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The Dilemma of Motherhood and Domesticity in Gina Gionfriddo's *Rapture, Blister, Burn*

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Abstract

This paper is a study of feminist theatre as a rejection of masculine superiority in theatre and social life. It examines a modern play that depicts the role of women as mothers and the conflicts defining the status of motherhood. It investigates thematic trends and objectives of feminist theatre, a theatre that started with the birth of second-wave feminism. It analyzes the reflection of women's social and political lives as represented by this theatre. To meet that end, it examines Gina Gionfriddo's *Rapture, Blister, Burn* (2013) that depicts issues of unsettled identities, women empowerment, and the dilemma of motherhood. The study explores the way this Play represents an imaginary space where women can play a revolutionary role by questioning their domesticity and careers. The Play is written by a feminist playwright, has an all-woman cast, and is produced by a woman director. *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, meanwhile, portrays the possible ways whereby the new era showcases an acceptable resolution for the unsolved dilemma of domesticity and motherhood. This paper correspondingly interrogates the theatrical depictions of the women characters, who come up with limited life choices and are trapped in the socially constructed dilemmas of domestic lives and the way they combat the social restrictions.

Keywords: Feminist theatre, feminism, womanhood, motherhood, dilemma, identity.

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Introduction

The paper is entitled, "The Dilemma of Motherhood and Domesticity in Gina Gionfriddo's *Rapture, Blister, Burn*", it is a study about feminism and feminist theatre. The paper studies the coming to the ground of feminist theatre and the way it served women empowerment. It examines Gina Gionfriddo's Play *Rapture, Blister, Burn*. It depicts women's concerns and the dilemma of domesticity from the beginning of feminist theatre to the fourth wave. Feminist Theatre questions the role of women as mothers, discussing their free will and the cultural and social obligations. The paper examines the mothers' burden and the way contemporary women rethink their roles and question their abilities. The paper consists of an introductory about feminism and feminist theatre, then social perspectives of the dilemma of motherhood.

Consequently, it examines the dilemma of motherhood and domesticity in *Rapture, Blister, Burn*. The paper ends with some conclusions and a list of references. The significance of this paper lays in its method of rethinking motherhood and career in feminist theatre. It explores how the contemporary feminist theatre deems motherhood and employment based on women's abilities. Feminist theatre in fourth-wave feminism gives voice to its audience to decide on women's life choices based on women's capacities. It breaks up with the previous ideologies that limited women's burden to one specific feature of life.

1.1 Feminism and Feminist Theatre

The word feminism is widely used, and it has become both an academic discipline and a social movement. Therefore, the main purposes of feminism are aiming at bringing inequality between the two sexes and creating a shared life value. Unlike what many interpret it that feminism has planted hatred between the two sexes. “Modern” women except for all the development and independence they have, they lack a sense of self. There is a strong sense of high position, which results in belittling their abilities and their feminine power. The embodiment of women becomes part of society’s interest. Women should percept the opportunities given to them as humans, but not as females. Women should try to form their identities and activate their individualistic abilities to lead society and gain power along with men, thus adopting a humanistic approach in viewing their womanhood. It is not necessarily the equality between two genders that solves the problems but the equality in rights that lead us to a better life.

Feminist Theatre questions the role of women as mothers, discussing their free will or the obligations that culture and the patriarchal society would put on them as reproductive tools. It is a form of literature addressed by women to women, about women. Different genres of literature have been published about female experiences. Women have had their presence since the emergence of drama. However, there was no true identity of their struggles and difficulties. Women were writing plays and participating in various ways in theatre.

Nonetheless, an actual feminist theatre focuses on inequalities in daily life, such as sexuality, family, reproductive rights, and women’s rights in the workplace. This genre of literature developed

during the era of second-wave feminism, which emerged in the 1960s. During that time several admirable volumes of plays by women and about women, and several articles on the new feminist theatre have been published. *Calm Down Mother* (1963) by the pioneering American feminist playwright Megan Terry (1932) is regarded as the foundational Play of the feminist theatre. The Play presents the limitations forced on women by themselves and by society. During the period from 1963 to 1966, Terry became noticeable through one of the most influential organizations to serve women, which was The Open Theatre of New York. The Open Theatre made a lasting mark on the world of contemporary theatre. Terry, in her writings, pinpointed the abilities women own to change and make their lives better (Canning & Swain, p.20). Though, there are not fixed numbers about women's presence in theatre at that time. Women used theatre with more self-awareness to identify what it means to be a woman. Women have never been absent on stage, they have worked in theatre, but feminist theatre changed the way women's stories had been presented. It finds their real call and realities. Women went through struggles to come into positions of power and responsibilities; they made an effort to own the stage as professionals. Therefore feminist theatre remodels women's stories on stage for the performance. It brought women out of their writing rooms to the stage and encouraged the women in the audience by giving them a sense of belonging, and inspiration.

Feminist theatre can be described to pinpoint women's social and political conflicts. It is a theatre, which was during the era of second-wave feminism. It has its roots in the women's movement and 'new theatre'. The late 1960s are defined as the original time of coming to the stage of feminist theatre, in both Britain and the

United States (Keyssar, 1985, p.1-4). Feminist theatre can ask more serious questions concerning women's power. It has the ability to embody women's consciousness and create a picture of what women really are, in addition to the struggle and difficulties they face. Megan Terry's *Calm Down Mother's* features Margret Fuller and the women transformations. Caryl Churchill in *Top Girls* portrays Marlene as a successful working woman to embody the Marxist feminist theory, and to bring women to the centre of the subjects, as they were marginalized within the boundaries that society had put for them. The stage needed female characters as women themselves, not men disguised as women. In feminist theatre, most of the playwrights are women writing from their own experiences and struggles they want to overcome. Theatre was in need to introduce women's problems and their inner lives the way they live it, for the plays that men write are usually about the things that can be seen. It strives to tell women's stories in their own words and resist the marginalization of women. For everything was seen from men's perspectives, and women were regarded as physical bodies, responsible only for the household. Escaping from the "male gaze" is one of the concerns of feminist drama, to destabilize the gaze and change the way theatre represented women, the world was seen through men's lenses, for that feminist playwrights tried to change it to women perspectives when it is needed (Aston, 1995, p.92-93). The way men write about women is about basic problems, and they cannot go deep into presenting their inner conflicts. As a turning point, almost most of the plays written by feminist playwrights are matriarchal, which they are against the squash of women into the structure of the family. The absence of men proposes the idea of indicating that women can be the head of their success, and the solution of their own conflicts to lead their path and change the life chosen for them by society. Women during

second-wave feminism started to criticize the system of power, which was a reason behind their oppression, and they started to tell the stories of oppressed women through the feminist theatre stage. The women's group protests of 1968 against the discrimination of the Miss American pageant and British women's disagreement against the Miss World event two years later were the reason behind women's awakening and consciousness raise. In the late 1960s, women were ready to take political roles, and it paved the way for feminist theatre to come to the ground. It recorded the women's presence in theatre and society generally. The protests were unquestionably theatrical. The slogan 'the personal is political' matched this massive transformation of the late 1960s in both America and Britain (Keyssar, 1985, p.16-18). Women were able to understand that their personal lives reflected their power structures. Theatre parallel with the social changes was able to challenge the actors and audience to rethink their cultural and personal behaviours.

Micheline Dinah Wandor (1940), the feminist critic and playwright, categorizes feminist theatre into four phases. The first phase, from 1969 until 1973, a period, which was mostly affected by consciousness-raising groups. The phase focuses on political activism and social economy pressured by the industrial conflicts, the decline of the economy, and the unprogressive efforts for equal pay. It is mentioned that the street theatre was a custom in this phase, and the scripts were mostly written collectively (Canning and Swain, 2006, p.31). The phase-matched the post-war-1968 student protest; women were protesting against the objectification and performing women's sexuality for men's profit. Feminists were angry about the Miss World Contest "we're not beautiful, we're not ugly, we're angry" (Wandor, 1986, p.36), the anger was about

women's passivity not only on stage but the passivity women were feeling within themselves. Women's Street Theatre Group led the second demonstration in 1971 outside the Royal Albert Hall, to protest against women's sexuality in beauty contests. The events continued in different parts of the country by feminist street theatre, in 1969 Jane Arden performed *Vagina Rex and The Gas Oven*, which was about women's struggles to deal with her inferiority. In 1970 Jane Arden joined one of the London consciousness-raising groups, setting up meetings to form a theatre group named 'Holocaust' where they performed: *A New Communion for Freaks, Prophets and Witches* in 1971 and later was made into a film by Jack Bond. The setting was a mental hospital when a group of women was unable to cope with the feminine roles they have been identified by society (Wandor, 1986, P. 37-42). The second phase started by a group of women calling themselves Women's Group Theatre, from 1973 to 1977 influenced by the first Women's Theatre Festival. In 1973 after a series of meetings with women interested in theatre, the idea of the Women's Theatre Festival was invented. Women's Theatre Group spread out from these activities; their first session was in 1973. During this time, over a hundred women came to workshops, readings, and discussions. The group attracted several professionals, and they called it Women's Theatre Group (WTG), and it is worth mentioning that the group started in 1974 till 1990. Women's Theatre Group was founded by Anne Engle, Jean Hart, Mica Nava, and Julia Meadows; indeed, women's theatre pioneers took an important role in feminist theatre establishment. School performances had a pivotal role in consciousness-raising for teenage girls. The pioneer playwrights of this phase were Jennifer Phillips, Pam Gems, Dinah Brooke, Jane Wibberley, and Michelene Wandor along with the American writer Sally Ordway. The women in this phase were not so much

concerned about feminism, but the lack of work frustrated them, the phase was working in the interest of theatre and the position of women. This phase's pioneering work was *Fantasia*, a collection of a written piece about women's fantasies. In the second phase, like the first phase, the collective work on scripts was still in practice for some theatre companies. In 1975 Haymarket theatre for the second Women's Theatre Festival in London featured Nancy Posener, Olwen Wymark, Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill, Jennifer Phillips, Dinah Brooke, Liane Aukin, and Michelene Wandor. The same year Caryl Churchill's *Objections to Sex and Violence* was performed at the Royal Court. In 1977 at London's Drill Hall, director Nancy Diuguid led the third festival. Michelene Wandor in her *Carry on Understudies* argues that the third phase, in 1977, unlike the first and second phases, was beginning to distance itself from the collective scripts. The year somehow was a turning point for Women's Theatre Group. In 1977 two plays were produced: *Pretty Ugly* about the outcome of a fashion image, the second one *In Our Way*, highlighting the sexual discrimination in the workforce. New independent voices sprang; assigning remarkable playwrights were in theatre companies' favour. In 1978 Eileen Fairweather and Melisa Murray wrote and performed *Bouncing Back Benyon*, a satire on the anti-abortion issue. The fourth phase started in 1979 with two crucial plays, Soap opera by American writer Donna Franceschild, and the Wild Bunch by Bryony Lavery; the plays concentrate on women's daily life and their relations with each other. In this phase, new ways of performance were available, including Solo performance. The Fourth phase involved more individuals from different countries, *Dialogue Between Prostitute and Her Clients* by the Italian writer Dacia Maraini (1980) and *The Morning Picture* by Honor Moore (1981) a play about mother-daughter relations and domesticity. This phase is realized by what

Wandor names “the numerous new voices of playwrights” (Canning & Swain, 2006, p.31-32).

The problems that feminist theatre concerned with are the equality of rights in economics, education, and lifestyle. The playwrights are attentive to the empowerment, freedom, and working of women, motherhood, and abortion. The feminist dramatists try to save femininity from masculine domination and to escape marginality. The aim is to create an equal stage in a theatre and real life. The rejection of women as carrying the burden of domesticity, women’s appearance in the plays is not for the sake of existence. Still, they are eager to dominate the stage and express their experience through drama. Feminist theatre tries to impoverish men on the stage as men are hiding women in real life. There is a break between women’s life on stage and their private life; therefore, the gap is to unlock the full potential of their power and ambition. Feminist theatre is a convenient form of feminine voice and power on the stage. The plays present women at the core of their existence. Feminist theatre gives equal interest in the interrelation of power and politics; the inseparability of sexuality and gender is one of the main focuses of feminist theatre. The plays show a vital interest in the interrelated roles of gender. On the stage, the actors take any character role or identity regardless of their gender. The plays of the feminist theatre were mostly regarded as ‘female-dominated’, because of the nature of their performance and audiences. Women needed free space for their own abilities and voices. They need an area where they are free to express their ideas, which were not supposed to be told, mixed environments. After the consciousness-raising discussion, groups of the Women Liberation Movement felt that they need a space for their creativity and feminism. Women set up feminist companies in

theatre. The Women-only group in the 1970s was an option chosen by many professional feminist companies, which was a persuasion for women to believe in themselves and their creativity:

We realized that we had never worked in an all-woman, as opposed to a women-dominated, environment and we wanted to explore that. We found that it gave us a different kind of freedom from anything we had experienced before and we enjoyed it. (Aston, 1999, P. 23)

Feminist theatre from the starting point has been unbalanced from its wishes to support women's demands for their roles in society. The considerable aim was to redirect women's invisibility in that era. The feminist theatre took a sociological approach to reflect women's social life. By the end of the 1980s, the feminist theatre was reformed by three different ideologies: liberal feminist approach, radical feminist ideology, and materialist feminist approach, which is mostly taken from psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism, a lot of focus was on women's identities on stage parallel with their real-life experiences. Feminist theatre was a call within women themselves to liberate women and set them free to recreate their stories on stage and have the life of their choice (Dolan, 1996, P. 95).

Since the very beginning, despite women's continuous participation in American theatre, women characters took the roles of witches, naughty people, and indecency. This simply was an act of interiorization of the image of 'womanhood'; this identification for women who worked in theatre struggled their life in the community. They went through a lot to transform this image into a different one, reforming the idea of women in theatre. Some

women focused on the type of theatre they make to change this very idea about women. Feminist playwrights were thinking about a more serious type of plays to be performed. "Their theatre must be more than "amusement...prostituted to the purpose of vice," (Chinoy, 1996, p.25). Women were after finding meaning in "we-consciousness" as Simone de Beauvoir names it, to find a place with all women characters making theatre, writing it, performing, and producing it all by themselves. Women should recognize that the power of one is the power of their femininity and only by being at peace with each and in an all-women company, they can prove their identities and womanhood.

One of the essential features in feminist theatre is the relationship with their audience; the audience of feminist theatre must feel empowered, inspirational, and adopt a sense of belonging. Charlotte Rea, in her article *Women for Women*, mentions that the attendance of men in the audience disturbs the way women perform on stage. Feminist theatre attempts to create a stronger relationship between the playwright, actress, and character. It aims to transform social life, not only changing it. On stage, the actor can take any identity or character. The actor of the feminist theatre should stay real to herself, not sticking entirely to the text to give it more emphasis and make the theatre look more realistic. It happens that the performers in feminist theatre speak for the audience and at the same time instead of them. the audience says what the actors have not been able to express; this can be a reason for choosing an all-women audience because they embody what has never been mentioned and try to identify it with their true identities. In this concern, Rea states:

Strongly dependent on the audience__ if the audience is there for us, we become more there for them;... [when the] audience doesn't understand us, we don't give such a hot performance... when women come with men, they worry about what the man is thinking does he like it or not? Women often come back on all-women nights so they can dig it by themselves (Rea, 1996, p.33).

The mixed audience is regarded as more alert in feminist theatre, but having an all-female audience is a way to escape male-domination. The reaction of all-women audiences are often expressed after the Play has been performed on stage; they usually find relations within the Play to their own lives. It is a way to involve women in feminist groups and women's movement groups; it raises their consciousness and leads them to far better places. Rea adds:

Politically, we prefer to perform for women. However, sometimes mixed audiences pick up on things better than all-women audiences where the women sometimes come with preconceptions about what we're trying to say, but when an all-women's audience gets it, they get it far better. Women have a better opportunity of understanding and responding when there aren't men present." (ibid, p. 34-35)

Rea's concern in her article "*Women for Women*" about men's presence in the audience identifies all the struggles that make women avoid men's existence. The prurient perspectives men have for the female actors on stage breaks down the aim of the feminist theatre, which again serves the patriarchal system and male profits. The most crucial part of any text is the message behind it; the aim of what it has been written for. As Nietzsche mentioned it: "the essential question of any text is its hinterfrage [back-question]" (Phelan, 1996, p.159). The questions of the feminist theatre were to serve women by all it is means, to create a stage for their femininity and their power, a stage of defining their identity as women and telling the societies who are women, and what are they able to do. Feminist theatre created a sense of community between the playwrights, actors, producers, and the audience, a sense of being one for all and all for one.

1.2 Social Perspectives of Dilemma of Motherhood

Motherhood, as a demonstration of womanhood, is one of the most widely used themes in feminist theatre. It is the task of fully dedicating one's life to domesticity and the struggles for an independent individual. Motherhood as duty and holding women back to their households, withdrawing them from the line of business, are the major spots for men and women inequality. Therefore, motherhood as a granted extent for a female's puberty becomes one of the key functions of women's oppression. No matter how women are prepared for the course of motherhood, life will hit them somewhere with the conflict of not enduring the burden; the time of motherhood is not a flat form of living, it is full of ups and downs. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* comments on this state of motherhood, noting:

No human being could stand it. Consider the facts, we said. First, there are nine months before the baby is born. Then the baby is born. Then there are three or four months spent in feeding the baby. After the baby is fed, then there are certainly five years spent playing with the baby. (Woolf, 2012, p.42)

The consideration that all women should be or desire to be mothers perpetuates women as inferior, with giving no attention to the importance of their social roles. The fact that the mother dedicates all her life to the child, from the pregnancy to the stage of raising the child, becomes the conflict that is discussed by the feminist writers. In most of the feminist drama, motherhood is one of the widely discussed themes of the plays. Motherhood is a hidden topic for it is like a bogeyman especially for radical feminists; Amy Westervelt in her article *Is Motherhood The Unfinished work of feminism* (2018) discusses the lack of interest given to motherhood compared to the other topics of feminism. Maternity, as one of the critical incidents of feminism, is affected by the opinion of culture; where women are judged by their ability to produce without paying attention to their intention of having children or not. Radical feminist Shulamith Firestone thinks that the burden of motherhood is a tool serving patriarchy to oppress women. On the other hand, Adrienne Rich, the American poet and critic, claims that the state of mothering itself is not a problematic issue for women. Still, the patriarchal frame of motherhood oppresses women; she compares between the pleasure of experiencing motherhood and the state of motherhood according to

patriarchal rules regarding women as the only responsible individuals for the mothering burden (Humm, 2003, p.179-180).

Besides, we can feel the lack of support for those women who are not mothers where they have to bear the heavy burden of not having children and working endlessly (Westervelt, 2018). Likewise, it is going deep into the core of the writings we would easily understand that it is an unsolved puzzle for feminist playwrights. They are not quite successful in answering whether motherhood diminishes women's status and their potentiality, or it enhances their abilities. The term motherhood both in real life and drama is an unsolved enigma that calls out for a solution. The feminist theatre tries to achieve the reality of the incident of womanhood; it presents the core meaning of motherhood. Feminist theatre attempts women to dive into the sense of their femininity to find real motherhood. Women should come to the point that it is not only the pregnancy and birth that make one a mother, but it is more about the process of raising the child as a priority of the mother: "People say, too, that human nature takes its shape in the years between one and five" (Woolf, 2012, p. 40). So the mother's burden starts hard after the labour by raising a healthy kid. The mother not only becomes a real feminine body and a mother in her family circle, but she also becomes the nation's mother. Feminist playwrights try to mother the drama and the stage of modern drama in feminist theatre.

A myth has been created about the emotionality of women and their duty as mothers, in fact, if women are powerful enough and save themselves from the dilemma of motherhood, then what reason they have to indicate that working life will take away women's emotionality and passion, and what reasons to think that pregnancy avoids career achievement for women. It is only better

conditions for mothers that would give them better chances for fulfilling both.

Feminist playwrights represent the narration of a clandestinely untold story, which was at the feminine heart of mothers. They become the language for their hard burden and a structure for embodying their pain. The focus on dialogue in feminist theatre indicates women's will to express their femininity. The privation on motherhood and the evaluations made to it would hide the absolute confidence in a female that fails her to realize her identity. Since most of the feminist plays indicate to show the gains women achieved, and their ability to show their femininity and empowerment through conversation in a comprehensible language.

Andrea O'Reilly, the writer and PhD professor in the school of gender at York University, launched in 2014 Matricentric Feminism as an academic field, indicating that the complexity of motherhood makes it to be a "feminism of its own" (O'Reilly, 2014), intending to create a mother-centred method of feminism. In 2013 Procreate Project was founded for those contemporary artists who were also mothers. O'Reilly's speech emphasizes two points; firstly, Sojourner Truth's an abolitionist meeting speech, that reemphasizes the hard doings of women equally with men. Secondly, Virginia Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own*, creating a turning point that defines femininity by motherhood, refocusing on women having money and room of their own. She states "I have sought to do feminism as a mother and do motherhood as a feminist: namely that we need a feminism –in both theory and practice– specifically for mothers" (O'Reilly, 2014). Playwrights try to reconstruct the patriarchal rules set to domestic life. It gives the indication that women should, first of all, have an identity, a true self that defines their feminine being. Therefore, the

motherhood dilemma stays as a mysterious, unsolved, conflict until the present day. O' Reilly emphasizes on mother's empowerment and helping them out; she indicates that mothers are doubly oppressed by patriarchal rules than women. The termination of motherhood is not about pregnancy and childbirth following the Second World War, Britain's Childcare Services focused on the role of mothers at home with their children. Britain made childcare as a crucial and sole responsibility for women. John Bowlby, the British psychoanalyst in his book *Childcare and The Growth of Love* (1953) declares that maternal absence in a child's life leads to mental dysfunctions, and he regards mothers as the key to a child's development. He states that any child who does not have "a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his [/her] mother (or permanent mother-substitute) will suffer from "maternal deprivation" (Bowlby, 1953, p.13). The feminist theorists criticize Bowlby by making women the sole responsible individual for childcare within the family circle. Theorists believe that Bowlby's theory serves patriarchal rules by holding women responsible for only pregnancy and childcare. Marxist feminists focus on the matter of childcare as parents' responsibility. Given this, Michelle Barrett argues that for a woman to be entirely dependent, the burden of childcare should be lightened on them; childcare should be the families' responsibility. Both parents should take the role equally (Humm, 2003, p.34). Feminists believe that motherhood shouldn't be taken as a restricted commitment. In her influential feminist text *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Nancy Chodorow, the American psychoanalytic feminist, describes how gender is developed within the family. Her attempt is a reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis of the family and the role of mother in the child's life from pregnancy to puberty. Including the interpretation of how gender is developed within the

domestic circle; the thesis discusses the way psychological differences between genders affect their biological growth and the way they live. She claims that a child achieves his/her identity concerning their mother (ibid, p. 35). On this account, the boy fixes on his mother, but at the same time, the fear of his self-ego makes him identify himself with his father. While the girl for her continuous relation and tie to the mother fixes and tries identify with the father, but when she reaches her puberty she realizes the sexual differences, and it is then she feels the phallus envy (Beauvoir, 1956, p.67).

Most of the plays written by women playwrights revolve around the struggles of choosing a career or motherhood; the failure of selecting one in most of the plays and the lack of fulfilment without the other poses the question that ‘what should women do?’ Furthermore, it helps to clarify that it is not about choosing one but to fulfil their womanhood and gain feminine confidence.

2.1 Dilemma of Domesticity in Gina Gionfriddo’s *Rapture, Blister, Burn*

The American television writer, academic, and producer Gina Gionfriddo, graduated from the MFA playwriting program at Barnard College and Brown University. As an award-winning playwright she received Guggenheim Fellowship in playwriting, Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights, and Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. She won the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *Becky Shaw*, and at Almeida Theatre the Play was twice awarded the Evening Standard Award. Similarly, *Rapture, Blister, Burn* in 2013 was the finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in drama. Gionfriddo worked as a producer in addition to her writing for *Law and Order* 1990. Her other works are *House of Cards* 2013, and lately, *FBI: Most Wanted* 2020.

The interrelationship between two characters in the Play in terms of domesticity and motherhood dilemma that had started since the second wave feminism up until now is performed. Second-wave feminists raise concerns about the role played by women as mothers within the family circle. They argue the problematic issue of womanhood concerning the domesticity and workforce. Moreover, fourth-wave feminists expand the issue of motherhood and wifehood versus career. The Play is going around the struggle, and the problematic issue of femininity, which is the course of motherhood and the dilemma each mother is living in. The two-act play *Rapture, Blister, Burn* is written during fourth-wave feminism. It depicts the different roles of two women that choose opposite paths. In 2012 a new era of feminism with new expectations started, though it has been against labels of being categorized. Fourth-wave Feminism began around 2012 and is characterized by a focus on the empowerment of women and the use of internet tools. Women were demanding for what they have been calling for but using different ways and with more severe and unsolved issues that the three previous waves were unable to solve. Gionfriddo's Play questions the possibility of any individual woman's capability of handling a successful domestic life and role of a mother and a wife versus the career. Catherine after high school built a career as a rock-star academic, while Gwen built a home with a husband and children. The two women meet after decades; each one of them is unfulfilled in their own lives. The dilemma of their fulfilment in each other's territory would lead them to convert their lives.

Gwen. You said you wanted my life. You said Don was the one who got away and you regretted not having a family. I said I had a fantasy of Julian and me moving to New

York. I would finish school while he pursued acting. I said maybe we should switch places and you said, 'Like in a Disney movie?' We laughed it off, but the next day I put you on Don's to-do list. I brought you here. I made this happen.

Catherine. So you... You want to switch lives with me?
(Gionfriddo, 2014, p.60, 2,2)

The Play opens with a gathering between Gwen Harper and Catherine, two high school roommates, with Don Harper, who is Gwen's husband together welcoming Catherine Croll, who just arrived. Act one of the Play seems to depict the struggles of fourth-wave feminism, and the ones come along from the other waves unsolved. The act plays around a serious conversation between Avery, Gwen's babysitter, Catherine, and Gwen herself, the three of them discuss feminism and Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* and women empowerment. Betty Friedan is an American second-wave feminist leader; her book *Feminine Mystique* in 1963 is regarded as the second wave's feminist masterpiece. The book discusses women's dissatisfaction in staying as wives and mothers. Catherine believes that women can empower themselves which she calls it raunch feminism, which is the type of feminism to find women empowerment and strength in accepting the body shape and their sexuality that shamed them in earlier waves. It is one of the main concerns of fourth-wave feminism.

Avery. Right, I know. There was a 'first wave' of feminism before that, but it's not interesting.

Catherine. Isn't it?

Avery. I mean, I'm glad it happened. It put an end to women being owned like slaves, and we got the right to vote. It's just...none of it is controversial, so what is there to talk about?

Catherine. It was controversial at the time, of course.

Avery. I know, but...It's like discussing why people thought the earth was flat. It's not, they were wrong, we've moved on.

Catherine. Fair enough.

Avery. So... The second wave is in the 1960s, and it's about... It's about this 'feminine mystique' idea that Betty Friedan wrote about. (Gionfriddo, 2014, p.23, 1, 2)

As a feminist masterpiece in fourth-wave Feminism, *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, revisits the demands of the second wave and criticizes *Feminine Mystique* for not making women free from the issue of women's fulfilment. The Play declares that Friedan's assertion is not for all women, but for those who have "functioning brains". Gionfriddo in act one tries to depict the role of two women and how unfulfilled each one of them through the paths they choose, she clarifies the dilemma that each female individual has chosen their lives, and the struggles each one of the faces. Feminist theatre keeps its audience in the dilemma of deciding which role for women and asking if a woman can have it all. The Play is the continuity of whether the wifhood and career would coexist in one female character.

Avery. So is the message that women are fucked either way? You either have a career you wind up lonely and sad, or you have a family and wind up lonely and sad?

Catherine. Maybe you have both, and you wind up fulfilled.

Gwen. I don't know anyone who has that (Gionfriddo, 2014, p.25, 1, 2).

The three characters discuss the importance of family and raising children, meanwhile the energy and abilities that women hold if they work to take all their energy and keeps their homes cold. Catherine as an academic and a woman who chose career over domesticity, a woman with abilities and strong character feels frightened of losing her mother after a heart attack that she has got, and she declares that her mother is the only family member she has. She believes that Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was to let women free for choosing a career or domesticity.

Catherine. Ok. Let's just... Let's agree that Betty Friedan was not about rejecting domesticity; she was about giving women a choice (Gionfriddo, 2014, p.27, 1,2).

To create more serious and robust discussions, Gionfriddo leads her characters to mention the Lawyer Phyllis Schlafly, who was against the state of keeping women to make their careers. Having social and political views that were against the second waves demand the right to legalizing abortion, believing that the Equal Rights Amendment would be the end of a marriage and the end of marriage would be the end of civilization. Her argument was against equal treatment for men and women in all life

circumstances. *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, so intelligently discusses the ideas and questions about this equality. The women characters in the Play answer the questions concerning how far women came after reaching the fourth wave of feminism. The little efforts women of that generation have considered defining themselves as feminists being not willing to be labelled. Gionfriddo keeps discussing the feminist previous waves, Avery, mentioning the demands and gains of second-wave feminism and then coming to the third wave citing the solidarity of the third wave, and the different views of feminists. Gwen as a stay home mom is disappointed about her life, and regretting her path, thinking that finishing school would have served her better than choosing the domestic life. Gwen asks for Friedan's "I want more".

Act two of *Rapture, Blister, Burn* continues to discuss the 'I want more' that Betty Friedan mentioned in *Feminine Mystique*, Gionfriddo keeps to go back to Schlafly ideas, the characters intend to discuss the righteous of their believes:

Gwen. That's all Schlafly was saying, you know, I was... If you decide to stay single and fabulous, you have to live with the consequences. What if you wake up one day and decide...My books don't love me; my degrees and awards don't love me; the five hundred men I've had sex with don't love me... only my mother loves me, but she-at some point-has to die. Schlafly's point is not that harm will come to that woman; it's that she better have the guts to live with her choices. Own your own misspent life. Don't victimize women who made the other

choice. Don't be a thug breaking into a house to steal a TV... Oh, my God! (Gionfriddo, 2014, p.57, 2,1).

Gina Gionfriddo indicates to take us through the changes women's lives went through and the way they would be able to solve their struggles with feminism. The achievements women gained. The Play focuses on the self-confidence of women, without having to depend on society or another person for acceptance.

Alice. She said you girls would pay for your independence and your whoring. She said men wouldn't stay with you and she was right. You're free. You're free... (Gionfriddo, 2014, p.93, 2,7).

Finally *Rapture, Blister, Burn* depicts to solve the feminine mystique giving women freedom of choice, for choosing where do they fit best. It seeks to improve the representation of feminine life in domesticity and the workplace.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed women's social conflict and the conception of motherhood as the most difficult task presented in the feminist theatre. It has examined the way the appearance of self-consciousness groups during the women's movement has been a gate for feminist theatre. This paper has therefore explored the way women have been part of the history of drama; feminist playwrights appear more concerned about the banishment of male characters on the stage. Meanwhile, male characters are banished and mostly presented in references to women's conversation. It has interrogated how feminist theatre has had the ability to embody women's consciousness and create a picture of what women really are, in addition to the struggles and difficulties they face. To conclude the paper, in *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, Gina Gionfriddo – as a feminist playwright – shows that choosing the domestic life or career should be by personal choice according to their understanding of their abilities and needs in their lives. The playwrights in feminist theatre are not trying to clarify and give answers to women's struggles, but they provoke questions. They push their audience to urge and look for answers.

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پوخته:

ئەم باسە لىكۆلېنەۋەيەكە لە شانۆگەرى فېمىنىستى ۋەكو رەتكردنەۋەيەكى بالادەستى پىياو لە دونىايى شانۆگەرى و ژيانى كۆمەلايەتيدا. لىكۆلېنەۋەكە برىتتە لە شىكردنەۋەى شانۆنامەيەكى مۆدىرن كە باس لە رۆلى ژن ۋەك دايك و ئەو كىشانەى بۆ رۆلى دايكايەتى پېئاسەن، دەكات و لە رەھەندە بابەتتەيەكانى شانۆگەرى فېمىنىستى دەكۆلېتەۋە، ئەو شانۆگەرىيەى كە لەگەل تەۋژمى دوۋەمى فېمىنىزىمدا ھاتە كايەۋە و برىتتە لە كاردانەۋەى ژيانى سياسى و كۆمەلايەتى ژن كە لە ناو خۆيدا بەرجەستەى كردوۋە. بە مەبەستى گەيشتن بەو ئامانجە، شانۆگەرى Rapture Blister Burn ۲۰۱۳ى Gina Gionfriddo، ۋەكو شانۆگەرىيەك كە كىشەى نەبوۋنى ناسنامە و دەسلەت و مۆتەكەى دايكايەتى تېدا وينا كراۋە، لىكۆلېنەۋەى لەسەر دەكرىت و بە واتايەكى تر باسەكە ئەم شانۆنامەيە ۋەكو بابەتتەى ۋەھمى بۆ دروستكردى بۆشايەك بۆ پرسیار كردن لە رۆلى ئافرەت لە روۋى خىزانى و لە كايەى كاركرندا بەرجەستە دەكات كە لە لايەن شانۆنوسى ژن و كارەكتەرى ژنەۋە پېشكەش دەكرىت و لە لايەن خودى ژنىشەۋە كارى دەرھىنانى بۆ دەكرىت. ئەم شانۆنامەيە وىناى ئەو رىگا گونجاۋانە دەكات كە تەۋژمى نوۋى فېمىنىزم ۋەكو چارەسەرىك بۆ مۆتەكەى دايكايەتى و خىزان دەيانگرىتە بەر. ئەم كارە گفتوگۆيەكە لە ئاكارى شانۆيى كارەكتەرى ژن، ئەو ژنانەى كە ژيان بۆردەى سنوردارى بۆ داناون و مۆتەكەى خىزانى سەرچاۋە گرتوۋ لە كۆمەلگا و ژيانى خىزانىيان كردوۋەتە رىگەيەك كە دژايەتى كۆت و بەندە كۆمەلايەتتەيەكانى پىدەكەن.

ملخص:

يدرس هذا البحث المسرح النسائي بطريقة يرفض فيها السيطرة الذكورية في المسرح و الحياة الاجتماعية. يصور البحث بطريقة حديثة دور المرأة كأم و يعرف الصراعات في مرحلة الأمومة. تتفحص هذه الدراسة الاتجاهات الموضوعية و اهداف المسرح النسائي الذي بدأ مع الموجة النسوية الثانية. كذلك تحلل انعكاسات الحياة الاجتماعية و السياسية للمرأة في هذا المسرح. لتحقيق هذه الاهداف تقوم الدراسة بفحص Rapture Blister Burn للمؤلفة Gina Gionfriddo، التي تصور قضايا الهويات غير المستقرة، التمكن النسائي و معضلة الأمومة. توضع هذه الدراسة الطريقة التي تمثل فيها المسرحية فراغ خيالي، تستطيع المرأة من خلاله لعب دور ثوري في حياتها المنزلية و في وظائفها. المسرحية كتبت من قبل مؤلفة تملك صفات امرأة و أخرجت بواسطة مخرجة. Rapture Blister Burn تصور بطريقة حديثة طرق ممكنة و مقبولة ليوافق المعضلات المنزلية و الأمومة. هذه الدراسة تناقش الوصف المسرحي لصفات المرأة، التي استطاعت ان ترتقي بالرغم من خيارات الحياة المحدودة و اشتركت اجتماعيا في حل معضلات الحياة المنزلية و تقاقل ضد المعوقات الاجتماعية.