



**LATCHKEYS AND SATELLITES: CONCEPT OF LOYALTY IN NOËL COWARD'S
PRESENT LAUGHTER**

KAPI ANAHTARLARI VE UYDULAR: NOËL COWARD'IN *PRESENT LAUGHTER* ADLI ESERİNDE
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Abstract

Comedy of manners, as a genre which emerged in the Restoration period, was popular in the twentieth century, too. Although some qualities have changed over time, the main characteristics remained the same. Noël Coward, a twentieth century playwright, has contributed to the genre with his plays that evoke the sense of comedy in the audience. In his *Present Laughter*, loyalty is an important term which has the power to reunite couples and maintaining businesses. Garry Essendine, who is in the middle of the events, has two circles around him: the inner circle in which the comrades of Garry try to protect and be loyal to him and the outer circle in which the members try to get in to the former one. By defeating threats like two one-night stand guests, the inner circle's aim is to keep their loyalty for their own benefits such as maintaining the business. Due to restricted studies about the concept of loyalty in the literature, we will focus, in this study, directly on loyalty as a comic element and the loyal comrades of the main character who contribute to the resolution in *Present Laughter*. Finally, we will show that the term loyalty is used in this play to protect the main character from a threat which comes from the outside of the orbit in which the satellites circle around.

Keywords: Noël Coward, Loyalty, *Present Laughter*, Satellites, Latchkey.

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Öz

Restorasyon döneminde ortaya çıkan töre komedisi, bir tür olarak yirminci yüzyılda da popülerliğini sürdürmüştür. Zamanla bu türün bazı nitelikleri değişse de temel özellikleri aynı kalmıştır. Bir yirminci yüzyıl oyun yazarı olan Noël Coward, seyircide güldürü hissini uyandıran bu türe uygun oyunlar yazmayı başarmıştır. Sadakat, çiftleri yeniden bir araya getirme ve işleri sürdürme gücüne sahip önemli bir terimdir. Olay örgüsünün tam ortasında olan Garry Essendine'in çevresinde iki çember vardır. Bunlar, Garry'yi korumaya ve ona sadık kalmaya çalışan arkadaşlarının ve ailesinin içinde bulunduğu iç çember ve üyelerinin ilk çemberin içerisine girmeye çalıştıkları dış çemberdir. İç çemberdekilerin amacı dıştan gelen tehditleri yenerek tiyatro işini sürdürmektir. Bu tehditler, Garry'nin tek gecelik ilişki yaşadığı ve daha sonra başına bela olan kişilerdir. İç çemberdekilerin sadakati ise kendi çıkarlarını korumak üzere geliştirilen bir savunma biçimidir. Sadakat kavramının literatürdeki kısıtlı çalışmalar nedeniyle, *Present Laughter*'daki sadakatin komik bir unsur olarak ele alınıp, ana karakterin sadık arkadaşlarının çözüme katkılarına direkt olarak odaklanmak önem arz etmektedir. Sadakat kavramı ana karakteri, uyduların etrafında döndüğü yörüngenin dışından gelen tehditlerden korumak için kullanılan bir araçtır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Noël Coward, Sadakat, *Present Laughter*, Uydular, Kapı Anahtarı.

Introduction

Although it emerged in the Restoration period, comedy of manners, also known as restoration drama or Restoration comedy of manners, managed to keep its popularity until the twentieth century. “*Comedy of manners, . . . holds up a mirror to the way people behave and the manners they employ in a social context, and while doing this it satirizes also certain types and certain manners*” (Dinçel, 1989: 73). Thus, the aim of comedy of manners is to entertain the audience by satirizing its present social condition. However, social conditions of the society vary from era to era; therefore, the genre’s themes may differ throughout the centuries. The key feature of comedy of manners is its witty dialogues that have underlying meanings in order to attract the audience’s attention. Besides, the plot is usually about a love relationship between a man, his wife or beloved, and a mistress or mistresses. This relationship is rather complicated due to the intrigues and seduction among the lovers. The relationships are also based on money and fame. The mistresses are attracted to the main character because of these reasons, and the central figure who is old thinks that he is young which is the fact in Noël Coward’s play, too. While some qualities of the genre disappeared over time, the main idea and essential characteristics such as intrigues, seduction, sexual affairs, inappropriate language, and money are still in use. As a representative of the modern version of the genre, the playwright sustained the traditions of the literary style through his *Present Laughter* noting:

“*Present Laughter is a very light comedy and was written with the sensible object of providing me with a bravura part. It was an enormous success. I received excellent notices and, to my bewilderment and considerable dismay, the play also was reasonably acclaimed. This so unnerved me that I can say no more. The reader must judge for himself.*” (Coward, 1954: xv)

Present Laughter which was put on stage in Blackpool in 1942 is Noël Coward's one of the best-known comedy of manners plays. It was directed by Noël Coward himself, and Garry Essendine's role was performed by him too. The play is considered to be a narrow autobiography of himself due to the resemblance between Noël Coward and Garry Essendine's lifestyle. The entanglements and intrigues in the life of Garry reflect Coward's life. *Present Laughter* satirises the manners of the contemporary society in a comic way. The play contains the elements of comedy of manners such as money, sex, extramarital relationships, and witty plot along with the concept of loyalty. Nevertheless, the play does not owe its reputation only to its topic or the characteristic features of the genre; the comic and witty designed elements in the content play an important role, too. The plot of the play develops around Garry Essendine, a selfish actor who sees himself as an attractive and invaluable actor. He is obsessed with his age and looks constantly to the mirror. His wife, Liz Essendine, does not live with him, but there is a strange relationship between them. The lechery actor is compelled by Daphne Stillington, a young girl who is in love with him, and Joanna Lyppiatt who is the wife of his producer, Henry Lyppiatt. The affairs with these women start with a common excuse. The side characters in the play all have a common aim: to protect Garry from invaders who want to replace or be a part of them. Fred, the valet, Miss Erikson, the maid, Monica Reed, the secretary, along with Liz, Morris Dixon, the manager, and Henry try the best to contribute to this protection. The famous Mr. Essendine is a pleasant and successful actor who is not able to stop acting. This continuous acting, combined with his "*farcical domestic entanglements*" (Hirst, 1979: 65), supports Garry's charm because people are prone to believe him. He is "*a man who dissimulates so eagerly that he has forgotten who he is*" (Lahr, 1982: 32). In fact, this shows the blur identity of Noël Coward whose self divided into pieces throughout his life. Like Garry, Coward was surrounded by a large amount of people who never let him alone; because of this fact, he is like Garry in the play. As a result of this regular acting, both on and off the stage, people succumb to Garry's charm. As reported, this charm disorients the people around him:

"Since his charm has an overpowering effect, persons who are attracted towards him soon feel like running away from him. Among these are women, both young and middle-aged, and young men. Being attracted and repelled at the same time, they simply revolve round him, unable to reach him in the centre, and equally unable to run away from him. Among the persons who are drawn towards him so blindly, and remain revolving round him so helplessly, are Liz, his wife; Daphne, a glamour girl, niece of Lady Saltburn; Joanna, wife of his friend Henry, and Boland, a young romantic playwright." (Yaravintelimath, 1975: 190)

Charm, status, and role play are used to gather people around the "*romantic comedian Garry Essendine*" (Lahr, 1982: 32). Garry is in the middle of the events in which people around him try to reach him with intrigues (Hoare, 1996: 293). The people around Garry build relational circles which are further explained in detail by Yaravintelimath (1975); he expresses that there are two circles around the charming actor: the inner and the outer one. In the former one, his close friends and the people with whom he lives try to maintain their position within

this circle and prevent the members of the other circle to irrupt into their current location. The latter is the circle in which characters like Daphne Stillington and Joanna Lyppiatt try to breach into the former circle with various intrigues and seduction in order to reach their most valuable aim, the charming Mr. Essendine (Yaravintelimath, 1975: 191). The genre comedy of manners satirises the social behaviours of the contemporary society in a realistic way and evokes laughter through mocking the values that are seen extreme or improper by the writers. The criticised manners of the society were mainly about the upper-class' behaviour. These manners are regarded as unmoral and brought up to the stage in order to be mocked. The snobby, non-loyal, and artificial characters of this class are the main subject matters of this criticism. The series of intrigues throughout the play exemplify the subject matter of the term comedy of manners.

According to Hoare, because Garry seems to be like Coward himself in many ways, the play is considered to be an autobiographical work of the creator (Hoare, 1996: 293); Barry Day, another scholar and the editor of *Noel Coward in His Own Words*, states that "*Coward's best invention was himself*" (Coward, 2008: 143) which verifies Hoare's statement. Coward (1995), in his autobiography, states that he had the intention to act in the play, which is probably an easy task to act like himself. The resemblance between the two men, both in the private life and on the stage, is an important factor. In fact, it is not acting because he has to be only himself.

It is important to analyse the literary work around the term 'loyalty' because the members of both circles have a specific aim in order to protect the values which they believe. The lexical meaning of being loyal is being "*faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government [,] faithful to a private person to whom faithfulness is due [or] faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product*" (Merriam-Webster, 2004: 738). In the play, the approach to the term loyalty is mainly about the benefits of the characters. A study in Coward's time about loyalty states that the people who are loyal to someone or something regard it as more important than themselves, and the term relates to someone who is in the immediate surroundings such as his or her family members or friends (Royce, 1908: 52). This state is present in the play due to the loyalty is between the central figure and his family or friends. However, loyalty starts when there is a threat against their current situation. Strangers like Daphne and Joanna tend to lose their latchkeys in order to seduce Garry with the purpose of capturing him for his money and charm. Garry's family, on the other hand, with most efforts, try to protect him from the outsiders. The fame and wealth of the business are worth being protected. However, the loyalty of the inner circle cannot be reduced just to the business itself; the charm of the actor needs to be protected too in order to keep the whole business alive. Also, as a mad dramatist, he needs to be looked after by his companions (Mander, 1957: 4). Because of the fear that these intrigues may harm the business and his charm, his friends are forced to control him. The artificiality of the relations reflected in the play is another characteristic that makes it a good example to comedy of manners. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that the number of the studies focusing on the concept of loyalty in this play is very limited. Coward's plays may seem to end with a marriage or the reunion of the married couples, but they "*are grounded in*

something ... more primitive: loyalty" (Gray, 2006: 230). He further emphasises that the bond between the couples and friends is sustained through loyalty (Gray, 2006: 230). However, the function of the loyalty in the play should not be seen merely as a term that connects people; the term serves to the comedy of manners by creating a comic element. This creation, along with other elements of the genre such as money and sexual relationships, demonstrates the value of loyalty between the characters and their interests in the play. Hence, this study aims to analyse the play in the sense of loyalty as a vital source for the relationship between the characters. Due to the set elements like 'latchkeys' and 'satellites,' the research focuses mainly on these aspects.

Concept of Loyalty through the Comic Elements: 'Latchkeys' and 'Satellites'

Present Laughter opens with Daphne Stillington, "a pretty girl of about twenty-three or four" (Coward, 1979: 135), who is on the phone speaking with Miss Cynthia about the night she has spent in the spare room of Garry Essendine's house. After meeting with Miss Erikson, "a thin [and] vague-looking Swedish housekeeper" (Coward, 1979: 136), she tells her why she has spent the night there:

"DAPHNE (in a rush): I'm afraid we were rather late last night you see we were at a party and Mr. Essendine very kindly said he'd drive me home and then I found I'd forgotten my latch key and I knew I shouldn't be able to make any of the servants hear because they sleep at the top of the house so Mr. Essendine said I could stay the night here and—and so I did." (Coward, 1979: 136)

Daphne says that she has lost her 'latchkey' and starts the loop of series of events which develops around the comic element. The latchkey seems to be a recurrent excuse for spending the night at Essendine's house which will be later confronted to the reader or audience again with a slight difference. Daphne who has lost her latchkey feels compelled to explain herself continually to whoever enters the stage. The latchkey is a symbol for threat which has to be eliminated by Garry's friends in order to "protect him from admirers" (Gray, 2006: 234). The first encounter is with Miss Erikson and the next with Monica, "a pleasant, rather austere woman in the early forties [who is] Garry's secretary" (Coward, 1979: 137). Daphne, one more time, tells her the situation she is in:

"DAPHNE: Well, I'm afraid it's rather awkward—you see, Mr. Essendine drove me home last night from a party and I idiotically forgot my latch-key and so he very sweetly said I could stay here—in the spare room." (Coward, 1979: 137)

The spare room is also connected with the latchkey because whoever loses her latchkey finds herself ending up in the room. It can be inferred that this room is intended for special guests who want to spend the night with the charming actor. Furthermore, Garry's behaviour on the next morning indicates that his purpose is to have a one-night stand and he tries to get rid of his seductive guests by playing "out a neat parody of a 'parting' scene" (Paterson, 1978: 27). He tries to convince his guest who has lost her latchkey that he is "too old for twenty-four"

(Coward, 1979: 145). In fact, Garry, too, knows that he has to protect himself from the aliens who try to be a part of the inner circle but cannot manage to do it. After awakening from sleep, he tries to remember who Daphne was. Monica, hopelessly, tries to make him aware of the consequences of his acts in a mocking way. Even Fred is loyal to the inner circle and the relationship between its members; in a clearly way, Garry's valet uses double entendre to raise awareness to the seriousness of the situation in which they are:

"GARRY: Who the hell is Miss Stillington?

MONICA: She's in the spare room.

GARRY (coming down): I didn't ask where she was, I asked who she was.

MONICA: We might look her up in the telephone book.

FRED: She forgot her latch-key if you know what I mean." (Coward, 1979: 140-141)

Monica wants the spare room to disappear because it is a threat against the comrades and is used as a tool for the risky affairs. Being loyal to the group and its benefits, she is in an effort to discourage Garry in his close relationships with his fans. *"Garry's awareness of the transience of all things is reflected in his concern with age"* (Rogers, 1972: 143). Because of this obsession with his age, he changes his behaviour and starts to act as if he is older or younger. The game with his age is used as an escape when the situation becomes too difficult for him. While speaking with Daphne, he claims that he is forty years old and is too old for a girl in her twenties. On the other hand, he cannot lie to Monica because she knows him so well and understands when he is acting and when not. Thus, he admits his real age to her, that is forty-one. Although reminded by Monica that he is actually forty-two, he says that he looks ninety-eight in front of a mirror. As a reaction to his hyperbole, Monica advises him to wear a wig with the hope that this will end his one-night stands with his lovers who come up with the excuse of losing their latchkeys (Rogers, 1972). Mainly, the purpose of his secretary is only to protect Garry from his lovers who tend to enter his zone in order to take advantage of his charm and money. Garry's answer to Monica is a paradoxical comedy which connotes that he will not be able to give up his habits; he is willing to continue the roleplay which has become a part of his character:

"GARRY: She had to stay the night. She'd lost her key.

MONICA: The sooner we turn that spare room into a library the better.

...

GARRY (taking it and going over to a looking-glass): Good God, I look ninety-eight.

MONICA: Never mind.

GARRY: In two years from now I shall be bald as a coot and then you'll be sorry.

MONICA: On the contrary I shall be delighted. There will be fewer eager, gently-bred debutantes ready to lose their latch-keys for you when you've got a toupee perched on the top of your head, and life will be a great deal simpler.

GARRY (*thoughtfully*): *I shall never wear a toupee, Monica, however bald I get. Perhaps on the stage I might have a little front piece but in life, never. I intend to grow old with distinction.*" (Coward, 1979: 142)

Liz, Garry's wife, who lives apart from him, encounters with Daphne and asks who she is in an interrogative way. The fact that they are not divorced, though they live separately, indicates that there is still a link between them. However, this link is rather emotional than sexual since she protests his acts as a loyal protector of Garry's charm and business. As it is usual in this period of literary history and the subsequent one, the attitude of the protest is silent and mocking (Kaya, 2012: 2):

LIZ: *Who was that poor little creature I saw here this morning in evening dress?*

GARRY: *She'd lost her latch-key.*

LIZ: *They often do.*

GARRY: *Now listen to me, Liz—*

LIZ: *You're over forty, you know.*

GARRY: *Only just.*

LIZ: *And in my humble opinion all this casual scampering about is rather undignified.*

GARRY: *Scampering indeed. You have a genius for putting things unpleasantly.*

LIZ: *Don't misunderstand me, I'm not taking a moral view, I gave that up as hopeless years ago, I'm merely basing my little homily on reason, dignity, position and, let's face it, age."* (Coward, 1979: 160)

Joanna Lyppiatt, "*an exquisitely gowned woman in the early thirties . . . [who] has a great deal of assurance and considerable charm*" (Coward, 1979: 186), tries her luck after Daphne and loses her latchkey, too. The recurrent events which have been experienced earlier by Miss Stillington are now performed by Joanna. However, Joanna, almost as charming as Garry, is a greater threat than Daphne. Her only and final goal is to obtain Garry and his charm along with the power of his business. Considered as an alien by Mr. Essendine's inner circle, it is inferred in the text that every single member's struggle is to keep her outside their circle. The "*gossipy little planets [comrades of inner circle] circling round the great glorious sun [the charming Garry Essendine]*" (Coward, 1979: 203) pay court to Garry at any cost. This loyalty is seen not only by Liz, Monica, Fred and Miss Erikson but also by Henry and Morris who would do anything to keep the business alive since they benefit from it; thus, "*they . . . find it necessary to extricate Garry from his romantic entanglements*" (Rogers, 1972: 142). The artificiality of the characters in the play is exposed explicitly through the witty dialogues. It is one of the main geniuses of Noël Coward. All of Garry's friends have the only aim to free him from his extramarital affairs in order to secure their current positions. This artificiality can be observed in various plays of the playwright and serves as a characteristic of the comedy of manners. The comic element in the play is that both Daphne and Joanna's excuses are the same: the laughter-provoking latchkey. However, Joanna is more determined than Daphne and has a specific aim. By pretending to have called the wrong number while on the phone in search for a taxi, her self-



driven provocative and seductive attempt to get Garry succeeds. Although Garry does not believe her that she has lost her latchkey, he gives in:

“JOANNA: I’ve forgotten my latch-key!

GARRY: Oh, Joanna!

JOANNA: It’s no good looking at me like that—I’m not in the least inefficient as a rule, this is the first time I’ve ever done such a thing in my life. I’m in an absolute fury. I had to dress in the most awful rush to dine with Freda and go to the Toscani concert and I left it in my other bag.

GARRY: And I suppose the servants sleep at the top of the house.

JOANNA: They do more than sleep, they apparently go off into a coma. I’ve been battering on the door for nearly half an hour.

...

GARRY: Nonsense, there’s nothing you’d hate more. You came here for a purpose, didn’t you?

JOANNA: Of course I did. I lost my key, I knew you had a spare room and—

GARRY: Well?

JOANNA: I wanted to get to know you a little better.

GARRY: I see.

JOANNA: Oh, no, you don’t. I know exactly what you think. Of course I can’t altogether blame you. In your position as one of the world’s most famous romantic comedians, it’s only natural that you should imagine that every woman is anxious to hurl herself at your head. I’m sure, for instance, that you don’t believe for a moment that I’ve lost my latch-key!” (Coward, 1979: 186-189)

Monica, as one of the members of the inner circle, directly reacts to Joanna, whom she sees as a threat to the loyalty of the group, by repeating what she says in a mocking way. The defence she makes in order to be loyal to the group and alienate Joanna aims “to keep the image of their ‘sun’ before the public for as long as possible” (Rogers, 1972: 142):

“MONICA: Did you stay the night here?

JOANNA: Yes, wasn’t it sweet of Garry to let me? I did the most idiotic thing. I lost my latch-key.

MONICA: You lost your latch-key?

JOANNA: I was in absolute despair and then I suddenly thought of Garry.

MONICA: You suddenly thought of Garry!

JOANNA: Why do you keep repeating everything I say?

MONICA: I don’t know, it seems easier than saying anything else.

JOANNA: Why, Monica, you actually look as if you disapproved of my staying the night here!” (Coward, 1979: 198-199)

Despite the fact that Joanna is married to Henry, she flirts with Morris and at the end with Garry. She uses the previous men as stepping-stones. “[Joanna’s] surname . . . suggests the . . . game of tip-cat, which characterizes the game Joanna has been playing. . . . The idea is to knock the billet as far away as possible. Three hits are allowed” (Rogers, 1972: 149-150). She tries her chance,

without success, and at the third shot she stumbles. Liz catches Joanna and breaks her silence; she makes Garry warn Morris about Joanna: “*Joanna is alien to us. She doesn’t really belong to us and never could. . . . BE CAREFUL! Is that clear?*” (Coward, 1979: 182-183). When Liz meets Joanna in Garry’s house, Joanna tries to lie; however, Liz does not believe her and suspects the adultery:

“LIZ: Good morning, Joanna. This is a surprise.

JOANNA: Liz! I tried to get you for hours last night. I’d lost my latch-key and was in the most awful state. But you weren’t in.

LIZ: I was in from ten o’clock onwards. You must have been ringing the wrong number.

JOANNA: I rang the number you gave me.

LIZ (sweetly): Then I must have given you the wrong number.” (Coward, 1979: 200)

Daphne unintentionally reveals her relationship with Garry when she responds to Joanna. However, Joanna does not reply to her but to Garry:

“DAPHNE (violently): The chauffeur’s got red hair and his name’s Frobisher!

. . .

JOANNA: Thank you very much. (To Garry.) I shan’t see you again, Garry, as I am going to Paris tomorrow for a month, so this is good-bye. I do hope that when you go to Africa you will be wise enough to take all your staunch, loyal satellites with you. It’s too dangerous for a little tinsel star to go twinkling off alone and unprotected. Please don’t imagine that I haven’t enjoyed the circus enormously. I have. But in the circuses I’ve been used to it was always the ringmaster who cracked the whip, not the clowns. Goodbye!” (Coward, 1979: 220)

The comic intrigues in *Present Laughter* end with Garry and Liz’s reunion. Garry and Liz’s reunion may seem like a happy marital ending, but it is based upon protecting the business (Burns, 1999: 56). However, the loyal wife does not think only of Garry’s business and fame; she also cares for her husband. Joanna is finally alienated from the outer circle and the possibility to breach to the inner one is disappeared. The reunion of the couple makes the bond stronger and the loyalty of the inner circle to one another saves it from being attacked by outsiders. Therefore, it is a vital issue that the satellites keep their loyalty to the planet which they circle around.

Conclusion

As one of the most prominent writers of comedy of manners in the twentieth century, Noël Coward uses in *Present Laughter* the comic elements of the genre through the witty dialogue of the characters. The main character, Garry Essendine, is represented by Coward himself, and it can be observed that there are reflections of Coward’s life and character in the play. This resemblance probably made him play the role with ease. The play handles the manners of Garry as an actor who is continuously acting, both on and off the stage. This

behaviour may harm his business and fame. Therefore, his friends try their best to avoid the consequences. In his private life, this continuous acting causes him sometimes to experience troubles and misunderstandings. The intrigues caused by the relationships with his one-night stand guests force his close friends and family to protect him in order to maintain his status, charm and business.

The loyalty between the characters and the groups are clearly seen in the play since there are two opposing sides and the members of each side have a specific aim; on the first side, there are Liz Essendine, Monica Reed, Fred, Miss Erikson, Morris Dixon, and Henry Lyppiatt who want to stick together and loyally protect the protagonist of *Present Laughter*, Garry, from the other side that wants to invade the centre in which Garry is. The loyalty of these characters does not permit the other side to do that. Liz, Garry's loyal wife, manages to convince Garry to escape from this predicament and hinders Joanna, whose aim is to achieve Garry's love, to reach to the centre where Garry is. Noël Coward's intention in the play is to depict that loyalty is not directed towards the actor himself but to his charm and business. The relationship between Garry and his friends is based on self-interest. In fact, the people around Garry are not loyal to him only for his persona; they are loyal to him in order to protect the image of the actor because the members of the inner circle know that they will lose their profits without his splendid image, prominence and ongoing success. Similarly, Coward was surrounded by many people who did not leave him alone, too. The similarity between the two men can be regarded as the reflection of the writer to his work. Garry's affairs, especially the latest one with Joanna, are seen as a threat not directly towards his persona but to the business itself. Indeed, Garry is aware of this concept of loyalty and complains about it by stating that they were nothing without him. This situation indicates that not only his friends are loyal to the great actor but Garry is also loyal to them and to himself. The concept of loyalty is not used only to re-unite Garry and his wife. Loyalty serves as a comic element that contributes to the play's witty plot. Sex, intrigues and money, as the characteristic features of the genre, are connected with loyalty in a comic way. However, the loyalty of the characters is based on artificial interests. The artificiality of them can be observed by comprehending their purpose. In order not to lose their wealth, position, and benefit, Garry's friends continue to be quasi loyal. Then *Present Laughter* indicates that as the satellites keep circling around the planet, the loyalty will be carried on in a loop from side to side.

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Genişletilmiş Öz

Töre komedisi genellikle İngiliz Restorasyon Dönemiyle ilişkilendirilen bir edebi türdür. Dönemin değerlerini, modasını, toplumun tutum ve davranışlarını ve bireylerin eylemlerini hicvederek ve alaya alarak seyircinin bu durumları fark edip gülmesini amaçlamaktadır. Restorasyon döneminde ortaya çıkan bu edebi tür, bir tür olarak yirminci yüzyılda da popüler bir yazı stiliydi. Noël Coward gibi bazı yazarlar, dönemin koşulları da dikkate alınarak töre komedisinin özelliklerini eserlerine yansıtmışlardır. Zamanla bu türün bazı nitelikleri değişse de temel özellikleri aynı kalmıştır. Olay örgüsü ve diyalogların akıllıca kurgulanması, aile ve evlilik kavramlarının farklı bir bakış açısıyla ele alınması, karakterler arası para ve ilişki çatışmaları bu özellikler arasındadır. Yirminci yüzyıl oyun yazarlarından biri olan Noël Coward, seyircide güldürü hissini uyandıran bu türe uygun oyunlar yazmayı başarmıştır.

Çalışmanın amacı, bir oyun yazarı olan Coward'ın *Present Laughter* adlı oyununda töre komedisinin özelliklerine direkt olarak ait olmayan fakat eserde karakterler arası ilişkileri çözümlemede önemli bir rol oynayan ve bu türün özelliklerini ortaya çıkarmada yardımcı olan sadakat kavramını nasıl ele aldığını incelemektir. Literatür incelendiğinde eserde sadakat kavramı üzerinde duran çalışmaların nadir olduğu görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla karakterler arası para ve çıkar ilişkileri ile aile bağlarına ışık tutan sadakat kavramının ayrıyeten ele alınması önemlidir. Bu kavramı en iyi yansıtan terimlerin 'kapı anahtarı' ve 'uydular' olduğundan çalışmada sadakat kavramının ele alınması bu terimler ile sınırlı tutulmuştur.

Sadakat, çiftleri yeniden bir araya getirme ve işleri sürdürme gücüne sahip önemli bir terimdir. Olay örgüsünün tam ortasında olan Garry Essendine da Coward gibi bir oyuncudur. Bu oyuncunun çevresinde iki çember vardır. Bu çemberlerden ilki, içerisinde Garry'yi korumaya ve ona sadık kalmaya çalışan arkadaşlarını ve ailesini bulunduran ve yakın çevresini oluşturan iç çemberdir. İkincisi ise, ilk çemberin içinde bulunan üyeleri saf dışı bırakıp, bulunduğu dış çemberden iç çemberi istila etmeyi amaçlayan Garry'nin yapımcısı Henry Lyppiatt'ın eşi Joanna, hayranı Daphne Stillington ve amatör bir yazar olan Roland Maule ile tek gecelik ilişkiye girdiği diğer hayranlarını barındıran ve uzak çevresini oluşturan dış çemberdir. İç çemberde bulunan Garry'nin eşi Liz, sekreteri Monica, hizmetçisi Bayan Erikson, uşağı Fred, menajeri Morris Dixon ve yapımcısı Henry'nin amacı tek gecelik ilişki için gelen misafirler gibi tehditleri yenerek ve tiyatro işini sürdürerek kendi çıkarları için sadık kalmaktır.

Kapı anahtarını kaybetme veya unutma bahaneleriyle Garry'nin evinde kalmak isteyen birçok kadın misafirden bazıları Daphne ve Joanna'dır. İkisinin de amacı buldukları konumdan daha iyi bir konuma geçiş yapıp Garry'yi elde etmektir. Amaçları doğrultusunda her entrikayı deneyen bu karakterlerin çabaları sonuçsuz kalmıştır. Yakın çevresi tarafından sadık bir şekilde korunan Garry'nin kendisi de aslında kendine sadıktır. Yakın çevresinin, işlerini ve kazanç kapılarını kaybetmeme uğruna sadık kaldıkları Garry'nin kendine olan sadakatının nedeni de mevcut konumunu ve şanını kaybetmemektir. Tarafların amaçları farklı olsa da birbirlerine olan sadakati bu unsur çerçevesinde devam etmektedir.

Amacına ulaşamayan Joanna, Garry'nin etrafındaki sadık insanları birer uyduya benzetmektedir. Bu uydular gezegenin etrafında döndüğü gibi karakterler de Garry'nin etrafında dönmektedir. Bu dönüşler devam ettiği müddetçe dıştan gelen tehditler her ne olursa olsun bertaraf edilmektedir. Bunun farkında olan dış çemberdekiler sızma girişimine umutsuzca devam eder ve amaçları doğrultusunda

hareket ederler. Hala evli ama ayrı yaşayan Garry'nin eşi de bu sadakatin son unsurunu oluşturup karmaşa içerisinde kalan kocasını kurtarıp birlikte kaçarak kendisine ne kadar sadık olduğunu kanıtlar. Kendisine uzak ama aynı zamanda en yakın konumda bulunan eşi onu tüm bu entrika ve oyunlardan kurtarıp en sadık uydu olduğunu göstermiştir. Kendini hem sahnede hem de sahne dışında bir oyundaymış gibi gören ve sürekli herkese oyun oynayan Garry de sonunda bu durumdan eşi tarafından kurtarılmıştır.

Komik bir unsur olan sadakat kavramının literatürdeki kısıtlı çalışmalar nedeniyle, *Present Laughter*'daki sadakat ve ana karakterin sadık arkadaşlarının çözüme katkılarına direkt olarak odaklanmak önem arz etmektedir. Sadakat kavramı ana karakteri, uyduların etrafında döndüğü yörüngenin dışından gelen tehditlerden korumak için kullanılan bir araçtır.

