folk/ed. Derg, 2020; 26(3):621-632
DOI: 10.22559/folklor.1184

Radical Feminist Echoes: Judith Thompson's *The Crackwalker* and *Lion in the Streets*

Radikal Feminist İzler: Judith Thompson'ın *The Crackwalker* ve *Lion in the Streets Oyunları*

Belgin Bağırlar*

Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of women's bodies in two of the contemporary Canadian playwright Judith Thompson's plays, *The Crackwalker* (1981) and *Lion in the Streets* (1992), from the perspective of the radical feminism, in particular, that of Kate Millet and Shulamith Firestone. Radical feminists advocate that the unfair distribution of social roles among men and women stems from biological differences and the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system. It is from this very perspective that Thompson, who has left a lasting impression on Canadian theatre with her influential avant-garde style, explores in both *The Crackwalker* and the highly successful *Lion in the Streets* the relationship between women and men within the patriarchal system. In these two-act plays, Thompson also lays bare, with her contemporary style, the manner in which women are positioned in the patriarchal society. In *The Crackwalker*, the themes of marriage, sexuality, and friendship are interwoven around the main characters, i.e. Theresa, Alan, Sandy, and Joe. Following their marriage, Alan's wish to have children makes Theresa feel obliged to give birth to his child. Sandy, on the other hand, suffers her husband

Geliş tarihi (Received): 13.11.2019 - Kabul tarihi (Accepted): 19.07.2020

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi. Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü. belgin.bagirlar@adu.edu.tr. ORCID ID 0000-0001-5575-3227

Joe's horrific verbal and physical violence. The second of the two plays, *Lion in the Streets*, opens with the apparition of the ghost of Isobel, a little girl who was abused and then murdered, and proceeds with a chain of outwardly independent events. Thompson, who masterfully knits up the beginning and end of the play, confronts her audience once again with the oppression that women have to endure in patriarchal societies. Throughout the play, women are sexually assaulted and belittled by men motivated solely by the desire to satisfy themselves. In neither play does Thompson make room for a picture-perfect married life. Quite on the contrary, Thompson goes as far as to portray how the institution of marriage in the patriarchal system, to one extent or another, eats away at women's bodies to the point that they are slowly worn out and destroyed.

Keywords: *contemporary theater, Judith Thompson, The Crackwalker, Lion in the Streets*

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı çağdaş Kanadalı oyun yazarlarından Judith Thompson'nın *The Crackwalker* (1981) ve *Lion in the Streets* (1992) isimli oyunlarındaki kadın bedenlerini, başta Kate Millett ve Shulamith Firestone'unki olmak üzere radikal feminist bakış açısıyla incelemektir. Radikal feminizm, toplumsal rollerin kadınlar ve erkekler arasında adaletsizce dağıtılmasının temelinde kadın ve erkeğin biyolojik farklılıkları ile ataerkil sistemin baskısının yattığını ileri sürer. Öncü ve yenilikçi tarzıyla günümüz Kanada tiyatrosuna damgasını vuran Thompson, söz konusu iki oyununda erkek egemen sistem içerisinde kadın ve erkek ilişkilerini işte bu bakış açısıyla ele alır. Thompson, her ikisi de ikişer sahneden oluşan *The Crakwalker* ile büyük yankı uyandıran *Lion in the Streets*'de ataerkil sistemin kadını nasıl konumlandırdığını çağdaş üslubu ile ortaya koyar. *The Crackwalker*, Theresa-Alan ve Sandy-Joe çiftleri üzerinden aşk, evlilik, cinsellik ve arkadaşlık gibi temalara yoğunlaşır. Theresa, kocası Alan çocuk istediği için çocuk doğurmaya mecbur olur. Joe ile evli olan Sandy ise defalarca Joe'nun kaba sözlerine ve korkunç fiziksel şiddetine maruz kalır. *Lion in the Streets* ise cinsel taciz sonrasında öldürülen Isobel isimli küçük bir kızın hayaletinin belirmesi ile başlar ve ilk bakışta birbirinden bağımsız görünen bir olaylar silsilesi ile devam eder. Oyunun başını ve sonunu ustalıkla birbirine bağlayan Thompson, *Lion in the Streets*'de seyircisini erkek egemen toplumda yaşayan kadınların katlanmak zorunda kaldıkları baskı ile yüz yüze getirir. Oyun boyunca kadın karakterlerin defalarca cinsel tacize maruz kaldıkları ve erkeklerin kendi bireysel tatminleri için onlara hakaret ettikleri görülür. Her iki oyunda da evlilik bir mutluluk tablosu olarak tasvir edilmez. Aksine, Thompson, ataerkil yapı içerisinde varlık mücadelesi veren kadınların vücutlarının, evlilik kurumu içerisinde nasıl ezildiğini ve yavaş yavaş tükendiğini anlatır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *çağdaş tiyatro, Judith Thompson, The Crackwalker, Lion in the Streets*

Introduction

As a social movement, Radical feminism has had a powerful voice since the 1970s. Like liberal, socialist, Marxist and materialist feminism, radical feminism too argues that the masculine system is the reason of women's oppression. Unlike other feminist theories, radical feminism recognizes the differences between men and women and refuses to adapt to the patriarchal system in order to ensure equality between men and women. *Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamite Firestone, is regarded as the manifesto of radical feminists. According to Firestone (1972) , one of the most explicit signs "is the inevitable female response to the development of a technology capable of freeing women from the tyranny of their sexual-reproductive roles" (p. 31). That is why the patriarchal system does not allow women to be independent either in social or cultural life. What is more, women are constantly oppressed under male hegemony. For this reason, Kate Millett (2000), akin to Firestone, primarily blames the institution of family on the patriarchal system. In her view, the family is the most basic ideological structure where gender discrimination is taught. In this regard, the only way in which women can overcome this inequality is through education. In doing this, not only does she become a member of society, but she also manages overthrow male hegemony as well. In a sense, women can therefore establish their own social order and constitute their free identity. Radical feminism emphasizes that women are biologically different. According to Firestone (1972), the main reason for the oppression of women under male hegemony is this difference in biology, and society associating women with love and sex, in turn rendering women as noting nothing more than mere sexual objects for men. Additionally, the reproductivity of the female body, giving birth, is also a form of abuse against the female body and is the reason why women are cast away from social and cultural life. The woman is exploited by the masculine system only for reproduction as well as sexual satisfaction, and in turn is under pressure to maintain this order.

Founded in 1970, *It's All Right to the Woman Theatre* is deemed the first American radical feminist theatre, and "its work provides a clear illustration of the effect of radical feminism on theatre practice" (Case, 2014, p. 65). Among the many works it has been staged include *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* (1981), *Women's Piece* (1976), and *Uncommon Women and Others* (1970), all of which depict the abuse of women both in the family institution and in the patriarchal society. To Helene Keyssar (1985), the "attempt to pay attention to the lives of women as individuals, in relation to each other, and in relation to men" (p. 3) is one of the most crucial aspects of feminist theatre. In this respect, we can examine Judith Thompson's female characters in *The Crackwalker* and *Lion in the Steets* within the framework of radical feminism. Deducing that Thompson has reflected Canadian society in a realistic manner, we get a better glimpse a woman's status in that society. In both plays, Thompson has saliently indicates to her audience that women are despised, underestimated, and subjected to violence under the hegemony of men.

1. Judith Thompson and feminism

Born in Toronto in 1954, Judith Thompson is one of Canada's most outstanding contemporary playwrights. Beginning her career first as an actor, her works echo volumes not only at home but also in Europe because of her contemporary approach to language as well as her incorporation of realistic characters who hail from a spectrum socio-economic classes. The critic Robert Nunn magnifies her talent, stating that she is "the greatest playwright this country has seen, now or ever" (Nunn, 1989, p. 3). According to David Krasner (2016), Thompson is "pioneering playwright whose drama is on the cutting edge of feminist and post colonialist dramaturgy " (p. 449). Thompson admits that JM Synge's use figurative language, Strindberg's realistic style, and David Mamet's simple if not mundane language have all had a profound influence on her and her writing. Explicitly stating that she regrets the fact that the authors she has been influenced by are men. She, moreover, articulates that the female characters in Mamet's plays do not fully reflect the truth, and points out that, "Although I relished Mamet's crazy, true-to-life rhythmic dialogue, I was instinctively aware that he couldn't write women. All the women in his plays were just a guy's idea of the things that women said, a guy's recounting a conversation with a woman - way off the mark" (Thompson, 2010, p. 509). In this regard, she argues that the lack of real female cognition and sentiment in the works of male playwrights guides her.

Many critics, Harvie (1992), Nunn (1989), Zeidler (2017), highlight the realistic quality of Thompson's works. Initially, if we were to consider the multi-cultural structure of Canada after the Second World War, we see why Thompson's characters have different ethnic origins. In an interview with Cynthia Zimmerman, Thompson also states that her aim is to reflect the truth:

> My real hope is to hold a mirror up to all of us, because I think that awakening, slipping out of our comas, is what it's all about. Otherwise, we do not live—it's the unexamined life. The coma lifting, then, becomes political. Art is political, should be political, but only in this really essential way. (Zimmerman, 1994, p. 193)

Thompson emphasizes that the characters and the plot in her plays echo Canadian society, hence her art serves as a mere tool to be used to reflect that reality. In this respect, Thompson clarifies that, when creating her female characters, she mirrors how women become stuck in the patriarchal society:

> I tried to look at my characters from a feminist perspective. To be honest, I wasn't exactly sure what I was looking for, but what I saw is that none of my characters defines herself as a feminist, or as someone opposed to feminism. Most of them have been successfully brainwashed by the patriarchal society in which they live, and the others are in a fight to the death with themselves because of it. But there is one I have overlooked, I think, waiting patiently at the back of the crowd, her legs crossed at the ankle, watching me. She is waiting for me to see her. I will look at her now. (Thompson, 2009, p. 23)

Throughout nearly all of her works, all of her female characters live in a masculine society and given to rather than oppose patriarchal oppression. In this sense, whilst in *Capture Me* (2004) she exposes the patriarchy's both repression and violence on women in the name of marriage, she displays the sexual abuse of women in *The Perfect Pie* (2002). Moreover, in *Who Killed the Snow White* (2018), Thompson makes probable for us to meet a female character who is not only waiting to be discovered but also resisting the masculine system.

Before she begins writing, she questions the difficulty of being a female actress and a playwright within the masculine world she inhabits. She inquires that "where were the female playwrights all through my youth? It appalls me that this was not even a question I asked myself. I simply accepted that the voice of drama was a male voice" (Thompson, 2010, p. 508). Thus, Thompson does not concentrate merely on the experiences and emotions of female characters, and moreover does not approve of her plays as being classified as being solely feminist. However, in an article that she wrote in 2010, Thompson, whose writing has improved over time, expresses her regret by virtue of stating that she is not a feminist. After her confession, she has gradually changed over the years. She, now depicts herself as 'a new woman'. She transparently assumes that she is "the woman she has chosen to be rather than the woman she was constructed to be" (Thompson, 2010, p. 505). Therefore, by proclaiming the challenging conditions that women have to live in (e.g. contempt, exclusion, oppression, rape, etc.) Thompson, has achieved great success as a female theatre writer in the patriarchal society for years, and reveals her sense of feminism in *The Crackwalker* and *Lion in the Streets.*

2. The crackwalker

"I know now that I was the vehicle for this story, that story was demanded to be told" – J. Thompson

The Crackwalker, Thompson's first play, teems with sexuality and submission. It became her "her most representative and most produced drama"(Krasner, 2016, p. 449) after being staged at Theater Passe Muraille in 1980. J. Kelly Nestruck claims that, "it feels like a feminist response to de Kooning's Woman" (Nestruck, 2016). The more abstract Kooning's work is, the more realistic Thompson's. In fact, according to Robert Nunn, the play echoes hell because Thompson skilfully exposes the brutality women are exposed to in the patriarchal system by revealing "the depts, the opaque surface, the cracks in the surface that give us dizzying glimpses of the abyss" (Krasner, 2016, p. 453).

Thompson uses colloquial language peppered with repetition. Krasner (2016) estimates her characters and their language and alleges that "Thompson's characters say almost everything they are thinking and feeling whether they understand themselves or not" (p. 455). The characters do, in fact, explicitly utter how they feel and what they deem even they do not listen to each other. Moreover, Thompson follows an unusual path at the beginning of the play rather than providing whole chunks of information about her characters. To Rebecca Ledrew (2012), "their identities are not allowed to settle into a definitive form" (p. 40). That is to say, as the play continues, we learn new information about the characters. In fact, as each character comments on each other, the question marks the audience has about each character slowly dissipates.

For Thompson (2010), *The Crackwalker* "was a kind of miracle, a gift from the theatre for which I will always be grateful" (p. 506). Having had worked at Social Services in Kingston for a while, Thompson admits that she has been inspired by real events while writing her play. At one point, she had met an unemployed woman named Theresa, one of her characters in the play, and was deeply moved by the tragedy of baby being murdered. Hence, Thompson alleges that her characters actually carry real life traces, rendering "we all have a little Therese in us: the innocent [...] there are lots of Joes everywhere ...] how is Sandy different from most of the women in the audience?" (Rudakoff, 1990, p. 100). Her play is about two married lower-class couples, Sandy and Joe and Theresa and Alan of Kingston Ontario, and their relationship to each other.

According to Millett (2000), "patriarchy's chief institution is the family… Traditionally patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale" (p. 33). In Thompson's play, Sandy and Joe are already married, while Theresa and Alan get married later on. Thereby, both Sandy and Theresa become women living under the pressure of their husbands. Throughout the play, their husbands recurrently underestimate and exclude them.

At the beginning of the play, Theresa has sex for money to be able to buy doughnuts, and then begins to satisfy her husband legally after she marries Alan. Sandy, likewise, is expected to satisfy Joe sexually even though she has no desire to do it.

As both Firestone (1972) and Millett (2000) point out, the *The Crackwalker*'s female characters live in the patriarchal system and stand out as 'sexual objects'. Theresa makes love to live, while Sandy is the victim of Joe's sex games. Joe has a habit of leaving home for days without notifying her. When he returns home, he is reluctant to explain where he was. Sandy insists on learning where Joe was, yet "Joe spits his mouthful of beer in her face" (Thompson, 2003, p. 18). Joe repeatedly humiliates and despises Sandy. In fact, the relationship between Sandy and Joe is full of physical and emotional violence in which the two constantly curse at one another. Although Joe acts like a sovereign, he does none of the household expenses. Sandy works as a bartender, covers the costs of the house, and submits to Joe's endless wishes. The only time Sandy is free to be on her own is when Joe leaves her. Upon Joe's final return, he tells Sandy that he has found a job in Kingston and they are going to move there. Nevertheless, Sandy knows that it will not be a happy dream:

Sandy: Won't be nothin different.

Joe: It's gotta be different.

Sandy: It'll be the same as before, beatin up on me (Thompson, 2003, p. 92).

The relationship between Joe and Sandy is pure cruelty; Sandy is nothing more than a sexual object to Joe. Millett (2000) advocates that sexual satisfaction is unilateral, commenting that "while patriarchy tends to convert woman to a sexual object, she has not been encouraged to enjoy the sexuality which is agreed to be her fate. Instead, she is made to suffer for her sexuality" (p. 119). Thompson confirms Millett's view in creating Sandy, who complains that Joe is sexually cruel to her.

Sandy: I got a fucking hole in my gut ‘cause of you.

Joe: Who told ya that?

Sandy: Doctor Scott.

Joe: He doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

Sandy: Hurtin me all the time.

Joe: Not no more. Not no more ya wont ‘(Thompson, 2003, p. 96).

In this regard, even though Sandy, as a legal sex slave, states that she suffers, Joe pretends that nothing is wrong and is proud of his superiority over her. Thompson, on the other hand, reveals the challenges that women face and how they internalize them. Sandy seeks to find out why Joe is so brutal:

Sandy: I never done nothin to you. Why?

Joe: Ewww Christ I missed your body, there was times I wanted ya so bad I could taste ya. I’d lie in bed there and think about you and what ya looked like stripped naked, think about your nice titties (Thompson, 2003, p. 97).

While Sandy sentimentally questions the reason, Joe only considers her body. Firestone (1972) deems that to patriarchy, “love” equals oppression. Men do not think of anything other than satisfying themselves under the concept of love. Hence, “love is the underbelly of (male) culture” (p. 126). Joe is also a typical male character who supports Firestone’s view. Although Sandy has forgiven Joe many times with all her emotionality, all Joe wishes is to use Sandy’s body repeatedly. Deciding to go with Joe at the end of the play, Sandy knows that nothing will ever change, neither Joe’s humiliation nor his brutal beatings; nevertheless, the two return back to Kingston with vague hope. Thompson’s other character, Theresa, has sex for money in order to buy her favourite doughnuts and chocolate at the beginning of the play. Joe’s friend, Alan, helps her when Sandy kicks Theresa out of her home after catching her sleeping with Joe. Nevertheless, Alan has the expectation of his aid, which in turn is why he expresses his happy marriage dream to Theresa and Theresa agrees to marry Alan.

To Firestone (1972), every society has a different concept of ‘The Beauty Ideal’; like “Marilyn Monroe of America” (p. 151). In order to keep up with beauty, women diet, dye their hair, and even go under the knife. Eventually, “women become more and more look-like. But at the same time, they are expected to express their individuality through their physical appearance. Thus, they are kept coming and going at one and the same time trying to express their similarity and their uniqueness” (Firestone, 1972, p. 152). Like this, not only does the patriarchal society put women under emotional pressure, but they also have the policy of shaping women’s bodies as they wish, at their disposal, setting her physical characteristics according to the social structure, and encouraging women to resemble that. In order to marry her, Alan asserts that Theresa looks like Madonna:

Alan: That- that Madonna lady; you know them pictures they got up in classrooms when you’re a kid? Them pictures of the Madonna?

Theresa: The Virgin Mary?

Alan: Yeah. Her.

Theresa: I love her, I askin her for stuff.

Alan: Yuh look just like her. Just like Madonna. 'Cept the Madonna picture got a baby in it.

Theresa: It do?

Alan: She's holdin it right in her arms. You too, maybe, eh? Eh? Hey! Let's go up to the Good Thief (Thompson, 2003, p. 52).

Thompson puts forth how different the worlds of Alan and Theresa are in this dialogue. For Theresa, Madonna is a divine woman, while for Alan, she is a sexy woman with a child in her arms. However, throughout the play, Theresa declares defeat to the patriarchal system when she is seen on the stage with the baby in her arms, just like the woman in a photo given to her by Alan, saying "I look like that Madonna lady" (Thompson, 2003, p. 95).

Firestone (1972) advocates that children are also slaves of the masculine system, like women. According to her, "Women and children are now in the same lousy boat. Their oppressions began to reinforce one another" (p. 91). Precisely because of that, it is not only Theresa who succumbs to patriarchy but also her new-born baby. Alan also sees his own baby as weird, does not concede it, and even asserts that the baby is 'strange', likening it to a 'lizard'. When Theresa refuses to have sex with Alan, Alan strangles the baby cruelly. This scene had been altered a number of times throughout the play's history. In its first version (1981), Alan strangles the baby on the stage, thus freezing both Thompson's and the audience's blood. To alleviate this emotional atrocity, Thompson decides in the next version (1990) that the baby's death scene ought to take place off stage. Theresa, who left Alan with the sorrow of her baby's carnage, has already found someone else to buy him doughnuts—that is, someone else to come under his pressure. In this sense, Thompson's female characters obey the wishes of the patriarchal system. Instead of resisting, both Theresa and Sandy accept being exposed to violence and verbal abuse.

3. *Lion in the streets*

Lion in the Streets "situates Thompson as one of Canada's leading dramatists" (Krasner, 2016, p. 449). Staged in 1990 at the World Stage Festival, it later was translated into French and premiered in France in 1991. In her article, Jennifer Harvie (1992) focuses on "powerful level of realism" (p. 82) in Judith's play and praises her extreme success in "deconstruction of reality" (p. 82). Conversely, Quest Sky Zeidler (2017) opposes this view after scrutinizing the ghost character, Isobel, and claims there is no "coherent reflection of reality" (p. 9). However, taking into account Thompson's understanding of political theatre and her aim of reflecting the dark side of society, the play "portrays the modern world as a war zone where hostility and abuse has become predominant" (Lindsay, 1992, p. 11). Thus, Thompson, in this play, reflects the dark side and cruelty of society from as many realistic angles as possible.

In the play with three acts, the characters are not heroes, and lack any great features. Criticizing the violence within the characters, Falk (1997) mentions that "many of the characters can be seen as victims or outcasts to one degree or another – gay men, immigrants, lower-class women" (p. 53). In this way, Thompson exhibits corruption in society through physical and

emotional suffering. In each act, the audience experiences different plots, and follows up the oppression of women living in the patriarchal system via different realist perspectives.

Believing in the supremacy and expressiveness of the power of language, she discourses that the ingenious use of language is more crucial than grammatical correctness, and therefore she defends linguistic simplicity. She advocates that, "I don't ever believe that the power of the way you speak with your friends" (Thompson, 2010, p. 508). For this reason, throughout the play, the characters spit out vulgarity at one other to insult and despise.

Lion in the Streets reveals the family institution, one of the cornerstones of the patriarchal system, and the difficult conditions of women within the family unit. The play begins with the return of a ghost, Isobel, "a ragged-looking nine-year-old Portuguese girl" (Thompson, 1992, p. 1) to where she lived 17 years prior. As soon as she realizes that she had been brutally murdered when she was a child, she starts to scout out her killer. Throughout the play, Isobel witnesses people's betrayals, tears, and even hypocrisy. When she finds her killer, she forgives him and returns to where she belongs. The optimist ending of the play may be the sign of Thompson's hope about the complete freedom of women.

According to radical feminists, women are subject to more pressure in the patriarchal system after giving birth to a child. Adrienne Rich (1986) conceives that "Firestone sees childbearing… as purely and simply the victimizing experience it has often been under patriarchy" (p. 174). Thomson confirms this view through her character Sue. As soon as Sue, who is married to Bill, realizes that her son is depressed, she leaves home to find her husband, Bill, who rarely comes home. As Bill chats with his friends, he ignores Sue. Eventually, Sue begs Bill to come home: "Sue: Bill, come home, your son is very depressed; his father is never there; why are you never never… " (Thompson, 1992, p. 13). However, Bill does not care about Sue, he belittles her, and he confesses that he has been cheating on her with a woman called Lily. Sue reminds him that they have two children and of the vow he made to her, "to love and honour and cherish till death us do part" (Thompson, 1992, p. 17) the day they got married. Nevertheless, Bill mentions that he will not keep his word, claiming that Sue has not satisfied Bill for months and,

> Bill: YOU turned your back on me !! You you- look at you in that... sweatsuit thing; you're not – I mean look at her, really, you're you're, you're a kind of ... cartoon now, a ... cartoon mum a ... with your day care meetings and neighbourhood fairs; you know what I mean Laura! Your face is a drawing- your body - lines. The only time, the only time you are alive, electric again is ... when you talk on the phone, to the other mums... (Thompson, 1992, p. 17).

Thomson reminds the audience that women still have to live in the patriarchal society in accordance with certain patterns: she must have certain body contours and must always satisfy men. Since Sue defies that code, Bill deems that he is right to leave both his wife and children. What is more, Lilly confesses that her relationship with Bill is purely physical. She says "You see, I love... his body, Sue. I mean, I really love it... his body is my God, okay?"

(Thompson, 1992, p. 18). Lily is an ultra feminine character, and through her, Thompson presents the obedient body that the patriarchal system expects. For Bill, Lily's beautiful body is the only important and available thing for him to fall in love with. Moreover, Lily not only presents her own body but also worships Bill's body. To counter this, Sue strips in front of everyone to regain her husband; nevertheless Bill ignores her and runs off with Lily. Thus, Thompson reveals that women are aware of how to use their sexuality in order to obtain what they desire, just as patriarchy has taught them. While putting on her outfits, Sue warns her friends, Laura and George, not to pity her. She asserts that when her husband's colon cancer recurs, he will already be back. Thusly, Thompson draws for us a victimized female character who does not have the power to resist the patriarchal structure. While Lily and Sue love the same man, "love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today" (Firestone, 1972, p. 126).

The only woman in both of Thompson's plays who is less feminine, as it were, is Christine. Christine meets her friend Ellen and her child at a park. Ellen is pregnant again, and tells Christine how she feels:

> Ellen: Wonderful! I finally feel ... good for something ...
>
> Christine: Not me. Not me. When I was pregnant, I felt as useful as a cow. A large, stupid ... (Thompson, 1992, p. 54).

Christine is a divorced woman who can stand on her own feet. Unlike the other women, she puts off being reproductive. Christine, who has only one child, will no longer allow her body to be used. In this regard, she surfaces as the strongest character in that she rejects the patriarchal rules.

The relationship between Sherry and Edward, who are about to marry one another, is quite remarkable in the play. Edward feels incompetent sexually, suspects that Sherry is cheating on him, and constantly threatens her to cancel the wedding. Nevertheless, Sherry always tries to persuade Edward that he is the only one with who she is in love with. As she continues to approve his masculinity, he feels more powerful. According to Millett (2000), "patriarchal force relies on a form of violence particularly sexual in character and realized most completely in the act of rape" (p. 44). Sherry is not merely Edward's victim, she is also the victim of patriarchal violence after having fallen victim to raped. Edward asks Sherry to tell him repeatedly how she got raped. Even though Sherry argues that she twisted her foot because of her high-heeled shoes, Edward blames her by saying, "But your heels, were so high, so provocative" (Thompson, 1992, p. 33). When Sherry puts forth that the rapist threw her between two houses, Edward cruelly asserts "you're breathing fast" (Thompson, 1992, p. 34). Finally, he blames Sherry for allowing herself to be raped. In other words, the woman who is accepted as a sexual object in patriarchy is also guilty of her sexuality.

In *Sexual Politics*, Millett (2000) cites the story of Adam and Eve: "It is the female who is tempted first and 'beguiled' by the penis, transformed into something else, a snake" (p. 53). In this respect, while the snake represents female guilt, Edward is a symbol of typical patriarchal power psychologically tortures Sherry in order to make her approve that she is 'a snake':

> Edward: You are the snake. Sherry: No. Edward: Because the snake tempts others to sin, uh-huh? SATAN tempts others to sin. Say it, Sherry. Come on, I am the snake, come on, I am the snake ... Sherry: I... am ... the snake (Thompson, 1992, p. 36).

Towards the end, Sherry cannot withstand the psychological pressure and collapses. Hence, Thompson both projects these negative analogies onto the female body, and exposes the hypocrisy of patriarchy. On the other hand, although Sherry feels psychological torment, she does not give up on the idea of marriage. Through this, Thompson again reveals a feminine character who has to bear rather than resist oppression.

Conclusion

With her fascinating and experimental style, Thompson reflects the reality of society, and her main aim is to confront people with their own cruelty. She believes that this is the reason why her excitement never disappears when she writes, so theatre is the only place where she can prove herself. She explicitly mirrors the exclusion and humiliation of women living under the roof of patriarchy, drawing upon her experiences and observations and projecting that in both *The Crackwalker* and *Lion in the Streets*.

In both plays, Thompson reveals patriarchal violence against women. In *The Crackwalker*, women are exposed to physical and verbal violence, while in *Lion in the Streets*, rape, psychological, and physical violence stand out. Furthermore, with the exception of Christine, all of her female characters accept humiliation, violence, and deception, as well as pardon their husbands by approving of their own inequality and alienation.

While both Sandy in *The Crackwalker* and Sue in *Lion in the Streets* try to convince their husbands to use their sexuality in order to return home, Thompson shows her audience how the masculine system humiliates women's sexual power. Even Sherry accepts the triviality of her sexual power akin to her female cohorts. Another crucial point in Thompson's plays is that almost all of the female characters are married. Through that, Thompson criticizes even the smallest unit of the patriarchal system: the family institution.

Consequently, Thompson's characters uncover the ruthless nature of the masculine system and how patriarchy degrades them. In order to raise awareness and engage in resistance by having her audience confront reality, all of her female characters are sexual objects who lack their own culture, who are ignored, and who are not conscious, powerful, or educated enough so as to resist.

References

Case, S.A. (2014). *Feminism and theatre*. London: Routledge.

Falk, J.G. (1997, Spring). Graceful penetration: Judith Thompson and her audience. (Master of Arts, University of Alberta). University of Alberta Library.

Firestone, S. (1972). *The dialectic of sex*. USA. A Bantam Book.

Harvie, J. (1992). Constructing fictions of an essential reality or 'this picksur is Niiiice': Judith Thompson's lion in the streets. *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada,* 13(1-2), 81-93.

Keyssar, H. (1985). *Feminist theatre*. New York: Grove.

Krasner, D. (2016). A history of modern drama. *John Wiley & Sons*, Volume II: 1960-2000.

Millett, K. (2000). *Sexual politics*. USA., University of Illinois.

Nunn, R. Spatial metaphor in the plays of Judith Thompson. *Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du Theatre au Canada,* 10, 1 Spring (1989). p. 3-29. https://doi.org/10.7202/041150arCopiedAn error has occurred

Rich, A. (1986). *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and İnstitution*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Rudakoff, J. & Munch, R. (1990). *Fair play: Twelve women speak: Conversations with Canadian playwrights*. USA: Dundurn.

Thompson, J. (1992). *Lion in the streets*. Canada: Playwrights Canada.

Thompson, J. (2003). *The crackwalker*. Canada: Playwrights Canada.

Thompson, J. (2009). *The mask of Judith Thompson*, Ric Knowles (ed.) Canada: Playwrights Canada.

Thompson, J. That stinking hot summer. *Theatre Journal*, Vol.62, No.4, Contemporary Women Playwrights, December 2010, p. 505-510.

Zeidler, Q. S. (2017). *You can't just be a picture: Expressionistic memory and traumain lion in the streets*. Santa Cruz University of California.

Zimmerman, C. (1994). *Playwriting women: Female voices in English Canada*. Toronto: Simon and Pierre.

Elektronic resources

Le Drew, R. (2012, Spring). *Elements of the gothic in the works of Judith Thompson*. (Master of Arts, University of Waterloo). https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Elements-of-the-Gothic-in-the-Works-of-Judith LeDrew/52b24e7e550b8ae3c4fe3d5a193dcb62a563d6eb.

Lindsay, M.K. (1992, Spring). *Pathways into the dark: Three windows on Judith Thompson's lion in the streets*. (Master of Arts, The University of British Colombia). https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/download/pdf/831/1.0086579/2.

Nestruck, J.K. (2016). The crackwalker: A drama that doesn't skirt away from tough realities. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/theatre-reviews/the-crackwalker-a-drama-that-doesnt-skirt-away-from-tough-realities/article29392588/.