




The Theatre Of Martin Crimp As A Critique Of Urban Consumer Society

Kentli Tüketim Toplumu Eleştirisi Olarak Martin Crimp Tiyatrosu

Kadriye Çiğdem Yılmaz¹ 

ABSTRACT

Martin Crimp criticises the urban culture based on pleasure and temptation in real-life contexts. Crimp depicts moral ambiguity and corruption faced by society and individuals in dealing with the problems caused by the free-market economy and globalisation in a background of an urban consumer society. Martin Crimp criticises contemporary urban life, in which consumerism has become a way of life, in the context of the social and individual degeneration, decay, uncertainty, violence and insecurity he witnesses. In his plays, Crimp delineates the issues of loss of tradition and value, social collapse, loneliness, and self-repetitive life in a bleak reality with a desire for an alternative life. In this context, to frame the theoretical structure of this study, British society and theatre, starting with The Margaret Thatcher era into the first decade of the 2000s, will be analysed in terms of economic, political, and cultural changes that affect and transform society and the individuals as reflected in the plays. This study will discuss Martin Crimp's stage plays titled Dealing with Clair (1988), The Treatment (1993), and The City (2008) within a social, cultural, political, and economic context.

Keywords: Martin Crimp, British Drama, City, Urban Consumer Society, Individual.

Öz

Martin Crimp, gerçek yaşam bağlamlarında haz ve ayartmaya dayalı kent kültürünü eleştirir. Crimp kentli tüketim toplumu arka planında, toplumun ve bireylerin serbest piyasa ekonomisi ve küreselleşmenin neden olduğu sorunları çözme noktasında karşı karşıya kaldığı ahlaki belirsizlik ve yozlaşmayı betimler. Martin Crimp tüketiciliğin yaşam biçimi haline geldiği çağdaş kent yaşamını tanıdığı toplumsal ve bireysel yozlaşma, çürüme, belirsizlik, şiddet ve güvensizlik bağlamında ele alarak tüketim toplumunu eleştirir. Oyunlarda gelenek ve değer yitimi, toplumsal çöküş ve yalnızlık kendini yineleyen yaşam, silik bir gerçeklik içinde alternatif bir yaşama duyulan arzu betimlenir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın teorik yapısını çerçevelemek için, Margaret Thatcher döneminden 2000'li yılların ilk on yılına kadar İngiliz toplumu ve tiyatrosu, toplumu ve bireyleri etkileyen ve dönüştüren ekonomik, politik ve kültürel değişimler açısından oyunlara yansıtıldığı biçimde incelenecektir. Bu çalışma Martin Crimp'in Dealing with Clair (1988), The Treatment (1993) ve The City (2008) başlıklı oyunlarını toplumsal, kültürel, politik ve ekonomik bağlam içinde ele alacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Martin Crimp, Britanya Tiyatrosu, Kent, Kentli Tüketim Toplumu, Birey.

¹ **Corresponding Author:** T.C. Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü,
kcylimaz@cumhuriyet.edu.tr, 0000-0002-2490-5993



INTRODUCTION:

Born on February 14, 1956, in Dartford, Kent, Martin Crimp graduated from Cambridge University St. He studies English Literature at Catharine College. After graduation, he moved to Richmond to join the Orange Tree Theatre's writers' collective. Crimp's first six plays, *Living Remains* (1981), *Four Attempted Acts* (1984), *A Variety of Death-Defying Acts* (1985), *Definitely the Bahamas* (1986), *Dealing with Clair* (1988), and *Play with Repeats* (1989) were staged at The Orange Tree Theatre. *No One Sees the Video* premiered in 1990 at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. *Getting Attention* was staged at the West Yorkshire Theatre in 1991. "The Treatment (1993), the play Crimp wrote in New York, where he stayed for three weeks due to an exchange program organised by the Royal Court, was staged by the director Lindsay Posner at the Royal Court and received the John Whiting Award" (Middeke, 2011, p. 83). With the performance of *Attempts on Her Life* in 1997, Martin Crimp is considered one of the prominent British playwrights. *The Country* (2000), *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), *The City* (2008) and *In the Republic of Happiness* (2013) were also staged at the Royal Court. Martin Crimp also translated plays by Eugene Ionesco, Bernard-Marie Koltès, Jean Genet, Pierre de Marivaux, Molière, Anton Chekhov, and Ferdinand Bruckner.

In his plays, Martin Crimp mirrors the period he lives in and presents a perspective of his age through time, depicting and criticising what he has witnessed. In his plays, Martin Crimp has a pessimistic view of consumer society and culture, reflecting on social collapse, moral corruption, violence, uncertainty, and ambiguity of the city life of the age. The violence, sexuality and profanity in his plays shock and agitate the readers/viewers. Crimp writes plays that capture contemporary British individual and social identity in an urban setting. Moving away from and changing traditional realistic forms, Crimp seeks new boundaries for theatre, transforming the familiar, the recognisable and the safe into the unfamiliar, the unrecognisable and the insecure. In the universe of Crimp's plays, the urban characters live in their safe world. However, this secure world gets shaken and starts to collapse as soon as the characters contact the stranger and the outside world, breaking the safe world's walls.

1. The Theatre of Martin Crimp

The first comprehensive critique of Martin Crimp's dramatic works is Aleks Sierz's book *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*. In this work, Sierz analyses Crimp's plays under such diverse topics as consumerism, interpersonal relationships, marriages in danger, broken family structure, victimised children, the depression-laden structure of the contemporary subject, widespread power plays, gender issues and the male gaze. Crimp is a writer who criticises urban life and gives importance to social problems beyond the individual while dealing with individual human relations (Sierz, 2013).

The characters in Crimp's plays face the consequences of their choices as they try to make sense of the world they live in, orient, and control their lives. According to Angelaki (2012), the individual-society relationship is a strange, dual representational process in which viewership and citizenship are reciprocal (p. 77). Handling the concepts of spectatorship and citizenship in the same frame, Angelaki intersects the individual's characteristics as a critical and questioning spectator and as a responsible citizen. In evaluating the moral context of Crimp's plays, Angelaki (2012) states that Crimp invites the reader/audience to rethink and question the social context and ethical values but does not provide a didactic message (p. 31).

Crimp's plays invite their audience to see behind the play, not just as spectators but also as citizens enabling them to see the quotidian, unnoticed, and neglected things anew, from another angle, with a sense of responsibility. Helena Grehan (2009) claims that the audience needs a space where they can experience the perplexing problems of the time and that the theatre provides this space. Thus, the

audience ponders how the aesthetic, ethical and political ideas depicted in the plays reflect and affect them (p. 1). Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) puts forward that theatre is the art of the social (p. 185). In this context, taking the audience on a journey into their souls and minds and to the society they are a part of, Crimp's dramatic works ask the audience to pause in their rapidly flowing life, look at life again and understand it. Aragay (2014) states that Crimp appeals to the ethical thinking capacities of the audience (p. 10). Thus, the audience reacts similarly to the events they see on stage and the events they witness in their day-to-day lives, thereby recognising the real-life contexts in the plays. Within this framework, Angelaki (2012) articulates that the audience of Crimp's plays is always in the process of making sense not only of the play itself but the real-life connections as well. In plays where the audience establishes mental and sensory connections, they easily correlate what they see on stage with their real-life experiences (p. 180). Agusti (2013) expresses that Crimp depicts the individual with empathy and a sense of responsibility towards the other (p. 34).

Sierz (2013) specifies that Crimp's plays present a vision of a society in decline, defined by moral malice and absolute violence. This dystopian vision does not allow for any optimistic point of view (p. 2). Rabey (2003) claims that Crimp describes his bleak and perhaps nihilistic observations of social decay resulting in corruption, isolation, and aimlessness (p. 192). Stating that Crimp's plays compellingly depict social and moral collapse, Rebellato (2002) acknowledges Crimp as an exhilarating writer with his fictional intelligence, the subtlety of the language he uses, and his sense of humour (183). Sierz (2013) asserts that Crimp is an elusive playwright with his plays' disturbing content and experimental form (p. 2). Peithman, on the other hand, says that the plays of Crimp, who is considered one of the most influential writers of his generation, are harsh and sarcastic (2001). Sierz (2013) considers Crimp a playwright who reflects the New English Drama tradition, although is not a part of it. According to Sierz, Crimp's political critiques reflect the concerns of his age and question the consumption culture. At the same time, Crimp tries to understand this urban culture, establishing his criticism on satire, not on a specific ideology. Therefore, what Crimp makes can best be explained as everyday politics (pp. 140-172). Dromgoole (2002) declares Martin Crimp as a European writer who uses theatrical possibilities to the fullest and reflects the events on the stage from different perspectives (p. 62). Angelaki (2012) states that the term European refers to unconventional and non-traditional plays that challenge the audience and prevent them from making sense of it quickly (pp. 6-7). In the interview in Aleks Sierz's work *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, Edward Kemp (Sierz, 2013) explains that in Continental Europe, especially in Germany, new literature has gradually moved away from traditional concerns such as character, plot, dialogue, and narrative/story (p. 205).

On the other hand, Crimp's theatre cannot be included easily in a particular tradition as it is not part of any established one (Angelaki, 2012, p. 8). Middeke (2011) clarifies that Crimp's plays oscillate between scathing and shocking criticism of society and experimentalism that expresses the uncertainties and emptiness of contemporary urban life (pp. 96-97). The experimentalism of Crimp's plays stems from the fact that even his plays that seem realistic are vague, obscure, surreal, disturbing, and timeless slices of life.

Crimp's plays are primarily staged in European theatres and festivals. Crimp, a playwright beloved by European audiences, is not well known in the UK because he writes compelling plays both in content and in form. Crimp's recognition in England grew with his 1997 play *Attempts on Her Life*. Sierz (2013) attributes why the English audience does not recognise Crimp to Crimp's rejection of the post-1956 British realist understanding of the social-realist play (p. 2). With its non-traditional, experimental, and unconventional style, Crimp approaches European aesthetics while moving away from the realistic culture of British theatre. Vicky Angelaki (2012) claims that Crimp's plays are studies of the private/public, social/individual, humorous/dramatic and what is said/not said, combining the aesthetics and the politics. Angelaki states that Crimp presents middle-class, urban, and contemporary lifestyles within their social contexts in an effective and emotionally intense content (p. 1). Crimp

reveals the unsaid behind what is seen/said in his dialogues, which he embellishes with funny pauses on the one hand and disturbing pauses on the other. Commenting on Crimp's mastery of setting descriptions and dialogues, Dominic Dromgoole praises Crimp's ability to use language, displaying the inherent distrust of the speaker and of what is said, the need for confirmation of what is said, and the possibility of the truth coming out (2002, p. 63).

Crimp began his playwriting career professionally at the Orange Tree Theatre in the 1980s, during the Thatcher era, when the institutional theatre was part of the entertainment market and business. The Thatcher era was a period in which self-sufficiency and nationalism rose in value, the promotion of private entrepreneurship diminished the state's role in the economic system, and the free-market idea became widespread. Peacock (1999) states that in the 1980s, the Thatcher government aimed to directly control theatres by restricting the state support given to the theatres and embedding market values in the theatres. Thus, he expresses that Thatcher tried to establish the understanding that theatre was a part of the entertainment sector by spreading the idea that theatre had no cultural, social, spiritual, or psychological function. For this reason, he says that the theatres had just enough financial support from the state to survive by staging plays that did not pursue any social or political goals but instead theatrical qualities. He adds that the state-supported mainstream theatres staged realistic plays in this period. However, intended for the middle class and dealing with personal and cultural problems, these plays were insufficient to criticise Thatcher's policies (pp. 214-216).

Billington (2009) states that after Thatcher's re-election in 1983, playwrights, who deemed the unemployment, strikes and social unrest as the results of Thatcher's policies, started to criticise these policies (309). During Thatcher's second premiership, plays began to be written about the consequences of Thatcher's policies, such as increasing social unrest, strikes, mass unemployment and protests. Theatre stages addressed disappointments, despair, anger towards the system, and the poor. Anger, hopelessness, and disappointment prevailed because the system left people unemployed. Clarke (2003) says that people rejected all ideologies and regarded dogmas as illusions, unmasking and stopping to take them seriously (p. 174). Billington (2009) writes that people experienced aimlessness due to lost beliefs, and the ambition to make money pushes moral concerns into the background. Making money has become the primary goal in every part of society. As a result, the sense of guilt and shame, the indicator of moral conscience, disappeared (pp. 315-316). The moral vacuum and aimlessness experienced in connection with this is the main point of criticism in Crimp's plays.

1.1. Dealing with Clair

The play *Dealing with Clair* (Crimp, 2000), staged in 1988, is about the social problems that emerged in the centre of consumption, personal gain, relationships based on profit and loss calculation, and the effects of Thatcher policies. The play deals with Thatcher's "property-owning democracy" (Thatcher, 1993, p. 698) policy, an economic and social policy aiming to spread the wealth to society at the individual level. Aleks Sierz interviewed Sam Walters, the director of the play at the Orange Tree Theatre, who stated that Crimp writes about his experiences in selling his own house in this play (Sierz, 2013, p. 176). The gradual increase in the rate of housing purchase/ownership is due to the promotion of housing as a right to buy, the unattractiveness of living in mass housing, and housing ownership as an expression of social status (Clarke & Bradford, 2003, p. 116). Crimp refers to the uncertainty and insecurity of the consumption age in the background of house sales in the play. Dromgoole states that in *Dealing with Clair*, with a gentle and emotional fiction, Crimp transforms an ordinary case of home buying/ selling and missing person case into a frightening thesis on the emptiness of contemporary urban life (2002, p. 63).

The play takes place in London from August till November in the late 1980s. The play's characters are Clair, a real estate agent; Liz and Mike, a young couple trying to sell their house; James, who wants to

buy the house; babysitter Anna, mechanic Ashley, Anna's boyfriend Vittoria; Clair's colleague, Toby. There are three locations in the play: the seller's house, Clair's studio apartment and the vendors' garden.

The play, which deals with the real estate market and touches on buyer-seller relations, makes the British city life and urban relations the focus of criticism. The main topics covered are the effects of Thatcherism and the morality of the new rich, Thatcher's policy of acquiring real estate, and emotionally exhausted individuals prioritising their self-interest. The functioning of the real estate market, which rapidly developed during the Thatcher era, is represented in the desire to make money and its morality. By describing the relationship between the real estate agent Clair and his colleagues and clients, Crimp handles the conflict between society-individual and individual-individual in an ethical framework in professional business relations. The play "peels off the glossy veneer from the profiteering lifestyle of the neoliberal market economy and exposes the moral perversion and emotional poverty behind it" (Zimmermann, 2003, p. 70). Bauman mentions that the essence of the relationship between the consumer and the object of consumption creates a pattern and model for relations between people, commodifying individuals, that the market invades the distance between people, and that market relations build fences between people (Bauman, 2007, p. 11). Self-sacrifice and altruism are the old concepts of an era that is over. Egoism is the safest venture for those who want happiness because altruistic behaviour can entail loss and suffering to a certain degree which, in turn, inevitably suggests the idea of cost and benefit in a new world turning around commercial relations. Being one of the self-centred people of the new consumer society, Clair does not want to sacrifice even for her family because she focuses on her happiness and her own life. Thus, Clair questions the very logic of altruism:

... the world's just not like that anymore. Why *should* we make sacrifices? Sacrifices for what? I don't have anyone to make sacrifices *for*, and I certainly don't intend to sacrifice *myself* thank you very much. *And* I happen to be very happy with my life. (Crimp, 2000, p. 9)

Crimp reveals that Clair's feelings for her family imply distance, not emotional intimacy. The selfish individual decides for himself how much of his well-being, peace, and happiness he will sacrifice. The limits of human sensitivity and ethical responsibility, which should be unlimited, carry an ordinariness determined by the individual. The concept of responsibility should include the other, but the responsibility is not to the other but to the person himself in the consumer society. In the market society, where personal success and happiness are key concepts, the individual should get what he deserves because he owes it to himself. Therefore, a choice can only be a responsible choice as long as it prioritises the happiness and interests of the individual.

For this reason, the first victim of the consumer form of social life is the moral concern and the ethical responsibility towards the other. As Bauman (2009) states, consumption behaviour patterns acquired by individuals living in a global consumer society inevitably profoundly affect every aspect of life, including work and family. Individuals under pressure to consume transform themselves into commodities in consumption and labour markets. When consumer market behaviour patterns affect interpersonal relations, the Adiaphorization process begins. Adiaphorization is the exclusion of behaviour that may have moral consequences from ethical evaluation and exemption from ethical judgment. People who become selfish and self-oriented begin to mute and neutralise the voice of ethical behaviour that reverberates on the conscience (pp. 52-54). The population of the consumerist world does not consist of altruist and selfless individuals but, on the contrary, disinterested and self-indulgent individuals in need of not others but themselves to perform well and be happy. As Bauman explains in *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers*, the people of the consumerist utopian world need empty spaces that should be usurped. The space the liquid consumers have to "fight for

and defend tooth and nail, can be conquered only by evicting other human beings – and particularly the kinds of human beings who care and/or who may need to be cared for. (2009, p. 54)

Adiaphorization is felt more with the disappearance of Clair. The final scene depicts Mike, Liz, and Toby chatting in Mike and Liz's garden on a peaceful afternoon. Their dialogue is like a synopsis of the whole play. The fact that Mike and Liz somehow hide the house's flaws and sell the house for a much higher price than its worth does not make Mike and Liz question their integrity or the morality of their actions. Since the trade takes place with the consent of both parties, it does not cover a unilateral moral responsibility towards the seller. On the other hand, Clair's disappearance is insignificant for them. This adiaphoric situation displays that the moral consequences of actions become trivial, and that morality loses its validity as a value judgment in an environment where success is prominent. At this point, it is necessary to repeat James' words: "But there comes a point doesn't there where you have to let go, you just have to let go. You just have to say to yourself: *that's her life, that's her choice*" (Crimp, 2000, p. 84). For Clair's family, friends, and those who know her, the only way to escape their responsibilities is to think that her absence—her disappearance—is Clair's own choice.

Another outstanding issue in the play is the uncanny nature of city life, where individuals are always together with strangers. As a customer of the house that Clair is selling, James' approach to Clair is somewhat ambivalent and dark. Crimp brings the unsettling presence of the stranger into the life of Clair, who says she likes to deal with people at the beginning of the play, through the dark and curious personality of James. James makes Clair feel like he has other intentions beyond his interest in her as a woman. James' presence adds a sense of uneasiness, threat, and insecurity to the play. According to James, who is interested in Clair's private life and interprets her perspective on life, Clair is one of those people who gets caught up in the routine of daily life and do the same things every day:

I've asked you this before. And you gave me the same answer. You have no children. You live on your own. You're very happy on your own. I'm sorry. Because I think it's a kind of measure, isn't it, of people. There is a way of measuring people by listening to how often they repeat themselves. With some it's just the same thing every day. But with others—drunks for example, the insane—it's the same every moment of every day. And here am I repeating myself. Because it's funny isn't, how you are terribly aware of everybody else's faults, and then you find you share them too. (Crimp, 2000, p. 68)

Bauman comments on the dilemma of meeting strangers. According to Bauman (1998, p. 62), it is "best not to meet strangers at all" than to be side by side with strangers. However, such a situation is not possible in the contemporary urban environment, which becomes more of a public space for strangers than acquaintances, thereby removing the encounter from its reality – the context of interpersonal relationships – and not feeling an emotional attachment by doing away with the ethical aspect of it. Bauman describes this situation as a "mismeeting" (1998, p. 63), borrowing from Martin Buber's term *Vergegnung*: which is essentially a set of techniques employed to remove the ethical considerations in the relationship with the Other. Its overall effect is situating the stranger in an amoral sphere:

This, however, is a poor substitute for the ideal condition perhaps lost, but at any rate now unattainable: one in which the opposition between friends and enemies is not challenged at all, and thus the integrity of the life-world can be sustained with the simple semantic and behavioural dichotomies operated matter-of-factly by community members. (Bauman, 1998, p. 63)

This is not only the exclusion of the other but also the familiar one as well from the sphere of intimate relationships. Left to themselves, atomised, lonely individuals can enter and exit human relationships or love affairs whenever they want, just as quickly and easily. The modern fluid individual who does

not make any commitments never expects relationships to last forever (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004, p. 62). Temporary relationships are momentary and can only include respect for a stranger, the most neutral and obscure feeling. Commenting on the love affairs of the city-dwellers, Martin Crimp employs the character of James as a mouthpiece and uses the word respect, which indicates distance, not closeness. Crimp suggests respect as the only way to live with strangers. James marks the individuals' lifestyle in their preferred solitude in a commodified city life presenting why denizens of the city are essentially strangers. The culmination of his speech is the lack of heartfelt relations. The sense of respect takes the place of intimacy as a way of living with other people:

James And I think there's a lot of nonsense spoken about cities, don't you? Because yes yes yes, we all know that strangers live next-door to strangers... But what does any of that matter? Because surely the great advantage is, that since we don't know each other, since we've never seen into each other's hearts, then we respect each other. (Crimp, 2000, p. 69)

1.2. The Treatment

Martin Crimp also deals with prioritising commercial values over aesthetic values, commodifying art products, and art's becoming a part of the market. Staged in 1993, *The Treatment* (Crimp, 2000) reveals the dark and dirty side of the entertainment business. Dromgoole defines the contemporary entertainment world as an experience-eater which Crimp depicts in this play (Dromgoole, 2002, p. 63). The play deals with how an artist creates artwork and the artist's/ art's power to create and convey meaning. It describes the prevalence of social corruption in all areas of life, including art. In *The Treatment*, Crimp narrates the main character Anne's real-life experience in the context of the film industry as a place of consumption. The play takes place in New York City in the present time. The characters of the play are Jennifer in her forties, Andrew in her forties, Anne in her twenties, Simon in her twenties, Clifford in her sixties, the blind taxi driver, the waitress, the female movie star, the maid, the madwoman, the police officer, John, and Nicky.

Crimp makes a disturbing and sharp critique of contemporary society in the play. *The Treatment* is an urban play that depicts chaos, cacophony, and the self-consumption of the city. Characters are the city-dwellers who have moral hesitations and resort to ruthlessness to hurt their opponents or take revenge, lead a purposeless and isolated city life. *The Treatment* is a fun but dark play about malicious filmmakers. The play begins with husband-and-wife filmmakers Andrew and Jennifer searching for a story to make a movie. They encounter Anne, abused by her husband, and they buy Anne's real-life story to make a movie. The filmmakers hire Clifford, a destitute, impoverished, and pathetic screenwriter, to write the story of Anne. The play, which starts funnily, gradually turns into a black comedy with the involvement of Clifford. According to Zimmermann (2003), the play, which depicts the neoliberal market economy and takes place in New York, the centre of the entertainment market, is Crimp's critique of the film industry and the moneyed society. The play is also about art-life as a meta-narrative (p. 71). The film industry takes Anne's personal story, shreds it, rewrites it, and turns it into something else. Clifford, who gets hired to script Anne's story, confuses the story he wrote with Anne's story -his fiction and Anne's real life. The border between fact and fiction blurs:

John I think Brooke is the key to this.

Nicky I think Brooke could well be – yes - / the key.

John Tell us something about Brooke.

Anne Who is Brooke?

Clifford Brooke is the old man who watches you both.

Anne Excuse me?

Jennifer (to John) Brooke is Clifford's idea, John. / He's not –

John (to Anne) He interests me. What's his background?

Clifford He does menial work but has a secret life as an artist. / Every day he –

John I'd rather hear it from Anne, Clifford. Anne?

Anne What?

John Tell us about Brooke.

Andrew She doesn't *know* about Brooke.

Jennifer Clifford wants to introduce a voyeuristic / element.

John (to Jennifer) Why doesn't she know about Brooke?

Andrew Brooke isn't real. *Wait* / a minute.

John Isn't real? You mean she imagines him? I / I don't / buy that.

Anne I don't know who / Brooke is.

John I don't buy that. He has to be real. He has to be *there*, in the apartment. (to Nicky) Isn't that right? He's there.

Nicky Absolutely. He's right there. He witnesses / their sexual acts.

John He witnesses - exactly, thankyou - their sexual / acts.

Anne (*Increasingly distressed*) What sexual acts? There are no sexual acts. There is no struggle. There is no other person. Just Simon and myself. I've told you this. He doesn't touch me, he talks to me. (to Andrew) Why are they changing / everything? (Crimp, 2000, pp. 348-349)

According to Angelaki (2012), when considered in the context of art-life, the play describes the production, promotion and perception stages of the artist and the art as a product through questioning the real and metaphorical consumption phenomenon (p. 85). The film industry consumes Anne (Angelaki, 2012, 63). Lindsay Posner states in the interview conducted by Aleks Sierz that *The Treatment* is about the place of art in society and asks questions such as when art becomes immoral and to what extent exploitation is legitimate even for art (Sierz, 2013, p. 190). The consumption of Anne depicts the moral and artistic void faced by man in fluid modern times. Crimp criticises art, the social construction of art and its power to convey a meaning, which is evaluated not by aesthetic but commercial criteria.

Angelaki mentions that the theme of surveillance is central to the play (2012, p. 5). Martin Crimp expounds on the surveillance theme through the character of Clifford. Clifford's scenario titled "The Tenant" features a character named Brooke who watches a married couple and their sexual acts to produce artwork. After Brooke dies in a car accident, the couple's marriage falls apart as the desire in their marriage for Brooke's peeping presence disappears. When the new tenant of the house comes up with a secret door to the basement and goes down to the basement, he finds paintings of the married couple drawn by Brooke. The new tenant, deeming that they are obscene, burns the paintings. Crimp points out that the artist's view and interpretation of an artistic product will differ from the view of ordinary people. Andrew and Jennifer decide to include the character of Brooke from Clifford's story in Anne's story. To this end, Clifford wants to watch Anne and Andrew's sexual intercourse. Andrew is aware that Cliff is watching them, but Anne is not. Anne gets furious when she learns what Clifford has done with Andrew's consent. Jennifer sees what has happened, and her response to apologetic Clifford is, "You are an artist, Clifford. It's your job to give offence" (Crimp, 2000, p. 336).

The artist takes people's most natural, intimate moments and transforms them into something else. Inevitably, a question comes to mind, is it natural for the artist to clash with general societal values in the artistic production process? Bauman (2018) draws attention to the view that privacy is gradually disappearing due to the violation of the boundaries of private-public space in the entertainment world in general and especially in the products presented to the audience on television screens. He claims that disclosing personal feelings, dreams, and obsessions is encouraged, and the audience's applause reinforces the desire to disclose the most private secrets. The confessions grow ferocious and intense as the applause and approval grow denser and more ardent. The audience, in general, is urged to forego such outdated notions as decency and manners. The message is that no thoughts, feelings, or desires may be too private to be made public (p. 232).

The play's setting, New York City, hints at city life's meaninglessness, aimlessness, and contradictions. Pile (2005) portrays New York in two ways: the Big Apple, an image of power, dynamism, and easy life, or the Rotten Apple, which symbolises greed, inequality, and racial conflict. According to him, New York is contradictory not because of its conflicting imaginary meanings but because of the diversity of people's experiences depending on who they are, what they do, and when they are in the city (p. 48). Dear and Steven (1999) characterise urban settlement as fragmentation; they liken the city to a gambling table due to the perverse rules, crime, corruption and violence in the global city (p. 81). It is uncertain whom the individual will encounter in the city and what will happen to him. The chaos of the city is felt in every aspect of life.

In *The Treatment*, Anne's quest for a different life ends with her returning to James, who promises safety and love, where she started in the first place by getting locked and willingly closing herself. However, when she tries for the last time to get rid of this life to be free, she dies from an accidental bullet from the gun in Jennifer's hand. Zimmermann (2003) states that Anne returns to her home to save herself from the commodification of her Self, her lost identity and her life that the film industry puts at its service. The last effort to get rid of the new captivity she is stuck in causes her death (p. 72). Clifford, whom Anne blinded because she believed he had violated her privacy, describes our ignorance and vulnerability about the forces that feed our destiny, desires, and creative imagination (Zimmermann, 2003, p. 73). Like Clifford, Anne is helpless and vulnerable in the face of life. Anne succumbs to the city life that she can never be a part of but tries to resist and survive. The critical elements in Crimp's plays are based on real-life contexts. Consumption culture destroys buyers and sellers simultaneously; individuals become the losers in the battle between market forces. The personal sense of morality turns into indifference in consumption's mechanised and virtual world.

1.3. The City

In his work *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today*, Sierz (2011), examining British theatre in the first decade of the 2000s, states that the central theme of the theatre stages is the British identity that the playwrights handle in a highly personal, unique and distinctive way. The plays do not only tell individual stories; they also study social segregation and exclusion, cultural discrimination, and immigration. In addition, the plays touch on globalisation and its shocking effects on daily life, the impact of virtual communities and digital media emerging with the widespread use of the internet and social media. There also plays dealing with the narrative and staging forms of theatre, the possibilities of staging, and the perception of time-space on stage employing simultaneous scenes and dialogues (pp. 1-11).

The plays that ask questions about society and the individual appealing to the community from which they emerge are contemporary and original. Some plays offer imaginary worlds, and other plays that adopt reality and naturalism and reflect a familiar world. In general, provocative, stimulating, exciting plays about the present (moment/time) and here (space) mirror the society. The theatre reflects the time lived in with all its situations, thus re-acquaints with politics. The theatre regains social character as the scenes reflect the audience's concerns. Fischer-Lichte states that the basic theatrical situation always symbolises the human condition independently of its different cultural-historically determined forms (2001, p. 2). In his plays, Martin Crimp describes and criticises the destroyed social structure, corruption, individual and social violence, and the environment of uncertainty and insecurity suitable for the fluidity of the age. Crimp, who does not suggest solutions in his plays where he deals with topical and timely problems, only points to the problem and uses the theatre as a public discussion space.

Crimp's critical thinking targets are consumerist capitalism, the culture of pleasure and its discontents. Crimp's response to consumer culture is to juxtapose the concepts of morality and material freedom.

Crimp represents the economic problems experienced in the context of consumer society and pleasure culture. He criticises the world of art and media as a means of creating culture as a part of the consumer culture and consumer market. *The City* (Crimp, 2008), staged in 2008, is a play consisting of two layers of meaning. The first level of evaluation comments on the global capitalist order, consumption culture and market economy. In this framework, Crimp discusses the concept of risk, the effects of the market economy on family and individual life, and work as a measure of personal value. The second layer of meaning delves into the relationship between art and life by theorising about the nature of fiction and reality through an additional fiction: Clair, the main character of *The City* writes a story creating her own fictional reality in which all the characters of *The City* are part of this fiction, possibly including Clair herself in her diary.

Elias Canetti (2001) refers to the power of fictional characters who never leave the place they have done to themselves in the author's inner world. According to Canetti, these characters react from within the author as if they were the ones who created the author. The fictional characters are like the double of the author having voices and acting consciously, living in the inner world of the author. These fictional characters constitute the author's resistance to death. (p. 276). Angelaki (2013) explains that in *The City*, Chris, Clair's husband, reads Clair's diary and this act gives the audience a new perspective on the play they are watching. The characters that are created and the questionable existence of the writer Clair, who devised these characters, offers a new perspective on the reality beyond the theatre as well as the theatre (p. xviii). When Chris, who reads the diary, asks, "Am I / invented too?" (Crimp, 2008, p. 63) and questions the fictional structure of art, the answer comes from Clair: "No more than I am, surely" (Crimp, 2008, p. 63). The main character of the play, Clair, has written a story. All the characters, including Clair herself, are part of the plot in this story. In this framework, Crimp opens the concepts of reality and fiction to the discussion. Calinescu (1987) states that reality is shattered by fiction, and therefore adds that it cannot easily be said that literature is a representation of reality (p. 299).

In her fictional universe, Clair depicts the problems faced by workers and their families in the new global capitalist order, the global order of uncertainty, economic concerns, widespread disappointment and the uncertainty of life (Angelaki, 2012, p. 28). In the context of this uncertainty, our age is marked by the lack of responsibility and security in a world of consumption and disposability because people no longer see life as a story they wrote, mainly because people lose control over their lives due to social and economic circumstances (Angelaki, 2012p. 31).

Individuals worried about losing their job are in a deep sense of insecurity. Clair deals with the capitalist consumer society in a fictional universe where she incorporates herself. The new global order causes uncertainty, anxiety, and frustration. Although opportunities such as job, income, professional and social status determine the apparent worth of the individual in the market, the understanding that equals this to self-value has lost its meaning since these opportunities are no longer stable variables. The market society's assumption that material possessions are the determining factor of self-worth is a mistake. Crimp depicts Chris, who descends into a lower class in terms of his previous social status, in a supermarket worker outfit on stage. Chris wears a white cap, a white apron, and a badge with his name pinned to it (Crimp, 2008, p. 57). Clair wants Chris to take off his hat and badge. But Chris does not want to take off his hat, claiming that he likes it (Crimp, 2008, p. 58). Embracing and loving his new job, Chris is happy and wants to kiss Clair while talking about his new job. Not wanting to be kissed, Clair connects Chris' kissing with the idea of taking control of one's own life. Both are a matter of willpower and getting what one wants:

Clair It's no good asking me what I want, you have to impose your will. You have to impose your will or you'll be (*snaps fingers*) out, you'll be (*snaps fingers*) out of that plate-glass door before

you've even arranged our photos on your desk. Because the world has changed – oh yes – and you'll have to be much stronger than this. (Crimp, 2008, p. 32)

In a world where people are repeatedly told to rely on their own intelligence, abilities, and work, it is useless to expect salvation from others (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004, p. 46). Those excluded from production have no control or influence over their own lives. What is expected from the individual is always to be strong and adapt to rapidly changing conditions with the same speed.

CONCLUSION:

Crimp's plays deal with the concepts of the individual and society and offer a perspective that says individuals need to redefine these concepts and raise ethical concerns. Although presented in a moral context, it should be noted that Crimp's plays are not morally didactic. In the plays, where the public and the private are intertwined and affect each other, an ethics of responsibility, advancing through individual responsibilities, accepting individual discontents emerging in the social sphere as a precursor to the individual-society conflict, is depicted, connecting the individual to the social. Crimp's characters face the consequences of their choices as they try to make sense of their world, struggling to guide and control their lives.

Crimp satirises social and individual values like a critic, not like a moralist in his plays. Crimp, who believes in the power of art to make a difference while criticising the contemporary, does not look away from what he reproaches. It reflects a view connected with the object of criticism and understands the situation. Crimp does not question his age with sarcastic sophistication; on the contrary, he tries to understand it and reveal the existing problems. He does not preach to his readers or viewers what ought to be; he expects viewers to be more active in criticising their own lives and beliefs.

Crimp's complicated plays aim to shake the audience. He tries to raise awareness with his criticisms. He puts the city at the centre and delves into the problems experienced by the contemporary urban individual and society, which has turned into a commodity and consumption culture. Crimp's offer for the solution to these problems is the re-establishment of human relations within the framework of mutual responsibility through a revival of the moral essence of people. What is at issue here is the personal sense of morality lacking due to the consumer lifestyle beyond the social. Believing in the power of art to make a difference, Crimp salvages the audience and the reader from passivity and incorporates them into a meaning-making process in the universe of interrogative plays, making them partners in the solution. In summary, Crimp discusses social hierarchy, social anxieties and fears, and topics that involve socially and personally conflicted points such as tradition, innovation, class distinction, and social mobility.

Compliance with the Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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