



The Portrayal of Violence in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur*: A Post-Apocalyptic Trauma

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Abstract

The current paper examines the violence in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur* (2005) set in a futuristic post-apocalyptic world. Through a critical analysis of the text, the study shows how violence becomes a mechanism for survival and coping with trauma and how a culture saturated with violence affects the individuals who inhabit it. The world depicted in *Mercury Fur* is characterized by a multitude of horrifying acts, ranging from the slaughtering of animals in zoos to random beheadings and the abuse of children. The impact of such a world on the mental state of those forced to endure it is incredibly intricate, resulting in inevitable trauma. Morality becomes a scarce commodity, elusive and challenging to attain, as it ultimately boils down to the lengths one is willing to go to ensure the survival and preservation of oneself and one has cherished loved ones. In a world where torture has become normalized and the veracity of memory has been distorted beyond recognition, one is compelled to ponder whether a life fraught with such excruciating agony and suffering is truly worth living. By analyzing the portrayal of violence in *Mercury Fur*, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional aftermath of trauma in a post-apocalyptic context. It emphasizes the significance of Ridley's play in discussing the complexities of human behavior and the enduring impact of trauma in extreme circumstances.

Keywords: Mercury Fur, morality, post-apocalypse, trauma, violence.



تصوير العنف في "ميركوري فر" لفيليب ريدلي: الصدمة ما بعد نهاية العالم

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المستخلص :

الدراسة الحالية تفحص العنف في "ميركوري فر" لفيليب ريدلي (٢٠٠٥) في عالم مستقبلي ما بعد الكارثة. من خلال التحليل النقدي للنص، تظهر الدراسة كيف يصبح العنف آلية للبقاء والتعامل مع الصدمة وكيف تؤثر الثقافة المشبعة بالعنف على الأفراد الذين يعيشون فيها. يُميز العالم المصور في "ميركوري فر" مجموعة من الأعمال المروعة، تتراوح بين ذبح الحيوانات في الحدائق إلى قطع الرؤوس بشكل عشوائي والاعتداء على الأطفال. يكون الأثر النفسي لمثل هذا العالم على حالة الأفراد الذين يضطرون لتحمله معقدًا للغاية، مما يؤدي إلى الصدمة الحتمية. تصبح الأخلاق سلعة نادرة، يصعب الوصول إليها، حيث تنحصر في النهاية في مدى استعداد الشخص للذهاب إلى أبعد الحدود من أجل ضمان البقاء والحفاظ على نفسه وأحبائه الأعداء. في عالم تم تطبيع التعذيب فيه وتشويهه صحة الذاكرة إلى حد اللا تمييز، يجد الشخص نفسه مضطراً للتفكير فيما إذا كانت الحياة المليئة بمثل هذا العذاب والمعاناة حقاً تستحق العيش. من خلال تحليل تصوير العنف في "ميركوري فر"، تسهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أعمق للعواقب النفسية والعاطفية للصدمة في سياق ما بعد الكارثة. يؤكد البحث على أهمية مسرحية ريدلي في مناقشة تعقيدات السلوك البشري والأثر المستمر للصدمة في الظروف القاسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ميركوري فر، الأخلاقية، ما بعد نهاية العالم، الصدمة، العنف.

1. Introduction

Mercury Fur (2005), written by Philip Ridley, is a theatrical piece that falls

within the genre of in-her-face theatre, originating in Britain (Gündoğdu, 2016). This play delves into intricate themes of morality, humanity, trauma, and existentialism through provocative implications aimed at potentially shocking the audience and provoking contemplation to alter their perspectives on life. The narrator introduces the readers to two siblings, embodying a stark contrast in personalities. At nineteen years old, the elder brother, Eliot, exudes a protective demeanour coupled with a somewhat severe attitude, while his younger brother, Darren, aged sixteen, is portrayed as irresponsible, reckless, yet endearingly kind. Together, these brothers grapple with the challenges of navigating a world where the essence of humanity is called into question, overshadowed by a pervasive haze of hallucinogenic drugs. Their struggle transcends mere survival in an external sense, extending inward as they battle against the allure of consuming hallucinogenic butterflies, each imbued with the power to distort their perceptions based on the specific colour ingested. This psychedelic experience not only destroys their memories but also amplifies their inclination toward aggression and violence.

In their quest to secure a place for an unconventional party, the readers gradually discern the nature of this gathering, which is distinct from conventional festivities due to including a human party piece. Another character ensnared in the hands of addiction is Naz, a fifteen-year-old neighbor in the vicinity where the brothers opt to host their event. Naz epitomizes a blend of naivety and recklessness, forging a strong bond with Darren owing to their shared inclinations. Spinx and Lola, another set of siblings, play pivotal roles in orchestrating these peculiar gatherings essential for their collective survival. Spinx, the elder brother at twenty-one, assumes the role of a ringleader, with a peculiar guardianship over the Duchess, a blind thirty-eight-year-old woman whose grip on reality wanes as the plot unfolds to unveil her connection to Eliot and Darren as their mother.

Meanwhile, Lola, aged nineteen, serves as Eliot's romantic interest, having rescued him during the onset of the apocalyptic events triggered by "the first butterfly and the sandstorm stuff" (Ridley, 2013, 153). Lola, known to refuse to remain present during the parties due to their disturbing nature, fulfills the task of preparing the character known as the Party Piece is depicted as a young boy of ten years old, who is portrayed as being in a state of unconsciousness for the majority of the performance, awakening in a state of hysteria. He is like an offering for the monstrous Party Guest. The Party Guests, twenty-three-year-old men who finance and partake in this event, harbor sadistic tendencies, seeking to indulge their darkest desires on the Party Piece while documenting the debauchery for future viewing.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key Words

2.1.1 Trauma

This study applies the trauma theory as explained by Laurie Vickroy in her book *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. While she focuses on psychology, she also highlights the cultural and environmental aspects of psychology in surviving trauma.

2.1.2 Post-apocalypse

In describing the major effect of post-apocalypse on people, this study focuses on James Berger's book *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*. The apocalypse, referenced as The End or drawing parallels to the end or explaining the end (Berger, 1999).

2.2 The Theoretical Lens

Trauma, a complex phenomenon encompassing psychological and sociocultural aspects, is shaped by the profound impact of culture on the various dimensions of traumatic experiences, including their contexts, severity, and how they are perceived. The exploration of psychocultural aspects is crucial as it serves as a valuable resource for gaining insights into how narratives of trauma challenge prevailing cultural perspectives on issues related to identity, social marginalization, and the deliberate silencing of traumatic incidents (Vickroy, 2002). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is characterized as the response to an event that exceeds the boundaries of typical human experiences, leading to significant disruptions in both the physical and psychological aspects of an individual's life, as highlighted by Marita Nadal Blasco et al. (2018).

Vickroy explains that trauma can be defined as a reaction to experiences that are incredibly intense to the point where they hinder one's typical emotional or cognitive reactions, resulting in long-term psychological disturbances. When examining trauma literature, it becomes apparent that it raises numerous thought-provoking inquiries and predicaments for writers and readers alike. These inquiries span from contemplating the potential ethical role of literature to reassessing our societal assumptions regarding identity, connections, and purposeful actions, to pondering the various factors that dictate whether or how individuals can endure the catastrophic events that lead to trauma (2002). Through a thorough exploration of the intricate connection between the demands of society and the personal relationships depicted intimately. The specific manifestations outlined in the recent diagnostic criteria encompass a range of symptoms, including re-experiencing the traumatic event, detachment from the external world, and

various autonomic, melancholic, or cognitive symptoms like hypervigilance, sleep disturbances, recurrent nightmares, survivor guilt, memory impairment, concentration difficulties, avoidance of trauma-related stimuli, and exacerbation of symptoms triggered by reminders of the traumatic event as discussed by Diedrich (2018). Events that cause trauma compel individuals to confront their experiences, preventing them from fully embracing the present or envisioning a hopeful future until these events are acknowledged, understood, and integrated into a new way of living. Within the framework of a catastrophic scenario, John Collins posits the idea of engaging with past traumas and reliving them as a means to construct a more positive outlook for the future, a concept he refers to as "the apocalyptic 'cure'" in his publication *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Collins, 2014).

2.3 Related Works

Mercury Fur as a play has been the center of some papers but was never discussed from the point of view of trauma and post-apocalypse together. In the dissertation "Trauma on the Contemporary English Stage: Kane, Ravenhill, Ridley" by Özlem Karadağ, the play was analyzed as a contemporary play using trauma as a theory, but without including the post-apocalyptic scene in the discussion. Other articles discussed the play but from different angles using different theories like "The Quest for An Authentic Self: Memory and Identity in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur*" by Tatiana Golban and Derya Benli. The article proposes that the play deals with the authentic self of the individuals, and its relation to the loss of memory in the play. "Here And Then: Theatricalizing Space-Time Compression in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur*" by Alex Ferrone through a sociological perspective, the study tackles the understanding of time between the past and the future. Moreover, Violence and melancholia: The story of melancholic "Butterfly" generation by Burcu Gündoğdu it takes the Freudian theory of Melancholia and its effects on the violent behavior of the characters.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

In this section, the author has to write something about the research design, i.e., whether the study is qualitative or quantitative in nature.

3.2 Normalization of Pain in *Mercury Fur*'s Post-Apocalyptic World

The dystopian urban landscape portrayed in *Mercury Fur* by Ridley unfolds in a not-too-distant future characterized by decay, violence, and moral decline. In Ridley's vision, societal structures have crumbled, plunging humanity into chaos and disarray. The play unfolds within a dilapidated apartment in a city besieged by rampant

violence, crime, and decay. Beyond the confines of the apartment lies a world that is hinted to be equally tumultuous and perilous, marked by societal disintegration and lawlessness. Within this grim reality, the primary focus becomes survival at all costs, as characters are compelled to undertake extreme measures to persevere, including turning to criminal activities, drug trafficking, and other illicit means to make a living. Ridley's stark and provocative depiction catalyses audiences to confront unsettling truths regarding the state of society and the essence of humanity. The drama is a touching reflection on the possible repercussions of societal breakdown and the vulnerability of ethical principles amid challenges. Through his narrative lens, Ridley prompts viewers to reconsider their perceptions of societal norms and the boundaries of ethical behavior in times of crisis. The thematic underpinnings of *Mercury Fur* invite contemplation on the resilience of the human spirit amidst the bleakest of circumstances, challenging audiences to reflect on their capacity for compassion and morality in a world teetering on the brink of destruction. Ultimately, Ridley's work is a convincing investigation of the human condition under extreme pressure, encouraging viewers to confront the intricacies of survival, morality, and the inherent quest for significance in a society teetering on the edge of collapse.

Mercury Fur depicts shocking moments of violence and torture involving a ten-year-old boy clad in a gold lame suit, positioned before a slaughterer showcasing meats hanging on hooks. This scene symbolises how children are viewed as mere pieces of meat by both criminal gangs and society as a whole. The play's title, which alludes to Mercury, the Greek god of finance, highlights the prevailing dominance of materialism over humanistic values, while the presence of fur in the narrative conveys a descent into a savage and primal societal hierarchy. Despite child abuse being a central theme in the play, it faced significant criticism and initial disapproval. Critics launched scathing attacks, Ridley's friends distanced themselves, and even the publisher initially refused to release the script.

Nonetheless, against all odds, the play was eventually brought to the stage in 2005, reflecting Ridley's uncanny foresight about the evolving world. Despite its challenging reality, the play underscores a poignant truth about the world's transformation, albeit not necessarily for the better. In alignment with this perspective, John Tiffany, the director of *Mercury Fur*, contends that the play reflects a society plagued by moral decay, rather than an indication of the playwright's troubled psyche (Gündoğdu, 2016).

The disturbing reality that the characters are going through as their reality is enough to traumatize them. Individuals grapple with challenges stemming from encounters of dehumanization that are so intense that maintaining their sense of humanity becomes a fragile and complex endeavor, leading to the emergence of a contradictory and uncertain sense of self and moral values within the backdrop of such distressing circumstances, where individuals were routinely devalued to the level of animals or inanimate objects. Lawrence Langer posits that inhabiting these exceedingly severe environments results in existing beyond the established moral system, with victims facing the daunting task of navigating through a landscape where their choices are limited to options that are unattainable to one another (Vickroy, 2002). Despite facing numerous traumatizing experiences, the characters in the play exhibit a remarkable ability to retain elements of their humanity and sanity, a truly commendable quality. Throughout the narrative, as the characters engage in discussions about the harrowing events they have endured, readers are prompted to contemplate the existential question of the value of the life being lived by these individuals. The contemplation of suicide within the characters serves as a paradoxical manifestation of their desire to truly experience the intensity of being alive. This internal struggle adds a layer of complexity to the character's psyche, inviting readers to delve deeper into the intricate web of emotions and motivations that drive their actions.

The process of apocalypse can be described as a complex and intricate transformation, wherein various signs and referents are subjected to intense burn and pressure, causing them to undergo a profound turn and creating entirely new and unforeseen substances. This transformative process can be likened to a refining fire that purifies and reconfigures the fundamental building blocks of meaning and representation. Post-apocalypse delves into the intricate dynamics of disappearance and persistence, seeking to unravel the mysteries of what vanishes into oblivion and what endures through the crucible of destruction and chaos. Furthermore, it examines how the remnants of the old world are transmuted and reshaped by the forces of upheaval, shedding light on the profound changes that occur in the wake of cataclysmic upheavals and cataclysms (Berger, 1999). But what if it seizes to purify what remains? Will all the survivors have to be just remnants of what was once rightly theirs?

The apocalypse depicted in this theatrical performance was executed through a phenomenon they referred to as a sandstorm. According to Lola's interpretation of events, the catastrophic incident was

attributed to a natural calamity that instilled fear and apprehension among the populace. This sense of impending doom was exacerbated by warnings broadcasted on television, foretelling the impending disaster. In contrast, Eliot's perspective offers a more sinister and politically charged narrative, presenting the sandstorm as a concoction devised by human agency "Elliot: A cocoon. A butterfly cocoon. I close the door. I keep hearing planes. I keep seeing sand and cocoons. But I don't see or hear any fucking storm." (Ridley, 2013, p. 188).

It is crucial to note that the sandstorm, as described, is not merely a meteorological event but a carefully crafted conjunction of sand particles and the intricate cocoons of butterflies. These butterflies are revealed to possess hallucinogenic properties capable of inducing vivid visions in individuals. Initially, the emergence of these butterflies coincided with positive and uplifting visions. However, over time, a disturbing evolution took place, leading to the manifestation of visions with ominous undertones. Some visions portrayed acts of violence, such as assassinations, while others depicted themes of self-harm and suicide.

The progression of these visions suggests a deliberate manipulation orchestrated by the creators of this hallucinogenic substance. It appears that the initial allure of nice visions served as a guise to entice individuals into a cycle of dependency. Once ensnared in this dark and addictive trance, the visions took a malevolent turn, reflecting a profound shift in the psyche of the affected individuals. The progression of the butterflies could serve as a symbolic representation of the shift in individuals' cognitive processes and belief systems, suggesting that the greater frequency of consumption of the butterflies may correspond to an increase in aggressive tendencies. Consequently, it is plausible that the butterflies underwent an evolutionary adaptation to align with this emerging demand for aggression within the population.

Experiences with hallucinogens, which are frequently characterized by their unpredictability, have the potential to differ depending on factors such as the quantity of substance consumed and the individual's unique characteristics, emotional state, anticipations, and environment in which they find themselves. The impact of substances known as hallucinogens, including LSD, can be elucidated as a state of drug-induced psychosis, signifying a profound alteration or breakdown in an individual's ability to discern reality, engage in logical thinking, and effectively interact with others (NIH, 2014). Substance use disorder, the severe form of it known as "addiction," is

a persistent brain condition that individuals can overcome and recover from. It is worth noting, however, that there are instances where the language utilised when discussing substance use may imply that issues related to the use of substances and substance use disorders stem from an individual's shortcomings. This may insinuate that individuals consciously choose to develop the disorder or that they exhibit a lack of willpower or moral strength to manage their substance use effectively. Nevertheless, scientific studies have demonstrated that addictive substances have the potential to bring about significant alterations in brain functionality, consequently diminishing an individual's capability to regulate their use of substances. Furthermore, continued utilization of these substances can profoundly modify brain chemistry and the operation of neural circuits, ultimately leading to a neurobiological disorder (Botticelli, 2017). A noticeable thing in their speech pattern is the poor grammatical construction due to the damage their brains took from eating butterflies, yet they cannot stop. Life is unlivable if people stop using it and are not ready to accept the reality of their world.

The utilization of drugs and alcohol to decrease the threshold for violent behavior has been extensively documented and researched in various settings. Numerous studies have explored the correlation between drug and alcohol intake and the escalation of violent incidents in scenarios involving armed conflict, violence related to war and extremism, public disturbances, and domestic violence within intimate relationships. Extensive research findings unequivocally demonstrate that the consumption of substances heightens the likelihood of engaging in acts of violence. It is widely acknowledged that the influence of drugs and alcohol can lead individuals to exhibit heightened levels of aggression and propensity for violence, simultaneously diminishing societal inhibitions against resorting to violent behavior. In a broader sense, the use of drugs and substances is undeniably intertwined with instances of violence. Particularly, psychoactive substances have gained notoriety for their capacity to incite aggressive conduct. It is crucial to emphasize that while substance abuse undoubtedly contributes to such behaviors, it is not the sole determinant; rather, it coexists with a myriad of other psychosocial elements such as trauma, individual history, upbringing, as well as cultural and societal conditions. Furthermore, it is pertinent to highlight that under specific circumstances, substance abuse can catalyze radicalization, a consequence thereof, or potentially both at once. The involvement in extremist organizations exerts immense psychological pressure and strain on individuals, fostering an

environment characterized by toxic stress and heightened susceptibility to trauma, thereby elevating the likelihood of resorting to substance use (Carlsson, 2021).

The characters, being fully aware that a certain sector in the political realm harbored intentions of inducing an addiction to these dreadful butterflies, undoubtedly exerts a significant toll on their mental well-being. It is almost as if they are being viewed as mere subjects in a scientific laboratory, mere guinea pigs on whom experiments are to be conducted, or as mere dispensable entities within the framework of society. Their responses and actions against the legal and moral structures in place can be construed as resistance against a system they feel has turned its back on them. They find themselves stripped of the privilege to lead a life of ease and security safeguarded by the laws and moral codes of society, yet paradoxically, they grapple with feelings of remorse and disgrace stemming from their inability to conform to these very standards, ultimately leading to a diminished sense of self-worth and recognition. This sentiment is palpable in their aggressive and acerbic tone, manifesting in expressions of fury directed inwardly and outwardly. For instance, Eliot's treatment of his younger sibling Darren, each time the latter slips, is characterized by lengthy diatribes filled with cursing remarks, including instances of racial slurs. The act of warning his brother about consuming a butterfly once more is portrayed in an extremely detailed and strongly aggressive manner, emphasizing the severity of the situation.

Elliot:, Know what I'm gonna do? One night, I'm gonna fill the fucking bath with sulphuric acid ... And you'll jump in the tub and Ten minutes later, I'll pop me head in and there'll be nothing left of ya. The bath'll be one big Darren soup. Perhaps a few teeth and that beer-bottle cap you swallowed as a kid. ... I bet you give him a fucking bellyache. You'll cause the poor cunt so much fucking grief it'll deliberately beach itself. (Ridley, 2013 p. 129-130).

This aggressive language plays a significant role in establishing a sombre and oppressive ambience within the theatrical piece, intensifying the feelings of fear and hopelessness that saturate the vision of a post-apocalypse world. Through the vivid portrayal of violent actions, Ridley not only presents a narrative on societal dilemmas like power struggles, ethical deterioration, and the dehumanizing impact of aggression but also sheds light on the consequences of unbridled hostility and cruelty. By exposing viewers to the aftermath of uncontrolled aggression and savagery, Ridley urges contemplation on the current state of society and the potential course it may take in the future.

The power abuse and the obvious brutality of people who were powerful enough to bring harm to the harmless, like women or children, resulted in a collective trauma that all of the characters share, whether they remember it or not. In his book *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, Vickroy points out that while trauma can have a damaging impact on an individual's psyche, collective trauma can lead to even more devastating consequences. This is because collective trauma can sever the connections that bind members of a society together, erode the sense of community and solidarity that individuals rely on for support, and cast a dark shadow over the overall mood and interactions within the group. The experience of trauma has the potential to not only shatter one's self-confidence but also to undermine the trust and faith in the social and cultural frameworks that are meant to provide structure and security (Vickroy, 2002).

The reader does not doubt that Eliot loves his brother dearly and is ready to do anything for him, not just kill for him but to kill him personally, as well as his lover Lola. The understanding of such type of traumatized love was also referenced by Darren when he was talking about how his father wanted to kill him with a hammer so that he would not live through such a corrupted world:

It wasn't hate! It was the opposite of hate. They hit me cos they loved me. Okay? They loved me so much they wanted to save me from ... from bad things. That sort of love don't exist any more. It's prehistoric. I'm lucky, me. I've experienced it. I've got that inside me head, and no one can ever take it away from me. (Ridley, 2013, p. 164).

The insatiable longing for love and tenderness within them is so powerful that it often emerges in a disturbed outburst of fury and aggression stemming from their deep-rooted struggle to communicate these emotions conventionally. Consequently, their emotional landscape is depicted in vivid and intense colours, with each sentiment being felt with a sharp and overwhelming force. In some instances, this intense passion blurs the boundary between acts of violence and expressions of affection, a phenomenon that is evident in their sadistic tendencies and risky demonstrations of love. Especially in their interactions with the Party Guest, this distortion reaches its peak in a grotesque, abhorrent, and even deadly spectacle that would be incomprehensible to someone with a rational and balanced mind and soul.

The characters in this narrative are portrayed as inhabitants of a society where the structure and foundation of social norms have

crumbled, thrusting them into a desolate and chaotic place devoid of law. In order to persevere amidst this chaos, they partake in a variety of unconventional and jarring activities that are both unsettling and dreamlike in reality, such as orchestrating elaborate gatherings where patrons are given free rein to indulge in their most sinister and hidden longings. The notion of hyperreality permeates throughout the storyline, manifesting in the characters' complete immersion within these gatherings, which serve as a temporary respite from the harshness of their grim existence. Within these peculiar events, they meticulously craft intricate scenarios and engage in violent and deviant behaviors, blurring the distinction between what is real and what is mere fantasy. These gatherings morph into a parallel realm of existence for the characters, offering them a fleeting escape from the stark realities of their world.

Furthermore, elements of simulacra are interwoven into the narrative as the characters construct false identities and scenarios tailored to fulfil the desires of their clientele. They fabricate a twisted and altered version of reality, where brutality and aggression are normalised aspects of this fabricated world. This distorted realm of violence serves as a coping mechanism for the characters, enabling them to disconnect from the trauma and savagery that permeate their surroundings. In a post-apocalyptic setting, individuals may resort to extreme measures and form alternate universes to adapt and survive. The plot delves extensively into the intricate psychological implications of residing in a universe where the fundamental nature of existence is in an eternal state of inconsistency, blending the boundary between real and mere fantasy. "Elliot Oh, you don't have to do a thing. The butterfly does it all for you. Very convenient, eh? You just lay back and – veins open without blades. Necks break without rope. Brains splatter without a single bullet being fired" (Ridley, 2013 p. 192).

Another aspect of hyperreality involves the utilization of drugs, consuming butterflies, and serving as a means of escapism from their harsh reality and the chaotic lifestyle in which they are entrenched. Indulging in these hallucinatory experiences offers them a reprieve from their actual surroundings, transporting them into a realm where they can find solace and joy. However, later, when these visions turn dark toward violent scenarios, the purpose shifts towards evading their reality altogether, constructing an alternate world where they believe they hold power and are shielded from harm, but they will be proven wrong. This reliance on drugs as an escape route is not a novel concept, yet the current method is particularly unhealthy, with each

butterfly of a distinct colour triggering a unique hallucination or emotional state. Among these butterflies, the black one stands out as the most lethal and sinister, manifesting one's darkest thoughts about suicidal tendencies in the most terrifying form imaginable:

Elliot: Oh, you don't have to do a thing. The butterfly does it all for you. Very convenient, eh? You just lay back and – veins open without blades. Necks break without rope. Brains splatter without a single bullet being fired ... And people are taking them, Lol. Started a few weeks ago. Manchester. Three cases. Girl fell asleep and never woke up. Like she'd taken pills or something. Another girl was found with her neck was broken. And a boy – he was only ten, Lol – his guts were split open like he'd –

Lola: Alright, alright, enough.

Elliot: It gets worse. Slight pause.

They're getting together to do it now. Suicide parties. Twenty were found in a club a few days ago. The place was like an abattoir, so they say ... (Ridley, 2013, p. 191-192).

The continuously evolving recollections of the characters' history manifest as psychological deluges, overwhelming their cognitive faculties with surreal occurrences incited by the captivating presence of butterflies flitting about. This persistent dynamic interaction encompassing genuine and contrived memories spanning from early years to maturity unveils the main figures' profound apprehension of confronting head-on the foreboding obstacles of the current time. The repeated exposure to acts of violence and cruelty leaves a lasting scar on the protagonists, leading them to seek solace in the realm of memory, a realm that proves to be unreliable, constantly intertwined with a heightened sense of impending danger, and intertwined with fantasies fueled by their current sexual desires, their longing for love is driving that. The process of recollection mirrors a serendipitous encounter between a yearning for the security of a long-lost familial haven and the harsh reality of threats lurking in the world beyond. This juxtaposition is vividly illustrated through Naz's poignant recollection of the tragic loss of his mother and sister, a memory that resurfaces only in a conversation with Darren, highlighting the profound impact of such traumatic events on his psyche (Golban and Benli, 2017).

Following the eradication of memory, Darren and the other members present in that disordered social group discover themselves lacking the ability to establish a coherent connection that would bind them to a collective past and a shared history, thus resulting in a hindrance in the formation of their individual identities. This deficiency creates an

empty space that is ready to be filled. In the company of Elliot, who serves as the sole genuine link to his familial roots and his personal history, Darren fervently clings to the remnants of his memory, which serve as representations of his family's past, in an attempt to alleviate the emptiness that confronts him. As highlighted in Andrew Wyllie's discourse, it is only by maintaining a sense of historical awareness that an individual or a community can engage in ethical discernment and ensure their own self-preservation. Ridley, in fact, poses inquiries about the potential of reminiscence to empower oneself, a community, or a moral consciousness essential for survival, a theme that emerges as a prominent motif in the realm of theatrical performance. (Golban & Benli, 2017).

In the play, the post-apocalyptic world of the anarchic society can be observed as being controlled by butterfly drugs, which are substances that trigger amnesia among the population. This presents a notable danger to the characters' Dasein and personal identity as a result of their disconnection from both personal and shared memories. Assuming that the erasure of memories can be equated to a loss of identity, such an occurrence also symbolises the manifestation of an inauthentic self (Golban & Benli, 2017). Consequently, the characters find themselves entangled in a relentless struggle for survival while grappling with the profound existential crisis of not knowing their true essence or significance in the world around them. This underscores the profound impact of trauma, as the memory loss and alteration become a vessel for conveying the shattering of identity and cognition.

The end of *Mercury Fur* brings to light the moral ambiguity that runs through the entire fabric of the play, delving deep into the intricate layers of human nature. The characters find themselves thrust into a harrowing confrontation with the most sinister facets of humanity, vividly portrayed through the ugly deeds of the Party Guest. The distinction between a victim and an assaulter becomes increasingly hazy, urging the spectators to delve into the intricate nuances of accountability and involvement. This narrative provokes a profound sense of existential desolation, laying bare the characters' realization of the sheer hopelessness in their attempts to elude the savagery prevalent in their reality. Despite their unwavering efforts and altruistic sacrifices, they cannot prevent the descent into a chasm of brutality and chaos. Trapped within an unending cycle of mistreatment and victimhood, they remain ensnared in the unbreakable chains of devastation that characterize their very being. The actions of the Party Guest stand as a stark admonition of the

deeply ingrained impact of trauma and the intricate mechanisms through which it endures through generations.

4. Conclusions

The theatrical production delves deep into the profound insights surrounding the intricate nature of violence, trauma, and the sheer will to survive within a world ravaged by apocalyptic events. By meticulously scrutinizing the text, the research study uncovers the intricate ways in which violence emerges as a mechanism for individuals to navigate through trauma and ensure their survival within a societal framework stripped of ethical boundaries. The various characters' violent journeys within the bleak and desolate setting of *Mercury Fur* vividly underscore the profound repercussions of existing in a culture immersed with violence, ultimately resulting in unavoidable trauma and a blurred sense of morality. Ridley's depiction of a realm marred by unspeakable atrocities effectively highlights the intricate process of upholding moral values in dire circumstances, where ensuring survival frequently entails compromising one's ethical beliefs. The characters' arduous battles to preserve their sense of humanity amidst the omnipresent violence and decay stand as a poignant reflection on the resilience intrinsic to the human spirit, as well as the lasting effects of residing in a culture engulfed by violence on individual psyches, ultimately leading to inevitable trauma and moral ambiguity. This narrative sheds light on the complicated psychological and emotional aftermath following harrowing experiences within a post-apocalyptic backdrop, emphasizing the crucial role Ridley plays in delving into the complexities of human conduct. Through the characters' rapturous ordeals, viewers are compelled to confront unsettling truths concerning the essence of violence, survival, and morality, thereby challenging established beliefs and inspiring contemplation on the fragility of societal norms when confronted with adversity. The research significantly enhances our comprehension of human nature and the enduring consequences of trauma in the most extreme of circumstances.

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