WAR OF WOMEN IN ARISTOPHANES’ *LYSISTRATA* AND D. H. LAWRENCE’S ‘‘TICKETS, PLEASE!’’

**Abstract**

The actual and interesting point of intersection of Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (411 B.C.) and D. H. Lawrence’s ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ (1919), is that, although written in distinctively different centuries, *Lysistrata* evokes D. H. Lawrence’s ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ in terms of thematic structure. In both stories, writers present the changing status of women in wartimes, the impacts of war on the private dynamic shifts between genders and the connection of women to violence and plotting to gain power in society. This study aims at searching for the similarities between two literary works, written in distinctively different centuries, within thematic analysis to conclude that despite the passing periods, the perception of men towards women has not improved dramatically.

**Keywords:** dynamic shifts, gender, *Lysistrata*, ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’, thematic analysis.

**ARISTOPHANES’IN *LYSISTRATA* VE D. H. LAWRENCE’IN 'TICKETS, PLEASE!' ESERLERİ İNDEKİ KADINLARIN SAVAŞI**

**Özet**

Belirgin bir şekilde farklı yüzyıllarda yazılmış olmalarına rağmen, Aristophanes’ in *Lysistrata* (411 B.C.) ve D. H. Lawrence’ in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ (1919) adlı eserlerinin asıl ve şaşırtıcı keşişme noktası tematik yapı bakımından ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ adlı kısa öykünün *Lysistrata’* yi çağrıştırmasıdır. Her iki hikayede de, yazarlar, savaş zamanlarında kadınların değişen statüsünü, savaşın cinsiyetler arasındakı hareketli geçişlere etkisini ve toplumda yer edinmek adına kadınların şiddet ve komploya başvurularını göstermişlerdir. Bu çalışma, farklı yüzyıllarda yazılmış bu iki edebi eser arasındaki benzerlikleri tematik analiz çerçevesinde araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, geçen dönemlere...
rağmen, erkeklerin kadınlara bakış açılarının büyük ölçüde iyileşmediğini/değişmediğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: hareketli geçişler, cinsiyet, Lysistrata, ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’, tematik analiz.

INTRODUCTION

The actual and interesting point of intersection of Aristophanes’ Lysistrata (411 B.C.) and D. H. Lawrence’s ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ (1919), is that, although written in significantly distinctive centuries, both texts present the changing status of women in patriarchal societies, the impacts of war on the private dynamic shifts between genders and the connection of women to violence and plotting to gain power against men in society. Much to men’s dissatisfaction, women have to replace men in wartimes in both texts: as alternative labour force in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ and within political arena in Lysistrata. As an undeniable fact, the roles of women have been determined as ‘‘the childcare, the provision of food and clothing, the guardianship of household goods’’ (Foley 1982: 3). To some extent, both Aristophanes and Lawrence in their works incidentally refer to the new roles of women, who are struggling for self-assertion and dominance in patriarchal societies.

Common themes in Lysistrata and ‘Tickets, Please!’

In Lysistrata, Greek women, guided by Lysistrata, revolt against men and withhold any sexual affair until their men agree to stop the Peloponnesian War and bring peace to the country. The comic episode of the play emerges from the women’s trivial and domestic concerns when dealing with a manly topic ‘‘war’’. Aristophanes does not openly present his feministic views in the play, yet through a critical feminist perspective, we can see his messages when we analyse his work in the deeper structure. Similarly, centuries onwards Aristophanes, D. H. Lawrence characterizes the changing roles of women after the I. World War in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’. Through the depiction of an unusual relation between a tramline inspector, John Thomas Raynor, and a conductor, Annie Stone in the Midlands tramline service, Lawrence extends beyond the struggle of women to reinforce power against men in a patriarchal society. The story, as explained by Kiernan (1992: 210), ‘‘is a version of the emancipative collapse of the dominant order of sexuality under the pressure of emergent new configurations of feminine need and potential’’. Besides showing the changing status of women in male dominated societies due to war, the stories of Lysistrata and ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ develop the theme of the struggle of women to maintain dominance and power. From the very beginning in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’, D. H. Lawrence portrays tramline girls as powerful as men in tram service in England which ‘‘is entirely conducted by girls’’ (640), indicating the fact that ‘‘the number of women employed in industry in Britain increased by more than a million, with about seven hundred thousand directly replacing men’’ and the ‘‘mass conscription of its active men had no choice but to look for an alternative labour force’’ (Simpson 1982: 63-4).

The social context of Lawrence’s story foregrounds the transformation of domesticated traditional women into a more masculine individual who work in ‘‘the most dangerous tram-service in England’’ (640). The tramline girls of the story are depicted as: ‘‘fearless young hussies who in their ugly blue uniforms, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps on
their heads, they have all the *sang-froid* of an old-commissioned officer’ (640). They ‘fear nobody – and everybody fears them’ (640-1). Similarly, Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* portrays women with strong will and power on whom ‘Nature has lavished with virtue, grace, boldness, cleverness, and whose wisely directed energy is going to save the State’ (25). The frustrating ending of the two texts indicate that the strong, decisive and heroic women eventually turn to their actual nature: sensitive, obedient and weak.

Unfortunately, in both *Lysistrata* and ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’, women, though dealing with a serious concern of war, are satirized for their capacities and flaws. When Lysistrata tries to persuade other women to withhold sex until men agree to bring peace, women appear in ridiculous domestic worries as their wool, flax and housework left behind: ‘I want to go home; I have some Miletus wool in the house, which is getting all eaten up by the worms’ (32) because as Calonice explains: ‘t’is not easy for women to leave the house’ (1). Women in the play are, thus, ‘caricatures…theatrical, comic women, whose gender identity is determined by what men think, by exaggerated fantasies and fears. They are the female figures completely created by men, on the stage and in the imagination’ (Taaffe 1993: 54).

The social dimension of male dominance in *Lysistrata* has degraded women’s status in society as substitutes, inferior individuals and weak emotional creatures in the background. This desperate realization is also present in Lawrence’s ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’. Although tram-girls work in hard conditions, when John Joseph appears in waiting room of the tram, all the girls try to fulfil their domestic duties: serving him tea and comforting him physically. Moreover, although the ‘stone-hearted’ (641) Annie is fearless and strong as man, she takes off her ugly uniform and dresses like a girl to attract men in the fair. As she falls in love with the famous John Thomas Reynor, she immediately plans for marriage, which indicates a traditional female desire for eternal possession.

Consequently, to gain dominance and equality in society, women create a sense of ‘womanhood’ against men and use their bodies, sexuality, intrigues and violence in both texts. For Kiernan (1992: 218), ‘women have been considered as a commodity and a possession’ because women’s influence over men extends beyond sexuality as explained by Lysistrata: ‘we [women] are good for nothing then but love and lewdness’ (8). On realizing that women’s body is the best weapon to gain victory over the Athenian men, who value women’s bodies more than their intelligence, Lysistrata uses the naked body of Peace to persuade men for peace treaty at the end. Similarly, the tramline girls in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ are dehumanized and degraded to sex objects: ‘From village to village the miners travel, for a change of cinema, of girl, of pub’ (640). They are seduced at work and: ‘they push off the men at the end of their distance. They are not going to be done in the eye – not they’ (641). That ‘fine cock-of-the-walk’ (641) John is the best example of men’s perception of women as he ‘intended to remain a nocturnal presence’ (643) when a relation becomes serious. That’s why; both Lysistrata and Annie revolt against being sex objects and desire to be taken into consideration as ‘intelligent’ beings by men.

Besides using their bodies as weapons, women in *Lysistrata* and ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ use physical violence and intrigues for self-defence, revenge and power towards men. As Lysistrata explains: ‘I’m positively ashamed to be a woman- we’re sly, deceitful, always plotting, monsters of intrigue’. Readers could attribute the physical violence of women to their desire to conceal power and dominance in society. When the policemen attack the women in *Lysistrata*, women ‘abused and insulted, attack the officers with spindles and chamber pots’ (19). Also, the
unforeseen violence of tramline girls towards John in the climactic final scene of ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ leads to a ‘‘baffled shock’’ (Kiernan 1992: 215) both for the reader and John. The ‘‘strange, wild creatures hung on him [John] and rushed at him to bear him down...they struck him wild blows’’ (644). In that long stunning scene, girls’ faces ‘‘were flushed, their hair wild, their eyes were all glittering strangely’’ (645). For Granofsky (2003: 128), young women’s metamorphosis cast a serious light on the scene and the release of energies on a man ‘‘gives the real measure of the women’s lived oppression’’ (Kiernan 1992: 216).

CONCLUSION

The most crucial discussions of Lysistrata and ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’ concentrate on the question of whether the Greek women and the tramline girls eventually have a victory over men. To some extend and in short-term, on the first glance, women seem to have a voice. However, a closer examination of the ending of both texts reveals that women are incapable of having permanent power and dominance in patriarchal societies. The unconditional acceptance and obedience of women reveal their domestic and sensible nature. It is a man (John) who is supposed to ‘‘pick one’’ of the girls as a wife in ‘‘Tickets, Please!’’. Similarly, the ending of Lysistrata suggests that after the peace treaty, women will willingly return to their domestic spheres as imposed by their husbands. That Lawrence engages women in struggle to explore their desire for power and dominance is significant. Moreover, the endings of both texts illustrate that since Aristophanes, the inferiority of women in men’s world is still peculiar because for ages, men in communities have been aroused by dominance and victory. However, as Kaplan (2003: 50) stated: ‘‘Women have always done a lot for the world, although not necessarily as part of any formal or self-conscious feminism. We do not need to go back to Greece and Lysistrata for models of how women have taken the lead in moral issues across history as citizens’’.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


