Masculinization of Tragedy in Joseph Addison's Cato and George Lillo's The London Merchant

Sinan GÜL

During the 18th century, the development of gender and sexuality in the modern Western world was under tremendous impact of visual and literary culture. Considering this, by examining Addison's Cato: A Tragedy. By Mr. Addison. Without the Love Scenes (1764) (Latin version) and Lillo’s The London Merchant (1731), this article analyzes the masculine features of the characters of 18th-century tragedies in England and investigates the reasons behind the dismissal and belittlement of love scenes and feminine qualities in those tragedies. In comedies, women and their qualities were openly ridiculed, while in tragedies, masculine values and patriarchal rules were overtly protected. Depicting societal norms and ideals, Cato and The London Merchant portray the evolving notions of masculinity.

Despite increasing female influence in political and social culture, love, often associated with feminine qualities, was belittled in domestic and public domains. In doing so, playwrights either entirely ignored the idea of using female characters in their plays, thus creating contextual errors of portraying husbands without wives or sons without mothers, or depicted women as the sources of passion that could potentially destroy society, men in particular. Therefore, the concept of love was neglected, undervalued, or dismissed, with playwrights rather offering patriotic or capitalist virtues to substitute the idea of love so that their plays would be deemed as appropriate for public appreciation. They also did not include any signs of sentiment, which was considered the reason behind a considerable decline in tragedies.

Anahtarl Kelimeler

Cato, The London Merchant, Eighteenth Century Tragedy, Joseph Addison, George Lillo

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Masculinization of Tragedy in Joseph Addison’s Cato and George Lillo’s The London Merchant. Joseph Addison’un Cato ve George Lillo’nun Londralı Tüccar Eserlerinde Tragedyanın Maskülenlemesi. Sinan GÜL. 1Instructor, TED University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Basic Sciences Unit, Ankara, Turkey.