

LONELINESS AND HUMOUR IN AZİZ NESİN AND NEIL SIMON: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract. This comparative study explores how Aziz Nesin and Neil Simon, representing different literary canons, treat and reflect upon the incorporation of loneliness and humour in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* [Let's Kill Me Honey!] (1970) and *The Odd Couple* (1965), respectively. Both playwrights examine the loneliness that has caught urbanised and atomised humans in two metropolises: Istanbul and New York. Simon deals with the values, concerns, lifestyles, aspirations and problems of middle-class people in his plays with domestic realism. In contrast, Nesin's plays explore lower-working-class people's values, concerns and struggles. Moreover, it focuses on how Nesin and Simon employ humour, as a *Lingua Franca* of comedy, in their works. The study emphasises the two playwrights' incorporation of the humour theories of *superiority*, *incongruity* and *relief* into the selected dramatic texts. The interactions between the characters in the two plays are analysed according to the three traditional humour theories by assuming a discourse-analytic approach. The study has exhibited that in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom*, all the humour theories have been explicitly observed. The humour largely stems from a case of mistaken identity, which creates incongruity. On the other hand, in *The Odd Couple*, humour is primarily evoked due to the incongruous characteristics of the roommates abandoned by their wives.

Key words: humour, loneliness, comedy, *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!*, *The Odd Couple*

INTRODUCTION

The literature survey demonstrates that a comparative study still needs to be done on the works of Nesin and Simon. The two modern playwrights, Aziz Nesin (1915-1995) and Neil Simon (1927-2018), have been chosen for this analysis because they both function as good representatives of comedy filled with wit, laughter and humour to depict modern humankind's loneliness and misery within their respective national and cultural contexts. It is particularly emphasised how Nesin and Simon incorporate the humour theories of *superiority*, *incongruity*, and *relief* into *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* [Let's Kill Me Honey!] and *The Odd Couple*, respectively. The interactions exchanged by the lonely characters in both plays depicted in

humorous situations are analysed according to the three traditional humour theories and the portrayal of loneliness.

Literature is a universal artefact that belongs to humanity irrespective of race, colour, geography, and cultural differences. Comparative studies are powerful tools for understanding other cultures and works of literature. Hajdu (2019: 1-2), in *World Drama*, contends that ‘comparative literature has ceased to simply compare disparate literary phenomena to see similarities and differences long ago, tending rather to focus on actual connections between literary cultures’. By this token, Nesin represents the Eastern literary canon, while Simon is a representative of the Western literary canon. In comparative studies, the Eastern and Western literary canons benefit humanity. Western and Eastern literary texts should be read and interpreted as artefacts of humanity.

AZİZ NESİN AND NEIL SIMON

Aziz Nesin, a dissident, modernist, progressive socialist writer, human rights activist, anti-Islamist, and one of the most significant satirists of modern Turkey, perhaps of world literature, was a novelist, playwright, essayist, and humourist. He was born into a lower-class family in Istanbul. He wrote over one hundred books (Yüksel, 1997: 36). He is one of the most important Turkish authors whose works have been translated into more than thirty languages, according to the UNESCO Authors’ Index. Many of his works, particularly his comedies, deal with the fight for the honour of his people and attacking the wrong and destructive policies of the government (Kabacalı, 2007: 111). Furthermore, Nesin extensively uses humour in his comedies to attract the audience’s attention to the loneliness and misery of humankind. As a playwright, he delivers his messages to the audience by employing witty, satirical humour, triggering the audience to think critically.

Neil Simon was a Jewish-American playwright, screenwriter and television joke writer who grew up in New York. ‘He still feels an almost doomed compulsion to live in New York.’ (Bryer and Siegel, 2019: 9). He was named Marvin Neil and is regarded as one of the commercially most popular and famous dramatists in the history of American theatre. ‘Having established himself as the pre-eminent craftsman of joke-filled urban comedy, Neil Simon continued to dominate that branch of the American drama through the 1980s’ (Berkowitz, 2013: 173). Moreover, he is considered one of the most prolific playwrights in the history of American drama. Walden (1980: 77) writes, ‘There is little doubt that Neil Simon is one of the most prolific, productive, and successful playwrights the United States has ever produced’.

Simon generally draws two-dimensional characters and is famous for his one-liners. Two-dimensional characters have little psychological insight (Egri, 1960: 34). Simon exhausts comic stuff rather than delving into the psychologies of his characters. His comedies abound with laughter and humour. In addition, they are

labelled as low comedy, appealing to the audience's senses rather than intellect. Simon's plays adopt a single conflict in their plots to propel the action. Şekerci (2023: 130) states that 'A typical dramatic text is based on conflict which propels the plot. The plot of a play develops on verbal and non-verbal conflicts involving characters'. As a master of one-liners, Simon was called the *Laugh Machine* of American theatre and Broadway. However, drama critics have not considered his plays serious enough to be a subject of literary criticism. Chanksy (2015: 178) explains the reason for this as 'Simon is often dismissed as a writer whose background in television made him an expert in the one-liner at the expense of any depth'. He produced numerous plays and movie screenplays and was granted many awards.

Both writers are very different in style, intellectuality, craftsmanship, ideology, and worldview. Nesin (2016: 501) is a radical socialist activist; he says, 'I am the writer of my class, I have to be like this'. On the other hand, Simon is an apolitical writer; he states, 'I am not very much of a political activist either. I have backed many candidates, given money to many candidates, and supported many propositions, but I don't much care for politics' (Simon, 1996: 364). Nesin and Simon are the leading representatives of the unity of opposites. Nesin is a communist, while Simon is a capitalist. Both playwrights use humour in their works for various reasons. 'The speaker in humourous discourse uses language to target an object, a person or a situation from the three worlds we live in: real, social and private, and conveys a message—social or political or general' (Genova, 2016: 38). Whereas Nesin uses satire as a powerful weapon to satirise social, political, and religious oppression, Simon hardly satirises American political or social superstructures in his works. Simon uses comic material (humour or laughter) to entertain the audience by combining simple opposites and reconciling them.

Both playwrights examine the sense of loneliness that caught urbanised and atomised humans in two metropolises: Istanbul and New York. Nesin was born in Istanbul and grew up there, and Simon was born in New York and raised there. The cities are inspirational in moulding and shaping their intellectual, artistic and literary worlds. Whereas Simon mainly depicts middle-class or upper-middle-class New Yorkers in his comedies, Nesin exhibits lower working classes, particularly from Istanbul, in his works. One of the most significant similarities between Nesin and Simon is their choice of comedy for contemplating and depicting modern humankind's loneliness by extensively using humour to alleviate the loneliness of their characters. Drawing humourous and lonely characters suggests that loneliness is a universal element of the human experience. They regard life as neither all comedy nor all tragedy. Moreover, they emphasise the importance of talking and communicating with one another to lessen the effects of loneliness. Nathan (1958: 86) contends, 'We talk to one another about our lives, which is our way of reaching after what is most really real by inwardness'. Nesin and Simon use humour, as a *Lingua Franca* of comedy, in their oeuvres for various reasons, such as exposing and examining social and individual anxieties, miseries, loneliness and entertainment. Furthermore, they use comedy as a catalyst. *Humour* and *laughter* are significant and distinctive characteristics of comedy.

HUMOUR/LAUGHTER THEORIES AND LONELINESS

Humour, as a style rather than a genre, dates back to ancient times. Plato, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, and many other philosophers wrote about humour (see Hobbes, 1840; Bergson, 1900; Freud, 1905; Palmer, 1994; Critchley, 2002; and Morreall, 2009, to name a few). Henri Bergson's *Laughter* (1900) is regarded as one of the first works written on humour (Sypher, 1980: 62). Clark defines it as the following:

Humour is a family-resemblance concept: no one could hope to compile any short list of essential properties abstracted from all the many varieties of humour-human misfortune and clumsiness, obscenity, grotesqueness, veiled insult, nonsense, wordplay and puns, human misdemeanours and so on. (Clark, 1970: 20)

However, humour has been utilised to mean funny and hilarious since the 18th century (Stott, 2014: 171). Modern writers have employed humour for many purposes, such as exhibiting happiness, fun, human misfortunes, clumsiness, obscenity, absurdity, and whatever concerns humankind. There are three traditional humour theories: *superiority*, *incongruity* and *relief*. The *superiority theory* is one of the oldest theories. It goes back to Plato and Aristotle. It is 'an expression of a person's feelings of superiority over others' (Morreall, 1982: 244). This theory also means humans like finding humour in other people's misfortunes (Kulka, 2007: 326). The *incongruity theory* goes back to Aristotle, but Kant and Schopenhauer promoted its popularity. This theory presupposes that people laugh at incongruous things and find humour in inconsistent and incongruous circumstances (Morreall, 2009: 7). In addition, Billig (2005: 57) notices, 'Instead of seeking the origins of laughter within the motives of the person who laughs, incongruity theories have sought to identify those incongruous features of the world that provoke laughter'. The *relief theory* is based on the energy release model (Stott, 2014: 184). Spencer and Freud were the leading relief theorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stott puts it as follows:

Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud saw the triggers of laughter not so much as are cognition of incongruity within scenarios or linguistic formulae, but as a symptom of division and struggle within the self, recognition, as it were, of incongruous selfhood. (Stott, 2014: 182)

Moreover, Freud states that we discharge excessive energy from our suppressed sexual and hostile desires towards others through jokes, witty remarks and humour. However, it is not easy to categorise the traditional humour theories in dramatic texts because they may overlap each other: '[They] characterise the complex phenomenon of humour from very different angles and do not at all contradict each other—rather they seem to supplement each other quite nicely' (Raskin, 1985, cited in Morreall, 2009: 9). It means that no matter how complex humour theories are, they act harmoniously in dramatic texts.

Turkish humour is based on playful, indirect, flexible, friendly and warm banter, while American humour is considered aggressive, inflexible and chaotic. It is given

under the mask of comedy. Bier (1968: 17) says ‘American humour reflects American lifestyles and behaviours. And since Americans tend to lead fast-paced, chaotic lives, as an audience, we can understand and associate with humour on that level’. Humour and loneliness represent an excellent unity of opposites. Nesin and Simon aptly utilise humour in their works by delving into deeper impulses that manifest the loneliness of their characters’ consciousness to make us accept that we are born alone and pass away alone. Loneliness has been one of the major themes of fiction and drama for ages. Lonely women and men are depicted in literary texts as a recurring trope. Alberti (2019:16) argues that ‘Modern loneliness is a product of the nineteenth century, of an increasingly philosophical and industrial focus on the individual over the collective, on the self against the world’. Loneliness did not appear in English-written texts until the onset of the nineteenth century, as we perceive it today. The meaning of loneliness meant oneliness until the 1800s, and it did not have the psychological and emotional impact and meaning as it does today (Alberti, 2019: 18).

To debate loneliness and its historical development in length falls outside the scope of this study. Loneliness can be explored in societal, psychological, philosophical, and socio-economic contexts. The paper demonstrates the characters’ loneliness as an accumulation of emotions according to their class and gender differences. There is a saying in monotheistic religions; it reads ‘God alone exists in solitude’, but Nesin and Simon’s characters distort this saying. Additionally, Alberti’s (2019: 3) contention supports it as ‘the modern rise of loneliness as an epidemic and an emotional state’. The study examines the characters’ loneliness in both plays according to their emotional trajectory, implying a negative state. Both plays demonstrate loneliness as a negative and dysfunctional part of the human soul, disconnecting individuals from others. Both playwrights depict domestic realism in their *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* and *The Odd Couple*, respectively, to attract our attention to the actualities of daily life. The two playwrights under scrutiny depict characters in both comedies who consent to being available and present to one another. In *The Odd Couple*, Felix Ungar and Oscar Madison play poker with their friends to relieve their loneliness and monotonous lives; similarly, in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* Siyen and Diha talk to each other about their memories. The plays posit loneliness as an absence rather than an action because it exists in plain sight. Loneliness differs by class, gender and age. In both plays, the characters are different in age, class and gender. The two older women, Siyen and Diha, experience severe loneliness. At the same time, Oscar and Felix Ungar, who are relatively young compared to Siyen and Diha, experience the pain of loneliness with a less emotional impact.

ANALYSIS OF *HADI ÖLDÜRSENE CANIKOM!*

It is a two-act play depicting the fleeting illusion of happiness and hope for two old widows, Siyen and Diha. They have been next-door neighbours for fifteen years and are intimate friends. Both live alone on the damp basement floor of an old

building in an outer suburb of a big city. Siyen, aged 68, has been a widow for about twenty-three years. She has a son; they live apart and he financially supports her occasionally. She lives by herself on a small widow's pension. Moreover, she seems to have failed to overcome her late husband's memory. The death of her husband creates loneliness for Siyen, making her emotionally distant. She quarrels with the portrait of her late husband to alleviate her loneliness. Diha, 72, has been Siyen's next-door neighbour for about fifteen years. Likewise, she shares the same destiny as her friend and next-door neighbour. Diha has also been a widow for almost twenty-seven years. She lives on a rental income thanks to the inherited house from her father in the city centre. The two widows terribly suffer from a lack of a male partner to end their eternal miserable loneliness and hold on to life with their fellowship and distant memories. The older women seem to crave a romantic partner desperately.

One day, they hear a public notice broadcast on the radio. The radio announcer states that a psychotic killer knocks at the door upon detecting a woman living alone and introduces himself as a gasman to check the gas stove and gas metre to enter the house. After he steps in, he rapes the women, strangles them, and escapes. The serial killer, described on the radio as a handsome young man with green eyes, broad shoulders, a deep voice, and an attractive appearance, draws the attention of the widows, who have been yearning for a male for years. Both crave the opposite sex's affection. The tragicomic play revolves around the arrival of the true gasman, utterly opposite of the given description, whom Siyen and Diha mistake for the serial killer and get excited passionately to be with him even if it costs their lives.

Extracts

- (1) SİYEN: I'm utterly tired of it. Almost always fighting, every day...
- (2) DİHA (smiling): Loneliness has driven you mad. Fighting with a portrait?
- (3) SİYEN: Why not? He is my husband, isn't he? What can I do about his death? Even if he is not here in person, all I can do is fight with his portrait. (Nesin, 1970: 9; all translations are the authors' unless indicated otherwise)

Siyen, living alone at home, seems to quarrel with someone else. Diha, her next-door neighbour, immediately appears in fear and anxiety to check if she is well. In turn 1, Siyen is lamenting her daily fight. However, she appeases her loneliness in her grief-ridden life by speaking and fighting with a portrait of her late husband. She accuses her husband of his early death and, thus, her lonely and miserable life. In turn 2, Diha, finding Siyen shouting at the portrait on the wall, gets relief and smiles. According to the *relief theory*, the character smiles when her excess nervous energy is discharged after discovering that her anxiety is inappropriate and pointless. She finds Siyen's behaviour humorous, and her smile is a sigh of relief.

- (1) DİHA: Once he discovers there is nobody but a lonely woman at home... He... you know what... he rapes her...
- (2) SİYEN: (with joy, as if she's received very good news) Really!...
- (3) DİHA: But after that, he strangles her...
- (4) SİYEN: Oh, that is so awful...
- (5) DİHA: Wretched! All right, whatever you do is ok but what the hell you strangle them afterwards? Isn't it a pity? (ibid.: 19)

They talk about the news about the psychotic serial killer broadcast on the radio. In turn 1, Diha says that he rapes the lonely women after entering their houses. The Incongruity and Relief Theories operate here. According to the *incongruity theory*, an expectation in the audience is set up for this horrific news. However, Siyen's absurd and incompatible reaction in turn 2 and Diha's contradictory conventional implicature within the context violate the audience's former expectations and evoke humour. The characters' reactions run counter to the conceptual and mental patterns of the audience. The possibility of the arrival of a rapist-murderer is welcomed by the women seeking a man for their sexual desire. In addition, violating the audience's expectations and incongruity helps them release their pent-up excess nervous energy and find it pointless. It indicates the *relief theory*. They get relief and respond to it with laughter.

- (1) SİYEN: Come and sit down dear, then, we could think about what to do.
- (2) DİHA: (Sits down) It would be a disaster...
- (3) SİYEN: If he didn't come up?
- (4) DİHA: Either he did, or not... (ibid.: 20)

In turn 1, Siyen offers to make a plan regarding the rapist-killer if he arrives at their home. In turn 2, Diha's description of the situation as awful sounds logical. However, Siyen's question in turn 3 is absurd because it implies that the possibility of his non-arrival is a horrible scenario. In turn 4, Diha's supporting utterance increases the absurdity of the characters' expectations. The arrival of the psychotic and rapist serial killer can likely relieve their loneliness and boredom. According to the *incongruity theory*, the expectations of the audience are blatantly violated. Laughter is kindled in the audience. While they await one thing, they witness the opposite.

- (1) DİHA: It's in the paper... Lots of news about it going on in the papers! Cab drivers abducting lonely woman passengers...
- (2) SİYEN: No, they don't... Lies, fake news... They victimize poor cab drivers. I've taken cabs so many times at night by myself and gone to remote places. They have done nothing wrong to me. No abduction.
- (3) DİHA: Absolutely right... I've also tried many times. They never do that. Our cab drivers are really very virtuous. (ibid.: 27-28)

Diha and Siyen are sitting at home and discussing the daily newspaper news. In turn 1, Diha reads aloud the news about the taxi drivers. They both reject the reliability of the news based on their hands-on experience. However, the news signifies a serious threat to the lonely women in the city, which should be a kind of fear and anxiety for them. In their exchanges in turns 2 and 3, they ignore the seriousness of the news and possible danger because they suppose that the rapist-killer might be a console for their loneliness, contrary to the audience's expectations. Consequently, the emotional or nervous energy of the audience disappears suddenly, so laughter is ignited by discharging the pent-up nervous energy, according to the *relief theory*. Moreover, the violation of the audience's expectations and the contradiction between the news and the characters' approach drive the audience into a dilemma. In terms of the *incongruity theory*, laughter is also triggered by the amusing mismatch, providing a mental jolt.

- (1) GASMAN: Yes... What can I do with a little pension money?... I still have to work at my advanced age.
- (2) SİYEN: (abhorred) You mean you do it for money?
- (3) GASMAN: Of course, madam, it's a tiresome, even unpleasant, and unrelenting job, I know... Shall I do it for free and for the sake of love? (ibid.: 34)

In turn 1, the gasman explains why he still keeps working despite his old age and poor health. Siyen still presumes him as the rapist-killer, veiling himself as a gasman, and she gets perplexed by his answer in turn 2. The absurd exchange between them creates incongruity and triggers laughter. Working as a gasman at 70, just for love in turn 3, is a humorous motive provoking laughter and incongruity.

- (1) SİYEN: The postman has delivered a letter, a love letter... You take it out from your chest... It's not your chest, it's a mailbox... And you read the love letter... And of course, you've refused. (imitating Diha) I've refused him.
- (2) DİHA: Then, don't you believe me?
- (3) SİYEN: Believe what?
- (4) DİHA: That I refuse them... (Siyen bursts into a long laugh as if she heard something very funny.) What? What are you laughing at? (ibid.: 45)

In turn 1, Siyen is mocking Diha because she writes love letters and sends them to her own address. She pretends to receive the love letters from her pseudo-admirers. She has already made up a love game to relieve her miserable loneliness. In turn 4, Siyen seems to burst into laughter heartily to ridicule her, and thus, she expresses her delight in the shortcoming of her love game. Siyen's awareness of her make-believe world gives her immeasurable joy. It is an indication of the *superiority theory*. Her malicious laughter is thrown at Siyen's misfortune and misery.

- (1) DİHA: (Yelling) Shut up!.. (tears rolling down Diha's eyes, Siyen is laughing. they stay so for a while.) So what? So bleeding what?... I know that the portrait is not yours? (pointing to the portrait on the wall) Is it yours?
- (2) SİYEN: (her laughter freezes on her face) Of course it is. Whose do you think?
- (3) DİHA: (laughing louder) Come to my house and then, I'll show you whose portrait... Piya Töpi, the great artist, it's her portrait. She was a great star in her day... (ibid.: 46)

Diha revengefully retaliates against Siyen with the portrait on the wall. In reality, it is a film star's portrait. In turn 3, Diha laughs scornfully at Siyen, as does Siyen. According to the *superiority theory*, her awareness of the facts gives her the strength to belittle and mock Siyen, who is obsessed with her past.

- (1) GASMAN: Women? I never even gaze at them...
- (2) SİYEN: (Flirtatiously) Liar! Come on, don't dare fool me. I can see it in your eyes, what a womanizer you are... The way you look...
- (3) GASMAN: (convulsively laughing) I'm short-sighted... (ibid.: 52)

In turn 1, the gasman explicitly rejects Siyen's suggestion that he is after women. Siyen's name-calling in turn 2 jolts him into hearty laughter in turn 3. According to the *incongruity theory*, the gasman finds it humorous, as he has never expected to be called a womaniser. A sudden violation of his expectations makes him laugh convulsively. He looks different because of his shortsightedness, but Siyen is not aware of it.

- (1) GASMAN: (laughing) I swear I am the gasman...
- (2) SİYEN: Don't believe you... You'd have strangled me long ago, if you were the gasman. (ibid.: 60)

Siyen coquettishly tickles the gasman to make him come closer to her, but to no avail. In turn 1, the ticklish man does not respond to her desire. In return, Siyen playfully regards strangling as rape, which the serial killer commits successively. She implies a sexual affair, but she fails to express it manifestly. According to the *relief theory*, she makes a sexually driven remark humourously by releasing her excess pent-up sexual energy.

ANALYSIS OF THE ODD COUPLE

It is a three-act play concerning the troubled round-the-clock domestic lives of utterly opposed roommates, Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar. Oscar Madison, 43, is a New York Post sportswriter and lives in a sizeable twelve-floor apartment

building on Riverside Drive, New York City. He is an easy-going, carefree, sloppy, irresponsible, and financially unorganised man. His wife, Blanche, was tired of all this, so she divorced him months ago. He throws weekly poker games to win money for his overdue alimony payments and to escape his loneliness, but he always loses. The poker games are held every Friday with his regular friends, Murray, Roy, Speed, Vinnie, and Felix Ungar, in his apartment, in an unbearable slovenliness which was once a lovely family apartment.

On the contrary, Felix Ungar, 44, is a news writer who is an obsessive-compulsive cleaner, a perfect cook, and highly tight-fisted. He is strictly pedant with petty finance, cooking and cleaning. His wife, Frances, fed up with him, decides to end their twelve-year-long marriage, and she kicks him out without having any pangs of conscience. Felix cannot stand the thought of a lonely life bereft of his wife and two children, so he has suicidal inclinations. Moreover, Oscar Madison, getting bored with loneliness and pitying Felix, offers him to move in until he pulls himself together. He seems to have rediscovered his compassion for Felix. The play humourously deals with two opposite characters' sharing the same apartment. Unfortunately, this mutual sharing leads to intolerable and inescapable arguments rather than helping them overcome their problems. They finally end up living apart after three weeks of companionship but remain poker friends as before.

Extracts

- (1) ROY. (Opens the betting.) You still didn't fix the refrigerator? It's been two weeks now. No wonder it stinks in here.
- (2) OSCAR. (Picking up his cards.) Temper, temper. If I wanted nagging I'd go back [to] my wife... (Throws them down.) I'm out... Who wants food? (Simon, 2010: 9)

Oscar hosts a regular Friday poker night at home and serves his poker friends some drinks and fast food. Almost all of them have family-related problems that cause them loneliness and alienation. That is why they come together to play poker to lessen their loneliness and have fun together. In turn 1, Roy complains about the hot-served beer and his broken refrigerator. Oscar's analogy between his poker friend and his estranged wife is somewhat unpredictable and humourous in turn 2. However, Oscar seems to have no sorrow or trouble because of his loneliness. On the contrary, he is quite satisfied with his peaceful life, with no one nagging or meddling. It is generally expected that he may long for the regular family life he used to have. His incompatible and odd analogy in turn 2 demonstrates incongruity. Moreover, it triggers laughter, as he seems complacent with his life.

- (1) OSCAR. (Looks under bread.) I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches... Well, what do you say?
- (2) MURRAY. What's the green?
- (3) OSCAR. It's either very new cheese or very old meat.
- (4) MURRAY. I'll take the brown (ibid.: 9)

Oscar serves Murray some sandwiches and asks which one he wants to have in turn 1. The colour green sounds awkward to Murray in turn 2, and he asks about its ingredients. In turn 3, Oscar's answer exhibits incongruity and absurdity; it violates the audience's general expectation and drives them to laugh as the possible reasons behind the colour, either new cheese or old meat, are incompatible. The implicature is that Oscar's loneliness leads him to a bohemian lifestyle.

- (1) ROY. (Glares at MURRAY.) Are you crazy? You're not going to eat that, are you?
- (2) MURRAY. I'm hungry.
- (3) ROY. His refrigerator's been broken for two weeks. I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle. (ibid.: 9)

In turn 1, Roy warns Murray not to eat the sandwiches lest he get food poisoned. In turn 3, his response implies an absurd and illogical utterance related to the milk, and it violates the general mental pattern of the audience and provokes a mental jolt for laughter by creating incongruity and making them laugh at the absurdity of the situation. His hyperbolic remark in turn 3 on Oscar's slovenliness and dirtiness is highly laughter-evoking.

- (1) OSCAR. Where are you going?
- (2) FELIX. (Stops in the doorway. He looks at OTHERS who are all staring at him.) To the john.
- (3) OSCAR. (Looks at others worried, then at FELIX.) Alone?
- (4) FELIX. (Nods.) I always go alone! Why?
- (5) OSCAR. (Shrugs.) No reason!... You gonna be in there long?
- (6) FELIX. (Shrugs, then says meaningfully, like the martyr.) As long as it takes. (ibid.: 3)

Felix, deeply depressed upon being kicked out by his wife, arrives at Oscar's and wants to go to the bathroom. However, Oscar and his poker friends are aware of his sensitive and fragile character traits, and thus, they think he might commit suicide there. Their suspicion of his possible suicide makes them nervous and strained; however, the absurd questions posed by Oscar in turns 3 and 5 alleviate the strained nervous energy and render the exchange humorous, as indicated in the *relief theory*.

- (1) SPEED. What do you mean, how? Razor blades, pills. Anything that's in there.
- (2) OSCAR. That's the kid's bathroom. The worst he could do is brush his teeth to death. (ibid.: 24)

When Felix enters the bathroom, Oscar thinks he will unlikely commit suicide there in turn 1. Oscar's turn creates a humorous scene in a problematic situation and evokes laughter. According to the *relief theory*, laughter releases strained nervous energy

while the audience feels pity and fear. Still, later, it is found unnecessary and pointless, and the audience discharges their excess jumpy energy with laughter and is relieved.

- (1) CECILY. People bring us their bodies and we do wonderful things with them.
- (2) GWENDOLYN. Actually, if you're interested, we can get you ten per cent off.
- (3) CECILY. Off the price, not off your body.
- (4) FELIX. Yes, I see. (He laughs, they ALL laugh. Suddenly shouts towards kitchen.) Oscar, where's the drinks. (ibid.: 64)

The sisters Cecily and Gwendolen live together without male partners. They are upstairs neighbours. Oscar invites them to help Felix forget his estranged wife's memory as a kind of console and have some fun to lessen his depressing loneliness. Cecily says she works in a health club with her sister when Felix asks what she does. In turn 1, Cecily details her job at the health club. Gwendolen ironically offers a discount if he considers any operation. Cecily, an uninhibited woman, tells a sexually-driven joke and evokes laughter in turn 3. Her sexual trick and the discharge of excess energy refer to the *relief theory*. The release of energy is fulfilled with laughter.

- (1) CECILY. Maybe you can mention Gwen and I in one of your news reports.
- (2) FELIX. Well, if you do something spectacular, maybe I will.
- (3) CECILY. Oh, we've done spectacular things but I don't think we'd want it spread all over the Telly, do you, Gwen? (ibid.: 64-65)

When Felix says he works as a news writer, Cecily coquettishly asks if they are newsworthy in turn 1. Unaware of her playfulness, Felix takes her question seriously and answers solemnly in turn 2. As a response, Cecily tells a sexual joke humourously to implicate her sexual drive and capacity. According to the *relief theory*, she tells a sexual joke to override her internal censorship of her pent-up sexual energy and again discharges her excessive nervous energy.

CONCLUSION

In *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!*, all humour theories have been explicitly observed. The humour largely stems from a case of mistaken identity, which creates incongruity. Moreover, the two old widows' incongruous and unexpected reactions to the horrible news on the radio and in the newspapers provide relief. Although the characters whose lives, ages, living standards, and fates are identical, they find a way to mock each other by establishing pseudo-superiority. However, they try to alleviate their miserable loneliness by being available to each other. In *The Odd Couple*, humour is largely evoked due to the incongruous characteristics of

the roommates abandoned by their wives. Hyperbolic criticisms uttered for Oscar's slovenliness and his carefree reactions to Felix's misery and suicidal mood provide a kind of relief. Although the characters are utterly opposite, they do not mock each other. They incessantly fight each other like cats and dogs.

The *incongruity* and *relief theories* have predominantly been observed in *The Odd Couple*, while the *superiority theory* has not been detected. The age, gender and class differences significantly affect the level and density of the characters' loneliness in both plays. In *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!*, the older characters are of low social standing, while those in *The Odd Couple* are much younger and from the middle class, so the loneliness does not impact the characters at the same density and level. However, at their advanced ages, Siyen and Diha are more sociable, optimistic, and cooperative with each other than Oscar and Felix. The two old widows are desperate to tackle their loneliness, but they have no means to reverse it. Oscar and Felix, though they have the means to alleviate their loneliness, do not exhaust it. Nesin's old and poor widows are still enthusiastically clinging to life with false hopes, make-believe worlds, and distant memories. Their bond of friendship also enables them to endure their loneliness, while Simon's middle-aged divorcés often have rows due to their opposite characteristics. Furthermore, they do not attempt to end their loneliness in their private lives, though they have professions and a social environment. Despite their loneliness, Siyen and Diha are full of life, while Oscar and Felix are more depressive. Both plays successfully depict how loneliness is incorporated into humour as a universal human element.

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