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**POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN MARTIN McDONAGH'S "THE
LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE, THE PILLOWMAN, HANGMEN"**

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Ayla ÇİÇEK tarafından hazırlanan “**Martin Mcdonagh**’nın “**Inishmore**’lu **Yüzbaşı, Yastık Adam, Cellatlar**” **Oyunlarındaki Siyasal Şiddet** ” başlıklı bu çalışma, **07.10.2022** tarihinde yapılan sınav sonucunda başarılı bulunarak, jürimiz tarafından **YÜKSEK LİSANS tezi** olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ETHIC STATEMENT

I declare that I complied with the rules of academic and scientific ethics from the proposal stage to the process of completion of the study titled *Political Violence in Martin McDonagh's "The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The Pillowman, Hangmen"* as a Master Thesis I prepared, that that I obtained all information in terms of the Project within the framework of scientific ethics and traditions, that I showed sources for each quotation I made directly or indirectly in this study I prepared as a Master`s thesis in accordance with the writing rules and that the works which I used are shown in the bibliography.

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ÖZET

MARTIN McDONAGH'NIN “INISHMORE’LU YÜZBAŞI, YASTIK ADAM ve CELLATLAR” OYUNLARINDAKİ SİYASAL ŞİDDET

“Martin McDonagh’nın Inishmore’lu Yüzbaşı, Yastık Adam ve Cellatlar Oyunlarındaki Siyasal Şiddet” başlıklı bu çalışma, şiddet kavramını ve şiddet türlerini, İrlanda Tiyatrosunun gelişim sürecini, İngiliz-İrlandalı oyun yazarı Martin McDonagh’nın yukarıda bahsedilen oyunlarındaki şiddet ve siyasal şiddet öğelerini betimleyici ve tarihsel bir bakış açısıyla ele almaktadır. Giriş bölümünde, günümüzde en istikrarlı demokrasileri bile tehdit eden şiddet ve onun bir türü olan siyasal şiddet tartışılacaktır. Siyasal şiddetin etkili silahları olan terör ve terörizm kavramları tanımlanacaktır. Şiddetin dramadaki yeri ve önemi ile dönemin siyasi olaylarının tiyatroya etkisi anlatılacaktır. İlk bölümde İrlanda tiyatrosu ve tiyatronun gelişim süreci incelenecektir. İrlanda tiyatrosunun sömürge döneminde meydana gelen siyasi ve tarihi olaylardan ne kadar etkilendiği ele alınacaktır. Ulusal İrlanda Tiyatrosunun kuruluşundan günümüze kadar olan gelişimi gözden geçirilecek ve McDonagh’nın İrlanda tiyatrosundaki yeri ve katkılarına değinilecektir. İkinci bölümde Martin McDonagh’nın hayatı, kariyeri ve suratına tiyatro anlayışı ile ilgili bilgiler verilecektir. Daha sonra McDonagh’nın Inishmore’lu Yüzbaşı, Yastık Adam ve Cellatlar oyunlarındaki siyasal şiddet ve diğer şiddet öğeleri incelenip örneklerle açıklanacaktır. Sonuç bölümünde ise, Martin McDonagh’nın Inishmore’lu Yüzbaşı, Yastık Adam ve Cellatlar oyunları ele alınarak, başta siyasal şiddet olmak üzere şiddetin genelde toplum, özelde ise birey yaşamı üzerindeki etkileri tartışılacaktır. 20. yüzyılda gerçekleşen iki dünya savaşı ile günümüzde de devam eden siyasal şiddet sorununu gözler önüne seren oyunları ile tiyatro sahnelerini büyük ölçüde etkileyen Martin McDonagh’nın oyunlarında siyasal şiddetin ve terörün gerekliliği değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Martin McDonagh, şiddet, siyasal şiddet, Suratına Tiyatro, İrlanda Tiyatrosu

ABSTRACT

POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN MARTIN McDONAGH'S "THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE, THE PILLOWMAN and HANGMEN"

This thesis titled "Political Violence in Martin McDonagh's The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The Pillowman and Hangmen" consists of the concept of violence and its types, the development process of Irish Theatre, and the violence and political violence elements in the above-mentioned plays of Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, with a descriptive and historical perspective. In the introduction, violence that threatens even the most stable democracies today and political violence, which is a type of it, will be discussed. Terror and terrorism, which are effective weapons of political violence, will be defined. The place and importance of violence in drama and the effect of the political events of the period on the theatre will be explained. In the first chapter, Irish drama and its development process will be examined. It will be discussed how much the Irish theatre was affected by the historical and political events that took place during the colonial period. The development of the national Irish theatre from its foundation to the present will be reviewed and McDonagh's place and contributions in Irish theatre will be mentioned. In the second chapter, information about Martin McDonagh's life, career, and understanding of theatre will be given. Later, the political violence and other types of violence in McDonagh's The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The Pillowman, and Hangmen will be examined and explained with examples. In the conclusion, the effects of violence, especially political violence, on society in general and the life of individuals in particular, in McDonagh's selected plays will be discussed. The necessity of political violence and terrorism will be evaluated in the plays of McDonagh, who greatly influenced the theatre stages with his plays that reveal the problem of political violence that has been lived through two world wars in the 20th century and continues today.

Key Words: *Martin McDonagh, violence, political violence, In-Yer-Face Theatre, Irish Drama*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, due to various developments and changes that have been going on, the world has become a small town. This situation has brought with it the obligation of people with different religions, languages, ethnicities, colours, cultures, beliefs, sects and creeds to live together. The history is full of good examples of living together with different cultures. The biggest obstacle to the culture of living together is the mentality that feeds on racism and discrimination all over the world.

Everyone writes about peace, but unfortunately, even in the past, violence, and war have been used to ensure peace. It is out of the question to reach clear data and historical information on whether people's tendency to violence stems from human nature or not. For example, while some believe that violence is born later, others claim that human beings tend towards violence together with an animal life instinct since their existence on earth. There is an Abel-Cain event that we know from religion. One of Adam's sons kills the other out of anger. In Greek mythology, Zeus saves his siblings by killing his father. All these examples show that even the first people had jealousy and were prone to violence and murder. Indeed, according to (Arendt, 1970), “the belief that violence is a life-supporting force is as old as Nietzsche” (p. 78).

It is not possible to write about a universal definition of violence since each different culture has its definition of violence, it is widely defined as "violence is a physical or psychological force applied to wear out or intimidate the others" (Şen, 2018). It is inevitable to see violence wherever there are people. “There is no society or country that has not suffered from violence” (WHO, 2002). We can say that violence is one of the most used problem-solving methods or ways in interpersonal relations. Violence is a problem that has always "remained" current throughout human history. However, the most important and perhaps the most dangerous thing about violence is that the state of violence is becoming more common in society and even turning into a part of daily life and becoming structural.

While there are different views on why violence occurs, there are some common conclusions. For example, people resort to violence for power. Domestic

violence, mafia, and violence-themed television series, misunderstanding of nationalism, and reaching the level of racism are among the factors that lead to violence. Situations that lead to anger and violence in people are extremely complex and unique to humans. People have the ability and power to suppress and control this anger, violence, and aggression in their internal mechanisms. People who cannot control themselves, their anger, and violence with internal mechanisms are expected to be limited by social rules or laws. As a person can exhibit violent behaviours through imitation, they can also resort to violence as a result of their innate tendencies. Arendt (1970);

Finally, more modern scientific and philosophical convictions concerning man's nature have strengthened these legal and political traditions. The many recent discoveries of an inborn instinct of domination and an innate aggressiveness in the human-animal were preceded by very similar philosophical statements (p.39).

As we see in Arendt's sentences, violence is not just behaviour; it is a way of thinking. We resort to violence not because we feel, but because we think. There are certain reasons why people resort to violence. Violence is often a reaction. According to (Arendt, 1970), "the view that violence often stems from anger is very common" (p.68). Weber (1964) defines violence as "man's domination over man through legitimate means of violence that are claimed to be legitimate" (p.6).

In the historical process, it is possible to see that conflicts always continue, sometimes individually – such as sibling fights or assassinations – and sometimes as groups/collectives – war, field battles, the terrorist organization, and mafia-type formation. Karagöz (2009) explains the historical process of political violence as follows:

We see that various institutions have developed to solve these stages in the historical process: army, police, and gendarmerie. Although most of these institutions were originally established to protect private property, they have legitimized violence to achieve their goals. This norm, which the masses have begun to adopt, is gradually accepted as law. Violence becoming invisible becomes normal for the system to function (p.24).

Balibar (2014) suggests that "We cannot clearly distinguish between individuals and groups as victims of violence and perpetrators. Obviously, those who are at risk of violence are primarily the victims" (p.60). Violence is a clear

reality today. Despite some developments that can be seen as progress in the history of humanity, "violence" has always kept its place, and even as some technological developments allow the dose and effect of violence to be increased, violence has become more visible, and more effective and destructive. For this reason, despite all human developments in science, art, and law, violence still has an important place in today's societies. According to Kavak (2020);

The phenomenon of violence continues to exist as a social problem with its more and more burning and destructive results, rather than decreasing, despite the developments in today's societies in fields such as science, law, art, and economy. Violence, for which humanity could not find a solution, maintains its existence as a "primitive tool of destruction" of the modern era (p.1).

There are many types of violence today. According to Karagöz (2009) "violence rising in four different areas as social, political, cultural and economic" (p.13), Şen (2018) explains "it has six different areas such as physical, sexual, psychological, economic, technological and political violence" (p.69). In this section, political violence, which is one of the types of violence, and the effect of political violence on the theatre stage, will be discussed.

"Political violence is the use of military units in addition to the legal security forces to protect the security of the state and public order" (Karagöz, 2009). Şen (2018) argues that "political violence is an expression of the partial accompaniment of violence to the way politics are made" (p. XIV). Violence as a political concept has always had an effective and founding role in the historical process. The use of violence has always been on the agenda in the debates of political institutions. "Systematic tortures, threats, genocides, and ultimately wars are the most severe forms of political violence" (Şen, 2018). It can be observed that all states resort to violence to a certain extent to survive. However, there may be some gaps left by the state's monopoly of legitimate violence. Groups such as the mafia, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations act to fill these gaps with various activities. For this reason, terrorist organizations, terrorism, and political violence are among the social events that have not fallen from the agenda of the world in recent years and have gained universal importance.

Political violence and terrorism are more complex phenomena than they seem. Terrorism is considered a specific form of violence. It is a multidimensional

concept that has occupied societies for many years and differs from event to event, state to state, and from time to time. It, on the other hand, is a special application of political violence, but not all political violence has to be terrorism. The state can also use political violence. The first period of terrorism begins with the workers' movements after the Industrial Revolution. It can be said that its roots go back to the French Revolution because the French Revolution brought significant developments in terms of the historical course of terrorism.

The concept of terror first came to the fore in 1789 during the French Revolution. It, used by the Jacobins, who ruled France for about a year after the French Revolution, went down in history with the bloody bloodshed and tribunals they perpetrated; according to them, the concept of terror had a positive meaning. Öztürk (2016) says, "After all, the Jacobin government is an emergency regime and has ruled the country through terror" (p.21). However, the Jacobins considered their violent actions called terrorism which is necessary to reach a peaceful environment on behalf of the state. In this context, the answer "What is terrorism?" question is rather vague. As it is known, some call it a terrorist, while others call it a freedom fighter. This is because there is no standard definition of terrorism in international law.

Karagöz (2009) says that "Terror is intentional, deliberate and strategic, and terrorists try to portray their activities as an act of war, making them call themselves *freedom fighters* or *rebels*" (p.22). On the other hand, according to Öztürk (2014), "violence directed at us is not legitimate, while violence caused by us is reasonable and exposed. Why we cannot agree on which organization is a terrorist organization is probably related to the same reason" (p. 7). The globalisation of terrorism is an essential factor that increases terrorist incidents. The borderless nature of technology, communication, and transportation has spread local terror and social violence globally. The whole world learns about even a small tribal war in an insignificant country, and it carries parties, opponents, and interests to the global arena. In this case, that action ceases to be local and turns into the world's action.

Şen (2018) states, "the globalization of terrorism and the boundless nature of risk are clear indications that national security is no longer confined to local

borders” (p.2). The terrorist attack of September 11, 2011, is also a challenge to the global power or powers. Keleş & Ünsal (1982) suggest, “The main purposes of terrorist acts are to wear down the political power in the eyes of the people and gradually weaken the moral authority of the state” (p.7). When the problems are based on ideological, cultural, ethnic, etc., conflicts have started in the social field; people may not be able to control their anger and adopt hostile attitudes. This causes political events to evolve into terrorism. When we look at the world’s countries, political violence and terrorism have faced many states, causing thousands of people to lose their lives. Today, many countries are experiencing the dark side of political violence and terrorism. Violence and its most important weapon, terror, are concepts that injure democracy and create irreparable problems. Undoubtedly, terrorism also clearly challenges democracies.

In democratic societies, it can be said that the use of force in the fight against terrorism, which is the classical method carried out with the function of the police and the military, has been replaced by a concept of struggle based on political, social, cultural, and preventive activities. However, Arendt (1970) states denying this fact (2011), “20th century is the century of violence” (p.9). For Bozbey (2015), what made Arendt think that is “Probably because there were two World Wars, bloodbaths and massacres in the 20th century” (p.3). People who had not personally witnessed these acts of violence began to wonder and watch them through television, media, videos, and movies. Kirel (1995) says, “Violence is a phenomenon that we have become accustomed to watching today, in the media, and gradually in our daily lives, and that we almost take for granted” (p.259). People can see all kinds of violence on television and on stage.

On the other hand, onstage violence is not a new phenomenon. Its roots go back to the medieval era. As Bozbey (2015) mentions, “Of course, as in Aristotle's idea of Mimesis, theatre imitates life, and reflects this violence among the society. On the other hand, onstage violence is not a recent event. It has a history as long as the history of theatre itself” (p.4). Regarding the history of theatre Franklin & Richardson (2009) state;

In the Medieval era, a great deal of graphic violence was presented onstage. In other words, the medieval understanding of torture and punishment both enabled and encouraged the dramatic depiction of

violence, as a means of coercing theatre audiences into accepting the various 'truths' enacted didactically in mysteries, miracles, and even farces. The grandiosity of violence was embedded in the very language of the law, and the violence of law was expressed in the theatre (64).

In the middle Ages, the gruesome, pathetic, and awe-inspiring rituals of public execution began to occur. Courts consisting of the executioner, the gallows, the priest-confessor, the judge, and the convicted criminals were established in the squares. Whatever the context of the publicly sacrificed prisoner, however, it was done, it was automatically endowed with scary and violent theatricality and traditional scaffolding talk was provocative. Franklin & Richardson (2009) state:

Public executions and other sorts of physical punishment were not the only forms of medieval violence. There were also duels, similarly theatricalised, and often equally gruesome. In the middle Ages, horror was indeed a spectacle to be watched by an audience. Moreover, for some reason, the audience reacted as if the horror had been aesthetically pleasing (p.65).

The burning of heretics was carried out with less publicity and greater ceremony. Such performances inevitably made a vivid impression on the imagination of the public. The gruesome rites, the scene set to evoke the utmost horror and pity for the drama, began to create a sense of wonder and joy in the hearts and minds of the audience. The audience enjoyed the terrifying scenes and the portrayal of evil.

The understanding of theatre for the purification of the soul from fears, and performing violence on stage is a theatrical understanding that has been going on since the Aristotle period. The sympathy and critical thinking presented to the audience, especially by modern and contemporary theatre or classical texts applied to the stage with new readings, contribute to the research and solution of violence. The representation of violence in the theatre is also not a new situation, it is said that this genre has its roots in Artaud's theatre of brutality (Aslan, 2017).

Writers sometimes do not display violence directly on stage; they send messages about violence with actors called a chorus instead of performing it. Aristotle (1996) mentions the chorus "One should handle the chorus as one of the actors; it should be part of the whole and should contribute to the performance" (p.30). This tradition continued for a while in theatre. By the 1990s, phenomena

such as violence, barbarism, social inequality, local and universal wars, and ethical collapse in social institutions and people, experienced in countries and around the world, emerged as facts that plundered and destroyed the whole world. The need for new methods and writers who bring all these facts to the attention of people and make them the subject of the article has increased.

In the 1990s, with the privatization of state institutions, the rising unemployment rate, and capitalism becoming more brutal, writers such as Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson, Philip Ridley, and Martin McDonagh emerged. According to Biçer (2010) “The young pioneers of the new understanding in theatre, which emerged in the 1990s and is called "In-Yer-Face" by Aleks Sierz, were brought up under the pressure of the conservative practices of the Thatcher administration” (p.5). The collapse of the Berlin Wall, Thatcher's withdrawal from the political scene, and the end of the ideological partisanship of the Cold War showed that change is possible, especially among young people, and encouraged them to experience new things in the theatre. Artaud (2021) says “Theatre needs to be free like expressions” (p.106). The new generation of writers has greatly influenced the theatre stages with their plays that reveal the two world wars that took place and the ongoing violence problem in the 20th century with its ongoing dimensions. According to Artaud (2021) “Instead of returning to certain and sacred texts, it is important, first of all, to break the theatre's dependence on the text and reinvent the concept of a kind of unique language caught between gesture and thought” (p.81).

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* was the first example of this new understanding, after Osborne, Sarah Kane's *Blasted* ushered in a new era in theatre. An unprecedented era of theatrical freedom began. Scenes of sexuality, violence, blood, nudity, torture, and rape began to be displayed on the stage. Aleks Sierz (2009) explains the emergence of all this in the 90s with the following words:

The nineties were brutal and violent years. Every day, news of war and murder was seen in the media. Terrorist bombings, ethnic cleansing, and mass graves left lasting marks in the public imagination. As the uneasiness arising from child abuse, domestic violence, and violence on the streets cast a shadow over the idea that

the home was a safe shelter; the fear of crime was becoming as big a social problem as the crime itself (p.253).

In-Yer-Face theatre examines issues that are considered intangible. It allows the viewer to feel extreme emotions while watching the play without leaving it to guess. It astonishes the audience by clearly displaying sexuality and violence on stage. Aleks Sierz describes In-Yer-Face theatre in his own words:

In-Yer-Face theatre is any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message. It is a theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves, and provoking alarm. Often drama employs shock tactics or is shocking because it is new in tone or structure, or because it is bolder or more experimental than what audiences are used to. Questioning moral forms, it affronts the ruling ideas of what can or should be shown onstage: it also taps into more primitive feelings, smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, and creating discomfort. Crucially, it tells us more about who we are. Unlike the type of theatre that allows us to sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, the best In-Yer-Face theatre takes us on an emotional journey, getting under our skin. In other words, it is experiential, not speculative (Sierz, 2000).

The young generation of writers, who are considered representatives of In-Yer-Face, try to confront the audience with terrible reflections of the real world. Sierz (2011) says “They introduced a new sensationalism: whatever you think of In-Yer-Face theatre – a sensibility which was characterized by explicit portrayals of sex and violence, with a fresh directness of expression, rawness of feeling and bleakness of vision – it certainly put new writing back on the map” (p.21).

In this thesis, political violence and its effects in Martin McDonagh's plays; *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman* and *Hangmen*, will be studied in a descriptive, thematic and historical way. The history of Irish theatre will also be studied to understand the process better. It is aimed to show the details of the development of Irish theatre by studying Irish history, and the effect of this development on McDonagh's plays has been tried to be explained by blending it with the concepts of political violence, terror, and terrorism.

CHAPTER I: THE HISTORY OF IRISH THEATRE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT TO THE PRESENT

Ireland is one of the countries with the oldest history in the world. The development of Irish theatre is as old as its history. It is possible to divide the development process of Irish Theatre into three periods: its origins, the twentieth century, and contemporary Irish theatre. The first period includes the historical origins of Irish theatre, the national awakening of the people, and the emergence of the national Irish theatre. There have been some developments throughout history that have changed the fate of the Irish nation. These developments also affected Irish culture and literature. One of these important developments is the adoption of Christianity. Ireland became inhabited about 7000 years ago. “Christianity, which would gain great importance in the life of Irish society, was only started to spread in the 5th century by a clergyman named Saint Patrick” (Çapan, 2014). Curtis (2005) explains this important change as follows:

In the spiritual history of Ireland, the first great name is that of Patrick, ‘the Apostle of Ireland’. He gave to this pagan island the priceless gift of the Christian faith and the moral order of the Christian Church. He opened it up to Latin civilization and the culture of Rome, which, though the Empire died, survived in the Church. He turned a land that had no written literature into a land where scholars and poets cultivated both the Latin, or learned speech, and the Gaelic, the dearly loved native speech (p. 6).

With the coming of Christianity, the art of poetry developed in Ireland, and the foundations of written literature were laid. Folk tales and epics were not written in Ireland before. Bards called "File" were reading them aloud. Despite the spread of Christianity and the development of literacy in Ireland, these bards remained the main representatives of Irish literature until 1603. Since the tradition of poeticism from the past is continued, the problems that will be the subject of the theatre had not been mentioned, and fairy tale and epic style products have been put forward. This is not the only reason why the theatre has not flourished, but also the people who are the subject of theatres in other countries live disconnected from the city, in the countryside in Ireland.

Another important reason why the Irish theatre could not develop is the occupations on the island. In the 9th and 10th centuries, the invasion of the island

by the Vikings and then by the Normans caused British domination and oppression in Ireland. Ireland, which lived under the pressure of England until the end of the 20th century, could not progress in many areas. Theatre is one of these areas. In 1532, Norman-born King of England Henry VIII's conversion to Protestantism marked a new era in Irish history. This event completely changed the fate of Ireland. Although the English, Welsh, and Scots adopted Protestantism, most Irish adhered to the Catholic Church. This situation forms the basis of the sectarian conflicts that continue today.

There was a "Great Famine" in Ireland, in 1845. In this period, there was a great decrease in the population due to those who died of hunger and migrated to different countries, especially the USA. Some Irish chose to take up arms but were not successful and easily dispersed. After the famine, the Irish language and tradition also lost their importance. English has started to be used as a mother tongue in every field.

In 1918, the IRA was established as the official army of the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Republican Army, which chose to fight, created an atmosphere of violence that negatively affected both the nation and culture. As an illegal organization, the IRA began to fight for Irish independence. At first not taken seriously by the British government, IRA has shown how dangerous they can be with their simultaneous terrorist attacks. England tried to solve this problem through legal means, but when it was unsuccessful, they chose to respond to violence with violence. When the IRA increased their attacks, they continued their actions as a problem affecting even the 20th century. "The current Irish Republic's war of independence after 121 years of British control and the independence it achieved in 1921 can be seen, in a way, as the success of the IRA" (Alptekin, 2020). Another armed organization is INLA. "The Irish Republican Socialist Party and its armed part, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), were founded in 1974 by those who left Sinn Fein and the IRA, accusing them of reformism" (Nar, 2020). INLA aimed to bring communism to the region. INLA declared a ceasefire after 24 years of armed struggle and did not become active again.

While all these actions and troubles continue, the theatre was trying to find a way for itself. All political actions on the island continued to affect the literature and art of Ireland. Since there was no theatre building to stage their theatres, plays were staged to a limited number of spectators in houses or small halls. The backwardness of the theatre culture in Ireland was attributed to the backwardness of the people. The misery, ethnic wars, and British pressure in the country caused Ireland not to develop and become civilized. This situation harmed literature and art branches as well as all other fields. Theatre and other branches of art also developed in civilized societies such as Rome, London, Athens, and Paris. In Ireland, life was mostly rural. This prevented people from needing a theatre building.

Irish literature is made up of all these wars, pains, joys, and heroism. Irish people have endured many hardships such as hunger and poverty with the dream of an independent, happy Ireland. The sense of nationalism of the Irish, who searched for various ways to get together in all these troubles, was strengthened. While some were looking for ways to fight this sense of nationalism, others gave importance to cultural integrity by clinging to their old epics and tales and turning to Celtic literature. In the second half of the 19th century, interest in domestic literature increased. To resist centuries of oppression and poverty, the Irish started to be interested in the richness of their ancient epics, which they rediscovered.

Celtic love of nature and imagination can also be seen in Celtic literature. People's admiration for natural events and forces of nature is also often described in folk tales. "The enthusiastic adoption of the revived Celtic literature at the end of the 19th century can even be considered a reaction to the rationalism of the 18th century and the materialism of the 19th century" (Çapan, 2014).

The second period is considered to be the twentieth-century Irish Theatre. The birth of Irish theatre coincides with this century. Irish theatre was born as a result of the search for revival and national identity of oppressed people who were exposed to exploitation for centuries. A movement in the cultural field was thought appropriate in a unifying quest to gather the entire nation around it. Starting the national movement in the field of theatre has also been an opportunity for Ireland, which has not had a national theatre in its history. In this way, there

were also opportunities to write plays reflecting on their own lives and problems. Kitishat (2012) states “One of the distinctive features of the Irish theatre is its adoption and its reintroduction of the Irish habitat to strengthen national feelings among audiences” (p. 83).

The national theatre movement that emerged in Ireland at the end of the 19th century was a natural result of the independence enterprise at that time. More than 100 years of political warfare in Ireland forced the Irish to establish national unity and integrity against the British Empire. While trying to establish a national theatre, which was one of the sources that fed this political unity, European theatre was developing in Europe. In Norway, Ibsen began to write his first plays. Bernard Shaw supported Ibsen, who started to reflect on the problems of middle-class society from the stage. This theatre movement, initiated by European writers such as Ibsen and Strindberg, also indirectly influenced writers such as Yeats, Gregory and Edward Martyn, who were trying to establish a national theatre in Ireland. However, Yeats's rebellion against the stereotypical theatre understanding of that period set him apart from Ibsen and some European playwrights. His inspiration was the pre-Christian Irish folk tales and the rural sensibility towards nature. To realize this dream, Yeats founded the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899 with the help of the intellectuals who gathered around him. The theatre, which was supported financially by Edward Martyn in the first place, later got incredible support from Lady Gregory, a wealthy widow. Lady Gregory not only provided financial support but also let them use her home as an office for literary writers to meet and discuss.

This movement, which was started in the Irish Theatre in the 20th century under the leadership of Yeats and Augusta (Lady) Gregory, was also supported by the writers such as Synge and Sean O'Casey. The movement aims to bring the oppressed and neglected peasant class and traditions to the stage. They thought that the most sincere way to do this was to write the tales, which became legendary by being told among the people, in the daily language of the villagers, and transfer them to the whole world. To reflect this naturalness on the stage, it was necessary to know the history of the Irish very well. It was also important that the stage be decorated with elements that reflect the countryside and its beliefs, far from an exaggeration. “The national culture was peasant/farmer culture, the

language had to be Gaelic beside English, the dominant denomination was Catholic, the ideology was nationalist ideology, and these were the most important elements of national identity” (Sayin, 2009). At the same time, the scenery and costumes should not overshadow the actor. Writers who wrote out of these determined rules were criticized, and even their plays were not staged. For a long time, they did not realize that their strict stance was causing divisions rather than uniting the Irish people, because the national Irish identity they spoke of was identified only with the countryside and the peasantry. Workers living in the city or Protestant Irish in Northern Ireland were marginalized.

The main feature of the new theatre movement was its national sensitivity, not making a political propaganda tool, and approaching the people of its own country with a critical understanding of reality while benefiting from public resources. The pioneers of this literary awakening, mostly of Celtic origin, were inspired by folk tales and did not want to be a tool of political propaganda. Yeats, O'Casey and Lady Gregory also experienced various problems in their works, claiming that they mocked Ireland. This independent attitude caused negative reactions, especially among the ultra-nationalists. Those who wanted to see examples of vulgar nationalist attitudes in the theatre, as in other artistic events, consistently reacted negatively to the plays of Synge and Yeats.

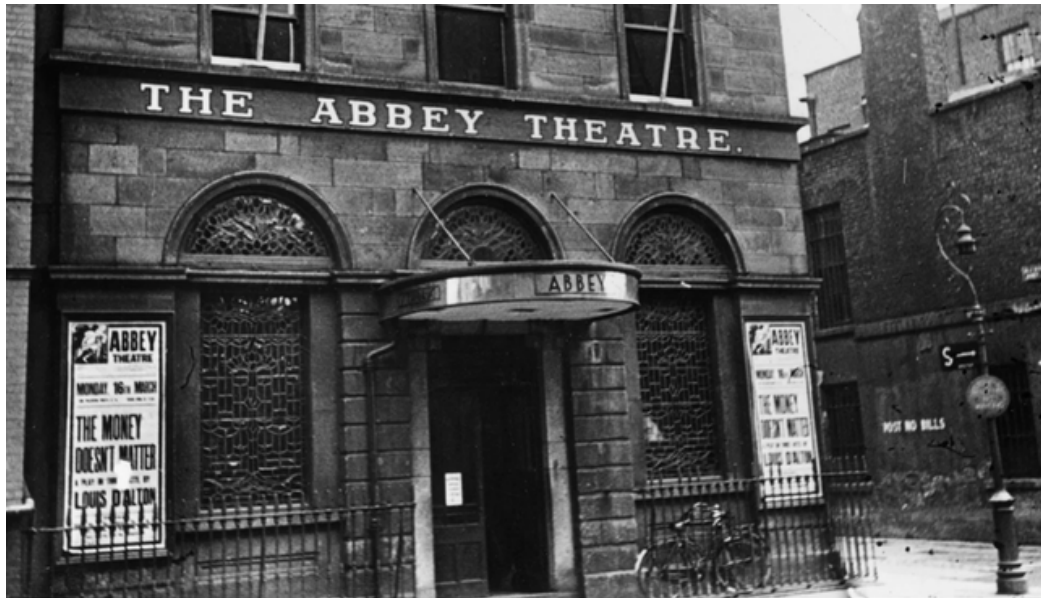
Yeats and Lady Gregory felt that educating Irish actors for their plays would convey their message and reflect the simplicity of the Irish peasants' behaviour better. While they were searching, they discovered two brothers, Frank and William Fay, who were talented in acting. The Fay brothers, who impressed Yeats with their acting, were accepted by the Irish Literary Society in a short time.

The Irish National Dramatic Society was founded in 1902. Yeats, president of the society, declared William Fay as the founder of the association. Eight plays were staged. The most notable "In the Shadow of the Glen" and John Millington Synge, the writer of "Riders to the Sea", also joined the Irish theatre movement. Miss Horniman, who watched and liked the plays, announced that she would donate money to the community every year. Thanks to this financial support, the National Irish Theatre was founded in 1904 as the Abbey Theatre. Between 1904 and 1909, the Abbey Theatre gained significant success both in Ireland and in

other countries, especially with Synge's plays. Considered a sign of Celtic literature resurgence, the Abbey was staging plays in English. "Founded by Yeats and Augusta Gregory in 1904 to serve this purpose, the Abbey Theatre desired to be independent culturally and unite the nation politically by serving a single cause. Believing that there should be a national theatre for this, they always aimed to flatter national pride by staging plays in which Ireland and its people were properly introduced" (Sayın, 2009). For this purpose, the Irish peasant, unlike usual, was considered an intelligent, hardworking, noble, determined and quick-witted character. Kitishat (2012) argues "The new theatre attempted to reintroduce the "other" image of the Irish people by changing the negative stereotype that the colonizer associated with them" (p.85). One of the most important features of the Irish theatre movement was the voice of Irish peasants, who had not been able to make their voices heard until that time. "Viewing language in this light, the Irish theatre focused on the issue of language and aimed at introducing Irish plays using the peasants' dialect. These attempts had a national and a cultural influence among the Irish audiences and hence is seen as a step forward establishing an independent distinctive national identity" (Kitishat, 2012).

Yeats was in search of beauty in the land of dreams. He used genies, fairies and demons instead of real people in his plays. Yeats had planned to develop a poetry theatre in the Abbey, but the development of public theatre disappointed him. However, it had to be admitted that "It was not Yeats's overly 'aristocratic' attitude that brought the Abbey Theatre into the 20th-century literary history, but the real-life, criticizing plays of Synge, Lady Gregory and Sean O'Casey" (Çapan, 2014). Lady Gregory set out for the same purpose, but she managed to stay closer to the public and daily life. When money was needed, she looked for support, found solutions in case of disagreements between authors, and used her home as a place of work. These features made her the most positive member of the Irish theatre movement. She was also the author whose plays were most staged because she knew the customs and language of the people very well. Lady Gregory wrote more than thirty plays and was one of the bravest Irish playwrights to tackle religious issues. "The most successful aspect of Lady Gregory's plays was that she described the daily life of the people. Even in her plays, in which she chose fairy tales as the subject, we see that folk beliefs were handled. The spoken language

she used in these plays was a language that brought the folk language to the stage with its rhymes, idioms and music” (Çapan, 2014).



Picture 1. The Abbey Theatre in Dublin before the fire of 1951. (irishcentral, 2022)

Yeats wanted to build a theatre based on reality; however, Synge was able to realize this dream. Yeats and Synge's meeting in Paris brought an important writer to Irish theatre. Synge's love of nature and closeness to nature can easily be seen in his plays. At Yeats' suggestion, Synge sailed to the Aran Islands in 1898. This is considered a turning point for the Irish Theatre movement. Improving close relations in the Aran Islands, Synge described the unemployed, vagrants, and poor people he encountered on the island as they were by combining them with the education he received. Synge started to go to the Aran Islands every summer and began to live on the island as if he were one of them. He began to learn the Gaelic language and chatted with them in Gaelic. In his plays, he also wrote about the deep connection between nature and the lives of these people, whom he knew very well. Synge gained a lifetime supply of resources and experiences in the Aran Islands. He used the stories he heard in his plays. His experiences on the island formed Synge's literary personality. Synge found creativity within himself on the island.

Synge and Yeats' understanding of art did not quite fit each other. While Yeats thought that the duty of the theatre was to engrain national consciousness

by teaching people their history and epics, Synge handled the natural reactions and behaviours of people in the face of war, love and death. The universality of his plays also made him the most beloved Irish writer. Synge wrote his plays in the peasant language he learned in the location. It is thought that poetry came back to the theatre with the language Synge used. In his plays, he dealt with only a limited part of Irish society. He dealt with the peasantry but not with the social problems of contemporary Ireland. According to some critics, the fact that he did not write about city life and city people, which he knew very well, left him half. It was Sean O'Casey who tried to complete this part that Synge did not mention.

O'Casey, one of the important revolutionaries of the labour movement, did not get a drama education. He was influenced by Shakespeare and Dion Boucicault was interested in the developing Celtic literature movement and learned the Celtic language. After a few tries, O'Casey finally signed the milestone plays for himself and the Abbey Theatre: "The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, The Plow and The Stars". Like Synge, O'Casey also wrote about Irish realities that were not similar to the plays of Yeats' dreams. Although Yeats did not like this situation, world theatre history was gaining a new and important playwright with O'Casey. Some bigots were angered by the fact that he handled religion, sexuality and patriotism, which were considered dangerous topics in his plays. "His plays later made O'Casey to be remembered as a socialist writer. Although he was not a member of a worker family and he did not grow up in a lower-class area, he touched on the conditions of the working class and left his nationalist position which he had under the influence of many nationalist plays and playwrights" (Bozbey, 2015).

Abbey Theatre's success is due to a simple and poetic staging and acting understanding that prioritizes national characteristics, as well as playwrights who do not distort Irish realities and adopt a realistic attitude and method while benefiting from public sources. Yeats defended all his writers against various attacks and bigotry fearlessly. For Kitishat (2012) "Staging Irish national plays had a powerful impact on the national interaction of the Irish audience more than any other political propaganda" (p.86). Thus, the Abbey Theatre made history as one of the brilliant victories in the art of the Irish War of Independence.



Picture 2. The Abbey Theatre Today. (wikipedia, 2022)

The period of contemporary Irish theatre, which we can call the third period of Irish theatre history, begins after the burning of the Abbey Theatre. The Abbey Theatre that was burned down by opposing views in 1951 harmed Irish theatre. On the other hand, Ireland gained its independence, but British oppression and supremacy continued in many areas. This pressure caused important writers such as James Joyce and Samuel Beckett to leave Ireland. In the 1960s, things started to change. With the capitalist system, the rich, who were few in the cities, getting richer, and the poor in the rural areas could not benefit from material privileges. Writers of this period opposed tradition.

Although not completely breaking away from the theme of creating a national identity, new determinants that affect national identity are added to the plays of these authors. The new problems of changing Ireland are handled in the theatre. The main ones of these problems are alienation and immigration, religion-individual conflict, freedom of belief and the new Irish 'non-identity' created by the spiritual values that had held the nation together until then, but now started to loosen and the changing moral understanding (Sayın, 2009).

New writers question both social problems and the systems of previous writers in their plays. Characters are people who live in a dilemma between the old and the new and are constantly in search of a concept. Some important writers

of the period are Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Hugh Leonard, John B. Keane, Thomas Kilroy, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh and Conor McPherson. These writers criticize that the theatre only aims to create an identity, and they argue that it should also reflect social, political, current and sexual problems. Writers try to mirror civil wars and internal divisions. Written with this logic, they take John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" and the Royal Court Theatre as a model.

Towards the end of the 1960s, just as the understanding in the theatre was about to change, violence broke out in Northern Ireland in 1969 and the task of re-creating the national consciousness in the public was again left to the theatre. Until the end of the 1970s, the act of raising public awareness and gathering around national identity continued through theatre. Ireland experienced very rapid economic development in the 1980s. Especially those who immigrated to the USA and other European countries started to come back. Incoming migrations not only stimulated the economy but also destroyed the traditional nationalist ideology that had been going on for years. A new identity emerged in Ireland, undecided between the past and the present. Writers like Brian Friel continued to write plays that reflected Ireland's problems. Economic and social change has negatively affected the country in the field of theatre as well as in every field. Instead of fancy Irish defeats and victories, writers wrote about Irish realities.

Rapidly developing technology and industry, national ideals that were on the verge of extinction, urbanization caused by migration to the cities, and families were fragmented by immigration, breaking away from the village culture, which was an integral part of Irish identity, trying to become European in every field with the effect of being in the European Union affected the psychology of the people. The Irish people, accustomed to the village life, were dizzy from this rapid change, felt increasingly depressed in the big city traffic and missed the simple and traditional life of the past (Sayın, 2009).

In the 1990s, a Europeanized, urbanized Irish society emerged. "Colonialism was over, the colonialist's military forces were withdrawn, the independent Irish republic was established, but the new nation-state had an elite upper class and this class had replaced the colonizer; that is, colonialism was going on differently. Promises made within the borders of independent Ireland were not kept. In Irish society presented in the texts, the dominant emotion was the feeling of betrayal" (Sayın, 2009). The 90s was also a turning point in the

history of theatre. Despite all the innovations, problems emerged in the fields of racism, violence and globalization. Writers began to be interested in the process of globalization and the internationalization of theatre. By the 2000s, writers of the period began to write about individual freedom, secularism and tolerance. Concepts such as Catholic, Protestant and Republican, for whom thousands died 100 years ago, were no longer so important in globalizing Ireland.

With the death of Sarah Kane and Conor McPherson's play *The Weir* (1997), Irish theatre is said to start a new era. Once a traditional rural culture, Ireland has now become an urban country powered by the global economy and part of the new information age. It should not be forgotten that contemporary Irish playwrights, on the one hand, developed with Celtic tales, on the other hand, they inherited a very different Ireland from their ancestors.

“The extraordinary range of Irish stories builds on more than 2,000 traditions that have successfully blended Celtic, Christian and English influences to create some of the most outstanding oral literature in all of Europe” (Ínan, 2017). One of the most popular themes used in literary writing in Ireland has been the spirit world. It is widely known that fairies form the basis of Irish culture and Ireland is home to all kinds of fairies. In the stories about fairies, the mysterious games done by the fairies on mortals are emphasized.

Conor McPherson, one of the important writers of the period, describes the psychological depth of the individual, especially embodying the mood of men who were trapped in their inner worlds. The private lives of the characters and their stuck situations in this life are actually among the topics that have been mentioned in Irish literature for many years. McPherson also emphasizes the importance of alcohol and bar culture in Ireland in his plays. “The stage setting in his plays reflects the realities of rural pubs in Ireland: the bar is part of a house and the house is part of a farm” (Ínan, 2017). McPherson’s *The Weir* is one of his important and popular plays. Middeke & Schnierer (2010) state;

Dominic Dromgoole describes the play as a ‘clever confection of different traditions of drama’, noting the shadows of Synge, O’Casey, Friel, Murphy and Billy Roche. Indeed, it abounds in signs of what is broadly perceived as the traditional Irish drama – a naturalistic pub setting, lonely old men, whimsical bachelors, boastful local businessmen, rural isolation, alcohol and storytelling. Into this is

blended a handful of contemporary references, and a self-conscious sense of modern-day doubt, to temper the formal echoes (p.279).

Ínan (2017) adds about Irish bar culture:

To illustrate that Irish pub culture is specified with hospitality, good conversations and tall tales, McPherson has used the public bar as a source of melancholic assertion in “The Weir”. The play represents Irish culture by underlining the fact that pubs are second homes for sad, solitary men, especially in the countryside. The playwright wants the audience to feel the solitude of the Irish male deep-rooted in the spooky tales (p.72).

McPherson underlines that alcohol is very common as well as bar culture in Ireland. From the theatre to romantic relationships, from funerals to weddings, and even going to the theatre, alcohol is consumed in each environment. According to McPherson, bars are not just places to drink. People in the bar discuss global politics, think about the meaning of life, and recite poetry. Bars are also places where people relax with a glass of drink. Grene (2005) argues that:

*The twinned successes of the two young Irish playwrights, so utterly different in style, temperament, and attitude, has been the subject of endless media stories. Theatre critics have tended to prefer one or the other, some regarding McDonagh as brash and heartless, some accusing of McPherson lacking dramatic edge. Both have been quickly assimilated into the heritage of Irish theatre stretching back to Synge and O'Casey, McDonagh's claims that he had never read Synge and O'Casey before he wrote *Beauty Queen*, and McPherson's uneasiness at being labelled an 'Irish' playwright (p.299).*

Early in his career, Conor McPherson did not accept the idea of being an Irish playwright but later became increasingly aware of how his Irish past had shaped his work. McPherson in many respects seems to fit harmoniously within what is generally regarded as the traditions of Irish theatre. His concern with storytelling, attentiveness to the subtle rhythms and idiomatic expressions of daily speech might be considered features. McPherson's characters do not want to submit to the globalizing world, they resist as much as they can, but are subject to loneliness and disappointment. “Despite being claimed in 1999 as Ireland’s latest ‘literary giant’, McPherson’s drama has certainly not generated scholarly debate comparable to that surrounding his close contemporaries Martin McDonagh or Marina Carr” (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010).

Another important Irish playwright that emerged after the economic rapid growth of the Celtic Tiger is Marina Carr. Carr is important in that she is the first woman writer whose play was staged after decades. According to Middeke & Schnierer (2010) “Carr has been described as ‘characterized by the expression, in richly scabrous language, of unhappy personal relationships in a comparatively wealthy new society only one generation removed from peasant culture’” (p.58). Her poetic plays, mostly about home life in Irish villages, were staged in many parts of the world. *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats* are amongst her notable plays. *Portia Coughlan* is portrayed as ruthless and hopeless, while *By the Bog of Cats* is portrayed as a theatrical example of courage and fearlessness. Richards (2004) states;

In Portia Coughlan (1995) and By the Bog of Cats (1998) Marina Carr dramatizes the impossibility of life by tracing journeys towards death. Both plays are haunted, literally and figuratively, by the dead, by suicide or killing, and by the act of dying. But death is reframed as the final resistance. The heroines are not the victims of violence but the perpetrators (p. 158).

Carr's exaggerated and extreme plays on violence, death, loss and disgust have been consistently criticized. However, by continuing to represent these themes, she reaffirmed that she was at the centre of contemporary Irish theatre. The pitying irony and poetic skill of Carr made her important for Irish drama as well. For Cronin & Jordan (2016) “If theatre does not ask difficult questions and interrogate our assumptions, it is redundant. Carr’s plays are difficult but crucial in their vocalization of the immense recent changes in attitude in Irish society” (p. 202). Traumatic authority gaps in the late twentieth century can easily be seen in Marina Carr's plays. Llewellyn-Jones (2002) supports this situation by stating that “The problematic identity of passionate women whose strong feelings do not fit their socio-economic context, already explored by Carr in *Portia Coughlan*, is further evident both in her earlier work *The Mai* (1994) and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998). Carr’s plays draw upon both the power of Irish landscape and myths of origin” (p. 87).

What distinguishes her plays from their more traditional predecessors, however, is the way that they disrupt those inherited sets and certainties and suggest their gradual passing from the world of social reality into that of the

parodic stage presence of disturbed states of mind and being. For Middeke & Schnierer (2010) “her place as ‘the most visionary Irish playwright of her generation is marked by huge creativity, restless courage and epic ambition” (p. 48).

Today, approximately seven million people live in Ireland, which is one of the safest countries in the world. However, it is estimated that millions of people worldwide have Irish ancestry, making the Irish diaspora one of the largest of any nation. Conor McPherson, Marina Carr and Martin McDonagh, the important writers of Ireland, try to mirror the civil wars and internal divisions in Ireland in their plays. These writers, unlike writers in their history, were neither great nationalists nor war against tradition. They looked at today's society and wrote down what was left. The most discussed among these writers is the "Anglo-Irish" writer Martin McDonagh.

CHAPTER II: MARTIN McDONAGH'S LIFE, CAREER AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN "THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE, THE PILLOWMAN AND HANGMEN"

McDonagh, whose parents were Irish, was born in London in 1970 and has spent most of his life in a London area populated by Irish people. McDonagh's father was a construction worker and his mother was a cleaner. Although born and raised in London, he spent his summer holidays in Ireland in Connemara or Sligo. Thus, he did not stay away from Irish culture and life. After his parents returned to Connemara, McDonagh started to live in London with his older brother, John Michael McDonagh who was a screenwriter. He left school when he was 16 years old. He began to spend his time watching television and going to the movies. He later worked in an office and supermarket. After writing short stories and movie scripts for a few years, he decided to try himself in the theatre. Twenty-two plays he wrote were rejected by the BBC.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane, the first play written in eight days by Martin McDonagh, was staged at the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs in 1996. By staging the play, the unknown McDonagh, who had lived on unemployment benefits until then, was suddenly the new literary celebrity of England. The play was highly appreciated and received many awards. By the end of the nineties, the play had been translated into about twenty-eight languages. Also in 1998, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was nominated for six Tony Awards, four of which were won, and the Laurence Olivier Award. McDonagh won an Oscar in 2005 for his short film "Six Shooter". His first film, "In Bruges", which he wrote and directed, won great acclaim from both the audience and the critics and received awards at festivals. His second film, "Seven Psychopaths", which he wrote and directed following the footsteps of his first film, and which also told a goofy story, was also very successful. There are also two radio plays. McDonagh has written nine plays, one of which has not been published or staged. "Time magazine reported that in 1997 McDonagh was 'the only writer this season, apart from Shakespeare, to have four plays running concurrently in London'" (Murphy, 2006). His most successful play *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* were staged in 1996, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West* were staged in

1997, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* was staged in 2001, *The Pillowman* was staged in 2003, his first and only play set in America *A Behanding in Spokane* was staged in 2010, and *Hangmen* was staged in 2015. *The Banshees of Inisherin* was neither published nor staged. He is best known for his Leenane trilogy, the Aran Islands trilogy, and the Olivier award-winning play *The Pillowman*.

In McDonagh's plays, both traces of the plays of master writers before him and elements of satire, irony, grotesque and parody, which are traditional Irish theatre techniques, can be seen. It can be said that McDonagh uniquely represents modern Ireland, combining traditional lyrical beauty with violence and ironic humour. "McDonagh repeats what Synge and O'Casey did at the beginning of the 20th century in the industrialized and wealthy 21st-century Ireland" (Sayin, 2009). The writer is inspired by Irish and British writers such as Yeats, Gregory, O'Casey, Brendon Behan, Harold Pinter, Edward Bond and Joe Orton, notably Synge.

McDonagh uses most of the elements of traditional Irish theatre. He adds to these elements, the motifs of British and American writers and his contemporaries, British Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, and he creates an original post-modern text. It can easily be seen that McDonagh was most influenced by Synge in his plays. According to Sayin (2009), "In his plays, McDonagh used the themes of violence, defying rules and taboos, questioning customs, which Synge added to the Western Irish setting" (p.19). McDonagh, like Synge, avoids being a side in the struggle for independence. Neither idealizes the local people. The relationship between reality and fiction in Synge is seen in almost every play by McDonagh.

Synge was criticized for not acting extremely nationalist and not defending the war of independence fiercely like other writers of the period. "Much of the debate around McDonagh's work has engaged with his London-Irish provenance; his insistence that he is an Irish playwright; and the veracity of his representation of Irish rural communities" (Murphy, 2006). McDonagh is similar to Synge in this feature. He also tried not to add politics to his plays. Both Synge and McDonagh have written plays which try to instil joy in life and hope by addressing the ignored feelings of unemployment, poverty, hopelessness and helplessness in

society. “He was harshly criticized by some critics and seen as outside the Irish theatre tradition for not glorifying traditional Irish identity and the struggle for independence” (Sayın, 2009). However, the author often expresses that he feels somewhere between the British and the Irish, and does not want to be defined under any political, social or religious label or trend. Martin McDonagh is a natural storyteller. ‘All I want to do’, he once said, ‘is to tell stories’ (Feeney, 1998). He does not have sharp and rigid comments on religious or political issues. He says “His plays ignore politics and social issues: ‘I’m not into any kind of definition, any kind of -ism, politically, socially, religiously, all that stuff. Besides; I’ve come to a place where the ambiguities are more interesting than choosing a strict path and following it” (Feeney, 1998). However, this has not been possible.

The characters he uses in his plays are generally excluded by society, and prone to violence and killing. “The characters in the McDonagh theatre are the kind that can be seen anywhere, anytime, each with its own story. It is possible to learn new things about these characters in a very short time” (Özata, 2012). The characters do not have much family order and peace. These issues, which reflect the social problems and family structure of the period, are proof that he cannot stay away from politics. “One of the many repeated motifs in all of McDonagh’s plays is the incapability of individual characters to become reconciled with elements of the past” (Pilný, 2004). In addition, McDonagh criticizes writers who act too nationalist. He also has a political will, which he mentions in the introduction to *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. He also wants to know how powerful the theatre is and to whom his messages reach.

Martin McDonagh has recalled wanting to write a play that would make militant Irish nationalists want to shoot him. ‘I was trying to write a play that would get me killed,’ McDonagh said. ‘I had no real fear that I would be because the paramilitaries never bothered with playwrights anyway, but if they were going to start, I wanted to write something that would put me top of the list.’ This is a political desire (O’Toole, 2009).

McDonagh is also considered as one of the important representatives of In-Yer-Face like his British contemporaries Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, but while both Kane and Ravenhill and other writers of the genre choose the big cities as the setting, McDonagh mostly chooses the western Irish countryside. “Because

to him, violence is not limited to big city life, it has a wider dimension; it is universal and it can occur itself wherever people are” (Sayın, 2009). McDonagh wanted to show people that violence is very close to them, even within their families. Thus, it can be better understood why McDonagh chose Ireland as the setting.

In McDonagh's plays, the most important components of traditional Irish theatre elements such as storytelling, including grotesque figures, and mixing comedy and tragedy can be seen. “The plays of Martin McDonagh showed that darkness could be endured with a laugh, even if it was a grim one” (Sierz, 2011). He uses grotesque elements to play with the expectations of the audience in *The Pillowman*. The first scene of the play looks quite realistic. A writer is subjected to political violence by a couple of detectives. However, this is getting exaggerated. Although McDonagh uses traditional and contemporary themes together, he signally carries the Irish theatrical tradition. The tragicomic genre in McDonagh's plays is one of the most distinctive elements of the Irish theatre tradition. In McDonagh's plays, some characters make their own rules that go against the rules and conventions. In his plays, both British and Irish traditions and traces are seen intertwined. In his plays, the individual is sacred, not the national identity.



Picture 3. Martin McDonagh. (filmloverss, 2019)

According to Sierz, McDonagh is one of the most important pioneers of In-Yer-Face. In In-Yer-Face, the famous movement of the period, rape, murder, events involving emotional and physical violence, torture, sexuality, and drug addiction are conveyed with abusive language.

All the at first sight familiar and idyllic country cottages, fireplaces, mantelpieces and tokens of 'Home Sweet Home' in McDonagh's West are foiled and, accordingly, disillusioned and displaced by disturbing instances of grotesque verbal, emotional, psychological, physical, structural violence – reason enough for Aleks Sierz to consider McDonagh one of his chief witnesses for In-Yer-Face Theatre (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010).

Martin McDonagh's genius lies in his ability to present tortures, murders, exploding guns, and corpses in the blood-drenched scene as a dark but truly laughable comedy. In this respect, he is one of the toughest and funniest representatives of In-Yer-Face. McDonagh doesn't use much sexuality but uses different types of violence in his plays. For example, in *The Pillowman*, a child is killing his parents, Katurian kills his brother to save him from police torture, and there are child murders. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, there is mad Padraic, who commits serial murders for his cat. In *Hangmen*, there is the murder of Mooney, no one even knows whether he is a criminal or not. Sierz (2011) says “Young playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson and Martin McDonagh, who have written highly provocative, violent, bloody and bodily plays, have saved British theatre in distress” (p. 7). The purpose of using these themes is to show that violence is not limited to the fields of terrorism, war and crime. Violence does not stand out because it is accepted in the daily lives, even in family relationships.

To sum up, despite harsh criticism, McDonagh is a proven and acclaimed playwright, with numerous awards. “What is perhaps the greatest strength of McDonagh's plays: they are simply extremely funny and exceptionally well written” (Pilný, 2004). His plays have a place on the international stage. After all, Martin McDonagh's plays up to now have potentially provided an invaluable service to Irish theatre.

The key reason for such success is McDonagh's talent as a storyteller. His plays and films are often inconclusive or ambiguous: but rather than frustrating his audiences, those features explain why his work is

so popular. The openness to interpretation is the major reason why McDonagh's work has so effortlessly crossed national and cultural boundaries, making him a truly global playwright. His success only makes sense when we think of McDonagh's work as functioning not on a page but in a theatre (or on a screen) – that is, before an audience (Loneragan, 2012).

Nelson Mandela (2002) says “The twentieth century will be remembered as a century marked by violence. It burdens us with its legacy of mass destruction, of violence inflicted on a scale never seen and never possible before in human history”, (WHO, 2002). The 90s were the bloodiest years all over the world. The 20th century, also known as the Cold War era, witnessed countless deaths and terrorist organizations developed rapidly all over the world. According to the 2002 report of the World Health Organization, “Each year, more than 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence” (p.1).

All these wars, bloody savagery and violence were shown in the media and influenced people. There have been many protests against wars, and military and political violence, reflected in the streets, media and literature. In addition, the stages have turned into places where acts of violence are openly performed. Playwrights wrote their works in this atmosphere. These domestic and international violence events have pushed Martin McDonagh to write in this genre like all other writers. Events such as the bombing terrorist attacks in England, the occupation of Afghanistan, the Gulf War, the Bosnian massacre, the terrorist attacks in Palestine, the Russian attack on Chechnya, and the US occupation of Iraq were constantly shown on television and affected society. “While the uneasiness arising from child abuse, domestic violence and violence on the streets cast a shadow over the idea that the home was a safe haven, fear of crime was becoming as big a social problem as the crime itself” (Sierz, 2009). All these wars and terrorist activities have caused a lot of psychological and physical pain in people's lives. Some of the people who had nothing to do with all these terrorist incidents or wars died, and it had many negative psychological and physical effects on the rest.

The theatre was also affected by all this chaos and affected the works of the playwrights. It was the duty of the theatre to show people this brutality and violence in all its clearness. Sierz (2009) states “Exposing violence was

sometimes a more effective form of expression than describing the terror it created with words” (p.255). Writers such as Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson and Martin McDonagh have used images and language in their plays that will bring violence to the stage with all its reality to give a moral message to society. McDonagh's reputation increased even more during this period. According to Pilný (2004);

The reasons for McDonagh's popularity are multiple, and some of them fairly obvious. First, McDonagh arrived at a time when the appetite of European audiences for the macabre and the grotesque combined with extreme violence and vulgarity has been whetted by 'In-Yer-Face Theatre', a genre which shares a number of features with McDonagh's shenanigans (229).

In-Yer-Face Theatre writers aim to shake and shock the audience. While doing this, the characters use abusive and vulgar language, resort to all kinds of violence, and undress and kill. McDonagh also aims to shock the audience by using verbal or physical violence in his plays. As Sierz (2009) mentioned in his book, Martin McDonagh, who wanted to bring sensation back to the theatre, said that “I think people should leave the theatre as if they had just stepped out of a very good rock concert. Plays should be breath-taking” (p.276). For McDonagh, the reactions of those who watch his plays are also very important in terms of understanding whether the message he wants to give reaches the targets. Russell (2009) says “In fact, watching the audience at a McDonagh play is almost as good as watching the play itself. This double act in which we watch both the stage action and the reaction by other audience members comprises one of McDonagh's great achievements in the theatre” (p.476).

In general, repeated acts of violence in McDonagh's these three plays also shatter family relationships. In *Hangmen*, parents always insult their daughter Shirley. In *Pillowman*, parents torture their children. Mairead in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* shows no more courtesy to her brother Davey. She insults him several times by insulting his long hair. She even goes so far as to put a gun to Davey's head. While Davey and Donny are annihilating the bodies, Davey is more concerned with the dress Mairead is wearing:

“Davey: *What the hell's that you're wearing?*

Mairead: *A dress! I do have them!”* (McDonagh, 2014).

McDonagh also sometimes shows violence to the audience in a bloody and brutal way in his plays. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, a man is hanging from the ceiling by his ankles, and another man threatens to cut his nipples off with a knife. In *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, a man hits a crippled boy with a hard pipe. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, her daughter burns her mother's hand with oil from a hot frying pan. These are just a few of the acts of violence in the McDonagh plays.

McDonagh's characters tend to be violent. Parlak (2012) states "Violence is, in a way, synonymous with freedom for the characters because the source of violence in these is usually the characters themselves, religion, history, country, etc. It is their rejection of what is wanted to be accepted by the facts" (p.10). Violence is not an act that McDonagh approves of. By using violence in his plays, he tries to show that there should be no violence.

In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, it is told how the IRA and INLA have deeply affected the lives of all people in the country, regardless of whether they are guilty or innocent. There are conflicts between the members of the group who could not even achieve unity even within themselves. The writer questions the existence of terrorist organizations through characters who are out of the ideal of fighting for the independence of Ireland, who can commit murder without hesitation for their interests and who can call it for their country. McDonagh was criticized for mocking the ideals of the nationalists in the play. However, what McDonagh criticizes is not only the IRA and INLA but an independent Ireland and murders, political violence and terrorism committed to vain in the name of ideals. The writer thinks that society cannot grasp the seriousness of all these events. So, he wanted to shake them by showing terror and violence in their truest form on stage. McDonagh aims to deliver a message of peace through violence. Lonergan (2012) states "McDonagh's target is not just Irish terrorism but also the compliant and complacent culture that makes Irish terrorism possible" (p.63).

In the same way, the characters Ariel and Tupolski in *The Pillowman* give the message that as if there are political references in the stories written by Katurian, Michal and Katurian were questioned for them. However, in the later scenes of the play, it is revealed that they were taken on suspicion of murder. It

highlights the problem of restricting individual freedoms in a totalitarian regime. *The Pillowman* is also an example of the legitimacy of state-sanctioned political violence. Normally, Katurian's crime does not require execution, but he is killed because the state officials think it fits. In *The Pillowman*, McDonagh conveys the message that the state cannot protect children from violence. In *Hangmen*, elements of political violence can be seen as in the other two plays. Hangman Harry is a figure of political power authorized by the state. He thinks that killing for the state is not a crime. Like James Hennessy, Mooney is thought to have been innocently executed by a government official. In the play, the message is given that the death sentence causes wrong processes and irreversible mistakes. Neither Katurian nor Mooney has any legal process to protect their rights or prevent their execution. They were executed because the people authorized by the state thought it was fit. As seen in McDonagh's three plays, there is the problem of legitimizing violence in the state monopoly. All of the murderers in the plays argue that they did this murder for their country. This makes them innocent, that is, killing for the state is not killing.

Sometimes McDonagh uses funny elements or verbalizes them. The writer conveys his message to the audience, sometimes through social and sometimes political ways. It conveys its messages so effectively that the audience cannot ignore this reality even if they want to. He sometimes uses the characters as a political symbol, sometimes as figures representing Ireland. "The violence used by McDonagh, who can make a permanent place in the memory of the audience in a short time, even at the end of the play, is much more open, much more pronounced, harsher, and more vulgar, it is the kind that can happen to real people, which shakes the audience deeply and makes them uneasy" (Özata, 2012). Since the important thing is to deliver the message he wants to convey, in any way McDonagh does it successfully. McDonagh's plays, despite their physical and verbal violence and extremism, have gained popularity all around the world.

As a result, the writer has supporters and fans as much as he is criticized in terms of the language he uses in his plays, the violence he shows, the setting and the characters. "What we are left with in McDonagh's world replete with murder, violence, spite, hatred, laughter and a tiny rest of affection is the epistemological void of unrelieved tensions and oppositions" (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010).

McDonagh explores the usage of violence in theatre in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman* and *Hangmen*. In this chapter, the violence and political violence in the mentioned plays will be studied in detail.

2.1. *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*

The second book in the Aran Trilogy, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is arguably McDonagh's most humorous and violent play, combining physical violence with humour. *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is considered McDonagh's first political play in which he deals with the violence that is an integral part of Irish nationalism. Although the play does not convey a single political message directly, it is a political satire. *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is also described as a popular black comedy in which despair and violence are always at the forefront. In an interview with O'Hagan (2015), McDonagh says his play "*The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is a violent play that is wholeheartedly anti-violence." The play is also considered an important example of the In-Yer-Face genre. Martin McDonagh's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* was written with brutality and extreme violence, the writer's anger at what has happened in Ireland over the past 25 years. Play, which was completed in 1996, naturally, due to the political climate of the 1990s, the National Theatre and the Royal Court Theatre refused to stage the play. O'Toole (2009) states;

Throughout the late 1990s, the Druid Theatre in Galway, and the Royal Court and the National in London – the theatres that had premiered his other work – refused to stage The Lieutenant of Inishmore. Its graphic depiction of torture, murder, and dismemberment, even (or perhaps especially) within the framework of a madcap farce, was deemed offensive and its full-frontal assault on paramilitarism was thought to be politically insensitive in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process.

It was first staged in 2001. In the same year, on September 11, 2001, the attack on the World Trade Centre brought terrorism to an international dimension in the world press; it gave the play a different reputation.

Martin McDonagh is criticised by a group of people in Ireland for this play. The reason is that the IRA and INLA, which have been idealized folk heroes on the stage so far, were treated as terrorist organizations by McDonagh and their members as terrorists. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, McDonagh sarcastically

addresses and criticizes Ireland, IRA and INLA terrorism. The play presents a complete picture of a society that reflects the tragedy experienced as a result of political terrorism. McDonagh aims to make the audience understand what it feels like to be exposed to political events and to raise awareness about the seriousness of acts of terrorism. McDonagh (1997) says in his interview with O'Toole;

Martin McDonagh has recalled wanting to write a play that would make militant Irish nationalists want to shoot him. 'I was trying to write a play that would get me killed,' McDonagh said. 'I had no real fear that I would be because the paramilitaries never bothered with playwrights anyway, but if they were going to start, I wanted to write something that would put me top of the list.' This is a political desire, but it is also an interrogation of the power of theatre.

The Lieutenant of Inishmore is set in the 1990s in Inishmore, a deserted village in western Ireland that everyone forgets. The play begins when Davey, an interesting teenager with long hair and a pink bike, arrives at his middle-aged neighbour Donny's house with a bloody, obviously dead black cat. Carey-Clark (2020) argues as follows:

The cat is obviously dead, but the intimacy of such a solemn moment is immediately undermined by Davey asking the obviously unnecessary question; it is, clearly, quite dead. Donny and Davey are hopelessly unaware, and we immediately gain an understanding of Davey's intelligence and Donny's drunken inability to handle the situation as he scrambles to come to grips with what has happened (p.36).

Donny gets very nervous when he sees the dead cat because the cat belongs to his son Padraic. Padraic is a former IRA member with a penchant for killing anyone who opposes him. The 'mad' Padraic, whom even the IRA had to remove due to his uncompromising attitude, is a true psychopath who kills even the most notorious terrorists with unbelievable torture. Militant Padraic joined the INLA organization, which was more violent, to liberate his country from British occupation. He has two great loves: Ireland, for which he is ready to die for its independence, and his cat Wee Thomas, whom he loves as much as Ireland. When Padraic left his village for a bombing, he entrusted his beloved cat to his father, Donny. On the one hand, Padraic's insanity, the other hand, trying to prevent the sale of drugs for the sake of his ideals, has also tired INLA, because drug dealing is INLA's tool to buy the weapon. The 'execution squad', consisting of three old friends, kills his cat to trap Padraic. Davey is charged with murder, as he finds the

cat dead in the middle of the road, covered in blood. Although Davey says he did not kill the cat, Donny does not believe him because he does not know the truth. They decide to explain the situation to Padraic differently. While Padraic tries to decide which nipple to cut off his victim, whom he tortured for dealing drugs, his father calls. Meanwhile, Padraic claims he tortured James for selling drugs. But for the Catholic Irish Padraic, who has suffered greatly from Protestants in the past, James represents Protestantism and the union of Ireland with England. In addition, the fact that the children James sells drugs to are Catholic has different anger for Padraic.

His father tells him on the phone that his cat is sick. Learning that Padraic has a cat, James says he has a cat too. He promises on his cat that he will never sell drugs to children again. Thereupon, Padraic leaves his torture unfinished and releases James. He even gives James money for the bus. James also prays to Padraic that his cat is well until he gets home. Padraic thinks he has the police capability to protect Ireland from criminals. That's why he calls himself The Lieutenant of Inishmore. When Padraic sets off, Donny and Davey are terrified. They are sure that he will kill them. To get rid of Padraic, they plan to trick him with another cat to replace his dead cat. However, they cannot find a black cat they are looking for. Instead, Davey brings his sister Mairead's orange cat, and they decide to paint the cat black with shoe polish. They fall asleep while painting. When Padraic comes home in the morning, he sees the half-black half orange cat. They try to convince him that his cat has the orange disease. He strokes the cat, gets mad when his hands turn black, and then shoots and kills the cat. Padraic, who finds his father Donny and Davey guilty of the death of his cat, decides to kill them and binds them.



Picture 4. *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. Chris Walley, Aidan Turner, and Dennis Conway.
Photograph by Johan Persson. (thetheatretimes, 2018)

He shaves Davey's long hair, and just as he was about to kill, his cat's real killers, INLA members Christy, Joey and Brendan, come home to kill Padraic with their guns. Their reason to kill Padraic is his desire to create a splinter group in INLA. They claim to form a group within a group. They take Padraic out to kill him, but Mairead comes and saves Padraic. Mairead, the only female character in the play, is only sixteen years old but is a very good shooter as she shoots all the cows in the area from afar. The reason cows are blindfolded is to save them from the meat trade. To save Padraic, she shoots the eyes of the men and blinds them. Mairead is in love with Padraic; her biggest dream is to join INLA. While Padraic went to INLA five years ago, Mairead insisted on taking her with him but was rejected. This time Mairead is hopeful. However, he is rejected by Padraic one more time. Although she is heartbroken, she does not want Padraic to die and she saves the man she fell in love with. The three blind friends enter the house and start shooting at random. Mairead and Padraic come after to kill them. Before Christy dies, he confesses that they killed Wee Thomas. Thus, Davey and Donny escape death. This time, they are tasked with cleaning the bodies of the three men from the house. While Donny and Davey are cleaning the house, Padraic and Mairead have romantic moments. When Ireland is liberated, they decide to marry. Padraic promotes Mairead, who saved him, to lieutenant and himself to full-blown

lieutenant. They will continue to fight for the independence of Ireland in their new organization they have just set up. They will marry when Ireland gains independence. Padraic tells Mairead that he killed a cat because it is unhygienic and asks him to dispose of the body. Mairead recognizes her dead pet and kills Padraic, whom she fell in love with, without hesitation, by shooting him in the head. Mairead declares herself lieutenant and leaves the house to form her splinter group.

In postmodern plays, the audience is disappointed because their expectations are not fulfilled. McDonagh, like postmodern writers, does not give the audience a clue about the end of the play. He leaves the end of the play to the audience. When *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is over, the audience wonders if Mairead is really gone or if she will come back and kill Donny and Davey. While Donny and Davey are busy cleaning the house, Wee Thomas, thought dead, returns home alive. Parlak (2012) states that “By bringing the cat alive to the stage is which the real cause of the violence in the play, McDonagh can be said to emphasize the absurdity of the violence in the play; this is also one of the methods used to reduce the tension prevailing in the environment” (p.114). At the end of the play, it can be said that the audience made two different inferences. The first is negative; the appearance of the cat at the end of the play reveals the meaninglessness of violence. When Donny and Davey see that all "terrorism is absolutely for nothing" is an example of this. The second is a positive, optimistic conclusion. Donny and Davey first think of killing the cat that caused all this violence, but then they decide to feed it. The fact that they decided to feed the cat instead of killing it shows that despite everything, there is a sense of hope in the end.

“(A black cat scrambles through the hole high in the wall stage left and stands or walks along the shelf there. Donny and Davey look at each other, then slowly turn and look at the cat.)

Davey: *What the hell fecking cat is that, now?*

Donny: *(Sickened.) Fecking Wee fecking Thomas this fecking is!*

Davey: *No! [...]*

Donny: *Aye! (Davey gets up and looks at the cat in Padraic’s arms on the table.)*

Davey: *So who the feck is this fecking cat?*

Donny: *Some fecking stray that must've been, only looked like Wee Thomas.*

Davey: *So all this terror has been for absolutely nothing?*

Donny: *It has!*

Davey: *All because this fecker was after his hole? Four dead fellas, two dead cats ... me hairstyle ruined [...] That cat deserves shooting!*

Donny: *He does, d'you know? [...] (They both cock their guns and slowly raise them till they're pointed at the cat.) But Davey?*

Davey: *What? (They lower their guns.)*

Donny: *Hasn't there been enough killing done in this house for one day?*

Davey: *No.*

Donny: *One more won't fecking hurt! (They both aim their guns at the cat's head again, arms taut.) On a count of three, now.*

Davey: *Aye.*

Both: *One ... Two... Three! (A long, long pause, arms taut, teeth gritted, not breathing. But neither of them can bring himself to do it.)*

Donny: *Will we leave the poor beggar alone, Davey?*

Davey: *Will we Donny?*

Donny: *We will!*

Davey: *We will! (The two breathe a sigh of relief, hearts pounding, slam the guns down on the table and stoke and pet the cat)"*
(McDonagh, 2014).

Donny and Davey just watch all the violence in the play. There is nothing they can do to stop it anyway. It can be said that in the play Donny and Davey represent innocent civilians whose lives have been affected even though they have no connection with terrorism or terrorist organizations.

At the end of the play, a cat thought to be dead caused the death of four people. Everyone is as shocked as Davey and Donny when Wee Thomas, responsible for all the chaos, arrives alive on stage. The question "So all this terror has been for nothing?" (McDonagh, 2014). is the explanation of political terrorism as well. Political violence and terror do not solve anything, and take the country nowhere; on the contrary, it worsens already bad conditions and causes the country to enter a vicious circle of unresolved problems. Thorson (2001) states "With lines such as, "So all this terror has been for nothing?" McDonagh exposes the banality of violence inherent in the play. Throughout the play, characters

commit violent acts, some in the name of patriotism and some out of whimsy, but each act breeds more destruction and violence” (p.50). However, as seen at the end of the play, INLA members, who killed everyone and everything for their interests, regardless of human or animal, guilty or innocent, were also targeted and killed in the same way. Padraic says he killed people for the independence of Ireland, but he killed people in vain. In the end, he was killed not for Irish independence, but for killing Mairead's cat. At the end of the play, Donny and Davey's phrase "Home Sweet Home" compares the house to Ireland that witnessed six murders in one day. The reasons why they did not kill Thomas Wee is an example of how much they yearn for peace and tranquillity like Ireland, even inside their homes.

“Donny: There there, now, baby. Sure, you’re home now. You’re home now.

Davey: Home sweet home.

Donny: Home sweet home is right!” (McDonagh, 2014).

McDonagh criticizes a world where people kill and are killed for no reason. McDonagh observes conditions in society and encourages the audience to think about how they are and what they should be. In fact, in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, McDonagh also criticizes the self-satisfied Irish who do not care about the seriousness of the IRA problem. His purpose is to scare the audience into making them feel unsafe. The events in the play that seem absurd at first glance are related to the region's full of violent acts past. McDonagh tries to show how much he is against violence with a series of violent acts in the play. “The traumatic and tragic history of Northern Ireland is transposed onto a massacre of felines” (Wallace, 2005).

Mairead's mother's sentence "good luck and try not to go blowing up kids" is a reference to the innocent children and people killed by INLA. Such similes are deliberately trivialized and placed somewhere. When Mairead leaves home to start a splinter terrorist group called Wee Thomas's Army, she cannot promise her mother she will not expose the kids to bombings. While they are carrying out terrorist attacks, for example, they are going to bomb a place; they do not care much if there are innocent people inside. This shows that terrorism is more of a threat to innocent people.

Davey: *What did Mam say to you when you left?*

Mairead: *She said good luck and try not to go blowing up kids.*

Davey: *And what did you say?*

Mairead: *I said I'd try but I'd be making no promises.*

Davey: *And what did she say?*

Mairead: *She said so long as you try is the main thing.*

Davey: *I suppose it is” (McDonagh, 2014).*

Dialogues praising the IRA appear in the play. For example, Padraic says “One thing about the IRA anyways, as much as I hate the bastards, you’ve got to hand it to them, they know how to make a decent bomb” (McDonagh, 2014). Or the dialogue between Donny and Davey is an example.

Davey: *She knew it was to be coming some day. I think she’ll have resigned herself to it, though I think she’d have preferred it to be the IRA if anybody. Y’know, they’re more established.*

Donny: *They are. And they do travel further afield than the INLA.*

Davey: *The IRA do get a good bit of travelling done, aye.*

Donny: *They do. They go to Belgium sometimes.*

Davey: *You never see the INLA going to Belgium.*

Donny: *You’re lucky if they leave the Falls.*

Davey: *You never see the INLA shooting Australians.*

Donny: *Still, I suppose it isn’t the travel that attracts people to the IRA.” (McDonagh, 2014).*

Despite all these praises, these organizations are also mocked by using funny organization names such as “Wee Thomas Army” or “The Irish National Being Nice to Cats Army” in the play. According to McDonagh, members of either the IRA or INLA are illiterate and unemployed people with no education. These terrorist groups see their violence as a part of their job because that is all they do or can do. For example, when his father calls Padraic in the play, he says he is at work. “I’m at work at the moment, Dad, was it important now?” (McDonagh, 2014). What he calls work is torture and torture is very normal for him. The passion for an independent Ireland in Padraic is strong enough to show any violence for its sake. Padraic represents the IRA and INLA group members' commitment to terrorist ideals in the play. How they are committed to the ideal of an independent Ireland can be seen in this sentence from Padraic. He says, “He is “interested in no social activities that don’t involve the freeing of Ulster”

(McDonagh, 2014). He believes that Ireland can achieve its independence through violence and terror. “All I ever wanted was an Ireland free. Free for kids to run and play. Free for fellas and lasses to dance and sing. Free for cats to roam about without being clanked in the brains with a headgun” (McDonagh, 2014). Parlak (2012) asks the question about the characters that are so keen on violence and torture. “How can such people contribute to the national struggle?” (p.100). He criticizes the possible contribution of people with an anarchist spirit to the process of independence, to respond to violence with violence. It is legitimate to resort to all forms of violence to realize their dream of a free and fully independent Ireland. According to Padraic, one of the biggest obstacles to the liberation of Ireland is the poisoning of young people by selling drugs. That is why killing drug dealer is perfectly normal. Drug dealing members of INLA are also disturbed by this situation. According to them, it is normal to kill Padraic who hinders their trade. Everyone in Ireland uses violence for their gain. "Ireland's war of liberation has ceased to be a holy and noble war; it has turned into a struggle where anyone can fight whatever they want" (Özata, 2012).

INLA member Padraic takes action by himself to liberate Ireland from the British. Punishing the drug dealer James is one of them. Although he is not a threat to the independence of Ireland, James was tortured while unarmed and defenceless. It can be said that James represents the innocent. In this scene, it is possible to say that Padraic also distinguishes between people to be liberated for the sake of independent Ireland. There is no problem if the children James is dealing drugs with are Protestants, but the fact that they are Catholic makes James a criminal. “Padraic: If you concentrated exclusive on the Protestants I’d say all well and good, but you don’t, you take all comers.” (McDonagh, 2014). However, while other INLA members Joey, Brendan and Christy are chatting among themselves, it can be seen that they do not agree with Padraic. When Christy criticizes Padraic for torturing James just for selling drugs, he says:

“That’s what Padraic doesn’t understand, is it isn’t only for the schoolkids and the owl fellas and the babes unborn we’re out freeing Ireland. No. It’s for the junkies, the thieves and the drug pushers too!” (McDonagh, 2014).



Picture 5. *the Lieutenant of Inishmore*. Chris Walley, Denis Conway and Aidan Turner.
Background: Julian Moore-Cook, Daryl McCormack and Will Irvine. Photograph by
Johan Persson. (theguardian, 2018)

The dose of violence shown to the audience is very high. There are exaggerated elements of violence in the play such as the scene where Padraic tortures James, Mairead kills his cat Sir Roger, INLA member Christy, Brendan and Joey are killed, Padraic is killed, blood is spilt and finally Donny and Davey dismember corpses. Despite all the verbal and physical violence shown in the scene, some scenes are not shown to reduce the tension of the violence in the play. For example, at the beginning of the play, Padraic mentions that he pulled out his toenails while torturing James, but this is not shown to the audience. Likewise, it cannot be seen how Mairead blinded the three INLA members.

The tragedies presented in the play are extremely exaggerated, which makes the play look even funnier. Instead of discussing political issues, the play presents the events in a humorous way to make them laugh and think about what they are laughing at, revealing violence. The writer tries to attract the attention of the audience by exaggerating the events. But as McDonagh himself tells us, ‘the violence has a purpose... otherwise, there’s nothing particularly interesting about shooting people on stage’ (Rees, 2006). For example, in the play, he exaggerates the fact that the life of the cat is more important than the life of the human. “McDonagh tries to emphasize that what can happen in this environment, where a cat seems more important than many people, is unpredictable” (Parlak, 2012).

McDonagh does not present the comedy elements in the play to make the audience laugh. Comedy elements are used both to reduce the dose of violence and to remind the audience that the brutality they watch and laugh at on stage is a part of their lives. All that violence exists not so that they can laugh, but so that they are ashamed of what they laugh at, realize the violence of the terror and feel guilty. Russell (2007) states “By holding a mirror up to his audience and showing us the lack of limits to our breathless fascination with violence and cruelty, McDonagh shows us that we desire to watch others’ discomfort and even laugh at it, a point made by several of the essays collected” (p.4).

In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, disembodied terrorists and constant gunfire are staged with comedic elements, so it does not bother the audience. In his play, McDonagh deftly draws black comedy, the line between cruelty and comedy. McDonagh explains (2021) himself by saying “I suppose I walk that line between comedy and cruelty because I think one illuminates the other. We’re all cruel, aren’t we? We are all extreme in one way or another at times and that’s what drama, since the Greeks, has dealt with.” The funny language the characters use when they demonstrate violence makes things ridiculous.

“Padraic: *So me cat is a feck now, is he?*

Davey: *He is! And you are too, Padraic Osbourne! And I don’t care if you do blow the head off me. You’re a mad thick feck and everybody know that you are! So there!”* (McDonagh, 2014).

In the first scene of the play, Davey's disbelief that the cat is dead, and Donny and Davey’s examining the cat is one of the funny scenes of the play. It shows how naive these two innocent people, who are not affiliated with any organization, actually are.

“Davey: *Do you think he’s dead, Donny?*

Pause. Donny picks up the limp dead cat. Bits of its brain plop out.

Donny *looks across at Davey and puts the cat back down again.*

Donny: *Aye.*

Davey: *He might be in a coma. Would we ring the vet?*

Donny: *It’s more than a vet this poor feck needs.”* (McDonagh, 2014).

Another funny element in the play is that Donny and Davey, who are afraid of Padraic, try to trick Padraic by painting Mairead's orange cat black with shoe

polish. The dialogues between James and Padraic during the torture are also extremely funny. One of the comedy elements is that when Padraic's phone rings while torturing James, he asks James' permission to interrupt the torture. It is one of the ridiculous scenes in which he frees James, whom he will torture and possibly kill, and also pay for the bus. In the last scene of the play, the arrival of Wee Thomas, the cat for whom six murders were committed, is one of the funniest elements. Among the funny elements are Donny and Davey's adoption of the cat by calling it "Home Sweet Home" in a house where murders were committed and terrorists' blows were felt. But all these funny elements do not change the fact that McDonagh's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is considered his most violent play.

Another message that McDonagh wants to give to the audience in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is that terrorist organizations even have disagreements among themselves and form splinter groups. According to Parlak (2012) "These people, who say that they are working for the same aim, seem not to avoid actions that will point guns at each other and hurt each other in the slightest incident" (p.107). The struggle of these splinter groups among themselves harms innocent civilians. Their struggle both with England and within themselves drags the country into even greater chaos. Terrorism does not solve anything and only worsens conditions. "In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, McDonagh tries to show the fact that in today's world where violence and terror are on the rise, the underlying causes of terror and terrorism are sometimes very simple and ordinary, even serving no specific purpose" (Özata, 2012). He criticizes the paramilitary groups formed in the country. Terror in society has turned into personal reckoning rather than the struggle for independence. In today's world, where almost all forms of violence are witnessed, *the Lieutenant of Inishmore* asks what is known, how much is known, and how much is thought about. It makes us question how little impact even the most severe events have on us over time, and how quickly their effects fade and become ordinary. He used violence in his play to convey the message of a restful and peaceful world.

2.2. *The Pillowman*

The Pillowman is McDonagh's independent play after the trilogy. *The Pillowman* was first staged in London in 2003 and in the United States in 2005. The play has won the Olivier Award for Play of the Year, the New York Drama Critics Award and two Tony Awards, and has been translated into more than ten languages. *The Pillowman* is a play that does not fit with the Irish identity McDonagh has written so far. The characters are not Irish and do not use the Irish accent like in McDonagh's other plays. The play does not take place in Ireland as usual. It is McDonagh's only play that is not set in Ireland. It is not known exactly where the setting is. It takes place in an unnamed totalitarian country. Its time is not known exactly, it seems to pass in the present. In the play, McDonagh focuses on issues such as state terrorism, the individual-state relationship, and the place and importance of the family in the formation of an individual's identity. It can be said that it is a political play. Although it is different from other plays, it also has common features. For example, it deals with the institution of the family and shows the family as an oppressive and boring institution, and as a result of this pressure, it has the theme of parental murder as in his other plays. The play takes place in a dark, gloomy atmosphere, fear and violence are intertwined, but as in other plays, the atmosphere is tried to be softened with funny elements. For example, Katurian's first name, surname and middle name are the same. In *The Pillowman*, McDonagh takes children's stories and fairy tales that often end well and creates an atmosphere of horror from them. In other words, at the end of these tales, the good behaviour of children is not rewarded but punished or sacrificed. Written in the In-Yer-Face tradition, the play uses violent elements such as swearing, torture and killing.

The Pillowman starts in the police interrogation room in an unnamed totalitarian state, where Katurian is questioned by Detective Tupolski and his deputy Ariel, two representatives of tyrannical power. The main character of the play is Katurian Katurian Katurian, who has the same name, surname and middle name. Tupolski and Ariel start the interrogation, mocking Katurian's name. Occasionally they repeat Katurian's words, repeat what they say, and try to intimidate him with threats and violence. However, Katurian is not told why he is there or what is expected of him. Because Katurian sees his own stories on the

detective's desk, he thinks that they bring him because of the political messages they find in their stories. He says that there are no political issues in his stories, and even if there are political connotations, he can immediately change them.

Playing the good cop Tupolski starts reading Katurian's "The Little Apple Men" story. In this story, a little girl makes cookies in the shape of a man to get rid of her tormenting father. She wants to feed her father by placing a razor in the cookies, but she dies when her father forces her to eat the cookies. In the neighbourhood, the corpse of a girl is found who died with a razor in her throat in the same way. It is said that these little children were tortured and killed both in this play and in other plays and some other children in the neighbourhood were killed similarly. Eventually, the reason for Katurian's arrest is understood: a series of child murders that bear an uncanny resemblance to their story. Thus, Katurian, who learned that he was brought about the murders, not for political reasons, says that he is a storyteller and adds:

"The first duty of a storyteller is to tell a story," and I believe in that wholeheartedly, "The first duty of a storyteller is to tell a story." Or was it "The only duty of a storyteller is to tell a story?" (McDonagh, 2003)

Katurian vigorously argues that a writer's responsibility is to tell a story. How others interpret his stories is not his responsibility. He defends that he has nothing to do with the murders.



Picture 6. *The Pillowman*. (decadenttheatrecompany, 2016)

Playing the bad cop, Ariel taunts Katurian, who is offended by everything he says. He says he will interrogate his brother Michal if he does not speak. Michal is Katurian's mentally handicapped elder brother. From the moment he was born, he was tortured by his parents for years. These tortures left Michal physically and mentally handicapped. His parents wanted Katurian, who was a writer, to write more realistic stories about horror and terror. That is why they tortured Michal on purpose. It is experimental violence against Michal. Katurian has been subjected to the tortured cries of his brother for years. One day, Katurian finds a note under the door of Michal's room. In the note written in blood, Michal explains that he was tortured so that his brother could become a better writer. One night, Katurian kills his parents while his brother is groaning unconscious from the pain. He buries the corpses at the bottom of the wishing well in the backyard of their house. Katurian, who does the cleaning work in a slaughterhouse, also takes his brother to a school for the mentally handicapped. Tupolski tells Katurian that his brother is in the next room under interrogation. Hearing this, Katurian gets nervous and angry. Tupolski promises him that nothing will happen to his brother and starts reading another of Katurian's stories. "The Three Gibbet Crossroads" He says that he could not find his theme in this story. Katurian says he does not have a theme, but Tupolski claims that Katurian writes stories with the theme of

"children are killed in the end". Katurian argues that he certainly did not give such a message. After Tupolski has finished reading the story, Katurian thinks they are not his best stories, but they are good enough. He says his best story is "The Tale of the Town on the River". It is the only story that is published, so it is important for Katurian. Tupolski takes that story and wants Katurian to read it. Katurian starts to read the story. There is a reference to "The Pied Piper" in the story he tells. In the story, there is a boy who is extremely poor but happy with what he has. One day, this boy shares his food with a man in black, who cuts the boy's toes off. He says it was a favour he did for the kid. The kid will understand favour when he grows up. In "The Pied Piper", there is a piper who follows all the children of the village after he cannot get his money. The child stays far behind as his toes are cut off. So he paid with his toes to be the only child left in the village. Police find a corpse in the neighbourhood with the toes cut off. Moreover, the cut toes are found in a black box in Katurian's house. When the story is over, Katurian hears his brother's screams from the next interrogation room. He gets very upset and angry. He reminds Tupolski that he promised not to do anything. Tupolski's answer would be:

"I am a high-ranking police officer in a totalitarian fucking dictatorship. What are you doing taking my word about anything?"
(McDonagh, 2003).

When Ariel comes back, Tupolski says that Ariel takes his anger out on the problems he experienced in his childhood from the people he detained. Tupolski and Ariel try to make Katurian angry and make him talk by telling him about the torture they claimed to have done to Michal. There is also the legitimization of violence in the conversation between Tupolski and Ariel: "Tupolski: Oh, Ariel, that'd definitely be classed as "police brutality" (McDonagh, 2003). There is a black box on the table. The detectives ask Katurian to open the box. Katurian is horrified when he opens the box and sees little toes inside. Ariel mentions that the successive murders in the region are exactly like Katurian's stories. Angry Ariel tries to put the toes in Katurian's mouth. The event comes to an end with the intervention of Tupolski. Katurian, who has no idea about all these murders, claims that the police kept him there either because they did not like his stories, or because they did not like the disabled. Then Katurian begins to tell the story of "The Writer and the Writer's Brother". This story is not fictional like the others. It

is like Katurian's autobiography. In this story, Katurian describes the torture of his brother. This story has a bad ending like the others. Michal does not like this story at all. He always asks his brother to change the ending. Katurian likes this story because he was inspired from somewhere in his other stories; this story is from real life.



Picture 7. *The Pillowman*. (shine, 2019)

Katurian listened to the sounds of torture to his brother for years. In the interrogation room, the roles have changed; Michal has listened to the sounds of torture against Katurian and Michal does not react much. For Michal, who was exposed to violence in his childhood, it seems normal to be subjected to violence against his brother, because now he has taken violence for granted. They torture Katurian and bring him to Michal's room. There Katurian learns that Michal was never tortured. Ariel asks Michal to shout as if he is being tortured and he does. The aim is to inflict psychological violence on Katurian. The truth makes Katurian very happy. Michal states that it is less painful to be on the side listening to the sounds of torture. "Here, people are not the only things that change, torture also changes hands. It passes from family to state" (Sayın, 2009). Michal asks Katurian to tell the story of "The Pillowman". This is the fourth story told since the beginning of the play. The 'Pillow Man', the title story of the play, is about a three-metre-tall creature that teaches children to commit suicide. This fantastic

creature, whose body is made up of tiny pillows and constantly smiling, teaches children to self-destruct rather than live a painful life and their parents think their child died by accident. The Pillow Man tries to eliminate pain as well as children who are likely to suffer. All he has to do is convince the children. "And when the Pillow Man was unsuccessful, a little child would have a horrific life, grow into an adult who'd also have a horrific life, and then die horrifically" (McDonagh, 2003). While the children were dying, the Pillow Man would stand by them, hold their hands and give them strength. Then he would cry until a puddle of water formed around him. One day he decides to finish this difficult task. He goes back to his childhood and tells the Pillow Boy about the unhappy future that awaits him. The Pillow Boy, who is convinced, pours gasoline on himself and burns himself so that no more children would die. However, they would experience the bad future that awaited them. This time, there would be no Pillow Man with them to support. When the story is over, Michal tells Katurian that he killed the children himself. He tells how he killed the children as Katurian tells in his stories. When Katurian asked the reason for the murders Michal replied, "You know. Because you told me to" (McDonagh, 2003). He claims that by reading the stories to himself, he encouraged him to kill. Michal has only done what the stories describe; he tests how much it is achievable.

"And I wouldn't have done anything if you hadn't told me, so don't you act all the innocent. Every story you tell me, something horrible happens to somebody. I was just testing out how far-fetched they were. 'Cos I always thought some of 'em were a bit far-fetched. (Pause.) D'you know what? They ain't all that far-fetched" (McDonagh, 2003).

He compares himself to the Pillow Man, Michal. Katurian says that Pillow Man hates his job and he is very unhappy, while Michal enjoys it. Katurian knows that they will soon be tortured and executed, but his mind is only on their stories. He accepts to have executed as long as they do not touch my stories. Michal says he is sleepy and asks Katurian to tell him the story of "The Little Green Pig". This story is different from the others because it is Katurian's only story with a happy ending. Michal falls asleep while Katurian is telling the story. Katurian predicts what will happen to him and his brother. So, to prevent Michal from suffering any more, Katurian assumes the role of Pillow Man and presses a pillow to the sleeping Michal's face and kills him, just like he did to his parents. Thinking that

he saved his brother, Katurian's only goal is to save his stories. Here, it is understood that Katurian is both a playwright and the Pillow Man in his story.

He states that he will confess everything if they promise to keep their stories. Then, Katurian confesses to being responsible for the murders of six people. It is state violence that he accepted a crime that he even did not commit. He tells the story of "The Little Jesus", where they claim to have committed Michal's last murder. In the story, a girl who claims to be the second Jesus is tortured by her stepparents. This is the story of a girl who was crucified, flogged, and finally buried alive in a tomb. After the story, Katurian, who signed his statement in the interrogation room, asks them to keep his stories after the confession. During the interrogation, Ariel describes how he hates those who torture children. Tupolski says that Ariel, like Michal, was tortured (sexually abused) by his father when he was a child and, like Katurian, he killed his father by suffocating him with a pillow. Angered by the revelation of his secrets, Ariel leaves.

Tupolski begins to tell Katurian his own story and praises his own story by comparing it with Katurian's stories. Tupolski tells Katurian that he likes the story of *The Pillowman* because Pillow Man has a naive side like being there when children die and trying to give them strength. Katurian immediately realizes that Tupolski has lost his child. Tupolski says that his son drowned while fishing alone. Then he returns to questioning. Meanwhile, Ariel comes back with the girl Katurian said they killed. The girl is painted green. Michal revived the "The Little Green Pig" story, not "The Little Jesus". Thus, it turns out that Katurian did not commit the child murders. Katurian is only responsible for the murders of her parents and older brother. When Tupolski asks Katurian why he is committing crimes he did not commit, he gets the answer:

“You had me for killing Michal. As soon as you found the third child you'd have me for killing my parents. I thought that if I tied myself into all of it, like you wanted me to, at least I'd be able to save my stories. At least I'd have that” (McDonagh, 2003).

Tupolski tells Katurian that they promised not to burn his stories in exchange for truthful testimony. Since Katurian gave false testimony, he begins to burn some of the four hundred stories he has ever written.

They give Katurian ten seconds when they want him to kneel to put a bullet in his head. The execution of Katurian without trial is also an example of the political violence of the police state. Katurian was put a black sack over his head and shot in the head seven seconds after they said they would give him ten seconds, he says "I was a good writer. (Pause.) It was all I ever wanted to be. (Pause.) And I was. And I was" (McDonagh, 2003). At the end of the play, Katurian changes the end of the story "The Writer and the Writer's Brother", which his brother wants him to change. According to the new ending, the Pillow Man comes to the seven-year-old Michal and tells him about the torture and bad life that await him. Michal says he likes Katurian's stories. If his torture helps Katurian write such beautiful stories, he will accept to live a life of torture and not go with the Pillow Man. At the end of the play, Ariel does not throw the stories into the burning trash with a decision that only he knows. Katurian puts it in the case file. Katurian explains this situation in his own words as follows: "For reasons known only to himself, the bulldog of a policeman chose not to put the stories in the burning trash, but placed them carefully with Katurian's case file, which he then sealed away to remain unopened for fifty-odd years" (McDonagh, 2003). Katurian dies in real life, but his stories live on forever.

Considered McDonagh's most tragic play, *The Pillowman* is filled with flashbacks. The real events of the main character Katurian and the stories he wrote seem to be intertwined. Like Synge, McDonagh presents reality and fiction together as an example of post-modern narration. The individuals in his stories are destroyed by the unlimited use of power by the state. He tells his stories so realistically that it is perceived as political criticism. In a way, the responsibility of the writer towards society is discussed. McDonagh raises the question of whether writers are responsible for what they write or not. In other words, are the writers responsible for the conclusions people understand from the works they read? The answers to these questions are not given in the play. However, it is clear that literature has the power to affect people psychologically and emotionally. In this sense, it can be said that the play explores the function of literature and the writer's duty toward society. There are also political questions that are often asked in the play. Katurian often states that he is not trying to imply anything political, "I don't have themes. [...] Are you kidding? I'm not trying to

say anything at all! That's my whole thing" (McDonagh, 2003). It is emphasized that people dealing with literature or art reach the people they address with the works they produce, and both parts have responsibilities in this mutual relationship. While it is emphasized in the play that his stories are more important than his own life for Katurian, it is also considered ironic that he shapes the lives of others with the works he wrote. It is emphasized that an author cannot ignore moral and ethical values while revealing his work and that his responsibility towards society will continue after he has written the work.

There is no clear information about the period of the play. However, the torture applied in the play and the murder of the writer by claiming that he poses a threat to the system give us an idea. The period in which the play was staged is the same as the occupation of Iraq. The fact that the torture in the play and the torture of the soldiers in Iraq were published in the same period causes the play to be evaluated in a political context. The developed countries of the period carried out undemocratic actions on some countries, claiming that they were implementing a totalitarian regime. McDonagh also refers to these countries in his play.

Martin McDonagh's London play *The Pillowman* embellishes a bleak portrait of a totalitarian society with the most brutal Grimm-like fairy tales. In the play, Michal perpetrates the murders in the stories he hears from his brother Katurian. It can be said that a child who has been brought up by experimentation has made a few experiments. Violence is seen as a learned behaviour. He tried to push the boundaries with the learned behaviour of violence, just as the writers of *In-Your-Face* did to the audience of the period. "Here, McDonagh underlines another very important social message. If the individual exposed to violence is used to violence and violence is taken for granted, individuals become desensitized; this prevents societies from living happily in peace" (Sayın, 2009). McDonagh emphasizes how important domestic violence is in the formation of an individual's character.

Katurian's family made a choice between their children and sacrificed one to give the other authorship identity. The family, which should be an institution where every individual escapes from dangers, feels safe, and finds complementary love and compassion, has turned into a

place of punishment and torture that decides the future of individuals in a cruel and autocratic way (Sayin, 2009).

Katurian and Michal are not the only characters reflecting the effects of childhood traumas in the play. Ariel and Tupolski also had traumas. In the past, Ariel's sexual abuse by his father and Tupolski's son drowning while fishing forms their current behaviour.

To reduce the elements of violence in the play, the tortures that are described as torturing children in the stories are never shown on stage. In addition, while the torture of Katurian is shown to the audience on stage, his mentally disabled brother Michal is treated as if he is being tortured behind the scenes. "Ariel physically tortures Katurian in the play but he also attempts to punish Katurian's soul by feigning to torture Michal" (Shalom, 2015).

In the play, many types of violence can be seen at the same time, such as the violence of the state against the individual, domestic violence, and fictional violence in the stories. Violence on stage can be heard verbally as well as physical violence. What Tupolski said is an example of both verbal and political violence: "We like executing writers. Dimwits we can execute any day. And we do. But, you execute a writer, it sends out a signal, y'know? (Pause.) I don't know what signal it sends out, that's not really my area, but it sends out a signal. (Pause)" (McDonagh, 2003). McDonagh emphasizes here the power of literature and writers to be considered dangerous in the eyes of the state. The writer also satirizes how society responds to storytelling and provocative art in general. Katurian believes so much in the sanctity of literature that he will do anything to save his stories. He even confesses to crimes he did not commit. The value Katurian gives to his stories becomes clearer from the dialogue between him and his brother. "If they came to me now and said, 'We're going to burn two out of three of you—you, your brother, or your stories,' I'd have them burn you first, I'd have them burn me second, and I'd have it be the stories they saved" (McDonagh, 2003).

O'Brien (2019) suggests "The suicidal violence that the character of the Pillow Man brings to the play is dark and disturbing, yet peaceful" (p.7), because individuals are peaceful since they are freed from violence both within the family and the state legitimized. The police officers in the play reflect the authoritarian

state that legitimizes violence. They do not forgive, they are unjust, and they oppress ruthlessly. But as it was later revealed, Ariel's attack was a real response, based on hatred for people who abused children. Katurian's stories are McDonagh's reaction to violence against children. Katurian's stories are the opposite of fairy tales with fairies, birds, flowers, children making wishes and happy endings. Here the writer shows the violated world of children who are exposed to violence and abuse in their lives. The common feature of all the characters in the play is that they were all exposed to different violence when they were children. This violence turned into childhood trauma and formed their current characters.

Katurian, who killed his brother so that he would not be tortured by the police, also inflicted both physical and psychological violence on his brother in the play. Katurian hits his brother's head on the ground when he confesses to committing the murders. Later, when he learns the details of the murder, he gets very angry. He also applies psychological violence by telling Michal that he is a bad person enough to be buried next to his parents when he dies.

***Katurian:** You're going to go to a little room in a little house in a little forest, and for the rest of all time you're going to be looked after not by me but by a person called Mum and a person called Dad, and they're gonna look after you in the same way they always looked after you, except this time I'm not gonna be around to rescue you, 'cos I ain't going to the same place you're going, 'cos I never butchered any little fucking kids (McDonagh, 2003).*

Katurian's desperation and love of stories; Michal's purity and experimentation; Ariel's past anger and profession, Tupolski's people and reasonable personality... *The Pillowman* is a disturbing play with its narration and story. The impact of literature on individuals is handled through dialogues between the police and the storyteller. Katurian is a lover of literature, and as a person who clings to literature, he cares about his stories more than his own life. In the play, McDonagh satirizes how the family, the most basic element, shakes up social life. It shows how cops can be bad when they're good and good when they're bad. It turns out that even the most innocent person can be a murderer, and it may be fair to kill someone so that no more evil can happen. How the power determines the end of the individual first and then indirectly the society is satirized with elements of violence. "*The Pillowman*" is black humour. It speaks of violence that

permeates every aspect of life and every period of human life. The message in the play is that those who were exposed to violence or abuse as children turn into troubled adults. Even if Katurian was right, he kills his parents and then his brother. Michal commits murders. Detectives constantly resort to violence during interrogation. Tupolski's killing of Katurian in cold blood before the countdown ends is another example of violence. The stories told throughout the play contain violence. When it is realized how violence affects individuals and social life, it terrifies us. The play characters are victims of the violence spiral that started in the family during childhood; the absurdity of the path they follow to get out of the deadlock makes the audience laugh. Çelik (2014) argues,

McDonagh reveals the hidden realities in the policy of the totalitarian state reflecting social and political events and the legal system though he shies away from making a direct comment. In this regard, The Pillowman is a play in which McDonagh lays emphasis on crucial matters by employing extreme violence (p. 133).

In short, in *The Pillowman*, McDonagh wants to show what can happen if individual rights are ignored and writers are not given freedom of expression. He also gives the message that those who will be most affected by such destruction will be children.

2.3. *Hangmen*

Hangmen is McDonagh's play that returns to the London stages after twelve years. The play was staged in McDonagh's brilliant year when he was nominated for an Oscar for the movie "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing Missouri." In 2016, *Hangmen* received the "best play" award at the Olivier Awards in London. "Hangmen" is a play about guilt, innocence, authority and power. The play takes place in 1963 in the working-class town of Oldham, located on the dividing line between the North and the South, in Northern Ireland. A play on the abolition of the death penalty and injustice, *Hangmen* is a black comedy about the second most successful hangman in British history. The play was written at a time when the reintroduction of the abolished death penalty was seriously discussed in England. The play mentions the British death penalty, which was suspended in 1965 and repealed at the end of the decade. On one hand, there is Mooney, who looks like a killer who scares people, and on the other, there is Harry Wade, who is a murderer to keep people safe.

Suddenly out of work the day Parliament abolished the death penalty, Harry is fragile, insecure, and smug. Harry Wade's name is a mix of two real English hangmen: Harry Bernard Allen and Stephen Wade. Like McDonagh's other plays, *Hangmen* features black comedy and spectacularly staged acts of violence. The play revolves around Mooney's arrival at the bar. His intentions are never disclosed. The claustrophobic atmosphere in the bar increases the tension in the environment even more. This is a tension that already existed in England in the 1960s. In 1963, religious and political tensions in the UK were at their peak. The biggest distinction was between North and South. At the time of the execution, the South was wealthy, overcrowded, and educated. The North, on the other hand, was considered poor, ex-industrialist and uneducated. The event, which is shown as the last death penalty in the country, questions the accuracy of the justice system in this period. The use of two real hangmen in the play also indicates that the play refers to the England of the period. The play deals with the death penalty as a political issue.

Hangmen begins with the execution scene in a prison of hangman Harry Wade, his assistant Syd, who stutters when tensed, and inmate James Hennessy, who is about to be hanged. James, who is about to be executed, still cries out that he is innocent and resists not going to the execution. Trying to prove his innocence many times, James is so angry that he insults the executioner who will hang himself. Hennessy is unhappy not only because he will be hanged innocently, but also because he will be hanged by a bad executioner. The prisoner praises Harry's greatest rival, Britain's greatest hangman, retired Pierrepoint. If he was to be executed, then at least he had been hanged by Pierrepoint.

***Hennessy:** What's he saying? He can't even talk normal and he's hanging an innocent man! They could've at least sent Pierrepoint! This strikes a raw nerve, stopping Harry in his tracks.*

***Harry:** I'm just as good as bloody Pierrepoint!*

***Hennessy:** Hung by a rubbish hangman, oh that's some!"*
(McDonagh, 2015).

Angered at James for giving them a hard time and praising his opponent, Harry hits a stick on James' head. Stunned, James is carried to the gallows. James, with a rope tied around his neck, repeats his innocence, before Harry pulls the lever.

The second scene takes place in a bar. It is a typical Irish pub downstairs of a house. People come there not only to have a drink but also to chat and discuss current issues. This is the general tradition of Irish pubs. The level of attention is quite high in public places such as bars. There is a double threat in these bars. Everyone is potentially both the subject and the object of fear. Hakkioğlu (2020) states “Those who open the door to the customer may be the perpetrators of a possible murder, or they may be the victims. In a sense, Russian roulette is played between the people entering the bar and the people sitting in the bar” (p. 86). The bar is run by the hangman Harry and his wife Alice. Bill, Charlie, the elderly and deaf Arthur, and the often drunk police officer Fry are regulars at the bar. Fry spends more time at the bar than he should at his job. They only come to the bar for the hangman, Harry. Even in one sentence, Arthur says “I were going to have another pint, but if hangman’s gone off I might go. I don’t even like the pints here, but they’ve a hangman” (McDonagh, 2015). Arthur sees Harry and Pierrepoint as folk heroes; Arthur represents the public's support and admiration for the execution during the abolition period.

Two years have passed since the execution of James Hennessy. The death penalty has been abolished. Customers in the bar are chatting about the abolition of the execution. While they are chatting, a stranger named Mooney comes to the bar. It looks extremely threatening. At that time, it is mentioned that Alice and Harry's daughter, Shirley's friend, was hospitalized in a mental hospital. According to her parents, Shirley is a pessimistic and quickly depressed young girl. Therefore, they decide not to tell this news to their daughter. When Shirley first enters the stage, her father's phrase is: "Speak of the devil!" (McDonagh, 2015). When Shirley goes down to the bar, her father constantly makes negative comments and psychologically abuses her. Returning to their conversation about the abolition of the death penalty, the bar customers ask Harry, an executioner, for his opinion. Harry, now unemployed with the abolition of the execution, does not answer any of the questions. Journalist Clegg, who travels there from Manchester to interview him, is angered by the refusal. He says that he will go and interview Pierrepoint to make Harry angry and get his blood up. “Clegg: Him being, y’know ... the Number One hangman all them years” (McDonagh, 2015). Then, Clegg stepping back to soften the atmosphere adds “(stalling) Well ... I wanted a quote

from the hangman, didn't I? The hangman that was still called upon at hanging's dying days. The one whose opinion matters. Not from some bloody has-been who quit his post ten years since. (Pause.) Y'know?" (McDonagh, 2015). On this comment, Harry accepts the interview. When Alice goes out to the garden to smoke, Mooney comes to the bar to chat with Shirley. When Shirley learns from the customers in the bar that her friend Phyllis is in a mental hospital and that her family is hiding this from her, Shirley feels very angry. Mooney is looking for an apartment to rent. He talks to Alice, who previously rented a room from her house. He gets the answer that she can rent her rooms if Mooney can bring invalid references.

A conversation begins reflecting Harry's interview with Clegg. Expressing his views on the death penalty, Harry says "*Hanging's too good for them*" and adds:

Harry: *Hanging int too good for them, hanging's just right for them. There are some fellas out there who are bad uns, and if the courts say they've got to go they've got to go, but if they've got to go they've got to go by the quickest, the most dignified and the least painful way of going as possible. That, in my book, in most normals people's books, is hanging* (McDonagh, 2015).

He criticizes other types of executions practised in China, America and France. To the question of how many people were hanged, he answers two hundred and thirty-three. Angered again when compared to Pierrepoint, Harry states that Pierrepoint had carried out a mass execution in the German war, thus he could surpass him. He argues that if they remove the Nazis executed in the war, they will be equal in number with Pierrepoint. When asked why he was not called to the executions during the war, he states that it coincided with the "Great National Race Week" and did not go, saying that Alice was ill. He adds that because he refused once, he was not called again. He has also never hung a woman, but Pierrepoint has never hesitated to hang women. Harry adds to his interview that Pierrepoint's hair smells very bad. Clegg also asks questions about the possibility of the youth's innocence at the Hennessy execution. However, Harry maintains that he was not innocent. After Hennessy was executed, some femicides were committed in the same way. Harry responds to this situation by normalizing violence against women. He states that violence is in the nature of men. "Clegg:

So are you saying, then, that the death penalty never worked as a deterrent, Harry?" (McDonagh, 2015). Clegg implies that Hennessy was punished as a warning to others, but the murders continue. It does not matter to Harry whether the deceased is guilty or innocent. He competes with Pierrepoint. It is enough for Harry to increase the number of executions.

Alice is reading her husband's interview in the newspaper in her dressing gown. Seeing that almost all of the things he said in the interview were lies, Alice says, "He's lost run of himself. I knew he would" (McDonagh, 2015). During the conversation between them, it is seen that not only her father but also her mother constantly abuses Shirley psychologically. While the mother-daughter are arguing, the doorbell rings and Mooney comes in with his references. Mooney and Shirley start a conversation when Alice goes upstairs to change her outfit. He says he can take Shirley to the mental institution if she wants to. If the hospital is closed, Mooney tells Shirley that then they can go to the seaside. He tells her to come to the train station at 11 o'clock in case she wants to see her friend. When coming back to the bar, Alice says she called Mooney's references and was unable to reach anyone. Angered at her calling for references, Mooney says, "Yeah, no, I don't want the room now. No, I don't even want to look at it. Even if you apologised. Phoning my references?! Your husband's killed two hundred fucking people! Where's his fucking references?!" (McDonagh, 2015). He gives up holding the room and slams the door quickly.

That afternoon at the bar, the topic is Harry's interview with the newspaper. Customers all praise a different detail. It is understood that they acted like this because they were afraid of Harry. No one dares to criticize except Inspector Fry. "Fry: But, overall, I just think you went a bit far, that's all. (Uncomfortable silence from all.) I mean, nobody needs to know numbers, do they? Or what was said int' death cell, or who were scared or who weren't scared. Some things ought to remain, I don't know, sacrosanct or summat" (McDonagh, 2015). While the conversation continues, Alice comes in and asks about Shirley. Harry does not care much, giving sarcastic answers. Just then, Harry's assistant Syd enters the bar. Everyone except Harry was happy to see Syd. Harry had Syd fired for making fun of the genitals of a man they had executed and disrespecting the dead. Syd tells him that these matters are in the past and he came there to do Harry a favour.

Syd says that there are strange developments regarding the Hennessy case, that they may have hanged an innocent man. He adds that he was visited by someone dangerous. Syd describes Mooney as a dangerous person. He advises them to be careful as it is the second anniversary of Hennessy's hanging that day. Harry was confused. They suspect Mooney when their daughter Shirley disappears on the same day.



Picture 8. *Hangmen*. Alfie Allen and David Threlfall. Photo by Joan Marcus. (vulture, 2022)

While Mooney is sitting in a coffee shop, Syd approaches him and it turns out that he hired Mooney to bust Harry's ego and avenge his dismissal for a genital joke. While talking to Syd, Mooney tells him that he is keeping the girl in a garage in Formby. It is not clear whether what he says is sincere or not. Syd gets very worried and starts stuttering like he does every time he gets nervous. Mooney admits to having met Hennessy before. He says Hennessy is too good to rape anyone. Hennessy and Mooney were good friends before Hennessy was hanged.

In the evening of the same day, there are the same customers at the bar. While they are talking about Shirley, Mooney walks in. He apologizes for his misbehaviour in the morning and asks if the room is still empty. Fry begins to

question Mooney, who they think has something to do with their daughter's disappearance. Mooney says he does not know, and also states that he and Syd are old friends. Harry hits Mooney's head with the same stick Hennessy hit. Ignoring Fry's request to take him to the police station, Harry puts the barrel rope around Mooney's neck, with the help of Alice and the three friends. Syd walks in just as Mooney is about to drown. Harry thinks he will find out about Shirley's location by torturing Mooney. Mooney is breathing hard. Meanwhile, there is a strong knock on the door. In a panic, they stuff a piece of cloth into Mooney's mouth and hide him behind the curtain. When they open the door, they see Pierrepoint, who was enraged by the interview and came to ask for this. Furious with what he read in the newspaper, Pierrepoint begins to insult Harry. Pierrepoint tells Harry how badly he runs a bar, how bad he is at his job, and that he takes pity on the prisoners he hangs. Harry insults Pierrepoint as well and adds that his hair smells bad. Refusing to accept this, Pierrepoint confirms to everyone inside that it does not smell bad by making them smell his hair. As Pierrepoint speaks, the chair under Mooney falls to the floor. This means that Mooney is currently smothering. Pierrepoint warns Harry not to speak badly about him or give interviews again. He puts on his raincoat and gets out very slowly. When they open the curtain, it is revealed that Mooney is already dead. Next up is Syd. As Harry is about to torture Syd, the door opens and Shirley enters. She apologizes to all of them for not letting them know. She says they went to the mental hospital with Mooney. She states that they went to the seaside and then to Mooney's house because the hospital was closed. She adds that Mooney treats her very well. She likes Mooney very much because he does not insult her like her parents. She states that she has feelings too. She waits for Mooney at the train station for four hours, but Mooney does not come. She tells that he is in love with Mooney as they go home with his mother. His mother turns and looks at the corpse.

When it comes to removing the body, Bill, Charlie, Arthur and Fry go out quickly. It is up to Syd and Harry to dispose of the body, as in the old days. The two, who were offended in the past, decide to shake hands over the corpse and leave the past behind. They plan to put Mooney's body in their car and throw it into the river. Their consciences are clear, they talk about what is right for

Hennessy and Mooney to do justly. When the play is over, everyone in the play is guilty; they are the hangmen, except for Shirley and the two who were executed.

At the end of the play, it has never known whether Mooney is a psycho, a murderer, or just a really weird guy who likes to piss people off. Did Syd call Mooney or vice versa? Did Mooney know Hennessy as he told Syd? What were Mooney's goals? Had he come to avenge Hennessy's unfair execution? On all these issues, McDonagh has written an open-ended final where he leaves the answers to the audience. In the play, the sanctity of human life, the sad consequences of the wrong functioning of the justice system, the effects and consequences of violence becoming a habit, and the dangers of institutionalization are explained using violence and funny elements. Özmen (2019) states the execution of Mooney “Considering this scene as a dark note on the uselessness of violence and blind adherence to ideals of justice, Mooney’s accidental killing should not only be seen as an element of dark humour but a political comment on various actual public punishment cases in Britain that have been carried out wrongfully” (p.94).

Executioner Harry is a sullen, tough Englishman who serves the system without question. It is not the innocence of the men he hangs or the memories he has had with them that bother him. His only concern is the superior social status of Pierrepoint, the only man in the country to have managed to hang many more convicts than him. Harry argues that it is unfair to include the number of Nazis Pierrepoint killed in Nuremberg after the war.

Albert Pierrepoint is a real hangman who lived in Britain. He is the most murderous executioner in British history. Pierrepoint executed six hundred and eight people in twenty-two years. Pierrepoint, who resigned after twenty-two years, started a campaign with the slogan "Death is not a deterrent". Arguing that criminals should be punished with strong and deterrent punishments instead of being killed, he said that they should be reintegrated into society. He demanded the Ministry of Interior remove the profession he has done for years. Bloody executioner Pierrepoint started a campaign against the death penalty in England. Özmen (2019) states:

The two most important characters, the “hangmen” of the play are based on the two most popular executioners in British history, Albert Pierrepoint and Harry Allen whose name is transformed in the play into Harry Wade. Apart from these famous executioners, several other people are also mentioned in the play whose names have been involved in miscarriages of justice. Representation of real people who are somehow related to capital punishment or remembering some of the innocent people who have been wrongfully killed indicates that the play provides a commentary on the problematic aspects of justice in criminal law (p.94).

Both executioners have run bars in real life. Using real executioners and real convict names, McDonagh questions whether the executions carried out in British history were fair or not. He also questions whether being an executioner was a truly honourable profession, as was generally thought at that time. McDonagh's reference to real people in his play causes a debate about the futility of the death penalty. The writer draws attention to the stories of people who were unjustly executed by state violence.

According to Duncan Campbell, a former reporter of the *Guardian* newspaper, in his article titled "A Hanging Offence" (2015), published in the play brochure, executions could be watched by the public in Britain until 1868. Even, Charles Dickens was among the 40,000 people who came to watch an execution in 1864, and he later recounted his experience by saying, "I would have thought it impossible that a large crowd of my contemporaries could be so repulsive." In the 1960s, when the play was set, the prison was filled with a crowd protesting the executions. However, especially after World War II, every week about five to ten people applied for being hangmen. Just like Harry Wade, they took pride in their work, and many of them even turned their memories into books. Even Pierrepoint, who became famous for killing the Nazis, mentioned in his memoirs his doubts about the deterrent effect of hanging. Of course, in the history of the country, as in other countries, there are examples where it was noticed that the death penalty was applied incorrectly. For example, Derek Bentley, whose family was apologised in absentia after his death, and James Hanratty, who are alleged to have traces of Hennessy's execution in the play.

Despite all the objections of the politicians, the death penalty was abolished at the request of the people. The recently abolished death penalty was a fairly common punishment in England. The execution, which was

abolished because it was against human rights, left bloody memories behind. Executioners and executed prisoners. The last execution in the United Kingdom was carried out in 1964 when the prisoner was hanged. In 1965, the death penalty for murder was suspended, and in 1969 it was completely abolished. Although the death penalty was abolished in England in 1965, it continued in Northern Ireland until 1973. The death penalty was commuted to life imprisonment across the country. The death penalty continued for crimes such as treason, piracy, arson and espionage. With the crime and disorder law of 1998, the death penalty was abolished for all kinds of crimes. The date of the last death penalty in England was 1964.

In *Hangmen*, which McDonagh wrote shortly after the abolition of the death penalty, he satirizes the consequences of this law and who is responsible for the accidental hanging of the innocent. The play graphically shows the death penalty as untenable: it is cruel, dishonourable and inhumane.

The death penalty, unlike other penalties, involves certainty, and quite simply, this play claims that no one can achieve that level of certainty. Human knowledge is inherently limited, flawed, and flawed. The death penalty involves finality unlike any other punishment and, quite simply, this play argues that no one can reach that level of certainty. Human knowledge is inherently limited, flawed and imperfect (Schwall, 2018).

In the play, it is possible to see all kinds of violent scenes that McDonagh does not hesitate to stage in their most brutal form. Especially the part about political violence is open to criticism. There are two executions shown on stage in the play. Both Hennessy and Mooney were blooded by Harry after being hit with a stick. In addition to these physical violence elements, psychological violence is also very high. The characters humiliate each other whenever they get the chance. For example, Harry said harsh words to Fry while torturing Mooney. “Harry (to Fry): I were always harder than you. I tolerate you, but you’re nowt. So shut your face. Alright?” (McDonagh, 2015). In the same way, he said that his wife, Alice, is a person who gets sick all the time. On the other hand, Shirley is subjected to domestic psychological violence by both her mother and father. Shirley thinks she is exposed to this because she is 15 years old. A conversation with Shirley and Mooney goes like this:

“Mooney: (pause) How old are you anyway?”

Shirley: Fifteen.

Mooney: (pause) A lovely age.

Shirley: It ain't.

Mooney: Ain't it?

Shirley: Everybody just keeps having a go at ya, and you're not allowed to do nowt.

Mooney: Well, don't let them have a go at you then.

Shirley: (tearfully) I know, but it's hard, int it, when they're all bigger.” (McDonagh, 2015).



Picture 9. *Hangmen*. Alfie Allen and Gaby French. Credit by Joan Marcus. (ew, 2022)

Constantly humiliated by her family, Shirley sought affection from the man she first met. Family relations are extremely weak.

“Shirley: Maybe I think you and dad are boring an' all.

Alice: Don't be stupid. We're not boring. I run a pub and he's chief hangman. That int boring, that's interesting. Meals on wheels for the depressed, that's boring.

Shirley: He were chief hangman yesterday. He int nowt today.

Alice: He'll be chief hangman for a long time yet, you mark my words. In his own mind if nowhere else” (McDonagh, 2015).

In the play, Mooney criticizes the system "But you can get away with anything when you've the cash, can't you? Money talks, I've always found" (McDonagh, 2015). All cases of execution mentioned in *Hangmen* are either accidental or unlawful, and they all demonstrate the failure of the justice system. Therefore, McDonagh's play also provides a warning note to contemporary society as it displays the former problematic uses of execution that are against human rights" (Özmen, 2019). McDonagh emphasizes that state-sanctioned violence leads to more violence. He argues that justice is imperfect because of the execution of innocent people. He also emphasizes that state violence is justified because the hanging was carried out by state officials, even if the executed were innocent. Özmen (2019) states "In this play, Martin McDonagh presents an event from the past while simultaneously engaging in a debate about the legitimization of state-sponsored violence" (p.92). McDonagh emphasizes in each interview that he is not a political playwright, but this play says the opposite, it is a political play. Even Harry and his men are exactly the kinds of men who get on well, who would make compliant Nazis.



Picture 10. *Hangmen*. David Threlfall, centre, with, from left, Richard Hollis, Ryan Pope, John Horton and Alfie Allen. The Golden Theatre. Credit by Sara Krulwich/The New York Times. (nytimes, 2022)

Can it be said killing for the state does not count as killing? Is it not a crime to kill in the name of the state? The play is an example of state-sanctioned violence. In the play, there is a conversation about other types of executions in Clegg's interview with Harry.

“Clegg: But how do you know, Harry? You haven't seen any of the other methods of execution, the electric chair, or the firing squad ...

Harry: Of course I bloody haven't, I'm from Lancashire, not Arkansas! 'The electric bloody chair.' I'm told when that goes wrong they come out sizzling like a bloody steak! No thank you! I'll have my executions without the need for fried onions if it's all the same to you. Yank claptrap!

Clegg: Guillotine's quick, I'd wager.

Harry: Guillotine's quick but guillotine's messy and French. Who'd go for that in Durham? No one. And who's going to clean up mess after? Heads bouncing round. I'm not going to clean it up after. Warders?

They've enough on their plate, the poor sods” (McDonagh, 2015).

It is emphasized that it is applied in many countries and that the most correct application is in England. State violence pressure is high in the play because Harry does not answer Clegg's question about the errors in the judiciary and the abolition of the death penalty over the last ten years. It is either because he is afraid or because he is too statist.

“Clegg: And, one final thing, Harry. The miscarriages of justice that've occurred over the last ten years ...

Harry: Oh, here we go, you had to spoil it ...

Clegg: The ones that have swayed public opinion against hanging ...

Harry: Says you” (McDonagh, 2015).

There are racist expressions in the play. Bill says about someone he met in town: “Bill: Aye, it's ... vicariously, int it? (Pause.) He's often in there. I don't mind him; I just don't talk to him, like, y'know? He's black” (McDonagh, 2015). Since the story takes place in the mid-60s, all the characters are racist, sexist and homophobic. The Northern British get the most criticism, but black immigrants, Americans, French, Scots and especially Germans are also criticized.

Proud of the number of men he has executed, Harry boasts that there is not a single German among two hundred and thirty-three. “Harry: Two hundred and thirty-three. Sans a single German” (McDonagh, 2015). However, he adds how

much he wanted to kill the Germans. “Harry: I regret not going, I’d’ve liked to see a bit of Germany. All I’m saying though is, all them Nazis Pierrepoint did, all them bastards as ran the camps and whatnot, I hold my hand up to him, I do” (McDonagh, 2015).

The Northern Ireland – Southern Ireland conflict, which dominates the period, is also seen in the play. Harry says about Hennessy: “Harry: Mostly what I remember about Hennessy, he were very anti-northern, and I don’t like that. It’s prejudice” (McDonagh, 2015). Pub people hate Londoners, just as Mooney despises them. “Mooney: Or do I say balls to all this and go back to London and civilisation?” (McDonagh, 2015).

There are funny elements used to reduce the dose of violence in the play. Everyone laughs when Syd makes fun of the inmates' genitals. When Mooney dies, they ask Syd for help, and Bill says to Syd, who does not want to help: “Aye, why don’t you two do it? You can take his arms, Harry, and you can look at his cock, Syd” (McDonagh, 2015). It also makes a funny impression on the audience that the customers in the pub drink whatever Harry wants rather than what they want. No one can object. Harry tells his customers what to drink and when to take a break and when to drink. These three buddies are at the bottom of Harry's detailed hierarchy. It is also a funny detail that Harry was afraid when Pierrepoint came to the pub, where he heroically gossiped about him. Another funny element in the play is Arthur, who is deaf. If he misses one of Harry's good talks, Charlie repeats it louder for him, and Arthur's sincere responses make the audience laugh.

“Hangmen” shows how much McDonagh relates to and cares about the political issues of his day and past. Besides, the use of a small town in England as the plot testifies to McDonagh's interest in more global issues. He touches on a serious subject by using elements of comedy and violence in his play. McDonagh draws public attention to the death penalty, the legalization of corporate violence, and the justice system. The play reveals the arrogance of killing people in the name of justice. He also makes a strong comment on the current state of human rights.

CONCLUSION

Ireland is one of the first countries that England has had at hand for centuries and has colonized whenever they want. The weakness of Ireland and the inability of the people to struggle in unity and solidarity were also effective in this. British exploitation left Ireland far behind other countries in every field, from language to literature, especially in the economy. Irish society was about to lose its national identity. While England had won famous playwrights like William Shakespeare, Ireland was still trying to get rid of oral literature and create their own written literature. The Irish people, who lived under exploitation for years, started a national resistance in the 20th century. While some reflected this resistance to literature and art, some chose to take up arms. Terrorist groups such as the IRA and INLA emerged. These armed groups, which were supported as well as criticised, went so far as to carry out acts of international terrorism. The civilian population was the most affected by these negativities, in which thousands of guilty-innocent people lost their lives.

Irish theatre was born under these conditions, as a result of the search for revival and national identity of oppressed people who have been subjected to exploitation for centuries. Starting the national movement in the field of theatre has also been an opportunity for Ireland, which has not had a national theatre in its history. In this way, they had also opportunities to write plays reflecting on their own lives and the problems they experienced. Yeats, Gregory and Synge are considered the most important writers of the independence struggle. The rapid economic change and the wealth coming with the Celtic Tigers in the 90s also affected the literature.

To provide national consciousness, the understanding of theatre, which only praises Irish culture and traditions, has turned to more realistic issues with postmodern writers. Until then, writers who had written plays that only praised being Irish began to add universal themes to their plays. These writers, such as Martin McDonagh, Marina Carr and Conor McPherson, who received much criticism and reaction from some sections of the public, brought Irish theatre to the world stage. These playwrights, also known as the leading figures of the In-Yer-Face movement, reflect different types of violence, such as verbal, physical,

psychological and political, with abusive language in their plays to disturb and frustrate audiences and readers.

Another feature in the plays is the interest in violence. Violence, which has existed throughout history, has always managed to attract the attention of mankind. Violence, which people like to watch just for fun, has started to be used realistically on stage with the In-Yer-Face theatre movement. The aim is to make people laugh while at the same time shaking them up by confronting the facts. Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh is considered one of the writers who best reflect this. It is possible to see almost all kinds of violence such as political, verbal, psychological and physical in his plays. These problems reflect the realities that people often come across in their daily lives and ignore.

Unlike other writers, Martin McDonagh, an Irish playwright and screenwriter, is known for representing Irish politics as well as the Irish nation and culture in his works. McDonagh tries to show the audience the fact that violence is a part of humans' daily lives. He emphasizes the seriousness of violent incidents such as murder, terrorism, rape and abuse, which are heard in daily lives and are starting to become normal. By showing all this violent content on stage, he tries to create a feeling of discomfort in the audience.

McDonagh uses extreme violence scenes to raise awareness and make the audience understand the seriousness of the event. The writer uses the daily household items or tools that are used in homes as a means of violence. For example, most of the murders in *The Pillowman* were committed with pillows. In *Hangmen*, barrel rope was used to hang Mooney. They hid it behind the curtain to hide that he was hung.

The perpetrators of violent acts in his plays are usually ordinary people. They easily kill the people around them and have no remorse or sadness. For example, in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, INLA members kill a man just because his name is funny. Mairead, on the other hand, kills the man she fell in love with, without even blinking, for killing her cat. No one who witnessed the event reacted to the murders. Society, which has been exposed to a lot of violence and terrorist attacks both in the media and in their daily lives, has become accustomed to violence. In *Pillowman*, Michal kills innocent children he never knew, just to test

how much of it could be implemented. In the same play, detectives Tupolski and Ariel executed Katurian without any judicial process. In *Hangmen*, while James Hennessy cries out for his innocence, Harry executes him by using the verdict of the judiciary as an excuse. Likewise, Harry easily hangs Mooney, who is suspicious of his daughter Shirley's disappearance, despite the lack of any concrete evidence. The customers in the pub even helped instead of opposing this torture and execution. Harry and Syd, who disposed of Mooney's body, did not show the slightest remorse or regret, even though they knew he was innocent. They even state excuses justifying the execution. McDonagh shows the characters in his plays with an incredible desire for violence.

In McDonagh's plays, there is a fight for status and hierarchy between characters. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, Padraic declares himself captain. He thinks that he has the right to torture and kill the people who do not comply with his interests. Later, when she kills Padraic, who declares her as his deputy, the authority passes to Mairead. This time, Mairead declares herself the new lieutenant. In *The Pillowman*, on the other hand, a constant conversation between detectives Tupolski and Ariel is about who is in charge. Ariel, who is uncomfortable with the fact that Tupolski is in a higher rank than him, often says that he will complain about him. In *Hangmen*, there is a social status and hierarchical order that Harry cares deeply about. In this hierarchy, Pierrepoint is superior to Harry. Harry, on the other hand, argues that the German Nazis Pierrepoint executed during the war caused unfair competition and should be removed. The pub's regulars, Arthur, Bill and Charlie, are at the bottom of Harry's hierarchy. Even Alice has the right to scold them.

Although McDonagh states that he does not write about politics and stays away from political issues, political references and political violence are seen in his plays. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, system criticism is made through the terrorist groups IRA and INLA. McDonagh satirizes political and physical violence for self-interest, using Irish independence as an excuse throughout the play. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, it is seen how the terrorist attacks and political violence they are exposed to in their daily life negatively affect their lives. The fact that INLA members Christy, Joey, Brendan, and then Padraic were killed for nothing, not for independence shows the damage done by political

violence. *The Pillowman* is also an example of the legitimacy of state-sanctioned political violence. The punishment for killing his parents and siblings is not execution. However, state-approved detectives Tupolski and Ariel pass the judicial process and execute the writer Katurian, so that the work will not be delayed. All of the characters have childhood traumas. The violence and torture they experienced in their childhood have formed their corrupted behaviours today. All of the characters who are problematic have past traumas that they cannot forget. Those who grow up exposed to torture and violence normalize violence. In *The Pillowman*, McDonagh conveys the message that the state cannot protect children from violence. In *Hangmen*, as in the other two plays, elements of political violence are seen. Executioner Harry is a figure of political power authorized by the state. He believes that killing for the state is not a crime. While executing James Hennessy although Hennessy cries out for his innocence until the very last moment, Harry ignores it. Saying that the judiciary has made its decision, he assigns it to the state over his responsibility. In the play, the message is given that the death sentence causes wrong operations and irreversible mistakes. As with the Hennessy execution, Mooney's murder is a mistake. Harry and Syd feel no pangs of conscience when it is discovered that Mooney was murdered without any guilt of his own. On the contrary, they argue that they were right in their executions so far and that they did nothing wrong. Neither Katurian nor Mooney has any legal process to protect their rights or prevent their execution. People authorized by the state executed them because they thought it fitted. As seen in McDonagh's three plays, there is the problem of legitimizing violence in the state monopoly. All of the murderers in the play argue that they did this murder for their country. This makes them innocent, that is, killing in the name of the state is not killing.

In McDonagh's plays, it can be seen examples of psychological violence and domestic violence as well. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, almost everyone practices domestic violence against each other. Padraic and his father have a very unhealthy father-son relationship. Donny is scared to death of his son. If the INLA members did not come into, Padraic was about to kill his father because his cat died. Mairead has a problematic relationship with both her mother and brother. She does not care about her mother and makes fun of her brother's physical

appearance and uses psychological violence against him. First Padraic and then Mairead want Donny and Davey to dismember and destroy the corpses they killed, which is an example of psychological violence. In *The Pillowman*, while interrogating Katurian, they act as if their brother Michal is being tortured in the next room is an example of psychological violence. Likewise, the detectives inflict psychological violence on Katurian, threatening to burn his stories. Tupolski's frequent reminder of Ariel's childhood, and his father's sexual abuse, is also an element of psychological violence. The problematic behaviours of the characters today are caused by childhood traumas. Those characters that grew up exposed to torture and violence normalized violence. It is possible to see elements of domestic psychological violence in *Hangmen*. In particular, the shy and introverted behaviour of their fifteen-year-old daughter, Shirley, is mocked by both her mother Alice and her father Harry among pub customers. Physically, she is mocked for her weight.

Violence is abundantly displayed in McDonagh's plays. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, three INLA members, Padraic and two cats are murdered on stage. With the funny elements added to the play, the audience watches all this brutality by laughing. When the characters in the play witness violence, they want more. Mairead, who easily killed her beloved Padraic for her cat, dreams of killing more people by joining INLA. In *The Pillowman*, Katurian kills his mentally disabled brother by pressing a pillow to his face to protect him from the torture of the detectives and the other innocent children in the neighbourhood from the torture of his brother. If Michal had lived, he would probably have continued to kill other children because Michal, who had been subjected to various tortures and violence from his family over the years, saw violence as a normal thing. Michal is killed on stage in front of the audience. Katurian is likewise shot and executed when Tupolski says seven while counting down from ten. In *Hangmen*, Harry is a government official who is proud of the number of people he has killed and the work he has done. On stage, Hennessy and Mooney are executed in front of the audience. He does not care about his memories of the people he hangs or whether they are innocent or not. His only concern is his rival, Albert Pierrepoint, who has executed more people than him. If the execution had not been abolished and Harry had not been unemployed, he would probably have hanged more people and still

be proud of it. Instead of reacting to Harry executing someone he does not even know was a criminal in his civil life, customers at the pub show their interest in violence by helping him.

In McDonagh's plays, comic elements are used to lighten the violence he reflects on the stage. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, painting the cat black with shoe polish; asking permission to talk on the phone while torturing James; and Padraic, who has to leave the torture halfway, pays James for the bus are the funny elements of the play. In *The Pillowman*, the dialogues between Katurian and the detectives during the interrogation and the conversations between Michal and Katurian add humour to the play. The other funny element is that Katurian's first name, last name, and middle name are the same. In *Hangmen*, Syd makes fun of the prisoner's genitals, which makes everyone laugh. It also makes a funny impression on the audience that their customers in the pub drink whatever Harry wants rather than what they want. It is also a funny detail that Harry was afraid when Pierrepoint came to the pub, which he heroically gossiped after him. Another funny element in the play is Arthur, who hardly hears. If he misses one of Harry's good talks, Charlie repeats it louder for him, and Arthur's sincere responses make the audience laugh.

Another common element in those three McDonagh plays is the appearance of a character at the end of the play that shows that they commit violence for nothing. The moment that shows the futility of violence in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is the appearance of Padraic's presumed dead cat, Wee Thomas. In *The Pillowman*, Katurian is tortured because of the characters he is thought to have killed. However, towards the end of the play, the little girl who is thought to have been killed in 'The Little Jesus Story' is brought to the stage alive by Ariel. In *Hangmen*, on the other hand, Mooney acts as a character that appears at the end of the play and is used to show the audience the futility of violence. When Shirley enters the pub, it is learned that Mooney was killed for nothing, following a misunderstanding.

In all three of McDonagh's plays, gothic elements were used to create fear and uncertainty in the audience. It is unclear who killed the cat Wee Thomas until Christy confesses his guilt in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. It is still unclear who

killed the children until Michal's confession in *The Pillowman*. In *Hangmen*, it is unknown whether she was killed by Mooney or not until Shirley showed up. It is also unclear whether James Hennessy is guilty or not. All this uncertainty is to create fear in the audience. The purpose of McDonagh's gothic elements is a deep reaction against the everyday reality of unstable political life. He aims to stimulate the imagination of the audience in his plays. Therefore he deliberately combines gothic elements with terror and extreme violence. In all three of the plays, the main characters die with an unexpected end. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, Padraic meets an untimely and unexpected end. In *The Pillowman*, while waiting for Katurian to be executed by counting down from ten, Tupolski says seven and pulls the trigger. Like Padraic, Mooney is caught off guard by Harry's reaction and is executed innocently.

Martin McDonagh underlines social and political issues in his plays. He has been tried to analyse the contemporary world created by the immorality, brutality and corruption prevailing in society. In all three plays, the characters are forced to deal with the violence, cruelty, immorality and injustice that today's world has brought into human life. The characters use all kinds of physical violence, such as wounding, strangling, stabbing, bombing, burial, crucifixion, execution, rape, and torture. These create psychological pressure on the characters and increase the tension in the plays. All characters in these plays are violent and open to violence; that is, the character who commits violence in one scene becomes a victim in another scene. In McDonagh's plays, the characters are neither all good nor all bad. Accomplice characters are also seen on the stage. In other words, the characters in these plays are portrayed as people who embody good and evil. When the plays are examined, it is seen that the writer has an implicitly critical attitude towards the social, political and moral deterioration in the contemporary world. McDonagh underlined that social, political and moral issues can be criticized by emphasizing the small events he handles in his plays.

The historical and cultural events and political violence in Ireland have had a direct impact on the Irish stage. McDonagh and his contemporaries contributed to the reorientation of Irish theatre to cope with modern changes in post-colonial Ireland. In other words, they increased the authority of the theatre equal to the political establishment. The success of Irish theatre exceeded expectations with its

international recognition. The contribution of Irish playwrights cannot be ignored, whose plays were staged and achieved great success in North America and Australia as well as in Europe. Martin McDonagh is undoubtedly one of the biggest contributors to this success in bringing Irish theatre to international platforms. It can be said that McDonagh, who tries to reflect the fact that violence is everywhere and can be seen in everyone regardless of age, gender and class, writes beyond the borders of Ireland and England. That is why his plays address not only Ireland but many countries around the world.

In this thesis, McDonagh's plays *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman* and *Hangmen* are studied. The central point where these three plays meet is to show that national and international problems cannot be solved by forming terrorist organizations or splinter groups, by using political violence, or by killing large numbers of people, including the innocent. Various means of violence against each other, even by people authorized by the state, without using the judicial process, are mentioned. These means of violence range from verbal and psychological violence to physical and political violence. This futile violence can only be changed through communication and trying to understand each other.

Besides, in this thesis, selected plays of Martin McDonagh were examined to reveal the function of violence and political violence along with social and political problems. It can be said that it is a promising study as it offers a new perspective to future studies and adds a new trait to the presentation of political violence in theatre.

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