


Witnessing Trauma in Simon Stephens' *Motortown*

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Abstract

Simon Stephens is one of the most important contemporary playwrights whose popularity spreads out both Britain and continental Europe. His *Motortown* (2006) consists of eight scenes. Having structural order and correlations with each other, these scenes depict notions of fear, violence, anxiety and traumatic experiences. The play's protagonist, Danny, is a British soldier who is sent to Iraq for his military service and comes back home with his traumatic memories. Simon Stephens portrays a political play which discloses the tormenting process of Danny's unsuccessful treatment back home. Stephens also depicts traumatic patterns and major trauma factors observed as the lack of family support and psychological disorders of contemporary British society, which are the disappointing results of war in Iraq. Applying the trauma theory and taking into consideration the effects of war, this study will illustrate Danny's personal background and his traumatic experiences which become central among other characters in contemporary British culture.

Keywords: Simon Stephens, *Motortown*, trauma, Contemporary British Drama.

Simon Stephens'in *Motortown* Oyununda Travma Tanıklığı

Öz

Şöhreti hem İngiltere'ye hem de Avrupa'ya yayılan, en önemli çağdaş oyun yazarlarından biri olan Simon Stephens 2006 yılında *Motortown* oyununu yazar. Oyun, birbirleriyle yapısal bağlantısı ve bütünlüğü olan ve her bir sahnede korku, şiddet, endişe ve travma kavramlarını betimleyen, sekiz sahneden oluşur. Oyunun kahramanı Danny, askerlik için Irak'a gönderilen ve travmatik deneyim ve anılarla eve dönen, bir İngiliz askeridir. Simon Stephens, sadece askerliği başaramamış bir şekilde eve dönen ve fiziksel ve ruhsal acıları açığa vuran evreleri değil, aynı zamanda Irak savaşının hayal kırıklığına uğratan sonuçlarının çağdaş İngiliz toplumu üzerindeki psikolojik yıkımı ve aile desteğinin de olmamasıyla gözlemlenen travma faktörlerini ve travmatik davranışları ele alan politik bir oyun tasvir eder. Bu çalışma, travma teorisini ve savaşın etkilerini analiz ederek, Danny'nin travmatik özgeçmişini ve çağdaş İngiliz kültüründe ki diğer karakterlerde de temel sorun olan Danny'nin travmatik döngülerini açıklayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Simon Stephens, *Motortown*, travma, Çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosu

INTRODUCTION

Simon Stephens, who is one of the most important contemporary playwrights whose popularity spread both in Britain and continental Europe, emerged as a dramatist in the late 1990s. As an in-her-face theatre playwright, Stephens has witnessed the Thatcher period, economical, social changes, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the USSR and Soviet Communism, and a golden period in ideological and economic capitalism. Enriched with such a socio-historical background, and after having attended the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1992, Stephens started his career as dramatist and wrote several plays.¹

Stephens focuses in his plays on his own feelings and thoughts which have been shaped essentially during his childhood under Margaret Thatcher's reign. Just like many in-her-face writers, Stephens' childhood witnesses a period of conservatism and strict political rules. Contrary to these rules, Simon Stephens discusses the dark and cruel side of the life, spanning children using guns in America and Europe, population problems, environmental issues, war, bombings, and Al-Qaeda terror attacks. Instead of great wars, Stephens witnesses terror attacks and psychological discourses; instead of grand narratives, individual actions, rebellions and suicide bombers claim the society. In dealing with these problems, Stephens writes his own stories and plays without grand narratives, and encourages spectators to question the events of this world on an individual basis. His plays show spectators realities of the world they live in.

In line with his agenda and poetics, Stephens' *Motortown* (2006), staged in the Royal Court Theatre, explores the relationship between the impacts of traumatic events on an individual (Danny) and his society and family relations. The play itself is the product of the contemporary traumatic event, the 7/7 bombings in London. After 9/11 the USA with the UK and their partner countries sent their soldiers to Afghanistan, Iraq and Basra because post 9/11 society was identified with the war on terror and globalization. The mass death of soldiers in Afghanistan, Iraq and Basra and 7/7 terrorist attacks in London caused reaction in the West. Because of the war and the government's decision, on the 15th of February 2003, hundreds of thousands of people have gathered to protest and to reveal their opposition Slogans like "George Bush can feel it, Tony Blair can feel it. Turn up the heat" (Jeffery 2003) reflected social anger at Iraq war. Simon Stephens, observing the protestation, explains that

I was confused by why I felt nervous about the anti-war campaign and the marches on Hyde Park. I was confused by why I felt angry about the moral didacticism of that campaign's spokespeople. I was confused about why I felt more sympathy towards Fusilier Gray Bartlam, convicted in Osnabruck of several unspecified crimes in his dealings with Iraqi prisoners, than I felt for Harold Pinter or Damon Albarn. It was especially confusing when many of their arguments resonated with sense (Royal Court 2006).

What is certain is that the anti-war campaign and marches on Hyde Park has emphasized discrimination between middle class and working class people in England. This discrimination creates mixture of disadvantage, corruption and violence in the society. In his

¹ His major plays afterwards include *Hérons* (2001), *Port* (2002), *One Minute* (2003), *Christmas* (2003), *Country Music* (2004), *On the Shore of the Wide World* (2005), *Motortown* (2006), *Pornography* (2007), *Harper Reagan* (2008), *Sea Wall* (2008), *Punk Rock* (2009), *Marine Parade* (2010), *The Trial of Ubu* (2010), *Wastwater* (2011), *Three Kingdoms* (2012), *Morning* (2012), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* (2012), *Blindsided* (2014), *Birdland* (2014), *Carmen Disruption* (2014).

article "Dark Times British Theatre after Brexit", Aleks Sierz underlines and questions the disadvantage of lower classes that lead to violence. He states that

... Simon Stephens' Motortown (Royal Court 2006), about a working-class veteran, returned from one of Blair's wars, who casually kills a black woman. The main criticism of such powerful imaginings of underclass life is that they are instances of cultural tourism: well-healed middle-class audiences gawping at poor people doing bad things in dirty settings (2017: 7)

British playwrights, enabling the dispossessed and deprived ones to verbalize themselves, have been both listening and writing plays about such people for decades. The time which led to the play's production was a time that reflected the alienated British society that had to deal with physical and violent acts and suffering because of the war on terror.

CURRENT CRITICISM

The play's subsequent reception shows the play's timeliness and the controversy around its subject matter. In general, critics agreed that the play has distinctive effect on audiences with its shock value, violent scenes and alienated mind. Paul Taylor, for instance, writes in the *Independent* this play is "[w]ithout doubt, the most provocative and gripping piece produced so far in the Royal Court's 50th anniversary year" (2006). Similarly, Nicholas de Jongh is confused "to find a Royal Court playwright sympathetically engaging with the experiences of the British military in Iraq" (*Evening Standard*, 2006). Likewise, as Ansdel states, "Daniel Mays performance is quite extraordinary: supple, aggressive, fearless, disturbing ... Stephens has written an instant modern classic, the first major anti-anti-war play of this era" (2006).

Despite the play's overt anti-war stance, some critics have accused the play of being supportive of war. In the *Telegraph*, for example, Charles Spencer reviews Simon Stephens' play as a play that supports the war: "To say that this is a work that defends the war in Iraq is a bit like saying that *Macbeth* is a play that justifies serial killing. In drama, the nature of the character making the case is every bit as important as the words he utters" (2006). Ramin Gray, director of the play, referring to the Gulf War and the need of Western capitals for the oil reserves of the Middle East, questions the paradoxical condition of the anti-war campaign in England as follows:

All these people (on the 'Million' march against Iraq, 16 February 2003) walking down the road holding their lattes wearing their t-shirts and saying 'no war, no war'. Don't they realise that their lattes and all the wealth they have comes from the oil that is being pumped out of the Middle East? Don't they see the irony of that position? (40)

Furthermore, Charles Spencer lays bare his feelings for the play "a deeply unsettling piece and this play "gets under your skin" (*The Telegraph* 2006). Likewise, Gardner (2006) clearly states that *Motortown* is a violent play which shows desperate and brutal insensibility. It is very certain that *Motortown*, with its violent scenes, discomforts its audiences. Sierz analyzes the play as "there was too much blood tonight so we had trouble cleaning the blood" (2011: 131). Part of the reason that this play has been criticized with emotions is because of play's content that displays the themes of fear and sense of community.

Critics also review the performance of Daniel Mays in the role the protagonist Danny, and point out the portrayal of Danny as an important factor for the play's success. Gardner, for instance, asserts that the play is "a searingly honest play written and played particularly by Daniel Mays as Danny, with a deadly coiled energy" (2006). It is generally accepted that Danny

lost his mental health because of the war however with Stephens' explanations that "*Danny was psychotic at school*", weakens the central argument that war has brutalised Danny (Sierz 2011: 131). Gardner's subsequent words that "*Danny was a psychopath long before he went to Iraq, or perhaps even joined the army, Stephens undercuts the connection between personal violence and violence perpetrated in the name of the state*" (2006), further supports Sierz' thoughts. In general, critics are divided about the intended stance of the play, where some support it to be against the war and some praise it for criticising the anti-war movement.

After *Motortown* (2006) was staged at the Royal Court Theatre and later continued in Hannover, the play has ultimately allowed Simon Stephens to win the title of Best Foreign Playwright. According to Aleks Sierz, the sources of the play consist of "*a mix of Georg Büchner's Woyzeck, Martin Scorsese's Taxi Driver and any number of road movies*" (2011: 131). There are two suggestions for the reasons for Stephens' motivations for writing *Motortown*. The first of these can be considered the events that happened after the 11th of September 2001 when the terrorist group Al-Qaeda attacked to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. Because of this event, the US, supported by UK, declared a war and invaded Afghanistan. Another more recent and connected reason deals with coordinating terrorist attacks on 7/7 2005. Four British Muslim men exploded bombs at the London transport system, which Stephens' next play, *Pornography*, has represented 52 people killed in the 7/7 London bombings with seven scenes. Bolton clarifies the situation as "*the stated motivation for the bombings was the United Kingdom's ongoing involvement in the Iraq war, also known as the Second Gulf War*" (2014: 111). Therefore it can be argued that after the 52 people had been killed, Stephens wrote *Motortown*.

Beside these distinctive events as the reason for the composition of the play, *Motortown* can also be read through a third perspective which criticizes the destructive effects of violence and war, and the appearance of social corruption and moral chaos. Based on these events, Stephens argues that "*I was deeply nervous about that (anti-war) march and that (anti-war) movement this moral chaos of England play rejects a simplistic division of the world into good guys and bad guys*" (Interview 2006). In other words, "*Stephens's play counters what he saw as a delusory moral superiority in the anti-war campaigners*" (Middeke and Schnierer et al. 2011: 452) and he aims "*to write, as honestly as I could, about England*" and its "*dark and contradictory and violent*" (Stephens Why I wrote *Motortown*) side. Simon Stephens wrote a play which is a reaction against the war in Iraq because "*British soldiers literally have no idea who their enemy is any more, leaving them in a morally chaotic state*" (452).

Simon Stephens' play *Motortown* contains eight scenes which have a structural order and correlations with each other. During the Gulf War, the US and the UK sent troops to Iraq, and this play portrays one of soldier's (Danny) life after turning to his homeland with war zone.

Bearing in mind the timeliness of the play reflected in the various critical responses, this article will analyse Stephens's play *Motortown* from Caruth and Freud's analyses of trauma.

TRAUMA THEORY

Before analysing the role of trauma and how it affects Simon Stephens' *Motortown*, it is essential to clarify the origin and definition of 'trauma' and 'Trauma Theory'. The word trauma originates from the Greek word 'wound' (Marder 2006). The Greek word trauma

refers to injury observed in the body rather than on the mind. However, in the later usage trauma has become to be used for conditions referring the mind as well. Instead of wounding of the body, the wounding of the mind and consciousness has been experienced in trauma theory.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis at the end of 19th century, first used the word wounding in his long essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) (Caruth 1996: 3). Freud has discovered that the First World War created so many shell-shocked soldiers because of traumatic neurosis which reappeared in the Second World War as war neurosis. Freud, especially focusing on soldiers in the First World War, states that “*a condition has long been known and described which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life; it has been given the name of traumatic neurosis*” (1961: 10). After the First World War, modern technology and politics came together to open road the Nazi genocide of European Jews and atomic bombs used in two Japanese cities. These events were too tragic to worry out and have to be memorialized. These repressed memories and remembering create trauma theory itself. “In Freud’s model repressed memories are subversive agents that cause dysfunctional behaviour and even bodily symptoms in the individual” (Avishai 2004: 3). Repressed memories actually illustrate extreme physical power and violence and cause more trauma. Jenny Edkins examines that “practises of memorialisation insisting on bearing evidence to past traumas were co-opted and used as a legitimation for more trauma” (2003: 172). Past experiences and traumas warrant more violence and traumas.

Cathy Caruth, one of the most distinctive scholars of modern trauma studies, analyzed theory with her two important works: *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). In her second work Caruth defines trauma as:

... an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers only in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century. (11)

Caruth refers to the paradoxical nature of trauma, and claims that an event is not digested at the time of its occurrence. This form of trauma has been termed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) since 1980. Judith Herman explains post-traumatic stress disorder as: “In 1980, for the first time, the characteristic syndrome of psychological trauma became a real diagnosis. In that year the American Psychiatric Association included in its official manual of mental disorders a new category, called ‘post traumatic stress disorder’” (1992: 27-28). Peter Buse expresses that PTSD “is an accepted, if somewhat controversial, medical condition which has come to have more and more applications and its use has extended beyond the experiences of war, most notably in relation to forms of sexual trauma –rape and child abuse – which are also often coped with in a delayed and belated fashion” (2001: 175). According to some general definitions, PTSD includes depressing delayed events that represent repeated thoughts, dreams, behaviours and experiences of war. Because of unforgotten traumatic events, the victim cannot escape from the war neurosis. The victim is unable to compromise with what he/she has witnessed and practiced. In Stephens’ play although Danny (the victim) has already left the war zone,

he witnessed that the horrors he has experienced have returned with him. As Ariane De Waal puts forward,

in drama, the traumatising impact of war is most often encoded in the figure of the returning soldier, who has been physically and/or psychologically wounded and struggles or fails to readjust to civilian life. The body of the injured soldier transports the horrors of war and destruction into the civic everyday life of the home front (2017: 141)

Danny suffers from repressed, traumatic memories and the violence of the war and reflects traumatic behaviours after returning to hometown from war. He feels intense feeling of betrayal his family and girlfriend for previously he regarded them as reliable. In fact, the play represents two versions of traumatic experiences as family relations and returning hometown from war.

FAMILY RELATIONS

In Stephens's play, different kinds of traumatic experience are observed such as psychological and physical traumas. The psychological trauma that Danny experiences certifies that he cannot escape from his memories of his time and at the same time Danny is physically possessed by his traumatic past in Basra. Danny has both suffered and inflicted horrific violence during the course of whatever war is taking place and he is going on to behave in a brutal manner after returning to his hometown. At the beginning of the play, Danny an Iraq War veteran, who bought himself out of the army and turned to Dagenham from Basra, starts to stay with his autistic brother Lee. Danny aims at a new beginning with his ex-girlfriend Marley; however it is understood that Marley's purpose is to put Danny off seen through Lee's opening line:

She doesn't want to see you.

She told me to tell you.

A brief pause.

She told me that you were frightening her. Your letters were frightening, she said.

(Stephens 2009: 145)

After ongoing conversations with his confused mind, Danny asks about his mother and father, although he does not want to visit them:

DANNY How are Mum and Dad?

LEE They're very well, thank you. I think they're pleased to you're home.

DANNY Great.

LEE You gonna go and see them, you think?

DANNY I don't think so, no.

LEE Right. Why?

DANNY I don't think I really want to, Lee, that's all (146-47)

His conflicting desires to see and not to see his parents reflect how Danny finds himself in a vicious circle of trauma, with which he does not want to confront. He has suffered terrible violence during the war in Basra and now he continues to commit terrible acts of violence himself. Love, compassion, and the sense of belonging are the notions of the family which Danny left before going to the wars in Iraq. Instead torture, destruction and displacement are depicted to be committed by Danny when he comes home. In his torture of Jade, he seems to repeat what has been done to him in Basra. Hence, Danny performs his physical traumatic past.

However, initially, what Danny wants when he goes back to Dagenham is a new relationship with Marley. After his conversation with Lee, he wants to visit Marley to be sure about her thoughts "Lee told me that you didn't want to see me anymore. That you told him I was frightening you. Is that true, Marley?" (152). Yet, Marley asks Danny to leave her alone "I expect you to leave me alone" (153) triggering the traumatic mood of Danny "I'm glad you didn't get your head blown off. I hope you're going to be OK" (153). In his persecution of Marley, he insists on behaving the same what he has done before. Apart from his cruel and violent state, Danny's persistent state discomposes Marley and we observe that Danny gives the brush-off from his ex girlfriend. He wants a new beginning through a love relationship to compensate for his own suffering which he reflects in the form of anger and violent behaviour. Yet, his aggressive behaviour is not only the result but also the reason for the vicious circle from which he cannot escape. Danny finds himself trapped in a vicious circle of trauma; his aggressive behaviours or silences recreate the trauma and traumatic moments.

Buse clarifies that "*trauma is not just a crisis in the memory of the traumatized subject but a crisis in representation and narration*" (2001: 182). Danny always tries to use his memories and to narrate them around, for that reason cannot adopt present situation. Danny experiences historical power of trauma that his past experience is repeated at all and shapes his present. On the other hand, Danny's situation can be evaluated in Sigmund Freud's psychic phenomenon, namely, repetition compulsion. In this phenomenon "*a subject unconsciously relives, or even acts out, a traumatic, unassimilated experience from the past, not just once but repeatedly*" (Buse, 2001: 174). Danny repeatedly tries to avoid his traumatic past but by no means convinces himself because, for him, there is no meaning of life and everything we see or observe is only a perception. Danny's friend Paul narrates this perception:

There is no solidity. Only a perception of solidity... There is no space. Only the perception of space... The best heist film Hollywood never made. That's what I think. The level of planning, the level of daring... The notion of a War on Terror is completely ingenious. It is now possible to declare war on an abstraction. On an emotional state (Stephens 2009: 164-170)

In this fictional world the whole universe is in a terrible state and everything and everywhere is consumed with catastrophic decisions and war. Danny, as a victim of catastrophic event, war and trauma, declares a war towards his environment and Paul converts Danny's gun.

The victimised Danny chooses a new victim, Jade, the black teenage girlfriend of Paul, and Danny abducts her. In scene six, Danny and Jade are in Foulness Island "*Foulness Island. What a funny name! How old are you Jade?*" (181). There Danny persecutes and shoots her. After killing Jade, Danny meets Justin and Helen, a swinger couple, when he stops to rest in a hotel bar on the road to Dagenham. At the end of the play Danny is again at his autistic brother Lee's home and wants to have sex with Lee, however Lee is aware of what Danny did and has already warned his family: "*I told them to tell anybody who asks that you were with them all day*" (202). Yet, Lee is probably to inform the police what Danny did "*I don't think I cannot tell. I think I'm going to tell*" (206). The whole play with its eight scenes represents a psychologically disturbed mind that reflects his frustration with the world in the form of physical and sexual violence.

In his play Stephens questions social and political agenda of contemporary world and presents this agenda on the stage. In *Motortown*, Stephens portrays moral complexity

because Danny meets liberal swingers who participate in anti-war demonstrations. After his encounter with this couple, Danny witnesses a big gap between his own values and the society he lives in. Christopher Innes clarifies Danny's alienation by claiming that

... Danny is that of a person who has lost all connection to society: alienated from the other soldiers in Basra (because, he claims, he alone tried to obey the rules), he hates or despises his family, has imaginary relationships with the women he knows, where the only real connection is extreme violence; he rejects the wider population of Britain, whom he identifies with the anti-war protesters whom he excoriates (2011: 454)

Contrary to the swinger couple, Danny was a soldier who indeed witnessed everything in Basra. He witnessed the violence of the war and suffers from psychological trauma as he brings the war back home. In Dagenham, his traumatised mood continues to do what he has witnessed. Response to trauma requires compulsive confrontation and reliving of the trauma; however Danny cannot succeed in realizing this confrontation and he has difficulties to get over and define what he has witnessed in Iraq. He cannot give voice to his trauma and is haunted by his experience.

RETURNING HOME

Being absent from his home country naturally creates a gap between what he remembers of Britain and what he sees, which forms, yet, another form of traumatic experience for Danny. In the play, Danny explains the big gap between his memories and his actual environment to the liberal swingers as follows: *"I come back home. It's a completely foreign country"* (Stephens 2009: 200). He is inapprehensible and alienated and *"he is boiling with resentment at a multicultural society that he has fought for"* (Sierz 2011: 130). Lyn Gardner clarifies this big gap:

To Danny it is not Iraq but England that is the foreign country ... It is an England where the 'war on terror' has become a war waged using the tactics of the terrorists. It is also a place of dubious moralities ... this England has all the stinking attractions of a dog turd. (The Guardian 2006)

Danny is alienated from his country and his country turns into a prison similar to the one in Basra. Danny's traumatic mood, the hypocritical stance towards the decency of society and the anti-war demonstrations are criticized by Stephens:

There was something about the anti-war movement that ... unnerved me. It was a movement that seemed to be based on a separation of the war from the international context that surrounded it. It managed, at times, to argue its way into defending the sovereignty of a mass murderer. I was not an unapologetic advocate of the war in any way and was sensitive to many arguments made against it. (Stephens 2009: xvii)

Stephens illustrates the war as an evil born out of a recoverable world and, single-mindedly, aims to reflect the dark and violent side and the contradictory culture of England and, as he states, he *"wanted to write a play which inculcated more than it absolved (its audiences)"* (41). As illustrated in the play, this violent, morally corrupted, and chaotic culture produces a violent and chaotic society and Danny is a product of this society. Danny's behaviours, broken family relations and Marley's choice to leave Danny lead to Danny's alienation from his family and country, and everything that can be associated with love for Danny. Danny buys a replica gun from his friend and assembles a real chamber to this replica. With this gun Danny abducts Jade, a fourteen-year-old teenage girl, to Foulness Island, where he has

got military training, and tortures her by pouring oil over her head like a process of brutalization in Iraq while he was in the army.

DANNY Now here's a question for you. Is this really petrol or is it water?

He opens the canister. Holds it open, under her nose, for her to sniff.

What do you think? Jade? What do you think? Answer me.

JADE I don't know.

DANNY No, I know. But have a guess. What do you reckon?

JADE I think it's petrol.

DANNY Do yer?

JADE It smells like petrol.

DANNY Are you sure that's not just your imagination?

JADE No, I don't know.

DANNY Your imagination plays terrible fucking tricks on you in situations like this

(Stephens 2009: 187).

Chaos and violence in the army create a prison in his mind and Danny does not want to escape from this prison. He tells us:

DANNY I don't blame the war.

The war was all right. I miss it.

It's just you come back to this (209)

The experience of shocking events and the rules in Basra affect Danny both physically and psychologically. Because of his memories, he cannot adopt to the present situation back home. His memories force him not to behave consciously. His memories are therefore repressed and pushed out of his consciousness. Danny's kidnapping of Jade to the island, where he gets military training, is not incidental. Danny tortures Jade to death in this training base because it hints at how soldiers, who get difficult military training and obey strict rules, are conditioned to kill. In addition to these, Danny was imprisoned in Basra which he explains with these words:

DANNY In Basra, when it all kicked off with the prisoners, I didn't do any of it. I never touched nobody. I had the rules, pinned above my head. My idiot's guide to the Geneva Convention pinned to the head of my bed. They used to call me a pussy cunt. It never used to bother me. I wish I'd told somebody. I might, still. I wish I'd joined in. I would've liked that. (209)

Stephens points out that psychological imprisonment is observed together with physical imprisonment in Danny. Thus, trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not only upon the body but also upon the mind.

CONCLUSION

In *Motortown* the consequences of the destabilization of Danny's relations with other characters can be observed. The discrepancy between what is present and what is lost leads Danny to make mistakes. He replaces his lost sense of belonging, understanding of love and compassion with his frustration and violent behaviours. When Danny expresses Marley his experiences of suffering and violence during the war, Marley explains her anxiety about his behaviours. At this point Danny, being a psychopath, frightens his ex-girlfriend Marley and kidnaps the black teenager Jade and kills her. Danny himself has obligations to remember events from the past. He cannot eliminate his past because the past shapes and animates his present. Simon Stephens, analysing 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Basra, wants his audience to consider the traumatic behaviours and personal reactions in British society because violence, fear, anxiety and traumatic events destroy both the individual and the society.

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