



## 'Farce' Or 'Comedy Of Situation': Joe Orton's *What The Butler Saw* (1969)

'Farce' Ya Da 'Durum Komedisi': Joe Orton'un *What The Butler Saw* (1969) Adlı Oyunu

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### ÖZET

Bazı eleştirmenler tarafından farklı bir edebi tür olarak görülen Fars, genellikle bir komedi alt türü olarak kabul edilir. Karakterlerden ziyade duruma bağlı olmasına rağmen, diğer tüm komedi türleri gibi mutlu bir sonla bittiği için, biz bu çalışmamızda, Aristoteles'in Komedi ve Tragedya arasındaki ayrımını temel alarak bunu bir komedi alt türü olarak kabul ettik. Bu çalışmada, esas olarak Fars'ın farklı özelliklerine odaklanan mevcut tanımları ve seçkin sözlüklerdeki açıklamaları temel alarak, yeterli ve kapsayıcı bir tanım yaratmayı deneyeceğiz. Sonra onu diğer komedi türlerinden ayıran özellikleri açıklığa kavuşturmaya ve her birini ayrıntılı olarak açıklamaya çalışacağız. Bunu yaparken, önce Fars'ın Avrupa ve İngiltere'de tarihinin ve gelişiminin kısa bir özetini vereceğiz. Sonraki bölümde, karakterlerin, olay örgüsünün ve diğer özelliklerinin onu bir Fars örneği olarak etiketlemek için uygun olup olmadığını belirlemek için Joe Orton'un şaheseri kabul edilen *What the Butler Saw* (1969) oyununu yakından inceleyeceğiz. Sonuç bölümünde oyundan topladığımız verileri değerlendireceğiz ve ne ölçüde bir Fars olarak kabul edilebileceğini göstermeye çalışacağız.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Joe Orton, *What the Butler Saw*, Fars, Komedi

### ABSTRACT

Farce, regarded by some critics as a distinct literary genre, is generally accepted to be a subtype of comedy. We will accept it to be a sub-genre of comedy as it also has a happy ending as all the other types of comedy based on Aristotle's distinction between Comedy and Tragedy, we will consider it as a comedy sub-genre, though it depends on situation rather than characters. In this study we will try to create a substantial definition for it depending on the present definitions first, which focus mainly on different features of farce, and explanations in the outstanding dictionaries. Then we will try to clarify the features that distinguish it from the other types of comedy and explain them in detail. Doing this we will give a brief summary of its history and development in Europe and Britain. In the following part we will closely examine Joe Orton's masterpiece *What the Butler Saw* (1969) to determine whether the characters, plot, and other characteristics of it are suitable for labelling it as an example of farce. In the conclusion part we will evaluate the data that we have gathered from the play, and we will show to what extent it can be regarded as a farce.

**Keywords:** Joe Orton, *What the Butler Saw*, Farce, Comedy

## 1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FARCE AS A LITERARY SUBGENRE OF COMEDY.

Farce has been among the most controversial literary genres of drama which is defined focusing on different aspects of its formation. Thus, it is not very easy to define it precisely and correctly. However, I will try to create one using the present definitions and explanations in the well-known and widely used dictionaries. Here are some definitions about *farce*: ***Collins Cobuild Dictionary*** “a humorous play in which the characters become involved in complicated and unlikely situations”; ***Macmillan English Dictionary***: “a play or film in which people get involved in silly or unlikely situations that are intended to make you laugh”; ***Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary***: “A funny play for the theatre based on ridiculous and unlikely situations and events; this type of writing or performance”; ***Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English***: “a humorous play or film in which the characters are involved in complicated and silly situations, or the style of writing or acting that is used”; ***The American Heritage Dictionary of English Usage***: “A light dramatic work in which highly improbable plot situations, exaggerated characters, and often slapstick elements are used for humorous effect; the branch of literature constituting such works.” However, ***The Macquarie Dictionary*** adds something new to the above definitions and focuses on the characteristic that the plot depends upon situation rather than character.

As one can understand from the definitions above, *farce* can consistently be defined as *a form of theatre or film which is humorous, ridiculous, funny or silly with exaggerated characters involved in improbable or unlikely complicated situations or events with the intention of making the readers or the audience laugh focusing on situation rather than the characters*. That’s why it is also regarded as a kind of low comedy, and exaggerated physical action (often repeated), exaggeration of character and situation and absurd situations are also added to its characteristics (Cuddon, 2013). According to (Baldick, 2001), it inspires laughter mixed with panic and cruelty in its audience through an increasingly rapid and impracticable series of absurd confusions, physical calamities, and erotic allusions amongst its stock characters “whose escapades lead them to, but never beyond, the brink of disaster” (Quinn, 2006: 159). Surprises in the form of unexpected appearances and disclosures are also very important in the formation of its plot and “character and dialogue are nearly always subservient to plot and situation. The plot is usually complex, and events succeed one another with almost bewildering rapidity” (Cuddon, 2013: 270).

Thus, “Farce” is a broad label intended to summarise the features of a theatrical work into a single “user friendly” word. In practice, the experiences and preferences of every individual convey a number of both positive and negative references, implications and analyses to such a label (Costa, 2004: 8).

Though some critics claim that the first plays that can be defined as farces were produced in France in the Middle Ages (Cuddon, 2013, p. 270) and British playwrights took them as their example, there are also some critics who are of the opinion that it is directly related to comedy. “Farce is a simplified dramatic form derived from comedy and the human psychology that seeks out fun for fun's sake along with the fulfilment of socially unacceptable fantasies” (Barranger, 1990:148) and thus it begins with the emergence of comedy. However, Bermel claims that comedy and farce are two different genres and lists a set of differences between farce and comedy. For him wit, generally verbal, is the predominant quality in a comedy, while farce generally depends on visual humour (1982: 53-57). In other words, in a comedy, the audience watching a comedy and the characters in the play laugh together, though the audience of a farce laughs at the characters in the play. The

actions, behaviours or the speeches in a farce can be entertaining for the audience but they didn't mean to be so (Bermel, 1982: 54)

Another point that makes comedy distinct from farce, for Bermel, is verisimilitude of the events and the characters in the play. Comedies are about the events and the characters that are 'life like'; they are closer to life, though farces are more abnormal and unreal (1982: 55). Bermel continues stating that in farce the same circumstances may be normal for some characters but abnormal for the others or vice versa, "or that in comedy characters remain rooted in reality while in farce they keep venturing out of reality. And they often do so in everyday settings" (1982: 55).

According to Barranger (1990), the best definition for farce is 'a comedy of situation'. Everything that distinguish farce from comedy develop out of situation. The best and most widely used examples are slips on the banana peel, pies in the face, slapsticks, and mistaken identities result from a situation. Risky, ridiculous, and absurd events without serious consequences take the place of comedy's traditional apprehensions for social values. The life reflected in a farce is an aggressive, mechanical, and coincidental one and entertains us with sketchily infinite variations on a single circumstance. Being temporarily trapped in a bedroom or somewhere intimate when the deceived lover comes suddenly is one of the distinctive situations in farce. "The situation is accompanied by much pounding on the bedroom door, efforts on the lovers' part to retrieve their clothing, followed by inventive escapes from the all too obvious situation, and sometimes the beating and humiliation of the intruder" (Barranger, 1990: 148). As a sub-form of comedy, it takes us to a world of fantasy full of with violence without harm, adultery without consequences), and cruelty without danger. (Barranger, 1990: 148).

## 2. EMERGENCE AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FARCE: A VERY SHORT SUMMARY

The origins of farce are unclear, however "it may be reasonably supposed that it precedes anything merely literary" which could be labelled as a form of ancient horseplay (Cuddon, 2013: 270). In classical Greek Literature it is possible to reach its traces especially in the works of Aristophanes such as *Lysistrata*, *The Frogs*, *The Birds* (STNJ, 2017). In Roman Literature Plautus, who is also the first playwright to use the term tragicomedy as a mixture of tragedy and comedy, used some farcical elements in his works. The form of farcical elements used by different playwrights taking Aristophanes as a role model used a plot structure that was the combination of low comedy and serious satire and criticism which is also very discernible in the Greek *satyr play*<sup>1</sup> (q.v.) and in the Roman *fabula*<sup>2</sup> (Cuddon, 2013).

According to *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (2013), the first examples of the play that can be accepted as farces appeared in the late Middle Ages and they were of French origin. They were 'stuffing' comprised of interludes<sup>3</sup> performed between religious or liturgical drama. They were generally written in octosyllabic couplets and were not longer than 500 lines, and they entertained the audience by displaying the flaws and bad habits, such as especially commercial

<sup>1</sup> 'The satyr play' was a burlesque presentation of Greek myth, often featuring satyrs (goat-gods) and the hairy, wild figure of Silenus. It was performed at the Greek tragic festivals as the fourth play, after three tragedies. *The Satyr Play* apparently formed a kind of anti-masque, or parodic answer to the tragic competition. The only extant example of a satyr play is Euripides' *Cyclops* (ca. 410 BCE?) (Mikics, 2007, s. 272-73)

<sup>2</sup> The Latin *fabulae* were forms of drama among which we may distinguish the following: (a) *Fabulla Atellana*, so called after the Oscan town Atella. A kind of southern Italian farce (q.v.) popular in Rome until the period of Augustus (63BC – AD 14). They were bawdy pantomimes (q.v.) with stock characters (q.v.) who were represented by masks (Cuddon, 2013, p. 265).

<sup>3</sup> 'The interlude' was a Medieval performance, usually farcical in nature—dinner theater that would be either sandwiched in between less frivolous material or served up between courses of a meal while spectator-diners groaned, belched, or otherwise responded to the dishes. (Bermel, 1982, p. 76)

deception and marital infidelity, of everyday life. Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* (1387–1400) can be regarded as a perfect example to this type of comedy.

In the fifteenth century the term farce was first used in France to indicate a new form of comedy including the elements of joking, physical actions, caricature, exaggeration, and crudeness together in a single form of entertainment. According to Gloria Loha, such were originally bits of 'impromptu buffoonery'<sup>4</sup> scenes inserted by actors into the texts of religious plays using the Old French word farce, which means 'stuffing' for them. Those pieces of work were written independently, the most important of which that survives even today is *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* (1470). The form of farce that appeared in France spread quickly throughout Europe, especially England (Loha, 2019). Their most important examples in Britain were the interludes written by John Heywood in 16th-century England. Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* (1672), and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590), and *The Comedy of Errors* (1594) are known to include the elements of farce (Cuddon, 2013: 270).

The time and place when and where farce turned into a fully matured form and established itself were 19<sup>th</sup> century and France with Eugène Marin Labiche's *An Italian Straw hat* (1851), and Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in her Ear* (1907). Arthur Wing Pinero popularized it in England with his works such as *Imprudence* (1881) (Kuiper, 2012: 190). Thanks to Labiche and Feydeau 'bedroom farce' with themes of sexual fidelity and romantic adventures both in and out of wedlock, has been one of the most widespread forms (Cuddon, 2013: 269-270).

The emergence of the 'Absurd theatre' gave this term a new meaning. The absurd dramatists, who used absurdity to represent the absolute chaos and meaninglessness of life, created a form sometimes called 'tragic farce' (Costa, 2004), which was also employed by T. S. Eliot to label Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1590). Jean Renoir provides a brilliant example in his film *Rules of the Game* (1939), in which a long farcical sequence of events causes the death of one of the characters (Quinn, 2006: 159).

Silent films accompanied the heydays of farce in the movies of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and, ideally, in Mack Sennett's Keystone Kops, in which the pursuit of so-called suspects played a fundamental role. When the silent movies were replaced by the one with sound, farce and sharp wit were collectively used in the films of the Marx Brothers. His *A Night at the Opera* (1935) is accepted to contain a scene which sums up the essence of farce. This scene, where an intolerably large number of people are filled into a small state room, reminds the etymology of the term: the word farce comes from "stuffing" in the French. Initially, this term means the interplay of broad humour (that is, "stuffed") introduced into medieval religious dramas (Quinn, 2006: 159-160).

Modern playwrights and their works, such as Joe Orton's *Loot* (1965), and *What the Butler Saw* (1967) revitalized the farce and employed them to force the audience to reconsider what is the normal and what is the abnormal. In the following part of our study we will take Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw* and examine the characteristics of farce as reflected by Orton.

### **3. *What the Butler Saw* (1967) And Characteristics of Farce**

Though a comedy presents complexly motivated self in a common-sense reality, Joe Orton presents a series of ridiculous cartoons that exist in a clearly theatricalized world. The play opens in a psychiatric consulting room. Dr. Prentice, a psychiatrist, enters wearing an expensive, tailored suit which indicates that he is the boss and the authority. He is followed by a young woman named

<sup>4</sup> foolish or playful behavior or practice made, done, or formed on or as if on the spur of the moment. (Marriam-Webster Dictionary)

Geraldine Barclay carrying a small box who applied for the secretarial position in the clinics. During the interview, Dr. Prentice begins to question Geraldine not as a boss trying to evaluate whether the applicant is suitable for the post or not but as a psychiatrist who examines his patient asking some questions about her past and her family. Geraldine reveals that she does not know her real parents and she was raised by a foster mother, Mrs. Barclay who died a few days ago because of a gas explosion which also ruined a statue of Sir Winston Churchill, which is understood at the end of the play to symbolize the state authority in England.

Pretending as if he really conducts a medical examination which is very necessary for the job, he forces the young woman to undress in front of him with a view to seducing her. From that point on we see in the play that the play is full of with absurdities related to both the characters and the situations. She is so naïve that she cannot understand what really lies behind the doctor's action, she removes her drees behind the curtains and lies fully naked on the examination couch which is much bigger than regulation size and looks big enough for two. However, her underwear is on the chair in front of the curtain.

Unexpectedly Mrs. Prentice, Dr. Prentice's wife comes followed by a young hotel page, named Nick. This is one of the typical situations in farce when the lover who is deceived or who believes to deceived appears all of a sudden and makes the situation dangerous for his/her lover who is forced to hide someone in a bed room or somewhere else. Dr. Prentices' efforts to retrieve Geraldine's clothing are followed by ingenious escapes from the all too obvious situation and becomes the beginning of the confusion and absurd situations that can be seen in every farcical play.

Through the conversation between Mrs. Prentice and Nick while Dr. Prentice is out for a moment, it is understood that they had spent the night at the hotel together, and Nick took photos of Mrs. Prentice, and he threatens Mrs. Prentice to give them to the media unless she convinces her husband to give him a secretarial position. When they leave the stage, Dr. Prentice tries to dress Geraldine to get rid of the confusion but before she does dress, her wife comes again and sees the Geraldine's dress. In a silly way she wants to put on it without asking any question about why the clothes are there. When she put off her coat before putting on Geraldine's clothes, it reveals that she has only a lip beneath it as all her clothes were stolen by the young hotel page.

All the characters presented by Orton in this play are more farce caricatures than ordinary characters seen in other types of comedies. They are in a self-evidently theatricalized world in which they exist as dramatic characters. From the very beginning of the play, the audience knows and admires that they are in a play because the farce of Orton is very successful in funnily exaggerating the construction of 'reality,' by stressing the normally ignored devices of convention behind the performance. According to Turner (1987) these self-conscious characters in the play seem so distanced from the drama to remark on it that the audience is detached by being made aware of the trick (1987: 24).

In this seemingly improbable situation, another doctor named Rance enters the clinic as a government official in charge of psychiatric facilities. He seems to be the figure of authority who takes all the control in the clinic and interprets everything he sees and hears according to his preconceived notions and knowledge. Prentice says that the young girl behind the curtain on the couch is a patient, and Rance immediately decides to examine her. It is very apparent that, as all the figures of authorities do, he imposes his own view and ideas on whatever she says rather than listening and taking the statement of so-called patient Geraldine into account. He reaches to the conclusion that she must have been a victim of her father's assault without knowing that she has been raised by a foster as she was abandoned by her parents when she was a baby. He tries to find a case in which he can prove a truth no one yet realizes. He trusts himself and his knowledge in psychiatry so much that he regards even her denial as a sign of approval for his theory: "The

vehemence of her denials is proof positive of guilt. It's a textbook case!" (Orton, 1992: 19). Doctor Rance does not delay making the diagnosis that Geraldine is insane. During all these events the audience is aware of the facts and laughs at Dr. Rance as they know that he takes charge of this case as "it appears to have all the bizarre qualities that make for a fascinating thesis" (Orton, 1992: 16).

In the course of time, Rance imposes his own elucidations on the words and statements of everyone. When he asks to Dr. Prentice where his secretary Geraldine is, he answers: "I've given her the sack" to express that he fired her, but Dr. Rance interprets it as: "He killed her and wrapped her body in a sack. The word association is very clear." (Orton, 1992: 49). With these conversations and the comments of Rance, Orton satirizes the modern practice of psychiatry. Using the events in the play, Rance creates a narrative which he plans to publish a short novel to be famous and rich.

The imaginary secretary becomes the centre of the acts and both Mrs. Prentice and Dr. Rance are in a persistent pursuit of her and they leave the stage and come back again and again. At this point another figure of authority, Sergeant Match, comes. When Dr. Prentice and Nick learn that a police officer has come, they both think that he comes for himself. Nick fears being arrested for his recent molestation of a group of schoolgirls, while Dr. Prentice believes that the police officer was called by Dr. Rance as he thought that he killed his imaginary secretary. The only solution for Prentice is to undress Nick and make him put on Mrs. Prentice's clothes he stole in the hotel and a wig. Nick is forced to pretend to be the imaginary secretary, Geraldine. This is the beginning of the play revolving around the mistaken or threatened identity of the characters which is also one of the most important characteristics of farce.

Maurice Charney (1984) states that transvestism is widespread in the ancient Greek tradition of farce; however, the costumes were the first and the foremost guide to the sexual identities of the characters. Orton changes this classical view in *What the Butler Saw* when Geraldine cannot persuade any character in the play that she is either girl or a boy as she is dressed in Nick's uniform "and she floats frustratingly in that epicene middle state where the categories of masculine and feminine lose their clear outlines" (Orton, 1992: 100). For Charney (1984) this cannot be regarded as a sign of bisexuality, but a funny escape from the problems of sexual identity. As an acknowledged homosexual, Orton might pitilessly tease both the gay and the heterosexual world and he turns the theme of sexuality in his play into a synonym for the imagination (Charney, 1984: 100).

When the sergeant enters and reveals that he is looking for both Nick and Geraldine who is suspected of having an important piece of the Churchill's statue which is very crucial for the nation, Nick pretends to be Geraldine in Mrs. Prentice's dress and sergeant questions him about the missing piece of the statue. Just after Mrs. Prentice and Nick leave the room, Dr. Rance returns and thinks that his mental patient, Geraldine, the naked girl behind the curtain, has escaped and pulls the sirens. As a matter of fact, Geraldine is just there dressed as Nick. The twists in the identities of the character is very apparent in the play. Geraldine who comes to the clinic for the secretarial position turns out to be a mental patient at first, then she is forced to pretend to be Nick, the hotel page. Nick changes his identity in a woman's dress and pretends to be the imaginary secretary Geraldine. Dr. Prentice is thought to be a homosexual or even a cross-dresser when his wife saw Geraldine's clothes and shoes at the very beginning of the play. Then when she sees Nick almost naked in front of her husband with the intention of dressing to pretend to be Geraldine, the secretary, she questions once again her husband's sexual identity and thinks that he is trying to seduce Nick as he is interested in both young women and boys.

As a perfect example of farce, a kind of low comedy, the play is full of with exaggeration in physical actions and behaviours as well as the language used. The absurd situations which can rarely be seen in real life together with exaggerated characters and situations take the play away from reality and make it a farce. According to Quinn (2006), it motivates laughter mixed with panic

and brutality in its audience via a progressively fast and unrealistic series of absurd misperceptions, physical catastrophes, and erotic allusions amongst its stock characters (Orton, 1992: 159).

Almost every scene is full of with surprises caused by some unexpected appearances and disclosures at least for some characters, and that is very important in the formation a typical plot of a farce. To support this atmosphere of artificiality, character and dialogue are almost constantly subservient to plot and situation. The plot which seems to be an ordinary one at the beginning of the play turns out to be a complex one with the events succeeding one another with almost puzzling quickness with the coming and going of the characters and seeing each time someone with a different identity.

In the second Act which begins in the same location only a minute later, Geraldine tries to tell what really happened when she came to the clinic for the secretarial post, but it is in vain as the sergeant believes her to be Nick not Geraldine. The only solution to the problem of identity, which is a recurrent theme in all the farces, is to have a physical examination to determine if she is really a girl or a boy. Rance is ready to examine the girl, but she persistently refuses to be examined by a man. She is in a dilemma as she wants to prove that she is not Nick on the one side, she does not want to be examined by a man as she really is a girl on the other. Just as Rance is trying to persuade the girl for the necessity of the physical examination, Mrs. Prentice enters and says that Nick, still in women's clothes, also refuses to be physically examined. Seeing the absurd situation, Dr. Prentice reveals the truth and says that she is really Geraldine Barclay and Nick left the clinic. However, Rance who is determined in his previous interpretation of the events, and diagnosis that he is insane, and he relieves Dr. Prentice of his post.

It is very clear from the play that any effort to undermine the authority is definitively and absolutely eliminated. At the beginning of the play, Dr. Prentice seems to be the only authority in the clinic but when a superior one, Dr. Rance, comes everything changes. Rance regards anything different from his views and predetermined notions as an attempt to surpass his authority and refuses them strictly. A perfect example occurs when Rance wants to learn if Mrs. Prentice really saw Dr. Prentice carrying a body into the shrubbery. Dr. Prentice answers: "Yes. I have an explanation for my conduct", however Rance shows that he does not need any comment on the subject saying: "I'm not interested in your explanations. I can provide my own" (Orton, 1992: 49). He is not trying to find what really happened, he tries only to find some evidence to prove his notions and explanations in his mind. Rance's authoritative character and actions represent Orton's criticism of the age of reason which regards the science as the only trustable source of truth and reality. When Prentice tries to express that there is no need to search for something complex in every case, Rance refuses this idea in a humiliating manner:

**Prentice.** Perhaps there's a simpler explanation for the apparent complexities of the case, sir.

**Rance.** Simple explanations are for simple minds. I've no use for either. I shall supervise the cutting of the patient's hair. (Wheels Geraldine into the wards.) (Orton, 1992: 28).

One can understand from Rance's behaviour and statements that he demonstrates the real world though he is almost the most insane of all the characters in the play. His unusual and illogical comments and interpretations make him almost the maddest of all the other characters. According to Bigsby (1982), the irrational "demands of the Ministry-appointed psychiatrist, in *What the Butler Saw*, are frustrated not by a rigid adherence to norms of behaviour but by a disturbingly flexible approach to identity, with the characters repeatedly changing their roles as easily as they change their clothes" (p.50). This shows itself when he is questioning Geraldine on her sexual identity:

**Rance.** ... Do you think of yourself as a girl?

**Geraldine.** No.

**Rance.** Why not?

**Geraldine.** I'm a boy.

**Rance.** (*Kindly.*) Do you have the evidence about you?

**Geraldine.** (*Her eyes flashing an appeal to Dr. Prentice.*) I must be a boy. I like girls.

**Rance.** (*Stops and wrinkles his brow, puzzled. Aside, to Dr. Prentice.*) I can't quite follow the reasoning there.

**Prentice.** Many men imagine that a preference for women is, ipso facto, a proof of virility.

**Range.** (*Nodding, sagely.*) Someone should really write a book on these folk myths. (*To Geraldine.*) (Orton, 1992:39).

When both Nick and Geraldine confess that they wear other's clothes and reveal their true identities, Nick says to Prentice in a silly and absurd manner that he wants to wear sergeant Match's uniform in order to arrest himself. When sergeant comes, Dr. Prentice uses his authority and orders him to undress for an examination and gives him a box of tranquilizers and sedatives. Secretly Dr. Prentice gives the sergeant's clothes to Nick and they once more leave the stage.

When Rance and Mrs. Prentice see the sergeant Match entering the room heavily drugged, Dr. Prentice takes him out of the room immediately. The empty box of pills gives both Mrs. Prentice and Dr. Rance the impression that Dr. Prentice committed suicide; they then speculate that Dr. Prentice may have killed Geraldine with these drugs. Making his mind that Dr. Prentice is insane, Dr. Rance asks for a straitjacket for Dr. Prentice though he tries to reveal the truth that everything happened is the result of his attempt to hide his effort to seduce Geraldine during the interview.

Instead of listening to what the others say, all the characters interpret the events as they want to see. For example, Mrs. Prentice says that she understands his husband's preference for young boys. Dr. Prentice orders her to take off her dress, then slaps her and tears her dress. When Dr. Rance comes, Ms. Prentice tells him the story in an exaggerated manner and turns the events into farce rather than a comedy.

As an important feature of farce, dramatic irony which occurs "when the audience understand the implication and meaning of a situation on stage, or what is being said, but the characters do not" (Cuddon, 2013: 216) is widely used in the play. Orton conceals what is most apparent to the audience from the characters on stage, and thus Dr. Rance and Mrs. Prentice, as the rules of farce demand, are not allowed to see the innumerable disguises.

Nick in Sergeant Match's uniform comes and claims that he has arrested Nicholas Beckett, his brother. However, when Mrs. Prentice and Dr. Rance want him to arrest Dr. Prentice for killing his secretary, he confesses everything and admits his true identity. While with the help of Nick, Dr. Rance is trying to put Dr. Prentice in a straitjacket, Prentice wants Geraldine remove Nick's hotel uniform and put on her own dress to enlighten everything. It seems that everything will be understood, and the misunderstandings will vanish, however a shot is heard, and Match comes to the stage with his foot tapped, behind her is Mrs. Prentice, who shoots at her with a gun and once again everything enters in a state of turmoil.

The next part of the act is full of with confusion, in which the actors enter and leave the stage and Mrs. Prentice is following Nick so that she can shoot him. Suddenly Geraldine appears on the stage and Dr. Rance becomes very happy as he believes that he has found the missing patient and immediately puts her into straitjacket. When Dr. Prentice enters the room being followed by his wife following him with a gun in her hand, Dr. Rance accomplishes to put a straitjacket on Mrs. Prentice. Thus, Dr. Prentice gains the control of the gun and then Dr. Rance takes the gun from him and push the panic button, which starts metal grilles to come down over the doors. All the stage



turns into a jail in a prison or a madhouse. This scene gives the impression that all the country turned out to be a jail or madhouse in which all the people with different ideas or opinions are regarded to be insane. Even Dr. Rance who symbolizes the state authority and who diagnoses everyone with abnormality and being insane is abnormal.

With the confession of Dr. Prentice, the truth about Nick and Geraldine's identities is revealed and Dr. Rance orders Mrs. Prentice and Geraldine to be released. However, Geraldine persistently complains of the loss of her lucky elephant charm. When Dr. Rance finds the charm and gives it to Geraldine, Nick makes another confession that he has a charm which is identical to it. Mrs. Prentice sees both pieces of it and puts them together in a way that forms a complete brooch. She confesses that it is her brooch which was given to her by a man who raped her in a linen closet during a power cut while she was working as a chambermaid at a hotel. She gets pregnant and as she is about to marry a promising psychiatrist when she gives birth to twins, a girl and a boy, she breaks the brooch into two identical parts and pins one piece to each of her twin children, and abandons the children in separate parts of the city. Thus, she is the mother of Geraldine and Nick. Dr. Prentice also makes a new confession that he is the man who raped Mrs. Prentice at the hotel and pressed that brooch into her hands in part payment. Therefore, he is the father of both Geraldine and Nick. This makes almost everyone happy but their logic behind this happiness is different. Dr. Rance is happy because all these confessions prove his theory that Geraldine really is the victim of an incestuous assault, as is Mrs. Prentice.

As all the parts of the clinic is covered with metal bars there is no way for them to leave the clinic but suddenly the skylight opens, and a ladder descends. Sergeant Match comes down the skylight in a leopard-print dress and wants Geraldine to give him the missing piece of Churchill's statue. She remembers the box given to her by the undertaker which she left on the floor when she first came to the clinic for the interview and opens and finds the missing part of the statue, an oversized penis. The play ends as all climb the ladder into the light.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS:

*What the Butler Saw* is a pure example of farce which must be *identity centred*. The entire story revolves around *the false or threatened identity of the characters*. At the beginning of the story Geraldine and Nick are two young people who are sexually abused or assaulted by both Mr. and Mrs. Prentice however in the course of the play they change identity and pretend to be someone different in crossdressing identities. At the end of the story, they both turn to their original identities and it is learnt that they are children of Mr. and Mrs. Prentice who transform into a father and a mother from two sexual abusers.

The plot in a typical farce *mocks the social codes of the society* including funny and violent scenes ending in a shock resolution and a happy ending. In *What the Butler saw*, Orton both mocks and satirizes the social codes of the society about the gender roles, family relations, perception of madness, and authority. Therefore, says Bigsby (1982), he uses a quotation from *The Revenger's Tragedy*: "Surely, we're all mad people, and they/Whom we think are, are not." (Orton, 1992: 56). In the centre of the Orton's play exists the perception of madness. He tries to answer the question who is mad and who is pervert and who is conventional without having a specific answer to these questions. However, he shows that the current views on this subjects in the period in which the play was written, such as the methods to determine who is mad, are not valid. It is full of with verbal and physical violence and abuse in a funny atmosphere. It ends in a shocking way revealing that Nick and Geraldine who seem to be the abused or sexually assaulted young people are their abusers' children. The audience is also shocked that the one who raped Mrs. Prentice is his husband. All the problems are solved, and a happy ending is reached when the missing part of the Churchill's statue, the penis as a phallic symbol is finally found.

The plot of *What the Butler Saw* makes fun of with **the concept of what is right or what is wrong** (is proper) and the revolts against the present codes about the social behaviours and sexual preferences of the individuals. The crossdressing of the characters is a means to criticize and rebel against the predetermined codes about the gender roles in the society. All these witty methods used in the play are essential elements to create a farce.

**Reversal of the expectations** reinforced with **surprising events** and **the comic reversal** at the end of the play are also very important in the formation of farce. From the very beginning to the end of the play, the reversal of the fortune is felt very apparently. At the beginning, Geraldine is happy as she would have a job, but she is sexually abused by her future boss. Surprisingly, Dr. Prentice's wife comes when Geraldine is naked, and the hunter becomes a prey. Nick comes to the room with the hope of having the post and a substantial amount of money, but he is forced to pretend to be a young lady lest he could be arrested by sergeant Match. When he thinks that he is the absolute loser, he learns that he is Mr. and Mrs. Prentice's child just like Geraldine. Dr. Rance believes that Geraldine is a case in which a young lady was sexually abused by her father and he wants to write a novella about this story and be very famous and rich through it. However, in the course of the time the truth reveals to be different and he loses his hope of being rich. At the end of the story, everything changes once more, and his theory is almost approved. All these reversals in the fortune caused by the surprises creates a comic and funny atmosphere and lead to the **happy ending** of the story. This makes *What the Butler Saw* more akin to farce.

Life in farce should flow much faster than normal. **Pace and speed** are very important both in farce and the play that we are studying. Everting happens so quickly and surprisingly that sometimes the audience cannot keep up with the speed of the events in the play. This effect is created by many doors in the scene and the characters goes in and out through these doors but find themselves in a different situation in each case. As it is a form of comedy timing is very important.

Every farce has **more than one subplot** which are very fragile, and each plot has its own rules and development. The relation and problems between Dr. and Mrs. Prentice; Dr. Prentice's attempt to seduce and assault Geraldine, Nick's and Mrs. Prentice's relationship and Dr. Rance's passion to find a case which has not been presented as a theory to the world of science and to create a novella form it, and the missing part of Churchill's statue are all the sub-plots in the story. They are closely linked to the main plot of the story and they determine how the characters will have to behave.

Like all the farces, *What the Butler Saw* has **young lovers, wife-ridden husband, miser, witty servants, someone trying to promote his/her social statues**. The cast is almost the same in every farce. Nick and Geraldine are the young lovers of Mrs. and Mr. Prentice who is also the wife-ridden husband. Nick, who is also the witty servant, and Dr. Rance are both misers and want to promote their social status. All these elements of farce all of which are present in *What the Butler Saw* make it a perfect example of farce in a modern world.

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### Uzun Öz

Bu çalışmada genellikle diğer komedi türlerinden daha aşağı kabul edilen ve ilkel, kaba ve fiziksel şiddete dayalı güldürü olarak algılanan bir tiyatro oyunu türü olan Fars'ın (Fars), ayırıcı özellikleri incelenmiş ve irdelenmiştir. Edebi çevrelerde olmasa da kamuoyundaki bu algının doğru değildir. Bu tür özellikle 19. Yüzyıl'dan başlayarak toplumsal sorunları eleştirmek ve yermek için

kullanılmaya başlanmış, fiziksel şiddetin ve kaba güldürünün bu türün saf örneklerinde sadece birer ara unsur olduğu yapılan araştırmalarda açıkça ortaya konmuştur. İngiliz Edebiyatı'nın bu türdeki en güzel örneklerinden birini verdiği kabul edilen Joe Orton'un 1967 yılında yazdığı ancak sevgilisi tarafından aynı yıl öldürülmesinden yaklaşık bir buçuk sene sonra 1969 yılında sahnelenen *What the Butler Saw* örnek oyun olarak ele alınmış ve incelenmiştir. Joe Orton otoriteler tarafından bu türe yeni bir anlam kazandıran ve onu kaba güldürü sınıfından çıkarıp seçkin bir tür haline getiren yazarlardan biri olarak kabul edilir. Bazı eleştirmenler tarafından farklı bir edebi tür olarak görülen Fars, genellikle bir komedi alt türü olarak kabul edilmelidir. Karakterlerden ziyade duruma bağlı olmasına rağmen, diğer tüm komedi türleri gibi mutlu bir sonla bittiği için, biz, Aristoteles'in Komedyası ve Tragedya arasındaki ayrımını temel alarak Fars'ı bir komedi alt türü olarak kabul ettik. Ancak bazı eleştirmenlerin ve edebiyatçıların neden bu türü ayrı bir tür olarak kabul ettiklerini incelemek okuyucunun zihninde oluşabilecek karmaşaya engel olmak gereklidir. Esas olarak Fars'ın farklı özelliklerine odaklanan mevcut tanımları ve seçkin sözlüklerdeki açıklamaları temel alarak, yeterli ve kapsayıcı olduğuna inandığımız tek bir tanım oluşturduk. Her ne kadar tam bir Fars özelliği taşıyan ilk oyunların orta çağda Fransa'da çıktığı ve buradan diğer Avrupa ülkelerine ve özellikle İtalya ve İngiltere'ye yayıldığı kabul görse de bu türün ilk izleri eski Yunan Edebiyatındaki *satry* ve İtalyan *fabula* oyunlarında aranabilir. Fars kendine özgü ayırıcı özellikleri vardır. Bunlar kimlik merkezli olması, toplumun mevcut sosyal yasalarını hicvetmesi, neyin doğru neyin yanlış olduğu ile ilgili tabuları tartışmaya açması, olay örgüsünde talihin defalarca değişmesi, olayların inanılmaz bir hızda akması ve oyunun sonunun mutlaka mutlu ancak şaşırtıcı bir sonla bitmesi gibi özelliklerdir. Bütün bu özelliklerin detaylıca incelenmesinden sonra bu özelliklerin Joe Orton'un *What the Butler Saw* adlı eserinde mevcut olup olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Örneğin Fars'ın genel ve temel özelliklerinden biri olan oturmuş toplumsal yasaların tartışmaya açılması incelenen oyunun belirgin özelliklerinden biridir. Oyundaki karakterlerin sürekli olarak karşı cinsin elbiselerini giymek zorunda bırakılmaları ve değişen kimlikleri, toplumsal cinsiyet olgusunun mevcut algılanış şekline karşı bir başkaldırı ve eleştiridir. Bu eleştiri karakterlerin cinsel tercihlerinin farklılıklar gösteriyor olabileceğini ima eden konuşmalarla da desteklenmektedir. Örneğin Bayan Prentice'in gittiği gece kulübü lezbiyenlere özgü bir kulüptür. Bayan Prentice aynı zamanda kocasının genç erkelere ilgi duymasını anlayabileceğini ifade etmekte ve daha da ileri giderek zengin olduğunu ve hayatın tüm zevklerini denemesi gerektiğini bile söyleyebilmektedir. Bu söylemler 1960'larda ortaya çıkan özgürlük hareketlerinin ve öğrenci ayaklanmalarının sanat alanındaki bir yansıması gibidir. Fars'ın bir diğer temel özelliği olan komik unsurların karakterlerden ziyade karakterlerin içinde buldukları durumdan kaynaklanması gerekliliği de incelediğimiz oyunda açık şekilde mevcuttur. Diğer komedi türlerinde seyirciler karakterlerle birlikte gülerken, *What the Butler Saw*'da karakterlere gülerler. Daha saygın kabul edilen diğer üst komedi türleri gerçek hayattaki ortama uygun bir olay örgüsü ve karakter yapısı gerektirirken, incelediğimiz oyunda da karşımıza çıktığı gibi Fars türünde gerek olaylar gerekse olay örgüsü daha ziyade fantastik ve gerçek dışıdır. Genç sevgililer, kılıbık kocalar, paragöz karakterler ve sosyal statü meraklısı kişiler bu türün genel ve temel tipleridir. Bu tiplerin incelenen oyunda mevcuttur ve bu karakterlerin davranış şekillerinin de inanılması güç tesadüflerce belirlenmektedir. Bu özellikle Fars'a özgüdür. Örneğin oyunun başında geceyi Bayan Prentice ile otelde geçiren ve onun çıplak fotoğraflarını çekerek ona şantaj yapan Nick adlı karakterin oyunun sonunda aynı bayanın yıllarca önce terk etmek zorunda kaldığı biri kız biri erkek iki evladından biri olduğunun ortaya çıkması tesadüf anlayışının sınırlarını zorlamaktadır. Bu tesadüfler zinciri bununla da kalmaz ve oyunun başında iş başvurusunda bulunan Geraldine adlı genç bayana sarkıntılık yapan ancak karısı kliniğe gelince onu perdenin arkasında çıplak şekilde saklanmak zorunda bırakan Dr. Prentice'in oyunun sonunda

aynı genç kızın ve daha önce bahsi geçen Nick'in babası çıkması da bu tesadüf sınırlarını zorlayan olaylardan biridir. Bütün bu özellikler Fars izleyicisinin kendisinin bir tiyatro izlemekte olduğunun farkında olarak oyunu izlemesini sağlar ki bu Fars'ın seyirciden beklentilerinden biridir. Oyunun sonunda bütün yanlış anlamaların giderilmesi ve bütün karakterlerin mutlu olacak bir sebebe sahip olması da oyunun Fars'ın temel özelliklerinden birine daha sahip olduğunu gösterir. Nick ve Geraldine hiç sahip olmadıkları anne ve babalarına kavuşurlar. Polis müfettişi Match aradığı Churchil heykelinin eksi parçası olan penisi bulur. Doktor Rance, Doktor Prentice'in Geraldine'nin gerçek babası olduğunun ortaya çıkması ile onun babası tarafından taciz edildiği teorisi doğrulanmıştır. Bay ve Bayan Prentice hem çocuklarına kavuşmuş hem de birbirlerini sevdiklerinin farkına varmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda, Joe Orton'un *What the Butler Saw* oyununun Fars türünün gerekli tüm özelliklerini taşıdığı ve bu türün en güzel örneklerinden biri olarak kabul edilebileceği öngörüsüne ulaşılmıştır.