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Derleme Makale/Review Article

WAITING FOR LEFTY: A SPEARHEADING PLAY OF AGITPROP

LEFTY'İ BEKLERKEN: AGİTPROP'UN ÖNCÜ BİR OYUNU

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I will reveal America to itself by revealing myself to myself [1]
Clifford Odets

ABSTRACT: Waiting for Lefty, which was written by Clifford Odets during the Great Depression of the thirties, has become not only an emblematic play of Agitprop Theatre but also it proves to be an emotional and political catharsis on the part of the audience. Clifford Odets' one-act play narrates the story of cabdrivers' heart-rending economic situation and the series of actions, some of which are narrated in the form of flashbacks, which lead them to go on strike. Rejecting the conception, application and aesthetics of bourgeois theatre and backing its arguments for the instigation of primarily economic and social change by the aid of Agitprop features, Waiting for Lefty calls for mobilizing people by collective endeavor through the depiction of the dismal life conditions of the down-trodden people and corrupt union affairs. By presenting historical and cultural circumstances and perspective of weltanschauung which shape the play and drawing a theoretical synopsis for Waiting for Lefty, the study aims to display the agitprop features in one of the landmark play of American theatre.

Key Words: Clifford Odets, Waiting for Lefty, Aesthetics of Bourgeois Theatre, Emotional and Political Catharsis

ÖZ: Clifford Odets tarafından 1930'lu yılların Büyük Buhran döneminde yazılan Lefty'i Beklerken yalnızca Agitprop Tiyatrosu'nun sembol oyunlarından biri olmakla kalmaz ayrıca seyirci açısından duygusal ve politik katarsis etki sağlamayı da başarır. Clifford Odets'in tek perdelik oyunu, eserdeki taksi şoförlerinin ekonomik yönden içler acısı durumunu ve bazıları geriyedönüşlerle anlatılan ve onları greve gitmeye götüren bir dizi olayı anlatır. Burjuva tiyatrosu fikrini, uygulamasını ve estetiğini yadsıyan ve Agitprop özellikleriyle argümanlarını öncelikle ekonomik ve sosyal değişimi başlatmak için destekleyen Lefty'i Beklerken, ezilen insanların kötü yaşam koşullarını tasvir ederek ve yozlaşmış sendika ilişkilerini açığa vurarak insanları harekete geçirmek için çağrıda bulunur. Çalışma, tarihsel ve kültürel koşulları ve eseri

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[1] quoted in Herr, J., Christopher (2003): Clifford Odets and American Political *Theatre*, p. 135, Greenwood Publishing Incorporated, Westport/Connecticut

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oluşturan dünya görüşünü serimleyip Lefty'i Beklerken oyunu için teorik bir özet oluşturarak Amerikan Tiyatrosu'nun önemli eserlerinden birinde Agitprop özelliklerini göstermeyi amaçlar.
Anahtar Sözcükler: Clifford Odets, Lefty'i Beklerken, Burjuva Tiyatrosu Estetiği, Duygusal ve Politik Katarsis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) whose overriding political message is clear, is about the strike of New York cabdrivers. During and after its publication and staging, the play was interpreted to have been oriented towards to promotion of communist ideals in the United States of America. The production and the staging of the play coincide with the time when poverty and unemployment were still being felt in U.S. due to the debilitating effects of *Great Depression*. That is why; the play singlehandedly brought fame to Clifford Odets and caused a great sensation. Although the play's aesthetic/stylistic concerns, which are politically oriented inoculating revolutionary ideas, were left behind, the play turned out to be supreme example of *agitprop* theatre.

Waiting for Lefty is a one-act play with five episodes and a prologue at the beginning. In the first stage, cabdrivers, who are union members, are seen to be discussing to vote for strike as the money they are earning for their livelihood is desperately low. While cabdrivers are discussing to go on strike, Fatt, who is the union leader and also an accomplice with capitalist employers, tries to dishearten cabdrivers from taking the decision of strike. Meanwhile, cabdrivers keep on waiting for -pseudo savior- Lefty Costello; play's titular image who turns out that he will never show up. During the waiting process, union members hold the floor and address to workers in telling their respective stories about how they have participated to the union concluding their speeches in an effort to convince them to go on strike. Clifford Odets portrayed each speaker's story in different episodes and combined them into the structure of the play. While each character narrates his story, tension begins to rise under which Fatt ineffectively tries to bring control. The play reaches its height as well as its end with the cries of strike both by the workers and union members after they have been informed that Lefty was shot to death.

As for the methodological aspects of the study, research methods consist of comparison, contrast and interpretation of the primary and secondary sources. Analyses will be supported with a considerable number of primary sources and critical secondary sources on agitprop theatre, historical, cultural and political background of the time in which the play was written and the root of the playwright's *weltanschauung* to deal specifically with the subject matter and establish a comparative basis.

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2. *Waiting For Lefty* In Terms Of Political Theatre

a. A Concise Glance at the Agitprop Theater and Its Characteristics

In order to better understand *Waiting for Lefty,* it will be of great benefit to take a closer look at what agitprop theater is and become familiar with its characteristics. First of all, agitprop is the abbreviation of Russian word "*agitatsiya propaganda"* (Britannica academic) which denotes a certain form of political theater to indoctrinate people and move them into action. It is argued that "The term agitprop developed after the establishment of *the Department of Agitation and Propaganda* in 1920 by the Soviet Communist Party" (Brown, 2013:5). After it had a relatively considerable impact in the Soviet Union in the second decade of the 20th century, it first spread to Europe then to the United States of America bringing along "formal innovations of European modernist political theater [which] certainly also influenced the American professional political theater" (Saal, 2002:237). By rejecting the conception, applications and aesthetics of bourgeoisie drama, agitprop theatre, which is promoted by Marxist tenets, has employed politically left-wing arguments as a springboard to appeal mostly to working class members. Since their audience is the members of lower classes, practitioners have avoided aesthetic experimentation and preferred to address emotions, make use of only one aspect of an argument and they allowed excessive speech, demonstrations and actions in their plays, which are often in the form of minimal sketches. Moreover, it is stated that agitprop directors and players "eschewed makeup, elaborate costumes, sets, stages, rigorous training programs, and sometimes even scripts" (Brown, 2013:7). All of these efforts integrated with improvisational acting primarily aim at reaching at the uneducated or poorly educated masses.

Among the techniques Agitprop Theater has employed in its performances mass recitation plays a vital role. Bernie Warren argues that:

> The mass recitation is a metaphor for collective endeavor, moving back and forth between individual and the group. The mass recitation is primarily a morale booster or a crowd warm-up calling for further action. The performers wear simple, neutral costumes. No special setting or props are required (Warren, 2002:152).

In these mass recitations, players mingle with the audience and directly address to them to make them an integral part of the play. As the audience of the agitprop theatre

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is ordinary man who has no certain aptitude for drama and adequate educational background, plays must made up of short sketches, which should not exhaust those who are addressed. In these brief sketches, stereotypical or caricature-like characters are used "to establish a recognizable and easily comprehensible world for the audience" (Warren, 2002:137). Moreover, to engage audience further and correlate the facts of the world and the dismal condition of the lower classes, agitprop theater benefits from historical documents, government declarations and news reports which help to portray circumstances vividly to contribute to the documentary quality of agitation propaganda plays. The other somewhat loosely inseparable feature of the agitprop theatre is its preference of episodic structure over that of the narrative. Thus, scenes are loosely connected to each other or they do not have a tendency to relate a story in follow-up manner. To illuminate the subject, Warren points out the episodic nature of agitprop theatre in touching upon its quality of bare setting as well:

> Few of the plays relied upon the traditional elements of protagonists and antagonist. Each had an episodic structure consisting of many short scenes. Each relied on simple setting and technical requirements, allowing for a fast pace and a fluidity of movement from scene to scene (Warren, 2002:154).

Since agitprop was designed as the theatre of laboring class, it necessitates convenience and facility for staging. Availability of "simple setting" and bare stage arrangement provides "simple scenic requirements […] that could be performed in a hall or large room without a special stage or curtains" (Pal, 2010:4). Agitprop plays' convenience and facility to be staged and performed easily contribute to realize their aim for effective propaganda to mobilize people.

In conclusion, Agitprop Theatre, which emerged in Soviet Union and spread to Europe and "mushroomed in Britain" (Pal, 2010:3), aimed at deliberately affecting and changing people thoughts by means of persuasive dramatic strategies such as mass recitation, stereotypical characters, episodic structure, historical documents, banners and movements. To involve the audience with the arguments discussed in plays, it appeals to emotions and benefits from "half-truths" to mold the public opinion. Agitprop theatre, first and foremost, is an interventionist theatre which takes advantage of "hard times" characterized by hunger, unemployment and widespread social, economic and political inequalities to indoctrinate people for a certain political agenda or *weltanschauung* which is already ever-present in its background. Although,

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agitprops are accepted to be "poor" in artistic quality, they are politically strong plays, which call solidarity among laboring class people or even between the members of middle class and working class as it is seen in *Waiting for Lefty* some of the characters of which are indeed declassed people such as Dr. Benjamin and Lab assistant Miller. Although *Waiting for Lefty* has been criticized by some quarters of not being a totally revolutionary play befitting every aspects of agitprop theater and remaining at the level of sloganized version of call for revolution and it only relates economic deterioration - or more properly complete collapse of American bourgeoisie - (Lawson, 1935:123-128), *Waiting for Lefty* stands out to be a politically robust and emblematic statement of the agitprop theater.

b. *Waiting for Lefty* as a Play of Marxist Insights

As it is pointed out, Clifford Odets was one of the members of the American Communist Party in 1934 and Marxist thought is unanimously stated to be an integral part of *Waiting for Lefty*. Moreover, Odets alludes to Marxism when he has frustrated Dr. Benjamin who say poignantly: "You don't believe theories until they happen to you" Accordingly, it is a pre-requisite to understand what Marxism is before presenting a theoretical background for Agitprop Theater and analysis of the play in terms of its features.

Marxism is based on the criticism of capitalism and its numerous institutions and it has created a massive legacy for such disciplines as philosophy, economics, sociology and cultural and literary criticism for the investigation of diverging aspects of a society (Habib, 2005:527). In Marxist discourse, it is traditionally argued that at the core of the evils taking place within a society, there always lies class struggle which fosters inequalities and injustices triggering economic exploitation, political manipulation and social degradation. The misery with which the characters of *Waiting for Lefty* are afflicted mostly arises from this fact and it surfaces when characters relate their respective stories in the manner of flashbacks in which they are both economically debilitated to the extent of not being able to get married and socially degraded referring their existence as dog lives as it is observed in the conversation between Sid and Florence.

The driving force for Marxism is the idea of historical materialism which has been used to explain how history has evolved: historical materialism posits that material and social conditions determine the consciousness of individuals (existence and the way how s/he generally behaves), the idea which is totally dissimilar to that of

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Hegel. Throughout the history, people have needed to collaborate to meet their requirements which resulted in the process of production involving two separate (but interrelated at the same time) domains: the forces of production and the relations of production. In the former ages, production was based on land and agriculture whose representatives were landed aristocracy and laboring peasants. After the Industrial Revolution, agricultural feudalism was replaced by capitalism and landed gentry and laboring farmers were respectively changed into the class of bourgeoisie and proletariat. Marx expresses that what gave way to these revolutionary changes is the historical materialism that includes the inevitable strife between social classes. Marx argues that his conception of dialectical history inevitably necessitates permanent changes - as seen in the history - until there would be no class rule (an no tyranny and injustice of any sort; be it economic, political or social) when the historical progress reaches its ultimate level in socialism:

> Marx alludes to the history of class conflict from the ancient world to his own times: between slaves and freemen, patricians and plebeians, lords and serfs. The major class conflict in modern times is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or industrial working class. And, just as the capitalist mode of production superseded the feudal mode, so the capitalist mode will give way to socialism (Habib, 2005:530).

Marx believed that history has not yet reached this level that will bring about such an equal and genuine society. In our present condition, Marx and Engels put forward that capital is more significant than man whose value is of secondary importance: "Capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality" (Marx and Engels, 1952:51). Under such circumstances, laboring classes became alienated, the term which Marx came up with to define physical and psychological condition of working class members when they cannot understand the complex machinery behind production process and the products they produced turn out to be an opposing force to their existence as they do not own the means of production; they are only contenting to sell cheaply their labour power merely for the sake of survival.

By leaving aside the theoretical complexities and abstract terms and categories of Marxism, Clifford Odets, who was inspired much about by the theory's concrete reflections to life, devoted his play to working class laborers and to those who were in

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the same league with these down-trotted people whose rights were crushed by either perpetrator industrialists, bosses/employers or accomplice "yellow union" leaders and collaborators. In *Waiting for Lefty*, Odets, who tried to relate his premise that in capitalist societies everyone constitutes an expandable force irrespective of his/her standing (whether s/he is a blue-collar worker [in the case of cabdrivers] or salaried professionals [in the case of Dr. Benjamin], endeavored to instigate social and political change by using his art as a weapon.

c. Historical and Cultural Background of a Morale Booster Play

Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* is not a "timeless story" rather it is the product of a specific time and culture that needs to be scrutinized in order to evaluate its value better. *Waiting for Lefty*, which Odets wrote in a tumultuous period particularly for Americans, came out as an artistic extension of a growing suspicion over the country's economic and political practices resulted from poverty, mass unemployment mainly caused by Great Depression, the effects of which were still felt during the 1930s.

Although *Waiting for Lefty* was "inspired by the New York taxi strike of 1934" (Cashman, 1998:377), it is hard to constrict it into this single event as a sole motivation for Odets to write his landmark play. America in the 1930s was characterized with poverty, unemployment and frustration due to the crises caused by Great Depression. No matter how much government authorities strived in the early years of the 1930s, they failed to solve the problem; banks and businesses collapsed, millions of people fell out of work. In *American Culture and Great Depression*, Levine's depiction of the misery summarizes macabre circumstances from which people suffered during the decade "People were hungry and crops rotten in the field. Children went without clothes […] Americans bewildered by the rapidity of events and what appeared to be the completeness of the destruction of their plans, their expectations and their certainties" (Levine, 1985:199). It is apparent that the splendor of *the Roaring Twenties* characterized by economic prosperity and cultural advancement, came to the end due to the extravagances of the consumerist society and the burden was shouldered not only by lower classes this time but by the whole nation. People felt a profound sense of suspicion towards to correctness of socioeconomic and cultural path that the United States had followed up to that time and intellectuals, artists ranging from poets to playwrights began to be interested in political ideas and theories which had been assumed radical or diametrically opposed to the core values of America. While some aligned themselves with far-right fascist movements, some others emulated

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communist/socialist ideals among whom there was also Clifford Odets who "joined the American Communist Party in 1934" (Oaks, 2004:261). Although these intellectuals, writers were not hostile to their own countries - the fact which was distorted later by some quarters leading their victimization in the 1950s known as McCarthy's witch-hunt trials - they realized the theories of Marx were justified by the grim circumstances they were living in. Playwrights like Odets were interested in addressing audience with plays oriented towards promoting leftish leanings through explicit political messages. Men of literature began to gather around groups which left behind the practice of benefitting from art as a form of entertainment and embraced such ideals as instructing people ideologically in terms of class consciousness and moving them to action. With these thoughts in mind; *The Group Theatre*, which was indeed developed out of *The Theatre Guild*, was founded "with the intent of offering works containing elements of social protest. The economic upheavals occurring then seemed to inspire established playwrights and newcomers alike to write plays that expressed more concern with contemporary events in America than previously" (Young, 2007:513). In addition to playwrights, the same is valid for poets and novelist who reflect in their works the cultural fervor of being dissatisfied with the era. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, which depicted the plight of Oklahoma farmers who were forced to leave their lands, is of this kind which refers to the economic hardships that rural Americans experienced in the early 1930s.

The Great Depression, whose causes are numerous, is argued to have arisen primarily from "efficacy of the unregulated free market" (McElvaine, 2003:151) and American farmers going into excessive debt so that they could own extra land and machinery to meet the increasing demands of Europeans for farm products and grain (as they were desperately in need of these products after the First World War). When the European countries recovered economically, their demand for farm products dramatically decreased leaving American farmers in great debt. American banks had to face that their loans could not be refunded by farmers whose products could no longer find demand in oversea markets. Among the other significant causes that led to the Great Depression in America were:

> Overproduction of consumer goods by manufacturing industries, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few (often referred to as [mis] maldistribution or unequal distribution of wealth, the structure of American business and industry itself, which included

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> several large holding companies, investors' speculation (buying stocks with the assumption that they can always be sold at a profit), the lack of action by the Federal Reserve System and an unsound banking system (Hanes, 2002:4).

In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected as the president of the United States and he legislated a series of law known as *New Deal* by which he tried to combat with the political and economic catastrophes of the Great Depression. From 1933 to 1938, First and Second New Deal enacted a series of recovery acts including banking relief, agricultural relief, labor and unemployment relief all of which played a significant role almost in each citizen's life. As for their effects, it is argued that "many of the programs established under the New Deal became cornerstones for programs lasting into the twenty-first century" (Hanes, 2002:36). For the workers, the New Deal provided a chance for unionism but it later turned out to be unionism was charged with the accusations of corruption, crime and union leaders' collaboration with employers either to restrict the rights of workers or break their strikes that's why unionism which was backed by employers was regarded as malevolent as unfair employers and industrialists. It is the very condition that Clifford Odets portrayed in *Waiting for Lefty* in which workers in the union meeting do not trust in their leaders.

3.a Elaboration on the Plot

The play opens up with an ongoing meeting of union members, which is moderated by Harry Fatt who is trying his best to persuade cabdrivers out of strike decision. Fatt somewhat despotically rebuffs and endeavors to dissuade almost a dozen of people from walking out off their jobs by referring to unsuccessful strike initiatives in different parts of the country. Moreover, his attempts to suppress requests for strike particularly by means of his threatening gunman and by despising labels he puts on workers as *red* –a usual derogatory remark reminiscent of communism- results in the wish for seeing Lefty Costello who is the elected leader of the strike committee. After Fatt reluctantly allows Joe Mitchell to speak on behalf of himself and his friends, he mentions their economic exploitation and how he was awakened to the cause of his comrades by his wife Edna so that they can stand up for their rights as cabdrivers.

Joe relates his discussion with his wife Edna in a flashback manner on the stage, which at the same time allows spectators/workers to comment on the ongoing action. In this first scene, Joe is seen to come to home in an exhausted mood only to find a

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dismal atmosphere there: a displeased wife, children who have just gone to bed without dinner and complaints by his wife because of the unpaid lodging money and confiscated property. Indeed, Edna's incessant and overpowering complaints are directed towards Joe's bosses rather than his low income. She simply tries to encourage his husband -and his coworkers- to go on strike for better wages and condition. At the end of her speech, Joe is convinced to go into action and seen to rush out for union to persuade his friends, too.

In the second episodic scene, Miller narrates his story in the same fashion as Joe did and audience is invited to witness what has brought Miller to the cause of strike committee. It is seen that Fayette, who is an industrialist, is conversing with Miller in his office. Fayette both appreciates Miller out of his studies and informs him about the nature of the work he will carry out under the observation of chemist Dr. Brenner. Miller, who seems to be very delighted for the pay rise at the beginning, becomes dissatisfied when he learns the details of his job: Not only will he work to produce chemically poisonous gas for military purposes but he also will spy on Dr. Brenner. Miller, who lost his brother and cousins in the First World War, refuses to work and be paid in exchange for such an occupation. As a result, he is fired and makes his way for the strike committee.

In the third scene, it is the story of Florence and Sid that is narrated. Before Sid's arrival, Florence and her brother Irv discuss her intention to get marry. Irv does not accept his sister's wishes for marriage as their mother, who is bed-ridden, needs their assistance. After Sid arrives, he brings up the subject and he regrets to say that though he strives much, he cannot afford enough money for their marriage and even if they somehow could marry, unfortunately, they would not be happy due to his deteriorating financial situation. Sid also opens up his brother's present condition: though he is a college graduate, he had to join the army and head for Cuba due to the widespread unemployment. He reasons that magnates aggravates the conditions of down-trodden people and make them work even harder so that they can maintain their affluence. Sid finalizes his speech that they must separate or else they would not be able to survive together.

In the Labor Spy Episode, audience is again brought to union meeting where Fatt still tries to convince workers out of strike idea and this time he introduces Tom Clayton who is allegedly a failed striker in Philadelphia. While Tom Clayton strives to discourage cabdrivers, a symbolic *Clear Voice* from the crowd accuses Clayton of

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being a strike-breaker, a spy to fail the efforts of cabdrivers for the chance of equal pay. Later, the strike-breaker Tom Clayton turns out to be *clear voice'*s brother!

In the Intern Episode, audience is called to observe the conversation between Dr. Barnes and Dr. Benjamin and to pass a value of judgment on the ensuing events. Dr. Benjamin complains that he has been replaced by an incompetent doctor due to certain favoritism as the doctor who has been entrusted with his position is a Senator's nephew. To make matters worse, Dr. Barnes informs Dr. Benjamin that he is to be suspended out of his job due to some regulations concerning his department and necessary budget cuttings. Although Dr. Barnes acknowledges that Dr. Benjamin is a victim of anti-Semitism, he can do nothing. Meanwhile telephone rings and Dr. Barnes has to inform Dr. Benjamin about what he has just been told on phone: young and incompetent doctor, who has replaced Dr. Benjamin's position cannot cure one of his patients and the patient died on the operating table. It is the last straw that broke camel's back for Dr. Benjamin who have decided to devote his energy into proletarian cause. The last part of the play is the section of strike meeting with which *Waiting for Left* proves to be symmetrical in terms of beginning and end: Audience/reader is again posited back at the union meeting. One of the workers named Agate speaks of his experience while working in a factory when he was eleven years old: he lost one of his eyes and the union in the factory did nothing. No matter how hard Fatt and gunman have tried, they cannot silence Agate who is now trying to instigate a strike. He further states that they have only two options; choosing either to die slowly or preferring struggle by which he believes they have a chance for change, equality and freedom. While he maintains his "call for action" speech and supporting his arguments in expressing that they must not wait any external power, intervention or Lefty, who never shows up, to change their dismal conditions, a group of workers interrupt him informing them that Lefty was found death with a bullet in his dead, an occasion that justifies Agate's agitating speech. All the workers triumphantly are shouting aloud "strike" while the curtain falls.

b. The Deployment of Agitprop Elements in *Waiting for Lefty*

Agitprop features strike our attention at the very beginning when the play opens up: we are informed that "curtains goes up and we see a bare stage" (Odets, 1939:197). As outlined above, simple stage and setting that do not need any technical requirements are one of the features made use of by agitprop plays. A few lines below, Gunman and Harry Fatt whose name is a telling one that provides some sort of

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preliminary information about his character, which turns out to be a rigid bully, are introduced. Gunman and Fatt resemble cartoonlike characters that fulfill their roles: While Gunman tries to keep committee members under control and tame or make them submissive, Fatt harangues the whole group and tries to dissuade them from going on strike with flimsy arguments as "I'm against the strike. Because we gotta stand behind the man who's standin' behind us […] the times ain't ripe for a strike" (Odets, 1939:196) and he refers to former strike initiation, which ended up with failure "starvation and broken heads" (Odets, 1939:196). Mass recitation, which is another characteristic of the agitprop plays, draws attention upon Fatt's accusation of Joe as being "red" and Joe feels the need to defend himself as "Don't tell me red! You know what we are? The black and blue boys! […] I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand ! […] We need a strike. There's us comin' home every night--eight, ten hours on the cab. "God," the wife says, "eighty cents ain't money--don't buy beans almost" (Odets, 1939:197-198). It appears that Joe's rightful defence overpowers Fatt's flimsy accusation and his colloquial, plain language - "I ain't a red boy one bit" - (Odets, 1939:197), which runs throughout the play, proves that how much the play is compatible with the characteristics of agitation propaganda aesthetics. In addition to the directness of utterances by Joe, Fatt's unfounded arguments give hints how he is in collaboration with bosses/employers which turns his union from workers union to a crime syndicate.

In the next scene in which Joe and Edna's story is related in the manner of flashback, stage directions inform that "a white spot picks out the playing space within the space of seated men. The seated men are very dimly visible in the outer dark, but more prominent is Fatt smoking his cigar and often blowing the smoke in the lighted circle" (Odets, 1939:198). It is seen that Odet's deliberate stage arrangement, which integrates the space of audience with that of players, aims to engage audience with the play and making them one of its constitutive or organic part. The whole discussion between cabdriver Joe and Edna is an explicit demonstration and symbol of the economically struggling couples striving to survive in dire conditions. Edna's biting and forcible quarrel with his husband addresses to emotional aspects of audience as well as that of rational. Joe's helpless interrogations, which appeal to emotional aspect exemplified in such expressions as "I'd get another job if I could. There's no work--you know it" (Odets, 1939:199) are counterbalanced by Edna's rational statement as "Joe, get wise. Maybe get your buddies together, maybe go on strike for better money.

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Poppa did it during the war and they won out" (Odets, 1939:200). Not only does Edna here address his husband but she also counsels world at large for the unification of those who are paid less than average. Edna's speech might have been straightforward for the audience who peopled the playhouse in the play's premiere when cab strike was still on the agenda in New York. As it is argued news records, statistics and documents are used in agitprop theatre; reports from newspapers are slightly touched upon in *Waiting for Lefty* when Edna maintains her arguments to "wake" her husband in suggesting that while their children are subjected to insufficient nutrition, his boss/es sponge on them and can amass further wealth.

> I know this--your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones. *Sure, I see it in the papers,* [emphasis added] how good orange juice is for kids. But dammit our kids get colds one on top of the other. They look like little ghosts (Odets, 1939:200).

Edna's role in the play is recurrently highlighted through her efforts to enlighten her husband about the intrinsic value of their union. According to Edna, their union is "rotten" (Odets, 1939:200), the fact which indeed is directed towards to audience to abandon their belief that their rights are protected by some others; therefore, the play fulfills the role of agitprop theater in the mobilization of audience into concrete action. Edna's convictions are justified when she predicts the cruelty of "magnates". Her statement "You know they're racketeers. The guys at the top would shoot you for a nickel" (Odets, 1939:201) acts a foreshadowing effect in the prediction of titular character Lefty's grave end! Upon Edna's insistence, Joe is seen to be unconsciously forced to condemn her wife as "red" just as Fatt did in the beginning, which reveals the fact that whoever wants justice and fair share in the thirties was probably accused of being a "red". Nevertheless, Joe's baseless accusation towards his wife is refuted when she says "I don't know what that means. But when a man knocks you down you get up and kiss his fist! You gutless piece of boloney" (Odets, 1939:203). It is obvious Edna tries to force her husband to do something to change their dismal condition and when he resists that he can do nothing on his own, she counsels not only to his husband but also to those who are struggling with the same circumstances " I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get

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those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like men and fight for the crying kids and wives" (Odets, 1939:203). After having been convinced by her wife, he ended up in the union meeting stating that "We gotta walk out !" (Odets, 1939:203). In the context of the agitprop theatre, Joe's realization of his situation and Edna's resolving him into devote his energy to defend their rights constitute an exemplary case and it is the exact thing that the play tried to relate its audience and generate the same reaction by its viewers/readers within the vortex of the Great Depression of the thirties.

Lab assistant episode, in which industrialist and employer Fayette and promising lab assistant Miller discuss, thematically fits agitprop theater in which Miller punches at Fayette's mouth as he rejects spying on his fellow coworker, scientist Dr. Brenner and resists being an accomplice in costing countless lives by the production of chemically poisonous weapons. Agitprop features worth consideration in this scene, too particularly when Miller suggests the lost lives in the First World War by referring to the historical facts: "They say 12 million men were killed in that last one and 20 million more wounded or 20 missing" (Odets, 1939:205). Nevertheless, Miller's ostensible objection is outrightly dismissed by Fayette: "That's not our worry. If big business went sentimental over human life there wouldn't be big business of any sort" (Odets, 1939:205). Fayette's soulless dismissal of Miller's concerns and his mechanical indifference to the fact that he lost his brother and two of his cousins demonstrate *tycoons*' frame of mind in their approach to value of man's life. Moreover Fayette demagogically argues that "They died in a good cause", the expression through which he tries to justify wars on the grounds of profit shrouded with the veil of patriotism. Lab assistant episode invites audience to the critique of material gain and preference and clash between individual responsibility against career and high-paid job.

In *the young hack and his girl* episode, cabdriver Sid and his fiancé Florence's story is narrated by which audience witnesses how a couple has to separate out of financial strains primarily triggered by the economic system that does not give a chance to young man to earn sufficiently in exchange for the effort he exerted in his occupation. Consequently, he decides that "If we can't climb higher that this together – we better stay apart" (Odets, 1939:211). Sid and Florence appear to have realized the causes that keep them apart and they also find out solution that unlocks the chains of their misery:

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> SID. Sure, the big shot money men want us like that.
> FLOR. Highly insulting us ----
> SID. Keeping us in the dark about what is wrong with us in the money sense. They got the power and mean to be damn sure they keep it. They know if they give in just an inch, all the dogs like us will be down on them together--an ocean knocking them to hell and back and each singing cuckoo with stars coming from their nose and ears (Odets, 1939:210).

Sid indeliberately suggests the strength of lower classes can only be assured by unification. Sid later resembles their situation to a card game in which the cards have been already "stacked" by those who are powerful and losing falls on their lot. Unable to realize his dreams due to the insufficient income and a heart with sorrow-stricken, Sid is drawn to workers cause and meets his unfortunate comrades in union committee.

In the labour spy episode, union's fake identity is debunked when so called Clayton turns out to be a strike breaker Clancy who constantly manipulates and dissuades workers into not going on strike on the pretext of "The time ain't ripe. Like a fruit don't fall off the tree until it's ripe" (Odets, 1939:215). The episode reveals how resistance of workers is typically weakened in "collaborative" union leaders and its so called comrade members therefore the episode in its own right particularizes a general condition and makes it obvious for its audience. The episode as a whole reveals the *inside story*; in other words, villainy that happens behind the scenes for the purpose of overriding the rights of already oppressed people. Exposition of "company spy" (Odets, 1939:214) or metaphorically a "rat" in the words of *Voice* informs audience and prompts them to be alert for their causes.

In the intern episode in which attention is drawn to the dialogue between Dr. Benjamin and Dr. Barnes, audience witness the favoritism when Dr. Benjamin is replaced with an incompetent doctor named Leeds who is the nephew of a senator. Later on, the patient for whom Dr. Benjamin was previously responsible dies on the operating table due to Dr. Leeds' inefficiency. The section without doubt addresses audience's affective domain to awake their conscious on the horrifying quilt committed due to clientelism, which costs a life! In this episode, this is the first incident that prepares audience to take side with Dr. Benjamin. The second impact is more effective when it is informed that Dr. Benjamin is obliged to leave his work in the hospital due

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to the financial deficit, which is also deteriorated by Dr. Benjamin's Jewish origin. The fact that Dr. Benjamin becomes the victim of racial discrimination as well as financial difficulties is not align to audience who are tried to be stimulated into active intervention rather than *philosophizing* on the causes and results of tyrannical injustices taking place around them. Dr. Benjamin feels that he is setting his heart and intellect on a cause, which is far different from that of the United States. He explicitly states that one cannot feel the burden of a particular trouble until his roads intersect with it. He succinctly summarizes his case in expressing "Lots of things I wasn't certain of. Many things these radicals say…you don't believe theories until they happen to you" (Odets, 1939:221-222). And it is no doubt what Dr. Benjamin is referring by theory is Marxism, which he is now of the opinion that, it upholds the rights of oppressed classes. Moreover, he seems to have quickly internalized Marx's maxim which puts forward that "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx and Engels, 1952: 95). In accordance with this line of thought, Dr. Benjamin now somewhat in a "militant" manner states that "Yes, to know I'm right? To really begin believing in something? Not to say, "*What a world!" but to say, "Change the world*!" (Odets, 1939:222). Dr. Benjamin newly-gained conscious, which is particularly about his firm belief in the change, is tried to be transferred to the audience with an undecreasing enthusiasm. Not only does Dr. Benjamin, who is now seen to be "with clenched fist high" and heard by "We'II go ahead" (Odets, 1939:222) speech, devote himself to the workers' cause but he also encourages people to be align actively with himself who are virtually in the same deplorable condition. The play prodigiously fulfills its agitprop role first by sensationally indoctrinating people then mobilizing them into action.

The last scene, in which Agate increases the tension, has the enthusiasm reached a climactic frenzy with the workers' demand for strike. The last scene is the microcosm, a miniature of the play in terms of its objective which is gradually catered for in all the previous episodes. In the previous episodes, audience/players are emotionally bolstered and Odets continually deprives of them from the ultimate triggering incident up to this last scene which proves to be a sensational explosion on the part of audience and players. Agate first incites crowd:

> What's the answer, boys? The answer is, if we're reds because we wanna strike, then we take over their salute too! Know how they do it? (Makes Communist salute) What is it? An uppercut! The good old uppercut

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> to the chin! Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our backs. What's the boss class tryin' to do--make a nudist colony outa us (Odets, 1939:223).

Then he tries to awake his friends in a way not letting people miss the vital point in his utterances: "Nothing's funny! This is your life and mine! […] we're dying by inches (Odets, 1939:223). Agate later strengthens his arguments by putting forward that their cause is one of war: "[…] fight with us for right! It's war! Working class, unite and fight! Tear down the slaughter house of our old lives! Let freedom really ring" (Odets, 1939:224). Expected but much belated *igniting* incident occurs when Lefty's murder news arrives as cabdrivers now have been really convinced that they must not wait any external intervention a kind of savior to change their situation. They all rise with strike exclamations, the effect of which is intended to produce among men/women in the streets by the overt and latent features of Agitprop Theater.

4. CONCLUSION

Waiting for Lefty has become an emblematic play of agitprop theatre by means of such features as integration of spectators into action, mass recitations, which are mostly repetitive in character that discuss the similar arguments and addressing directly to audience which assures their identification with the players. Moreover, bare stage arrangement and the use of news reports and factual information (even if they are restricted in number) contribute to the play's agitprop identity. Episodic structure and stereotypical characterization are two distinctive characteristics of agitprop plays. Nevertheless, except Fatt and gunman, Odets' characters are observed to be round characters who have achieved a change in their attitudes towards social and political variables taking place around themselves. Likewise, though Odets has written his play by the integration of episodes into the "story", they are not totally detached or discrete from one another as Agitprop Theater requires; one can sense a narrative flow among "episodes". However, the play has achieved to be a paragon of political plays, which culminates at the end by leaving an emotional and political catharsis on the part of its spectators. In thematic level, the play combines such subjects as family (of Edna and Joe), love (of Sid and Florence) and career (of Miller and Dr. Benjamin, respectively in different episodes) which are not alien to spectators. In *Waiting for Lefty*, which is defined as a "dramatic machine gun" (Watts, 1935: New York Herald Tribune) because of its political agenda and the way it utilizes from agitprop devices, Odets achieved to "reveal America to itself" (Herr, 2003:135) by situating familiar concerns

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within the play and in placing the stalemate of the 1930s characterized with Great Depression, hunger and unemployment at the play's background.

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