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Mad Daughters, Narcissist Mothers: A Study of Turn-Taking Mechanism in Martin MacDonagh's The Beauty Queen of Leenane

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Martin MacDonagh's play, The Beauty Queen of Leenane depicts a violent domestic crisis in a rural household of post-colonial Ireland. Teeming with wild humor and anxiety, the play tells the gloomy fate of Maureen Folan, a mentally fragile and emotionally trapped spinster in her early forties and Mag, her aging, selfish and demanding mother. The main objective of this paper is to apply a conversation analysis (CA) approach to evaluate the mutually destructive relationship between the mother, who constantly strives to inhibit her daughter's romantic life, and the daughter who accuses her mother of constraining her natural right for self-realization. The first part of this paper outlines the work of the conversational analysts of the ethnomethodological school, namely Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, which crystalizes the mechanics of turn taking in ordinary conversation. The second part employs the insights derived from the conversational analysts to examine the strategies of speech alternation and interaction management in the opening scene to demonstrate how the two women are involved in a fierce battle for control that inevitably leads to the play's appalling end in which one of them devastates the other.

Key Words: Turn taking, the beauty queen of Leenane, family crisis, dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship

Introduction

Have (1999) defines conversation as being people's talk either as a form of sociability or to indicate any activity of interactive talk. Schegloff (1986) stresses that talk is "what appears to be the primordial site of sociality" (p.112). Talk is a vital activity that allows us to go beyond isolation and to share our lives with others. Dramatic dialogue, due to its basic writing layout, raises consideration of language as speech exchange—as interaction among participants in speech events. Herman (1991) maintains that a major aspect of dramatic art is the management of the interactive dimension of speech. It is through the understanding of what characters say and do to one another in specific occasions that we come to realize the situations they are involved in, and the significance of the issues raised.

Turn Taking

Conversation involves two or more parties and each of them must have the opportunity to participate. Therefore, there must be some principles governing the way turns are taken in conversation where participants speak one at a time in alternating turns. In 1974, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, published their article, entitled, "A Simplest Systematic for the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation." In this article, they outline the workings by which speakers manage turn taking in conversation. They identify two components and a set of rules, which enable speakers to accomplish smooth and well-ordered conversation and reduce the gaps and overlaps among them. The first of these components is "the turn constructional component," the second is "the turn allocational component."

The turn constructional component contains the chief content of the utterance and consists of various unit types: turn construction units or TCUs. TCUs differ in size, length and linguistic texture. They range from a single word, a phrase or a clause to complex sentences. The end of a TCU is a point where the turn ends and a new speaker begins, forming "an initial transition relevance place," or TRP (Sacks et al, 1974, p.703). Herman (1998) points out that long turns put a load of listening on the addressees hence may arouse their boredom, resentment or aggression. Long turns also hinder access to the floor (the right to take part in conversation) for other speakers and can function as a tactic to achieve interactional dominance or exclusion of other parties.

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Other participants may meet this by opposing reactions or various degrees of confrontation. Short turns on the other hand, may signify indifference, urgency, the need for more information if questions are transmitted consecutively on the same topic and so on.

Talk can be directed towards a common focus: the topic of conversation. Topics are the central points, which speakers bring up by means of their linguistic participation. Conversation can move smoothly from one topic to another. However, as Herman (1995) contends, participants may raise different topics or different aspects of the same topic. As a result, we may find turn clashes or topic conflict.

The turn allocational component organizes the switch of turns among speakers that is known as transition relevance place (TRP). TRP's occur easily as one-participant talks, stops, then the next talks, stops and so on. According to sacks et al (1974), the basic set of rules governing turn allocation to one party is as follows:

(1) the current speaker can select the next speaker;
(2) the current speaker does not select the next speaker, then the next speaker self-selects;
(3) if the current speaker does not select the next speaker, and another does not self-selects, then the current speaker may continue;
4) if neither the first nor the second rule have functioned and the current speaker has continued, then the set of rules 1-3 applies to all ensuing TRPs until change is effected.

These rules guarantee that there is one speaker at a time and that any forms of disorderliness such as overlaps and gaps are evaded. Gardner (2004) points out that these rules are simple, yet forceful, and they can describe not only orderly turn-taking behavior, but also apparent breakdowns in orderliness. Liddicoat (2007) argues that the possibility of current speaker going on as next speaker allows for the possibility that a turn can include more than one TCU, or an extension of an existing TCU beyond the first possible completion. In other words, the system does not offer a maximum turn size, although it does offer a normal minimum turn size of one TCU.

Discontinuity of interaction may also occur and are likely to be interpreted by participants as indicating that something significant and additional other than changing turns is happening. Sacks et al (1974) identify three types of inter-turn silence: lapses, pauses and gaps. Lapses are prolonged silences at TRP's i.e. when at some transition place, a current speaker has stopped and no speaker starts or continues, the following space of non-speech forms a turn lapse. The silence in this case becomes attributable to the party who chooses to drop out. If there is a turn lapse, the current speaker may add it into his/her own turn, transforming it into a pause and continues with turn the next TRP. Herman (1998) argues that recurring turn lapses on the part of a targeted addressee can indicate lack of interest, tedium, hostility, the desire to be left in peace, opting out and so on, and convey negative tenors into the interaction even in silence. A gap is a silence after a possible completion point at the end of a turn, which has not lapsed. A gap before speaking in response could involve defiance, refusal, or even politeness. At other times, they could enact think before you speak maxim, thus making response more thoughtful (Herman, 1995). Intra-turn silence (within a speaker's turn), not at a TRP, may serve as a pause not expected to be filled by another speaker and may reveal the speaker's attempts to combine thought and language (Herman,1995).

Sacks (1995) particularly refers to a class of sequences of turns called adjacency pairs, which are more closely associated than others are. They consist of two utterances delivered successively by different speakers. They are related, not any second pair part can follow any first pair part, but only an appropriate one. The first pair part often selects next speaker and always selects next action—it thus provides a transitional relevance and expectation, which the next speaker fulfills, thus questions require answers and greetings oblige return greetings. Common examples of adjacency pairs are question-answer, greeting-greeting, requests-acceptance/refusal, complaint-apology/ justification, etc. Sacks argues that if the second part is missing, its absence is noticeable and regularly commented on by speakers. According to Goodwin and Heritage (1990), the adjacency-pair structure describes a process through which participants "constrain one another, and hold one another accountable, to produce coherent and intelligible courses of action" (p. 288). In addition, within this framework of give-and-take behavior, conversationalists will certainly make some analysis of one another's actions in order to produce proper reciprocal action.

Although participants generally follow the rules of turn-taking system, brief overlaps may occur when two participants compete for the floor i.e. both speakers trying to speak at the same time. A self-selecting speaker may overlap with a current speaker at a TRP, and one of them has to leave the floor accepting the other's right to turn. Yule (1996) points out that when two speakers are having difficulty in getting into a shared conversational harmony, "the stop-start-overlap-stop" pattern may recur. In non-competitive situations, however, overlaps are interpreted differently. For instance, for younger speakers, overlapped talks serve as an expression of solidarity or closeness in stating similar opinions or values (Yule, 1996). In addition, in free for all floors, such as in large dinner parties, one conversation may split into more than one and becomes a systematic possibility. In such type of

floors, much talk is characterized by overlap and parallel speech and is not regarded as conflictual or competitive (Edelsky, 1981).

Hutchby and Wooffit (1998) differentiates between unintentional overlap that occurs near a possible TRP and interruption, which is more problematic and refers to simultaneous talk that does not occur at or near a TRP. Whereas unintentional overlap does not violate the current speaker's turn, interruption is an attempt to grab the floor from the current speaker while he/she is still delivering his/her TCU. By cutting off the turn before reaching the TRP, interruption breaks the unstated rules of conversational structure and signals aversion to or conflict with the current speaker, sometimes deemed by participants as insolence or discourtesy. West and Zimmerman (1983) define interruption as "a device for exercising power and control in conversation" and they act as "violations of speakers' turns at talk" (p. 103). Speakers sometimes reject interruptions, if they choose not to give up the floor, by speaking more loudly, more quickly and in a higher pitch, and frequently, the speakers refer to the interruption (Coulthard, 1985). Yule (1996) illuminates that when two people attempt to have conversation and discover there is no flow to their interaction, there is a sense of distance, a lack of familiarity or ease.

Within a dramatic text, therefore, it is possible to conclude many details concerning characters' positions and relationships by analyzing their conversational conduct including turn-taking and topic management particularly at TRP's.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane: A Family Crisis

The Beauty Queen of Leenane is a play of nine scenes written by the Irish-born, London-based playwright, Martin MacDonagh. Set in a dreary village in the mountains of Connemara, County Galway, West Ireland, Beauty Queen is a tragi-comedy telling the gloomy story of Maureen Folan, a neglected and frustrated woman in her early forties, with a previous history of mental breakdown. She lives with her manipulative mother, Mag, a nagging woman in her early seventies. Maureen's sisters have managed to escape the dull conditions of the family home and set up lives of their own, but she alone remains trapped in a dysfunctional bond with her mother. The arrival of an invitation from a former local neighbor, Pato Dooly, a good-looking man in his forties revives Maureen's aspiration of a last chance of romance and offers her the prospects of a new fruitful life. Mag's selfish fear to lose her only care provider drives her to cruelly interfere and ruin Maureen's nascent love affair, consequently sets in motion a series of events which unleash the long-suppressed hatred—Maureen becomes determined to take a terrible revenge against her mother and eventually brings the play to its dreadful conclusion. In a fit of madness, the marginalized woman savagely kills her mother to remove the obstacle that prevents her from travelling with Pato, and destroys her last hope of personal happiness and self-achievement. The play can be summed up as a fierce and bitter conflict of wills between an egocentric mother, Mag, and her neurotic daughter, Maureen, and as it progresses, the audience's sympathy shifts from mother to daughter and vice versa for both equally oppress each other in a vicious circle of mutual abuse

Centered on the hate-hate relationship within family limits, the play demonstrates an occasional tension in some families due to what Brown (2001) calls a parental destructive narcissistic pattern (DNP). In normal family circumstances, parents are expected to take care of their children and facilitate their growth and development toward becoming separate and autonomous individuals. However, this is not so in a narcissistic family system where children are regarded as an extension of their parents. Any attempt to free themselves or develop an amount of autonomy is seen as intentionally hurtful and they often met with absolute rage. In such families, parents do not assume the nurturing role, but instead, let the responsibility for their personal, emotional and psychological well-being fall on their child. This situation results in what Brown (2001) describes as a "parentified" child. The child is in the parent's role instead of the reverse. These misfortunate children grew up with immature, self-absorbed parents who made their own children responsible for their physical and emotional well-being, who expected admiration and constant attention, and who reacted with demeaning criticism and blame when anything went wrong or their slightest need went unattended.

As adults, parentified children may develop one of two response patterns: either the compliant or the siege. The adult with the compliant response spends a great deal of time taking care of others and is constantly alert about acting in a way to please them. He / she is very conforming and tend to be self-depreciating. The siege response, on the other hand, is one of defiance, rebellion, withdrawal and/or insensitivity. The adult with the siege response works hard to prevent being manipulated by others, getting overwhelmed or trapped by others' demands and feelings. Eventually, like Maureen in the play, he/she decides not to act in accordance with the parents' wishes and demands. He/she fights hard to become separate and independent, to overcome being parentified. Moreover, they fight that battle with others in their lives and this negatively affects their relationships outside the family.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane: Critical Overview

O'Toole (1998) in discussing the 1990s Irish playwrights, including Martin MacDonagh, points out that they were interested in looking at the peculiar fragments of a dead society. Beauty Queen is set in a world that has all but collapsed, where meanings have been lost, where people live out their lives suspended between Ireland and England, between the real landscape they inhabit and the electronic images—Australian soap operas and American movies that fill their screens. Left behind by relentless social change, and located on the margins of modernity, the characters have nothing to do but turn inwards or fight an endless civil war against those who know most intimately.

Boles (1999) believes that Martin MacDonagh belongs to a group of English playwrights of the 1990s he terms as the New Brutalists. They share with their predecessors the same forthright critical stance about the state of Great Britain, but their methods and motives differ markedly. Rather than embracing a heavy-handed leftist analysis of the country's problems, they make every effort to provoke visceral responses from their audiences by vividly portraying the painful lives of their characters.

Diehl (2001) contends that in Beauty Queen, MacDonagh creates a generic hybrid, blending elements of classic realist, Irish nationalist and angry young man drama. He achieves this hybrid form through the complex, historically based, post-colonial Irish experience marked by exile, diaspora and internal strife. The dramatist voice is pessimistic offering his readers/spectators neither a means of escape nor a hope for a better future.

Grene (2005) sees that the violently dysfunctional relationship of Mag and Maureen is central to a strategy of demythologizing Ireland. With its explicit aggression and humorous excitement in expressing it, Beauty Queen promotes a comic collusion to destroy the mother, thus representing the recoil against the motherland and all the mythology of the rural west as a primal place of origin. With a mother like Mag, with a home like Leenane, matricide is all but justified.

Castleberry (2007) maintains that MacDonagh, like his predecessors, Synge, O'Casey and Beckett delights in creating laughter in darkness, finding humor in pain and torture of living. Though he is rooted and inspired by the same human landscape, but he has also created a unique writing style. Beauty Queen reveals his skill in telling a memorable story resonating with universal significance and at once emblematic of modern Irish culture and representative of any nation torn between dreams and despair. Ultimately, the play's comic power stems from its direct shock tactics, immediate language and relevant themes.

The first scene of the play, set in the living room/kitchen of a rural cottage in the west of Ireland, establishes the embattled relationship of the two women. Maureen acts as her mother's caregiver and only companion. She seems extremely weary of her lifestyle and she blames her mother for leading a dull life. Mag, on the other hand, seems to exploit the mother's demanding duty over her daughter, treating Maureen as an object only existing for her gratification. It is raining outside quite heavily. Mag is sitting in a rocking chair, staring off into the space, when Maureen enters carrying groceries and goes through to the kitchen.

Turn size and texture

Turn size and texture of both mother and daughter differ but not radically. They range from single sounds such as "Oh-h" (Turn3), "Eh?" (Turn 66) or single words like "No" (Turn9), "Ireland' (Turn 61) to several sentences. Mag uses her mostly short turns to initiate conversation with Maureen. She also states her various physical needs to Maureen to reinforce the pretense that her daughter's existence is indispensable. She repeatedly tries to make herself the center of interest who must feel comfortable all the time. Her desires are priorities in the house, which she delivers as first pair requests to be accepted and satisfied by her daughter: "Me porridge Maureen, I haven't had, will you be getting?"(Turn 36), "Will we have the radio on for ourselves?" (Turn 37), "Is the radio a bitter loud there, Maureen? (Turn 43). Most of Maureen's turns are also short and they come as angry and sometimes sarcastic and/or abusive responses to her mother's utter dependency. It is clear that she has been accumulating anger and now releasing it at the slightest provocation. Her speeches reveal that she has being doing everything around without any help from her mother who simply shrinks from doing anything for herself. Her longer turns articulate her deep-seated discontent with her mother's shrewish control and merciless indifference to her daughter's happiness.

When early in the scene Mag tells her daughter that she prepared her Complan (a food supplement) during her daughter's absence, Maureen confronts her mother that she really bases her utter dependency on a fiction to keep her daughter tied to the kitchen sink with no life of her own: "So you can get it yourself" (Turn 6). Mag's cunningly replies that she made it badly implying her constant want for her daughter's skill: "You do me Complan nice and smooth... Not a lump at all, nor the comrade of a lump" (Turn 11). When Maureen chides her for not giving the drink a good stir and for pouring the water in too fast, Mag's response intensifies her argument that she cannot make smooth Complan: "And the hot water I do be scared of. Scared I may scould myself" (Turn17). Maureen then looks at

her suspiciously insisting: "You're just a hypochondriac is what you are" (Turn19), and "...everybody knows you are" (Turn 21). Consequently, Mag goes on with her charade, reminding Maureen of her "urine infection" (Turn 22), her "bad back"(Turn 24) and finally holding her shriveled hand, "me bad hand"(Turn 26). Certainly, any dutiful daughter would not leave her poor, helpless mother when she cannot even make herself a cup of Complan?

Maureen, though fully aware of her mother's deceit, gives in, probably by a remnant of filial obligation, and makes the drink producing her first long turns. Her words demonstrate that she awfully suffers because Mag has two other daughters who have left the home and she is the only one who has to be permanently trapped in household servitude:

Maureen (quietly) ...(Irritated.) I'll get your Complan so if it's such a big Job! Form now and 'til doomsday! The one thing I ask you to do. Do you see Annette or Margo coming pouring your Complan or buying your oul cod in butter sauce for the week? (Turn 27)

Not satisfied, Mag then initiates another request of foodstuff: "Me porridge, Maureen," covering her attack with a veneer of fake concern: "No, a minute, Maureen, have a rest yourself" (Turn 36). Maureen does not utter a word creating a potential turn lapse, but she "stomped angrily back to kitchen and started preparing the porridge as noisily as she can"(p. 3). The dialogue insanely continues with discussions about the English versus Gaelic language and immigration to England and the United States, until Maureen suddenly becomes enraged and shouts at her, "You're oul and you stupid and you don't know what you're talking about. Now shut up and eat you're oul porridge"(Turn 84). At this point Mag mounts her final foodstuff assault: "Me mug of tea you forgot" (Turn 85). Maureen, providing another potential turn lapse, does not say a word, but conceals her exasperation with difficulty, "clutches the edges of the sink and lowers her head," then quietly with visible self-control, fills the kettle to make her mother's tea (p. 6).

Maureen's second long turn in the scene ominously expresses her fatal wrath and reflects her intense hostility towards the domestic environment. She taunts her mother by wishing to make friends with the murderer of an old woman whom Mag recalls his news story and to have him as a possible lover, even if he victimizes her.

Maureen I could live with that so long I was sure he'd be clobbering you soon after. If he clobbered you with a big axe or something and took your oul head and spat in your neck, I wouldn't mind at all, going first. Oh no, I'd enjoy it, I would. No more oul Complan to get, and no more porridge to get, and no more...

Clarke (2013) draws attention to the fact that Maureen's desire for violent parting with her family signifies her need to control both her sexual identity and body. Her mad fantasy touches a raw nerve in her mother, who cuts it short by holding her tea out and firmly interrupting, "No sugar in this, Maureen, you forgot, go and get me some" (Turn 94). Her interruption proves to have a devastating impact on Maureen who, at the end of her tether, takes the tea and pours it away in the sink, then grabs the half-eaten porridge and scraps it out into the garbage bin. The scene ends as she looks at her mother threateningly and exists into the hallway. Mag gazes irritably out into the space. The audience, so far ignorant of Mag's basic evil narcissism, may likely sympathize with her. However, such feelings may change when in the following scenes she battles viciously against her daughter's happiness and personal self-fulfillment.

Topic management

Throughout the whole scene, Mag is the one who initiates all the conversational exchanges and introduces new topics reflecting her inexorable endeavors to impose the only identity she allows her daughter to have: a mother's nurse and attendant. Maureen's defiant and rebellious responses are communicated through her verbal power and swearing. They manifest her tactics so far to resist the domestic identity forced on her by her mother. Mag uses first part of adjacency pairs to start conversation with Maureen at the same time limits her daughter's choice of topics. She opens the scene with a first pair question that requires a straight answer, "Wet, Maureen?" (Turn 1) when her daughter first enters the cottage from the front door carrying in shopping items. Maureen replies: "Of course, wet" (Turn 2), implying that it is her mother's fault that she was caught in heavy rain.

Mostly Mag employs first pair parts to urge Maureen to feed her or to do something around. For instance, she asks her to turn on the radio then, a few moments later complains that it is too loud: "Will we have the radio on for ourselves?"(Turn 37) and "Is the radio a biteen too loud there, Maureen?" (Turn 44) to which Maureen furiously swipes at the radio, turning it off instead of toning it down. This leads to their intense debate over a Gaelic radio program. Mag launches the topic with, "It sounds nonsense to me. Why can't they just speak English like everybody?" (Turn 51) Mag's belief that English is a more valuable language that may serve to secure jobs for the Irish in England or America throws some light on the economic crisis of the nation in the 1990s. On the other hand, Maureen, who suffered from the racial biases of her work mates in England, sees that Irish should be one's first language. Her responses suggest that she

does not want to leave Ireland to "beg for jobs and handouts" anymore. Clarke asserts that, given her former history of psychological trouble, mainly due to her employment experience in England, Maureen has created idealized images of Ireland through television, radio and newspapers. All her connections with the Irish emblems repeatedly prove the old idyll has collapsed—the west is remote, inert and lonely, the home is poor and grimy, the mother is more of a burden than a blessing. However, Maureen imagines a romantic vision of the country in much the same way that she imagines her life without Mag. Losing her temper, Maureen ends the argument by hurling sharp abuses at her mother (Turn 84, above). This is followed by Mag demanding a new nutritional demand: "Me mug of tea you forgot" (Turn 85).

While Maureen is preparing tea upon her mother's request, Mag starts her longest turn in the scene. In fact, the turn consists of short enquiries about whether her daughter has met or talked to anybody on her way back home after doing shopping. When she receives no answers from Maureen, she goes on and gives her daughter a significant piece of advice as not to talk to strangers these days. In conclusion, she tells the news story of a criminal who killed an old lay in Dublin without even knowing her (Turn 86). Up to that point, the audience may have the impression that Maureen is acting with excessive harshness toward Mag. However, this turn reveals something about Mag's innate obsession to prevent Maureen from mixing with others to remain as her exclusive helper. It also foreshadows her later wicked actions, which destroys her daughter's last opportunity to marry and have a family. Maureen shocks her mother and the audiences with a sinister fancy, which anticipates the play's heartbreaking end. She states that she would not mind to meet the Dublin murderer as long as he brutally kills old women (Turn 87). Then she proceeds to express her pleasure of being freed from Mag and her never-ending requests (Turn 93) before her daydream is disrupted by Mag's nutritional imperative: "No sugar in this, Maureen... go and get me some" (Turn 94).

Pauses, lapses, interruptions

The scene consists of two-party conversation, so turns mostly alternate in A-B-A-B fashion. This may suggest a smooth turn change between Mag and Maureen, but a close examination stresses the troubled relationship of the two women. Many of Maureen's turns are dominantly constructed on potential lapses or rather non-verbal responses demonstrating her rebellion and frustration. She frequently uses non-speech options to emphasize her rage, disappointment and craving for breaking up with her role as "a skivvy" in the house. For instance, when Mag tries to assure her that she is appreciated for all what she does in the house and that she is not regarded as just a servant, Maureen does not reply but she "slams a couple of cupboard doors ... and sits at the table, after dragging its chair loudly" (p. 3). When Mag follows this by asking for her porridge, Maureen "stomped angrily back to the kitchen and started preparing the porridge as noisily as she can" (p.3). A moment later, she demands Maureen to turn on the radio, accordingly Maureen "bangs an angry finger at the radio's 'on' switch" (p.3). When Mag asks for her mug of tea, Maureen "clutches the edges of the sink, exasperated, then...quietly begins to make her mother's tea" (p. 6). The scene ends with a violent non-verbal response from Maureen. When Mag interrupts Maureen's macabre fantasy by asking to bring some sugar, Maureen replies by tossing the mug of tea in the sink and throwing the porridge in the bin then leaving the room after staring wrathfully at her mother.

Some of Maureen's silences are potential turn lapses echoing her desperate tactics to confront her mother's egotistical endeavors to prevent her access to the outside world. Mag displays some gaps (pre-responding pauses) and intra-turn silences, not at TRPs, to keep her manipulative hold on her daughter. By driving many false excuses to justify her complete dependency on Maureen, she lashes her daughter with the whip of guilt. The opening argument of Maureen over her mother's ability of to make the Complan herself is faced up to with Mag's pretense to lack the necessary skill to make it:

Mag I can ... [make it]. (Pause). Although lumpy it was, Maureen (Turn 7); Mag (pause) You do make me Complan nice and smooth. (Pause.) Not a lump at all, nor the comrade of a lump (Turn 11); Mag Mm. (Pause.) And the hot water too I do be scared of. Scared to scould meself (Turn 17);

Mag (pause) Me bad back (Turn 24).

Turn 86 is Mag's longest turn in the scene. Its length is because Mag tries to initiate a conversation about Maureen's socializing activity when she has been out for shopping. Maureen refuses to take part in the conversation thus providing several attributable turn lapses. As Maynard (1980) maintains, a refusal to take the floor when the addressed person is required to talk indicates that the targeted addressee finds the ongoing topic unacceptable and desires to change it or to end the conversation. Receiving no replies, Mag, however, continues the turn, incorporating these successive lapses, transforming the inter-turn silences into intra-turn pauses. She begins the turn by posing a first part question and waits for Maureen's answer at a possible TRP, but Maureen out of defiance does not give an answer. As a result, Mag answers the question instead of Maureen asserting that it is unlikely to talk to people on a rainy day like this. Maureen's insists on

opting out, so Mag refers to her daughter's usual disinclination to talk to people. In order to undo the interactional problem, Mag eventually warns her daughter better not to be in touch with strangers so as not to meet the terrible fate of an old woman from Dublin.

Mag Did you meet anybody on your travels, Maureen? (No response.) Ah no, not on a day like today. (Pause.) Although you don't say hello to people is your trouble, Maureen. (Pause.) Although some people it would be better not to say hello to. The fella up and murdered the poor oul woman in Dublin and he didn't even know her. The news that story was on, did you hear of it? (Pause.) Strangled, and didn't even know her. That's a fella it would be better not to talk to. That's a fella it would be better to avoid outright. (p. 6)

Finally, Maureen thwarts her mother's attempts to limit her existence to that of a naïve unmarried woman, unacquainted with the outside world. Her pent-up frustration explode in a series of fierce turns to tease her mother: "Sure that sounds exactly the type of fella I would like to meet, and then bring him home to meet you, if he likes murdering oul women" (Turn 87). Mag retaliates by intimidating Maureen that the brutal man may victimize her first. Maureen indifferently states that she would not mind if this means getting rid of Mag. Unable to rival her daughter's verbal ferocity, Mag abruptly terminates the diatribe with one of her dietary demands (Turn 94) providing the dangerous interruption that, as the stage directions clearly indicate, causes Maureen's verbal aggression to turn into a physical onslaught. Maureen stares at her mother for a moment, and then she takes the tea and pours it into the sink. She goes back to Mag, grabs the porridge and scrapes it out into the bin. She then goes out into the hallway giving her mother a hostile look and closes the door behind her, maybe, as Morrison (2010) argues, with murder in the heart.

Conclusion

The Beauty Queen of Leenane represents an unsettling experience of a daughter and a mother engaged into a prolonged disparaging relationship in the 1990s Ireland. Examining the linguistic tension displayed in the two–party dialogue of the opening scene in the light of turn-taking system as described by Sacks et al proves to be useful in disclosing the lethal struggle between both mother and daughter. The egocentric mother constantly attempts to appropriate the self of her daughter to be her exclusive caregiver through the scheming pretense of utter reliance on her daughter. The perturbed daughter, who blames her mother for her fruitless and bleak life, retaliates with verbal and non-verbal violence. As each interaction between the mother and her daughter progresses, tactics of active cruelty aggravate until verbal aggression becomes physical. In the end, neither of them survives and both get their dramatic retribution.

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