

“FUN” BY HOWARD KORDER

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Howard Korder is an American screenwriter and playwright nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1988 for the play “Boys’ Life.” A year before this nomination Korder wrote a short play “FUN” that marked the main peculiarities of his unique style of writing. The author did not identify the genre of his work mentioning that this was a play in ten scenes. We argue that “FUN” can be called a socio-psychological drama with strong elements of absurdist drama.

The main characters of this work are Casper and Denny. These are two teenagers who are 15 years old and who live in Roberson City in the northeastern United States. This is an industrial town lacking facilities for entertainment and employment. The play that starts as an idle talk of two teenagers skipping school gradually receives social coloring and discloses such burning problems as social inequality and lack of opportunities for self-realization. While commenting on the people driving cars Danny indicates that “they have the cruise control...they got dinner on the table” (Korder 12). Later they discuss shoes trademarks and their influence on people. Social elements are quite important in the play since they give insight into psychological states of the main characters. It should be mentioned that the play is based exclusively on dialogues comprising short and often elliptical remarks. The language of the play is full of slang. The staccato dialogue requiring additional concentration is one more peculiar feature of this play. Such form of the dialogue bears a strong influence of the absurdist drama, mainly of the works written by Samuel Beckett. From time to time Denny and Casper sound like Beckettian figures: “Let’s get out of here.” “We don’t know where we are.” “And it doesn’t matter where we go.” Alongside with the language and the form of the dialogue there are other elements that indicate the influence of postmodernism, mainly this is scattering of the scenes and the fact that they are connected with each other only by the characters. Furthermore, Korder’s characters and the ones created by Beckett are united not only by the form of the dialogue but also by the absurdity of their lives and meaningless searching for pleasures.

It is hard to say what the main idea of this play is. On the one hand, it is obvious that the main concept of this work is “fun” since it is the title of the play and the idea

that goes through all ten scenes. This concept is first met in Scene I when Denny offers to have some fun. Then the idea of having fun is recurrently repeated. In the last scene Casper states that they had some fun “Casper: Yeah, we had some fun. (Pause.) So, Danny, ...what do we wanna do now?” (Korder 43). Though it is clear that the concept of fun is central in this play, there remains a question what is implied by this concept. For main characters fun is such thing as alcohol, sex, drugs, crimes, swearing, dangerous driving and other forbidden things. At least they think so. However, even going through some of these dangerous things, their lives do not become less boring and meaningless. It turns out that starting from the inciting incident when they decide to have some entertainments and up to climax when they nearly died in the car accident, all their adventures are meaningless because they get nothing except idle talks. They move from front steps of Casper’s house to the bridge, from the bridge to the restaurant, from the restaurant to the mall and everywhere they find nothing but boredom. So, in our opinion, this play is about young people who are left without care and love of their parents. Denny and Casper are not loved by anyone and they try to compensate this by their anger and searching for dangerous adventures. This idea can be supported by one of the phrases said by Danny “Denny: Jesus, can’t I even get arrested” (Korder 43). This strange desire of being arrested manifests how lonely the boy is. Probably, being arrested he would become a member of some community and probably he would finally attract his parents’ attention.

So, “FUN” is a play about lonely people who live in the cruel world and try to find some meaning of their existence and this is the main issue that unites this play with the theatre of the absurd.

References

1. Korder, H. (1988). *Fun and Nobody: Two Short Plays*. Dramatists Play Service Inc.