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87

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ABSTRACT

Philip Ridley's Vincent River centers on a personal tragedy while deeply exploring the emotional and social impacts of loss. The play begins with the murder of a young man in a homophobic attack and focuses on his mother Anita's process of coping with the devastating loss. Ridley uncovers the psychological depth and internal conflicts of his characters while sharply critiquing important issues such as homophobia, discrimination, prejudice, and societal silence. Anita's initial feelings of denial, anger, and guilt gradually give way to confrontation, understanding, and acceptance. Her unexpected relationship with Davey represents not only personal healing but also a social awakening. Through this powerful connection, Ridley shows how two strangers can form a bond and undergo transformation through shared grief. This study analyzes Anita's inner journey in Vincent River through a psychoanalytic lens, drawing on Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning alongside Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief. It explores how Ridley intertwines personal grief with broader societal issues, showing how trauma destabilizes identity while opening space for transformation. The play transforms individual mourning into a vehicle for social critique, presenting theatre as a space for confrontation, empathy, and responsibility. By linking personal loss with collective injustice, Ridley urges audiences to reflect on the emotional cost of silence and the urgent need for recognition, healing, and social change.

ÖZ

Philip Ridley'nin Vincent River adlı eseri, kişisel bir trajediyi merkeze alırken kaybın duygusal ve toplumsal etkilerini derinlemesine inceler. Oyun, homofobik bir saldırı sonucu öldürülen bir gencin cinayetiyle başlar ve annesi Anita'nın bu yıkıcı kayıpla başa çıkma sürecine odaklanır. Ridley, karakterlerin psikolojik derinliklerini ve içsel çatışmalarını ortaya koyarken homofobi, ayrımcılık, önyargı ve toplumsal sessizlik gibi önemli sorunları sert bir biçimde eleştirir. Anita'nın reddetme, öfke ve suçluluk duyguları zamanla yüzleşme, anlayış ve kabule dönüşür. Anita'nın beklenmedik ilişkisi Davey ile hem kişisel iyileşmeyi hem de toplumsal bir uyanışı temsil eder. Ridley, bu güçlü bağ aracılığıyla iki yabancıyı paylaşılan yas üzerinden nasıl bir bağ kurabileceğini ve dönüşüm geçirebileceğini gösterir. Bu çalışma, Vincent River'da Anita'nın içsel yolculuğunu Sigmund Freud'un yas kuramı ile Elisabeth Kübler-Ross'un yas aşamaları ışığında psikanalitik bir bakış açısıyla analiz eder. Ridley'nin kişisel yas ile daha geniş toplumsal meseleleri nasıl iç içe geçirdiğini, travmanın kimliği nasıl sarsarken aynı zamanda dönüşüm için bir alan yarattığını araştırır. Oyun, bireysel yas sürecini toplumsal eleştiriye dönüştürerek tiyatroyu yüzleşme, empati ve sorumluluk alanı olarak sunar. Kişisel kaybı kolektif adaletsizlikle bağdaştırarak Ridley, izleyicileri sessizliğin duygusal bedelini ve tanınma, iyileşme ile toplumsal değişim ihtiyacını düşünmeye davet eder.

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INTRODUCTION

Philip Ridley, born in 1968, is a multi-award-winning artist who created his first piece at 11. After leaving to study painting at St. Martins College of Art, he wrote *Vincent River*, winner of the TMA Stages Award for Best New Play, the Time Out Award, and the Evening Standard's Most Promising Playwright. Following the play were *Ghost from a Perfect Place*, *Passion*, and *Mercury Fur*. His debut film was *The Reflecting Skin*, shot in 1989; he moved from Chicago to Los Angeles in 1992, writing screenplays, radio, song, and music videos. In 2002, he published his first collection of adult fiction, comprising six plays and three short stories.

Philip Ridley's *Vincent River* is a play that is both thought-provoking and emotionally engaging, exploring the themes of societal prejudice, identity, and grief. The story centers on Anita, a mother who is currently coping with the inhumane murder of her adolescent son, Vincent, because of homophobia. Davey, a young man who witnesses Vincent's death, confronts Anita as she navigates her grief. Together, they endeavor to penetrate the intricacies of Vincent's life and the circumstances that led to his lamentable demise. The play delves into the fundamental emotional torment of loss, depicting characters burdened by personal adversities and societal norms. The play's symbolic profundity and potent dialogue underscore the influence of prejudice and violence on both individuals and communities. The adventures of Anita and Davey intertwine with Ridley's profound reflection on the enduring human spirit, resilience, and acceptance in the face of tragedy.

Aleks Sierz (2018) asserts that Philip Ridley's *Vincent River* marks a significant shift from his previous works, which were characterized by surreal and gothic elements. He observes that *Vincent River* adopts a more naturalistic tone when it addresses pressing social issues, particularly anti-gay violence. Sierz recognizes Ridley's ability to integrate an acute sense of societal critique with emotional profundity by utilizing dark comedy to address serious themes. The play's narrative forces Anita and Davey to confront the repercussions of Vincent's homophobic murder. It examines their existential reflections and emotional torment. Sierz states that *Vincent River* is a compelling example of modern theater that engages with fundamental

human experiences and societal issues, as he emphasizes the play's intense emotional impact and its capacity to inspire deliberate reflection on contemporary societal challenges.

This study aims to analyze how Ridley's *Vincent River* transforms individual grief into a vehicle for social critique through a psychoanalytic lens. By focusing on Anita's personal loss, the work reveals not only private trauma but also society's problematic relationship with sexuality, violence, and silence. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning alongside Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief as its theoretical framework, this study seeks to explore how repressed emotions and cultural denial surface through the characters' psychological journeys.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grief and trauma have been widely explored in psychoanalytic and psychological studies, forming the foundation for understanding the emotional and cognitive responses to loss. Sigmund Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) remains a crucial text in grief studies, distinguishing between normal mourning and pathological melancholia. Freud's theories suggest that unresolved grief leads to psychological distress and that individuals must detach from the lost object to move forward. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying* (1969) further contributes to this discussion by proposing the five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—as a model for understanding bereavement. These foundational theories provide the framework for analyzing Anita's and Davey's struggles in *Vincent River*.

In addition to Freud and Kübler-Ross, contemporary trauma studies offer deeper insights into the long-term impact of grief. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) explores the psychological effects of trauma and highlights how traumatic experiences disrupt one's sense of self and relationships. Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) builds on this by discussing the role of narrative in processing trauma, emphasizing that survivors often struggle to articulate their experiences. These perspectives are relevant to *Vincent River*, where Anita and Davey's conversations serve as a way of confronting and reconstructing their traumatic pasts, aiding in the grief process.

Scholars have also examined the role of societal and cultural factors in grief. Tony Walter's *The Revival of Death* (1994) discusses how modern societies approach death and bereavement, emphasizing the importance of open Conversations about grief. This aligns with the themes of *Vincent River*, where Anita and Davey's dialogue serves as a form of catharsis, allowing them to navigate their shared loss. Moreover, studies in queer theory, such as J. Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), highlight how marginalized grief—such as the loss of a queer loved one—complicates traditional mourning processes, a significant theme in Ridley's play.

Critical studies on Philip Ridley's works, including Aleks Sierz's *In-Yer-Face Theatre* (2001), explore the playwright's recurring themes of violence, trauma, and raw emotional intensity. Sierz argues that Ridley's plays challenge audiences by presenting uncomfortable truths about human suffering, making *Vincent River* a poignant case study in psychoanalytic grief theory. Scholars like Dan Rebellato and Stephen Lacey have also examined *Vincent River* within the context of British theatre's engagement with social issues, particularly homophobia and the lingering effects of violence. These studies highlight the play's engagement with grief but often focus on its socio-political context rather than its psychological dimensions. Unlike previous research, this study uniquely applies psychoanalytic grief theory, integrating Freud's and Kübler-Ross's perspectives with trauma studies to offer a focused psychological reading of *Vincent River*.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a psychoanalytic approach to analyze the themes of grief and trauma in *Vincent River*, drawing on the theories of Sigmund Freud and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. By utilizing Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia and Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief, the study examines how the characters Anita and Davey process loss, trauma, and repressed emotions. A close reading of the play is conducted, focusing on character interactions, dialogue, and emotional responses to identify patterns consistent with psychoanalytic grief theory. Additionally, secondary sources, including scholarly articles on trauma and loss, are used to support the analysis and provide broader theoretical context.

Furthermore, this study integrates perspectives from contemporary trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth to deepen the understanding of grief and psychological distress in *Vincent River*. By applying a multidisciplinary approach that combines psychoanalysis and trauma studies, the research aims to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms at play in the characters' grief journeys. This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive exploration of the impact of loss, guilt, and memory, emphasizing the relevance of Ridley's work in the broader discourse on grief and human resilience.

GRIEF IN VINCENT RIVER

Many literary works feature the motif of grief, which significantly shapes characters and stories across various eras. The distinctive depictions of grieving over time reflect the cultural, theological, and philosophical backgrounds of each age. Classical literature usually depicts grieving through epic narratives and tragedies, which highlights the significant influence that mourning has on the larger community as well as the characters. It is impossible to separate the concepts of divine intervention, honor, and destiny from the concept of grieving (Rodgers & Cowles, 1991). It is Achilles' anguish at the death of his close comrade Patroclus that serves as the primary focus of Homer's *Iliad*. As a result of his grief, Achilles withdraws from the conflict, and his eventual return is characterized by a desire to exact revenge. His sorrow is profound as it encompasses not only the specific loss of a partner he loved dearly but also the broader concepts of bravery and mortality.

Medieval literature frequently links the concept of grief to religious and chivalric values throughout its convention. Grief that the characters experience is not only a personal feeling; rather, it is an element that is part of a more comprehensive universe and moral order (Templeton, 2021). In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, a recurrent motif is the anguish that Lancelot and Guinevere feel because of their predetermined love for one another and the end of Camelot. The portrayal of their sorrow within the context of heavenly judgment and chivalric duty reflects the complex interaction that exists between individual feelings and the expectations of society.

Mourning is a topic that is widely explored in Renaissance and Elizabethan literature. This is accomplished through

sophisticated plots and characters that are multifaceted. As a result of the period's emphasis on humanism and individual experience, a comprehensive investigation into the existential and psychological dimensions of grieving was made possible. It is the grieving of the main character in "Hamlet" over the loss of his father and his mother's hasty remarriage serves as the primary impetus for the plot of the drama. It is through Hamlet's faked madness and existential pondering, which are the result of his grief, that the disruptive and transforming capacities of grieving are demonstrated.

Modernist playwrights give pictures of sorrow that are fragmentary and thoughtful. These depictions reflect the disorientation and complexity that characterize the modern world. The intensely personal and frequently isolating nature of mourning challenges individuals' understanding of their identity and place in society. Popular playwrights such as Friedrich Durrenmatt in *The Visit*, Arthur Miller in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, and Albert Camus in *The Misunderstanding* depicts characters dealing with grief and loss. The plays illustrate that grief is a universal human emotion, and all humans grieve when they have lost someone they love. Death is the cause of the grief in these dramas. However, death is also represented in theatre as the death of an idea or a relationship. Literature of the modern day continues to investigate grief from a wide range of subtle and different perspectives, frequently incorporating elements of existential, cultural, and psychological significance.

Grief is the period of distress that follows a significant loss. Nonetheless, Freud posits that the loss itself may not always be the primary cause of grief, but rather a combination of intricate and frequently unconscious factors.

According to Freud:

The loss of the object, which once seemed so important to the ego, leads to a reaction in which the ego withdraws its libido from the object and directs it back upon itself. This process, which is unconscious, is the essence of mourning and melancholia. The ego must free itself from the attachment to the lost object, a gradual detachment which causes profound distress and depression. (1917, p.244)

Freud's psychoanalytic framework distinguishes normal mourning from pathological melancholia, viewing grief as an unconscious process where the ego gradually detaches

its emotional energy (libido) from the lost object and reinvests it elsewhere. He emphasizes that grief involves complex unconscious factors beyond the loss itself, triggering emotional distress and ego disruption. Freud's "Universal Principle of Grief" highlights the need for the ego to disregard the lost object's identity to restore psychic balance. While foundational, Freud's theory has been critiqued for overlooking social and cultural influences and oversimplifying grief's diverse manifestations. Nonetheless, his insights remain influential in understanding the psychological dynamics of bereavement.

Grief can overwork the nervous system. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, American-Swiss psychiatrist, stresses physical symptoms of grief in her book, *On Death and Dying*:

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. It can affect our entire being, including our body. We may experience physical symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, and a weakened immune system. Our appetite and sleep patterns may be disrupted, and we might feel an overall sense of physical heaviness. (1969, p. 67)

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross emphasizes that grief affects not just our emotions but also our physical health. When experiencing loss, our physical state can deteriorate, leading to symptoms like chronic tiredness, headaches, and a lowered immune response, which can make us more susceptible to illnesses. Additionally, grief can disrupt our eating and sleeping habits, causing changes such as loss of appetite, overeating, insomnia, or excessive sleeping. There is also a sensation of physical heaviness or burden as if the sorrow is physically weighing us down. This comprehensive perspective shows that grief has far-reaching impacts on minds and bodies.

Anita's physical response to grief in *Vincent River* is profoundly illustrated through her reliance on alcohol and medication. These substances become her primary means of coping with the overwhelming physical and emotional toll of her son's death. Davey says that "You drink too much," to which Anita candidly replies, "That's the plan, yes" (Ridley, 2021). This exchange highlights how Anita's consumption of alcohol is not just a casual habit but a deliberate attempt to numb the persistent pain that she cannot escape. The physical act of drinking becomes intertwined with her grief,

as the alcohol serves to dull the sharp edges of her emotional anguish, albeit temporarily.

Her dependence on strong painkillers is another manifestation of the debilitating impact of her grief on her physical health. When Davey questions her about her headache medication, she nonchalantly compares them to sweets, indicating a casual and frequent usage:

Anita opens canister of tablets.

Davey ... What're ya up to?

Anita Got a headache.

Davey They're strong stuff.

Anita You take them like sweets.

Davey I've been taking 'em for years – not too many! Here!
Goes to Anita.

Davey What kind of headache is it?

Anita How many are there?

Davey Tension? Shoulders tight?

Anita Yes. Yes. (Ridley, 2021, p. 94)

This usage of pills as sweets underscores the extent to which Anita relies on these medications to manage not just physical pain, but also the emotional torment that accompanies her loss. Her casual attitude toward such potent drugs suggests a deep-seated need to escape from the constant, overwhelming burden of her grief. These physical symptoms of grief are compounded by Anita's behaviors, which further demonstrate the toll of her loss on her body. For example, when she reveals the tension headaches she suffers from, it becomes clear that her grief manifests in chronic physical discomfort. Davey's observation that these medications are "strong stuff" implies the severity of her physical pain and the extent to which she is willing to go to alleviate it, indicating that her grief has not only affected her emotionally but has also left her in a state of perpetual physical distress.

Anita How will it make me feel?

Davey Wrapped in cotton wool.

Anita takes puff. She coughs.

Davey Howd'ya feel?

Anita Stuck to me chair.

Davey Stuck good or stuck bad?

Anita Stuck very bloody good. (p. 101)

Anita's decision to engage in this form of self-medication suggests a desire for solace and a brief respite from the brutal realities of her life. Her remark, "Stuck very bloody good," after consuming the joint, evidences her intense desire for a brief respite from the persistent physical and mental anguish that afflicts her daily life. Anita's grief-related physical symptoms extend beyond substance abuse. Throughout the play, the protagonist's demeanor and physical condition reflect the enduring fatigue and sluggishness accompanying deep sorrow. She exhibits symptoms of fatigue and sluggishness, which are indicative of the physical repercussions of chronic stress and sleep deprivation. Fatigue is a prevalent physical symptom of mourning, characterized by persistent and debilitating fatigue that affects all aspects of one's life due to the emotional burden of the loss. Anita's physiological responses to melancholy in *Vincent River* illustrate the profound impact of loss on physical and mental well-being. Her dependence on alcohol, drugs, and other substances evidences the profound bodily distress that accompanies her psychological agony. These acts and symptoms accurately depict a woman grappling with the intense and overpowering experience of grief, highlighting the profound interconnection between the physical and emotional aspects of grief.

Ridley emphasizes the detrimental consequences of Anita's endeavors to alleviate her grief by self-administering medication. A frantic effort to evade the overwhelming weight of her sorrow is evident in her actions. Ridley's goal is to underscore the hazards associated with suppressing or evading emotional distress. He posits that the avoidance of such circumstances only serves to exacerbate misery, resulting in further physical and emotional decline. This portrayal is a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of confronting and acknowledging melancholy rather than suppressing it through substance misuse and denial.

Grief can significantly impact all aspects of an individual's existence, including their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Lamenting individuals frequently employ the metaphor of emotions "coming in waves" to depict the unpredictable and overwhelming nature of their feelings. An

unforeseen outpouring of weeping can abruptly disrupt the seemingly usual course of life. This phenomenon underscores the unstable nature of grief, in which emotions can fluctuate abruptly and without warning (Freud, 1917).

Grief is characterized by various exhibitions of emotions, such as sporadic moments of joy, profound sorrow, and anger. The variability in emotions underscores the intricate and detailed nature of the bereavement process, potentially leading to individuals experiencing conflicting emotions simultaneously. The diverse array of emotions exhibited demonstrates the multidimensional nature of human responses to grief. Additionally, grief may induce a sense of detachment from one's feelings, leading to a state of inertia. Individuals often use detachment as a coping mechanism to carry on with their daily routines, focusing their emotional energy on the bereavement process. Even when engaging in routine activities, individuals who are experiencing grief report a sense of detachment, defined emotional disconnection and preoccupation with their loss (Kübler-Ross, 1969).

Anita is a prime example of the emotional turmoil in *Vincent River*. She captures the unpredictable nature of mourning by fluctuating between moments of numbness and raw anguish. Her emotional state is in perpetual turbulence, which is indicative of the chaotic nature of dealing with loss. Anita's distinct recollection of Vincent's violent death serves as evidence of her profound mourning:

Anita What did he think when they started to kick him and punch him and stab him –

Davey Stop it!

Anita They pushed broken glass into his eyes!

Davey Stop it! Please! ... Please!

Blood everywhere. Broken wood all over the place. Cubicles been torn apart – A dark shape! It's laying on the ground! Leaning against the wooden frame of the cubicle. It's Vince. His left leg is broken. Twisted under his right. Skin is punctured with bone below the knee. Both legs are covered with cuts. Like they've been clawed. What could've made marks like that? ... It's the nails! Nails sticking out of the wood they've hit him with. His groin is full of blood. His stomach is covered with dark patches. Bruises. Deep cuts all over his chest. A gaping wound across his neck. And his

face – oh, my God! His face! His teeth are smashed. His nose smashed. Just blood. I look at him for a long time. He's not moving. Not breathing. Nothing. (Ridley, 2021, pp. 80-130)

The vivid memory serves as a stark reminder of the dreadful reality she confronts on a daily basis, as her mind is plagued with terrible visions of her son's agony. Anita's emotional roller coaster is further illustrated by her interactions with Davey. She often swings between moments of intense anger and deep sorrow. Her anger is a manifestation of her helplessness and the injustice of Vincent's death. At the same time, her sorrow reflects the void left in her life, the constant reminder of her irreplaceable loss. Anita's raw emotional outbursts are her way of grappling with the enormity of her grief, as she lashes out in a desperate attempt to make sense of her pain.

In line with Caruth's argument that trauma returns not as a fully grasped event but as a recurring wound, Anita's raw emotional outbursts reveal how the past continues to intrude upon the present, demanding recognition even when she cannot fully articulate it. Thus, her eruptions of rage and grief become her way of grappling with the enormity of her pain, as she lashes out in a desperate attempt to make sense of a trauma that repeatedly resurfaces.

Davey also experiences difficulties with intricate emotions. A multifaceted and occasionally contradictory experience of sorrow results in the interweaving of his feelings of shame and regret. Davey urgently pleads, "Stop!" when Anita asks about Vincent's final moments. The phrases "Please!... Please!" reveal the protagonist's inner turmoil and the profound magnitude of his sorrow. Davey experiences profound humiliation due to his apparent inability to safeguard Vincent. An unyielding internal conflict stems from the intertwining of his remorse and anguish. Davey's emotions of shame and responsibility serve to exacerbate his anguish. The conviction that he could have taken action to avert Vincent's death torments him, intensifying his feelings of remorse during his period of mourning. He frequently experiences a range of emotions, oscillating between attempting to provide

Anita with solace and managing his profound feelings of grief. Davey's interactions with Anita illustrate his sorrow, highlighting her dual role as a source of solace and a constant reminder of their shared loss.

The play also delves into the theme of disenfranchised grief, where both Anita and Davey experience a form of mourning that society does not fully recognize or validate. Disenfranchised grief refers to the grieving process that lacks public acknowledgement or social support. Society does not publicly recognize or validate disenfranchised sadness, a form of mourning. This is a common occurrence when the loss is linked to stigmatized circumstances, such as the death of an LGBTQ+ person because of hate crimes (Kübler-Ross, 1969).

Ridley underscores the marginalized suffering of Anita and Davey, highlighting the extent to which society's indifference and prejudice exacerbate their anguish. He employs the explicit visual details of Vincent's murder to illuminate the social exclusion that victims of hate crimes experience, encouraging the audience to confront the brutal realities that marginalized communities encounter. This representation functions as a critique of how society frequently disregards or diminishes the mourning experienced by individuals who lose loved ones to intentional acts of violence, thereby exacerbating their feelings of marginalization and loneliness.

The narratives of Anita and Davey exemplify the isolation that often accompanies the mourning of underprivileged individuals. Anita's strong desire to articulate the detailed and horrific aspects of Vincent's death and Davey's inability to adequately manage the situation underscore the difficulties they face in attempting to comprehend and obtain assistance. Ridley demonstrates how societal disregard compels individuals to confront their loss in isolation, thereby exacerbating their suffering. This isolation serves as a powerful reminder of the supplementary burden that individuals who are grieving under these circumstances must bear.

Ridley is a proponent of a more inclusive and empathetic approach to grief, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and providing support to individuals who are irrespective of the sort of loss they have experienced. He meticulously examines the lack of concern and prejudice that permeates society, emphasizing the isolation and heightened suffering that individuals who agonize under these circumstances endure. Ridley's work advocates for the acknowledgement, validation, and encouragement of mourning

expressions, encouraging society to confront and surmount the fundamental causes that perpetuate inequality and violence.

Anita's and Davey's emotional journeys in *Vincent River* highlight the non-linear and deeply personal nature of grief. Their experiences show that grieving is not a process that follows a set path but is rather a series of unpredictable emotional upheavals. Their interactions reveal how grief can both connect and alienate, providing moments of shared sorrow while also isolating them in their pain. Ridley's portrayal of their grief serves as a powerful reminder of the complexity and depth of human emotion in the face of loss.

Acceptance of Loss

Over time, most people finally come to understand the truth of experiencing loss, even though they may still feel emotional agony. Acceptance does not entail ignoring or erasing the past, but rather finding a way to live alongside the absence. It involves acknowledging the permanence of death and finding a way to progress, even amidst suffering. As Freud states:

The work of mourning consists in the individual slowly detaching themselves from the object they have lost, withdrawing the libidinal energy that was invested in that object, and reinvesting it in a new object. This process is both painful and necessary for the eventual acceptance of loss. (1917, p. 245)

Freud provides a theoretical framework for understanding the psychological mechanisms involved in mourning and how people deal with loss. When an individual experiences the grief of a significant item, such as a person, a relationship, or even an ethereal concept like an ideal or fantasy, they form a profound emotional attachment to the lost object. The individual has committed a significant amount of emotional energy, known as libidinal energy, to this issue. Mourning is a gradual and often agonizing process that involves detaching from the lost object, confronting the harsh reality of the loss, and redirecting the emotional energy once invested in the entity. The process of withdrawal takes time, necessitating the active confrontation and experience of the loss's distress, which can take the form of various emotional responses like hopelessness, anger, or sorrow. This gradual withdrawal enables the individual to recognize and reconcile with the loss. Upon effectively redirecting their energy away

from the lost object, individuals enter a phase that is defined by their capacity to acknowledge and embrace the loss.

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory supports and complicates Freud's model by suggesting that loss is not always fully accessible to consciousness at the moment it occurs.

According to Caruth, traumatic experience is defined by "the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later" (1996, p. 4). In this sense, while Freud emphasizes a progressive detachment from the lost object through conscious work, Caruth highlights how certain losses resist immediate comprehension and instead return belatedly, interrupting the linear process Freud describes.

Accepting a situation is essential for progress, as it enables individuals to redirect their libidinal energy toward new pursuits, such as pursuing objectives, forming new relationships, or participating in activities that offer unique emotional fulfillment and attachment. Mourning is inherently agonizing because it entails confronting and reconciling the emotional repercussions of a loss. Nevertheless, this sorrow is essential, enabling the individual to progress and recover. An individual can endure psychological healing by redirecting libidinal energy from the lost thing and directing it to other domains. This prevents the stagnation of emotional energy and fosters personal growth and resilience. Freud distinguishes between mourning and melancholia, emphasizing that mourning is a healthy process of detachment and reinvestment. Melancholia is defined by an inability to detach from the object of loss, resulting in protracted suffering and a negative self-perception. Freud's theory provides valuable insight into the process of human loss and emphasizes the necessity of confronting and actively dealing with grief to achieve emotional healing. It explains the different phases of sadness and emphasizes the importance of accepting and moving forward.

Anita's journey to acceptance in *Vincent River* is characterized by tumultuous encounters encompassing significant emotional and physical trials. She transitions from a state of denial and despair to a realm of meticulous recognition as she begins to engage in a mental and emotional examination of her grief and the truth surrounding her son's existence and death.

Her preparedness to confront the specificities of Vincent's final moments, as well as her eventual realization of his identity and the circumstances surrounding his death, are indicative of her understanding of his transformation. Initially, intense distress and fury consume Anita, preventing her from reconciling the brutal murder of her son. Her terrible sorrow is completely engrossing and overwhelming, ensnaring her in a repeating cycle of despair and reluctance to acknowledge the truth. She protects Vincent's memory by preserving physical mementoes, such as his unwashed shirt, as a way to keep his memory alive: "You should've washed it" (Ridley, 2021, p. 112). This action serves as an illustration of her endeavor to relinquish control and progress.

Davey's participation in this expedition is of the utmost significance. He assists Anita in navigating the challenging emotions and memories by engaging with her. Their mutual distress establishes an environment in which they can candidly articulate their mourning and initiate the healing process. Davey's struggle with his own emotions of guilt and sorrow catalyzes Anita's transition to a state of acceptance. Her encounter with him compels her to confront the intricacies of his character and the harsh realities of Vincent's demise. They form a connection by sharing their stories and suffering, which enables them to provide each other with support in coping with their grief. One of the most significant moments in the narrative is when Anita and Davey smoke a hashish cigarette together. Anita is interested in comprehending the emotional repercussions, asking, "How will it make me feel?" Dave asserts that the experience will resemble "Wrapped in cotton wool" (p. 101).

This moment is a small step forward in the pursuit of comfort and tranquility, despite the persistent anguish resulting from their loss. Even in profound sorrow, it underscores the necessity of locating moments of tranquility and comfort. Anita's quest for acceptance revolves around finding a way to live with her loss without succumbing to its profound impact. She progressively recognizes the truth of Vincent's death and begins to relinquish the bitterness and denial that have impeded her development. This process stands out for its demanding nature and non-linearity, encompassing periods of intense distress and mourning. Nevertheless, Anita initiates the recovery process by engaging with Davey and confronting her emotions. Anita's pursuit

concludes with a moment of intense and therapeutic emotional expression. She acknowledges Vincent's demise and the commencement of her recovery process by letting out "a long, painful cry" (p. 130). Her sob is a poignant acknowledgement of her acceptance of Vincent's death and the pain and sorrow she has experienced while also indicating her readiness to move forward

and the beginning of her healing process. As Caruth (1996) suggests, healing can only begin when the survivor finally confronts the long-deferred truth of the traumatic event, and Anita's sob signals the moment she begins to face what she has spent years avoiding.

Vincent River's profound investigation of mourning skillfully illustrates the intense emotional and physical manifestations that accompany the loss of a loved one. The play explores the intricacies of grief and the difficult process of embracing and coping with loss by drawing on the experiences of Anita and Davey. Ridley's melancholic narrative serves as a poignant reminder that, despite the most challenging circumstances, there is the potential for recovery and the discovery of a path to progress.

CONCLUSION

Vincent River, a play by Philip Ridley, transcends the constraints of traditional theatre by offering a profound exploration of social injustice, individuality, and mourning. Ridley portrays the characters Anita and Davey in an unwaveringly candid manner, as he delves into the complex emotions and intricate nature of grief. Ridley portrays mourning as a communal process characterized by moments of distress and cautious acceptance. Ridley skillfully merges

societal criticism with emotive nuance to accentuate the intricate narrative of the play, underscoring the pervasive impact of bias and hate on both individuals and society. The portrayal of Anita and Davey's developing love in *Vincent River* is especially distressing because it represents broader societal challenges. Their collective anguish is an opportunity to explore concepts of resilience and interpersonal bonds, compelling viewers to confront unsettling realities regarding prejudice and its enduring consequences. Ridley skillfully utilizes emotional narrative to eloquently depict the essential elements of human fragility and resilience, fostering audiences' empathy for characters whose lives undergo irreversible transformation due to disaster.

The play's thematic significance extends beyond its immediate plot, offering a sharp critique of the ongoing struggles against racism and homophobia. Ridley deftly amalgamates personal experiences with societal observations to generate a captivating narrative that encourages self-reflection and discussion.

Vincent River is a catalyst for societal introspection and transformation, compelling individuals to confront injustice and adopt compassion in the face of hardships and serving as an artistic masterpiece. In essence, the play demonstrates the extraordinary capacity of theatre to illuminate the human experience and encourage meaningful dialogue. Ridley's masterpiece explores the themes of perseverance and sorrow, encouraging us to acknowledge the complex nature of grief to find hope in the presence of despair. As viewers immerse themselves in Anita and Davey's narrative, it underscores the enduring significance of empathy, comprehension, and unity in our collective endeavor for justice and restoration.

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