Albee, 1983: 147)

As it is also obvious once again from the dance scene, the relationship between George and Martha is more like a battle rather than a marriage. Mona Hoorvash and Farideh Pourgiv explain this relationship in a 2011 article:

As critics have pointed out, Martha and George's relationship appears to be suffering from "overwhelming defeat and frustration". Martha never hesitates to express her profound dissatisfaction with her situation. She senses that something is lacking, not merely in her marriage or her life, but also in the lives of everyone else. George seems to be equally aware of this sense of lack and emptiness. The couple's powerful expression of their discontent can be explained and justified with what Lacan refers to as "phallic lack". (Hoorvash, Pourgiv, 2011)

Indeed, George is aware of the fact that Nick and Honey's situation is not different from theirs and from the very beginning of the Act II, he tries to learn the secrets behind Nick and Honey's marriage playing language games towards Nick. The

only game in Act II is not George's language games but also after a certain point, all four characters start to play games with each other.

Act II is an act of games and violence. When Martha starts to talk about the book George wrote, George attacks her physically and grabs her by the throat. The violence in the play makes a crescendo as the secrets are revealed step by step. Quite funnily, they offer names for the games they play such as "*Humiliate the Host*" "*Hump the Hostess*", and "*Get the Guests*". All names refer to the relationship between these four people that night. This "play in the play" is another stylistic element used by Albee to create the illusionary world on stage. Without being didactic, Albee is giving the message that the reality we have consists of merely plays with other people. Thus, this stance of Albee is extremely political as there is a harsh criticism for the social relationships. However, it is clear that Albee's primary purpose is not to be political or to give a message through his play, but the theatrical elements he uses lead to an enlightenment in the minds of the audience. Thus, just like all the other playwrights in this dissertation, he perfectly succeeds in proving that stylistic elements and form in art have a much higher value than the message or the plot of the play.

"The child" is another symbol mostly underlined in the second act. We know that George and Martha have a son but we also learn that the son escaped from home. On the other side, Nick got married to Honey because he thought that Honey was pregnant. In that respect, "child" is a symbol of insincerity, especially in Nick and Honey's relationship. It is widely believed that a child is a product of love between two people; however, Albee invalidates this belief by turning it a symbol of hypocrisy. Once again, the playwright proves his genius by achieving to question all the established values of the society without falling into the trap of being explicitly "political".

The occupation with the child issue also reflects the illusionary aspect of the play. Throughout the whole play, the distinction between reality and illusion is blurred, which is also a common characteristic of the theatre of the absurd. Both children which are mentioned in the play serve to that purpose. Nick and Honey's child is a "hysterical" child and we never see the other child on stage. We are not sure whether George and Martha's child really exists or not as they cannot even come to an

agreement on the physical characteristics of the child. Lawrence Kingsley, in a 1973 article, explain this issue with George and Martha's wish to escape from reality:

Albee again explores the meaning of a child in a sterile marriage, a problem for which he has a natural feeling, being himself an adopted child. Because they cannot have a child, George and Martha are contemptuous of each other. Martha is fifty-two, stuck in a small college town, unloved by her father, and fond of alcohol. Her father, the president of the college, had hoped that George would follow in his footsteps, but George has never amounted to much even in the History Department. By inventing the existence of a child, George and Martha escape mutual recrimination and provide themselves with the single solace in their marriage... Over the years the need for such an outlet has blurred the line between reality and illusion and brought George and Martha to take the easiest way out... What has happened plainly, is that George and Martha have evaded the ugliness of their marriage by taking refuge in illusion. (Kingsley, 1973: 74)

This illusionary world of the characters come to an end with the last Act, which is titled *The Exorcism*. For the first time in the play, we see that the fight between George and Martha is paused and the realities under the illusions created through the first two acts are revealed to the audience. It is very interesting that after all the battle between George and Martha in the first two acts, Martha says in the final act that George is the only man in her life who has made her happy. Moreover, upon Nick's surprise she reveals her true feelings to George:

MARTHA: ... George who is out somewhere there in the dark... George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I'll bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and, yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad. (Albee, 1983: 202)

For the first time, we feel an empathy towards Martha and start to understand her. The reason behind all her harsh character is the wish for happiness. In the rest of the act we see an alliance between George and Martha towards Nick. And, one after another they repeat the same sentence, which indeed is the basis of the play: *Truth and Illusion. Who knows the difference?* (Albee, 1983: 214)

Towards the end of Act III, they decide to play a final game, which is opposed by Martha; however, George doesn't listen to his wife and they decide to play "bringing up the baby" play, during which every reality is revealed. Maybe this is why

Martha does not want to play this last game as she does not want the real life take over the illusionary world they have created. The discrepancy between reality and illusion is once more underlined.

After they start to tell the story of their child, the play takes a tragic turn towards the end of it. They blame each other for not being a good parent to their son, and at a certain point, they start to talk at the same time: Martha in English and George in Latin. They start and finish their dialogues at the same moment. This is another stylistic innovation of Albee. It is just like a Chorus addressing to the audience.

Just after this crescendo, George gives the tragic news of the death of their son to Martha; however, it is still not clear whether a real child exists or the death of the child is another symbol used by Albee. The child represents a common illusion or dream they build up together and with the intrusion of the outsiders, they have turned back to reality:

GEORGE: I have the right, Martha. We never spoke of it; that's all. I could kill him anytime I wanted to.

MARTHA: But why? Why?

GEORGE: You broke our rule, baby. You mentioned him... you mentioned him to someone else.

MARTHA: I did not. I never did.

GEORGE: Yes, you did.

MARTHA: Who? WHO?

HONEY: To me. You mentioned him to me. (Albee, 1983: 251)

The final scene of the play is quite stylistic again. After the news about the death of the son, Honey and Nick exit and Martha and George are again alone on the stage; however, this time in a much more different state than they were in at the beginning of the play. We have seen a transformation of the characters and the conversation between them is quite different now, with no more braying or arguing:

GEORGE: Do you want anything, Martha?

MARTHA: No... nothing.

GEORGE: All right. Time for bed.

MARTHA: Yes.

GEORGE: Are you tired?

MARTHA: Yes.

GEORGE: I am.

MARTHA: Yes.

GEORGE: Sunday tomorrow; all day.

MARTHA: Yes. (*A long silence between them*) Did you... did you... have to?

GEORGE: (*pause*) Yes.

MARTHA: It was... You had to?

GEORGE: (*pause*) Yes.

MARTHA: I don't know.

GEORGE: It was... time.

...

GEORGE: (*puts his hand gently on her shoulder; she puts her head back and he sings to her, very softly*) Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf?

MARTHA: I... am... George...

GEORGE: Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf...

MARTHA: I... am... George... I... am... (Albee, 1983: 256-257)

The last words of Martha make a reference to the title of the play, which requires an analysis of the title in terms of anti-realist or avant-garde artistic stance of Edward Albee. Obviously, Virginia Woolf is a very important English modernist writer, who can be considered to have created the stream-of-consciousness technique. The term was introduced by William James, in his research *The Principles of Psychology*:

...it is nothing joined; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" is the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let's call it the stream of thought, consciousness, or subjective life. (James, 2014)

In the light of this, stream-of-consciousness technique is quite revolutionary and it doesn't follow the conventional rules of plot and character. The writer reflects the hidden parts of her imagination freely on the paper. This is very similar to the illusion versus reality theme of the play "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?".

Another interpretation of the title of the play is about its reference to the joke "Who is Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?". The play itself is based on a series of games and jokes, just as the title suggests. Although there are such interpretations about the title of the play, Edward Albee never makes its reference clear. This is another element which belongs to the avant-garde theater. The title may be suggesting multiple meanings or no meaning at all, and we will never be sure about that.

Albee was often criticized by critics such as Charles Thomas Samuels and Richard Schechner for not saying anything useful at all, it is obvious that Albee was able to be a "political" and "social" writer without being didactic and explicit through his unique style of playwriting and the artistic form he created on stage. He showed

the whole world that “realism” is not only to imitate and reflect the outside world on stage but it can take many different forms combined with the genius of the writer.



CHAPTER III: THEATER OF CRUELTY AND “OTHERS”; ILLUSION VS. REALITY: JEAN GENET AND SEVIM BURAK

Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory defines theater of cruelty:

This derives from the theories of the French dramatist Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who, in 1938, published *Le Théâtre et son double*, in which he formulated his principles. In his view the theatre must disturb the spectator profoundly, pierce his heart and soul in such a way as to feel unconscious repressions and oblige men to view themselves as they really are. In it mime, gesture and scenery are more important than words, and the director is a kind of maker of magic, “a master of sacred ceremonies”. Much depends on spectacle, lighting effects and the exploitation of the full range of the “theatrical” Prior to 1938 Artaud had published two manifestos (in 1923 and 1933) and also had produced *Les Cenci* (1935), based on versions by Shelley and Stendhal, which was an attempt to put his theories into practice. (Cuddon, 2015: 719)

Theatre of Cruelty was indeed the theatre of “the others”. For example, Genet’s characters are the ones who have been excluded from society for their certain characteristics or roles. There is no doubt that Genet’s primary purpose was not to convey a social message to his audience through these characters, but to challenge the character development of the conventional realist theater, and bringing the side characters to the center of the theatre. For example, his most famous play *The Balcony* takes part in a brothel, where illusion and reality are intermingled.

Interestingly, in a completely different culture and society, Sevim Burak was challenging the reality by using “illusion”, and in a way Burak’s characters were also “the others”, owing to her own Jewish background in a Muslim society, no need to mention Genet’s background as a homosexual, who was an adopted child. In two distinct cultures, anti-realist theater was flourishing, almost simultaneously, through the voices of two “other” writers.

1. Elements of Anti-Realist Theatre in Jean Genet

A legendary and controversial figure, both for his artistic work and his way of life, Jean Genet comes up as one of the four pioneers of absurd theater along with Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, and Arthur Adamov. However, he differs from the others in that his artistic work was later labeled as “underground literature”, as besides being a literary figure he is also a thief, a vagabond, a political activist, and a gay icon who lived all his life contrarily to social expectations. Thus, it was inevitable that most of his artistic work was semi-autobiographical.

One may assume that the works of such a political activist should include explicitly political elements; however, this is not the case with Genet. David Bradby and Clare Finburgh reveal this in their Jean Genet book:

Genet’s view of the writer’s political responsibility at this time was clear, and stated on many occasions, most notably in the prefaces to *The Balcony* and *The Blacks*. He considered that the task of theatre was not to advocate political solutions, not to condemn injustice, but to present images of the power of evil, so formidable as to create a kind of explosion in the minds of its audience. (Bradby & Finburgh, 2012: 23)

This is quite similar to what Beckett and Ionesco does on stage. Genet ensures that the audience of his plays experiences a transformation throughout the staging but this does not necessarily turn the stage into a political arena. The audience, at the end of the day, is provided with the freedom of choice. In accordance with this, Genet himself underlines, in his foreword to *The Balcony*, that political problems need to be resolved by political action in the real world, and that problems explored in creative works should never be resolved in the imaginary realm. So, for Genet, stage is a place where the audience is faced with the world but it is not the place where the problems of the world are solved. Moreover, it would be a misinterpretation to assume “facing the world” as imitating the outside world on stage. Genet, just as Ionesco and Beckett, creates his own world and reality on stage, which leads the audience to reconsider the perception of “the real”. Yusuf Eradam, in the closing remarks of his article “The Theatre of the Absurd and Jean Genet” says:

To Genet, theater should present the vulgar, the horrible, and the obscene, through rich and rhythmic language and gestures within the framework of Black Mass. The greatest hero for him is the greatest criminal, the greatest rebel against society. He uses language as a means to communicate the spectator the

harsh facts of this cruel world and his own isolation. For Genet, theatre assumes a religious role, and turns out to be a Dionysian nightmare. He lived and died like the hero of such a nightmare, a committed antagonist. (Eradam, 1992: 22)

Eradam points out a very significant fact about Genet when he is describing Genet's stance as an individual, by saying that he is an antagonist. No other word would be more appropriate to define his personal and artistic existence.

Genet's works are mostly autobiographical and Sartre in his book "*Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*" provides a very detailed account of the events having shaped Genet's psychological state, which had a profound impact on his literary career. However, Sartre's work approaches Genet's art from a predominantly psychological point and fails to unveil his artistic talent on stage. Thus, a comprehension of Genet's artistic stance is possible through a close reading of his plays rather than focusing too much on the artist's personal life.

Genet always struggles with the conventional ways of thinking about identity and the conventional rules of the society in his artistic work. Therefore, questioning of identity and the blurring distinction between dream and reality are common themes in most of his plays.

1.1 “The Maids”

One of the early key plays of Genet “The Maids”, first produced in 1947, questions the conventional elements of theater although the play itself seems to hold those. The reader/audience may misread the play as a piece of conventional theater as it has a plot, characters, and even the unity of time and place. However, these elements are found in the play as tools to serve Genet in creating his unique artistic form on stage. In that respect, the play is significant in showing that it is possible to create nonconventional art through the use of conventional elements, a characteristic which distinguishes Genet from the other anti-realist playwrights.

The most significant characteristic of the play is its “play within a play” style. The two maids in the play Claire and Solange pursue a game of their own throughout the play and after a point, it becomes ambiguous for the reader what is real and what is a game, what belongs to the play itself and what to the game, which is in the play. In conventional realist theater, this kind of an ambiguity would be considered as the failure of the playwright while in “The Maids”, it is his talent. The underlying reason for this is that there is no room for an unclear course of events in the realist theatre. Everything should be made clear to the reader and the audience, which results in the passivity of the audience. On the other hand, Genet’s reader/audience is an active one who tries to fill in the blanks within the play through the use of his intellect and imagination.

The ambiguity and unexpectedness start at the very beginning of the play when the maids are introduced to the audience. The audience does not have any opinion about who these people are, and what their relationship is until the point where Madame enters the play. Only after this point, the audience understands that Claire and Solange have been playing a game so far.

The game played by Claire and Solange underlines the theme of role-play in the play. Although it may seem old fashioned for the 21st century audience, this use of role-play was an obviously innovative tool for the 1940s. This is directly related to the common theme of Genet, “the search for identity”, which he used in his previous works too. On the one hand, this role play makes it more difficult to follow the play; on the other hand, it gives the audience/reader an active role by making the play open

to various interpretations, a characteristic which cannot be found in conventional realist theater.

The maids in the play are surely trying to create a “fake” identity for themselves by pretending to be the Madame; however, while doing this we are also faced with their self-hatred. The play is not merely a criticism of bourgeois society as one may think so, looking at the general plot. Conversely, the Madame in the play does not generally show a humiliating attitude towards the maids. It is the maids themselves who humiliate each other when they take the role of Madame in their role-play. Claire’s words while acting the role of Madame reveal how the maids see themselves from the eyes of the Madame:

Avoid pawing me. You smell like an animal. You’ve brought those odors from some foul attic, where the lackeys visit us at night. The maid’s room! The garret! (Genet, 2015: 40)

According to David Bradby and Clare Finburgh, who compiled a detailed analysis of Genet’s life and plays, this attitude of the maids is similar to what Frantz Fanon explores in his “Black Skin White Masks”. Fanon underlines that the most significant problem with colonization is that the colonized start to see themselves from the eyes of the colonizer after a point, which leads to their feeling inferior. Similarly, the maids start to see themselves from the eyes of the Madame and start humiliating their own identity, which is a kind of masochism. This is especially evident for Solange, who is actually older and more powerful in reality, but prefers to be the humiliated maid in their role-play, rather than acting the role of Madame. Solange even kneels down in front of the Madame (Claire) while helping her to get dressed, which is encountered by a protest from Madame (Claire): “Let’s skip the business of your prayers and kneeling” (Genet, 2015: 40). It should be noted that the real Madame never displays such humiliating attitude throughout the play although she is not totally kind at all times. The Madame character acted out by Claire mostly depends on their own imagination rather than the real Madame, which underlines the identity crisis problem in the play. In another part of the play, Claire, acting out the Madame, even protests against Solange’s (the Maid’s) touching her by saying: “Keep your hands off mine! I can’t stand your touching me. Hurry up!” (Genet, 2015: 42)

When Solange (acting out Claire) loses herself and slaps Claire (acting out the Madame), we understand that jealousy is another reason why they hate the real Madame and why they consider her such an evil person.

SOLANGE (*she steps back to the wardrobe*): I'm ready- I'm tired of being an object of disgust. I hate you, too. I despise you. I hate your scented bosom. Your ... *ivory* bosom ! Your ... *golden* thighs! Your ... *amber* feet! I hate you! (*She spits on the red dress*)

CLAIRE (*walking up to her*) : Yes, my proud beauty. You think you can always do just as you like. You think you can deprive me forever of the beauty of the sky, that you can choose your perfumes and powders, your nail-polish and silk and velvet and lace, and deprive me of them? That you can steal the milkman from me? Admit it! Admit about the milkman. His youth and vigor excite you, don't they? Admit about the milkman. For Solange says: to hell with you! (Genet, 2015: 44)

From the quotation, it is obvious that the underlying reason for the Maids' hatred of the Madame is not merely a matter of class difference, but a more emotional affair. Solange believes that the Madame has stolen the Milkman from her, causing her to hate Madame. The turning point of the play comes when the maids face themselves in front of a mirror, which is a reference to Lacan's mirror theory according to Bradby and Finburgh:

SOLANGE: So I'll finish it up. Now, here are the two maids, the faithful servants! They're standing in front of you. Despise them. Look more beautiful. We no longer fear you. We're merged, enveloped in our fumes, in our revels, in our hatred of you. The mold is setting. We're taking shape, Madame. Don't laugh- ah! above all, don't laugh at my grandiloquence... (Genet, 2015: 46)

At this point, it is revealed to the reader/audience that what has been happening so far on the stage was a role-play. This is also quite different from what happens in a conventional realist theater. In a realist play, the characters in the play are introduced to the audience as early as possible and never change identity during the rest of the play although they may display changes within their own character. The characters of a realist play in that respect are more limited. Genet, on the other hand, invalidates this rule by not revealing the real characters of the play in the first half of it. While Beckett's and Ionesco's characters seem to be from a different world, Genet's characters display a dual identity. All three playwrights, either this or that way, challenge the approach to the character in realist theater.

While talking about the characters, it is also worth mentioning that, Genet, just like Beckett and Ionesco, is not interested in the emotional or biographical backgrounds of his characters, as he is not trying to imitate something on stage. It is not important for the audience or the reader what kind of a background these characters had outside of the stage, or in the period before the play begins. Bradby and Finburgh underlines this differentiation of Genet's theatre from merely imitation as follows:

For in Genet's theatre, the function of representation is not to show the world as it is, but rather to show the exaggerations and distortions through which our imaginations try to construct the desired image of ourselves and the forces that shape those imaginary selves. (Bradby & Finburgh, 2012: 35)

Genet's approach to the role of the actor also differs him from the conventional realist theater. Genet believes, as Beckett and Ionesco, that the role of the actor is not merely imitating the character written on the script by the playwright. He explains this in *Fragments of the Artwork*, quoted by Bradby and Finburgh:

Genet's preface complains that the western actor (in contrast with the performer in Chinese, Japanese or Balinese theatres) is only interested in constructing a realistic character – s/he is unwilling to “become a sign laden with signs” (Genet 2002: 816; 2003: 37, translation modified). Genet contrasts his approval for Eastern theatre, described as ‘ceremony’, with his scorn for western theatre of psychological character study, which he terms puerile masquerade (ibid.) For him, the actor should seek to be as distant as possible from what s/he represents, aspiring to become the metaphor of what is enacted. (Bradby & Finburgh, 2012: 40)

Genet's symbolic language on stage also bears significance in understanding why he must be considered as an anti-realist playwright. Just as the bell of Ionesco in “The Bald Soprano”, Genet makes use of the alarm clock to pinpoint a turning point in the play. Towards the middle of the play, with the ringing of the alarm clock, the audience understands that what they have seen so far on stage was just a game and the real Madame has not arrived yet.

At this point, it is also obvious again that their identities are blurred and they sometimes believe in the illusion they create themselves. When Solange says “And it's all your fault, you're never ready. I can't finish you off”, she is indeed referring to finishing off the real Madame. Thus, we also understand that even from the very beginning of the play, the two sisters are decisive about killing the real Madame to get rid of her. The psychological reason for this is when they finish the Madame off, they

will no longer continue their game and will find their true identity. However, this wouldn't be the case at the end of the play.

Their identity and existence depend on the existence and identity of the Madame, which results in an identity crisis for the Maids. When they understand that the Madame would enter soon and they should finish the role-play, Claire gets perplexed that Solange feels the need to warn her by saying "You can be like me now. Be yourself again. Come on, Claire, be my sister again." (Genet 48). Solange's mockery with Claire also reveals that Claire continues the role-play when she is alone too:

SOLANGE (*ironically*) : Oh, no. Mademoiselle has never gone strolling! Wrapped in the curtains or the lace bedcover. Oh no! Looking at herself in the mirrors, strutting on the balcony at two in the morning, and greeting the populace which has turned out to parade beneath her windows. Never, oh no, never. (Genet, 2015: 51)

So, this role-play is a life style for the maids as they are not happy with who they are, what they do, and where they live. However, this is not an innocent game as it is supposed to be, but would turn out to be an evil one. After a certain point, they not only hate the Madame but also go into a power struggle between themselves and try to blame each other.

Turning back to the symbols Genet uses in the play, another one is the ring of the telephone. Just as the ringing alarm clock, the telephone ringing also underlines a turning point in the play. It is the moment where the maids learn that the Monsieur has been freed from prison now. This is the beginning of the end for them because Solange is the one who had denounced Monsieur for her jealousy of the Madame.

Genet uses these two rings as theatrical tools to underline the key turning points of the play. They also give us the clue that the maids are not merely innocent characters who are rising against oppression by their Madame. In each ring, an evil side of maids is revealed, which is contrary to the expectations from a realist play. In a realist play between two maids and a Madame, it is highly expected that the Madame would be the evil character. However, on page 68 of the play, when Madame understand that she is being rude to Solange, she feels guilty:

MADAME: I'm not tired. You treat me like an invalid. You're always ready to coddle me and pamper me as if I were dying. Thank God, I've got my wits

about me. I'm ready for the fight. (*She looks at Solange and feeling that she has hurt her, adds with a smile*) Come, come, don't make such a face. (*with sudden violence*) All right, it's true! There are times when you are so sweet that I simply can't stand it. It crushes me, stifles me! And those flowers which are there for the very opposite of a celebration! (Genet, 2015: 68)

Although the quote reveals Madame's feeling of guilt for hurting Solange, it also reveals that she is such an unstable character as she starts complaining (*with sudden violence*) that she can't stand Solange's sweetness in the middle of her talk. The unstable nature of Madame's character is also revealed in the part when she finds out that Monsieur has called. Just a few lines before this, Madame is extremely kind to the maids, gives her clothes to them and says that it is a pleasure for her to make people happy; however, just after that point, she starts shouting at and giving orders to the maids upon finding out about Monsieur:

MADAME (*rising to her feet*): And you didn't say anything! Go get a taxi! Solange, quick, quick, get me a taxi. And hurry up. Go on, run. (*she pushes Solange out of the room*). My furs! Quick, quick! You're both mad. You let me go on talking. You really are mad. Or am I going mad! (Genet, 2015: 72)

The two further symbols repeatedly used by Genet in the play are the colors of the dresses and the curtains. Both represent deeper meanings unlike their role in a realist play. At the very beginning of the play Claire (acting out Madame) and Solange (acting out Claire) are seen in a conflict over the color of the dress Madame would wear. Although Madame wants to wear her white dress, Claire (Solange) protests against this and firmly says that Madame would wear the red dress instead. White color is generally associated with innocence and purity; thus, Solange does not find it proper for Madame to wear white. On the other hand, the color red, which is proposed by Solange for the Madame, is the color of desire and blood. This gives us a clue about the maids' feelings towards Madame. Solange is the one who hates Madame more and who wishes to finish her off while Claire has a softer attitude. This does not necessarily mean that Claire loves the Madame but she does not hate her either.

Another symbol used in the play with a deeper meaning is the curtain. Throughout the play, there are many parts where the stage directions refer to the curtains such as "she runs to the window and lifts the curtain" (51). They either lift the curtain or close the curtain or open it. This curtain is a red curtain which reminds of a

curtain on the theater stage. Genet uses the symbol of curtain as a tool which reminds the audience that what is being staged is just a play and not the real life itself. This is similar to Brecht's alienation effect on stage. What Genet is trying to do is not to imitate the outside world as much as possible and to make the audience believe that, but rather to make it clear that stage reality is different from the outside reality and it should always be kept in mind that there is a created reality on stage rather than merely imitation.

The end of the play also represents the anti-realist approach of Genet. In a conventional realist play, there is generally a course of events which happen on stage in a kind of order. The realist play is based upon a cause-effect relationship and it does not favor open ended stories as a plot should have a proper beginning, rising, and end. However, in *The Maids*, contrary to the expectation that everything would be solved out and made more clear for the audience at the end of the play, things get more complicated and blurred for the audience. The maids are trapped in their own games and the distinction between illusion and reality disappears. It is not clear any more what is illusion and what is reality.

First, the audience thinks that Claire is killed by her sister Solange as a result of an ecstatic moment; however, it is then revealed that Claire is not dead yet as she reappears on stage. In her second appearance on stage, Claire goes into a madness and wants her sister to poison her with the tea which is supposed to be given to the real Madame. Solange doesn't accept the proposal at the beginning but Claire's decisiveness makes her retreat. Claire commits suicide in a sense as she wishes to be killed by her own sister. The identity struggle appears in its most violent form at the end of the play. Solange's long monologue towards the end of the play is the best representation of the identity struggle they are dealing with:

SOLANGE: Madame...At last! Madame is dead!... laid out on the linoleum...strangled by the dish-gloves. What? Oh, Madame may remain seated...Madame may call me Mademoiselle Solange...Exactly. It's because of what I've done. Madame and Monsieur will call me Mademoiselle Solange Lemercier...Madame should have taken off that black dress. It's grotesque. (Genet, 2015: 91)

It is obvious that the only reason why they want to get rid of Madame is because they want to take place of the Madame. When the Madame is dead, Solange will be

called as Mademoiselle Solange Lemercier and she will be respected. The only way to create her own identity and existence is to get rid of another person's. To finish with Bradby and Finburgh's analysis of the end of the play:

The transformation has taken place. The poison has been turned against themselves, yet they have succeeded in destroying the inherited image of the maid as subservient and faithful. They have substituted a new image, one that they term 'holy', just as they had dreamed of the violent deaths associated with saints halfway through the play. They have become 'the eternal couple of the criminal and the saint' (Bradby & Finburgh, 2012: 47)



1.2 “The Balcony”

One of the later plays of Genet, “The Balcony”, is maybe the most well-known of his theatrical work. As well as being a commercial success, it is also, along with “The Maids”, exemplary of Genet’s approach to theater. “The Balcony” is parallel to “The Maids” in terms of its subject matter. It also focuses on the discrimination between illusion and reality through role-play in a brothel.

Even from the very beginning of the play, it is obvious that the play would come and go between illusion and reality. The play opens in a brothel which is called “The Grand Balcony”, and the owner of the house is Irma. The audience is encountered with an argument between Irma and one of the customers but the customer is dressed as a bishop. It is obvious that there is a role-play going on in the brothel. The opening scene reminds of “The Maids”, but it is now more clear that the customer is not a real bishop, whereas in “The Maids”, the audience doesn’t learn the real identity of the two characters on stage until the middle of the play. Thus, Genet, in this later play, makes his technique obvious from the very beginning and gives the audience the message that what they are about to see should not be interpreted in realist terms.

The play is not based upon a single role-play as “The Maids” does but on a series of role-plays going on simultaneously. In the second scene, we see a client acting out as a judge, and a whore acting out as a thief. Thus, “The Great Balcony” is a place of fantasies and illusions. However, meanwhile, a revolution is happening outside of the walls of the brothel, which is the reality part of the play.

Looking at the characters in terms of anti-realist theater, Irma, the owner of the brothel, is exemplary of a businesswoman who is more interested in the money she earns than anything else. In some respects, she is similar to the Madame in “The Maids”, as the girls working in her brothel are like her maids. However, she is obviously much more cruel towards the girls working in her brothel, and doesn’t care about them at all. Although there is a revolution going on outside and people are dying every day, she is only worried about the possibility that the revolution would affect her house negatively. Towards the end of the play, she plays the role of the Queen to calm down the rebellion on the streets. This is the point where her identity gets blurred.

Carmen is most probably the only realistic character in the play. She has been working with Irma for a very long time, first as one of the whores in the brothel now as Irma's assistant who keeps the books. She has a daughter who lives in the country and she wants to see her child. Carmen is realistic because she thinks that the fantasies should come to an end as they are of no use.

As the Madame's lover Monsieur in "The Maids", Irma has a lover called George, and who acts out the role of the Chief of Police. All of the main characters are stuck in between illusion and reality as it can be seen obviously. This is the way unique to Genet when he is creating his characters, and which differentiates him from conventional playwrights.

This alienation from reality in terms of character development is most obvious in the stage directions describing the clothing of the characters. At the beginning of the play, when describing the Bishop, Genet says:

He is obviously larger than life. The role is played by an actor wearing tragedian's cothurni about twenty inches high. His shoulders, on which the cope lies, are inordinately broadened so that when the curtain rises he looks huge and stiff, like a scarecrow. (Genet, 1994: 7).

Even at the moment the curtain rises on stage, the audience will be faced with a scene unlike the ones they are accustomed to see in realist plays. Genet most probably makes use of exaggerated costumes to suggest the idea that the characters are stuck between their small lives and their imaginary lives which are "*larger than life*". When The Bishop and the Woman are talking about the reality of the sins the Woman confessed to the Bishop during the role-play, we understand how The Bishop is afraid of reality and how he wishes to continue living in the illusion created in the brothel:

THE WOMAN (*suddenly coy*): And what if my sins were real?

THE BISHOP (*in a different, less theatrical tone*): You're mad! I hope you really didn't do all that!

IRMA (*to the Bishop*): Don't listen to her. As for her sins, don't worry. Here there's no...

THE BISHOP (*interrupting her*): I'm quite aware of that. Here there's no possibility of doing evil. You live in evil. In the absence of remorse. How could you do evil? The Devil makes believe. That's how one recognizes him. He's the great Actor. And that's why the Church has anathematized actors.

THE WOMAN: Reality frightens you, doesn't it? (Genet, 1994: 10)

The last question of the Woman bears importance because The Bishop is really afraid of reality. When he thinks about the possibility of reality, he suddenly becomes “*less theatrical*” and starts questioning.

In Scene 2, there is a similar case. The man acting out the role of The Judge is so afraid the whore acting out The Thief would stop role-playing that he pleads her to continue being the Thief. The brothel is a place where these men can escape from the reality they are so afraid of and find the possibility to be whoever they wish to be.

Genet also makes use of the stage décor to create this illusionary world on stage. He suggests using a moving stage and in the stage directions of the second scene he writes “The stage moves from left to right, as at the end of the preceding scene, and plunges into the right wing. In the distance, machine-gun fire” (20). This is of course innovative for the time the play was written and staged; thus, it was really difficult for the directors to stage the play in the way Genet wished it to be. This use of stage décor reminds Beckett’s use of décor in *Act Without Words I* and *II*, and *What Where* as well. These playwrights brought an innovation on stage which had previously served merely to the imitation of outside world.

Another stage tool used to underline the conflict between illusion and reality is the mirror. In each scene, some mirrors are seen on stage and some of the characters are seen through the mirrors. This is very similar to what Genet did in *The Maids*. When The Maids see themselves on the mirror, they are faced with their real identity or how they consider themselves to be. Similarly, mirrors are used throughout *The Balcony* to underline the fact that what we see on stage is illusionary. In a realist play, such a use of the décor is not proper. A mirror would most probably be used for a “realistic” reason such as combing your hair, or looking at your image; however, in Genet’s theater the audience should actively ponder over its deeper meaning. Irma’s words in Scene Four are proof to the function of the mirrors:

IRMA (*after a pause*): Some men. Drawn by my mirrors and chandeliers, always the same ones. As for the others, heroism takes the place of women. (Genet, 1994: 30)

The quote can be interpreted in two ways. The men drawn by the mirrors and chandeliers are the ones who wish to live in an illusionary world and escape from the reality, which is the revolution taking place on the streets. Or, it can be said that all

men live in an illusion; some with the illusion created by mirrors and chandeliers; others with the illusion of heroism created by the revolution. Thus, the audience is, once more, faced with the question of what is real and what is illusion.

Just as in *The Maids*, the game turns into a catastrophe towards the end of the play and the distinction between reality and illusion is blurred. This is true especially for the part when they cannot understand the Queen's position in the rebel:

THE CHIEF OF POLICE: By God! What have you done with Her Majesty? I want a straight answer. I'm not amused...

THE ENVOY: She is in a chest. She is sleeping. Wrapped in the folds of Royalty, she is snoring...

THE CHIEF OF POLICE (*threateningly*): Is the Queen dead?

THE ENVOY (*unperturbed*): She is snoring and she is not snoring. Her head, which is tiny, supports, without wavering, a crown of metal and stones.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE (*more and more threateningly*): Enough of that. You said the Palace was in danger... What's to be done? I still have almost the entire police force behind me. Those who are still with me are ready to die for me... They know who I am and what I'll do for them...I, too, have my role to play. But if the Queen is dead, everything is jeopardized. She's my support, it's in her name that I'm working to make a name for myself. How far has the rebellion gone? I want a clear answer. (Genet, 1994: 62)

Indeed, this quote and the rest of the play focuses more on the main theme surrounding the play: how dreams and illusion make the reality more bearable. All the characters in the play (except Carmen) are trying to escape from reality with the illusionary world created by Madame Irma and her brothel. However, at a point, there is no way to escape from reality as the rebellion going on outside also strikes Madame Irma's house.

The Balcony is a power-play, questioning all kinds of authority; nevertheless, it is difficult to regard it as a "political" play in the broadest meaning of the word, as Genet's motive is not to protest a certain group of political stance; but rather to seek an artistic medium to reflect upon a common problem of humanity, which is not necessarily limited to politics.

The play's depiction of the differentiation between illusion and reality is parallel to Genet's approach to realism in his theater, which suggests that what is called "realist" cannot merely be interpreted as the mimetic representation of the outside world on stage. The meaning of the word "Realist" goes far beyond the scope of conventional realist theater. Genet's play is realistic in the sense that it reflects the

most real inner motives and desires of its characters on stage; however, this effect is achieved through a means of theatrical devices rather than to imitate the outside life counterparts of these characters, which makes Genet a unique figure. This re-interpretation and deconstruction of the word “realist” was what the theater had been waiting for over a century.



2. Sevim Burak as a Modernist Anti-Realist Playwright

Sevim Burak has certainly been one of the most underrated and unsung figures in Turkish literature. Born in 1931 to a Jewish mother and a Muslim father, she started writing in the middle of 1960's after performing in a variety of jobs such as modeling and dressmaking for high class society. Her first volume of short stories "Yanık Saraylar (Burnt Palaces)" was published in 1965; however, she did not publish anything else for 17 years after the publishing of "Yanık Saraylar", as a protest to the literary world for not awarding her the short story prize that year. She turned back to the literary stage in 1982, just one year before her death, with a play "Sahibinin Sesi ("His Master's Voice" or "The Owner's Voice")" and a short story collection "Afrika Dansı (African Dance)". Five more books were published after her death from heart failure.

Although she had a very limited number of works, she was more effective than most of her contemporaries in creating a new language and form in Turkish literature; however, she has not been very popular among the common readers as understanding and evaluating her works need a great effort. To put it simply, she is not an easy writer. In an article on Daily Sabah newspaper, Hakan Arslanbenzer describes her style with the following words:

She never has enough narrative in her style. Her fragmented style never comes together as a single plot or a chronology of events. She thinks, she remembers, she murmurs, she begs, she prays, she tells, and she doesn't tell. She is herself, and she is somebody else. Once she said she was writing for those who had lost their minds, for those who lost their worlds, for the dreamers, for those who prepare to leave this world. "I will not write for the astute, not for those who may cope with this world. I will write for the crazy of love, for the schizophrenics, for the extreme sadists". (Arslanbenzer, 2016)

Her style is unique in Turkish literature. To be more clear, she may be considered as the Virginia Woolf of Turkish literature. She combines stream of consciousness with dreams and social structure she lives in. Her works and characters are all linked to each other. They are like the small parts of a big puzzle. For example, "Sahibinin Sesi", one of the two plays which will be analyzed in this study, is based on a short story titled "Ya Rab Yehova" which took place in "Yanık Saraylar" in 1965.

Sevim Burak does not have a plot or character development in conventional sense. She writes in fragments going back and forth between illusion and reality. She always has a reference to her Jewish background but only through the use of language. Burak's literature is generally described as "minor literature" which refers to the fact that her works do not follow the common rules of mainstream literature. Beliz Güçbilmez, who calls Sevim Burak as "a true avant-garde playwright of Turkey" describe Burak's process of creation in her article:

The process Sevim Burak goes through while creating her texts is an indistinguishable part of her fiction. She used to cut her texts into pieces, and try them in any possible arrangement, needling or pinning them to the curtains, reading and reading, and then changing the arrangement, maybe with pins between her lips, like a tailor-writer, that keeps knitting her texts. This is also a clue for the most peculiar qualities of her writing: the fragmentary, effort demanding, avant-garde way of writing. (Güçbilmez, 2014)

Burak is an adorer of Beckett and Kafka, which is obviously apparent in her writing. Her repeated sections, fragmented pieces, use of stream of consciousness, focus on process rather than the end product, her darkness are all reminders of this influence.

As all the other playwrights who have been analyzed in this study, Burak's works are never explicitly political. She does not make use of art and literature as media to voice her individual political stance; however, this does not mean that her works are blind to the society and the world around them. Through her unique style and her artistic interpretation of "realism", she creates an artistic form on stage reflective of the society she lives in and her Jewish background, which is extremely though-provoking even for the audience of 21st century.

2.1 “Sahibinin Sesi (“His Master’s Voice” or “The Owner’s Voice”)”

“Sahibinin Sesi” which was published in 1982 after seventeen years of silence is based on a short story “Ya Rab Yehova” which took place in the first short story collection of Sevim Burak. The play includes most of the elements of Burak’s artistic style and is one of the best examples of avant-garde theater in Turkey.

The play focuses on the lives of Bilal Bağana and Zembul Hanım (Sümbül Hanım). Zembul is expecting a baby and they are not officially married. Bilal’s jealousy is at a catastrophic and schizophrenic level, which causes him to lead a life which goes between illusion/dreams and reality. Bilal, and the audience as well, cannot distinguish between what is real and what is dream throughout the play. This construction of plot is extremely different from a conventional plot.

Seeing and being seen take a very significant place in Burak’s play. The play starts with Bilal watching his neighbors with a telescope. He then reports what he sees to the audience. In that respect, Burak’s style reminds of Brecht and his alienation effect on stage. In the plays of Brecht, actors, while acting their roles, tell the audience what has happened or what will happen to remind the fact that what they are seeing on stage is a play and not the real world. Just as Brecht, Burak is also against a mimetic imitation of the outside world on stage and she adds such artistic elements to create her own reality on stage.

Not only seeing the others, but also to be seen by the others is very significant for the character of Bilal Bağana. He always thinks that some other people, and then ghosts are watching him. This combination of the living and the dead is another stylistic element used by Burak.

Bilal continues reporting what he has done throughout the day to the audience; however, Sevim Burak also makes use of the lightning in between the different stories of Bilal Bağana. After each report or story, the stage gets dark and then we see Bilal Bağana in a different setting, still telling his story. Thus, this then revolutionary technique is perfectly cinematographic. Just as a film director, Burak makes use of montage to construct her play on stage. This use of lightning was then used widely by Şahika Tekand, who is considered to be one of the most innovative directors of Turkish

theater, in 1990s. Just as the fragmented pieces of her stories she puts on the curtains, her play also consists of fragments rather than a conventional plot with a beginning, a dénouement, and a resolution.

Bilal's addressing to the audience directly is another stylistic element used by Burak. Burak does not aim to imitate the outside reality on stage or to make the audience believe that what they see on stage is real; contrarily, she is telling a story to the audience through the character of Bilal.

While Bilal is telling his report of the day to the audience, he tells the dream of his father and at that moment the dream scene comes to life on stage. This is quite different from conventional realist theater in the sense that dreams and reality occur simultaneously on stage; moreover, it is not the story teller's dream. This combination of illusion and reality also reminds of Edward Albee.

Symbols on the stage also bear great significance in Burak's theatre. For example, when Bilal tells his father's dream, there is a blue light on stage. Blue color is obviously associated with a world of dreams and illusion. Besides, Burak gives a detailed description of the costume in the stage directions: "Zembul is wearing a strange evening dress made of the fur of a wild animal... Ziya Bey is in a black costume or penguin suit... (Burak 8-9)". These costumes also define the two characters in the dream, and thus used as symbols by the playwright.

Rather than describing the properties of the characters in conventional terms, Burak goes even further and make the characters act like animals on stage. Zembul Hanım (Sümbül Hanım) has a voice which reminds of a cat. Burak says "*she meows like a crying cat*" while Ziya Bey's voice is similar to a *bulldog* or a *goose*. Making a connection between the characters and specific animals is also a well-known acting technique.

The dream of Bilal's father is a reflection of Bilal's subconscious. Bilal is extremely obsessed with the possibility that Zembul Hanım would cheat on him with Ziya Bey, and accordingly in the dream he sees Zembul Hanım flirting with Ziya Bey just like a cat. This obsession of Bilal comes to a peak step by step throughout the play. Obviously, Burak is making use of Freudian theories of interpretation of dreams and the hidden feelings in the subconscious in order to reflect the psychological condition of the character of Bilal Bağana.

In this dream of Bilal's father, we are also faced with another significant subconscious fear of Bilal Bağana. We learn that Bilal is a deserter and he is scared to death that he would be picked up by the recruiting office one day. Burak gives the intensity of Bilal's fear by using the echoing sound in the dream:

ZİYA BEY (*in a serious tone*): I reported him to the recruiting office. In a few days, they will pick him up and first send him to the prison, and then to compulsory service in the East (*these words can be repeated two or three times louder than normal*) to the compulsory service... to the compulsory service... (*echoing*) prison... prison... (*echoing*) to the compulsory service... prison... (*with a higher echo*) prison... to the compulsory service... (Burak, 2014: 11)

Just after this dream scene, Bilal turns back to the audience again and reports what he did after he learnt about the dream. Thus, going back and forth between dream and reality is one of the major components of Burak's style.

When the real Ziya Bey comes to the stage with his wife Melek Hanım, we see that it is not very possible that there is such an affair between Ziya Bey and Zembul Hanım; however, Bilal's obsession makes him believe only in whatever he thinks to be true. This obsession can also be interpreted as Burak's criticism to the male-dominated society. Zembul's life is determined by what Bilal thinks to be true. In other words, unfairly we see the female characters through the eyes of a male character. However, this gender issue in the play has been misinterpreted by some critics. For example, Özlem Belkıs explains this situation in her article on Sevim Burak:

This short story (*Ya Rab Yehova*) is a story of a woman who has burnt herself out in the service of a man and is told through the eyes of a man. The central theme is the condition of Zembul, who served to Bilal for years, who got pregnant, and who wants a civil marriage now. Sevim Burak has tried to define the woman through the eyes of the man without bringing the woman on stage. (Belkıs, 2009: 14)

It is obvious that Burak is underlining the gender difference in the play; however, considering this to be "the central theme" of the play is possibly an overgeneralization. Besides, trying to find a "central theme" in the works of a modernist writer, using stream of consciousness technique and the dreams as her main sources would be misleading. Belkıs then goes further and puts the character of Zembul in a very miserable condition as Bilal did not get married to her, which is a false interpretation again. Although Belkıs claims that Sevim Burak is trying to define

the woman through the eyes of the man, indeed she herself is trying to interpret on the characters of Burak through androcentric values. What is to be done here is to focus more on the stylistic elements used by Sevim Burak in order to understand her works more deeply, as Burak is a playwright who is more interested in creating an artistic form rather than focusing on a central theme in her works.

Besides dreams and fragments, it is clear that Sevim Burak is also a genius in the use of language. For example, when Bilal reports the day to the audience, he always prefers to use passive voice instead of active sentences such as:

Pieces of paper have been plugged under the doors and windows... it has been realized that these children have a strength in learning languages (Burak, 2014: 16).

This turns Bilal's stories into a kind of news report, which is another stylistic element used by the playwright.

After the report, there is another dream scene, this time seen by Bilal himself. Use of dreams as a stylistic technique on stage is quite different from conventional realist theater. Sevim Burak is eliminating the distinction between illusion and reality through the dreams. It is not very possible to see these kinds of interferences in a conventional realist play, in which the plot improves in a chronological order. However, Sevim Burak departs from this rule and proves that a different kind of reality is and should be possible on stage.

Bilal's obsession comes to a peak throughout the play and Sevim Burak shows this to the audience through his dreams. For example, in the dream he sees after Ziya Bey and Melek Hanım leave the house, he sees Melek Hanım doing magic in the house on Zembul and Bilal. This shows that Bilal is truly obsessed with being seen as well as seeing the others. He is so obsessed with being betrayed that he believes Zembul Hanım carries Ziya Bey's child, and not his own.

Sevim Burak uses lightning on stage also to underline the different phases of the relationship between Zembul and Bilal. For example, through the middle of the play, Zembul gets frustrated at Bilal's obsessed attitude and they have a big fight. After the fight, Burak creates the atmosphere with the help of lightning:

This scene is divided into two parts with the lights on and off. The light is off, and then on. Zembul and Bilal are in the same condition, unchanged. Bilal speaks.

...

The light is off. Bilal is on the sofa, and Zembul is on the floor. Contrary to the previous scene they are talking in a low voice whispering at each other. (Burak, 2014: 21)

In a conventional realist play, all these steps are shown on stage to the audience as if they are real. There is no room in between to be filled by the audience; thus, the audience is in a passive state. They just watch the events happening on stage. However, Burak leaves some parts of her play to the imagination and intellect of the audience putting the audience in an active position. Without realizing, the audience take part in the creation of the play. Burak is interested in showing fragments on stage rather than the whole story, and while doing this she makes use of stylistic features and stage tools such as lightning. This is how she creates her own reality on stage and this is what puts her in a unique place in Turkish theater.

Identity crisis is another common theme in Sevim Burak's plays. This can basically be linked to her Jewish background and her experience within the Jewish community in Istanbul. Most of her characters in both her stories and plays have two names, referring to the two different identities they have to adopt. For example, Zembul Hanım is also called as Sümbül Hanım because the former refers to the Jewish identity of the woman whereas the latter is her Turkish identity.

Similarly, Burak creates another identity crisis in *Sahibinin Sesi*. This time Bilal Bağana adopts the identity of a dead soldier Muzaffer Seza so that he would not be picked up by the recruiting office. Burak's use of double identities for the character of Bilal Bağana underlines the message that all of our identities are indeed slippery. Because of this slippery characteristic of the identities, we are always faced with a crisis in different ways. Bilal's second identity in the play is stemmed from and also causes his subconscious fears. He adopts his second identity because of his fear to be recognized by the recruiting office; however, this creates a bigger fear in him that his fake identity would be recognized by someone.

Bilal's dreams turn into the worst nightmares after he adopts the identity of Muzaffer Seza. He sees in his nightmares that the police would come and interrogate

about his identity. This is indeed the point where Bilal Bağana starts to lose his mind. The steps of Bilal's madness are given by the content of the dreams throughout the play by Sevim Burak. She was able to tell a real life event through the use of dreams and illusion.

Bilal's obsession with being seen or being denounced by someone becomes more and more apparent after his adoption of a different identity: Muzaffer Seza. This time he gets suspicious about Zembul and thinks that she would denounce him to the recruitment office. Muzaffer Seza's identity also bears significance as he is a dead soldier, as a reflection of the guilt Bilal feels subconsciously due to the fact that he hasn't completed his military service. Once again, Burak makes use of Freud's psychoanalytical approach.

At that point in the play, we are faced with another stylistic element unique to Sevim Burak. Muzaffer Seza's ghost appears on stage following Bilal and reminding that Bilal has stolen his identity. In other words, Burak's characters are not only from this world but she also makes use of the dead as characters of her play. In a way, this reminds of the ghost of Hamlet's father who follows Hamlet as his conscience in Shakespeare's masterpiece.

The first act of the play ends with the most significant symbol in the whole play; the needle. Bilal's father dies through the end of the first act and interestingly Bilal doesn't seem to be affected deeply by his father's death. He urges that the corpse be buried down as quickly as possible. His father's bed is carried to Bilal's house but at that moment a needle pricks his heel, which is most probably the needle used to scratch his father's foot. Throughout the second act, quite metaphysically, we see that the needle creeps step by step up to Bilal's heart to kill him. Özlem Belkıs underlines the fact that the needle has multiple meanings as a symbol:

It is possible to explain the function of this needle in various ways. The first to come to mind is a symbol for Bilal's fear. The needle moves up first to the calf and then to the knee, hurting him whenever he forgets about the needle. He gets nervous as he doesn't know where the needle is, and he feels the existence of the needle only when he feels pain. Thus, he is trapped in a painful paradox... On the other hand, this needle can also be explained as a symbol for a feeling such as conscience or common sense, which Bilal does not have. He spends his time with feeling the pain when the needle moves, and waiting for the pain in fear when the needle doesn't move. His fear and paranoia reach to

such a level that he starts calculating the distance of everyone to his house. His mind gets totally out of control. (Belkıs, 2014)

Belkıs is right in saying that the needle is a symbol for Bilal's conscience. Throughout the second act, Bilal feels the pain of the needle whenever he remembers the fact that he has stolen another person's identity not to be picked up by the recruitment office; thus, the needle serves to create the feeling of justice and conscience in the play. Using symbolism as a stage tool to create the stage reality emerges as one of the stylistic features of Burak's theater.

Interestingly, the needle symbol is also directly related to Burak's private life. Before being a writer, Burak was working as a tailor for the high class society and it is a well-known fact that she used to pin her writings on the curtains as a habit. Nilüfer Güngörmüş, in her biographical book "Sevim Burak: From A to Z", explains this relationship:

The Needle

There is a relationship between Sevim Burak's writings and her sewing. The needle is one of her irreplaceable tools for writing. It comes after her typewriter and scissors. Sevim Burak works with a technique which can be called as copy-paste without a computer. She writes the texts in small papers or she cuts the texts she wrote on the typewriter into small pieces. Then she pins these small pieces to each other with needles, and then puts them everywhere in her house, specifically on the curtains. She reads them, replaces them, and pins them again... Her sister says that she would take packs of needles to the writer. There is also the needle which creeps up to the heart of Bilal Bey. This needle is a symbol she uses in her stories, and it represents death. Indeed, this symbolization can also be considered as a kind of personification. This is because death, the invisible hero of all the stories emerges within the identity of a needle. (Güngörmüş, 2003: 28)

Burak's theater consists of symbols and stage tools to create a form on stage as analyzed so far; however, this doesn't make her an apolitical writer at all. Burak, as the other writers of this study, proves that it is possible for a writer to have political concerns without being explicitly political. Bilal's case is an example for the significance of justice in people's lives, which is totally a political issue. Moreover, the characters having two names, one belonging to their Jewish background and the other to their converted identity is a totally political issue; however, Burak does not have a concern to send a message to her readers or audience through this. Her primary

concern is to create her own reality using the tools of the stage and theater. Beliz Güçbilmez links this political side of the writer to the needle metaphor:

It is important to note that the metaphor of moving needle is not only important for emotional, stylistic, or vital issues but also for the political content of the plays. Sevim Burak's writing is explicitly and radically political, turning ethnocentrism, which is generally left unsaid, into the needle which creeps up to the heart of the majority. (Güçbilmez, 2014)

Güçbilmez is right in saying that Burak's writing is political; however, it is not very possible to say that she is an explicitly political writer. Nowhere in her plays does she make her political stance clear or send a political message to the reader or the audience. Explaining the needle metaphor as a political symbol does not reflect Burak's artistic stance fairly. Just contrary to Güçbilmez's explanation, what makes Burak's theater unique is her ability to be political without being explicitly political and turning her theatre into a political propaganda. Burak is concerned with more general issues concerning the humanity rather than being an explicitly political writer as Güçbilmez suggests.

The last element to be discussed in the play is the sounds Bilal hears towards the end of the play. To underline the level of Bilal's psychological sickness, Burak makes use of some sounds. Bilal starts to hear these when his obsession reaches at an irreparable point. Güçbilmez says:

When a sound is heard on the stage and when its source is not made clear, a dislocation occurs in the perception... theatre's visual codes are replaced by an auditory obligation (Güçbilmez, 2014).

As Güçbilmez suggests, Sevim Burak makes use of the auditory devices besides the visual element of theater.

The use of sounds dominates the last part of the play where Bilal decides to set the whole neighborhood into fire. He hears the voices of Zembul, Muzaffer Seza, Aunt Azize, Şahende, and various unidentified ones, and this cacophony brings the end of the play. Burak's stage directions clearly explain that cacophony:

Voices get faster, are mixed into each other. Fragments of words and sentences will be taken from the previous texts again. Speeches get meaningless. They turn into gabble... such as Yuki...)
Curtain (Burak, 2014: 70)

Once again Burak makes use of “repetition”, the cornerstone of her style. All her writings consist of repetitions and fragments as underlined before. These repetitions, fragments, symbols, sounds, dead people, dreams all constitute the artistic reality of Sevim Burak and make her a unique artist.



2.2 “Everest My Lord/ İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar (Here’s the Head Here’s the Body Here Are the Wings)”

“Everest My Lord and İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar (Here’s the Head Here’s the Body Here Are the Wings)” was published together in 1984 after the writer’s death. Interestingly, Burak prefers to categorize “Everest My Lord” as a “three act novel” rather than a play; however, in terms of form and style, it has widely been regarded as a play, just as “İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar”.

Even from the description of the characters at the very beginning of *Everest My Lord*, it is clear that Burak’s work is not a conventional play at all. The characters are listed as *Everest My Lord*, *Sucu (Waterman)*, *Başvekil (Prime Minister)*, *Two Ladies*, and *Yazarın Gölgesi (The Writer’s Shadow)*. These characters suggest a different form of reality associated with an illusionary world. Once again, the lines between dreams and reality in Burak’s work are blurred. Some characters such as *The Prime Minister* are obviously the creation of the story teller while some others such as *The Writer’s Shadow* are not alive.

The setting of the novel-play is Hyde Park, which is described in details at the beginning of the play. However, the description of the setting is also unique to Burak’s style. Unlike the descriptions in a conventional realist play Burak describes the setting in fragments of words separated by dashes:

Green trees with dark shadows/mowed grass like a smooth carpet/trees covering the sky/thus it is like a dark day/cypress trees in the forefront creating a dreary atmosphere... (Burak, 2014: 9)

Her use of fragmented words in describing the setting creates a unique atmosphere and an imaginary world in the minds of the audience and the reader. This technique used by Burak reminds of Virginia Woolf and her stream of consciousness technique.

“Everest My Lord”, as the other works of Burak, underlines isolation and otherness in a quite unfamiliar way through the characters of “Everest My Lord” and “The Writer’s Shadow”. “Everest My Lord” sits and contemplates in Hyde Park at the beginning of the play, while some other characters come and go. Burak underlines “Everest My Lord”’s isolation through his (un)communication with other characters, in a way by reading the mind of him. For example, when two ladies are talking about

him, he also tries to take part in this conversation but also cannot show an existence, thus leading the audience to question whether the two ladies are the creation of Everest My Lord's mind and inner self:

First Lady: What a lonely man, and contemplative as well.

Second Lady: I wonder what he thinks about.

First Lady: Shall we ask?

Everest My Lord: Ask.

(Ladies continue their conversation while moving away)

First Lady: Do you think he was talking to us?

Everest My Lord: I wasn't talking to you.

(The Second Lady whispers something to the First Lady)

First Lady: What if he hears?

Everest My Lord: I do not hear... (Burak, 2014: 11)

In this weird conversation between the three people, we can never be sure if the ladies really hear Everest My Lord's words or whether they exist in reality or they are the creations of his mind. Once again Burak does not draw a thick line between illusion and reality. However, it is certain that Everest My Lord is a character who wishes to be heard by other people, as most of the characters of Sevim Burak. Nilüfer Gögörmüş, in her article titled "Sevim Burak and Identities" describe the play as a *completely complex text*:

Everest My Lord is completely a complex text. It is full of free associations. The storyteller/writer walks along the corners of childish language, vocabulary, toys, and the mind. Words step into action as well. Writer's Shadow waits quietly while all of this happens. And, at the end of the story, when everything and everyone leaves, "he goes to his room, sits on his writing desk, and starts writing". (Gögörmüş, 2014)

Gögörmüş is absolutely correct in saying that "Everest My Lord" is a complex text, as all the other texts by Burak. Reading and analyzing Burak requires a great effort, which sometimes, may end up with disappointment. Although Gögörmüş underlines this fact both in her articles on Burak and her biographical study, she tends to present Burak as an explicitly political writer, most of the time, which is a false assumption. It is true that Burak's "otherness" as a daughter of a Jewish mother had a great influence in her literary works; however, the primary purpose of Burak's writings, specifically her plays, is not to reflect the difficulties of being an "other" in the society. Burak aims to create a new style, an artistic form on stage through her experience as a Jewish descendant; however, she neither takes sides nor voice her

political concerns in her works. She is, just as Beckett and Ionesco, a “political” writer without trying to be political.

Burak’s text consists of repetitions and fragments as underlined before. These stylistic elements were also used in “Everest My Lord”. Towards the middle of the play, we are faced with some words repeated in different grammatical forms through pages rather than conventional dialogues between the characters:

IF HE DOESN’T KNOW
IF WE DON’T KNOW
WE DON’T KNOW
They don’t know
They can’t know
They will not be able to know
He doesn’t know
If they don’t know
If they can’t know
If they will not be able to know
If they can’t know
It will not be known (Burak, 2014: 15)

This shows that Burak also plays with the language itself in her works, challenging the conventional usage of language in theater to convey meaning. Burak’s repetitions are meanings inside meaninglessness. She even puts the letters of alphabet on one page and the numbers from 0 to 9 on another page within the play, a representative of her fragmented style. her use of language, in that sense, is quite contrary to the conventional realist playwriting, in which language is a means of communication and has its own limits.

Food and death are two most prominent symbols in “İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar (Here’s the Head Here’s the Body Here are the Wings)”. Two women Nivart and Melek are in a room with Ziya Bey, who is about to die and as the play reveals itself we learn that he had abused both women in his lifetime. Although it seems like an unhappy atmosphere at the beginning of the play, we then feel that Ziya Bey’s death is the salvation of both women.

Both Nivart and Melek are very hungry at the beginning of the play and decide to eat something but the food they eat is imaginary. Their plates are empty but they act as if they are eating. Once more, Burak removes the borders between reality and illusion. The women characters have been waiting for this salvation for a long time but

now they are not sure about how to react. Beliz Güçbilmez explains the situation of the characters:

And these two women, who both suffered Ziya Pasha's abuses, spent their most beautiful days under the pressure of him. Now after his death they've waited so eagerly, they find out that they don't know what to do with their long-awaited but belated freedom. So the dead body of Ziya keeps living with them, watching, demanding, frightening and separating them. (Güçbilmez, 2014)

This obsession with eating turns into a cannibalism following the mention of a new character: gravedigger:

MELEK: What should we do to him?

NIVART: What are you going to do to him?

MELEK: Of course I am going to eat him.

NIVART: Cook him quickly, kill him now.

MELEK: First, I have to cut his head. *(She drags the imaginary gravedigger from outside to the room. Takes him to the kitchen to kill him. She disappears. Her voice is heard from the kitchen)* Now, I have separated the head from the body; here's the head, here's the body, here are the wings...everything is ready... (Burak, 2014: 52-53)

The eating of the gravedigger, for Bengü Vahapoğlu, symbolizes the eating of "death":

Melek, turns into a death angel and the biggest step on this way is eating the gravedigger with Nivart. The gravedigger, to Melek, is the embodiment of the death angel. Melek and Nivart, who always feel the breath of death on their necks in the room they share with sick Ziya Bey, find the revelation in eating. These two women, who eat with an unending appetite (or who act like eating) catch the gravedigger who comes to their house for the debts of Melek, cook, and then eat him... Gravedigger's wings, which cannot be seen in the human anatomy, are an indication that he is the death angel.... Melek, who cannot satisfy her appetite in any way, finds the solution in eating the "death" itself. Her purpose is to defeat death by intermingling with it. (Vahapoğlu, 2013: 72)

Just as the food, the gravedigger is also an imagination, as Burak says "*an imaginary gravedigger*" in the stage directions. We are confronted with the fantasies of the two women in a sense but we also see that they do not have the courage to turn their fantasies into reality. This reminds of Beckett's characters, who are stuck in a vicious cycle and who cannot move forward. Most probably, Burak was deeply influenced by Beckett in her own style as she was an adorer of Beckett, Joyce, and Kafka. However, this doesn't mean that she was merely an imitator of Beckett. She was able to create her own unique style.

When Melek tells about how Ziya Bey behaved towards her in front of the guests, we hear Ziya Bey's voice on the stage and the stage gets red. Using the voice and the change of the stage with the help of lightning, Burak gives the idea that both women are still under the influence of dying Ziya Bey, and although his physically decaying he is still and always existent in the lives of two women.

This is a turning point in the play because with the change of light on the stage, there are three consecutive scenes which are called by the writer as "alienation scenes". In these "alienation scenes" the two women turn into two strangers, which refer to the fact that two separate lives had been destroyed by the existence of Ziya Bey. This alienation part is like an intermittent play, a play within the play, which is another stylistic element used by Burak to reflect the nature of relationship between Ziya Bey and the two women. Burak also explains clearly that these scenes reflect the subconscious of the women, and have the primary significance in understanding and analyzing the rest of the play. Throughout the scenes, Melek and Nıvart act as if they are seeing each other for the first time, and Ziya Bey's character consists of his voice only.

In the alienation scenes, which are defined as the subconscious of the characters, Ziya Bey turns into Melek's 100 year-old child. Bengü Vahapoğlu explains this transformation in Lacanian terms:

Melek introduces Ziya Bey to Nıvart as her son. "He is my child... I gave birth to him. Look, look I am carrying him on my lap. He never cries, he does whatever I ask him to do, have you seen? If I want, I can take him for a walk in the streets." (Burak, 2012: 56). When she tries to hug Ziya Bey after saying so, Nıvart gets scared. Identification of Ziya Bey with the child Melek never had is meaningful. According to Lacan "the mother, puts the child in the place of phallic symbol, as a woman." (Nasio, 2006: 64) Weakening authority/phallus has gone to the hands of Melek. However, when it is taken into consideration that Melek calls it as "dead child" (Burak, 2012: 56), what is on hand is just a lost authority. (Vahapoğlu, 2013: 69)

Vahapoğlu's interpretation of the characters is mostly valid; however, she fails to underline the significance of form in Burak's play and bases her discussion of the play mostly on a psychoanalytical ground. Burak's plays, before any other kind of interpretation, requires an understanding of her style and a formalist approach to her work.

Intermingling of illusion and reality also appear in the second act through Nıvart's dream and Burak's use of the stage. At the beginning of the act, three of them try to sleep in the same bed and Nıvart sees a dream but she is aware that she is dreaming because she says "I am dreaming now". At that moment, Burak's stage directions refer to a change on the stage: "The stage dims, the curtain in-between rises, there is a scene of trees and garden. Young Melek and Nıvart." (Burak 64). With a physical change on the stage, Burak takes the audience to a second play in which the young Melek and Nıvart are acting now. These kinds of stylistic elements are the cornerstones of Burak's theater and they are the factors which make her theatre unique rather than the psychological background of the characters.

With the change of the stage, we also understand the history of relationship between Melek/Nıvart and Ziya Bey. However, Sevim Burak does not explain this relationship through telling the story, which is the medium of conventional realist theater, but rather provides us with fragments about their relationships and leaves the rest to the imagination of the audience.

After a certain point in the play, two stories intermingle and the story told about Melek and Nıvart's young ages come to life on stage. Once more, Burak makes use of "play in the play" technique.

This "play in the play" climbs to a peak point at the end of Act II. Both women decide to take revenge on Ziya Bey, now in a position of not being able to defend himself. On the last scene of Act II, Melek wears the wings of an angel, which is a reference to her name, and attacks Ziya Bey on his bed. Sevim Burak makes it clear that, this angel represented by Melek and her wings is Azrael (the angel of death), who comes to take Ziya Bey's life. This is very meaningful as we see the transformation of Ziya Bey's "women" into his death angels. This is also significant in terms of character development, as Burak's characters are both from this world and the other world, making them a challenge to the character understanding of the conventional realist theater.

İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar (Here's the Head Here's the Body Here are the Wings) is most probably the most exemplary of Sevim Burak's theater. It includes nearly all the elements which constitute Burak's writing: repetition, illusion vs. reality, alienation effect, play in the play, use of color, lighting, and symbols.

As the other works of Burak, “İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar” is a “political” play without being political at all. Burak does not aim to give a political message or a lesson to the audience in her works. However, the theatrical elements she uses create a political meaning in the minds of the reader and the audience.

It is clear that “İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar” is a play of two unfortunate women who have been abused by a man throughout their lives and who now have the chance to take their revenge; however, Burak never intends to give a didactic message to the reader or the audience about women rights but creates the feeling of abuse on the reader and the audience through the use of formalistic theatrical elements unique to her style. She, like Beckett and Ionesco, proves that having a political stance as an artist does not require to give a prominent role to politics in the artistic work. Formalistic elements can be much more effective in establishing this stance and indeed “form” is what art, in our context “theater” is and should be about.

CHAPTER IV: AN INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE TO THE CONVENTIONAL REALIST THEATER; “THEATER OF IDEAS”: MELİH CEVDET ANDAY AND TOM STOPPARD

Similar to the correlation between Sevim Burak and Jean Genet, theatres of Melih Cevdet Anday and Tom Stoppard also prove that anti-realist theater is a boundless form regardless of cultures, countries, and periods. It is the peak point of an interdisciplinary, intercultural approach to theater. Anday’s and Stoppard’s theater also prove that, contrary to the common claim of the practitioners of the conventional realist theater, anti-realist theater updates itself and even challenges itself with the emergence of every new writer. The first plays of anti-realist theater were a challenge to the use of language as a means of communication. Similarly, Anday and Stoppard’s theatre also challenge the conventional use of language but this time from a very different perspective. Both playwrights use language as a means for intellectual talk, the reason why their style is considered as “theatre of ideas”.

Stoppard’s and Anday’s plays are not only theatrical performances but also intellectual manifestos, which is a challenge to the use of language for everyday communication or for the purpose of conveying social and political messages.

The period of Stoppard and Anday, starting with 1970’s was not a fortunate time due to a high interest in “performance art” and later on some short-lived and local movements such as in-your-face theater.

The underlying reason behind this shift of interest from a written script to mere performance on stage was, rather than an artistic stance, mostly the influence of television as an entertainment medium. Theatre practitioners felt an urge to be able to compete with television as well as the developing technology; and thus found the solution in creating more “interesting” productions on stage which would attract the attention of the audience again. Sex, violence, and exposure of the human body performed as the lifesavers for artists and producers who wanted to make a living on theatre.

It is not correct to say that performance art started in 1970’s though. Before that period, there were some experimental works of performance art, as well; however, they could never become highly popular until the last few decades of the century. Then

in 1980's, a new form of theater, in-yer-face (in-your-face), appeared on British stage in 1990's. It supported the idea that the audience should be shocked by being presented the extremes of sex and violence on stage; however, the rationale behind that was a false notion. At the end, it turned out to normalize sexual and physical violence by reproducing it on stage, rather than to shock the audience, similar to the gladiator fights. On the other side, "performance art" turned out to be extremely individual with nothing to say about art. Practitioners left the "art" part out and turned it into simply physical "performance". Thus, it was proven that none of these new art forms were competent enough to compete with the artistic style created by a playwright. Anday and Stoppard emerged in this period, as a proof of the unbeatable position of script in theater.

1. Melih Cevdet Anday and “Mikadonun Çöpleri (The Mikado Game)”

One of the pioneers of the outstanding “Garip” movement in Turkish poetry along with Orhan Veli and Oktay Rifat, Melih Cevdet Anday also emerged as the first playwright representative of the absurd movement in Turkish theater. Written in 1967, “The Mikado Game” still stands as one of the most powerful pieces in the history of Turkish theatre.

The whole play covers a time range of a single day starting on a snowy winter night and ending at dawn. Similarly, it takes place in a single place, the Man’s house; thus, following the unity of time and place. However, it is not a conventional realist play in any other senses. Rather than a conventional plot consisting of a beginning, a dénouement and a resolution, the play mainly depends upon the, sometimes-weird mostly philosophical, conversation between the two characters. That is to say, the use of language takes the prominent role throughout the play, which is not surprising when Melih Cevdet Anday’s background as a poet is taken into consideration.

There are only two characters in the play (and a child whom we never see throughout the play) without specific names. The characters are referred to as “Man” and “Woman”. It is just like a Beckett play in which specific backgrounds of the characters do not bear any importance. Man and Woman in the play can be any man and woman who have met on the street on a snowy winter night. The subject matter of their conversation is life itself and not their individual backgrounds although it may seem so in the first reading of the play.

Although we do not know anything about the lives of the two characters for certain, Anday still provides the audience with some specific details regarding the characters. We know from the stage directions that the Man is about twenty-eight or thirty years old and the Woman is thirty to thirty-five years old. The Woman holds a child, which is supposed to be hers, but we can never learn whether there is really a child or not throughout the play. Even from the first page of the play, the roles attributed to the Man and the Woman are quite obvious. The Woman is the representative of the tradition. We understand from her words that she is not totally happy to be in that house, and the Man who is quite aware of this fact, tries to comfort

her by saying “I told you, my parents are home. You have nothing to fear” (274). All the movements of the Woman are representative of her feelings towards the condition she is trapped in. However, she is not the only one who is trapped; the man is also in the same condition. Two characters who know nothing about each other are in the same room and they have to share the whole night. This is quite similar to the other plays of Anday such as “İçeridekiler”, in which people are trapped in a room throughout the whole play. This preference of the place creates the feeling of isolation and alienation, which is a distinctive characteristic of the absurd theater.

The nature of the relationship between the two characters is a very significant aspect of the play which puts it away from conventional realist theater. The characters have never seen each other before, have met coincidentally on the street, but they share their most secret and hidden feelings throughout the play. Thus, we can sometimes not be sure whether there are two characters in reality or they are indeed the same character, and the Woman is the creation of the Man’s fantasy world. This uncertainty about the existence of two characters is also reflected in the stories the characters tell each other throughout the play. We can never be sure whether the stories reflect the reality or are made up by the characters. Even the existence of the child is not certain as the Woman says at the end of the first act: *It’s not a child- it’s just a doll* (307). Sevda Şener states in her review of the play:

Melih Cevdet Anday aims to tell a lot of things simultaneously in The Mikado Game. He may have thought that a lot of things exist simultaneously in reality, and they can only be told together, and that dealing with a single reality is against the law of life. He is trying to show that the reality is hidden behind chaos, that it includes controversies and conflicts as well as reconciliation within the conflict, resolution within the problem, the problem within the resolution, the imaginary within the reality, the reality within the imaginary, the concrete within the abstract, the abstract within the concrete, the specific within the general, and the general within the specific. (Şener, 2014: 104)

The play depends upon the use of language and the Man is the philosophical side of the play, who plays with the language from the very beginning. However, later on the Woman also joins this play of language. Although it is a play of language, language is not always used as a way of communication but rather it implies a feeling of non-communication, just as the use of language in Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano*. Language leads to misunderstanding between the two characters and from time to time

the topics discussed one after another are not related at all, different from the real life conversations. For example, in Act I, when they enter the house, the Man starts talking about the condition of the weather but the question he asks at the end of his talk is totally irrelevant:

You waited for nothing. Taxi drivers do not work on nights like this. An unheard-of winter. The snow's right up to the doors. Perhaps it's the beginning of a new Ice Age, man's last night on earth. Tell me, are you educated? (Anday, 2008: 274)

Interestingly, the Woman does not find the question weird and answers "*I suppose so*". This is a dialogue which is not very possible to see in a conventional realist play, in which the language and the conversations serve to the purpose of communication. In that respect, Anday's use of language in the play is revolutionary.

The Man seems disinterested to the Woman's story although he questions her about what she was doing out at that time of the night. When the Woman says she had nowhere to go and no money by hiding her face in her hands, the Man just continues asking questions without displaying any sign of empathy for the Woman. Similarly, the Man's behavior is quite relaxed although he is with a Woman whom he has never met before. He takes off his socks and offers the woman to do the same. He doesn't show any sign of discomfort.

The conversation they have about having food is also quite absurd and displays the sick communication between two people:

MAN: Are you hungry?

WOMAN: No, no. I'm a married woman.

MAN: (*Doesn't understand that these are two unrelated statements.*) Well, as I'm a dark-haired man, I'm hungry.

WOMAN: You didn't understand. I was going to say something else. (Anday, 2008: 276)

And after this point, although the Woman tries to explain that the Man has misunderstood her, the Man continues giving a long speech on why he is hungry. When the Man goes to the kitchen to bring some food, Anday adds a feeling of mystery to the play with the movements of the Woman. The woman quickly looks at her bag and closes it immediately when she hears that the Man is coming. According to Sevda Şener, Anday's purpose here is to keep the interest of the audience in the play by adding an element of mystery:

Melih Cevdet Anday must have thought that the complex and interesting inner conflict throughout the play would not be able to attract the attention of the audience to the stage and thus embellished the play with the element of curiosity from time to time. The hidden realities which the audience wants to learn at once are revealed ambiguously and with delay. (Şener, 2014: 117)

Şener may be right in saying that Anday is adding an extra element of curiosity to the play to attract the attention of the audience; however, her analysis of the characters is not very convincing when it is taken into consideration that *The Mikado Game* is an absurd play. Şener is trying to explain the function of the characters in the play by using the medium of analysis in the conventional realist theater. She claims that the Man and the Woman in the play represent the position of men and women in Turkish society, and even goes further to claim that the traits of the characters are based upon some inherent characteristics of men and women in general, which makes her analysis quite conventional and overgeneralized. Şener says:

The characters in the play are a Woman and a Man. Each of them represents a position towards life. As these characters do not have specific names and are called as Man and Woman, it is possible that they represent the general men and women. The position of the Man and the Woman in life is contrasting... The Woman represents closeness to nature, childishness, instincts, belief in love and happiness, sensitivity, and adherence to the rules and traditions of the society. She is the representative of the female gender with these characteristics. The Man, on the other hand, represents common sense, intellectuality, independence, rebellion, and self-satisfaction. (Şener, 2014: 105)

This interpretation of the characters does not sound convincing for a modern reader as it is not very possible that such an international playwright as Melih Cevdet Anday would have fallen into the trap of stereotyping characters. There is a practical reason behind his choice of characters as Man and Woman but it would be too simplistic to say that the characters are representative of their gender.

Contrary to Sevdâ Şener's interpretation, Anday creates a totally different world from the world outside of that house with his characters. Anday's characters seem like not belonging to the world outside. That is because Anday's play does not aim to reflect the outside world either. Trying to find connections between Anday's characters and plot and the everyday reality would be against the nature of Anday's theatre.

The Man in the play is stuck in his own world and for that reason we can never be sure that there is really a Woman character or that she is the creation of the Man's mind. The conversation between them is totally irrelevant at most points. The Man is busy with explaining what happened that night in an argument he took part, while the Woman is trying to explain her own condition:

MAN: ... What does the child eat?

WOMAN: I'll find some milk for it tomorrow.

MAN: There may be some in the kitchen. It wasn't the fault of the host, mind you. Thoughts, arguments, clashes, even fights are to him like the tidbits that go with drink; they just keep the conversation going. He is so tolerant; no idea provokes him. Hasn't got a belief to his name, in other words. Don't misunderstand me; I don't mean to praise people with beliefs. If someone were to stick a knife into my belly, I don't know which of the ideas in my head would stay and which would disappear. One mustn't brag. My room's in there. You can sleep out here or in there. (Anday, 2008: 276)

There is always a transition from the imaginary to the real throughout the Man's monologues. We can never be sure about what had happened before they came to the house that night. This reminds the monologues of Davies in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. He also tells a lot of stories and makes a lot of comments about the people outside but we can never be sure whether there is any kind of reality behind these stories throughout the play. This non-communication and the failure of language to communicate is an escape from the conventional realist theater unlike Şener's conventional interpretation of the characters.

One of the turning points in the play is the Woman's criticism of Man not listening to her. She says:

You must put it out of your mind or I'll be a constant nuisance to you. I was going to explain briefly, and then hold my tongue. But then, when I saw you didn't want to listen, it made me cringe. Don't worry, please don't worry! (Anday, 2008: 278).

After this point, the Man's philosophical side is revealed more in his words and there is an emphasis on the fact that the imaginary plays the major role in this play. The Man says:

But I was carrying on two conversations at the same time, one with you and the other with the people in that house. (Anday, 2008: 279).

These kinds of words imply that everything we see on stage can be the imagination of the Man. Presenting that kind of an ambiguity through the characters is exemplary of absurd theater, as well.

A kind of character development is apparent through the play, but quite different from the character development in conventional realist theater. The characters go through a change but this change does not happen in a linear flow. They have ups and downs in certain parts of the play and the audience does not see a full transformation until the end of the play. Şener mostly focuses on the transformation of the Man:

There is a transformation in the Man's character throughout the play. He gets relaxed and purified through this dialogue. He has found his secret side in another person who suffers and has enlightened his subconscious through her. He has gotten rid of his complexes which drown him. His sinking into a relaxing sleep at the end of the play represents a return to psychological recovery. (Şener, 2004: 107)

Not only the Man but also the Woman goes through a transformation, even a bigger transformation than the Man's. The Woman who was extremely self-enclosed at the beginning of the play turns out to be a completely resilient and rebellious character throughout the play. This transformation of the characters without a linear line is another characteristic of the absurd theater, which can also be observed in Ionesco's characters.

Anday underlines the futility of the language and its failure to communicate, which is one of the main themes of the play, through the character of Man. For example, when the Man is telling an anecdote, he implies how absurd the conversations between people are:

MAN: You see? We're both thinking of something else. It's pointless to try to talk. But that's not altogether unusual; all conversation is rather like that. I conducted an experiment once. I didn't listen to a word of what the other fellow was saying; I thought of other things all the time, and at the first opportunity I said the first thing that came to my mind. "I want to spit," I think it was. The fellow came back with, "That's exactly what I was suggesting." So I had come up with exactly the right reaction! (Anday, 2008: 279)

Anday is trying to show with the anecdote of the Man that language is not always a way to communicate in real sense. Communication sometimes depends on merely coincidence. This is something which is nearly impossible to see in a

conventional realist play. In a realist play, language and conversations between characters always serve to a purpose in the play. There is no word which wouldn't serve to the plot of the play; however, in an absurd play, as there is not a plot with certain limits, the function of language is quite revolutionary.

Through the middle of Act I, Man's character is revealed more and we understand that the Man is not a person of his time and world. He has a kind of hatred towards all humanity, which underlines the fact that he is a lonely character. While he is explaining what he was doing that night out, this becomes more obvious:

MAN: As for me, I prolonged the walk in order to curse to my heart's content. There was a light at some windows. Whenever I saw a light, I stopped and shouted, "Bastards!" The light would be turned off at once. I was one of those men who used to walk in the street with a snuffer to put out the streetlamps, "Bastards!" And that did it. Only one time a window opened, and a man looked out. The fool was curious. I made him regret his curiosity. "Greetings, bastard!" I shouted, louder than ever. Wasn't I right? I shouted for bastards, and he opened his window. He must have told his wife it was some bum disturbing the quiet of the night. Insults are of no avail at such times; they don't touch one's honor. When the temperature is minus ten, honor retires, shutting the doors and windows tightly, and the streets are left to bums. (Anday, 2008: 279-80)

The Man doesn't care about the rules of the society and backgrounds of the people. When the Woman tries to explain him that she comes from a good family, the Man is totally disinterested and says "*I'd like to know who doesn't*" (280). The important thing for the Man is that he has seen a woman in need of help on the street and thus has decided to help her. Nothing else matters for him regarding the identity of the Woman. This also invalidates Şener's argument that the Man is the representative of other men in the society.

The Woman also acts like the conscience of the Man from time to time, which causes the audience to think that they are indeed the same character. For example, when the Woman criticizes the Man for his behavior that night, she totally acts like a heart-searching for him:

You weren't being natural; you were simply ignoring me. Because you were obliged to assume I wasn't there. A man who is so courteous as to ask no questions of a woman he brings into his house from the street is more afraid of being natural than he is of anything else. You were really protecting yourself. You behaved that way so that I wouldn't think myself worthy of your noble generosity. I wasn't important; you were. "I've done my duty", you were

saying to yourself. But I wasn't the object of your duty, merely a pretext for it. My husband was just the same. A heartless do-gooder! (Anday, 2008: 284).

Different from the other absurd plays which have been studied in this dissertation, Anday's characters turn out to be quite philosophical after a point in the play. All the words of both characters underline the problems of humanity and offer analysis of certain human behavior. In that respect, Anday's characters are indeed "deeper" characters when compared to the characters of absurd plays in general. However, this doesn't make them realistic in conventional terms. The actions of characters in "The Mikado Game" do not develop within a linear flow and there is not a certain character development, notwithstanding the ambiguity about the real existence of the characters. This dependence on words and philosophy mostly stems from Anday's background as a poet.

While talking about the characters and the ambiguity about their real existence, another character who needs a deeper analysis is the Woman's child. Throughout the play, we can never be sure if there is really a child or not as the Woman suggests "*It is not a child-it's just a doll*" at the end of Act I.

More than a character, the child serves as a tool for the stories of the Woman, and the self-identification of the Man, and for that reason the Man thinks that their meeting was not merely a coincidence and that the Woman was specifically waiting for him. Other than that, the child's existence in the play does not serve to any practical purpose on stage, and thus we can never be sure about its existence. However, in the middle of Act I, we learn some basic information about the child's identity, about which there is no certainty. While the Woman was talking about her seek for a job, she mentions that the child is a girl and her name is Sibel. That is the only information we have about the child.

Besides acting as a tool for the Woman's stories, the child is also a reflection of the Man himself. When the Woman is talking about how the child was called as bastard by her relatives, the Man gets deeply influenced and we can easily understand that he himself experienced something similar when he was a child and thus identifies him with the child:

WOMAN: One night the child was in pain. It began to cry. I rocked and rocked it in my arms. It wouldn't stop. Suddenly the door opened, and the aunt came in. She turned on the light. "Shut that bastard up!" she shouted at me.

MAN: (*jumps up*) What was that? What did she shout?

WOMAN: (*rises to her feet*) "Shut that bastard up" she shouted at me.

MAN: (*shouts*) You're lying!

WOMAN: Wasn't it that way in the book?

MAN: What book?

...

MAN: You're inventing these things on purpose. (*Drains his glass*) (Anday, 2008: 288)

The Man doesn't want to believe to the stories of the Woman for the first time when it comes to the story about the child, as the child in the story is actually the Man himself. This ambiguity of characters is another important aspect of the play which makes it an absurd play. Sevda Şener explains the function of the child in the play with these words:

The Woman goes to the extreme of objectifying the child as a result of their alienation to themselves and to the outer world. The Man has been aware of the absurdity of hatred, disinterestedness, and his claims. It is impossible to deny the nature as long as it exists. The child has turned out to be the fundamental reality of both the Man and the Woman throughout the play. (Şener, 2004: 115)

In another part of her analysis, she mentions how the man identifies himself with the child:

... With his subconscious feelings, the Man identifies himself with the child on Woman's lap. He sees his desolation in its desolation. His conflict with the Woman is not only to save her but also to save his own identity in the existence of the child who would be left behind. For this reason, he prevents woman from suicide. He rebels in the name of all children who were left behind, and ill treated. As he is as desperate and weak as a child inside, he wants to be seen powerful and strong-willed. He tries to see himself as a meaningless object so as not to suffer. (Şener, 2004: 107)

Another ambiguity in the play which puts it far away from the conventional realist theater is the ambiguity of the stories shared by both the Man and the Woman. Throughout the whole play both the Man and the Woman share some stories from their past lives but we can never be sure about the reality of these stories. They may be true or they may be the fantasies of the characters.

Turning back to the characters and looking at the stories told by the characters, one may think that the play is not a political play at all. However, as the other absurd plays, “The Mikado Game” succeeds to be a political play without being explicitly political and Anday shows the audience that you do not have to take sides with a political party or you do not have to send a political message to the world to be political. The monologues of characters all refer to the social decay and the degeneration of the communication among the members of the society but in doing that, he is never didactic and does not suggest a “right way” to do things. He achieves his goal through the medium of theater, just as Samuel Beckett or Eugene Ionesco did earlier.

Other than the nature of characters in the play, the element of action and the way it is handled is another important element which makes the play an avant-garde play. Interestingly and in a rather innovative way for 1960s, the play depends heavily on inner actions of the characters on stage rather than the outer actions as in conventional realist theater. The whole play takes part in a single room and except for a few scenes such as the scene they dance and the scene the Man tries to catch the Woman’s bag, there is not much action in the play. This may be a point of criticism in a realist play; however, it achieves to create an artistic form in Anday’s absurd (or avant-garde) theater.

Most of the outer action takes part in Act II, as the characters have been drinking throughout the First Act and now we see them in a more relaxed situation. Act II does not start from where the play was left at the end of Act I. Act I ends with the Woman saying “*It’s not a child – it’s just a doll*”. However, at the beginning of Act II, we do not see the Man’s reaction upon this and the new Act starts as if the Woman didn’t say such a thing.

The most important action of Act II is the Mikado game they decide to play on the second page of the Act. This is another characteristic of Anday’s theatrical form used in the play. Anday makes use of “play within the play” tool to create a new artistic form on stage. This is a symbolic game in many senses. For example, the Man teaches the game to the Woman, just as he was teaching the philosophical side of life throughout the first act of the play. Nothing was able to bring them together throughout the first act, including all the stories about the cruelty of life; however, a game succeeds

to bring them together around the same goal, which is symbolic of life's absurdity. The game is an escape from reality for both of them; however, after a point they cannot achieve this and the game and the real world intermingle:

WOMAN: How many points is this?

MAN: Three.

WOMAN: Why three?

MAN: Because there are three colored stripes on it, see?

WOMAN: Move back. That boy wasn't your friend.

MAN: What boy?

WOMAN: My hand is trembling so much I'm afraid I am going to move them.

What did you say?

MAN: I said "What boy?"

WOMAN: That orphan at grade school.

MAN: The one in my story?

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: Who was he? I wonder. I'd like to know.

WOMAN: You do know. It was you.

MAN: Go on, make things up! You mean the boy I bullied? The one who shared my desk? That's very funny! What in the world makes you think ...?

WOMAN: Wait, wait, wait. How many points is this? (Anday, 2008: 311)

It is highly possible, as the Woman suggests, that the boy in the Man's stories was the Man himself. However, the Woman only dares to reveal this reality during a game, a time when they are away from the real life. This is one of the turning points in the play as after this point they start to have a long argument over the reality of the stories told by the Man, and this is where the Woman openly opposes and questions the honesty of the Man. However, the end of the long argument is quite unconventional. They continue the same argument for nearly two pages but when the Man says "*Let's go on with the game*" (313), they suddenly start acting as if nothing happened and the argument ends abruptly. The symbolic meaning of the Mikado game in the play is more obviously underlined at this point because both of them agree to turn back to the game when the harsh realities are revealed. This is one of the points which suggests that the world created in the play is a combination of dream and reality. Anday's use of imaginary world creates a stage realism which is quite different from the Realism with a capital R. Anday achieves to prove that through creating a theatrical form, it is possible to create a reality which does not merely depend upon the imitation of the outside world.

Another point where they return to the reality from the imaginary is the point on which the woman asks the time. Upon her asking the time, they pause the game again and start talking about their stories once more, focusing on the intention of the Woman to commit suicide. Thus, once again the play goes back and forth between the real and the imaginary.

This “play in the play” and “transition between the real and the imaginary” reminds Ionesco’s “The Maids” to a great extent. The characters in *The Maids* were also playing a role-play and most of the time it was not very clear what was real and what was the part of their role play. Similarly, Anday tries the same technique in his theater in a different context and fulfills his aim to create his own stage reality.

Through all this game and the conversation intermingled with the game, there is another detail which belongs to Anday’s artistic form indeed. While the characters are talking to each other, a dog can be heard barking for a few times. This is one of the two interruptions from the outside world, the other being the neighbors ringing the bell. These interruptions, surely, serve to a purpose. The dog starts barking at the most important turning points of their conversation as a signal. This reminds of the clock in Ionesco’s “The Bald Soprano”. These kinds of outside interferences create a new atmosphere on the stage, serving as another tool to create an artistic form.

The game they play becomes much more symbolic following the interference from the outside world. After the Man’s long monologue about the people who get married, they identify the rules of the game with rules of the real world. Once again, the game and the reality intermingle:

MAN: ... And they talk about the sacredness of the family. “It’s sheer wanton destruction, sir!” What are you but a ruin yourself, you so-and-so! Traditions, ceremonies, sacred institutions ... for those fellows, they are the sticks of the Mikado game. “Wait, morality’s been juggled, it’s my turn. Look, without juggling tradition at all I am going to pick up twenty points with my two fingers”. “Wait you’ve juggled tradition, so it’s my turn. If I can get hold of one of those sacred institutions, then I have it made! I can go on picking up all the sticks. I’ve got it, well done!” “I’m after the Samurai, my dear. Once I’ve got him, the day is mine!” They’re playing a game- they’re gambling, I tell you! (*Goes up to the table and hits the Mikado sticks with his fists, scattering them*) To hell with you all! (*Looks up toward the ceiling*) Hey, usurer, sycophant! Can you hear me? Or are you snoring in the arms of your wife? You bear, why don’t you just stay asleep, hibernate in your cave, to give us a break? (Anday, 2008: 316-17)

The following scenes, towards the end of the play, constitute the funnier part of the play, accompanied by the effect of drunkenness and an emphasis on the outside action. After they stop playing the game, they decide to dance, try a dancing ceremony, and play a game of rocking. This part of the play is the part where we see a full transformation in their relationship. They start to exist together. If the Woman was the creation of the Man's mind, then it could be also interpreted as the Man's having peace with himself ultimately.

Towards the end of the play, we are faced with another symbolic tool on stage: the mirror. The Man brings the mirror and wants the Woman to look in it:

MAN: Look, look well, closer! Your eyes, your eyelashes. Look closely! Your eyebrows, your lips... that mouth, that chin... look at your forehead, too. Now try to look at all of them at once. They fade, they swim away, don't they? They drift away from each other- each one pulls in a different direction, and they go in separate directions! Look carefully! Are those your eyes, your eyebrows? Those pretty lips, are they yours? They aren't. You don't know that mouth; it's someone else's mouth. This face is someone else's face. The hair you caress as you run a comb through it... place your hand on it now. It's like thorns, like thorns pricking your hand, isn't it? It scratches. You're afraid of yourself. Yet you used to love your hair, to love your eyes. You used to open and shut your lips in the mirror, to love them better. Never look at them again when sober. They're not yours, so you can't destroy them. (Anday, 2008: 319)

This scene may be interpreted as Woman's facing the reality; or, if we accept that the Woman is the imagination of the Man, Man's facing the reality. It symbolizes the fact that we become estranged to ourselves while living in this world and sometimes it may not be possible to recognize ourselves when we see the reality. Once again the distinction between the real and the imaginary is blurred.

Upon this attempt of the Man to show the reality to the Woman, the Woman counter attacks by voicing the Man's intention loudly:

WOMAN: You're merely pretending to sway as you walk. You're shouting on purpose. You're pretending to be angry. Pretense, pretense, pretense! You've got some sort of plan; you're carrying it out step by step. Everything you do and say is calculated. You're trying to pin me down; you want me to repent, to change my mind. You want to crush me! ... If you can make me despise myself and the world, then you shall have made me rise above the world and myself, is that it? ... You want to achieve in me what you haven't achieved in yourself. You've given up hope for yourself, so you want to change me ... (Anday, 2008: 319)

This is the last turning point of the play, the last increase of the tension between them and as in the other parts of the play, they suddenly start talking about a completely irrelevant topic and the stage settles down. These sudden bursts of anger and then return to an agreement is another characteristic of Anday's theatrical form.

The last symbol of the play is the color blue. When the Woman decides to go at last, the Man does not want her to leave and says that

Children should not be awakened in the dark. There's no window in this room but I'll turn off the light when it is morning and you can watch the room fill with blue, like the bottom of the sea (Anday, 2008: 321).

It is quite absurd that the Man offers the Woman to wait for the blue light in a room which does not have any windows. In that respect, the room may be interpreted as a symbol of the Man's life, isolated and secluded without any windows. However, even in this desperate situation, he believes that the blue light will appear when it becomes morning. Thus, the play ends with a feeling of hope gaining victory over all the realities and cruelties of life. In addition, this hope brings two people together or provides a kind of self-reconciliation if we think that the Woman does not exist in reality. ,

Both characters tell about their dreams in the last few pages and upon doing that suddenly realize that the clock in the room had stopped. So once again there is a transition from the dream to the reality, as we think of the clock a symbol of real life. Regardless of the outside reality, the characters create their own reality through their dreams, just as Anday creates his own theatrical reality. The play ends with another anecdote or fantasy of the Man:

MAN: On a snowy morning, there is nothing so pleasant as a drink of brandy before you go out into the street. I remember having done that once, long ago, with a poet friend when we were young. We had spent the night talking at the home of another friend. Toward morning that friend placed a bottle of brandy on the table. "Can you drink this?" he asked. He had no idea that we would be able to, and, frankly, neither did we. To keep up the joke we filled our glasses. But now we couldn't stop; the glasses were waiting. So, for a joke, we drained them. I'll never forget it; the world was like paradise. Then we went off into the snowy streets. (Anday, 2008: 323)

This final of the play is quite interesting because the anecdote told by the Man reminds the night he spends with the Woman. Another important point about the end

of the play is that the Man goes to sleep using the Woman's handbag as a pillow. One of the most important symbols and the object of curiosity throughout the play, the Woman's bag, loses all its significance at the end of the play and turns into an everyday object. To conclude with Şener's words:

We can say that *The Mikado Game* addresses to the enlightened audience and satisfies those audience in terms of intellectuality, emotion, excitement, poetry, and stylistic beauty. We all need to congratulate the fact that theater art in our country has reached such a high level. (Şener, 2004: 118)



2. Tom Stoppard's Anti-Realist Theater

Having a career spanning over a time period of more than 50 years, Tom Stoppard is surely one of the most important playwrights of the second half of the twentieth century. In spite of holding some common characteristics in terms of artistic style, Stoppard's plays from 1960's when he first started writing to 2000's show his trials with the theatrical style.

Different from his predecessors such as Beckett and Ionesco, Tom Stoppard deals with characters from real life, mostly historical figures, in an unorthodox and unrealistic way in his plays. Thus, Stoppard's plays may be considered as "realistic" plays at first glance; however, the way he uses and distorts realism makes him one of the forerunners of the anti-realist movement in the contemporary world.

Another important characteristic of Tom Stoppard's plays which put him to a different position compared to the other anti-realist playwrights is his approach to language. Most of the anti-realist playwrights question the function of language in theater and mostly use language as a means for uncommunicating or failure to communicate. Beckett uses repetitive words or phrases instead of full sentences and sometimes doesn't use language at all in plays such as "Act Without Words". Ionesco's use of language is mostly to create irony on stage. Most of the time, dialogues among characters are meaningless. Albee and Burak's use of language is similar to Beckett and Ionesco, as well.

However, just like Melih Cevdet Anday, Tom Stoppard uses language to communicate intellectual ideas. His plays consist of long monologues upon issues such as love, art, and life itself. That is basically the reason why his theater is named as "theater of ideas". However, this doesn't make his theater a follower of the conventional realist theater. The way his characters speak is far away from realistic theater of the nineteenth century. Most of the time, one of the characters gives a long intellectual speech whereas the other character does not respond as expected or the response does not make sense in the minds of the audience of realist theater. Once again, language is used as a means of uncommunicating with a different perspective.

2.1 “The Real Thing (1982)”

“The Real Thing” which premiered in 1982 is surely one of the most exemplary plays of Stoppard’s artistic and theatrical style. The play combines many elements of Stoppard’s theater which can be found in isolation in his other plays.

As in most of the other plays of Stoppard, love recurs as a main theme in “The Real Thing” as well; however, Stoppard this time deals with the intricacies of love and questions its purity. The play is a perfect example of “play within the play” technique and throughout the whole play, it may sometimes be difficult to differentiate between the characters of Tom Stoppard’s play and the characters rehearsed by these characters.

Obviously, the characters in the play are actors and they are rehearsing for a play; thus their rehearsal intersects with Stoppard’s play. At the very beginning of the play, the audience sees a rehearsal scene between Max and Charlotte but is not aware that the characters are rehearsing their roles until the beginning of the second scene; thus, we understand that the whole first scene is actually a part of the rehearsal. Besides adding an element of surprise to the play, this technique serves to the purpose of questioning what is real and what is not. This “play within the play” technique employed by Stoppard in most of his plays is explained by Ayşegül Yüksel as a form of aesthetic distancing:

In attaining aesthetic distancing Stoppard employs the artifice of the theatre as abundantly as possible. The “play within the play” technique is the one practiced most often. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the two already dead characters borrowed from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, not only act out off-stage portions of their roles in Shakespeare’s story, but they also watch the Players perform the end of their predestined lives. In *Travesties* the action of the characters and the play are interwoven in the hazy memory of the protagonist-narrator. In *The Real Thing*, a play written by Henry, the protagonist, serves as the fictional model on which he will base the future course of his life. (Yüksel, 2009)

Some critics believe that *The Real Thing* is a realist play of Tom Stoppard in which he gave up his trials with the absurd. This idea is based on the assumption that Stoppard is not using language in a poetic way anymore but in a more realistic way in “The Real Thing”, and his characters are real characters inspired by his personal life. However, stylistic elements in the play which challenge the understanding of the conventional realism are overlooked in such interpretations. One of these critics is

Steven Kellman. In “Magill’s Survey of World Literature”, which he edited, he interprets “The Real Thing” with these words:

With this play Stoppard departs from his previous experiments in stagecraft and the avant-garde. There is no absurdist-existential empty stage, no acrobats swinging from chandeliers, no Dada poets, and no Russian revolutionaries. Instead, the audience sees the pain and suffering of a middle-aged man and his slightly younger second wife, characters who are mature, articulate, and highly sensitive to nuance. (Magill, 2009: 2513)

It is true that Stoppard’s plays do not resemble one another in terms of stylistic elements he uses but this does not mean that he gives up absurdist, or avant-garde style, all together in “The Real Thing”. For us, although we are faced with real relationships and a plot, there are many stylistic elements within the play, which make it an anti-realist trial.

Along with “play within the play” technique, Stoppard makes use of music throughout the play. In a sense the play changes in accordance with the change in the music played in each scene. For example, the first scene ends with the stage direction “*Music- a pop record- makes a bridge into the next scene*”. Stoppard uses music as a link among the scenes in the play but also the kind of music he chooses is perfectly amiable with the mood of that particular scene.

Music is not only used as a background instrument but it has an actual role within the play. At the beginning of the second scene Henry is busy trying to find a record to play for a long time until he finally comes up with a speech on music:

HENRY: I’m supposed to be one of your intellectual playwrights. I’m going to look a total prick, aren’t I, going on the radio to announce that while I was telling Jean-Paul Sartre that he was essentially superficial, I was spending the whole time listening to the Crystals singing “Da Doo Ron Ron”. Look, ages ago, Debbie put on one of those classical but not too classical records- she must have been about ten or eleven, it was before she dyed her hair- and I said to you, “That’s that bloody tune they were driving me mad with when I was trying to write “Jean-Paul is up the Wall” in that hotel in Switzerland”. Maybe she’ll remember.” (Stoppard, 1984: 17)

Music here is a reminder of the past as well as a reference to the social status of the characters. The kind of music you listen to gives away who you are.

Irony is always an instrument used by Stoppard in all his plays, and in “The Real Thing”, as well. Even in the first scene, where we see a play-within-play, the

sense of irony and humor is obvious. In the opening scene when Charlotte comes into the house, the conversation between her and Max is humorous:

CHARLOTTE: Hello

MAX: Hello, lover.

CHARLOTTE: That's nice. You used to call me lover.

She drops the airport bag on his lap and returns towards the suitcase.

MAX: Oh, it's you. I thought it was my lover. (Stoppard, 1984: 19)

In this dialogue between Max and Charlotte, the tone of the play changes completely in four lines. When Charlotte says *You used to call me lover*, this creates a feeling of nostalgia and emotionality; however, it turns out to be an intimidating scene when Max says *Oh, it's you, I thought it was my lover*. This is something which is not very common in conventional realist theater. In the conventional realist theater, characters and dialogues hold a consistency throughout the play; that is to say, change happens very slowly and gradually from the beginning till the end of the play. However, in Stoppard it is possible to see harsh turns within the same scene, even in the same dialogue.

Another point in the first scene where Stoppard makes use of irony anti-realistically is when Max implies that Charlotte is cheating on him:

MAX: No? Where did you go, then?

CHARLOTTE: Geneva.

MAX: Geneva! (*He drinks from his glass*) How's old Geneva, then? Franc doing well?

CHARLOTTE: Who?

He affects surprise.

MAX: The Swiss franc. Is it doing well? (Stoppard, 1984: 9)

Along with irony and play with language, it is also possible to see, when stage directions are taken into consideration, how Tom Stoppard makes fun of the acting techniques used by realist theater. Before Max tries to imply that Charlotte is cheating on him, he first *drinks from his glass*, which is an indication that he is going to utter an important sentence, or when Charlotte asks *Who?*, the stage direction says *He affects surprise*, which again a reaction we would expect to see in a conventional play. In a 1984 article titled "The Real Tom Stoppard", Mel Gussov explains Stoppard's experience with realism with these words:

"The Real Thing" is a play about the parallels and perpendiculars of art and reality. This is Stoppard's first romantic comedy and an answer to those critics

who think his plays are several surrealistic steps removed from life as we know it. The play begins with a scene of marital discord, as brittle as anything written by Noel Coward. It is, as we soon learn, fictional, not “The Real Thing”, but a scene in a play written by a playwright whom we meet in the second scene. The opening sets the tone for an evening in which life imitates and contradicts art. (Gussov, 1984)

Although I wouldn’t agree with Gussov’s interpretation that “The Real Thing” is a romantic comedy as this contradicts with what he says later about the play’s approach to reality, he interestingly notes that “life imitates and contradicts art” in Stoppard’s play, in contradiction to the realist theater where art imitates life.

However, it should also be noted that Gussov’s interpretation takes it for granted that a kind of “imitation” from either side is unavoidable in artistic production, which is not necessarily the case in Tom Stoppard. Stoppard creates his own reality on stage using his unique artistic techniques and a collusion to a certain degree from time to time, but it is not very clear whether his art contradict life or not.

Talking about collusion (or plagiarism), this is another element which is quite Stoppardian, so to say. Stoppard uses a lot of references to the other works from other writers and to his own works, as well. In his plays such as “Arcadia”, he even uses other writers and thinkers as his characters. This may seem like a kind of plagiarism, but actually it is not as Stoppard never denies what he is doing. Thus, something which may be considered plagiarism and unethical in a different context turns into a stylistic element in Stoppard’s hands. This also emerges as another challenge towards the rationale of realist theater. Ayşegül Yüksel explains Stoppard’s plagiarism:

Stoppard has been labelled jokingly as a master plagiarist due to the fact that a good number of his plays have intertextual ties with a good number of master works. He is defended wholeheartedly by Hanna Scolnicov, who asserts that “intertextuality is a methodology that topples the notion of the text as autonomous, discrete and independent.” For Scolnicov “the essence of the text is seen to reside in the web of relations it forms with other, surrounding texts.” (Scolnicov 1995: 19). Stoppard’s use of other texts serves a pragmatic purpose in the sense that his drama is based on the juxtaposition of diverse elements so as to create aesthetic distancing and bring out his unique theatricality as well as his particular means of conveying ideas. (Yüksel, 2009)

This also brings us to the fact that Stoppard’s plays are “plays of ideas”, in which the writer presents a clash of ideas through his real or imaginary characters, which provides a philosophical aspect to his plays. He does not aim to send messages

to the audience like Brecht, but just to create question marks in the minds of the audience presenting them with different sides of an argument. However, it should also be underlined that, this approach may, from time to time, turn his plays into “extremely intellectual” conversations which would limit his audience to people with a solid knowledge of art and theater.

Stoppard’s style may look different from the other anti-realist playwrights of the twentieth century at first glance, and it may even be assumed to be realistic. However, this is not the case. He is an anti-realist in his own unique way. Mel Gussov focuses on the difference between Stoppard’s and Pinter’s styles while explaining this:

Stoppard and Pinter are stylistic opposites. Stoppard’s plays are expansive, verbose and filled with digressions. Pinter’s are mysterious, parsimonious with words and filled with pauses. However, they share common ground, beginning with their affinity for and indebtedness to Samuel Beckett. After Beckett, theater could be two men sitting in a basement room with only a dumbwaiter as conduit, or two men wandering blindly through the corridors of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies. Inspired by Beckett, Stoppard and Pinter can explore the implausibility of existence, memory as a foreshortener between past and present, and the unreliability of the lessons of history. (Gussov, 1984)

Again, different from the other anti-realist playwrights whose “themes” are generally ambiguous, Stoppard’s themes recur in all his plays, which is another characteristic of his writing. Two of these themes are art and love. Various forms of love relationships make up an important part of Stoppard’s plays. “The Real Thing” also focuses on couples cheating on each other in the real play and “the play within the play” parts. In a sense, the play blurs the lines between the real life and the life in a play. What happens in the play George wrote turns out to recur in their real life, which is another way Stoppard is challenging the meaning of realism.

The theme of art is presented in an ironic way through the discussions between and long speeches of the characters, which is exemplary of Stoppard’s “theater of ideas”. For example, when they are discussing about the kind of music Henry listens to, a criticism towards “the elite” is implied:

CHARLOTTE: He likes pop music.

HENRY: You don’t have to repeat everything I say.

MAX: I don’t understand the problem.

CHARLOTTE: The problem is he’s a snob without being an inverted snob. He’s ashamed of liking pop music.

HENRY: This is true. The trouble is I don't like the pop music which it's all right to like. You can have a bit of Pink Floyd shoved in between your symphonies and your Dame Janet Baker- that shows a refreshing breadth of taste or at least a refreshing candour- but I like Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders doing "Um um um um um um" (Stoppard, 1984: 25)

Turning back to Stoppard's so-called plagiarism, he makes use of it when the couples discover that they are cheating on each other. Max finds out that Annie and Henry are having an affair when he sees Henry's blood-stained handkerchief, which is a reference to Shakespeare's "Othello".

Another direct reference appears on Scene III, when Max and Annie are on stage. This time, Stoppard refers to August Strindberg's "Miss Julie", a play in which "Miss Julie" from the higher class is stuck between the requirements of her social class and her unending desire to unite with Jean, her father's servant:

MAX: How's Julie?

ANNIE: Who?

MAX: Julie. Miss Julie. Strindberg's Miss Julie. Miss Julie by August Strindberg, how is she?

ANNIE: Are you all right? (Stoppard, 1984: 40)

Max's talk here is also reminder of Pinter's characters who repeat what they say in different ways changing the order of the words. This repetition element is also used on Scene IV. In the stage directions of Scene IV, Stoppard writes *The disposition of door and furniture makes the scene immediately reminiscent of Scene II*, which suggests that as well as recurring themes Stoppard also makes use of recurring scenes, which is quite Beckettian.

Scene IV is significant also for underlining another Stoppardian element, which is the play with time. In a conventional realist play, there is generally a limited time period on stage from the beginning of the play till the end, usually in chronological order. However, we see that Stoppard challenges this by skipping to a scene where we see Henry and Annie are married now. And on Scene V, just one scene after, we see them at the end of the second year of their marriage. Ayşegül Yüksel also underlines this play with time:

A further device employed by Stoppard in attaining aesthetic distancing is his playful attitude towards time and space. Most of his plays are episodic and rarely follow a linear direction. In *Travesties* it is quite impossible to follow and put the events into correct order, while Ros and Guil keep on moving into

and out of Shakespeare's text. In *Indian Ink* the action continually swings between the past and the present as well as between India and England. In *Arcadia* the different characters that inhabit the same house at two different periods are finally brought together in the same scene toward the end of the play. (Yüksel, 2009)

Being an anti-realist playwright (at least in some of his plays) Stoppard's main purpose in his theater is far away from giving a message to the audience or telling a story; however, this doesn't make his plays "apolitical" at all. He is one of those writers who prove that it is possible to hold a political stance without being explicitly political and that giving messages (as in most of the realist plays) is not the main purpose of theater or any artistic work. On an interview with Brian Firth, he underlines this point very clearly:

Well, it's not a policy or principle or philosophy which I in a deliberate way propagate through plays. I have a very conservative temperament. What sophistication I pretend to usually takes the form of resolving various complex versions of the world and arriving at a really simple view of the world, which I take to be a fairly sophisticated end... something like that. (Firth, 1983)

However, interestingly Mel Gussow, on his article on Tom Stoppard, defines Tom Stoppard as a writer who attacks modern art and *The Real Thing* as a kind of explicitly political play:

Because of his conservatism in politics, one might expect him to toe a Tory line in matters of art. But he remains unclassifiable, attacking modern art at the same time he is defending freedom of artistic expression. Although he dismisses all schools that are neo-anything or post-anything else, he readily finds an ally in an innovator like James Joyce (a main character in "Travesties") or Samuel Beckett (whose work influenced "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern") (Gussow, 1984)

This interpretation of Gussow is surprising in multiple ways. It is clear that he is not differentiating between Stoppard's personal political beliefs and his art. Tom Stoppard is an activist, and a defender of freedom in his personal life but this doesn't necessarily mean that he writes about activism or freedom, as obvious from the close readings of his plays.

The second point which wonders my attention is that Gussow falsely takes it for granted that Stoppard is against modern art and that his art does not belong to any category. He then expresses his surprise that such a writer makes use of James Joyce

and Beckett. This is also debatable because Stoppard is a modernist writer stylistically, and it is clear that he has been greatly influenced by Beckett's style. Once again Gussow here is not differentiating between the terms and most probably he is referring to postmodern tendencies when he uses the term "modern art".

In another passage from the same article, he comments on *The Real Thing* and its being a political play:

Even as plays like "The Real Thing" have taken a more definite and judgmental position on questions of politics and society, often representing his own role as an activist for human rights, Mr. Stoppard still seems to regard criticism as an eternal balancing act. (Gussow, 1984)

Again, Gussow takes a problematic stance by claiming that Tom Stoppard takes a judgmental position in the play "The Real Thing". Contrarily, Stoppard is a writer who does not give answers but ask questions. It wouldn't be fair to claim that he is judgmental in "The Real Thing". He presents the audience with relationships among his characters without supporting one of them and judging the others.

2.2 “The Invention of Love (1996)”

“The Invention of Love” is an exemplary play to show that modernist tradition in playwriting extends even to the last decade of the 20th century, contrary to the general belief that script in theater does not address to the requirements of the new world anymore. In one of his latest plays, Stoppard uses his popular theme of love once again in a completely different way. The play brings together the living and the dead, the real historical figures, and an intellectual debate on the meaning of love and life.

The most obvious innovation in terms of his characters is that he brings together the youth and the old age of the same character in an intellectual conversation. The main character of the play is A.E. Housman, but actually there are two A.E. Housmans on stage: one in his 70s the other in his undergraduate years. Obviously, this is a challenge to the character development of the conventional realist theater where characters are presented in a chronological order or with a specific period from their lives. This is also valid for the other characters. We see all the characters in their different ages throughout the play; however, Stoppard shows that this does not necessarily have to follow a chronological order.

Along with characters, Stoppard also plays with the place, challenging the conventional rules about it. The place in the opening scene is the bank of Styx, the transition to the other world. This play with time and place does have a strong basis evidently. Stoppard, as the other playwrights of the anti-realist tradition is underlining the fact that life is not always experienced in a chronological order, one event following the other; contrarily, we have ups and downs, and sometimes vicious cycles, as Beckett also suggested. This jumpiness in time and place in Stoppard’s play is a reminiscent of this fact. In an article on the play, Alastair Macaulay underlines this function of “The Invention of Love”:

Viewed from another perspective, *The Invention of Love* becomes a reflection of the ways in which a single character lives in terms of separate kinds of thoughts and feeling. Its overlapping memories form a deliberate, sensuous clutter, a memory-scape whose kaleidoscopic patterns keep returning, as if by accident, to certain themes. All members of the audience, whether stepped in the classics or ignorant of them, will find themselves asking: What parts of all this information matter, and why? (Macaulay, 2015: 150)

Although Macaulay's interpretation of Stoppard's play falls into the trap of being too much "theme-based" from time to time, it still deserves attention to show the function of multiple, overlapping times and characters in Stoppard's play.

These trials with setting and characters continue in the rest of the play, as well. We are presented with "the underworld" as a mystical setting and more historical figures joining the two characters at the beginning of the play. However, when talking about the characters it should also be noted that Stoppard's use of real historical figures as his characters doesn't mean that he is giving a historical account of these characters' lives. He uses historical figures to serve the purpose of attracting the attention of his audience to his abstract world. He is making use of the "concrete" as a transition to "abstract". Melina Probst, on an article on "The Invention of Love" underlines this point:

From some critics' views, Tom Stoppard's game in *The Invention of Love* appears to be using actual people as pieces to emphasize the importance of love, or sexuality; however, the complexities of the play do not warrant only those conclusions. Rather, the intricate scenes with characters who appear to be actual people prompt audiences to examine more closely the art of Stoppard. An alternate, or at least additional subject of the play is that actual people are figments of another actual person's imagination, to which audiences can never have full access. (Probst, 2013: 202)

Although Probst's interpretation that Stoppard's use of real characters attracts the attention to his art, the second part of her commentary needs clarification in that she seems to depict Stoppard's play as a single character based play and additionally why the *audiences can never have full access* to this so-called character is not clarified. However, it should be understood that Stoppard's use of real characters in the play serves to multiple purposes.

In another part of the same article, Probst describes how Stoppard goes through a recreation process when using real characters:

As a playwright adapting real people to fit within drama, Stoppard is translating these characters for the stage, and in a sense creating them; although they are real people, his methods of fictionalizing them makes them his creations, however much he appropriates their words. Stoppard deliberately integrates them into Housman's fictionalized past, each serving a specific function in discourse on scholarship and editing. (Probst, 2013: 208)

Stoppard also challenges the dialogue element in the conventional realist theater. In a conventional realist play dialogues between two characters are always two-sided; however, as in most of the other plays of Stoppard, dialogues in *The Invention of Love* may turn into one sided monologues.

Mufti Mudasir, in a recent book (2014) titled “Towards a Poetics of Postmodern Drama: A Study of Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard” makes a comparative analysis of Pinter and Stoppard in terms of stylistic elements they use and their challenge of the conventional realist theater; however, comes to a false conclusion that both writers are “postmodern” writers. Mudasir says in the third chapter of his book titled “Stoppard and Postmodernism”:

Tom Stoppard is probably the most prominent contemporary British playwright who has persistently engaged with concepts central to the poetics of postmodernism. He has written in a characteristically postmodern mode, employing structural devices of self-reflexive theatre such as parody, play-within-the-play, and metafictional characters. His plays foreground the problems inherent in theatrical representations, covering a cluster of concepts like the nature of objective knowledge, the human subject and the status of linguistic reference. Stoppard’s theatre marks a radical departure from the realist conventions in drama. (Mudasir, 2014: 65)

What Mudasir says when describing Stoppard’s theater is perfectly true, and has been well-analyzed; however, the problem here arises when he claims that these characteristics make Stoppard a postmodern playwright. Mudasir falls into the trap of confusing modernism and postmodernism in his claim that both Stoppard and Pinter were postmodern playwrights. For instance, in another part of his work Mudasir wrongly assumes that the challenge towards mimetic realism started with postmodernism and attributes it solely to postmodernism. He says:

Postmodern art problematizes the concept of neutral representation, the very basis of the realist tradition in art, by engaging with the political nature of representation. Art, postmodern works suggest, can never avoid implication with the discursive practices which are themselves built into politically inflected relationships. “All language” as Hayden White has said, “is politically contaminated”, and postmodern art works to reveal the political status of all representations claiming neutrality. This concern of postmodern art finds expression in the tendency to depart from the mimetic tradition in arts. The assumptions of the realistic tradition, which are thoroughly challenged by postmodernism, give way to the increasing awareness of inescapable imbrications with the ideologies inherent in artistic representation. (Mudasir, 2014: 21)

It is perfectly true that the works of writers such as Stoppard and Pinter depart from the mimetic tradition in arts; however, Mudasir misses the point, when using this as a criterion for postmodernism, that chronologically this attitude was adopted way too much earlier than the start of postmodernism. Postmodernism was started to be widely used in the artistic field in 1960's. However, the challenge to mimetic realism was apparent even in the second half of the nineteenth century, in stylistic plays such as August Strindberg's "Miss Julie (1888)", and the very beginning of the twentieth century, in the fiction of writers such as Virginia Woolf. Thus, it may be claimed that postmodernism continued this tradition of challenging mimetic realism in the second half of the twentieth century; however, attributing this approach totally to postmodernism would be misleading.

The problem with Mudasir's categorization of Pinter and Stoppard as postmodern has also been faced frequently when interpreting Beckett's work. Some critics such as Stephen Watt have labelled Beckett also as a postmodern playwright; however, my objection to this approach would be the impossibility of defining an artist with a term which does not have a definition at all and which denies all types of categorizations. Each critic, Mudasir as well, has his own personal criteria when claiming that these playwrights were postmodernist. When we look at Mudasir's criteria in defining Stoppard as a postmodernist playwright, we see that he underlines the writer's use of stylistic elements such as "play-within-the play" and "metafictional characters", which are the characteristics of "modernist" movement indeed.

In understanding why the art of playwrights such as Beckett, Pinter, and Stoppard should not be considered as "postmodern", Terry Eagleton's interpretation of postmodernism versus modernism is highly significant. Eagleton, in "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism" declares, as a response to interpreting modernist artworks as postmodernist:

It is though postmodernism is among other things a sick joke at the expense of such revolutionary avant-gardism, one of whose major impulses, as Peter Burger has convincingly argued in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, was to dismantle the institutional autonomy of art, erase the frontiers between culture and political society and return aesthetic production to its humble, unprivileged place within social practices as a whole. In the commodified artifacts of postmodernism, the avant-gardist dream of an integration of art and society

returns in monstrosly caricatured form ... Postmodernism, from this perspective, mimes the formal resolution of art and social life attempted by the avant-garde while remorselessly emptying it of its political content. (Eagleton, 1986: 60)

Although his conclusions are falsified, Mudasir analyzes the modernist (which he assumes to be postmodernist) elements in Stoppard which challenge the conventional realism. In the part about “The Invention of Love”, he focuses on the challenge to the linearity of the plot in realist theater:

Linearity is disrupted when the past and present collapse into each other in a future where divisions of time dissolve into nothingness. The spatial framework of the underworld allows the meeting of the older Housman with his younger self. A sense of surreal informs the entire play as real Victorian poets and scholars are situated in a Greek mythological world. The plot negates any casual or linear progression as the past and the present mingle with each other and one is refracted through the other. At the heart of the play lies the idea of reconstructing lives not as coherent wholes but fragmented textualized events produced by selective and unreliable memories and manuscripts which have passed down to the present in conditions which leave open the question of their authenticity and which can yield divergent meanings. (Mudasir, 2014: 80)

Dual identities of A.E. Housman are presented through flashbacks in the rest of the play with the change of the stage. Through this, Stoppard adds a cinematic quality to his play. Just as the technique of montage which is the foundation of the “art” of cinema, Stoppard’s stage changes in the flashback scenes create an attraction for the audience. Most probably, he uses two different names “AEH” (for the old A.E. Housman) and Housman (for the young A.E. Housman) to avoid a confusion in the minds of the reader.

These cinematic scenes are sometimes too short that they are just like a moment of remembrance in AEH’s mind. This is important because these moments of divergences create a new artistic language on stage. Besides, Stoppard makes an attempt to make use of different artistic forms to enrich his play. This is very similar to what Richard Wagner, the German composer, suggested 100 years ago. To give an example from the actual text:

CHARON: That’s right, I remember him – Theseus – trying to break the chains that held fast his friends, to take him back with him from the Underworld. But it can’t be done, sir. It can’t be done.
Charon poles the ferry into the mist.

*Light on Vice-Chancellor in robes of office.
His voice is echoing. Alternatively, he is heard only.*
VICE-CHANCELLOR: Alfredus Edvardus Housman.
Housman, aged eighteen, comes forward and receives a “book” from him.
Alfredus Guilielmus Pollard... Moses Johannus Jackson...
Light on Pollard, eighteen, and Jackson, nineteen with their statue books.
(Stoppard, 2014: 5)

It should also be noted that, in that scene of flashback, Stoppard makes use of lightning as a means to change the stage. This is quite similar to Beckett as in Beckett's theatre, lightning has a predominant role.

“The Invention of Love” is, obviously not a play completely made up of stylistic elements as there are two very obvious discussion points throughout the whole play along with the stylistic trials: love and art. After all, Stoppard's all plays are “plays of ideas” and he melts these ideas in the pot of anti-realism. Via the way he presents these arguments, he creates question marks in the minds of the reader which challenge the meaning of these terms as well as reality. For example, in their college years Jackson, Housman, and Pollard are discussing about the meaning of love:

HOUSMAN: “Suns can set and rise again: when our brief light is gone we sleep the sleep of perpetual night. Give me a thousand kisses, and then a hundred more, and then another thousand, and add five score...”

JACKSON: But what happens in the end?

HOUSMAN: In the end they're both dead and Catullus is set for Moderations.
Nox est perpetua.

POLLARD: It's not perpetual if he's set for Mods.

HOUSMAN: Is that Church of England?

JACKSON: No. They loved, and quarreled, and made up, and loved, and fought, and were true to each other and untrue. She made him the happiest man in the whole world and the most wretched, and after a few years she died, and then, when he was thirty, he died, too. But by that time Catullus had invented the love poem.

JACKSON: He invented it? Did he, Hous?

POLLARD: You don't have to ask him. Like everything else, the love poem had to be invented. After millenniums of sex and centuries of poetry, the love poem as understood by Shakespeare and Donne, and by Oxford undergraduates- the true- life confessions of the poet in love, immortalizing the mistress, who is actually the cause of the poem- that was invented in Rome in the first century before Christ. (Stoppard, 2014: 13)

The way they discuss the invention of love is both ironic and romantic, but it is also a challenge to the realism, as well. This, indeed, is an intellectual conversation

and Stoppard includes the audience in the conversation. There is actually no action in the scene which challenges the idea of the realist theater that theater should be composed by actions. Besides, Stoppard makes use of poetry in this scene and many others throughout the play, which is another example of his bringing together different forms of art.

Stoppard's challenge towards realism and truth is also underlined in an article on the relationship between politics and Tom Stoppard by Aydın Görmez:

Stoppard also questions the accuracy of historical events and biographies of historical figures. He urges people to think over what they had assumed to be true. He makes our minds confused, and we are not sure of anything we formerly believed to be true any longer. The scepticism of his plays brings about a radical change in the way we begin to consider the world and its history. Historical events, historical figures, great or notorious leaders have been displaced from their unshakable thrones, and they have been put on an ambiguous and slippery environment instead. (Görmez, 2016: 56-57)

However, alongside all these artistic quality of his work, Stoppard's theater is not flawless. In a review on the 2001 production of the play, Charles Isherwood declares:

The first two qualities are hallmarks of the whole play, but the last one, alas, isn't. *Invention of Love* contains scenes of great emotional power, but their effectiveness- the play's as a whole, really- is sometimes occluded by the overwhelming intellectual and historical scaffolding surrounding them. The complexity of the play's architecture is paralleled in Bob Crowley's clever and attractive but somewhat fussy design scheme, which occasionally distracts the viewer from a text that needs concentrated attention. (Isherwood, 2001)

What Isherwood says for this specific production is valid for Stoppard's theatre in general, as well. Stoppard's works, from time to time, may lose their dramatic qualities and turn into heavy intellectual readings, which may distract the audience's attention. However, this flaw does not blur the fact that he has invented a new style in theater.

Stoppard is obviously an anti-realist writer, a follower of the absurd tradition pioneered by Beckett; however, it should also be noted that this is true only for a number of his plays as he is a writer who loves trying with different styles. He was also a supporter of humanism, a kind of activist in his daily life. Contrarily, neither "The Real Thing" nor "The Invention of Love" are "political" plays. When I use the

term “political”, as in the other writers of this study, I am referring to being explicitly political, or so to say to make use of art for the sake of political propaganda. It is possible that the audience or the reader of his plays can draw political conclusions as he is dealing with highly political issues in both plays, being love, relationships, art, and homosexuality, but this does not mean that these conclusions can be attributed to the playwright himself.

Mentioning homosexuality, it is vital to analyze Stoppard’s approach to homosexuality in “The Invention of Love” as this constitutes one of the major themes of the play. Its significance in terms of anti-realistic theater lies under the fact that Stoppard takes a stance to the issue from the point of love, which is not dealt much even in the contemporary theater of the 21st century.

In the play, we see Housman’s attraction to his college friend Moses Jackson, who is a heterosexual athlete. However, this obviously is a one-sided love which drives Housman into misery and we, as the audience, are presented with a quite sensual and heart-touching love story.

At that point in the play, we are presented with the character of Oscar Wilde, the direct opposite of Housman. While Housman is a secluded melancholic, Wilde emerges as a homosexual character who is living his identity openly. Pam Kragen on a review of the play says:

Wilde lived unapologetically for his art and his passions, and his fame endures. Housman lived into his late 70s, but his creativity - - veiled poetry that only hints at his true nature - - was stunted and his personal life was unfulfilled. (Kragen, 2005)

The depth of Housman’s affection towards Jackson is also well-known by his colleagues. In the second Act, when they are watching the game Jackson is playing in, Chamberlain refers to the feelings of Housman:

CHAMBERLAIN: No offence, old chap. I like you more than anyone I know. I even like you for the way you stick to Jackson. But he’ll never want what you want. You’ll have to find it somewhere else or you’ll be unhappy, even unhappier. I know whereof I speak. I don’t mind you knowing. I know you won’t tell on me at the office. You’re the straightest, kindest man I know and I’m sorry for you, that’s all. I’m sorry if I spoke out of turn. (Stoppard, 2014: 63-64)

Stoppard's approach to this love is obviously sentimental and universal in the sense that he does not judge Housman for his love or underline the fact that this is a homosexual love; but, instead, he is more focused on the idea of "love" itself regardless of genders, which is still a new approach in theater, and which shows Stoppard's universality as a playwright. When Chamberlain describes the feelings of Housman upon his question *What do I want?* we see the same approach:

CHAMBERLAIN: Nothing which you'd call indecent, though I don't see what's wrong with it myself. You want to be brothers-in-arms, to have him to yourself... to be shipwrecked together, (to) perform valiant deeds to earn his admiration, to save him from certain death, to die for him- to die in his arms, like a Spartan, kissed once on the lips... or just run his errands in the meanwhile. You want him to know what cannot be spoken, and to make the perfect reply, in the same language (*Pause. Still without inflection*) He's going to win it. (*Finally he warms into excitement as the race passes in front of them.*) By God, he is! Come on, Jackson! Up to the Patent Office! He's won it! (Stoppard, 2014: 64)

Maybe with one of the best definitions of "love" since Shakespeare, Stoppard proves that his stylistic theater does not fail to touch the heart of the audience. Besides, while Chamberlain is describing Housman's love, it is important to note that the transition from love to the play is interesting, and another stylistic device used by Stoppard. On the one hand, sentimental and intellectual talks create new question marks on the minds of the reader while on the other hand daily life continues just as Jackson's play, and these two lives are intermingled.

In this speech by Chamberlain, the phrase he uses for Jackson just after he finishes his description of love (*He's going to win it*) is, for me, another stylistic element of Stoppard. This sentence has duality of meanings in that it may be interpreted with its literal meaning that Chamberlain finishes talking about love and comments on the game, or it may be connected to what Chamberlain was talking about previously "love". When he says *He's going to win it*, he may be referring to the relationship between Housman and Jackson and implying that in any way Housman is going to be the part who will fail in this relationship.

Turning back to the appearance of Oscar Wilde in the play towards the end of the play, the discussion between Wilde and AEH (Old Housman) is like a summary of the whole play, focusing on the meaning of truth:

AEH: I read a report of the inquest in the *Evening Standard*.

WILDE: Oh, thank goodness! That explains why I never believed a word of it.

AEH: But it's all true.

WILDE: On the contrary, it's only fact. Truth is quite another thing and is the work of the imagination.

AEH: I assure you. It was not long after your trial. He has a Woolwich cadet. He blew his brains out so that he wouldn't live to shame himself, or bring shame on others. He left a letter for the coroner.

WILDE: Of course he did, and you should have sent your poem to the coroner, too. Art deals with exceptions, not with types. Facts deal only with types. Here was the type of young man who shoots himself. He read about someone shooting himself in the *Evening Standard*, so he shot himself in the *Evening Standard*. (Stoppard, 2014: 93)

Indeed, Stoppard's aim in including Oscar Wilde in the play towards the end of the play is to create this discussion between Housman and Wilde and draw the play to a conclusion. Thus, Oscar Wilde's use as a character is another stylistic element by Stoppard.

Each of Stoppard's plays deserves to be closely analyzed in order to understand his stylistic elements and his anti-realist theater as his theater has gradually changed in every play he has written. This puts him in a different place from the pioneers of the anti-realist movement. Being an undefinable playwright who has a variety of styles on the same body, Stoppard will surely continue being the subject matter of many more future studies in the field of theater.

CONCLUSION

As the last words, it is significant to underline that the purpose of this study is, in no way, to claim that art has a closed definition and that realist art is not art at all. Actually, we are well aware of the fact that the concept of “art” is undefinable in the 21st century, and that it is neither possible nor desirable to be totally apolitical in a work of art. Before reaching to a conclusion about what the study claims, these points about what this study does not claim are important to highlight to avoid any misunderstandings.

To be more clear about the conclusions of the study, we think that providing a list of its claims is useful:

- 1) Realist movement in theater has ideological concerns rather than artistic ones.
- 2) Reproducing the outside reality on stage cannot be the main purpose of art/theater as it attributes a sublime role to the outside reality, the role of something to be imitated; thus, resemblance to real life cannot be a criterion when evaluating an artwork.
- 3) Similarly, reproducing the outside reality does not raise awareness towards the problems of the outside world as claimed by the realist artist; but rather, normalizes the problems of the outside world.
- 4) Thus, it is not the artist’s responsibility or duty to convey either a political or a social message to the audience.
- 5) However, this does not necessarily mean that these artists do not hold a political stance or that they are totally indifferent to the problems of the world.
- 6) Instead of merely reproducing the outside reality on stage, the theatre director and the playwright as well, should strive to recreate the reality on stage with the help of formalistic and stylistic techniques.
- 7) As a result of this attempt, the end product would already have a political/social stance but it would be open-ended (unlike the realist theater) so as to create question marks in the minds of the audience and to challenge the idea of “reality”.
- 8) This goal has been achieved by the so-called “theatre of the absurd” playwrights and their followers; however, due to ideological concerns, these

playwrights have been unfairly blamed for being too individualistic and indifferent.

- 9) Analyzing the stylistic elements these playwrights have brought to the world of theater would be clear evidence that, what the anti-realist theater aims is totally intentional and planned, and that there is a strong artistic worldview behind anti-realist theater.
- 10) This brings us to the conclusion that anti-realist theater is neither an outdated movement nor a movement limited to a specific area in the world, but instead a multicultural and timeless approach which still influences the whole world of theatre.

The playwrights who have been chosen to support these claims bear importance. Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco were the writers of the first chapter as the pioneers of anti-realist movement in playwriting. The styles of these two writers do not resemble each other actually, but the mentality behind their theater is identical. Beckett's theater is much darker and gloomier than Ionesco's, most probably a reflection of his character. However, when we look at both writers, we can see the hints of the basic characteristics of anti-realist playwriting.

Both of them question the validity of outside reality through reflecting the "absurdities" of human interaction. Neither Beckett nor Ionesco believes in the role of language in a healthy interaction/communication. Beckett underlines this through a minimum use of verbal language whereas Ionesco creates characters who talk nonstop without understanding each other.

The important point about Beckett's and Ionesco's theater is that none of the preferences of the playwrights are arbitrary. For example, when Beckett's stage directions are taken into consideration, we can see that he calculates even the minutest detail on the stage, because he knows that these details would change the effect of the play completely. Similarly, Ionesco makes use of detailed stylistic changes on stage to create the atmosphere he aims at. Thus, it is unfair to consider them "too individualistic" and indifferent.

Contrarily, both playwrights achieved to prove that it is highly possible to be political without being explicitly political. Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" deals with a highly existential crisis whereas Ionesco's "The Bald Soprano" is a totally ironic

criticism to the institution of marriage. However, neither of these plays are based on conventional story telling. The audience is not introduced a story with a beginning, a dénouement, and a resolution; however, how can it be claimed that these plays are not political at all? The truth here is that neither of the writers try to give a didactic message with their plays but create question marks on the minds of the audience about the long believed institutions and ideals; however, this does not mean that these playwrights were indifferent to the real world.

Another important point about these playwrights is that they come from different cultures and backgrounds, Beckett being an Irish and Ionesco a Romanian. Choosing writers from different parts of the world was an intentional preference to highlight the intercultural and universal nature of anti-realist theater.

On the other chapters of the study, different stylistic characteristics of the anti-realist theater introduced by the other playwrights were discussed to prove that anti-realist theater is not arbitrary at all and is based on a variety of formulaic structures which depend on the artistic creativity of each individual playwright. Thus, anti-realist theater is individualistic only in the sense that each anti-realist playwright brought a new technique and style to the world of theatre, unlike conventional realist playwrights whose works are based on previously formulated rules of mimetic realism. This brings us to the conclusion that, although the word “individualistic” has been attributed a pejorative meaning by the conventional theater people, it may as well refer to the innovative nature of each anti-realist playwright, and anti-realist theater more broadly.

As well as having an innovative characteristic, anti-realist theater was also a courageous movement in the sense that it challenged the limits of what is to be shown on stage. In that respect, Edward Albee and Jean Genet proved to have a prominent role in the whole history of theater. Genet’s *Balcony* brought a brothel on stage, which was not very possible in conventional realist theater which was mostly about bourgeois (i.e. the plays of Anton Chekhov); however, in a very unorthodox way. Genet’s aim was not to give a moral lesson or a message to the audience, instead he was challenging the “realness” of long-believed “reality”, by blurring the lines between the illusion and the reality in his theater. Along with this challenge, Genet’s theater also introduced violence on stage from a very different perspective.

Similar to Genet, just three years after his *Balcony*, an American, Edward Albee, staged his challenging work *The Zoo Story* which was also an unprecedented approach to violence on stage. Neither Genet nor Albee was using violence on stage for the sake of using it, unlike the in-your-face theater or the performance theater of the 1990's. These playwrights were using violence as an artistic expression to challenge the status quo of the conventional realist techniques and the idea of theater in broader terms.

Moreover, anti-realist playwrights were experimental artists, and were never satisfied with what they already had. While Albee's *The Zoo Story* has parallels with Genet's theatre, his *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* had striking resemblance to Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* in terms of their subject matters and artistic styles. Both plays were challenging the institution of marriage without being didactic or a concern to convey a message to the audience. These plays proved that it was possible to be political without being "Political". They also proved the fact that anti-realist playwright makes use of a combination of various artistic styles in a very planned and intentional way to create his own reality on stage, which invalidates the argument that anti-realist theater is "too individualistic", let alone to mention the universality of anti-realist theater once again through the examples of writers from different parts of the world.

One may argue, especially the critics who adopt Martin Esslin's famous titling Theatre of the Absurd, that anti-realist theater is limited to European, specifically French theater, in a certain period of time, namely 1960's. This may lead to the misperception that anti-realist theater is outdated. However, the writers and the plays in this study prove that anti-realist theater is timeless and universal. Irish Beckett, Romanian Ionesco, French Genet, and American Albee highlight the fact that anti-realist theater is a world theater. Of course, it is not limited to Europe and America.

As analyzed in the Introduction chapter, anti-realist theater had already been present in Asian and African world long before its emergence in Europe and America; however, another interesting and often ignored fact is that anti-realist theater has been influential even in Turkey, which does not have a long history of theater. Thus, two Turkish playwrights who created their anti-realist world on stage, Melih Cevdet Anday and Sevim Burak, were also included in the study.

Melih Cevdet Anday's theatre mostly depends on his intellectual personality, but it also holds the elements of anti-realist theater in his own unique style. While *The Mikado Game* is a play which blurs the lines between illusion and reality on the one hand, just as Genet's *Balcony*, it also shows parallels with Stoppard's "Theater of Ideas" in the way that both writers use language. Anday also challenges the conventions of realist theater in *The Mikado Game*, and the play is still staged regularly even after 50 years without losing anything from its actuality.

Similar to the striking resemblance between the artistic styles of Stoppard and Anday, an interesting parallelism can be found between two playwrights who come from completely different cultures; Sevim Burak and Jean Genet. Genet and Burak's personal backgrounds and positions in their society are very similar and reflect on their art. Both of them are "outsiders" or "the others" in their societies. Genet is an adopted child, a gay, and a prisoner whereas Sevim Burak's Jewish background puts her in a different position in a Muslim society. In parallel with their personal histories, both writers used characters who are not in the main stream. However, once again their purpose is not to find a solution for the problems of "the others" or to convey a political message to the audience based on their personal backgrounds, but instead they make use of their personal background to create their artistic and abstract reality on stage. In a way, they are not using art to tell their personal stories (as conventional realist writers do) but they are using their personal stories in the service of their artistic style.

Another resemblance between Burak's and Genet's theatre is their focus on the distinction between illusion and reality. Just as Genet's *Balcony*, Burak's *Sahibinin Sesi* and *İşte Baş İşte Gövde İşte Kanatlar* blur the lines between illusion and reality, offering a new understanding of reality on stage. This is also apparent in Anday's *The Mikado Game*. The audience can never be sure whether the man or the woman are two separate characters or one of them is the schizophrenic creation of the other's mind. This is never revealed by the playwright himself; however, this challenge to reality creates a completely new style on the stage.

Actually the common accomplishment of these playwrights was that each of them challenged the concept of reality in his/her unique artistic style and proved that reality is a slippery term and thus how well a playwright or a director reproduces outside reality, as the conventional realist playwrights imposed, cannot be considered

as a criterion when evaluating an artistic and a theatrical work. In parallel with this, conveying messages or teaching the right way to live are not the concerns of the artist. Contrarily, this approach passivizes the audience by putting him/her in the position of a “watcher” instead of someone who “reacts”. Moreover, actually in the ritualistic roots of theater, resemblance to reality was never a concern; thus, it can as well be claimed that anti-realist theater forms are more true to the roots of theatre.

At that point, it shouldn't be forgotten that, this obsession with mimetic realism on stage has been deliberately imposed upon the audience and the theater people for reasons which are not artistic at all. It has its roots, as explained in details in the Introduction chapter, in Moscow Art Theatre and Stanislavski's method which was founded in accordance with the Soviet government's ideologies.

It should also be noted that anti-realist theater was faced with serious obstacles in its first years, put deliberately by the practitioners of the conventional realist theatre. The best example for this would be the clash between Stanislavski and his own student Meyerhold. Brockett explains how realist theater was favored by the political parties in the time of Meyerhold:

Although the innovators of the 1920s attracted most attention, the conservative groups, notably the Maly Theatre in Moscow and the Alexandrinsky Theatre in Leningrad, were favored by political leaders and most of the public. Meyerhold disliked the Maly Theatre's realistic productions so much that in 1921 he recommended that the troupe be liquidated. In response, Alexander Yuzhin, the Maly's director, launched an attack on “formalism” that began a struggle not to be resolved until the 1930s. (Brockett, 2003: 488)

Indeed, these kinds of attacks to anti-realist playwrights continued throughout the whole 20th century and still continue today. Brockett continues underlining how anti-realist theater was suppressed by the ideologies behind the realist theater:

The new policies meant the gradual suppression of the avant-garde troupes and greater prestige for the Maly, Alexandrinsky (now renamed the Pushkin Theatre), and the Moscow Art Theatre, which after 1932 was called “the House of Gorky”. The nonrealistic groups attempted to adapt to the new demands... Nevertheless, Meyerhold's completely apolitical interpretations displeased officials even more than his formalism, and in 1938, his theatre was closed. In 1939 he made his last official appearance; in a speech to the First All Union Congress of Directors he is reported to have admitted errors, but to have added: “The pitiful and wretched thing called socialist realism has nothing in common with art... Where once there were the best theatres in the world... in hunting formalism, you have eliminated art.” (Brockett, 2003: 488)

This suppression was not limited to the 1930s Russia. It still continues in a different level. This can be felt even in the words of Oscar Brockett, who wrote his book in 1995. Brockett unconsciously defines Meyerhold as “completely apolitical”, which is a misperception still continuing towards anti-realist theater. When Brockett claims that Meyerhold was “apolitical”, he is indeed trying to say that he was not political in the sense that socialist realist regime demanded. However, this does not mean that a writer is “apolitical” as can be seen from all the works studied in the thesis. Certainly, it is time to redefine being political before labeling artists for not having a political stance.

This was actually what the anti-realist playwrights after the World War II did. Besides challenging the mimetic reality, they also challenged the conventional meanings attributed to the word “political”, and proved with their works that being “political” and being “ideological” are two different concepts.

As the last words, anti-realist theater has achieved, through individualistic contributions of each artist, to be an intercultural, universal, and timeless approach to theater contrary to all the suppressions and counter-arguments of the conventional realist theater. However, in the level of theater critics and the audience, obsession with the long-imposed mimetic realism still continues today. I hope this thesis will highlight once more the idea that, being true to the outside reality, and having political/social messages are not criteria in evaluating theatre works in today’s world, and that mimetic realism has been more of an ideological concern rather than an artistic one in the 20th century and we, as theater people and academicians, should be aware of this fact and question the role and meaning of realism in art once again.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Mehmet Zeki Giritli 2005 yılında Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları bölümünde lisans öğrenimini tamamladıktan sonra 2007-2009 yılları arasında Kadir Has Üniversitesi Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı bölümünde tam burslu olarak yüksek lisansını tamamladı. Aynı zamanda profesyonel tiyatro oyuncusu ve yönetmeni olan Giritli, 2012 yılından bu yana Beckett, Pinter, Anday gibi yazarların oyunlarında oyuncu ve yönetmen olarak görev aldı. Malmö Üniversitesi (İsveç), Beyrut Amerikan Üniversitesi (Lübnan), Trinity College (İrlanda) ve Aarhus Üniversitesi'nde (Danimarka) misafir öğretim görevlisi olarak bulundu. Şu anda Koç Üniversitesi İnsani Bilimler ve Edebiyat Fakültesi'nde Öğretim Görevlisi olarak çalışmakta ve tiyatro çalışmalarına devam etmektedir.