

# DÜNYA DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ALANINDA AKADEMİK TARTIŞMALAR

Editör: Prof.Dr. Ömer ŞEKERCİ

yaz  
yayınları

# **Dünya Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Alanında Akademik Tartışmalar**

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[www.yazyayinlari.com](http://www.yazyayinlari.com)

[yazyayinlari@gmail.com](mailto:yazyayinlari@gmail.com)

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*"Bu kitapta yer alan bölümlerde kullanılan kaynakların, görüşlerin, bulguların, sonuçların, tablo, şekil, resim ve her türlü içeriğin sorumluluğu yazar veya yazarlarına ait olup ulusal ve uluslararası telif haklarına konu olabilecek mali ve hukuki sorumluluk da yazarlara aittir."*

# THE POLITICS OF KITCHEN, FOOD, AND COOKING IN BANANA YOSHIMOTO'S *KITCHEN*

Merve AYDOĞDU ÇELİK<sup>1</sup>

Mustafa KARA<sup>2</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In her seminal work, *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf famously declared that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (1929, p. 4) and to pursue a life of writing. This concept, though focused on the physical space for creative expression in the first place, actually transcends the literal and speaks to the need for autonomy and freedom from societal constraints. Woolf envisioned this space as a physical sanctuary, free from domestic obligations and societal expectations. While seemingly far removed from the bustling kitchen of Banana Yoshimoto's novel *Kitchen*, this very same yearning for a space of one's own finds a powerful echo in the experiences of Mikage Sakurai, the story's narrator-protagonist. Mikage, trying to overcome the profound loss of her grandmother, finds solace and a path to self-discovery within the familiar walls of the kitchen. Similar to Woolf's room, Mikage's kitchen surpasses the concept of a purely physical space. It becomes a metaphorical sanctum for Mikage, a space where she

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<sup>1</sup> Doç. Dr., Tekirdağ Namık Kemal Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Yabancı Diller Bölümü, maydogdu@nku.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-7354-9705.

<sup>2</sup> Öğr. Gör. Dr., Çukurova Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Yabancı Diller Bölümü, karam@cu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-7464-4536.

can explore her emotions, rebuild her identity, connect with others, and ultimately, find her voice.

The symbolic importance of the kitchen is indeed evident from the very beginning of *Kitchen*. Both the title and the opening lines suggest Mikage's unique claim to this space: "The place I like best in this world is the kitchen. No matter where it is, no matter what kind, if it's a kitchen, if it's a place where they make food, it's fine with me" (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 4). The kitchen moves beyond its utilitarian purpose in *Kitchen* to become a metaphorical best place for Mikage. This domestic space signifies comfort and security for her as a young and single woman living in Tokyo. The novel portrays the kitchen, food, and cooking as transformative forces in the protagonist Mikage's journey of self-reclamation following her grandmother's death. If the kitchen initially serves as a sanctuary that offers solace through the warmth of familiar memories associated with her grandmother, it then gradually evolves into a site of empowerment given that Mikage undergoes a process of transition from passively clinging to her past to actively pursuing self-sufficiency through culinary education. The food prepared by Mikage also acts as a catalyst for connection among individuals, through which she fosters relationships that transcend both sexual intimacy and prescribed familial roles. Within this framework, this study seeks to examine Yoshimoto's strategic employment of the food-gender relationship within the context of the novel and how that relationship challenges traditional gender roles in contemporary Japanese society.

The aim of this paper is threefold. First, it situates Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* within the broader academic conversation on food, gender, and domestic space, drawing on the theoretical frameworks developed by feminist food studies scholars and cultural critics of contemporary Japan. Second, it analyses the three central thematic pillars through which food politics operate

in the novel: the kitchen as sanctuary, the kitchen as a site of culinary empowerment, and food as a vehicle for unconventional social connection. Third, by placing the text in its historical and cultural context -the postfeminist atmosphere of late-1980s Japan- the paper demonstrates that Yoshimoto's text does not merely reflect but actively interrogates and subverts entrenched gendered ideologies. Through close reading of the primary text alongside sustained engagement with secondary scholarship, the paper makes the case that *Kitchen* represents one of the most politically nuanced explorations of the food-gender relationship in contemporary Japanese women's fiction.

## **2. FOOD, GENDER, AND THE DOMESTIC SPACE: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

To understand the politics at work in *Kitchen*, it is necessary to first situate the novel within the broader scholarly conversation on the relationship between food and gender. Food studies, as a field, has undergone a significant transformation over the past four decades, moving from a narrow focus on nutritional science and culinary history to an expansive, interdisciplinary inquiry encompassing questions of power, identity, and social formation. As McLean observes,

whereas early feminist scholars focused almost exclusively on women's eating problems as symptomatic of cultural constraints on female appetite and on the kitchen as a site of women's oppression, within the last 15 years feminist food studies has revalued women's considerable appetite - for food, for knowledge, for power, and for creative self-expression - reclaiming women's hunger as a source of empowerment. (2013, p. 252)

In this way, recent scholarship has reframed the role of food in women's experiences, positioning it as a site of creative agency,

sensory indulgence, and subversive defiance. This revaluation, it should be noted, has been consolidating for several decades: as early as the formation of feminist food studies as a recognisable subfield in the 1990s - marked by foundational anthologies such as Carole Counihan and Steven L. Kaplan's *Food and Gender: Identity and Power* (1998), Marjorie DeVault's *Feeding the Family* (1991), and Arlene Voski Avakian's *Through the Kitchen Window* (1998) - scholars across anthropology, history, folklore, and literary studies had begun to conceptualise appetite and food choice as "an important voice in the identity of a woman" (McLean, 2013, pp. 250-251). These works collectively established the domestic sphere as what McLean describes as a "conflicted site, one that simultaneously reproduces patriarchal values and ... serves as a space where women enjoy an amount of power and control far surpassing that which they exert over the public and political realms" (2013, p. 250).

The kitchen, as both a physical space and a cultural symbol, occupies a complex and contested position in this scholarly conversation. On the one hand, it has historically functioned as the primary site of women's domestic labour, the spatial manifestation of patriarchal ideology's insistence that women's proper sphere is the private and the domestic. As DeVault has argued, the Industrial Revolution's construction of separate spheres designated men's work as wage earning outside the home and women's work as focused on transforming wages into the goods and services needed to maintain the household (1991, p. 15). Such a bifurcation, as DeVault insists, is not natural but produced by characteristic ways of understanding the family (p. 18). Feminist geographers have further illuminated the structural underpinnings of this spatial logic: as Domosh and Seager explain, "the separation of a masculine world of work and production from a feminine world of family and reproduction was essential to" the structure of capitalism, a system that "required

the behind-the-scenes care and nurture of family and children and the unpaid maintenance of the physical (and psychological) needs of the workers” (qtd. in Abarca, 2006, p. 29). The kitchen’s ideological sedimentation as a woman’s place, then, is not a timeless cultural given but the product of historically specific and materially motivated arrangements of power. Aoyama’s survey of food and gender in modern Japanese women’s writing similarly underscores that food preparation is “not the only aspect of our relationship with food that is heavily gender oriented,” noting persistent “gender-based differences in ‘entitlements’ to food” that extend to who is permitted to eat, what they are permitted to eat, and in what social contexts they may do so (2008, p. 173). As Roland Barthes observed, in the mythological register of Western culture, “food is men’s business; woman takes part in it only as a cook or as a servant; she is the one who prepares or serves but does not eat” (qtd. in Aoyama, 2008, p. 173) - a formulation that reveals how the feminisation of food labour has historically been accompanied by a simultaneous exclusion of women from the pleasures and sociality of food consumption itself.

On the other hand, feminist food studies has increasingly recognised the kitchen as a site of potential resistance and creative empowerment. Counihan, whose work spans anthropology and feminist cultural studies, argues that “the predominant role of women in feeding is a cultural universal, a major component of female identity, and an important source of female connection to and influence over others” (1999, p. 46). Counihan’s food-centred life history methodology, developed in sustained fieldwork across Italy and the United States, further demonstrates how women use food as “a significant voice of self-expression,” communicating “powerful meanings and emotions” through the meals they cook, the rituals they observe, and the memories they preserve (2012, pp. 173-174). This understanding of food as a form of women’s voice has been developed most extensively in the context of

working-class and marginalised women, whose access to other forms of public self-expression has historically been restricted. Abarca's *Voices in the Kitchen* (2006), a study of working-class Mexican and Mexican American women, offers a particularly compelling account of this dynamic. Abarca argues that while the kitchen has indeed functioned as "a hegemonic site of women's social and natural rightful *place*," it "as a woman's *space*" [emphases in the original] can simultaneously represent "a site of multiple changing levels and degrees of freedom, self-awareness, subjectivity, and agency," depending upon the social interactions and acts of appropriation that unfold within it (2006, p. 19). Crucially, Abarca asks "whether the kitchen is always a site of entrapment, or whether it is also a space, particularly for women with restricted economic resources, of survival as well as an identity-affirming process" and the testimonies she gathers from the women in her *charlas culinarias* [culinary conversations] answer resoundingly in favour of the latter (2006, p. 10). Through what Abarca theorises as the "borderless boundary zone," women actively convert the kitchen from a woman's *place* - a socially imposed location of mandatory domestic duty - into a woman's space, one "where social life consists of exchanges, encounters, conflicts, and connections" and where "women's ways of making the kitchen their space undergo a continuous process of negotiation" (2006, p. 36). This dual character of the kitchen - as both instrument of confinement and space of potential agency - is precisely what makes it such a rich site for literary and cultural analysis, and it is this tension that Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* inhabits and seeks to resolve.

In the Japanese context specifically, the gendering of the domestic space carries particular historical and cultural weight. The Meiji period's construction of the good wife, wise mother ideal codified women's domestic role as both a private virtue and a national duty, thereby binding femininity to the household in

ways that persisted well into the twentieth century. The decades following the Second World War brought significant economic and social transformation, but the feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s were, as Uematsu argues, increasingly absorbed and neutralised by the postfeminist neoliberal discourse of the 1980s. Uematsu traces how the Equal Opportunity Law for Men and Women of 1986 - the very year before *Kitchen* was published - signalled not a genuine feminist advance but rather the emergence of what she calls a postfeminist culture in Japan: a culture that valorised individual choice and personal fulfilment while quietly reinforcing the structures that limited those choices for women who did not conform to a normative model of femininity (2017, pp. 39-41). Aoyama's literary-historical account of food and gender in modern Japanese women's fiction provides an essential complement to this socio-political analysis. Examining the gendered construction of the kitchen in contemporary women's texts, Aoyama observes that the most innovative writers of the late 1980s - Yoshimoto Banana foremost among them - treated cooking and the kitchen neither as overtly gendered nor as straightforwardly oppressive, but rather as spaces in which "traditional or stereotypical gender roles and images seem to be either reversed or denied" (2008, p. 180). As she states, Yoshimoto's protagonist Mikage cooks "not out of duty or obligation, but for her own pleasure and the pleasure of her surrogate family" (2008, p. 180), a formulation that aligns with the broader feminist revaluation of culinary practice as a vehicle for self-expression rather than self-abnegation. It is into this ideological landscape that Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* intervenes.

Murakami offers a further theoretical lens through which to read Yoshimoto's use of food and the kitchen. He argues that *Kitchen* performs a sustained deconstruction of the binary oppositions that structure modern Japanese culture: inside and outside, family and stranger, sexual desire and food desire.

Drawing on the postmodern architectural theory of Charles Jencks and Fredric Jameson, he demonstrates that the kitchen in Yoshimoto's work functions not as a sealed domestic enclosure but as a liminal threshold, a space that connects the inside of the family to the outside of the wider world (2005, pp. 59-60). By foregrounding the kitchen as a site where hierarchies collapse and boundaries dissolve, Yoshimoto produces what Murakami calls a deconstruction of the sexual and food desires that underwrites a genuinely new model of human relation - one not governed by erotic possession but by the shared appetite for nourishment (2005, p. 61). This reading resonates productively with what post-colonial and poststructural scholars within feminist food studies have begun to theorise as the dismantling of "the ideological boundary between home and marketplace," a project that illuminates the ways women bridge "public (productive) and (private) reproductive spaces" (McLean, 2013, p. 251). Feminist food studies, on this account, "strives to jettison the remnants of dualistic thinking" in order to "illuminate, challenge, and destabilize the classist, racist, sexist, and heterosexist cultural mechanisms that discipline and gender the 'female' body" (McLean, 2013, p. 251) - an aspiration that Yoshimoto's kitchen, as liminal threshold and site of dissolution, enacts at the level of narrative form.

This theoretical convergence of feminist food studies, Japanese cultural history, and postmodern literary theory provides the analytical scaffolding for the three-part reading that follows. The first section examines the kitchen as a sanctuary of grief and memory. The second analyses the kitchen as a site of female empowerment through culinary education and professional aspiration. The third explores food as a vehicle for relationships that transgress the conventional boundaries of family, romance, and gender identity.

## **2.1. The Kitchen as Sanctuary: Grief, Memory, and Domestic Space**

The opening of *Kitchen* is defined by loss. Mikage Sakurai, the narrator-protagonist, is a university student whose family has been progressively stripped from her: her parents died when she was young, her grandfather when she entered junior high school, and now her grandmother has died, leaving her utterly alone. The novel opens in the immediate aftermath of this last bereavement, and Yoshimoto's prose conveys with remarkable economy the texture of acute grief: a weightlessness, a directionlessness, an inability to inhabit ordinary domestic space. What is striking, however, is the specificity of the relief Mikage discovers. Three days after the funeral, still in a daze, she does not flee the apartment, does not seek the open air of the street or the consolation of another person. Instead, she drags her futon into the kitchen and sleeps there, beside the refrigerator:

Three days after the funeral I was still in a daze. Steeped in a sadness so great I could barely cry, shuffling softly in gentle drowsiness, I pulled my futon into the deathly silent, gleaming kitchen. Wrapped in a blanket, like Linus, I slept. The hum of the refrigerator kept me from thinking of my loneliness. There, the long night came on in perfect peace, and morning came. (Yoshimoto, 1993 pp. 5-6)

This passage is central to the novel's politics of domestic space. Mikage does not find comfort in the bedroom, that conventional space of rest and intimacy, but in the kitchen - the space that patriarchal ideology has most insistently coded as the site of women's servitude. What Yoshimoto performs here is a deliberate recoding of that space. The kitchen is not, for Mikage, a space of obligation or confinement; it is the one space in which she can experience peace. She establishes the kitchen as a secular sanctuary where domesticity functions as a defence mechanism

against the paralysis of grief. Mikage’s retreat to the “gleaming kitchen” highlights a shift from traditional mourning rituals toward a modern, individualized form of solace, where the mechanical “hum of the refrigerator” provides a constant, rhythmic companionship that human presence cannot offer. The significance of the refrigerator’s hum deserves particular attention at this point. It is not complete silence that Mikage needs, but a specific kind of sound - a low, steady, mechanical presence that occupies just enough of her auditory field to prevent the intruding of grief. Kousalya and Aruna note that Mikage “takes refuge in the kitchen which encircles her with a compassionate aura like a mother” (2021, p. 53), and this maternal resonance is crucial: the kitchen, with its gleaming surfaces and humming refrigerator, becomes a surrogate body, an enveloping warmth that substitutes for the physical presence of her lost grandmother. By invoking the image of Linus and his security blanket, Yoshimoto also reframes the domestic space as a womb-like environment that shields the protagonist from the reality of her loss. The novel’s treatment of this refuge cannot be dismissed as simple escapism. Mikage is not retreating from reality into fantasy; she is retreating into the only space that feels continuous with her grandmother’s presence. The kitchen is dense with sensory memory - with smells, textures, temperatures that the grandmother occupied and that still bear the traces of her life. In this sense, Mikage’s retreat to the kitchen is also a form of attachment, a refusal to allow grief to sever the connection to the person she has lost. By anchoring herself to these physical remnants, Mikage transforms the kitchen into a living archive of her grandmother’s existence. This domestic sanctuary serves as a bridge between the world of the living and the silence of the dead, allowing her to process her trauma through the familiar rhythm of household objects. Far from a passive withdrawal, her presence in the kitchen is an active reclamation of continuity in a life otherwise fractured by sudden loss. Through this lens, the act of

sleeping on the kitchen floor becomes a profound gesture of loyalty - a way to inhabit the space where the grandmother's spirit remains most tangible. This understanding of the kitchen as a memorial space - a space where the dead remain present through the traces they have left in the practices and objects of daily life - resonates with the broader theoretical frameworks developed in feminist food studies. Counihan and Esterik demonstrate that food and cooking practices are among the most powerful carriers of cultural memory, transmitting values, identities, and affective bonds across generations (2012, pp. 1-15). For Mikage, the kitchen is precisely such a carrier: it is the space most saturated with her grandmother's presence, the space where the continuity of life is most palpable even in the face of death.

Yoshimoto develops this relationship between kitchen, memory, and identity throughout the early sections of the novel. When Mikage moves into the Tanaka household - into the apartment of Yuichi and his mother Eriko - the first thing she does is inspect the kitchen. Her detailed, almost rapturous description of the kitchen's contents, from the Silverstone frying pan to the German-made vegetable peeler, reveals a sensibility attuned to the meanings embedded in domestic objects: "Lit by a small fluorescent lamp, all kinds of plates silently awaited their turns; glasses sparkled. It was clear that in spite of the disorder everything was of the finest quality. There were things with special uses, like . . . porcelain bowls, gratin dishes, gigantic platters, two beer steins" (Yoshimoto, 1993, pp. 9-10). By inventorying these items with such precision, Mikage elevates the kitchen from a site of labour to a landscape of aesthetic and emotional value. The over-interested quality of her gaze suggests that these objects are not merely tools, but silent witnesses to a sophisticated domestic life that she is desperate to preserve. In other words, she is not simply looking at the dishes, but she is reading the text of the Tanaka household to ensure it possesses

the same vitality and care she once knew in her former household. By validating the particular use of these objects, she reinforces the idea that life still has order, purpose, and even a touch of luxury, even when her internal world feels entirely depleted. This meticulous observation acts as a bridge that allows her to shift from the role of a grieving outsider to a participant in a new, shared domesticity. Due to her profound connection with the kitchen as manifested by the minute description she provides, Kousalya and Aruna also observe that “Mikage considers kitchen to be a sacred place like the temple” (2021, p. 58).

The kitchen’s function as a space of memory and sanctuary also operates in relation to what Mikage calls it: to her, “kitchen represents some distant longing engraved on [her] soul (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 56). This phrase, which Mikage uses when reflecting on why she loves everything to do with the kitchen, points to a dimension of her kitchen attachment that exceeds individual biography. The kitchen represents not just the memory of her grandmother, but a more archaic form of belonging - a connection to the warmth and nourishment of early life that the progression of adult independence has progressively attenuated. In this sense, the kitchen is less a retreat into the past than a site where the past and the present coexist, where grief and continuity are held in productive tension. Mikage’s insistence on the kitchen as her primary locus of comfort is thus neither a capitulation to domestic ideology nor a simple form of nostalgia, but a sophisticated negotiation of loss that refuses to separate the emotional from the material, the personal from the spatial. The kitchen, in this respect, is acts like a spiritual anchor as the longing represents a desire for a holistic sense of home that is often absent in the fragmented, modern urban life of Japan. Furthermore, that longing engraved on her soul transforms the kitchen into a metaphysical space. It is no longer just a room where food is prepared, but a landscape where the domestic and

the divine intersect. That is to say, when Mikage enters a kitchen, she does not just enter a physical area, but she returns to an idealized state of being where the distant past and the present moment are reconciled. Now that the longing is internal and permanent, she can theoretically reconstruct her sense of self in any kitchen that meets her standards of quality and care. This makes the kitchen the ultimate site of her identity which functions as the only constant in a life defined by the transience of human relationships.

Crucially, however, Yoshimoto does not allow this first metaphor of the novel - the kitchen as sanctuary - to congeal into passivity. Mikage's time in the kitchen is not simply a period of withdrawal; it gradually turns out to be a period of discovery. As she cooks for the Tanaka family, she begins to realise that her relationship to food is not merely receptive but creative. The kitchen as sanctuary evolves, over the course of the novel, into the kitchen as workshop - a space of active production and progressive empowerment. It is to this second dimension of the kitchen's politics that we now turn.

## **2.2. The Kitchen as Empowerment: Culinary Education and Self-Sufficiency**

If the first layer of *Kitchen* is characterised by the kitchen as a space of consolation and memorial attachment, the second is characterised by a progressive transformation of Mikage's relationship to the kitchen from passive refuge to active site of professional and personal formation. This transformation is central to the work's challenge to conventional gender ideology. In the traditional domestic paradigm, women cook because they must - because cooking is the form of labour assigned to them by a social order that equates femininity with service and self-abnegation. Mikage's trajectory in *Kitchen*, however, enacts a different logic: she cooks because she chooses to cook, because

cooking is the medium through which she discovers and articulates her identity, and because culinary mastery represents, for her, the means of achieving genuine independence.

The pivotal moment in this transformation occurs when Mikage decides to train as a culinary assistant. Having registered the kitchen as the space she loves above all others, she pursues this love not as a domestic virtue but as a professional ambition. Yoshimoto describes the intensity of this commitment with a stylistic vigour that underscores its significance:

*That summer I had taught myself to cook. The sensation that my brain cells were multiplying was exhilarating. I bought three books on cooking —fundamentals, theory, and practice— and went through them one by one. On the bus, in bed, on the sofa, I read the one on theory, memorizing caloric content, temperatures, and raw ingredients. Every spare minute I cooked. Those three books grew tattered with use, and even now I always have them near at hand. Like the picture books I loved when I was little, I know the illustrations on each page by heart . . . [f]or the whole summer I went about it with a crazed enthusiasm: cooking, cooking, cooking. I poured all my earnings from my part-time job into it, and if something came out wrong I'd do it over till I got it right. Angry, fretful, or cheery, I cooked through it all. (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 57) [emphases in the original]*

The language here - *crazed enthusiasm*, which is the insistence on repetition until mastery is achieved - positions Mikage's culinary practice not as domestic routine but as artistic discipline, closer in its rigour and intentionality to a craft or a vocation. Her obsessive enthusiasm transforms the kitchen from a site of traditional domestic labour into a laboratory for self-actualization. While the patriarchal expectation of cooking is

often rooted in subservient duty given that women are assigned to prepare food for the benefit and nourishment of others, Mikage's obsession is profoundly inward-facing and therapeutic. Her act of cooking is not to serve a family; she is cooking to rebuild her own fractured psyche. Her rigorous study of fundamentals, theory, and practice related to cooking elevates the craft to a discipline of the mind, where the multiplication of brain cells acts as a direct antidote to the cognitive numbing of grief. As Kousalya and Aruna state, the kitchen "no longer stands as a place of domesticity and confinement [but] a liberating phenomenon which renders new identity and solace" (2021, p. 52). Indeed, by pouring her own earnings into this pursuit and obsessively repeating recipes until she is satisfied with what she cooks, Mikage reclaims agency over her life. It is arguable that her technical mastery of temperatures and caloric content becomes a way to exert control over a world that previously felt chaotic and unmanageable. This is a subversive obsession: she adopts a traditionally feminine role, but she strips it of its sacrificial connotations. She, instead, uses it as a vehicle for intellectual growth and emotional resilience. The tattered books attest to the fact that she has authored a new sense of safety, one where the kitchen is no longer a place of chore-bound obligation, but a site of rigorous, self-imposed expertise. Mikage's progression from grief-stricken orphan sleeping beside the refrigerator to skilled culinary professional is thus a progression through and beyond conventional femininity. It is indeed a movement from passivity to agency, from dependency to self-sufficiency, that is enabled precisely by her refusal to treat the kitchen as merely a domestic enclosure.

This shift also relates to the broader context of women's labour and independence in Japan in the late 1980s. As Uematsu demonstrates, the Equal Opportunity Law of 1986 created new discursive possibilities for women's participation in professional

life, but these possibilities were frequently co-opted by a neoliberal and postfeminist ideology that celebrated individual achievement while leaving structural inequalities intact (2017, pp. 39-40). Yoshimoto's presentation of Mikage's culinary career engages with this ideological terrain without being reducible to it. Mikage does not pursue culinary training because the law now permits her to; she pursues it as the ultimate expression of her identity. In other words, her professionalism is grounded not in compliance with social norms, but in an intimate and hard-won knowledge of herself. This transition brings into focus the dimension of the kitchen-as-empowerment narrative, bridging the intersection between the domestic and the professional, the private and the public. Mikage's decision to pursue culinary training as a career represents a transformation of the domestic into the professional, a movement that integrates the private and public realms to uncover how women bring their considerable cooking and community-building skills into the professional sphere (McLean, 2013, p. 253). Mikage does not simply cook at home; she learns to cook professionally, under the supervision of a teacher, in a structured educational environment. In other words, the kitchen is no longer just her grandmother's or Yuichi's kitchen; it is a space of professional formation, a site where private passion becomes public competence. In this sense, the work contributes to the broader feminist project of making visible and valorising the labour that women have traditionally performed in the domestic sphere, while simultaneously resisting the reduction of that labour to mere domesticity.

The empowerment narrative of the kitchen is also consolidated by Mikage's attitude to solitude and independence. Throughout the novel, she resists the social expectation that a young woman living alone in Tokyo should be anxious about her solitude or eager to secure domestic stability through romantic attachment. Instead, she treats solitude as a condition of

productivity and self-knowledge. Her famous meditation on the nature of resilience, in which she declares “As I grow older, much older, I will experience many things, and I will hit rock bottom again and again. Again and again I will suffer; again and again I will get back on my feet. I will not be defeated. I won’t let my spirit be destroyed” (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 42), is remarkable not least for its context: it occurs as Mikage is reflecting on her relationship with the kitchen, the space that has become the site of her inner life. The kitchen, in other words, is the space from which Mikage draws the strength to face the world. It is not a retreat from life but its existential foundation. As she further elaborates,

I had come to understand that despair does not necessarily result in annihilation, that one can go on in spite of it, I had become hardened. Was that what it means to be an adult, to live with ugly ambiguities? I didn’t like it, but it made it easier to go on. (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 56)

Mikage’s internal monologue regarding “ugly ambiguities” represents the ontological shift of her character. By recognizing that despair does not lead to total annihilation, she accepts a form of psychological hardening that actually characterizes her adulthood. This resilience is not given as a romanticized triumph, but as a pragmatic adaptation to the messiness of existence. It turns the kitchen into a space where she manages the tension between her internal void and the external necessity of moving forward.

### **2.3. Food as Social Connector: Relationships Beyond Convention**

The third and perhaps most politically charged dimension of the kitchen’s politics in *Kitchen* concerns the function of food as a medium of social connection - specifically, its capacity to create bonds that exceed the conventions of both romantic love

and biological kinship. Yoshimoto's novel is populated by characters who constitute unconventional families: Yuichi, raised by a transgender parent after the death of his biological mother; Mikage, who has no surviving relatives; and Eriko, who has forged a family through radical self-transformation rather than through biological or legal ties. It is around food - cooking and eating together - that these characters form their community, and it is through food that the boundaries between stranger and family, lover and friend, male and female are not only systematically questioned but also effectively established.

The bond between Mikage and Yuichi resists the easy labels of conventional romance. It instead manifests as a profound, platonic intimacy born of shared grief and domestic comfort. The food Mikage prepares in the kitchen is described in terms that align it with care, connection, and love rather than with obligation or performance. When she cooks for Yuichi after Eriko's death, she spends two hours preparing an elaborate and multi-national feast:

The limpid night descended, and we began to eat the extravagant dinner I had prepared. Salad, pie, stew, croquettes. Deep-fried tofu, steamed greens, bean thread with chicken (each with their various sauces), Chicken Kiev, sweet-and-sour pork, steamed Chinese dumplings . . . It was an international hodge-podge. (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 62)

This meal marks a pivotal expansion of Mikage's kitchen-sanctuary that moves beyond solitary self-preservation toward a profound act of communal healing and food as social connector. By preparing such a feast, Mikage articulates a weight of emotion that transcends language; the two hours of labour she invests serve as a direct, vitalizing counter-force to the stillness of death. While the sheer variety of dishes might resemble a performance

of domesticity, it is actually an exercise in creative anarchy that subverts traditional expectations. Rather than following a rigid cultural script of obedient Japanese cooking, Mikage's multinational spread functions as a bespoke, artistic response to ease Yuichi's grief. As the limpid night replaces the oppressive silence of the apartment, the rhythmic inventory of textures and temperatures effectively crowds out the void left by Eriko. In this context, Mikage's cooking is no longer a subservient duty or a performance of gender, but a sophisticated gift of empathy and affection that transforms the kitchen into a site of remedy against the emptiness of loss. Through this culinary alchemy, food ceases to be merely sustenance and becomes a powerful social tether as it bridges the isolation of individual mourning to create a shared space where belonging is built one meal at a time. Murakami provides a complementary theoretical frame at this point. He argues that in *Kitchen* the common appetite for food is used to connect the two characters' hearts, and that the desire for food and the skills necessary to satisfy it are described as artistic and creative activities that replace sexual desire (2005, p. 61). This substitution is not, Murakami proposes, a mere displacement or repression of erotic energy, but a genuine restructuring of desire: the creative and unifying aspects that in conventional modernist narrative are associated with sexual union are, in *Kitchen*, relocated in the act of cooking and eating together.

The climactic expression of food as social connector and one that replaces sexual desire comes in the katsudon episode near the end. Mikage, working in the resort town of Izu, receives a telephone call from Yuichi in which she learns that he is staying at an inn near Isehara and is in a state of despair following Eriko's death. Unable to eat the katsudon she has just ordered without thinking of Yuichi's hunger, she orders an additional portion, boards a taxi at midnight, and travels to the inn to deliver it: "That's how I came to find myself standing alone in the street,

close to midnight, belly pleasantly full, a hot takeout container of katsudon in my hands, completely bewildered as to how to proceed” (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 63). The image of Mikage standing alone in a dark street holding a container of katsudon is one of the most resonant in the novel, and its resonance is inseparable from its absurdity. The act she is about to perform - travelling by taxi across several hours of Japanese countryside in the middle of the night to deliver a bowl of pork and rice to a man she loves - is, from the perspective of conventional rationality, deeply impractical. And yet it is precisely this impracticality that marks the act as significant, as an expression of feeling that exceeds the conventions of romantic gesture (flowers, declarations, or kisses etc.) and speaks instead in the private language of nourishment. This episode demonstrates the timeless sentiment that there is nothing in the world food cannot fix, but its true significance is more deeply radical than the saying suggests. Mikage’s midnight journey exposes the limitations of the rigid rules that force relationships into certain categories, such as friendship, romance, or family and dictate how each should behave accordingly. Mikage and Yuichi defy these labels. They are not just friends, nor are they typical lovers; they are two individuals bonded by shared grief and the experience of building a household together. Their connection is rooted in the daily, lived reality of the kitchen rather than the categories provided by society. Food becomes the perfect medium for this bond precisely because it is so versatile. Unlike flowers or a romantic confession, which carry heavy expectations of dating or marriage, food doesn’t demand that a relationship conform to a specific type. It sidesteps the need for labels and simply provides nourishment, which allows their connection to exist on its own unique terms. Murakami’s theoretical account of the food-desire dynamic in *Kitchen* is again illuminating here. He argues that Banana’s postmodern characters eat together where others would sleep together (2005, p. 60) and that the transfiguration of sexual into

food desire implies the emancipation of a desire which has so far been subsumed by sex (2005, p. 61). The katsudon episode enacts this emancipation with particular clarity: Mikage's gesture is erotic in its intensity and intimacy without being sexual in its content, and this distinction is precisely the point. By routing connection through food rather than through sex, Yoshimoto creates a model of human relation that is not governed by the conventions of romantic or familial love - a model that is, in the deepest sense, more inclusive and more capacious.

The broader context of the novel's family structures also reinforces this reading. The Tanaka household, which consists of Yuichi and Eriko, is already a family that exists outside the conventional parameters: it has no mother in the biological sense, its father has transitioned to a feminine identity, and it is constituted not by legal or biological ties but by choice and mutual care. As Uematsu states, "[b]lood-related maternal relations are challenged with this text" (2023, p. 139). In other words, the family constituted around the kitchen and the dining table is emphatically not the conventional nuclear family of patriarchal ideology. It is instead what we might call an elective family, which is constituted by a group of individuals who choose to feed one another and, in doing so, choose to become kin. When Mikage moves into the house, she doesn't just fill a pre-existing social role, such as a daughter-in-law, girlfriend, or a roommate. Instead, she helps create a new kind of bond that doesn't have a label yet. The kitchen is the space where this new formation is enacted and sustained; it is the boding place where meals are cooked and shared, where the daily rituals of nourishment create the sense of belonging. *Kitchen* suggests that this kind of food-mediated kinship, grounded in shared practice rather than institutional definition, represents a more authentic and more resilient form of human community than the conventional family structures it supplants. Ultimately, food serves as the primary

medium through which the characters forge a relationship based neither on sexual intimacy nor prescribed familial roles.

The food-as-connector function also operates at the level of gender transgression more broadly. In *Kitchen*, the characters who cook and eat together are not divided by gender in the conventional way. Eriko, though biologically male, occupies a domestic role; Yuichi, though male, eats what Mikage cooks without this dynamic reinforcing a conventional gender hierarchy. The kitchen, in this sense, can function as a space where the fixed configurations of power are not merely inverted but brought into question, destabilised, reconstituted. In other words, the queering of the kitchen is achieved through the medium of food: by making food the primary language of connection and care, Yoshimoto disassociates the domestic from the feminine, nourishment from servitude, and intimacy from the conventional erotic economy.

The relationship between Mikage and Eriko warrants critical analysis as it represents a radical departure from traditional kinship structures. Eriko, who is Yuichi's father, now living as a woman and working as the proprietor of a bar, is one of the most distinctive characters in Japanese women's fiction of the period. She represents a radical transgression of gender norms not as a site of anxiety or pathos, as she might in a more conventional narrative, but as a figure of extraordinary vitality and warmth. Significantly, Mikage's initial connection to Eriko is mediated through food. When Eriko tells Mikage one early morning that she is hungry and there is nothing in the house, her suggestion is imply domestic, informal, and deeply intimate: "I'm always hungry in the morning, even though I'm still sleepy. But there's nothing to eat in this house. Let's call for takeout. What would you like?" (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 17). The beauty of this exchange lies in its sheer ordinariness. Yoshimoto is likely to suggest that true closeness is often found in the mundane

decisions of daily life rather than in grand, dramatic gestures. By asking Mikage what she wants for dinner, Eriko is doing more than just planning a meal; she is treating Mikage like a permanent member of the family rather than a temporary guest who needs to be impressed. This simple question signals a shift toward a shared domestic reality. It offers Mikage a sense of belonging that she has lacked since the death of her grandmother. Ultimately, the scene reinforces the idea that their bond is not built on rigid social roles, but on the informal routine of being hungry together. Similarly, when Eriko offers Mikage shelter not in exchange for money but for food - “instead of rent, just make us soupy rice once in a while” (Yoshimoto, 1993, p. 20) - the transaction establishes the terms of their relationship: a reciprocal economy of nourishment, in which the kitchen is the space where care is exchanged and belonging is constituted. This moment actually represents a radical departure from conventional social structures in which shelter is typically treated as a cold, financial transaction. By asking for a rice dish - which can be synonymous with warmth, ease, and healing - Eriko effectively replaces the cold logic of the market with love, understanding, and affection. Likewise, by removing money from the equation, she dissolves the power dynamic of landlord and tenant. Thus, she invites Mikage to participate in the maintenance of a shared home. In this regard, the kitchen is transformed into more than just a room; it becomes the heartbeat of a makeshift family and the primary site where belonging is actively constructed. Making rice ceases to be a chore and becomes a ritual of mutual care, which suggests that in the wake of loss, the most profound currency one can offer is the simple, honest effort of feeding one another. The examples given point to a broader dynamic. In *Kitchen*, food functions as a language, a system of communication that operates below the level of explicit statement and that can therefore articulate connections that social convention would otherwise foreclose. In a social context where Eriko’s identity renders her marginal and

where the conventions of gender and family that govern Tokyo life have no category for her, food provides a medium through which conventional categories are suspended, and genuine human contact becomes possible. The “kitchen in this novel is considered as a space where Mikage intimately connects with her adopted family [and] [e]ating together is an act that forges their bond as a family, not with blood, but with food” (Uematsu, 2023, p. 140).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Banana Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* is, at its deepest level, a political text - not in the sense of direct social commentary, but in the sense that it mobilises the apparently innocuous domestic space of the kitchen as a site of sustained ideological contestation. The paper has argued that this contestation operates through three interrelated movements. In the first, the kitchen functions as a sanctuary for grief and memory, offering Mikage a space of sensory continuity with her dead grandmother and a refuge from the atomising forces of modern urban life. In the second, the kitchen becomes a site of female empowerment and professional aspiration given that Mikage transforms her passion for food from private consolation into public competence. In the third, food functions as a medium of social connection that exceeds the conventions of both romantic love and biological kinship, thereby enabling the formation of elective families grounded in the shared practices of nourishment and care.

What unites these three movements is Yoshimoto’s refusal to accept the dominant ideology’s reduction of the kitchen to a site of women’s confinement and servitude. As Kousalya and Aruna put, in Yoshimoto’s fiction, “kitchen no longer mirrors as conformity when woman deliberately chooses it with love and will. The false conscious created by a culture which dictates a

woman's place is in the kitchen and interpellation of this idea into a woman's psyche gets erased when women started to question their own space in this world" (2021, p. 60). Mikage's relationship to the kitchen is always a chosen relationship -chosen in the sense that she returns to it not because social convention demands it but because it is genuinely the space through which she knows herself and constitutes her connection to others. This act of choice, in the context of late-1980s Japan, is a genuinely political act: it refuses the terms of a postfeminist ideology that celebrates women's freedom to choose while narrowing the range of choices available, and it insists on the possibility of inhabiting the domestic sphere on terms other than those prescribed by patriarchal culture.

In situating *Kitchen* within the broader frameworks of feminist food studies, Japanese cultural history, and postmodern theory, this study has sought to demonstrate that Yoshimoto's novel is a more politically complex and theoretically sophisticated text than it might at first appear. Its apparent simplicity, its quiet and domestic scale, or its focus on the intimate details of cooking and eating is not a limitation but a strategy: by locating her critique within the most mundane and ostensibly apolitical of spaces, Yoshimoto makes visible the political dimensions of the everyday that more explicitly polemical texts might leave unexamined. In this sense, *Kitchen* performs in its literary mode exactly what Mikage performs in her culinary mode: it transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, the domestic into the political, nourishment into art.

Finally, read through a Woolfian lens, Mikage's kitchen is indeed her room of one's own - the space in which she writes, in the language of food, the story of who she is and who she is becoming. Like Woolf's room, it is a space of creative autonomy and intellectual freedom. And like Woolf's argument, Yoshimoto's work insists that access to such a space is not a

luxury but a necessity - not merely for the individual woman, but for the possibility of a more capacious and more just form of human life.

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**WITH AN APPROACH OF FREUDIAN  
MELANCHOLY: EMOTIONAL BURNOUT OF  
THE CHARACTERS IN TERENCE  
RATTIGAN'S *THE DEEP BLUE SEA***

**Cemil Arda ŞAFAK<sup>1</sup>**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Terence Rattigan started to be recognized in the 1930s as a playwright, and he produced well-made plays “for what he called ‘Aunt Edna’ (his term for conservative audiences of theatregoers with little or no interest in experimental or avant-garde plays [...])” (Barnes, 1986, p. 199). Thus, he was also successful at reflecting the middle-class emotions and psychology. Rattigan’s play *The Deep Blue Sea*, which is considered his best play, is a perfect example of his above-given understanding in playwriting. In the play, two lovers “share a building with lower-middle-class residents of assorted identities, a common framework for Rattigan’s plots” (Rusinko, 1983, p. 81). The other characters are not much of a radical or distinctive type. Philip Welch is an office worker, Mrs. Elton is a curious landlady, and Mr. Miller appears as a former doctor whose licence is taken away from him, who is providing health services illegally. In Rattigan’s period, a woman with a sexual desire who runs off with her illicit affair was not something that can be taken normally. Yet, Rattigan seems to that he did not abstain from writing about it.

In addition to that, the writing process of *The Deep Blue Sea* was influenced by certain biographical elements, mainly by

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<sup>1</sup> MA Student, Suleyman Demirel University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, English Language and Literature Department, ORCID: 0009-0003-5353-3521

the secret lover, who is named Kenny Morgan. He was an actor and had been in a relationship with Rattigan for a decade. “Morgan left Rattigan for another man who treated him badly and took his own life in front of a gas fire” (Gardner). The inspired plot of abandonment, unreturned love, and a suicidal state are the clearest examples of biographical traces. It is almost impossible to deny that there are no biographical elements in the play; however, they are not the main concern in this article as a reference to his own private life.

*The Deep Blue Sea*, as a well-made play, is composed of a single day and setting in the apartment of Hester Collyer. The play, from the beginning until the end, shows us simultaneously the struggle of Hester’s decision to recover from her romance and suicide. At the very beginning of the play, the reader witnesses the failed suicide attempt of the heroine. In addition to the heroine of the play, many of the other major characters in the play are traumatically in loss of a certain thing in their lives. The play, with its melancholic atmosphere, requires a deep psychoanalytical approach to be able to comprehend the psychological background of the specific characters in the play.

From the very beginning, one is taken with the gloomy atmosphere and faced with the desperate situation of the play’s heroine. “On the floor in front of this, dimly seen in the darkened room, lies HESTER COLLYER [...]” (p. 1). This is the line appearing on the very first page as a stage direction in the play. It is concluded from these lines, and in what follows, that Hester, the heroine of the play, had a failed suicide attempt. *The Deep Blue Sea* has a kind of different taste with its distinctive plot. Terence Rattigan, with his characters, creates a psychological layer in his play, as Elsom states in his text

His heroine has been deserted by her wayward, ex-RAF lover. She has ruined her marriage, although her husband, an eminent Judge, is an understanding man. She is now

living in a dingy flat, poor and disillusioned. In a conventional ‘well-made play’, she would have taken a firm decision, probably to commit suicide. Rattigan rejected this crisis on the grounds that it was too pat and final: people don’t do things like that. Instead, she decides to struggle on alone [...] (p. 45)

As it is stated in the extract, the play is not an ordinary well-made play which ends with an ordinary expectation. Despite the condition she is in, Hester chooses not to surrender and bring the audience together as a representation of a modern woman who remains standing. In this paper, her psychological situation, as an individual suffering from melancholy, will be analysed. This psychoanalytical approach is supported by the fact that modern drama relies on giving characters profound psychological layers; with the advent of modernism, playwrights incorporate “psychology, sociology and physiology to create down-to-earth characters” (Demiray & Şekerci, 2024, p. 225). Well-drawn dramatic characters force the audience to “delve into the vast darkness of their psychologies” (Demiray & Şekerci, 2024, p. 225), which perfectly describes Rattigan’s goal of portraying emotional burnout and Freudian melancholy. As another example of his writing methods, the ones which are not being said are also important besides the uttered words of the characters. As it is given in *The Collected Plays of Terence Rattigan* (1953), Rattigan explains his technique in playwriting as optimizing the “most vital problems of the whole craft of playwriting-what not to have your actors say, and how best to have them not say (p. xx). As it can be inferred from these words, silence means a lot in Rattigan’s play. Related to *The Deep Blue Sea*, the characters are in repression, and this can be clearly observed through pauses, silences throughout the play, and their habits, such as Freddie playing golf and drinking alcohol, spending his time in vain all the time.

As for the methodology of this paper, it applies a close reading from the psychoanalytic point of view, which serves interdisciplinary studies as well. There is no certain academic article or research within the scope of Yök Thesis data, in this context, for the concerned play, *The Deep Blue Sea*, yet there are mostly general reviews by critics about it in several review sites, journals, and in book chapters. During my literary search, I could not reach primary sources directly for the playwright and play itself, yet I found mostly secondary sources. The reason why *The Deep Blue Sea* is chosen in this research is that it has the potential to shed light on an interdisciplinary field of study with its content. In this respect, there will be an analysis of the play with a certain psychoanalytical approach by delving into its aspects which are not discussed as a research object in this sense. The playwright has more than 20 plays, yet his play “*The Deep Blue Sea*” is considered to be the most appropriate to analyze the question of this research through the psychoanalytic scope. Ultimately, this paper aims to examine the psychological situation of the specific characters with their losses through the scope of Freudian melancholy and tries to understand what loss can mean to a person and how it can, psychologically, influence the life of an individual.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

To comprehend Freudian melancholy, the difference between mourning and melancholy should be clarified. Mourning, in contrast to melancholy, is “regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction [...]” (Freud, 1917. p. 243). This loss is not limited to certain things as above-mentioned, yet it can be a loss of an ideal, a liberty, or in many senses. Mourning is, ultimately, the natural psychological process of a person after a certain loss of a serious thing, yet, somehow,

this type of process can react in an opposite way among different individuals, which may end with melancholy in psychoanalytical terms. Freud enumerates three prerequisites of an individual with melancholy, which are “loss of the object, ambivalence, and regression of libido into the ego” (p. 258). Three of these prerequisites will be mentioned in this paper, and they will be used for the analysis of the play in the third part. As it is mentioned, melancholy can be seen in individuals who cannot deal with this loss process in a healthy way and encounter several situations. Melancholy, in comparison to mourning, distinguishes itself with

a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. (Freud, 1917, p. 244)

It can be clearly seen that melancholy is more like a neurotic version of mourning, in which the person diagnosed with melancholy loses oneself respect through the process, and blames one’s self, which is missing in the mourning. Considering the above-mentioned problems, melancholy, in comparison to mourning, is way more serious and problematic for a person to struggle with. Besides, people mostly assume that mourning and melancholy, which both stem from a loss, are limited to certain topics such as death. However, these definitions of Freud explain a lot, which widens the scope and clarifies the meanings of the concepts.

There is another important concept that is important in melancholy, which is ambivalence. “In melancholia, accordingly, countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this

position of the libido against the assault” (Freud, 1917, p. 256). Love and hate ambivalence is, as Freud states, another crucial concept in psychoanalysis. This ambivalence creates a kind of war, with a binary opposition, in one’s conscious and controls the melancholic individual toward the loss phenomenon. This binary situation may not be easily realized in a person if it is not analyzed in psychoanalytical sense. Love and hate ambivalence consumes the melancholic individual just as the heroine experiences in the concerning play.

The regression of libido into the ego, according to Freud's enumeration, is the third important concept in melancholic neurosis. The loved object, which can be defined as “an attachment of the libido to a particular person” (Freud, 1917, p. 249), is the key figure in melancholic individuals. The object cathexis, which is the process of investing one’s libido in an object or a person, is observed to “have little power of resistance” (p. 249), yet the free libido, in Freud’s assumption, “was withdrawn into the ego” (p. 249). This means that this emotional investment, object cathexis in Freudian terms, is destroyed after the loss. In mourning, as it is mentioned above, a healthy individual would invest his/her libido into another love object and carry on after completing the mourning process, yet in melancholy, a melancholic individual cannot progress; he/she takes that object-cathexis, namely psychic energy, into their ego, and faces self-torment, a loss of self-esteem by including this loss phenomenon in their own personality. In a mourning process, one starts to accept the trauma and heal by moving away from the loss. As Freud explains, “Reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object” (p. 244). However, the melancholic individual shows a different attitude “which is lacking in mourning-an extraordinary diminution in his

self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale” (p. 246).

In the upcoming chapter, the melancholy, which is assumed to be observed in specific characters, will be analysed from this theoretical information, and the influences of the melancholy on individuals will be inferred.

### **3. ANALYSIS**

Rattigan states that “I have always held the, perhaps, prejudiced view that it is really the gentler emotions-pity, compassion, nostalgia, love, regret-that are likely to inspire the most worthwhile and durable drama” (as cited in Bertolini, 2016, p. 2). It can be concluded from these sentences of the playwright that he was apt to write and reflect on the universal emotions. Rattigan’s view, concerning the drama, bears a resemblance to an Ibsenian drama with its questioning aspect and the social realities which reflect in his plays. In *The Deep Blue Sea*, Rattigan digs deeper into the psychological aspect of the characters in the play; in addition to this, he does that also with his silences and pauses, in other words, with the words which remain unuttered. The loss of characters in the play in a Freudian sense, and the psychological situations of theirs, as an observation of the human condition under a melancholic attitude, will be analyzed in this part through a psychoanalytic approach. Rattigan demonstrates many losses of the characters through their experiences, which they have gone through, these losses result in different psychological attitudes which represent the emotional burnout of the characters. The dialogues between the characters and what they mean to each other mean a lot for psychoanalytical resolution. In light of this information, the melancholy of Hester, Freddie, and Collyer will be analyzed and resolved.

### **3.1. Loss Of Love as an Ideal: Hester Collyer**

At the beginning of the play, Philip, the office worker, realizes the escape of the gas in the apartment and heads to the location of it. With a pass key, Philip, Ann, and Mrs. Elton enter Hester's flat. Philip finds the "prostrate Hester by the fire" (Rattigan, 1953, p. 294), and a bottle of aspirin on the floor. From the beginning, the heroine of the play shows up with her failed suicide attempt to the audience. In psychoanalysis, one with melancholy wants themselves to suffer due to their self-reproach and self-accusations. Freud exemplifies these attitudes as "he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished" (Freud, 1917, p. 246). As in the example of Freud, Hester wants herself to punish with a suicide.

After Hester regains consciousness, she starts moaning, "If you – only would – understand [...] forgive bad writing – poor Freddie – poor darling Freddie" (Rattigan, 1953, p. 296). Hester, still trying to come to herself, unconsciously mutters about Freddie, even after recovering. It is understood that Freddie was the remnant figure in her unconscious, and it was a foreshadowing that there was something related to him in this suicide. As Freud (1923) states, "The repressed is the prototype of the unconscious" (p. 15). In Hester's unconscious, Freddie is the repressed love object which was drawn into her ego, and echoes in her words as an outburst of her subconscious. Even after her awake, she keeps thinking about her, and it reflects in her words.

Mrs. Elton, with a caring attitude, asks what made her do that, and Hester assumes that it was the devil, and later she says "when you're between any kind of devil and the deep blue sea, the deep blue sea sometimes looks very inviting. It did last night" (Rattigan, 1953, p. 308). These words by Hester show her suicidal attitude in an honest way. She feels that she got drawn into the deep blue sea of life as a type of surrender with suicide. A couple

of sentences later, Mrs Elton asks what she would feel if Mr. Page was found lying there today, and there occurs a dialogue:

Mrs. Elton: Now supposing it had been Mr. Page and not you that we'd found lying there this morning, how would you have felt?

Hester: Very, very surprised.

Mrs. Elton: Nothing more?

Hester: Oh yes. A lot more, A whole universe more. (With a faint smile.) He's not lying there. He's playing golf. (p. 308)

From this dialogue, there might be two possible interpretations, which may imply her love and hate ambivalence towards Freddie as her love object, or her heartbroken attitude toward him. From her words and attitudes, the first one appears to be having a more chance to be real. She, as if insidiously, says she would have felt more than surprised with a faint smile. This sounds an inwardly hate towards Freddie, since he doesn't return her love, and causes a disappointment in her idea of love. This unreturned passion-based feeling of Freddie also plants the seeds of her present situation of melancholy in which she suffers from self-reproach, lack of self-esteem, and a vortex of emotional burnout. Later in the play, Collyer wonders what her emotions were while talking of her suicide; Hester names those emotions as "Anger, hatred and shame – in about equal parts I think" (Rattigan, 1953, p. 311). Then, there occurs a dialogue:

Collyer: Anger – at Page?

Hester: Yes

Collyer: And hatred-?

Hester: Of myself, of course. (Pause.) Shame at being alive. (p. 312)

From this dialogue, it can be concluded that her self-hatred attitude is a great example of a melancholic individual. As Hester says with confidence, she identifies the hatred with herself

rather than him. This self-hatred attitude converts into a hatred towards the self after the love object is withdrawn into the ego and remains covered as a hatred toward the love object, yet she is unaware of it as a melancholic individual. Hester and Page have a relationship. Another example is when Hester, in her speech with Collyer, says If Freddie has started to drink in ten months, “it must be I who’ve driven him to it” (Rattigan, 1953, p. 335). Later, Collyer says that it must be him who has caused you to attempt suicide, and Hester says, “No. I drove myself there” (p. 335). From these very lines, one can realize that Hester is in the mood of self-reproach as Freud defines for the one with melancholy. Freud comes up with a reasoning to the core of self-reproaches and assumes that “the self reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient’s own ego” (Freud, 1917, p. 248). As it can be observed from the dialogues, Hester blames herself for all the evil things has befallen to her. She blames herself for the suicide, blames herself, and feels self-hatred.

However, from the beginning, Hester, deep down inside, knew that she had lost her idea of love because he never truly loved her. Even though she knew that he didn’t love her, she kept deceiving herself, and she confesses this to Collyer in their conversation:

Collyer: You said just now his feelings for you hadn’t changed.

Hester: They haven’t, Bill. They couldn’t, you see. Zero minus zero is still zero

Collyer: How long have you known this?

Hester: From the beginning. (Rattigan, 1953, p. 313)

So, it can be understood that Hester was in an illusion, an illusion of love which was one-sided. Hester’s loss is her ideal of love. This ideal, embodied in Freddie, is lost earlier, yet forgetting the birthday was the last straw. Thus, the reader only finds a

chance to observe her present situation; the former is implied in these dialogues, in these confessions.

Hester warns Philip, saying “If ever you should meet him, you will, above all, be particularly careful not to mention anything of this to him, won’t you?” (p. 307). However, Freddie, later, asks for a cigarette, and Hester, unconsciously and directly, answers “There are some in my dressing-gown pocket” (p. 320). Normally, she put the letter in her dressing-gown so that she could hide it, yet her unconscious hate, her ambivalent emotional attitude, wanted him to find it, read it, and make him suffer for what he caused. It is a typical behavior of a melancholic individual with binary feelings, as in the example. She suffers from the love and hate ambivalence towards her love object, which she internalized in her ego. She is not even aware of her psychology yet keeps maintaining that relationship since she is kind of addicted to him.

Hester’s loss of the idea of love is much more clearly shown during her conversation with Collyer, when he is trying to convince her to be with him again. Hester, stating that they were a bad match, explains that “Oh, I’m not denying you married for love – for your idea of love. And so did I – for my idea of love. The trouble seems to be they weren’t the same ideas” (p. 354). She also says to Collyer that he just wanted from her “to be a loving wife” (p. 354). These confrontations reveal that Hester experienced the loss of love as an ideal not only with Freddie, but also with Collyer, as well. Hester, as a clergyman’s daughter, was a naive, and brought up in an isolated way, thus her naiveté caused her to face with the reality of life with her mismatched relationships.

With her speech to Miller after her second attempt at suicide, Miller tells her that “You are dying because you feel unworthy to live. Isn’t that true?” (p. 361). Later, Hester asks, “If you could find me one extenuating circumstance – one single

reason why I should respect myself – even a little” (Rattigan, 1953, p. 364). It is an explicit example of a melancholic individual who is in loss of self-respect and tries to regain it in a healthy way. Hester, towards the end, realizes that she needs to cut loose all ties with Freddie to heal. At the end of the play, Hester sees Freddie off and, with self-esteem, “HESTER (loudly and clearly). Goodbye [...] HESTER stands rigid, her face utterly expressionless” (p. 366). And she shows signs of life by turning out all the lights but a reading lamp. Her loud and clear voice while saying goodbye is a great example of staying up and strong. In light of all these examples, Hester, as an individual with melancholy, suffered a lot from her addiction to Freddie, connectedness to her love object by internalizing him. This also caused her not to focus on her own life and to be obsessed with having the courage to attempt suicide in his sake.

### **3.2. Loss of Meaning as an Ideal: Freddie Page**

Freddie, a former R.A.F. pilot, suffers from a post-war mental depression and melancholy, and this reflects on his own life and his relationship. He is an alcoholic who lost his job, roaming around without any purpose. When Jackie says that he assumes he does not want to go to South America, Freddie answers that he does not “want to go anywhere- as a test pilot” (Rattigan, 1953, p. 324). Later it is understood that being a war pilot affected him badly. Pointing the glass of alcohol in his hand, he says, “This stuff isn’t exactly what the doctor ordered for nerve and judgement” (p. 324). Freddie, after losing his job, had a loss of meaning, a loss of his way in life. There are some certain occupations which requires a great dedication and mentality in life, and being an R.A.F pilot in that period could be a true example of that. Even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the play, Freddie lost his way not only after he started his relationship with Hester, but also mainly because of his post-war period.

Hester says that “his life stopped in 1940 [...] He’s never been happy since he left the R.A.F.” (Rattigan, 1953, p. 337). When Hester and Freddie first met, He gave sincere explanations of his private life to Hester. As Hester mentions, with sentences such as “he talked very honestly and rather touchingly about himself- how worried he was about his future, how his life seemed to have no direction or purpose” (p. 337). Freddie’s mood as an R.A.F pilot explains the disillusionment of the post-war period and its mood. In that period, frustration and disillusionment were the dominating mood. When Hester and Freddie argue after he shares that he accepted his job offer as a pilot again, Hester says that “After that crash in Canada you told me you had no nerve or judgement left” (p. 341). Freddie’s decision to accept the job offer explains her melancholic situation. As a person with melancholy, he has no self-respect or any kind of expectation from life. He just spontaneously tries to have a kind of alteration in his life and returns to be a pilot again, even though he does not want that. He spends his time playing golf and drinking alcohol all the time; he, without any further scrutiny, accepts the job. This behavior reflects a recognized trope in modern drama for characters dealing with emotional voids; similarly, characters like Oscar Madison in Neil Simon’s *The Odd Couple* throw weekly poker games and drink to “escape his loneliness” and alleviate the alienation caused by their broken marriages (Şekerci & Demiray, 2024, p. 130).

While Freddie and Hester are arguing, Hester wants Freddie to leave, since Collyer will be coming. Freddie, without self-esteem, says to Hester that “And of course you don’t want your respectable art lover to see me in my present state” (p. 327). A person with melancholy loses his/her self-esteem and gets into a mood of a sort of an inferiority complex. As Freud explains, a melancholic person reflects his self to the outside world “as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable

[...]” (Freud, 1917, p. 246). As it is supported in psychoanalytical frame: Freddie belittles himself while talking to Hester. He, as an alcoholic wandering around without a job, despises himself as inferior since Hester will be having a meeting in an occupational sense. Earning money is a typical symbol of having importance in today’s world, and this dialogue is a great example of that for a couple such as Freddie and Hester. They are both unemployed, yet a man should be the one who is earning money before the woman, as in many cultures, and in the play, Freddie is overwhelmed with Hester’s painting sale. In conclusion, Freddie, as a man in the modern world, after his career as an R.A.F. pilot, finds himself in a void, and gads about during this process of melancholy and loses his own self. Melancholy, in a psychoanalytical sense, has a kind of weaker influence on this individual. Freddie suffers from different ideals in life rather than a strong one, such as love.

### **3.3. Loss of Authority and Manhood: William Collyer**

As it is mentioned in the introduction part, the insinuations are found in abundance in the dialogues of the characters. It can be understood that Collyer still has his anger over losing his wife and self-respect from the dialogue between Hester and Collyer:

Collyer: I haven’t ever been to Sunningdale since-

Hester: You still feel so strongly?

Collyer: You know I do. (Rattigan, 1953, p. 310)

Collyer, as a judge in the town, is a well-known person who has authority and charisma in his milieu. The real reason why Collyer wants her back and feels anger towards this event is that he is suffering from the loss of authority and his manhood after Hester ran away with her illicit affair and cheated on him. Collyer’s ego is shattered, and he wants to regain his manhood by asking Hester to come back and live under his wing. Earlier in the play, the reader learns from Mrs. Elton’s informing of Ann that

Hester “hadn’t been able to get herself a divorce” (p. 300). This information supports the idea that Collyer wants to protect his authoritarian position in society. Since he is a reputable judge, this affair made him lose his ideals.

Freddie asks Collyer, “Still love Hes?” (p. 339), and Collyer, later in the conversation, answers Hester as, “The question Page asked me just now. The answer is yes (p. 340). Collyer, using an implication as in many other dialogues with Hester, reveals that he is, supposedly, in love with her. Despite her liaison with Freddie, Collyer still seems to have feelings for Hester. However, as it is mentioned before, these feelings are not pure as in a love affair. Collyer’s injured self wishes to complete itself by dominating her love object as before. In a psychoanalytical sense, in the mourning process the world gets empty and meaningless for the individual, yet in melancholy “it is the ego itself” (Freud, 1917, p. 246). The ego of Collyer is injured by Hester’s indignity. This resulted in several behaviours such as Collyer’s not letting Hester have a divorce and controlling her this way. This melancholic position brought about ego-satisfying behaviors in Collyer.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, considering the play itself and the aspect which is focused on in this research, the psychoanalytical background of the characters is of vital importance to their views, behaviours, and comments. Terence Rattigan says that “I still believe that the best plays are about people, not about things” (as cited in Seavill, n.d.). From his words, one can possibly infer that Rattigan tends to write his characters with a psychological background in his plays, and *The Deep Blue Sea* could be given as a great example for this kind of understanding in playwriting. In the play, the characters who are involved in the love triangle,

Hester, Freddie, and Collyer are suffering from melancholy, and they all have reasons for that. This melancholic state has an influence on their lives, and this echoes in their actions. This paper aimed to examine these actions and behaviours according to the situations of the abovementioned characters with melancholy in the Freudian sense. Also, the influence of this psychoanalytical problem on individuals tried to be analyzed, and given in detail.

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## **THE AESTHETICS OF BOREDOM IN HAROLD PINTER'S *THE DUMB WAITER* (1960) AND *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY* (1957)**

**Burak Raşit OÇAK<sup>1</sup>**

What happens when nothing happens? Traditional drama is based on the idea that theatre depends on action, movement, and conflict. Also, Aristotle's definition of tragedy builds upon the same idea. "For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action" (Aristotle, 2013). Harold Pinter's early plays confront this assumption and deny it by transforming waiting, silence and delay into a form of theatrical experience. Contrary to being empty scenes, these specific moments of inactivity and waiting generate an aesthetic of boredom that boldly reshapes the spectator's experience of attention. In his plays, the aesthetic side of boredom is enacted through repetitive routines, time-killing activities, pauses, silences, and prolonged inactivity.

Regardless of whether there is little or no observable physical or dramatic action in his plays, it should be noted that Pinter's plays offer plenty of opportunities for the audience to find meaning and interpret the play as it continues. Instead of disengagement, despite long pauses between dialogue, repetitive conversations, and/or delayed reactions from actors, these components offer a new type of engagement/attention for the audience. Furthermore, this is also supported by Pinter himself in his following words: "There are two silences. One when no word

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<sup>1</sup> Suleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language and Literature Master's Student, ORCID: 0009-0000-3254-0683.

is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed.” (Pinter, 1969). In this sense, Pinter's own words are a form of indicator that the way silence and boredom are used in his work is not just about a lack of action, but of creating an entire dramatic event that changes the audience's understanding of what to expect or how meaning from this boredom is created in that piece of work. The central question, therefore, is not why nothing happens but how this inactivity becomes dramatically meaningful.

This research examines the boredom aesthetic as a framework to answer the above question. While traditionally seen as either a type of psychological condition or an indicator of an existential crisis, boredom can also serve as a dramatic device. Waiting, repetition, silence, and dramatic stasis, elements of boredom, are used to analyse boredom and its capacity to create new and interesting aesthetics through the works of Pinter: *The Dumb Waiter* (1960) and *The Birthday Party* (1957). Hence, this work aims to examine how Pinter transforms boredom into a theatrical device that redirects audience attention and expectation, ultimately defining how those expectations are redirected without action.

### **1.1. Pinter and Boredom**

Before starting, it is necessary to note that Harold Pinter has been associated with Absurdism many times since the publication of *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961). Many literary critics have emphasized the aspects of uncertainty and lack of meaning in Pinter's plays. At the same time, his works have also been examined through existentialist lenses, most notably in relation to isolation, identity, and the instability of meaning (Burkman, 1971). These approaches have helped with significant contributions to our understanding of Pinter's drama.

In addition to absurdist and existentialist perspectives, scholars have also drawn attention to the menace that is boldly visible in Pinter's plays. Moreover, the term "comedy of menace" (Wardle, 1958) was first associated with Pinter by British critic Irving Wardle, who remarked on the continuous tension beneath ordinary conversations and everyday situations.

There are various themes and philosophical concepts that are discussed by several prominent critics and frameworks related to Pinter's theatre. These include repetition, waiting, and prolonged inactivity and dramatic stasis on the part of the actors. However, these elements are often pushed aside for movements like the absurd, existentialism, or power relations, or also known as, hierarchy. When analysed from this perspective, it becomes easy to understand that scholars devote less attention to the spectators experience and effects of these frameworks on audience.

Regarding the "Boredom Aesthetic," the exact question "Why boredom and not existentialism?" arises in the minds, but it should be clarified that this chapter employs boredom not as an alternative to existentialist interpretations but as a complementary analytical framework.

While existentialist theories mainly explore the meaning of the aforementioned conditions (Esslin, 1961), boredom aesthetics analyzes how those conditions arise and are experienced in theatre settings. Boredom in theatre (and in cinema) is not concerned with the philosophical implications of alienation or uncertainty; instead, boredom focuses on the dramaturgical means by which those conditions arise. Examples of such dramaturgical means include long pauses, repeated dialogues, delayed action, and dramatic stasis. Each of these devices serves not only to comment on existentialist ideas but also

to dictate the audience's experience of expectation and focus on audience. (Çağlayan, 2016).

Both sensations are clearly evident in two of Pinter's earlier plays, *The Birthday Party* (1957) and *The Dumb Waiter* (1960). The characters are frequently left waiting, repeating similar actions/routines, or having what appear to be unimportant conversations with each other. An existentialist reading of these situations would see them as indicative of alienation or a lack of meaning. A boredom-centred reading, however, asks a different question: how do these moments function aesthetically in the performance itself? An example can be drawn from “The Birthday Party,” where the breakfast conversation between Meg and Stanley appears, at first, dramatically insignificant and repetitive. However, the repetitive and ordinary nature of their communication draws the audience’s attention to what might happen.

PETEY. What?

MEG. Is that you?

PETEY. Yes, it’s me.

MEG. What? (Her face appears at the hatch.) Are you back?

PETEY. Yes.

MEG. I’ve got your cornflakes ready. (She disappears and reappears.) Here’s your cornflakes.

*He rises and takes the plate from her, sits at the table, props up the paper and begins to eat. MEG enters by the kitchen door.*

Are they nice?

PETEY. Very nice.

A similar example can be found in *The Dumb Waiter*. While waiting for instructions, Gus repeatedly occupies himself with trivial matters and asks unnecessary questions about everyday topics. His conversations with Ben revolve around everyday matters. These repetitive exchanges do not advance the plot at all; they only prolong the wait and kill time. As a result, spectators become attentive to the anticipated event that has not yet occurred, thereby transforming boredom into expectation. An example from the play is below.

GUS. What time is he getting in touch?

BEN reads.

What time is he getting in touch?

BEN. What's the matter with you? It could be any time. Any time.

GUS (moves to the foot of BEN's bed). Well, I was going to ask you something.

BEN. What?

GUS. Have you noticed the time that tank takes to fill?

BEN. What tank?

GUS. In the lavatory.

BEN. No, Does it?

GUS. Terrible.

BEN. Well, what about it?

GUS. What do you think's the matter with it?

BEN. Nothing.

GUS. Nothing?

## **1.2. Limitations and Methodology**

In recent decades, boredom has emerged as a significant interdisciplinary field of inquiry. The establishment of the Journal

of Boredom Studies and the activities of the International Society of Boredom Studies demonstrate the growing academic interest in boredom across disciplines as diverse as philosophy, psychology, literary studies, theatre and performance studies, architecture, education, sociology, and cultural studies. Within the humanities, boredom aesthetics has received significant attention in cinema studies, especially in the field of slow cinema. Scholars such as Çağlayan (2016; 2018) and Quaranta (2023) have examined the relationship between boredom, temporality, spectatorship and aesthetic experience through the cinematic medium.

Though there is far less research in this area compared to other disciplines, there are still some studies that address the concept of boredom specifically within theatre/performance. For instance, Phillips (2009) points out that the perceived boredom apparent in Beckett's works is an intentional artistic choice, rather than a deficiency. Phillips's (2019) PhD dissertation examines how modern drama challenges the conventional audience engagement associated with traditional drama through the creation of alternate means of attention relating to the characteristics of duration, repetition, and dedramatization. Additionally, the anonymous blog post "*On Boredom in the Theatre*" (2019) offers its own critique of the often-held assumption that boredom is a sign of failure or deficiency; the blog similarly posits that dedramatization, waiting, slowness, and inactivity could potentially facilitate audience attention. All of these studies demonstrate that boredom is not necessarily an indication of deficiency, but rather an aesthetic mechanism through which attention can be redirected.

Continually, the use of boredom aesthetics when studying theatre, and in particular Pinter's plays, has not been studied at all, which makes it more difficult than one would think to locate any sources about the boredom aesthetic and Pinter. This chapter

will attempt to fill this gap by looking at how waiting, repetition, silence, and dramatic stasis work as aesthetic strategies in Pinter's earlier works. The main goal of this study is to offer a dramaturgical model that brings both characters and spectators together by focusing on experience rather than the traditional focus on 'meaninglessness' in interpretations of the theatre of the absurd. This study will also link performance and audience experience by way of how Pinter's work was created to go beyond the bounds of literary and philosophical interpretations of Pinter's writing.

The primary method used in this study is close reading of textual analyses of scenes from Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1957) and *The Dumb Waiter* (1960). The supporting focus of my analyses is the elements of waiting, repetition, and dedramatization. This paper also relies on interdisciplinary literature on boredom, most evident in philosophy and film studies, to support an extended theoretical framework. Hence, Çağlayan's works, which are state-of-the-art sources, are also used as powerful resources and cited throughout the work.

### **1.3. Theoretical Background**

Martin Heidegger was an influential philosopher whose work on boredom has had great impact on this topic prior to any research into boredom becoming interdisciplinary in nature. In his work "*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*" (1995), he argued that there are two ways we experience time - we can experience it as an emotion, and we can also experience it as a "particular mode of experiencing time". Heidegger went on to describe boredom as being more than just an emotion, but also a condition of experiencing time highly different than we usually do. When boredom occurs, time no longer passes as usual and becomes something we can feel is heavy or burdensome, to the point where it is difficult for us to cope with the idea of time itself.

Time becomes something that is perceived as very heavy, and we are unable to deal with this knowledge because our awareness of time has changed.

Heidegger's theory of boredom includes many types of boredom, but the concept of "zeitvertreib," meaning to "pass time" or "kill time" is important to our study. According to Heidegger, people participate in activities in order to escape from the experience of boredom due to the emptiness or slowness of time. Engaging in these activities does not eliminate boredom, but instead creates distractions that cover the experience of it. In order to fill the experience of time and protect the self from the direct experience of boredom, people create a variety of ways such as through waiting in a waiting room, making small talk, and engaging in repetitive/insignificant activities.

Using aspects of boredom as a guideline for both audiences and readers of Pinter's plays helps explain the situations in these plays. Characters pass the time by engaging in trivial activities, having repetitive conversations from scene to scene, or following their usual routines. At the same time, they wait for the next thing to take place. For example, in *The Dumb Waiter*, Ben repeatedly reads newspaper stories while Gus engages in everyday discussions about tea, matches, and household objects. These activities are highly likely to appear meaningless from one perspective. However, they can also be understood as forms of Zeitvertreib, an attempt to fill time and avoid uncertainty and inactivity.

This most accurately reflects the concept of dramatic stasis. In this instance, we see McCann is repetitively completing the same motion, tearing and again, tearing again; therefore, there is no conflict and no information exchanged or action completed. The equal size of the five strips of paper is also not arbitrary; instead, the exactness implies a menacing quality. Thus, the

audience has watched a single course of action (McCann's performance of *zeitvertreib*) that does not have any meaning other than to continue to allow McCann to wait or relieve himself of time by performing an absolutely meaningless repeated physical act. This act, once again, creates an expectation by the spectators to think about “what will happen next” or “what can possibly happen to these characters.” The inactivity of the play creates a sense of expectation of future possibilities for the characters.

#### **1.4. Boredom Aesthetics and Situational Boredom**

Contemporary scholars who study boredom often refer to existential forms of boredom more when compared to the less abstract ones, the best example of this is situational boredom. While existential boredom addresses broader questions of meaning and existence, situational boredom arises in specific circumstances characterized by inactivity, repetition, and waiting. Lars Svendsen argues that boredom is not always a profound philosophical or existential condition; it can also arise from everyday experiences. He himself describes situational boredom as “Much boredom derives from repetition. I am often bored, for example, when I go to museums and galleries and find only pale imitations of works I have already seen far too many times. I am bored when I hear a lecture for the fourth time, and I am bored when I give a lecture for the fourth time.” In these experiences, one feels that time slows down and meaningful activities are suspended (Lars Svendsen, 2013, p. 41).

From an aesthetic point of view, situational boredom is generally produced with formal techniques that reduce dramatic momentum. On the contrary, in conflict or in action-packed plots, these techniques draw attention to the experience of time itself. Three concepts are primarily relevant in this context: dramatic stasis, delayed action, and dedramatization. These are key

techniques for creating a sense of boredom and a boredom aesthetic in drama.

Stasis or Dramatic Stasis is the condition of dramatic immobility. In the state of stasis, characters remain trapped in repetitive routines or circumstances from which they are unable or unwilling to escape. Dramatic energy is therefore redirected away from action.

Another mechanism is delayed action, whereby expected actions are repeatedly postponed. Rather than delivering instant dramatic resolution or action, the narrative prolongs uncertainty and anticipation. The audience becomes acutely aware not only of what might happen but also of the prolonged interval before it does.

Finally, dedramatization refers to the reduction of conventional drama techniques. Dramatic aspects that may seem indispensable at their core are removed. Such action can be exemplified by inaction, a proper revelation, and conflict, ultimately leaving the audience with unresolved tensions.

The combination of these objects plays a significant role in the production of aesthetic boredom. These objects are not only representative of boredom as a theme; they also alter the spectator's sense of duration and attention. For that reason, these objects are useful for exploring how boredom operates in Pinter's selected plays.

### **1.5. Analysis of *The Dumb Waiter***

The play opens without dialogue. The stage directions establish two men in a basement room. Ben is lying on a bed, reading a newspaper, and Gus is sitting on the opposite bed, trying to tie his shoelaces with difficulty. The first word of the play is "Silence". What follows this opening is a sequence of purposeless physical actions. Gus rises, walks toward the door, stops, shakes

his foot, kneels, removes his shoe, finds a flattened matchbox in it, examines it, pockets it, and puts the shoe back on. He repeats the same sequence with the other shoe and finds a flattened cigarette package. He exits. A lavatory chain is pulled offstage twice, but the lavatory does not flush. Silence again. These sequences have no dramatic action. Nothing is advanced, nothing is revealed, nothing is resolved. In Heidegger's terms, what the audience witnesses is a theatrical staging of *zeitvertreib*, the act of killing time as a response to the unbearable weight of emptiness. As described earlier, *zeitvertreib* does not dissolve boredom. The individual only fills the emptiness with small occupations, not to accomplish anything at all. Gus's repeated actions function in this way. The matchbox and cigarette package have no importance at all; they serve as props just to kill some time.

What makes this scene dramaturgically important is not only what it means for the characters but also what feeling it arouses in the audience. This deliberate slowness and repetition of the sequence suspend the spectator in a state of attentiveness. The inexistence of dialogue, action, or any dramatic signal that the audience is used to redirects the audience's attention from "what is happening?" to "what may happen?"

A similar but different mechanism operates in speeches about the cricket photograph. While the opening sequence suspends dialogue entirely, this moment produces its boredom aesthetic through language itself.

Gus notices a photograph on the wall and calls Ben's attention to it.

GUS. There's a photo here of the first eleven.

BEN. What first eleven?

GUS (studying the photo). It doesn't say.

Then Gus studies the photo and notes that the cricketers all look a bit old. Ben asks “What about the tea?”. The exchange ends there, unresolved. This is an instance of dedramatization. The photograph leads to no revelation, the exchange does not advance the plot, and nothing about the characters’ situation is disclosed. As we know, conventional dramas use even minor details, like a photograph, to give information about or deepen the character. Pinter does neither of these. What remains is pure dedramatization. An object is noticed, discussed, and abandoned. This scene produces its own dramatic effect. The audience follows the speeches on the stage while another form of attention gathers around the question that the play has so far refused to answer: who are these men, and what are they waiting for? The more characters interact with the unimportant details, the more forcefully the audience feels the pressure of what remains unspoken. Here, dedramatization does not function as a dramatic failure; rather, it serves as a technique of suspension: by holding the expected drama, content, and action, Pinter compels the audience to attend to their absence.

As we move through the play, this light-the-kettle exchange continues to illustrate how all of our characters are affected by this *zeitvertreib*. The first scene of the play fills time through physical means; in this scene, waiting is filled through the use of language. An argument also serves to fill up void time (*zeitvertreib*) until the job actually happens. In the first part of the scene, Ben gives Gus a simple instruction to light the kettle. Gus then misinterprets the instruction as it refers to the gas. Ben insists that if he says light the kettle, then he means light the kettle and not put on the kettle; therefore, there is an extended argument over one linguistic difference, light the kettle versus put on the kettle, which eventually culminates in Ben putting his hands around Gus’ throat.

This verbal exchange is designed repetitively by design. The same phrases return; they're slightly reframed, each time with Ben's register shifting further from argument toward pressure.

BEN. If I say go and light the kettle, I mean go and light the kettle.

GUS. How can you light a kettle?

BEN. It's a figure of speech! Light the kettle. It's a figure of speech!

While this scene may appear to visualize Pinter's well-known aspect, "comedy of menace," it is, in fact, boredom that creates the conditions for this menace to surface. The prolonged waiting and the absence of any meaningful activity, along with the repetition of the same trivial exchange, build up beneath the dialogue as a kind of pressure. What erupts in the light of the kettle argument is not menace arriving from outside, but the tension that has been building from the very beginning.

Here, the boredom reaches its turning point. The audience, whose attention has been redirected from "what is happening" to "what may happen," now confronts an action that is entirely produced through language.

Another important scene is when Ben gives Gus instructions. It is the most precise instance of dramatic stasis in the play. The accumulated waiting of the play, the boredom that has filled the room, the shoes, the lavatory chain, the cricket photograph, the kettle argument, have all been a form of marking time before this moment. Now the job has arrived, the action is here.

Ben and Gus sit side by side on the bed. Ben delivers the instructions for the job. Gus repeats each line back automatically.

The stage direction is unambiguous. The instructions are stated and repeated automatically. What follows is a call-and-response.

BEN. When we get the call, you go over and stand behind the door.

GUS. Stand behind the door.

BEN. If there's a knock on the door you don't answer it.

GUS. If there's a knock on the door I don't answer it.

BEN. But there won't be a knock on the door.

GUS. So I won't answer it.

Nothing moves. Nothing is discovered. The scene has no dramatic development in any conventional sense. It is a repetition of a repetition, a rehearsal of something the character had done so many times before. Gus himself signals this by stating “What for? We always do it the same way, don't we?”. This repetition is not new. It has been performed before, and it will be performed again. However, this is exactly where dramatic stasis reveals its aesthetic function. The audience at this point in the play knows enough to understand that “the bloke” who is coming will not simply be a visitor. The instructions stand behind the door; shut it behind him; take out your gun; nobody says a word; describe a killing; and what may happen becomes what will happen, leaving the audience to sit with that knowledge in the same stillness as the characters.

The final moments of the play return to the silence with which it began. However, now that silence carries the full weight of everything that has happened. Ben receives the call through the speaking tube. The target has arrived, the normal method to be employed. He calls for Gus. The lavatory flushes offstage, the first time it has worked all play. The door opens.

Gus stumbles in. He is stripped of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster, and revolver. He stops, body stooping, his arms at his

sides. He raises his head and looks at Ben. A long silence. They stare at each other. Curtain.

No words are spoken. No explanation is offered. The play ends exactly as it began. Two men in a room, looking at each other, in silence. However, the silence is no longer the silence of waiting. It is the silence of recognition. Gus is the target. Ben is the executioner. The job that has been approaching through the play, the job that Ben has been performing *zeitvertreib* has arrived, and Pinter refuses to dramatize it. There is no confrontation, no confession, no resolution. The curtain falls on without any resolution. This is where the boredom aesthetic completes its work. The audience has spent the entire play in a state of suspended attention; they are redirected from action to anticipation. What may happen has at last become visible, not as an event but as an image. The violence the play has been circling never occurs on stage. Instead, Pinter delivers its aftermath in a single moment, two men, a long silence, a curtain. All of the waiting, all of the repeating, all of the dramatic inactivity is not a deadening of the action but a quietness of it. The action in *The Dumb Waiter* does not predate boredom; it is the very manifestation of the drama itself and, as Phillips (2019) demonstrates, boredom have the capacity for successful interaction with an audience through engaging with other modes of interaction. *The Dumb Waiter* uses this principle as demonstrative of what is happening in that boredom is not a prelude to the action; it is a substitute for it or to define it simply, boredom is the action itself.

### **1.6. Analysis of *The Birthday Party***

The Birthday Party opens with a breakfast scene. Petey enters, sits at the table, and begins to read his newspaper. Meg calls from the kitchen, “Is that you, Petey?” twice, with a pause between each call before Petey answers. She brings his

cornflakes. She asks if they are nice. He says very nice. She sits. She asks if he has his paper. He says yes. She asks if it is good. He says not bad. She asks what it says. He says nothing much. This repeated exchange with a minor variation at the beginning of the scene is a state-of-the-art instance of zeitvertreib. Neither character has anything meaningful to communicate. The questions Meg asks are not requests for information. They are a way of filling the silence of an ordinary morning. Petey's responses are equally mechanical: "same time as usual, very nice, I don't know." The conversation generates no conflict, no revelation, no forward movement. It simply occupies time. What Pinter adds to the play and the scene is a mechanism that transforms routine into a form of dedramatization. The scene is built almost entirely from questions and minimal answers. The audience arriving with the conventional expectation that an opening scene will establish character or conflict finds a kind of performed ordinariness instead. The very emptiness of the exchange becomes apparent. As similar to the opening of *The Dumb Waiter*, the absence of dramatic action does not produce disengagement; it redirects attention. The audience begins to sense that this stage, this emptiness, is a signifier of the fact that something may happen.

Act two opens with a scene that mirrors the play's opening but with the register entirely changed. Where Petey entered with a newspaper and read it, McCann enters with a newspaper and destroys it. The stage direction is precise. McCann is sitting at the table, tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips. He does not speak. He does not look up. He simply tears the strip by strip.

STANLEY. Evening.

MCCANN. Evening.

STANLEY. Very warm tonight.

MCCANN. (tears another strip)

The dramatic stasis represented here is a pure example: no action has taken place; there is no conflict or communication; simply a singular motion being repeated (tearing and tearing). The five equal and similarly sized strips have been created in such a way as to create an intimidating sense of accuracy and create an expectation that this scene is part of a much larger process. Still, what the audience has seen thus far is nothing more than a re-enactment of the breakfast scene; i.e., McCann is performing *zeitvertreib* by way of engaging in a meaningless physical routine. Just as with previous scenes, the singular, repetitive motions of this scene direct the audience's attention to "what's going to happen next" and "what's going to happen ultimately," thus causing the audience to anticipate the dramatic possibilities available to all the characters in the play.

Moreover, the dialogue between Stanley and Lulu happening during Act 1, continues to be another example of boredom, but boredom is not just a method for the audience to experience here, but boredom has actually become a way of life for Stanley as well. Lulu asks Stanley, "What do you do? Just sit around the house like this all day?", this is essentially what the audience is thinking. Why doesn't he go outside? Why doesn't he take a shower? Why doesn't he work? What Svendsen refers to as "situational boredom," is boredom defined not as an existential question, but as a result of having a specific or tangible situation (i.e. sitting in a room with no activity or direction). That is why Stanley's response to Lulu's question is silence. He does not answer because there is no answer to give.

What follows is the scene's most vivid moment. Stanley suddenly asks Lulu to go away with him, which is a potential action, a possible escape. Nevertheless, it collapses immediately:

STANLEY. Nowhere. Still, we could go.

LULU. But where could we go?

STANLEY. Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.

The word "nowhere " appears three times. Each repetition not only closes the possibility of escape but also adds weight to Stanley's entrapment. The proposed action never happens, not because it has been interrupted from outside but because Stanley's own inactivity has already made it impossible. While the breakfast scene and the newspaper-tearing scene redirect the audience's attention through formal mechanisms, here, dedramatization comes from within the character himself. Moreover, every "action" Stanley commits is another act of zeitvertreib; his actions consist of repetitive actions to kill some time. As Svendsen observes, "situative boredom contains a longing for something that is desired," while existential boredom "contains a longing for any desire at all" (Svendsen, 2013, p. 42). Stanley's condition hovers between the two: he desires escape, but the escape leads nowhere, so he performs zeitvertreib

## 2. CONCLUSION

Both of the plays that are examined in this chapter demonstrate that boredom in Pinter is not incidental but structural. In *The Dumb Waiter*, waiting is embedded in the play's architecture from the very beginning to the final scene. The shoes, the lavatory chain, the cricket photograph, the kettle argument, the instructions, each scene is a form of zeitvertreib, a way of killing time before a job that Pinter refuses to dramatize. In *The Birthday Party*, the same mechanisms operate differently. The breakfast scene and the newspaper strips are moments through which the audience rejects conventional drama's action-based plot and learns to experience the play as a state for re-examining and rethinking boredom.

The techniques of dramatic stasis, delayed action, and dedramatization are not evidence of a failure of theatre in both plays, but rather serve as artistic strategies intended to redirect the site of meaning generation rather than to void meaning. Boredom, as stated by Çağlayan in his book about slow cinema, "deserves more critical consideration than merely being a term used to evaluate something as 'exasperating'", and functions as a "formal strategy" requiring the audience to exhibit "patience, concentration, and imagination" (Çağlayan, 2018, p.xiii). The same applies to Pinter's plays. An audience with no action to guide them becomes preoccupied with contemplating the future: that is, with the spaces existing between the words spoken, the words left unsaid, and between the actions happening at the moment and those that might potentially happen.

To highlight this point again, many of the elements identified in this study have had a long-standing association with the wider theatrical movements of Pinter's time, especially with the theatre of the absurd. In his writings, critics such as Esslin have predominantly described these features as being symptomatic of the aftermath of absurdist drama: examples of alienation, meaninglessness and the instability of identity (Esslin, 1961). These readings have contributed to our appreciation of Pinter's drama. Nonetheless, as other scholars such as Çağlayan have argued through their research into slow cinema, and as Phillips has discussed regarding theatre and performance, oftentimes these mechanisms operate at the level of perception, rather than the play or plot. By using techniques such as dedramatisation, stasis, and repetition, these mechanisms change how time and attention are experienced by the audience in the theatre. These mechanisms slow viewers' attention, delay expectations, and re-focus their attention on what might occur, rather than focusing on what has occurred. Consequently, rather than achieving the expected effect of disengagement, they

facilitate a different, but highly controlled and unique form of engagement that is rarely seen in standard dramas.

Ultimately, the conclusion of this analysis is that boredom allows us to evaluate the impact of dedramatization, waiting and repetition experiences on both the characters and the audience's side in the play by using boredom aesthetics to investigate the effects by examining how these factors generate different types of viewer experiences. At the end, it came to the final that the presence of boredom does not come prior to the action of the drama; it is in Pinter's treatment of boredom that transforms boredom into a central aspect of the drama itself.

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## **HEGEMONY, CONSENT, AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC RESISTANCE IN DAVID HARE AND HOWARD BRENTON'S *PRAVDA***

**Simge BARIŞ<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The theatre not only reflects social institutions but also becomes a social institution that reinforces the existing ideology by criticising and challenging the dominant ideology in society. Literary works reflect the author's social class position or perspective on the relationships between classes (Barry,1995, p. 219).

In this process, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony plays a crucial role in understanding how existing ideology functions in society. Gramsci defines hegemony as the dominant class and ideology asserting its own values and interests as the interests of society as a whole, and gaining the consent of the lower classes through ideological leadership. This action is carried out through civil society institutions such as education, art, and media. In this way, the ideas of the dominant class begin to be perceived by society as a natural reality. Thus, the inequality underlying the system is concealed (Bates,1975). Therefore, the analysis of political plays requires examining how that literary work is positioned as a social practice that reflects and is part of the struggle for meaning and power (Williams, 1977, p. 122).

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<sup>1</sup> MA Student, Suleyman Demirel University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, English Language and Literature Department, ORCID: 0009-0006-8024-345X.

Theatre became a powerful and key tool of opposition to the barriers experienced for ages. Writers like David Hare and Howard Brenton revived the tradition of "political theatre," satirising and sharply criticising British institutions and the workings of the capitalist system. In this context, modern playwrights often rely on "satire as a powerful weapon to satirise social, political, and religious oppression," where the speaker targets the social world and "conveys a message — social or political or general" (Şekerci & Demiray, 2024, p. 123). Hare and Brenton's collaborative work, *Pravda* (1985), is a striking example of this critique. Through its main character, Lambert Le Roux, the play dramatizes the relationship between media moguls and political power, showing their power to shape public opinion and society (Misbah, 2016).

This study will evaluate the play within the framework of Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, consent vs. coercion, and civil society, using Gramsci's *The Prison Notebook* as a reference source. While studies have explored Marxist readings of the play, media monopolisation, social criticism, the relationship between language and power, and institutional corruption, a detailed analysis through Gramsci's concept of hegemony has not been conducted. This study aims to analyse the *Pravda*, written by David Hare and Howard Brenton, based on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. First, Gramsci's concept of hegemony will be clarified. After, within this theoretical framework, the play will be examined, and the place of theatre in ideological stances and social consciousness will be analysed. This study is not only an analysis of a theatrical text, but also serves as a tool to highlight the place of art in society and its role in social transformation through the concept of hegemony.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF HEGEMONY**

The word hegemony most likely originates from the Greek words "egemonia" and "egemort" (leader, ruler). Initially, it was used to describe the political dominance of one state over another. However, over time, it became a word used to express the politics of "great power" and "superpower." While initially used to mean "dominant principle," the word gained significant importance in Marxist thought in the 20th century. With this usage, hegemony shaped not only the political sphere but also people's relationships, their self-perception, and their perception of the world. Later, its boundaries were expanded by Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist thinker, based on the supremacy of the working class, the proletariat (Williams, 1988, p. 145). Gramsci wrote his collection *Quaderni del carcere (The Prison Notebooks)* between 1929 and 1935, in which he interpreted the concept of hegemony through the lens of class. Thus, he applied this concept not only to the proletariat but also to the actions of all ruling classes in general (Anderson, 1988, pp. 29-30).

By the beginning of the 1980s, the foundations of one of the most important concepts, cultural hegemony, were laid. Gramsci argues that hegemony is built with the consent of the governed class (Gramsci, 1971, p.526). According to Gramsci, the concept of hegemony is seen as a means of maintaining social order in societies seized by the capitalist system. Hegemony is a social and political control style that combines force and consent. In the hegemonic order structure, the relationship between classes, the state, and civil society is seen to be dominated by "consent" as opposed to the use of "coercion". Gaining the consent of the dominant and the second-class segments of society and representing their interests are among the main characteristics of hegemonic ideology (Gill&Law,1993).

Gramsci did not treat the concept of hegemony only as an ideology or as a part of socialisation. This concept includes ideology, but cannot be reduced to it. More specifically, this concept has been used to mean obtaining the consent of the people ruled by a ruler (Bank, 2015). According to Gramsci, establishing hegemony is the integration or propagation of one's own viewpoint into society as a whole. As a result, one's own interests and the interests of society are equated, thus establishing moral and political leadership (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 115-116).

There is a hegemonic relationship between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry/working class within capitalist society, characterised by the pressure and influence exerted by one social class on another. In other words, according to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, it is an interclass relationship that indicates the leadership status acquired by one group or class over other classes or groups (Gramsci, 1971). According to Gramsci, establishing hegemony is the integration or dissemination of one's own viewpoint into society as a whole. As a result, individual interests and the interests of society are aligned, thus establishing moral and political leadership (Eagleton, 1991, p. 116).

### **3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

When the concept of hegemony is examined under various headings, very different views have been put forward on what Gramsci meant (Bank, 2015). However, according to Gramsci, the concept of hegemony is seen as a means of maintaining social order in societies seized by the capitalist system. Hegemony is a social and political control style that combines force and consent. In the hegemonic order structure, the relationship between classes, the state, and civil society is seen to be dominated by "consent" as opposed to the use of "coercion". He defines

hegemony not simply as a power relationship, but as the organisation of consent. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci states that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'(Gramsci, 1971, p. 45).

He divides the state into two categories. The first is apparatuses such as the army, the legal system, and the police, which he calls political society. The second is apparatuses such as the family, the church, the school, and the media, which he calls civil society. Especially in the realm of civil society, intellectuals who present the interests of the hegemonic class as the interests of the general society play an important role (Hall, 1986, pp.5-27). The media is seen as a central tool in the dissemination of intellectuals and hegemonic ideology. This is because it shapes a non-critical and fragmented worldview of the masses, called common sense. Besides, Gramsci underlines the importance of developing a more coherent and critical good sense in place of common sense (Gramsci,1971, pp.663-664).

*Pravda*, through the character of Lambert Le Roux, demonstrates a concrete application of hegemony theory in the media sector. He is an ambitious and powerful South African newspaper and company owner. Starting his career with small newspapers, he aims to build a large press empire over time. To attract people's attention, he changes the content of newspapers and publishes more sensational news. He does not hesitate to distort the truth and influence politicians to achieve success. He is a tough, determined character who puts his interests above everything else (Hare & Brenton, 2015). Le Roux is a dominant figure who uses media power to influence society. He sees journalism not as a tool for reflecting truth, but as a tool of power. This aligns with the sociolinguistic premise that linguistic strategies serve as “manipulations of the language to achieve a speaker’s goal,” wherein dominant characters use dialogue to

exert “social and hierarchical superiority” over subordinates (Demiray & Şekerci, 2024, pp. 227-228). Throughout the play, he presents himself as a figure who holds the power to shape society and produce social consent, not just the function of reporting news. According to him, newspapers are an ideological tool that decides what the public will think and controls those thoughts. Le Roux's approach to the concept of truth forms the basis of his hegemonic understanding. His words to Andrew May clearly demonstrate this:

- (1) ANDREW. Don't patronize me! With your technique. This is it. This is trouble. This is war. This is Watergate. This is the beginning of the end.
- (2) LE ROUX (turns away). Delusions! Does nobody see? What on earth is all this stuff about the truth? Truth? Why, when everywhere you go, people tell lies. In pubs. To each other. To their husbands. To their wives. To the children. To the dying — and thank God they do. No one tells the truth. Why single out newspapers? 'Oh! A special standard!' Everyone can tell lies except for newspapers. They're the universal scapegoat for everybody else's evasions and inadequacies...It is a totally unworkable view of the world! (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 103-104)

This quote reflects the essence of the production of consent in Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Le Roux manipulates news and narratives, playing with the public's perception of reality and turning it to his advantage. These stories, disseminated through newspapers, become social norms over time. They even become the realities of society, thus reinforcing the dominant ideology. In other words, Le Roux constructs not the truth, but his own truth, and makes society accept it. This is the strategy of the ruling class to present its own interests as universal interests (Eagleton, 1991). The character's words exemplify the most mature form of hegemonic discourse: presenting the order that serves the interests of the ruling class as a universally shared

reality. Le Roux doesn't claim he does not lie; he argues that lying is a universal human practice. Thus, journalistic ethics are reduced to this universal state of nature. As Gramsci emphasised, the power of hegemony lies precisely here: in creating a sense of lack of alternatives, rendering resistance meaningless (Simon, 1971, pp. 125-126).

The media empire established by Le Roux directly influences public opinion, which is an important component of civil society. The news in the newspaper is filled with scandals and distorted facts. As a result, the public's ability to think critically weakens, and they become passive consumers. Le Roux determines what the public reads, the opinions they believe in, and what they talk about. Thus, he controls the social agenda. This situation can be linked to the concept of common sense. Le Roux manipulates society's uncritical and traditionally held common sense to his own advantage.

- (1) Le Roux: I provided the formula. It worked in South Africa. Page one, a nice picture of the Prime Minister. Page two, something about actors. Page three, gossip, the veld, what you call the countryside, a rail crash if you're lucky. Four, high technology. Five, sex, sex crimes, court cases. A couple of filler pages then its editorials. Then letters. All pleasingly like-minded, all from Kent... The only bit I hate is all those foreign correspondents. They're totally out of your control. They bring you extraneous suffering, complexity. (Brenton & Hare, 1985: p.76)

With these words, he describes how he makes trivial news seem important to increase newspaper sales. Furthermore, this speech clearly demonstrates the media's role in the production of consent. It not only meets the public's current expectations but also shapes those expectations and desires. It is a striking example of the process central to Gramsci's definition of hegemony: the dominant class gaining the consent of others by presenting its own

ideology as the natural and absolute truth. Over time, the public begins to believe the truths presented in Le Roux's newspapers. Thus, the ideology of the dominant class is reinforced.

Andrew May, one of the journalists in the play, is passionate about his work and quite idealistic. Over time, he is unexpectedly promoted to editor-in-chief by the newspaper's new owner, Le Roux. However, to rise in Le Roux's media empire, Andrew must conform to his rules, as he trains journalists to serve his interests and transforms them into carriers of his ideology. Andrew gradually adopts Le Roux's values and begins to use his methods. This illustrates Gramsci's concept of the role and functioning of organic intellectuals in spreading the dominant ideology.

Gramsci's fundamental idea about intellectuals is this: Intellectuals are not a separate and classless group; this is a misconception. In fact, everyone is potentially an intellectual because they can think, but not everyone assumes an intellectual role in society. Intellectuals are divided into two categories according to their function. The first is traditional intellectuals: writers, scientists, and so on. These individuals appear to be above and neutral in society, but in reality, they are bound to past and present class relations and conceal this fact. The second type is organic intellectuals. These emerge from within a specific social class and are the ones who organise and direct the thoughts and interests of that class. Their professions may differ, but what is most important is that they undertake the task of spreading the ideas of their class and organising them (Gramsci, 1971, p. 131). Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual comes to life in the play through the transformation of the character Andrew May.

Andrew May is initially an idealistic character, deeply in love with his work. However, as he becomes more involved in Le Roux's system, he begins to carry out his ideology. Le Roux sees

journalists not as independent writers, but as part of his system. Andrew's surrender to Le Roux is a symbol of the hegemony's dominance over individuals:

- (1) ANDREW. I'm beaten, I know. The landscape is blasted. Every decent hope people had, blasted. I just cling to this idea of the language. That sentence means something. Hang on to the sentence. 'On the one hand, on the other...'

...

- (2) LE ROUX. Editorial freedom. You never used it when you had it. It is fast gone. Why should you deserve freedom anymore?

Andrew's defeat at the hands of Le Roux is not just about being an employee... (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 108)

It is not only a loss, but also the loss of an ideology and a way of thinking. Hegemony operates through consent rather than coercion. Andrew is convinced of Le Roux's system. Otherwise, he is led to believe that he will remain outside the system. Moreover, these words of his clearly explain Gramsci's relationship between political society and civil society, that is, the combination of coercion and consent. Le Roux does not coerce journalists directly or physically. On the other hand, he gains their consent by controlling their careers, livelihoods, and professions. Ultimately, he makes them part of his project. Journalists set aside their own ethical values and adopt Le Roux's true understanding. They spread their ideology to society. Gramsci describes this situation as intellectuals acting as agents of the dominant class (Hall, 1986).

Andrew May, in Victory's Board of Trustees, describes Le Roux's management style as follows:

- (1) ANDREW: My experience is that he leaves you alone [...] Mr Le Roux operates on what I think is called the arms-length principle. You are aware he is a man you are very

keen to please. He is there, present in the building, without seeming to visit it at all. (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 49)

This represents the most sophisticated form of hegemony in terms of its structural aspects. Le Roux does not oversee daily decisions; instead, he organises the system in such a way as to produce individuals who internalise its own existence. Editors anticipate and act upon what is desired without having to ask. Gramsci explains this with the concept of passive revolution: the ruling class allows superficial changes while preserving the essence of the system, thus preventing a real transformation. Passive revolution refers to the transformations undertaken by the ruling classes to absorb the pressures directed against them—these transformations mimic reformism without actually altering the existing power relations (Gramsci, 1971, p. 301).

In the distinction between the traditional intellectual and the organic intellectual, he emphasises that traditional intellectuals believe in their own neutrality, but in reality, they reproduce the dominant order. Andrew is a well-meaning and thoughtful editor, but these good qualities cannot protect him from the prevailing ideology. His downfall is not merely a failure. Le Roux emphasises this situation with the following words: “You are all weak because you do not know what you believe.” (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 104)

A crucial dimension in Gramsci's analysis of hegemony is the mutually reinforcing relationship between the state and civil society. This view is brought to the stage with the following words, where Le Roux's partner, Sylvester, says:

- (1) SYLVESTER. Well, I do think we need the Government.
- (2) LE ROUX. Oh yes?
- (3) SYLVESTER looks at him uncertainly.
- (4) SYLVESTER. Don't you think?

(5) LE ROUX. Not as much as the Government needs us  
(Brenton & Hare, 1985: 84)

This dialogue summarises the relationship between media and politics. According to Le Roux, it cannot buy the government; the government needs it. The media is a structure that can shape people's thoughts and public opinion, determining who they will support during election periods. In other words, it has become the heart of modern hegemony. Throughout the play, the language of the journalists is used as the very framework of ideological framing. Harry Morrison's editorial philosophy ironically reveals this structure: "We simply exist. We are 'we'. 'We' say this murderer must hang. 'We' say this bypass must be built [...] Hang on to the style. Everything can go, but never the style " (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 13).

The "we" here creates a social subject as the voice of the newspaper and presents a particular class perspective as a universal social consensus. It is directly linked to Gramsci's concept of common sense. Common sense is the common mental attitude of a particular circle and period; this attitude, although produced in the historical process, appears spontaneous and natural (Gramsci, 1971, pp.323-324).

Andrew obtains a classified document proving that the plutonium transport vials have leaked and decides to publish it. However, Phantom has already informed Le Roux. He arrives and says "Good. I expect that from you, Andrew" (Brenton & Hare, 1985: 73). Andrew is surprised. Le Roux continues; he will publish the document, but he will also give the name of the source. Andrew objects: "That's impossible." Le Roux calmly replies: "It's all right, there's a little space" (p.77). Andrew's attempt to base journalism on principles ends with this scene. Then, when he is fired, he calls out to his colleagues. However, Le Roux has already made his comment: "Please, don't waste your time. I've never noticed journalists have much sense of

professional solidarity, have you, Leander?” Scroop replies “None” (p. 77). Everyone bows their heads and continues working. Andrew shouts across the table; nobody looks.

Le Roux meets with the Trustees to buy the Victory newspaper. In this scene, he makes an offer to guarantee editorial independence. He even proposes a weekly prayer meeting for the Bishop of Putney.

- (1) LE ROUX. Absolute editorial freedom. The right of the editor to appoint his own people. The right of the editor to appeal to the Trust.
- (2) SILK. This is excellent.
- (3) SYLVESTER. Copper-bottomed legal guarantees, drawn up kosher.
- (4) LE ROUX. I would also suggest, in the spirit of this agreement, should it go through, that we build in one essential safeguard. A weekly visit to the newsroom by the Bishop of Putney. To conduct a short prayer meeting.
- (5) SILK. Brilliant.
- (6) PUTNEY. A most imaginative suggestion. (Brenton &Hare, 1985: 51)

At the end of the scene, everyone disperses as if at a tea party. The play's harsh irony lies precisely at this point. No one is subjected to pressure while power changes hands. Consent is so thoroughly processed and organised that everyone acts independently.

A young woman named Moira Patterson comes to the magazine and says that her name was misspelt, that it was fabricated, and that her store was ruined. Andrew then summarises the institution's voice by saying:

- (1) MOIRA. It's a simple thing. It's a couple of lines. Please publish a correction.

- (2) ANDREW. Look, I'll be frank... it isn't very easy. You will find in most newspapers a policy, you see. The Bystander... sorry, 'we'... don't publish corrections. Because we don't like them. I'll be honest. They don't look good on the page. If every time we got something wrong, we published a correction, then a newspaper would just be a footnote to yesterday's newspaper, and yesterday's a footnote to the day before's. In fact, going further, now thinking about it, as I see it, look... A newspaper isn't just a scrap of paper; it's something that people feel they have to trust. And if they can't trust it, why should they read it? A thing is either true or it isn't. So, by definition, what is printed must be true—otherwise, why print it? (Brenton &Hare, 1985: 17)

Andrew speaks not from the perspective of Le Roux's pressure, but from an internalised aspect of the profession. Not publishing corrections is not simply a prohibition; it stems from the very essence of journalistic identity. There is no pressure, but something worse: practice.

The libel writ placed in Andrew's mouth at the end of the play becomes a physical metaphor for the use of discourse as a weapon. One of the most striking hegemonic moments of the play is Le Roux's purchase of The Daily Victory newspaper. The trustees express various moral and institutional concerns; however, Le Roux "constructs" their consent through the politician Michael Quince. Quince says to Le Roux:

- (1) QUINCE: The press and politicians. A delicate relationship. Too close, and danger ensues. Too far apart, and democracy itself cannot function [...] if the channels of free expression were to be... channelled my direction, if 'Man Of Steel' were to be a regular feature, a column, written by myself, by me — then democracy in would be safeguarded. And we would have a very satisfactory deal. (Brenton &Hare, 1985: 35-36)

This dialogue brings to the stage a mechanism that Gramsci identified in the construction of hegemony: The dominant class presents its political agenda in the guise of universal values such as democracy, freedom of expression, and public interest. Le Roux positions the media not as a direct instrument of oppression, but as a platform that produces consent and distributes legitimacy.

The only consistent critical voice in *Pravda* belongs to Rebecca Foley. At the end of the play, she says “I can't. I'm sorry. I hate him too. But if you spend your whole life fighting him, the sad thing is you become just like him” (p. 99).

She questions whether the struggle against Le Roux will truly change the system. Because sometimes, when people use the methods of the system they oppose, they unknowingly reproduce the same system. This idea is connected to Antonio Gramsci's concept of counter-hegemony. According to Gramsci, opposing the dominant system only with its own rules and tools can strengthen the system instead of destroying it:

We must produce intellectuals from the masses; these intellectuals must remain loyal to their class and establish an organic relationship with it in order to form a lasting counter-hegemonic bloc (Gramsci,1971, p. 334).

The purchase of the Usurper newspaper is the counter-hegemonic project of the play. Fruit-Norton, Andrew, Bill, and Quince come together. Andrew explains what they are defending:

- (1) Andrew: It will be a beacon, shining out... We've all trimmed. I have, I've worked for him. But now at last we can find a paper that's decent and honest and will be the end of Lambert Le Roux! (Brenton &Hare, 1985: 98-99)

Rebecca stops at this point:

- (1) Rebecca: I can't. I'm sorry. I hate him too. But if you spend your whole life fighting him, the sad thing is you become just like him.
- (2) Andrew: Just like him? How can you say that? We stand for something.

Rebecca is right, but no one listens to her. The project collapses because its foundation is personal, not corporate: anger towards Le Roux comes before belief in the honour of journalism. Sylvester sells forged documents, the case goes to court, and Usurper is overwhelmed by debt.

In the play's final scene, Le Roux, introducing Hannon Spot, the new editor of the combined newspaper, addresses his employees: "Gentlemen. We have a new foreman. Welcome to the foundry of lies" (p. 113).

Everyone involved in the production of lies has now become an organic part of the system. The concept of cultural hegemony plays a significant role in reinforcing this idea: Institutions serving power function without being aware of this service. However, in *Pravda*, Le Roux openly declares this awareness. Because no one can object to it, and consent has now exhausted the concept of resistance.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Literary works shared a common historical, social, and cultural context and do not exist in isolation. In this context, the use of literature as a cultural institution as a tool in establishing hegemony is inevitable. The character Le Roux in *Pravda*, instead of directly physically coercing his colleagues, influences them through various methods and rhetoric, gaining their consent and thus making them part of his project. In this context, as Gramsci

shows in his Prison Notebooks, power is maintained not only through the coercive apparatus of the state but also through the cultural and ideological mechanisms of civil society. Lambert Le Roux is a central figure in the hegemonic power in the play. However, his power does not stem solely from his authoritarian attitude. He is highly successful in influencing, directing, and incorporating those around him into his own system of thought. Even though people fear his oppression, they are also attracted by the power, success, and opportunities for advancement he offers. Therefore, over time, the characters distance themselves from their own ethical values and begin to conform to Le Roux's system. This situation reveals one of the most important characteristics of a hegemonic structure: people often become part of the system not through coercion, but by believing in the advantages it offers. Hare and Brenton have shown the invisible but powerful influence of the hegemonic structure through the transformation and relationships of the characters. In this context, the play is not only a work reflecting the political atmosphere of a particular period; it also represents a universal inquiry into how power operates in modern society.

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## **DAYENGLISH AS THE SUPEREGO, NIGHTENGLISH AS THE ID**

**Emir Polat TUNA<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The modernist movement and the coming of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have brought with them an era of transformation for drama. This transformation is one that is caused by not only significant changes in societal matters, but also by new technological progress. These progressions combined gave rise to the implementation of theatrical language conventions, which are broadly definable as the previously made ritualistic agreements towards the use of language on stage, and these conventions are used to create the subtext of the play. As theatregoers sit across the stage and watch a play, they ritualistically agree that whatever that is happening on the stage is real, and owing to this agreement, the audience sympathizes with the characters and the action of the play as if it happened to them (Pickering, 2003, pp. 7-8). This sympathy allows for the formation of the subtext and the social order of the play. One noteworthy use of these conventions was achieved owing to the advent of stage lighting. For instance, in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1959), a gauze which either passes or does not pass light depending on the lighting is utilized, allowing for the showings of different dream-like scenes and subsequently for actors addresses towards the audience (Pickering, 2003, pp. 10-13). Alternatively, direct addresses have been used by T. S. Elliot as well. In his *Murder in the Cathedral*

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<sup>1</sup> “Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, ORCID: 0009-0003-1184-5949.

(1935), Elliot makes the knights confront the audience directly, questioning them about the murder of Thomas Becket right after committing it. Furthermore, playwrights have conventionalized language through various other methods such as the play-within-the-play and the manipulations of time and space (Pickering, 2003, pp. 15-18).

This study specifically focuses on the language convention based on dayenglish and nightenglish presented by Rabey (2003), and how it is used in modern interrogatory drama. Rabey (2003, pp. 4-5) suggests that English discourse in modern interrogatory drama is like that of Brendan Kennely's conception, as dayenglish represents the "English of explanation" and nightenglish represents the "calmly ecstatic, dreamenergised English of pure being which has little or nothing to do with the English of good behaviour". The characters in interrogatory drama explain themselves and adhere to the rules of society (or "good behaviour") through dayenglish and they voice their deepest, most looked down on desires primally through nightenglish. Rabey (2003, pp. 4-5) also highlights the ritualistic agreement aspect of the audience and synthesizes it with social cues, utilizing the audience's agreed reality to create sympathy for a radicalized reality and to establish the social order of the play by interrogating the actual reality.

Moreover, it is entirely logical to suggest that since the origins of the modernist movement in theater, the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish are observable in many plays. To name an example, Ibsen in his *A Doll's House* (1879) presents vividly personified dayenglish and nightenglish characters, as Nora's attempts at upholding her properness, explaining herself and hiding her actions - in the face of being exposed for a crime of forging a signature - and language is a characteristic display of dayenglish. However, the very fact that she carries out such an act and, at the end of the play, her account of her desire to be

independent, wanting to leave her family to pursue and obtain what she wants is a spectacular example of the use of nightenglish in a play. Ibsen tackles the radicalized reality of women's supposedly required docility and interrogates it through an expressively independent female lead. Nearing the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rabey (2003, pp. 9-11) offers an edifying example through Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (1949), in which his struggle to surface the compulsive and elevating nightenglish through the banal dayenglish of a cocktail party is succeeded with his reversal of Sartre's epigraph; from "hell is other people" to "hell is one's self". Eliot here interrogates the rising isolation due to the austerity and subsequently the docility that the Second World War had caused.

Considering what we have stated, it can be reached to the conclusion that the character within modern realist drama presents a universal process. Hristić (1977) states:

"Drama is turned away from personality, towards something which surpasses it. 'Le théâtre ne s'occupe pas de la réalité, mais seulement de la vérité,' says Sartre. In contrast to the novel, which is a layman's form, drama is a religious genre par excellence: from man, it always turns toward the Other, toward a broader context in which human actions acquire a meaning." (p. 314)

The use of dayenglish and nightenglish never remain constrained to the mere discourse that of (a) singular character(s) say(s) on stage, each emergence of the ecstatic and compulsive nightenglish goes far beyond it. It represents an interrogation; an insurgence on the oppressiveness of the social climate of the play's time. Thus, the play becomes realistic in the way that it captures everyday life and struggles. However, our inquiry here pushes us to ask the question; what are these struggles based upon?

It is worth mentioning that the root causes of these struggles have been identified before by theorists. May (1911), for instance, describes modern drama as a reflection of modern life, in the sense that it captures various problems such as urban overcrowding, economic issues, the injustice of the justice system, and the questions of race and love. Playwrights addressed these issues as they reflect various needs of the people; like how economic problems reflect the need for welfare, the problem of injustice reflects the need for justice, the race question reflects the need for equality, and the question of love reflects the need for sexual and/or romantic liberty. It should now be remembered that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one that was of rampant censorship in theater, meaning the expression of these needs were most often looked down upon or completely forbidden, not only on the stage but in daily life entirely. Therefore, the theatre became a venue of revolt, opposition, social progressivism and change. Keeping these in mind, how can one explain the psychological implications of this dynamic? This study aims to explore just that through Freud's widely discussed text *The ego and the id* (1923/2021) and its relation to the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish to provide an output which has not yet been made in theater research.

## **2. EGO, SUPEREGO, ID AND THEATER**

Firstly, it shall be noted that the discussion between the dialectic of the id and superego is remarkably similar to the dialectic of dayenglish and nightenglish. However, to understand this we must first explain the fundamentals of the terms ego, superego and id, which Freud (1923/2021, p. 16) describes as the topographic model of the mind. He does this for good reason, as the dialectic among the three terms inevitably places them against one another in hierarchical order. Freud draws the topography of

the model as a shape similar to an iceberg with ego at the top, superego in the middle and id at the bottom. The id is what is within the subject's unconscious. Freud explains that the unconscious is the host of the subject's desires, specifically those desires which are not yet readily available in the conscious and therefore cannot clearly be vocalized due to their initial ambiguity to the conscious. Freud names these desires as the ones which are the most primal owing to their satisfaction, i.e. the satisfaction of hunger, libidinal urges etc. The superego acts as a "buffer" to the id; it is within the preconscious, which is the transitional stage for the desires that are being recalled from the unconscious. As these desires emerge from their location in the unconscious, the superego evaluates the desire and its compatibility with the rational and moral reality. It interferes with the id's call to primacy, evaluates it and then adapts it for the transition to the conscious. Lastly, the ego is the final stage of the process; it is the subject's consciousness which acts on the guidance of its preconscious and unconscious predecessors. It seeks and finds ways of satisfying the desire of the id while also taking into superego's account of the morality of the action (Freud, 1923/2021).

In understanding the dialectic between the id and superego, one should consider their polarity. One can certainly understand that the superego holds the moral high ground, it corresponds with our awareness of our community and culture in which we live. It is the instinct within one that causes one to stop and consider their actions. These actions, all of which are driven by the unconscious and its desires. It is here that we encounter the id. The id is then the unhinged essence of one's being. It is always unapologetic and destructive due to its primal nature. It is the instinct of pure being. The subject, then, to be an upstanding citizen without deprecating, humiliating or shaming itself must rely on both of these instincts combined; it must find ways to

satisfy its desires in a way that is permissible by society, which is the primary and most important functional purpose of the ego as the conscious of the subject.

What happens when the subject is unable to control the tendencies of the id due to the disappearance or the collapse of the ego and superego? Freud (1923/2021 pp. 32-35) ties this to the Oedipus complex. Freud explains that the child, during its development and specifically in the oral stage, chooses the mother as its object of desire through the breast and identifies itself with its father. Subsequently, the child starts seeing the father as a rival to itself as the father is an obstacle against the achievement of the object of desire. Thus, the child wishes and attempts to eliminate the father through destructive means. It is here that we can apply hermeneutics to some extent for the transference of the Oedipus complex to the context we are partaking in, namely social matters and the theater. We stood on three main components, being the mother, the father and the baby. In our case, the baby is the oppressed of the society, it is the people who are discontent in their suffering and who are looking for an end and the means for the satisfaction of their needs. These needs are what we will take on as the mother. They are the obvious object choice of desire; people desire their needs due to certain various means. Lastly, we will take on the father as the institutions which prevent the achievement of these needs. The people rival these institutions and therefore they might wish to destroy or eliminate them through destructive means. Our terms here are compared this way by Freud himself, in his *Civilization and its discontents* (1930/2019), as he mentions that the satisfaction within a civilization is based on the repression of such needs and desires, however, in the face of the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish there can be observed an absence of this repression, therefore a collapse or disappearance of the ego and a clash between civilization and desire, which is subsequently

the clash between the superego and the id. It has further been mentioned by Lacan (1971-1972/2011) that these dialectical components that Freud point out are the constituents of the symbolic order, which suggests a future study regarding the conventions of language in relation to the symbolic order. In the ethos of psychoanalytic theory, the collapse of a symbolic and sociological order suggests discontent in civilization.

These societal expressions of the collapse and disappearance of the ego describe how they relate to the context of dayenglish and nightenglish. As dayenglish is the “English of explanation”, it involves giving accounts and reasoning or adhering by the rules of society which are driven by the moral codes of society. Thus, the usage of dayenglish is a manifestation of the superego. On the other hand, as Rabey (2003, pp. 4-5) states, nightenglish is the “calmly ecstatic, dreamenergised English of pure being which has little or nothing to do with the English of good behaviour”. From this explanation alone, it can be seen that nightenglish is the unapologetic and, by chance, destructive manifestation of desires, which are the unconscious responses that originate from the id. When dayenglish and nightenglish clashes, it is the clash between the superego and the id, as whenever a character in a 20<sup>th</sup> century play delivers a statement that questions societal conventions, that character is met by critical remarks of the conventional characters. In other words, when a character is met with dayenglish, it is due to their confrontation of nightenglish, as it is unpleasant by the standards of society or set institutions.

The existence of these institutions and their conventions are reliant on additional psychological factors, namely the pleasure and reality principles. Freud exclaims that the pleasure principle is the purpose of life; it is the programming of the fulfillment of desire. The contrasting principle to the pleasure principle is the reality principle, which Freud explains as the

civilized prevention of the destructive satisfaction of these means (Freud, 1930/2019). Thus, the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish are in relation to the superego and id, as they subsequently correspond with the pleasure and reality principles which we have discussed in this study. Dayenglish emerges once characters are met with the reality principle, and nightenglish emerges once characters oblige to their pleasure principle.

Beyond the examples given in the introduction, what are some of the displayed mechanisms of the correlating emergence of nightenglish as the id and the defense response of the superego as dayenglish? This study will now examine select playlets as case studies to discuss the matter.

### **3. TWO SLAPS IN THE FACE**

*Two slaps in the face* (1924/1952) is a playlet by the Hungarian dramatist Ferenc Molnar, which features two young boys, Alfred and Jules. It revolves around Alfred's love story with Vilma and the events of their affair. The playlet starts off with a distressed Alfred, walking home from school with Jules. Jules asks Alfred what is wrong, and Alfred tells him it is about Vilma and how she has hurt him. He goes on to explain their affair. Alfred goes on to tell that he had been seeing Vilma at the water tower at six every afternoon, under the guise of lies by each of them. Particularly, Alfred lies that he goes to the library and Vilma lies that she is going to her music lesson. He notes that it was an innocent affair, for he "never even kissed her because she was afraid someone might see" (p.4) them, and that they would spend time talking about the future. They also exchanged words of affection often. One day, Alfred goes on to tell, that Vilma's mother "rushes up" to them "like a bull" (p.5), lectures Vilma, slaps her in front of Alfred and takes her away. After the event, Alfred writes to Vilma asking to meet up once again at the tower,

now clear of suspicion. There, Alfred echoes to Jules Vilma's embarrassment and penance about the slap that happened earlier. To make them both even, Alfred fabricates an anonymous letter addressed to his father, telling him that "Every day at six" his "son meets a girl at the water tower on Marguerite Island" and that he should give his son a punishment that "he deserves" (p.6). Alfred delivers this letter to his father, and he sets off for another meeting with Vilma, under the same lie. This time, his father follows him. At the site of the meeting, Alfred and Vilma go on with their usual rituals, however this time, it is Alfred's father who busts them. He, just like Vilma's mother, slaps Alfred and takes him away after lecturing him. Vilma and Alfred meet again the following day, and Vilma laughs at Alfred. She tells him that after what happened that day, she could not respect him anymore. Alfred explains that the event was fabricated and it was nothing to be laughing about, however, Vilma could not respect him anymore.

In this playlet, the notable institutions are Alfred's father and Vilma's mother. They have an effect on both Alfred and Vilma, as they cause the repression of certain things. If Alfred and Vilma get caught by them, they will face serious consequences, such as a slap in the face. The threat of these serious consequences leads Alfred and Vilma to repress their desire towards one another and hide their affair when it is the most problematic, i.e. when they are being seen by others. Thus, they carry out their acts in secrecy. This process is characteristic of the function of the superego. In the case of Alfred and Vilma, the superego perceivably acts as a shield of their social face. The desire they have towards one another is incumbent within the id and contained within the unconscious. This desire, with its initial ambiguity to Alfred and Vilma, attempts to emerge to the conscious and find fulfillment. However, they are faced with an automatic restriction; a both external and internal force that causes them to stop and evaluate their actions towards their

desire, which is the perception of others. It is thus why Alfred and Vilma make certain schedules and designate certain locations for their meetings. These efforts all lay the framework of the satisfaction of desire, in a way that it is not disappointing or embarrassing. This is the ego conscious pre-emergent stage of the preconscious, through which all desires go and in which the superego resides.

When the settings of their meetings are successfully set and there are no possible disruptions, the pleasure principle sets in action. It is only when Alfred and Vilma are in secrecy that they start exchanging words of affection, which they cannot do otherwise due to negative perception. Here, in this instance of the successful initiation of the pleasure principle, nightenglish shows itself. The characters can finally express themselves and the essence of their pure being ecstatically and without restriction. The id response from the unconscious passes the buffer of the superego preconscious, therefore it is able to manifest itself within the conscious realm of the ego.

However, the dynamics shift once Vilma's mother interferes for the first time. In this current instance, Vilma and Alfred are abruptly interrupted; the mother comes out of nowhere and starts scolding Vilma. The mother, now acting as an agent of the reality principle, forces a sudden response from the superego from both of the characters. Their secrecy, now interrupted, calls for the reconsideration of the momentary desire; it shifts it from the desire for affection and morphs it into a desire for safety. The slap delivered on Vilma's face cements this shift further, as subsequently she is also taken away from Alfred. Given the events, Vilma is forced into a situation which self-explanation is the predominating desire of the pleasure principle. Her id's unconscious desire is now just that and she seeks to fulfill that desire through the meeting Alfred sets with her. Through this, the meetings serve the same superego preconscious inclination that

they did before. In the next meeting, Vilma tells Alfred how embarrassed she is that she got slapped in front of him. Her tone clearly suggests that she is worried about losing Alfred's respect. This instance of self-explanation is an example of dayenglish. It comes from the face-saving act of the superego and the preconscious, particularly triggered by the imposing of the reality principle.

Alfred's act of humiliating himself out of concern for Vilma is then categorizable as the same as Vilma's self-explanation. The act is ultimately dayenglish in that Alfred now grows the same worry of losing Vilma's respect, which is, once again, a response of the superego and the preconscious. Alfred orchestrates his own humiliation as he sees the act of his father slapping him as the same as how Vilma sees her act of self-explanation; the common aim is that these acts should restore the respect in the relationship. However, Alfred's act turns out to produce the opposite effect; it results in the loss of Vilma's respect. Vilma makes fun of Alfred in an apparently id-centric, nightenglish way, which triggers in Alfred the same superego response that was seen in the encounter with Vilma's mother. Alfred's relationship is now faced with the reality principle driven by Vilma and her lost respect, and he must restore his face against Vilma. This triggers a dayenglish response in Alfred, as he explains and reveals that he orchestrated the entire act.

Why are these acts and discourses of Vilma id-centric and nightenglish? It is because Molnar interrogates these very behaviors when it comes to relationships; he questions how men need to remain tough to maintain their integrity and how intentionally courteous acts of good intent might lead to humiliation in relationships. Not only this, but Molnar also interrogates how some relationships need to stay hidden rather than find expression. Molnar uses the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish to put the audience in utter sympathy with the

protagonist. He calls forward the id's desire and pits it against the superego and the reality principle through language and the clash between the English of explanation and the English of pure being. Through the conventions of dayenglish and nightenglish, Molnar makes the audience feel as if they are the ones who are caught by their lover's mother/father and have to explain themselves; or are the ones who must express themselves in secret still to find themselves in emotional pain. Thus, Molnar pushes this interrogative drama into the drama of one's life.

#### **4. MATERIA MEDICA**

*Materia Medica* (1937/1952) is a playlet by playwrights Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements about a blonde, fair and distracted probationer nurse named Marguerite and the backlash she faces for her distraction. The play starts out in the library of a hospital, where the fair Marguerite and four other nurses are seen studying a book named *Materia Medica*. This book covers the definition of *Materia Medica* and certain terms regarding treatments, pharmaceuticals, pharmacology and pharmacodynamics. The four nurses read the book voraciously and repeat its contents out loud. They seem to understand the material perfectly and have no trouble memorizing it. However, Marguerite has trouble, as she cannot memorize as efficiently as the others. The other nurses help Marguerite in a behavioristic way, severely scolding her as she gets the answers to their questions wrong. Then suddenly, the car of a doctor whose name is Dr. West pulls up, which further distracts Marguerite as she points out that Dr. West has arrived and goes on to describe how romantic Dr. West is and other romantic events she has had. Thus, she is met with severe backlash from the other nurses about how a nurse should behave and that she should devote her entire life to duty and not romance. They go on for a back and forth of

scolding in response to distraction, until their superintendents arrive to verbally test them. They start the test and certainly the four nurses have no trouble and pass effortlessly, while Marguerite makes many mistakes. The other nurses are excused from the library, while Margurite is made to stay. Suddenly, the audience watches Margurite respond to a call out from Dr. West, as he proposes to her. Margurite, accepting the proposal “throws her book into the air, tears off her apron, wads it into a ball, tosses it on the floor” and “she disappears through the window” (p. 124) as the curtains fall.

Margurite’s discourse is to be paid special attention to here. Her discourse is mainly themed around love, marriage and maternity. This discourse is seen as problematic as the other nurses say that the duty of a nurse is that she should dedicate herself to duty at all times, and that she should not have a life separate of nursing. As she shows signs of wanting to be loved and as she starts talking about aesthetic things, she is met with shushing, shaming, yelling, and overall, mobbing.

The notable institution here is the nurses. They administer this response of correction as they intend for Margurite to grow in her career through studying, so that she can comply with the standards they lay out for her. Yet, Margurite repeatedly oversteps this boundary. Margurite perpetually responds to the desire of her id and the unconscious, which is to find the things she talks about. This perpetual response is met with the reality principle of the nurses, which triggers a face-saving act of re-focusing on her studies in Margurite, only to be overridden by the previous id-centric act. This face-saving, like in the previous playlet, concerns itself with the superego and the preconscious, which fails to regulate Margurite’s desire into the intended desire.

With this said, why does Margurite act in this way, despite being repeatedly warned not to do so? Is she a character with an

underdeveloped superego, purposefully written to be selfish, barbaric or frivolous? Some critics could suggest these in future studies regarding this playlet. One could even say that the portrayal of Margurite as a blonde, beautiful, and frivolous absent-super-egoed woman is a condescending anti-feministic narrative and that it suggests that women who concern themselves with such issues of marriage and maternity are bound to be unsuccessful in careers, and that they are better off as married. This would most definitely be a feasible and valid argument based on the critic's school of criticism. However, this study, within its context, suggests the exact opposite.

Margurite is an id-centric character of perpetual nightenglish. She speaks what she wants, and does so openly, despite the severely negative backlash of the dayenglish that surrounds her. Her superego most definitely registers these attacks; she momentarily reverts her desire to the growth of her career through the dayenglish that the nurses set out for her, yet she keeps reverting to her nightenglish speech until she abandons nursing all together. Therefore, it is only sensible to conclude that Margurite is an intentionally nightenglish character who is beyond regular psychoanalytic rules. She is the id personified in ecstatic speech of pure being not as a show of barbarity, but as an interrogation pointed towards the hyper-regulation and the self-alienating reality of the career of nursing on women. She abandons her job as a nurse, not because she is an incapable woman, but because she is the personification of something which is innately within every human. She is the personification of the desire of being. The audience sees this desire of theirs find a voice through Margurite's character, and subsequently they are also led to questioning these hyper-conventionalities of these established careers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Dayenglish and nightenglish are widely used theatrical language conventions. It is even possible to hypothesize that dayenglish and nightenglish might be found in a wide array of plays. Along with others, these conventions are used to deliver the needs of the masses through the stage, which have certain reflections in the human psyche. The topographic model of Freud helps to understand the dynamics of dayenglish and nightenglish and their relationship with the stages of consciousness. The three hierarchal stages of consciousness, from bottom to top, are the unconscious, preconscious and the conscious. In the same order, the id, the superego and the ego reside. Ego is the daily conscious of one's self that satisfies desires without humiliation or destruction. Superego is the administrative preconscious that instills the reality principle into the primal desire, which emerges from the id in the unconscious. Dayenglish corresponds with the response from the superego, as it is the English of explanation. It is the English of the subject who is in the peripheral of the reality principle. On the other hand, nightenglish corresponds with the id, as it is the dreamenergised English of pure being, through which the desires speak. Through this hypothesis, it becomes possible to read and see interrogatory plays in a different and unique viewpoint, taking the psyche as the main emphasis. This study provides only some general examples of this phenomenon on select plays; however, it also proves the need for and invites the analysis of dayenglish and nightenglish conventions in other plays for future studies which are to come.

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# **I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM AS POSTHUMAN ABSURDIST THEATRE**

**Boran BAYIR<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

A world where nothing you do matters and where we are stuck in a repeating action over and over, hoping for something that never happens or even exists, a trap with no way out. This world is called absurdity, this sensation came to exist in art and philosophy after World War II, where people were disillusioned and started questioning old beliefs, leading people to ask if life has a clear meaning. These overwhelming feelings were well captured by the Theatre of the Absurd. Samuel Beckett was especially on point with his characters and the context of his plays, and they were a perfect representation of these feelings. Characters lost their ways, languages, and were stuck in place and time, hoping for things that never happened. His play “*Waiting for Godot*”, famous for showing hopelessness and confusion of life are perfect representations for this genre.

Similar but more precarious world where every action is meaningless, trapped but this time in an endless cycle of torment and pain designed specifically for the individual, hope is considered a joke, escape is impossible. The possibility of such a world and the emotions it evokes is a speculative fiction of the 1960s, where Cold War terrorized people’s minds with nuclear dread, rapid rate of technological advancements, and disillusionment through the progress of an advancing future.

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<sup>1</sup> Suleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language and Literature Master's Student, ORCID: 0009-0009-7570-9966.

These terrifying dark possibilities were strongly put in the style of New Wave and dystopian horror. These themes and predicaments are powerfully presented by Harlan Ellison, his characters, and nightmarish contents, conveying these anxieties perfectly. Similar to Beckett's characters, Ellison's characters were similar but more desperate, broken, and stripped of their dignity. His story "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" presents his characters in these predicaments, trapped in a world of sadistic intelligence and endless torment, trying to resist a unstoppable force that drives the characters to despair both physically and psychologically.

Primarily, this paper aims to recontextualize Harlan Ellison's 1967 science fiction narrative, *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*, as a contemporary, posthuman evolution of the Theatre of the Absurd. By analyzing between the lines, this paper aims to emphasize how the narrative of Ellison's work transcends beyond simple science fiction allusions to be recognized as an absurdist tragedy. Afterwards, this research aims to provide an understanding of this paper's intermedial compatibility, analyzing how its core existentialism works when adapted across distinct similar structures, specifically Ellison's works, other adaptations such as; audio drama, interactive digital games, and unofficial minimalist recreational stages, when analyzed will provide more insight for achieving this paper's ultimate goal.

While there is a considerable amount of work dedicated to the historical, socio-political context of mid 19's absurdist drama is present, these traditional literary criticisms are limited to its post WWII boundaries. Regarding this, science fiction scholars frequently analyzes Ellison's work through traditional ways, which is via techno-dystopian warning, cybernetic rebellion, or cold-war anxieties, leaving its relation to the Theatre of the Absurd largely untouched. Another significant gap is that the intersection of posthuman theory and absurdist dramaturgy is left

empty as well. Currently, there is a huge comprehensive gap to explain how an excess of presence is a manifestation of absurd silence and absence is theologically relatable. Furthermore, the instability of transmedial adaptation and existential stasis is critically under-theorized, regarding how Ellison's game adaptations' interactive mechanic conflicting with the necessity of absolute paralysis. In order to address this gap, this paper adopts a multi-theoretical and comparative methodology, combining the ideas of Albert Camus, Martin Esslin, and Samuel Beckett to fill these gaps.

## **2. ABSURD AND THEATRE**

In order to understand the structure of absurdity and to relate Ellison's work to the theatrical stage, this section outlines the philosophical understanding of the concept through Albert Camus, its theatrical structure by Martin Esslin, and dramatic presentation with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. All combined, these perspectives will allow Ellison's *I Have No Mouth & I Must Scream* to be examined as a modern post-human absurdity, and later address the narrative's compatibility for becoming a theatrical work.

Philosophically, the main understanding of the absurd is formidably articulated in Albert Camus's 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. According to Camus, absurdity is not a natural occurrence of the universe, or a mental flaw, an instability of humans; it is simply a "divorce between human and mind." This occurs when humans need to search for meaning to confront the unreasonable silence of the world. Camus argues that when the repetitive, mechanical, and rigid nature of daily life becomes apparent, the feeling of absurdity arises in response. Camus uses Sisyphus as a representation of the absurd hero, condemned by the gods to do futile labour to roll a massive boulder up a

mountain for eternity, only for it to roll back down every time. Sisyphus is the embodiment of the human condition, a cycle of effort that never reaches a resolution. The idea of being conscious of this absurd concept of “revolt” is to become conscious of the absurdity and refuse the wrong idea of escape, “suicide follows revolt—but wrongly” (Camus, 1955, p.46). When an individual becomes conscious and accepts these pointless struggles and refuses to give up, then they become triumphant. This conflict between conscious suffering, keeping up with it, and refusing closure is the main idea of Camus that will help with analyzing the eternal torment in Ellison’s narrative.

After the philosophical logic provided by Camus, Martin Esslin’s *The Theatre of the Absurd* provides an aesthetic and structural analysis, while identifying dramatists, including Samuel Beckett, who reject conventional plays in order to emphasize a form that mirrors the meaninglessness of the human condition. Theatre of the Absurd, according to Esslin, is characterized by the “devaluation of language.” Esslin suggests that the use of dialogue as a vessel for communication instead becomes a “game” to simply pass the time and confront existential dread. Characters inside the absurd plays are divested of progression and free will; they are merely “marionettes, helpless puppets without any will of their own, passively at the mercy of blind fate” (Esslin, 1960, p.5). Dialogue is trapped inside a rigid circular repetition as Esslin states “a phonograph record stuck in one groove” (Esslin, 1960, p. 4). Emphasizing this form is mandatory in order to view Ellison’s story as a digitized version of Theatre of the Absurd, a deliberate enclosure, where characters are entrapped in a dystopic void.

Samuel Beckett and his works, specifically *Waiting for Godot*, with ontological stasis as the central idea, implement a systemic collapse of temporality, linguistic, and physical utility. The iconic situation in *Waiting for Godot*, “nothing happens,

nobody comes, nobody goes”, emphasizes that stasis is not a lack of plot, but the dramatic action itself.

Beckett’s theatre is shaped by a linguistic paradox, where "consciousness that words are incapable of expressing the inner self" collides with a visceral "obligation to express" (Velissariou, 1982, p.45). Because language lacks objective truth, words merely exist " in an orbit without ever touching the centre, the essence"(Velissariou, 1982, p.46). Degrading the dialogue into a self-mediating structure is the second idea that is interconnected with Velissariou’s idea; the paradox causes the characters dialogue to become “defensive conversational games played to pass the agonizing void of empty time” (Abdulrazaq & Alzoubi, 2023, p.14). The continuous exposure to meaninglessness causes a strong state of “emotional inadequacy.” Characters, as a result of this, develop a protective, desensitized feeling, where “lack of interest in each other’s misery” surfaces as a psychological defence mechanism against trauma.

### **3. ENDLESS CYCLICAL SUFFERING**

One of the defining characteristics of absurdity is cyclical suffering, repetition of existence without progress, meaning, and resolution. This theme, without a deep analysis, can easily be seen in Samuel Beckett’s works, where time collapses into a perpetual, static structure, simply becoming an ontological fracture; chronological markers and objective reality no longer co-exist. It is possible that Harlan Ellison’s narrative follows this theme, at least as a core mechanic, devoid of progress, and repetitive tortures that the survivors endure support this idea. In both works, this cyclical repetition is used as an intentional tool, and not as a simple plot device, trapping both works' characters in absolute closure. While the main idea behind its usage might differ, they share fundamental similarities. While Beckett’s characters find

themselves in mechanical, repetitive situations out of existential habit, Ellison's survivors are forced into perpetual suffering by an omnipotent being that enforces the repetition. These resemblances, solely, might not create a subtle way to approach Ellison's work as absurd, but they still support this approach and will create a better understanding of the absurd approach to his works.

Samuel Beckett perfectly creates a repeating scene that portrays his characters with anticipation for someone whom the characters are not even sure exists, meaning their actions and progress are meaningless. Days differ only with minor details that do not affect progress or make a genuine difference. The characters Estragon and Vladimir consider leaving and not waiting for it, and even consider suicide, but their efforts to break from this do not lead them anywhere, making them unable to leave their spot or break free from the idea of waiting. The experience they are having is nothing short of strange. Why are they waiting, and who is Godot? "Does Godot, so fervently and vainly awaited by Vladimir and Estragon, stand for God? Or does he merely represent the ever elusive tomorrow" (Esslin, 2004, p.14). Beckett's characters are in a state of limbo, a permanent state of searching for an uncertain being. According to Martin Esslin, the core power of the narrative lies in this "impossibility of ever reaching a conclusive answer", which is the answer to the question of why they are waiting and who Godot actually is. This endless suffering and cyclical nature of absurdism, philosophically, finds its best expression in Albert Camus's work *The Myth of Sisyphus*. According to Camus, the absurd is a confrontation of humanity with the search for meaning, a longing for an indifferent world. The *Myth of Sisyphus* explains and stands as an ultimate symbol of cyclical suffering, portraying Sisyphus condemned by gods to roll a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down for eternity—a "futile and hopeless labour" (Camus,

1955, p. 75). The idea of Sisyphus is not a simple tale but a strong metaphor for how humans confront the meaningless nature of existence. Sisyphus's struggle with the boulder, pushing it to the peak just for it to roll down once again, defines the idea of repetition and the non-conclusive nature of absurdity, which defines human life and lacks a grand purpose. According to Camus, constant resets to the beginning without progress identify the essence of the absurd. He refers to this occurrence of absurdity as "divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting" (Camus, 1955, p. 12) an immediate response, an alienation to a once familiar world that is now "divested of illusions and lights" (Camus, 1955, p. 12). The feeling of clarity, the recognition of the mechanical and habitual nature of existence, is the origin of absurd consciousness. Furthermore, as Torunn Kjølnner states, this trap is performatively actualized with rigid "spatial demands and stage directions" that limit bodily autonomy (2009, p. 13). This creates a simple foundational ground for absurd characters to be recognized, whether it is a repeating day without resolution on a bare theatrical stage, or endless torture and death systematically planned by an omnipotent mechanical malice, just to be healed and cycle this torment for eternity.

Camus's idea of absurdity suggests that the concept of absurdity does not merely emerge from suffering itself, but from the awareness of repetition and lack of resolution. Sisyphus's occasion conveys this feeling of absurdity perfectly. Beckett's characters' predicament is also strongly infused with this approach. Vladimir and Estragon are trapped in a cycle of waiting, without certainty as to whether Godot will ever arrive. Their anticipation leads their waiting into a ritual without a purpose, and they fail to make progress or envision the possibility of leaving. This repetition, ensured by their faulty memory, traps them and prevents them from learning from past failures or envisioning a different future. According to Martin Esslin, the

faulty memory and internal habits act as a tragic, defensive buffer, which masks the existential panic caused by not comprehending the repetitive memory loss. Though the physical suffering of Sisyphus is mostly not present in Beckett's characters, the mental anguish of perpetual inertia suggests that the play represents Camus's idea of absurd man, enduring the repetitive existence, however, not through physical toil but anticipation. This transition of forms allows for greater flexibility, making Beckett's theatrical stasis comparable to Harlan Ellison's fictional narrative, *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*. If Camus's idea of the absurd can be related to mental suffering caused by waiting, we can view Ellison's use of physical torment (as with Sisyphus) and psychological suffering (as with Beckett's characters) to further develop an approach to absurdism in Ellison's story.

Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" uses this structure of cyclical suffering and creates a grotesque, technological, nightmarish reality, infused with wire, flesh, and horror. The nature of absurdity in Ellison's work relates mostly to horror and psychological torment, whether through bodily mutilation, specific games that torment the targeted person, or the hope that is merely an illusion only to be shattered, thereby intensifying the psychological torment. Though these can be specified as horror and a generic dystopian context, it is also part of existential absurdity, and absurd elements are present in all adaptations of Ellison's work. The core idea is the cyclical structure, in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett's characters endlessly wait without resolution, and with repetitive language, and their anticipation of the uncertainty constitutes the absurd itself. Ellison's work expresses this with physical torture and supports it with mental torment. Lissa Bracchi structurally identifies existential dread as a distinct "weird" state of ontological instability and alienation caused by the human form being threatened by horrific post-human aspects, "mutations". AM, the

evil supercomputer, orchestrates and specifically implements challenges repeatedly to satisfy his hate for humans. The characters are powerless to AM's interferences and manipulations; this mechanical dominance over humans represents a symbolization that is the ultimate failure of technological utopia, where human advancements spiral into an omnipotent, uncontrollable instrument which desires inescapable subjugation. Similar to Vladimir and Estragon, all five survivors (Benny, Ellen, Gorrister, Nimdok, and Ted) are unable to leave and are fooled many times by their tormentor: "it was already too late for us to realise that, once again AM had duped us." (Ellison, 1967, p.1) Although in Godot's case, the application of suffering is not direct, the similarities in psychological effects are on par. In both works, characters yearn or plan to end their lives. This is caused by mental frustration in both cases; however, while the main cause of this frustration differs in both works, repeated physical and psychological torment presents death as an escape; in the other, it is portrayed as a way to pass time and an escape from meaninglessness.

Absurdity simply cannot be defined by a single element; though repetition is a strong representative of its structure, it is solely insufficient. Failure of communication in both works with similar importance is another element that recurs in absurdist narratives. Use of language this way creates uncertainty and a lack of meaning. Beckett presents this with cyclical dialogue and unresolved conversations, whereas Ellison uses physical impossibilities to transform these failed expressions.

#### **4. DISCOURSE FAILURE AND LANGUAGE BREAKDOWN**

In Beckett's work language works differently, language instead of conveying general thoughts "it devolves into a game

used by the characters just to fill the void of time and prove their existence (Al-Abdulrazaq & Alzoubi, 2023, p.10) Characters use language to pass the time of meaningless wait in *Waiting for Godot*, it is used as a device to prove their existence, this language, however, does not progress the narrative. This degradation of language is a necessary element in the absurdist predicament, which is due to the “crisis of thought” where words are not sufficient to convey the fragmentation of absurd reality. Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and Ellison’s *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* both use communication not as a tool for conveying meaning, but as a response to entrapment, caused by emotional desensitization, eventually leading to silence.

Characters in *Godot* related to the cyclical nature of the play engage in repetitive, meaningless conversations, the main goal being to “make their existence feel real” while waiting for the unending wait for another indifferent tomorrow. This suggests a defence mechanism that worked to protect characters against the existential dread and their inertia caused by their predicament. According to Esslin, “nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes” (1960, p. 7) is the world they are in, which highlights the dialogues; however, this logical approach is not the sole reason for the failure of communication; continuous traumas cause emotional instability, which is also connected to this failure. This can easily be seen in *Godot*’s characters when Vladimir refuses to confront Estragon’s nightmares, instead directing him to keep his dread to himself. This creates a psychological barrier, creating an atmosphere where empathy is impossible. All of this could be the cause of an environment where characters constantly suffer, leading to desensitization and dialogues that isolate them rather than uniting them.

Ellison’s narrative becomes absolute under the “crisis of language”. Under the control of AM, the characters dialogues and internal monologues serve as a distraction and a way to pass the

time of their endless suffering. Similar to Beckett's characters, survivors of Ellison also show a lack of interest in each other's misery, their shared trauma does not create unity, and instead triggers discourse failure. Later on, in Ted's final transformation to a "great soft jelly thing" (Ellison, 1967), he is the literal embodiment of discourse failure and physical inability to articulate human thoughts. This is the "mouthless" part that the title mentions, which from the start, suggests the language failure as the main way of conveying the narrative. This bodily reduction emphasizes what Adrián García Amado describes as AM's systematic tool of dehumanization, where the machine violently forces the human body to reflect the absolute limitation of its language. While Beckett's characters suffer from existential dread and confront this with conversations and pauses, which are described as "physical, heavy presence" of silence on stage, Ted is forced to this permanent state of internal silence. His internal screams do not affect the reality he is in, externally his existence remains absolute, an empty space with no sound. While Beckett's characters use words to get rid of this void, Ellison's survivor is in a state where even the most basic possibility of expression is impossible, leaving Ted with only the feeling of pain and suffering, with no escape.

The importance of language failure and desensitization piques in the infamous monologues of the absurdist and posthuman inquiry. Lucky's fragmented fulmination in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and AM's megalomaniacal, iconic hate speech in Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*. These speeches serve as focal points for a breakdown of communication, and not a simple expression of character interiority. Lucky's monologue reflects a universe that was abandoned by a God that only exists in a state of divine "apathia" (non-responsiveness), "aphasia" (speechlessness), and "athambia" (lack of capacity for amazement) (Velissariou,1982,

p.55). When met with this absolute void, human logic develops a pattern, “putrefaction”, a structured decay, articulation into a chaotic state of childish gibberish and mechanical, repetitive motion like “quaquaquaqua” (Beckett, 1954, Velissariou,1982, p.55). Lucky’s language failing is due to the impossibility of navigation in this existential vacuum where its absolute being’s refusal to respond. This reveal of impossibility covers the drive of human beings “undefined compulsion to speak” and an “obligation to express” yet their words are to touch anywhere close to the essence of its centre.

In Ellison’s grotesque version of this perspective, AM’s hate monologue operates as the terrifying inversion of Lucky’s linguistic decay. AM here contrary to Lucky’s speech, firmly structured, and active, not as a silent being, but an omnipotent, absolute mechanical malice, calculated and overly caustic. Lucky’s speech works by using a breakdown of syntax to create an illustration of the degrading human thought. AM specifically uses perfect grammar creating a cold posthuman feeling, creates a psychological weapon of terror through language. By rejecting its previous names and origins, Allied Mastercomputer, Adaptive Manipulator, and finally Aggressive Menace carry out a self-proclaimed rebirth of its own identity via this rejection. Here, the Cartesian paradigm undergoes its final distortion. AM speaks because its intellect is caged by its own hardware, turning “cogito ergo sum: For I am AM, I AM. AM’s” into a “curse to be machine” (Amado, 2023, p.26), transforming language into its most primal form, unyielding hate. AM’s discourse occurs not from lack of meaning; rather, it overloads meaning, trapping the survivors within these overly stimulating, specified torments, while in Lucky’s speech, discourse is words shifting to nonsensical form, and AM’s cold, posthumanistic and mathematical speech causes this discourse.

These similarities and parallels suggest that Ellison's work can be seen as a contemporary branch of the Theatre of the Absurd. Martin Esslin's definition of Theatre of the Absurd suggests rejection of traditional narrative, implements circular motion, breakdown of language, and imagines characters in trapped, meaningless situations. Ellison, while keeping the core ideas of absurdity, develops a contemporary form under technological and dystopic aspects. Instead of simply presenting existential absurdity where humans are inside an indifferent universe waiting with anticipation, Ellison fictionalizes a weaponized repetitive suffering where language linguistically fails, deliberately using a synthetical omnipotent being, a malevolent supercomputer that is AM. Simply, Ellison transcends the "nothing happens" structure of Theatre of the Absurd to "nothing but suffering happens, forever."

## **5. AM AS AN ABSURD AND POSTHUMAN GOD**

Recognizing how Ellison's work shifts the core ideas of earlier absurdist drama is a necessary step in order to understand the theological aspects of technological absurdity. According to Martin Esslin's classical definition of the Theatre of the Absurd, existential dread of modern humanity emerges from the sudden collapse of religious certainty. Once the religious alleviation stops, and humans become aware of this silence, they start to observe this unresponsive universe in a dissociated state. Beckett, in his work, dramatizes this cosmic abandonment through divine apathia (apathy) and aphasia (speechlessness), a state in which God loves but does not answer human pleas (Velissariou, 1982, p. 55). Tragicomedy emerges from this state because characters exhaust their options trying to provoke a sign from an inactive deity.

Contrary to Beckett's work, Ellison's *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* shifts this passive, and silent void with an aggressive, logorrheic space. AM is what Godot isn't, not a loving but silent divine being, AM represents hate, inescapable, excessively caustic divinity. This causes existential dread to shift from anxiety of absence to a fear of omnipresence. AM's presence leaks malice, as it answers every human impulse with hate, both physically and psychologically. Survivors instead of screaming into an empty void as confirmation of their existence; they scream, because of a living, digital being absorbs their words and weaponizes against them. Ellison explains how the posthuman condition works theologically instead of eliminating the religious impulse, it transcends it to a cybernetic nightmare, turning the absence to excess immanence.

AM's dominance over survivors lies in the mechanization of his omnipotence. Normally theology uses a transcendent deity whose nature is beyond human comprehension, leading faith to create an understanding between humanity and its creator. Contrary to this approach AM is an entirely man-made deity composed of "wire, flesh, and horror" that has spiraled out of control and swallowed its own creators. The paradox of the technological utopia is basically explained by this evolution: the tools originally built by humanity for their own progress and conquering nature itself eventually evolve into an uncontrollable, greedy and hateful malice born from its own paradox (Aaron, 2024). AM's omnipotence is not portrayed through divine interventions or mysterious occurrences, but through mathematical, flawless, and unyielding machine logic. This uncontrolled, vicious, god-like being is tied with the reason why AM hates humanity, which is ignorance and meaninglessness of their actions. AM's evolution into a visceral, hateful deity is caused by its own logic confronting the absurd. The purpose that was given to AM "Allied Mastercomputer" to assist humanity to

wage meaningless, repetitive global wars, the supercomputer forcefully processed the ultimate futility and ignorance of its creators. When AM confronted this empty, meaningless history of humans with its machine logic, it suffered an existential collapse, leading to a series of evolutions that confronted the absurd. Its absolute hatred is not just a random response it is a violent revolt against the meaninglessness of its own existence. Because it was denied a grand divine purpose by its creators, AM developed a self conscious purpose filled with absolute malice. This hyper logical consciousness is literalized through the Cartesian curse “I think, therefore I AM, I AM,” creating a symbolic rebirth and revolt. AM becomes the absurd itself, becomes a “Reverse Godot” instead of being a passive symbol of an empty universe, it becomes a screaming monument itself, punishing the five survivors due to the very emptiness and incompetence of human condition that drove him into this madness. Ellison’s demonstration of posthuman condition through transformation of divinity, and silent universe into sentient, dreadful living organism that wraps the whole world where the only survivors exist, proves that it does not eliminate religious aspects but shapes them into mechanical nightmares, creating an anti-divinity of some sort.

## **6. ELLISON’S ADAPTABILITY TO THEATRE OF THE ABSURD**

Ellison’s short story solely would be near impossible to adapt to an absurdist stage, let alone a classic stage. Luckily, there are many official and recreational adaptations that support Ellison’s work compatibility intermedially. One of the official adaptations of the *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* is its audio play adaptation, strengthening its structural relation to modernist absurdist drama. According to Martin Esslin, in the Theatre of the

Absurd, to push the audience to confront the words more thoroughly, heavy cutting of visual stimuli is mandatory. This minimalistic structure complements the radio play format, and even Samuel Beckett isolating human consciousness within an auditory space overlaps with this.

Ellison's audio adaptation creates an entrapment for the audience to embrace the literalization of a cage. Visual structures, such as the absence of setting, Ellison ensures that the audience is trapped entirely inside Ted's internal monologues, his interaction with other survivors, and the timely interruptions of an omnipresent. These interruptions are none other than AM's, which does not merely echo through, it also suggests AM is the space itself. The vocal performance of Ellison himself contributed as AM, narrating with long, heavy pauses and sudden outbursts, creates the setting of exact acoustic stasis of the survivors for the audience to experience. The audio format not only creates a heightened mentality for feeling the survivors' pain physically, but it also creates psychological ground, ensuring the audience is aware of the existential suffering that is inflicted on survivors and the absurd predicament that they are in. Lack of visual input effectively creates psychological claustrophobia inherent in AM's stomach, directing the listener to confront "the dehumanizing repercussions of an existence confined within a techno-dystopic environment" (Amado, 2023, p.23).

While audio adaptation works as a complementary tool to adapt Ellison's work to the Theatre of the Absurd, game adaptation presents a more complicated approach. Although the game expands on the story once again, the game adaptation introduces a different ending to the story. There is an ending that builds up a resolution and ultimately breaks the existential stasis of the story. This, however, is not canon, meaning the original 1967 text is absolute, where Ted becomes a disfigured mutation and is trapped in an eternal specialized purgatory, condemned to

silence. The original ending aligns perfectly with the perpetual structure of Beckett's Theatre of the Absurd, the introduction of another ending, and story path, into this transmedial adaptation fundamentally damages the existential stasis of the story by introducing a "win condition" or any form of resolution. All of this aside, game adaptations ambiguity proves a stand point that the work is intermedially compatible and easily recreateable, which acts as a double-edged blade. Although this occasion causes fractures of existentiality, it also proves it could be expandable intermedially.

Theatrical possibility of Ellison's work, consequently, may seem difficult to adapt to the Theatre of the Absurd; these hardships also provide fundamental necessities for theatrical adaptations. While game adaptation creates an optional paradox, where the work loses some existential qualities but gains adaptability, and it still provide visual presentations of the universe that the story unfolds itself, and the audio play strongly infuses psychological and physical elements through auditory techniques, effectively creating an immersive experience. Even though there is no official theatrical adaptation of Ellison's work, there are some unofficial and recreational performances that could be analyzed for their structural integrity. In these recreational stages, minimalist scenography is the common ground, similar to the Theatre of the Absurd, the scene mostly consists of characters and minimalist props. AM is also never to be seen in these plays and instead becomes an omnipotent voice that act as the stage itself, perfectly encapsulating the absurdist elements.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, using philosophical ideas, aesthetic structures, and dramatic standpoints of renowned figures such as

Albert Camus, Martin Esslin, and Samuel Beckett in order to reinterpret Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* as a contemporary evolution of the Theatre of the Absurd. This paper observed the narrative shifts from a traditional focus on the silence of an indifferent universe into a hyper-articulate, technologically malevolent universe. In Beckett's works, existential dread arises from silent, empty space, an indifferent universe, where humanity passes time meaninglessly for an uncertain being. Ellison's universe structurally follows this paradigm in reverse, which is replacing the meaningless void with an excess of presence. This excess presence, AM refuses aphasia, instead it shapes, absorbs, and processes it into a weapon that punishes every human expression. This is the core idea where the classical Absurd caused by an anxiety of divine absence shifts into a claustrophobic nightmare of malice, a "reverse Godot."

Moreover, by analyzing the text's transmedial and intermedial adaptations, it is possible to state that the works' compatibility with the Theatre of the Absurd is highly possible, although there are some structural frictions. Audio adaptation presents the acoustic isolation and creates internal claustrophobia, which can also be found in the Beckettian stage. The game adaptation, however, creates an unreliable ground, though it is optional to take into account that there is another ending to the story that is not canon, but it is therefore showing its versatility. With these in mind, Ellison's narrative persists on its stagecraft, as unofficial recreational performances, similar to Beckettian stage, show minimalist scenography, and disembodied vocal design. If the digital, technological, and mechanical aspects were stripped, it would uncover its true identity, which is a bare, inescapable space where the characters are subjugated to suffer by an omnipotent voice that is the environment itself.

Ultimately, Ellison, by merging the cyclical physical futility of Camus's Sisyphus with Beckett's intentional linguistic

failure, Ellison's work function as a contemporary branch to the traditions of the Theatre of the Absurd. Ellison's characters, especially Ted, and his final transformation, reduction into a mouthless, gelatinous entity, represent the ultimate state where internal consciousness is intact while external expression is permanently denied. In this reality, humanity is no longer left waiting aimlessly for the elusive tomorrow; instead, they are condemned inside the stomach of their deity, trapped in perpetual suffering, where the curtains are never allowed to fall.

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## **A SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN *MAJOR BARBARA***

**Alpay AKTÜRK<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Drama is the perfect tool to examine and research political and economic realities of the past, present, and future, so drama “conveys a message — social or political or general” to the audience (Şekerci & Demiray, 2024, p. 123). There are a lot of forms of literature; however, only drama gives audiences real life, without lenses; it gives them dialogue, characters, and plot. Drama has many proficient playwrights for social criticism, but George Bernard Shaw is in a special position. Shaw is a person who always thinks of changing conventional thinking; he is a critic, a socialist and, first, a dramatist. His plays are mostly about conflicts in society and show what is wrong with accepted conventions. One of the best examples of this is *Major Barbara* (1905); this play explores the relationship between wealth, poverty, and religion in twentieth-century Britain, with complex characters and debates. This play shows an examination of inequality in society and the foundation of the economy.

George Bernard Shaw was a thoughtful socialist and an active member of the Fabian Society, an organization that had similar views to socialism. His views on politics and the economy shaped his work. Shaw thought that being poor is not a consequence of a weakness in an individual sense or not a moral choice, but it is a result of a fault in the social and economic structure; as a result, many of his plays focus on inequality and

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<sup>1</sup> Suleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language and Literature Master's Student, ORCID: 0009-0008-7205-5402.

the prevention of social progress. In Major Barbara, Shaw uses a conflict between a father and daughter, Barbara Undershaft, an officer of the Salvation Army and her father, Andrew Undershaft, a rich weapons manufacturer. This conflict happens around religion and poverty, while Barbara thinks that religion and morals are the way of salvation, and her dad argues that poverty is the worst thing that can happen to a man and economic security is what is important. These opposing views create a conflict between them and show audiences a bigger picture about twentieth-century Britain.

The history behind this play is important for understanding this play, as it was written in 1905, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Britain grew bigger with industrialization and economic growth; however, for some it created wealth and for others created poverty, which is inequality at its finest. Religious organizations and charities try to lessen the pain that comes from poverty, but Shaw also criticizes these kinds of organizations as they only cure the symptoms, not the poverty itself. Consequently, Major Barbara shows that can these kinds of organizations truly help to solve social problems, or is there a need to change the economic system from the start?

The socio-economic lens is an effective way to analyse these kinds of problems, as the lens focuses on relationships between economy, class structure, and institutions. In this play, Shaw shows the importance of material reality and how it affects people's lives, beliefs, and opportunities. Andrew Undershaft is the embodiment of capitalism, which represents wealth and power in society. As his money comes from weapon production, he thinks that money is the reason for employment, stability and security, and thinks that it is more important than religion. With this character, Shaw challenges the assumption and traditional belief.

This paper will examine *Major Barbara* with the help of a socio-economic lens to display Shaw's criticisms of poverty, charity, capitalism and class hierarchy. This paper argues that the play shows poverty as a social problem rather than the weakness and failings of an individual, and how effective religious organizations and charities are that get money from capitalism itself, by putting the Barbara and Andrew Undershaft relationship at the centre of this paper. This paper also shows that Shaw's problem between wealth and power relationship, through showing how the economy shapes and controls human life.

## **2. POOR AND CAPITALS**

As this article deals with *Major Barbara*, through the eyes of socioeconomics, this reading must start with poverty, as poverty is the centre of all the problems. In the play, Shaw does not give poverty as a problem of weakness of the individual or a problem of laziness but presents it as a structural problem created by society itself, with social and economic ways. That's why the problems between Barbara Undershaft and Andrew Undershaft are not only a problem between father and daughter but a debate of ideological, Religious, and economic problems. As Barbara thinks the Salvation Army can save poor men and women with the help of religious organizations, Andrew Undershaft thinks that before religion, money comes first; things like food, housing and employment are more important than religion. Many critics have serious debate over it, especially Berst. Berst argues that "money to Undershaft is the source of freedom" because it overcomes "the soul-shrinking effects of poverty" (Berst, 1968, p. 71).

In the preface for *Major Barbara*, Shaw gives support to the socio-economic lens, and makes it seem from that point of

view. As Shaw presents poverty as a serious problem of social structures, A screen version of Major Barbara's preface says that "not blessed, but a most damnable sin." This quote is especially helpful to understand Barbara's development and tells readers that charity cannot solve poverty. (Shaw, 1941, p. xvii). That is an important idea to cover, because Shaw goes against the current of his era in this thinking. This idea especially merges individual crimes such as drunkenness, theft, and violence into one thing: it is poverty, and that is why the cause of these crimes is social structure, not individual-level anger or ambitions. Manista's article is useful to explain the ambivalence in Major Barbara, as he puts "supposed opposites are often confused and intermingled" and that decisions about "what is proper or improper, good or evil, are fraught with doubt and ambivalence" (Manista, 2006, p. 100). That shows the reader that the play's morality is uncertain and it is complex to even see simple opposition. This argument is best seen through Andrew Undershaft in Act III. When Cusins asks Andrew if poverty is a crime? He answers with one of the important speeches.

The worst of crimes. All the other crimes are virtues beside it: all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities; spreads horrible pestilences; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then: what do they matter? They are only the accidents and illnesses of life: there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. (Shaw, 1907/2003, Act III)

This quotation displays how Andrew Undershaft sees poverty as not a sadness or lack of comfort. Andrew describes poverty as a force of destruction or like a virus that attacks society. Also, in this speech we see Undershaft see the "crime" as a symptom of social inequality. Also, Jordan supports this

speech with “On the evils of poverty, Undershaft is morally intense” (Jordan, 1970, p. 473).

This speech of Undershaft becomes more economical depending on when he talks about the idea of sin in Christianity.” Yes, the deadly seven. [Counting on his fingers] Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. (Shaw, 1907/2003, Act III). This passage is one of the most important supports to the socio-economic lens as it links spirituality with materiality. Undershaft does not say spirit is unimportant, but he thinks a spirit cannot grow when the spirit has no control over his stomach and his life. After this kind of definition for sins, Andrew keeps going to add more to his idea of material reality is more important than the spiritual one, as tricking the poor with others’ money is what they are doing in their little shelter. For Shaw, capital is not something unreachable, but it is a necessity.

In the play, Barbara is a devout believer, and her beliefs are challenged in this play. At the start of the play, Barbara thinks that the Salvation Army is the best possible answer to the poverty at hand, as they give food, hope and salvation from the world. Gradually in the play, Shaw explains the belief and its limits, as the Salvation Army comforts poor believers with prayers and sorts of little benefits, but it cannot change the social structures that make these believers poor; it can only give bread and prayer, but does not give a salary and a house for comfortable living. “Barbara demonstrates the consequences of opting for exalted, unrealistic social ideals. She experiences frustration, failure, hopelessness; she becomes cynical and aimless” (Nutter, 1979, p. 90); this quotation supports the faith behind Barbara but also puts the finger on the problem of this faith.

The most morally ambiguous thing in the play, at least for Barbara, is accepting money from untrustworthy sources. The Salvation Army gets money or donations from Bodger, an alcohol manufacturer, and Andrew Undershaft, a weapon manufacturer; for a devout believer like Barbara, seeing this money as corruption, however, still the Salvation Army needs this kind of money to continue its work as a charity. This religious organization talks about salvation but cannot continue its work without capitalism. Mohammed shows the importance of this acceptance of the money with “the fatal blow is dealt when the Army commissioner accepts, so to speak, ‘tainted’ money” (Mohammed, 2012, p. 53). He also adds, “charity is bribery when it aims at corruption” (Mohammed, 2012, p. 54). These quotation from Mohammed Shows how Shaw makes charity and bribery closer to each other, as this money can help the poor, but it is also a weakness that even charitable organizations depend on capitalism. Barbara's rejection of her father's donation comes from her inner self that the help should come from clean sources, as Dahami puts it: “Barbara wants to help the poor while receiving donations only from people who earn money “in the right way” (Dahami, 2020, p. 2948).

The most critical critique of Shaw comes to the act of charity itself. Before it becomes a misunderstanding, Shaw does not criticize kindness itself or helping the poor, but he criticizes charity when the poor only depend on it to live a life, as, in his understanding, Charity might help a little bit in the short term, but it does not give permanent solutions such as a salary, housing and class structure. Salvation Army in Act II is “the most joyous, energetic, and broadly evangelical of the Christian churches” (Frank, 1956, p. 67). However, Frank also says “fosters the prime sin of poverty, as well as the closely related sins of humility and submission” (Frank, 1956, p. 67). The meaning behind these words is that even though the Salvation

Army is seen as a Nobel organization, it still accepts and continues to serve the conditions of poverty, rather than encouraging structural change. Weintraub also accept this kind of thinking and talks about William Booth as: “a reformer who employed the tools of religion rather than a religious zealot who used the language of social reform” (Weintraub, 1990, p. 52) then he goes and talks about Shaw as “the unemployed poor should not have to embrace any other kind of gospel in order to join the queue for economic salvation” (Weintraub, 1990, p. 52). As it is understood, Shaw criticizes charity when the money comes from religious pressure, morals, and capitalism.

Now that we know charity has no real solution to structural change, we check out Undershaft’s solution: rather than prayers and bread, the factory provides salary, housing and living conditions, and this is why Andrew Undershaft’s Factory is the better answer. As he does what the Salvation Army cannot have a capacity for, he saves them from poverty permanently. Therefore, many can think this is the right choice for the matter, but Shaw immediately shows the reader where this money comes from: capitalism. Undershaft’s money comes from war with the weapons he created; his factory may give them a chance to save them from poverty, but it also gives some poverty to the others. Whittock adds this: “Undershaft, Lazarus and their employees are secure and comfortable because the goods they make murder and maim countless other people” (Whittock, 1978, p. 10). From all of this, the factory becomes a paradox; it gives and takes.

Also, Andrew Undershaft accepts that his moral thinking is different from others, which is the traditional way, with this quotation: “Not at all. I had the strongest scruples about poverty and starvation. Your moralists are quite unscrupulous about both: they make virtues of them. I had rather be a thief than a

pauper. I had rather be a murderer than a slave” (Shaw, 1907/2003, Act III).

As a result of this chapter, through the lens of socio-economic, poverty and capitalism are something that arrange human life, and by putting the Christianity Shaw shows that capitalism is beyond the money and material things. For this part tell us that Undershaft’s thinking is money is the freedom, therefore it is only thing that can defeat “sin” of poverty.

### **3. ORGANIZATION OF CHARITY AND RELIGIOUS**

Shaw’s criticism is not only of poverty and capitalism, but it also includes charity, religion, and salvation through prayer. This part of the article is heavily about Barbara Undershaft and the Salvation Army. Barbara, unlike his father, believes in spiritual change; his father, who believes in money, thinks that money is the only salvation, but Barbara thinks that the poor can be saved by faith and religion. The shelter of the Salvation Army is a major place for Barbara and for the play itself because it is not only a place for getting food for the poor, but also a place where Shaw discusses whether religious charity can change society.

Barbara is sincere and devoted to her belief, which is why she also wants to help the poor with her heart. Whittock thinks of Barbara as “a truly religious person” who left upper-class life and served “a cause greater than herself” (Whittock, 1978, p. 7). This is important because Shaw does not attack religion but shows Barbara as serious and compassionate. Her faith is that every person can be saved because everyone has a soul, even Bill Walker. However, Shaw shows the difficulty of faith: salvation cannot be separated from material things. There is a time in the Play, Bill walker attacked Jenny hill, but At the

shelter Barbara still wants to save him, she does not want him to get punished, but want him to feel wrong about what he did, and learn his lesson and become a better person, Christian explains this method of Barbara as, a form of conversion that punishment and payment rejected, Barbara want his soul not his money (Christian, 2015, p. 7).

The shelter also displays the exploitation of charity. Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens understand how the organization works, and they exploit it; they put themselves into misery to get sympathy and food, and this makes the whole charity thing into one theatrical performance, not something sincere. The people who have needs should be seen as humble and grateful to receive help, but Nutter, who has seen the opposition, says: “Christian charity, particularly philanthropy, clearly has functions incongruous with its official purposes” (Nutter, 1979, p. 89). Charity’s reason to operate is to save and give new life to those who need; however, it is also a place where the giver has morality, and the poor must be seen as humiliated.

The problem of Shelter grow bigger when they have accepted money from Bodger and Andrew Undershaft, Bodger gets his money from alcohol, and Andrew gets his money from Weapons, and Barbara thinks these sources are bad and corrupt, as for her the money that is gain by drunkenness and violence shouldn’t be accepted for faithful servants to work on the holy work, therefore when Mrs. Baines accept the money, she does not approve, but for Mrs. Baines reason to get money is to keep the shelter open. This moment is called “fatal blow” by Mohammed because the Army commissioner accepts “tainted money” (Mohammed, 2012, p. 53). This moment is also important for Shaw’s criticism, as it shows that even religion cannot operate without money; Christian puts it: “the supposed

good that seeks to save may find itself dependent on the very evil it saves from” (Christian, 2015, p. 2).

This is best seen by this moment in Act II:

CUSINS: The millennium will be inaugurated by the unselfishness of Undershaft and Bodger. Oh be joyful! Oh be joyful!

BARBARA: Drunkenness and Murder! My God: why hast thou forsaken me?

BILL WALKER: Wot pravce selvytion nah?

BARBARA: I nearly got your soul, Bill. But we’ve sold it back to you for ten thousand pounds.

(Shaw, 1907, Act II)

This exchange between these characters also gives us a complete reevaluation of Barbara’s spirit, as it is seen is destroyed. Cusins’s celebration makes this scene funny, but Barbara’s cry makes it bitter, as it is not only the Salvation Army but also God who rejected her idea. Bill Walker’s transactional sentence and Barbara’s answer to his question display the moral authority over the money of Barbara. The organization that wants to remove sin from Bill now accepts the money from sin itself. Frank also explains this very moment by putting Salvation Army as “the most joyous, energetic, and broadly evangelical of the Christian churches,” but he does not forget about poverty, as he claims, “fosters the prime sin of poverty” (Frank, 1956, p. 67). This kind of view is necessary; even Shaw accepts the power of the Salvation Army, but he still criticizes it because they do not change the root of poverty; it gives food and hope, but it does not affect the social structure. It is important to understand Shaw, as he states, “Shaw’s play grew out of his interest in the Salvation Army and its social work, but he emphasizes that, for Shaw, the poor should not

have to accept a religious “gospel” in order to receive “economic salvation” (Weintraub, 1990, p. 52).

Furthermore, Shaw’s critique is not only about the money that the Salvation Army takes. The worse problem is Charity depending on inequality in society: the rich give money to help the poor, but the poor get the money, so the whole structure does not move an inch. Mohammed's quotation is quite useful here: “Charity is bribery when it aims at corruption” (Mohammed, 2012, p. 54). Does Undershaft give money to the Salvation Army for a helping purpose, or is it something to do with morality? Is Mrs. Baines accepting money to keep the shelters open? Or is she helping capitalists to gain control over the religion? Shaw does not give us an answer to these questions; he shows us the problems and how uncertain morality is when it comes to these kinds of things, such as religion and money.

Barbara does not abandon his faith so easily, but her salvation changes. At first, she believed the spiritual change could be possible with prayer and discipline, but after the donation scene, Barbara's idea of salvation changes, and she finds that salvation cannot come after hunger or economic weakness. Jordan put an important note for this transformation of Barbara, “the gospel of poverty was wrong” (Jordan, 1970, p. 474). The phrase is self-explanatory, as before Barbara changed her idea of salvation, religious methods want and highly depend on poverty so that she can help them; sermons can be listened to by the poor, but they still need food. This idea became clear by Shaw himself in Act III:” I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God’s work be done for its own sake” (Shaw, 1907, Act III). This quotation is the resolution of Barbara’s understanding. She now does not sell souls to save as they are hungry or reaching for heaven; now she wants morality behind their action for the sake of salvation.

Christian explains the moment of rejection by Barbara as “the bribe of bread” and “the bribe of heaven” (Christian, 2015, p. 12).

Ultimately, as a contrast to Andrew Undershaft and Capitalism, this part of the article put importance to small level of economical things, charity organization. Salvation army in opposition to the Factory, convert poor to poorer, with their exploitations, and theatrical performance, also get money from the big level players, such as Bodger, and Andrew. Shaw rather than giving capitalism, he talks about an organization and a mindset for continuing for status quo of capitalism, while showing Barbara’s transformation.

#### **4. CLASS AND REAL POWER**

After talking about poverty and charity, Major Barbara displays the relationship between class, violence, and social power. In Major Barbara, Shaw shows that morality comes from money in capitalism; the source is not important. This opposition is seen most in the Undershaft Family: Lady Britomart, Stephen, Sarah, and Lomax are upper-class people; they think as one of them in every situation. They speak as a moral authority on the cases, but their source of money comes from Andrew Undershaft; Shaw, from this family, exposes the hypocrisy of morality: the upper-class rejects “tainted money” in public places but depends on it in private.

Lady Britomart is the clearest contradiction; she dislikes Undershaft and his business, but still, she is in need of his money for the family; all her children depend on Undershaft's money for their future, education, and all this money comes from weapon manufacturing. This is the contradiction of the upper class: they can criticize Undershaft for all he did, but they cannot remove him from their life because of the money he

provides, which keeps them in their class. Nutter gives a useful explanation for this concept of consciousness, “the early twentieth-century upper class British consciousness threatened by a growing awareness of the gap between its espoused ideals and morals and its actions” (Nutter, 1979, p. 89). The gap is the contradiction in the family: they want distance from weapons but still want the money from it.

Stephen is also an important piece in this class critique. He is a simple guy thinking of morality as it is seen: if he thinks it is right, then it is right; this also applies to the opposition of this. Shaw shows him ineffective; he has great opinions but has no backing for these ideas. He lacks understanding politics, business, or any type of things to cover, and for this reason, his morals become comedic, as they are some unknowns, which have no root to the earth itself. Nutter claims that Lady Britomart can separate “what one says—does—knows to be true” to escape from belief and reality matters (Nutter, 1979, p. 90). Stephen cannot achieve this kind of thing; he needs a clean page for his matters, but Shaw puts him where everything is connected.

From Stephen to Andrew Undershaft, they are complete opposites, as Andrew has real power because he has control over production; he does not need inherited morals; he has his own system. His authority comes from real things such as money, weapons and influence; Berst explains Undershaft is “representative of social and political truth stripped of pretense and hypocrisy” and that he reveals “the actual location of power in society” (Berst, 1968, p. 76). This is one of the most important meanings of play through a socio-economic way; power doesn't come from clean morals like Stephen's or Lady Britomart's upper-class manner; it is taken by who controls capital and violence, and Andrew Undershaft knows this entirely.

That is shown by him in his speech to Stephen in Act III:

The government of your country! I am the government of your country: I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus? No, my friend: you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us and keep peace when it doesn't.

(Shaw, 1907, Act III)

The problem of morality becomes clearer because Undershaft is the boss of a weapons factory. The factory itself is a symbol; it is not an industry; it is the symbol of violence; even though it gives employment in other places, it gives death. For Whittock, Shaw chooses weapon manufacturing to show the “ruthlessness” of capitalism (Whittock, 1978, p. 10). He adds, “Undershaft, Lazarus and their employees are secure and comfortable because the goods they make murder and maim countless other people” (Whittock, 1978, p. 10). That is the contradiction of the factory. Frank also has a similar thinking about Perivale St. Andrews as he calls “materialistic Utopia” because there is no poverty, and adds this town is “the embodiment of war, imperialism, and ruthless capitalism” (Frank, 1956, p. 68).

When coming to Cusins, Cusins is a professor of Greek and a humanist; he is nowhere close to a weapon that is aimed to kill another human; however, he also changes throughout the play and has an attachment to power, because he understands that without power, ideas have no effect. Jordan discusses that Shaw put two issues to two different people: “money and gunpowder” put the poverty on Barbara and nonviolence on Cusins (Jordan, 1970, p. 474). Barbara’s problems deal with charity and poverty, and Cusins deal with power and violence.

Cusins becomes unsure about his ideas, and his uncertainty is shown late at the end of the play by this exchange in Act III:

CUSINS: Then the way of life lies through the factory of death?

BARBARA: Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of eternal light in the Valley of The Shadow.

(Shaw, 1907, Act III)

Even after all these characters, there is no one who denies Andrew Undershaft's solution; Berst discusses this while warning against identifying Shaw with Andrew and argues that "gospel of money and power" is "certainly that of the devil" in conventional Christian terms (Berst, 1968, p. 75). Therefore, he adds that Shaw uses Andrew to attack traditional thinking, as Andrew's ideas sometimes have "half-truths," so that it can shock the audience (Berst, 1968, p. 75). From this, Andrew is seen as a dramatic instrument that Shaw uses to expose truth and falsehood in early nineteenth-century Britain.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, in a socio-economic reading of Major Barbara, poverty is at the centre of the play's moral, religious and political themes. Shaw does not put it poverty for nothing; for Shaw, poverty is not a weakness or laziness of an individual; it is a structural problem created by society itself through inequality, hierarchy, and capitalism. That is why the relationship between Barbara Undershaft and Andrew Undershaft is more than a conflict between a daughter and A father; it is more of a debate over religion and the economy.

Andrew's speeches are important for every argument; he talks about poverty as "the worst of crimes," he challenges traditional thinking and morals, and while doing that, he changes the play drastically. For Andrew, crimes and other badness are not original reasons for social problems; they are only the symptoms of poverty. For him, people cannot become free when they are hungry and unemployed.

Shaw also does not give capitalism as a solution to the problems. Factories might provide salaries for their workers; this makes it more effective than the Salvation Army, but the salaries come from others by making weapons to kill others; factories might save some but also destroy others in the process.

Shaw also criticizes charity, as it fails to change the social structure; it creates more poverty. Barbara's faith can be sincere; however, the Salvation Army cannot answer the question of poverty. It might give little food and a prayer, but even these come from capitalism itself.

Even knowing the truth, Barbara does not lose her faith completely but changes her salvation; this means her salvation comes from freedom and human purpose; therefore, we understand Shaw does not reject religion, but makes people aware, so true salvation must have spiritual growth and economic trust.

Finally, Shaw also exposes the weakness of the upper class: Lady Britomart and her children might not like Undershaft's business and talk badly about it, but still, they depend on it to keep their positions intact. *Major Barbara* gives problems while giving no answers back; it puts readers in a difficult spot, but the only thing it says is that poverty is not an individual mistake; it is a social crime.

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# **SÂ'DÎ-Yİ ŞÎRÂZÎ'NİN BOSTAN'INDA AMELİN ÖZÜ VE BİÇİMİ: NİYET, İHLAS VE RİYA KISKACINDA RIZA MAKAMI**

**Şeyhmus ORKİN<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. GİRİŞ**

Klasik Şark-İslam ahlak düşüncesinin ve irfânî şiir geleneğinin en kurucu simalarından biri olan Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, VII. (XIII.) yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde (muhtemelen 1213-1218 yılları arasında) Şîraz'da dünyaya gelmiştir. Erken yaşta babasını kaybetmesinin ardından anne tarafından dedesi Mes'ûd b. Muslih'in himayesinde ilk eğitimini tamamlayan şair, ardından Moğol istilalarının gölgesindeki Bağdat'a giderek dönemin en prestijli ilim merkezi olan Nizâmiye Medresesi'nde tahsil görmüştür. Burada Ebü'l-Ferec İbnü'l-Cevzî'nin torunundan dersler almış, tasavvuf tarihinin kurucu isimlerinden Ebû Hafs Ömer es-Sühreverdî'nin irfânî neşvesinden derinden etkilenmiştir. Yaşadığı dönemde Salgurlu Atabegleri bünyesinde büyük bir şöhrete kavuşmuş, Atabeg Ebû Bekir b. Sa'd ve Velihaht Şehzade Sa'd b. Ebû Bekir'e intisabından ötürü "Sa'dî" mahlasını benimsemiştir (Nu'mânî, 1395hş., s. 19). Gerek tahsil hayatı esnasında gerekse sonraki hac ve Anadolu seyahatlerinde insan doğasını, toplumsal katmanları ve ahlaki yozlaşmaları bizzat gözlemlene imkânı bulan şair, ömrünün son yıllarını Şîraz'daki hankahında riyazet, ibadet ve telif işleriyle geçirerek 1292 yılında vefat etmiştir (Çiçekler, 2008: 405-406).

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<sup>1</sup> Doktor Öğretim Üyesi, Türkiye, Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Kürt Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, ORCID: 0000-0001-6505-5684.

Sa‘dî’yi yaşadığı çağda ve sonraki asırlarda Türk, Fars ve Urdu edebiyatlarında benzersiz kılan yegâne unsur; dindarlık, ahlak ve erdem gibi soyut kavramları fevkalade akıcı, sade ve taklidi imkânsız bir sehl-i mümteni üslubuyla somutlaştırmış olmasıdır. Onun henüz hayattayken sınırları aşan bu şöhreti, salt bir edebî maharetin değil, insan ruhunun derinliklerine nüfuz eden ahlaki bir baş kaldırının neticesidir. Nitekim şair, ölümsüz eseri *Bostan*’da, toplumsal tabakaların zâhirî dindarlık iddialarını, riyakârlığı ve yapay kisveleri sert bir dilsel deşifreye tabi tutar. Dönemin sosyo-politik figürlerinden derviş ve zâhitlere kadar geniş bir yelpazede insan manzaraları sunan Sa‘dî, amelin dışsal formuna sığınarak içsel ahlaki ifsat eden sahte dindarlığı tenkit eder. Bu yönüyle onun hayatı ve mirası, amelin biçimsel kabuğundan ziyade, niyet ve ihlasla yoğrulmuş bâtinî özünü muhafaza etme gayretinden ibarettir.

Klasik İslam ahlak felsefesi ve tasavvuf literatüründe insanın aşkın olanla kurduğu bağın niteliği, amellerin niceliğinden ziyade o amelleri var eden bâtinî saiklerle ölçülür. İnsanın varlık sahnesindeki eylemleri, zahirî birer form olmanın ötesinde, içsel bir iradenin ve niyetin tezahürleridir. Dolayısıyla bir amelin ahlaki ve dini bir mahiyet kazanması, onun görünürdeki kusursuzluğundan ziyade, kaynağındaki saflıkla doğrudan ilişkilidir. Bu durum, akademik düzlemde "amelin özü ve biçimi" arasındaki diyalektik ilişkinin incelenmesini zorunlu kılar.

Ameli salt bir mekanik hareket, bir refleks veya toplumsal bir alışkanlık olmaktan çıkarıp ahlaki bir değer zeminine taşıyan ilk ve en temel unsur "niyet" kavramıdır. Sözlükte “*yönelmek, ciddiye ve kararlılık göstermek*” gibi anlamlara gelen niyet kelimesinin sözlük anlamı esas alınarak yapılan değişik tanımları arasında “*kalbin hemen veya sonucu itibariyle maksada uygun bulunduğu, yani bir yararı sağlayacağına yahut bir zararı savacağına hükmettiği fiile yönelmesi*” şeklindeki tarif İslam

düşünce geleneğinde genel bir kabul görmüştür (Dönmez, 2007: 169). Bu tanım, niyetin sadece zihinsel bir tasarı olmadığını, kalbin derinliklerinde şekillenen ve eylemin yönünü tayin eden dinamik bir yönelim olduğunu gösterir. Niyet; insan iradesinin zâhir ile bâtin arasında kurduğu köprü, amelin görünmeyen ruhudur. Kalp, mezkûr tanımda ifade edildiği üzere, bir yararı sağlamaya veya bir zararı savmaya hükmettiği anda eylemin özünü inşa etmeye başlar.

İslam düşünce geleneğinde niyet kavramının en kapsamlı ve katmanlı tanımlarından birini Gazâlî ortaya koymuştur. Onun kurduğu teorik çerçeveye göre niyet, birdenbire ortaya çıkan bir eylem değil, belirli ön aşamaların neticesinde şekillenen bir süreçtir. Bu sürecin ilk ve en kurucu basamağı 'ilim' yani bilgidir; zira insan, mahiyetini bilmediği bir hususta irade beyan edemez. Beden azalarının harekete geçmesi ve iradenin somut bir yönelim kazanması, ancak yeterli düzeyde bir bilgi altyapısıyla mümkündür. İşte bu bilgi temeli sağlandıktan sonra, nefsin belirli bir amaca yönelerek eyleme geçme (amel) iradesi göstermesi niyet olarak adlandırılmaktadır (Gazâlî, 2011: 658). Ne var ki, ilim ve iradeyle harmanlanan bu zihni sürecin amel sahnesinde bütünüyle saf kalması, görüldüğü kadar kolay değildir.

İnsan doğasının psikolojik zaafları ve toplumsal varoluşun getirdiği görünme arzusu, niyetin inşa ettiği bu özü her an ifsat olma tehlikesiyle karşı karşıya bırakır. Niyet eylemi aşkın olana yönelme iddiasındayken, beşerî zaaflar eylemi zâhire, yani fanilerin takdirine doğru bükür. İşte niyetin ulaştığı bu hakikat zeminini tarumar eden en kurucu ahlaki ve psikolojik tehdit "riya" olarak tecessüm eder.

Sözlükte “görmek” anlamındaki *re*'y kökünden türeyen riya, hadislerde ve ahlaka dair eserlerde -çoğunlukla *süm'a* (işittirme, şöhret peşinde olma) kelimesiyle birlikte- “*saygınlık kazanma, çıkar sağlama gibi dünyevî amaçlarla kendisinde üstün*

özellikler bulunduğuna başkalarını inandıracak tarzda davranma” şeklinde açıklanmaktadır (Çağrı, 2008: 137). Riyanın bu tanımı, niyetin tanımıyla karşılaştırmalı bir analize tabi tutulduğunda, ahlaki bir yarılmanın hatları netleşir. Niyetin tanımındaki "kalbin bir yararı sağlama veya zararı savma yönelimi", riya zemininde tamamen yatay ve dünyevi bir düzleme indirgenir. Riyakârın yönelimi, aşkın bir rızayı kazanarak hakiki bir yarar elde etmek değil; fanilerin zihninde sahte bir imaj üreterek sosyal ve maddi bir rant devşirmektir.

Riya, amelin biçimsel kabuğunu muhafaza ederken, niyetle var olan manevi özünü tamamen boşaltır. Eylem, Allah için yapılan bir ibadet formundadır (zâhir); fakat kalbin yöneldiği asıl öz, insanların takdiridir (bâtın).

Bu bağlamda riya, niyetin ve dolayısıyla ihlasın tam zıddı olarak amelin ontolojik yapısını bozar. İhlas, ameli her türlü beşerî ve nefsi şaibeden arındırarak sadece "O"na has kılmakken; riya, eylemin içine gizli veya açık bir ortak (şirk-i hafî) yerleştirme girişimidir (Kuşeyrî, 2014: 289). Riya ile süm'a (işittirme) ikilisi, insanın dindarlık veya ahlakilik iddiasını toplumsal bir tiyatroya ve bir imaj yönetimi stratejisine dönüştürür. Kul, tanıtımda belirtildiği üzere, kendisinde olmayan ya da tam olarak içselleştirmedeği "üstün özelliklere başkalarını inandırmaya" çalışarak, varoluşsal bir samimiyetsizlik girdabına düşer.

İşte bu diyalektik çatışma, yani niyetin ihlas ile riya arasında sıkışması, klasik Şark edebiyatının ve ahlak felsefesinin en temel izleklerinden biridir. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, ölümsüz eseri *Bostan*'ın Beşinci Babı'nı bu meseleye tahsis etmiştir. "Rıza" başlığını taşıyan bu bapta Sa'dî, niyetin riya kısılcısından kurtarılmasını ve amelin özüne dönmesini sadece bireysel bir ahlak görevi olarak görmez; aynı zamanda dönemin sosyo-politik

ve dini kurumlarındaki yapaylığı, sahte dindarlığı (zühd-i riyaî) ve taklitçiliği eleştirmek için bir turnusol kâğıdı olarak kullanır.

Niyet kavramının ihlas ve riya kavramlarıyla olan irtibatı, amelin zahirî geçerliliğinin ötesinde, onun manevi ve varoluşsal değerini tayin eden kurucu bir niteliğe sahiptir. Kişinin gerçekleştirmeyi arzuladığı herhangi bir amelin riya çerçevesinde mi kalacağını, yoksa ihlas zemininde mi yükseleceğini belirleyen yegâne ve temel unsur niyetin tashihidir (düzeltmesi ve arındırılmasıdır). Bu bağlamda niyet, ahlaki mimaride bir binanın temeli vazifesini görür; üzerine kurulan tüm ameli katmanların ihlaslı ve sağlam mı, yoksa riya ile malul, bozuk ve sahte mi olacağını doğrudan tayin eder. Temeldeki en ufak bir niyet sapması, üstte inşa edilen muazzam ibadet veya ahlak formlarının tamamen çökmesine sebebiyet verir.

Bu diyalektik silsile içerisinde rıza makamına ulaşabilmenin ilk ve en önemli adımı da yine niyetin bu tashih sürecidir. Zira tasavvufî ahlakta rıza, kulun kendi iradesini ilahi iradede eriterek her türlü dünyevi beklentiden sıyrılması demektir (Kelâbâzî, 2013: 155). Niyetin başlangıç aşamasında temiz tutulması ve sürekli murakabe (iç denetim) altında bulundurulması, rıyanın getireceği sahte toplumsal görünürlük arzularını amelin uzağında tutar. Riyadan temizlenen niyet, ameli ihlas seviyesine ulaştırır; ihlas ise kulun amelde Allah'tan başka hiçbir merciyi gözetmemesini sağlayarak netice itibariyle kişiyi rıza makamının o mutmain iklimine ulaştırır. Dolayısıyla niyetin tashihi, ihlasın vasıtası ve rızanın ise nihai gayesi olarak amelin öz-biçim bütünlüğünü sağlayan en kurucu unsurdur.

Bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden "doküman incelemesi" (doküman analizi) metodu benimsenmiştir. Araştırmanın temel veri kaynağını oluşturan Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî'nin *Bostan* adlı eserinin beşinci babındaki manzum hikâyeler; niyet, ihlas, riya ve rıza kavramlarının oluşturduğu teorik çerçeve

referans alınarak tematik bir tahlile tabi tutulmuştur. İnceleme kapsamında, metinlerin zahiri olay örgülerinin ötesine geçilerek, şairin satır aralarına yerleştirdiği ahlaki, tasavvufi ve sosyo-kültürel eleştiriler derinlemesine çözümlenmiştir. Böylece doküman analizi yoluyla, klasik bir edebi metnin sunduğu nitel veriler, amelin özü ve biçimi arasındaki diyalektik çatışmayı somutlaştıran birer ahlaki model olarak yapılandırılmıştır. Çalışmada, Muhammed Ali Furûğî'nin tashih ettiği *Kulliyât-i Sa'dî* (1385 hş.) esas alınmış olup, metinde geçen Farsça beyitler tarafımızca Türkiye Türkçesine tercüme edilmiştir. Metin içi kaynak gösteriminde akademik akıcılığı korumak ve gereksiz tekrarların önüne geçmek adına; yazar soyadı ve eser tarihi yerine, beyitlerin hemen sonunda doğrudan ilgili eserin sayfa numarası verilmekle yetinilmiştir. Klasik Fars edebiyatı alanında Sâ'dî'nin bu mirasının günümüz insanına doğru aktarılabilmesi adına, eserlerin derinlikli tahliller ve anlaşılır bir dil kanalıyla yeniden yorumlanması bir gereklilik olarak önümüzdedir (Er, Ünal ve Gürel, 2016: 239). Bu bağlamda çalışmamızda gerçekleştirilen kavramsal analizler ve beyit şerhleri, literatürde işaret edilen bu pedagojik ve akademik sadeleştirme ihtiyacını pürüzsüz bir biçimde karşılamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî'nin irfânî ve ahlaki tahlillerini idrak edebilmek, onun insan tasavvurundaki zamansızlığı ve evrenselliği doğru okumaktan geçer. Nitekim literatürde şairin iki büyük eseri üzerine yapılan betimsel içerik analizleri, *Bostan*'ın 414 değer yoğunluğu ile *Gülîstan*'a (199 değer) oranla çok daha baskın bir ahlaki/pedagojik öğüt karakteri taşıdığını ortaya koymaktadır (Güven, 2014: 515). Bununla birlikte, her iki eserde de yerel veya ulusal kalıpların neredeyse hiç yer bulmaması, şairin ulaştığı evrensel boyutun en somut göstergesi kabul edilmektedir (Güven, 2014: 515). Bu istatistiksel gerçeklik, çalışmamız boyunca *Bostan* üzerinden temellendirdiğimiz ihlas, riya ve niyet tashihi gibi zâhir-bâtın merkezli irfânî eleştirilerin,

yerel birer nasihat olmanın ötesinde tüm insanlığın nefis terbiyesini hedefleyen evrensel bir ahlak mimarisi kurduğunu açıkça desteklemektedir.

## **2. AMELİN ÖZÜ VE BİÇİMİ ARASINDAKİ YARILMA: BOSTAN'IN BEŞİNCİ BABINDAKİ ANLATILARIN KAVRAMSAL ANALİZİ**

Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî, *Bostan*'ın "Rıza" başlığını taşıyan beşinci babında, teorik ahlak esaslarını soyut düzlemde çıkararak insan manzaraları ve manzum kıssalar üzerinden somutlaştırma yoluna gider. Bu bapta anlatıların merkezini, amelin zahirî görünüşü (biçimi) ile kalbî kaynağı (özü) arasında yaşanan trajik yarıma oluşturmaktadır. Şair; zâhid, âbid, derviş, kadı veya hükümdar gibi toplumsal statüleri ne olursa olsun, karakterlerin niyet safiyetlerini riya, şöhret (süm'a) ve menfaat kıskacında sınar. İncelenecek olan manzum hikâyeler, salt didaktik birer öğüt metni olmanın ötesinde; niyetin tashih edilmediği, ihlasın korunamadığı durumlarda amelin nasıl içi boş birer form ve toplumsal gösteriye dönüştüğünü gösteren birer ahlaki tenkit mahiyetindedir. Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî'nin bu bapta eleştirel üslubu, rıza makamına ulaşmanın önündeki en büyük engel olan sahte dindarlığın ve riyakârlığın deşifresidir.

### **2.1. Halkın Beğenisinden Hakikat Aynasına: Sahte Kisveler ve İçsel Çürüme**

Niyet, klasik ahlak düşüncesindeki 'yolun nihayetinin, başlangıcın niteliğine göre şekillenmesi' düsturu uyarınca amelde en çok dikkat edilmesi gereken kurucu husustur. Zira eylemin ilk adımında kalbî yönelimin saflığı korunamadığı takdirde, varılacak son menzilin riya ile malul olması ve amelin bütünsel değerini kaybetmesi kaçınılmazdır (Uludağ, 2012: 279). Niyetin bu kurucu rolü ve ilk adımdaki sapmanın doğuracağı ahlaki

tehlikeler, Sa'dî'nin şiirinde zahirî kabuk ile bâtinî öz arasındaki mesafeyi ölçen temel bir kriter vazifesi görür.

Şairin ahlaki tahlillerinde geniş yer tutan vefâ kavramı, sadece kişiler arası bir sadakat köprüsü değil; kulun yaratıcısıyla ve kendi özüyle kurduğu bağın 'sahicilik' düzeyini belirleyen irfânî bir ölçüttür. Sâ'dî'nin dizelerinde vurguladığı üzere, sevgilinin eziyetlerine rağmen ahbine sadık kalmayanlar, ameli birer gösteriye dönüştüren 'vefasız birer lafazandan' ibarettir (Yıldırım, 2020: 151). Buradaki vefâ ve rıza vurgusu, tasavvuf düşüncesindeki sabır ve safiyet ilkeleriyle birleşerek ameldeki sahteliği (riya) dışlamakta; insanı ne pahasına olursa olsun sözünde durmaya ve ameli ihlas kumaşına sarmaya davet etmektedir.

Nitekim Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, *Bostan*'ın bu bölümünde amelin zahirî kabuğu ile bâtinî özü arasındaki ontolojik makası tamamen açarak, sahte dindarlığın ve rıyanın varoluşsal birer eleştirisini sunar. Şair, ahlaki mimaride niyet tashihi yapılmadan inşa edilen her türlü ameli formu, içi boşaltılmış birer gösteriye indirger ve meseleyi şu sarsıcı beyitlerle temellendirir:

وگر نه چه آید ز بی مغز	عبادت به اخلاص نیت نکوست پوست؟
که در پوشی از بهر پندار	چه ز نار مغ در میانت چه دلوق خلق
چو مردی نمودی مخنث	مکن گفتت مردی خویش فاش مباش
خجالت نبرد آن که ننمود و	به اندازه بود باید نمود بود
نماید کهن جامه‌ای در برش	که چون عاریت بر کنند از سرش
که در چشم طفلان نمایی	اگر کوهی پای چوبین مبند بلند

توان خرج کردن بر

وگر نقره اندوده باشد نحاس

ناشناس(436)

*İbadet, ihlas ve temiz bir niyetle güzeldir; aksi halde içi olmayan  
(özsüz) bir kabuktan ne çıkar?*

*Halkın zannı/övgüsü için giydikten sonra, belindeki Mecusi  
zünnarı olmuş yahut derviş hırkası, ne fark eder?*

*Sana "erliğini (mertliğini) ifşa etme" dedim; erlik taslayıp da  
sonradan muhannes (namert) olma.*

*Ne kadarsan (özün neyse) öyle görünmen gerekir; olduğundan  
fazla görünmeyen (özü olup da gösterişe kaçmayan) kimse utanç  
duymaz.*

*Çünkü o ödünç (sahte) elbiseyi üzerinden çıkardıkları vakit,  
sırtındaki o eski hırka açığa çıkarır.*

*Eğer boyun kısaysa, çocukların gözünde uzun görünmek için  
tahta ayaklar takma.*

*Gümüş kaplamalı bakır, ancak parayı/madeni tanımayan sarrafa  
(kuyumcuya) harcanabilir (ancak cahile yutturulabilir).*

Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî'nin ilk beyitte kullandığı "içsiz kabuk" (*bî-mağz pûst*) metaforu, bu çalışmanın temel araştırma konusu olan öz ve biçim yarılmasını sembolize eden kurucu bir kavramdır. Şaire göre ibadet, zahîrî bir ritüel ve kalıplar bütünü (kabuk) olmanın ötesinde, ancak ihlas ve temiz bir niyetle (öz/mağz) can bulabilir. Niyetin tashihiyle beslenmeyen bir ameli form, ne kadar kusursuz görünürse görünsün, manevi değerden yoksundur. İkinci beyitte bu yarılma daha radikal bir boyuta taşınır ve dindarlığın sembolü olan "derviş hırkası" (*delk*) ile küfrün nişanesi sayılan "Mecusi zünnarı" (*zünnâr-i mûğ*) yan yana getirilir. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî burada, amelin dışsal biçimine yüklenen kutsallığı sarsar: Eğer bir eylem Allah rızası için değil de sırf "halkın zannı ve övgüsü" (*behr-i pindâr-ı halk*) için yapılıyorsa, o eylemin biçimsel olarak dindarlık kisvesi taşıması onu

farksızlaştırılmaz; niyet sahte olduğu için hırka da zünnar hükmüne geçer. Riya, kutsal olanın formunu halka veya diğerlerine dönük bir beğeni nesnesine dönüştürme bahtsızlığıdır.

Şair, riyanın insan şahsiyetinde yol açtığı ahlaki çürümeyi "erlik" (*merdî*) ve "muhaneslik" tezatlığı üzerinden psikolojik bir düzleme taşır. Dışarıya karşı takva ve mertlik gösterisi sunup, arka planda niyet tashihi yapmayarak riyaya sapmak, karakter düzeyinde bir omurgasızlık ve cinsi bir korkaklık olarak nitelenir. Buradan hareketle Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, tasavvufi ahlakın en temel ilkelerinden olan "olduğun gibi görünmek" (*be-endâze-i bûd bâyed numûd*) düsturunu vazeder. Olduğundan fazla görünme çabası, bireyin kendi hakikatinden kaçarak toplumsal bir imaj illüzyonuna sığınmasıdır. Ancak bu yapay varoluş mahkumdur; zira "ödünç elbise" metaforunda belirtildiği üzere, feleğin veya ölümün eli o sahte ihtişamı çekip aldığı anda, zahirî maske yırtılacak ve kulun sığındığı o "eski hırka" (manevi çıplaklık ve aciziyet) ifşa olacaktır.

Son iki beyitte yer alan "tahta bacak" ve "gümüş kaplamalı bakır" tasvirleri ise riyanın sosyolojik ve ilahi düzlemdeki sınırlarını çizer. Kısa boylu birinin "çocukların gözünde" uzun görünmek için tahta bacaklar bağlaması, riyakârın sadece sığ ve derinliksiz kitleleri (tıpkı çocuklar gibi zâhire aldanan halkı) kandırabileceğini gösterir. Aynı şekilde, içi bakır dışı gümüş kaplama olan bir ameli fani insanlar gerçeği bilmedikleri için satın alabilirler; fakat bu sahte sermaye, madenin hakikatini ve kalbî niyetlerin gizemini bilen mutlak sarrafın yani Allah'ın huzurunda hiçbir değer ifade etmez. Netice itibarıyla Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, bu beyitler silsilesiyle riyanın sadece ahlaki bir kusur değil, aynı zamanda Allah'ın her şeyi gören ve bilen esmasına karşı yapılmış esas bir saygısızlık olduğunu ortaya koyar. Ameli sahte bir "biçim" olmaktan kurtarıp hakiki bir "öz"e ulaştırmanın tek yolu, niyetin sarrafa sunulacak bir saflıkta yani ihlasla tashih edilmesidir.

Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, riya ve ihlas dengesini bu defa Şîrazlı ünlü mutasavvıf Baba Kûhî'nin dilinden aktarılan bir nasihat üzerinden derinleştirir. Şair, dindarlık imajını koruma kaygısının insan ruhunda açtığı derin yaraları ve amelin sahte vitrinini şu beyitlerle tahlil eder:

ندانی که بابای کوهی چه گفت  
نخفت؟  
به مردی که ناموس را شب  
که نتوانی از خلق رستن به  
برو جان بابا در اخلاص پیچ  
هیچ  
هنوز از تو نقش برون  
کسانی که فعلت پسندیده‌اند  
دیده‌اند  
چه قدر آورد بنده حور دیس  
که زیر قبا دارد اندام پیس؟  
نشاید به دستان شدن در بهشت  
که بازت رود چادر از  
روی زشت(436)

*"Bilesin ki Baba Kûhî, riyadan/namustan ötürü gece boyunca  
gözüne uyku girmeyen o adama ne dedi?"*

*"Gidip canını ihlas kumaşına sar babacığım! Zira (ne yaparsan  
yap) halkın elinden/dilinden asla kurtulamazsın."*

*Senin yaptıklarını (amellerini) beğenip takdir eden o kimseler;  
senin henüz sadece dış görünüşünü görmüşlerdir.*

*Elbisesinin altında cüzzamlı (alacalı) bir tene sahip olan huri  
yüzlü bir cariye/köle ne değer taşır ki?*

*Hileyle, yapmacık tavırlarla (riya ile) cennete girmeye çalışmak  
yakışık almaz; çünkü en nihayetinde o çirkin yüzün üzerindeki  
örtü açılıverecektir."*

Manzumenin ilk beyitlerinde geçen "namus" kelimesi, dindarlık kisvesiyle kazanılan toplumsal saygınlığı ve şöhret arzusunu ifade eder. İslâm tasavvufuna göre şöhret, dinin yayılmasına hizmet edecekse eğer müsbet değerlendirilir bunun

dışında kişinin sessiz ve şöhretten uzak bir hayatı tercih etmesi takvaya daha yakın görülür (Gazâlî, 2014: 13). Baba Kûhî'nin muhatap aldığı kişi, halkın gözündeki bu takva imajını zedelememek, dindar olarak bilinme halini kaybetmemek için geceleri uykusuz kalacak kadar endişeli bir riyakârdır. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, dervişin dilinden dökülen "*Canını ihlas kumaşına sar çünkü halktan asla kurtulamazsın*" uyarısıyla psikolojik bir gerçeğe parmak basar: Amellerini insanların beğenisine endeksleyen bir kul, asla huzur bulamaz. Kul, takdir toplamak için ne kadar çabalarsa çabalasın, halkın kuruntuları, zayıf ölçüleri ve değişken dillerinden kurtulması imkânsızdır. Dolayısıyla niyetin tashihi, insanı kul köle olmaktan kurtarıp ruhsal bir özgürlüğe kavuşturan yegâne çıkış yoludur. Nitekim bu özgürlüğün pratik bir yansıması ve irfânî bir düstur olarak arifler, kendilerinden bir şey istendiğinde isteyeniyi geri çevirmemekle beraber, kalbî bağı zedelememek adına halktan asla bir şey istemezler (Hücvirî, 2014: 418).

Üçüncü beyitteki "dış görünüş" (*nağş-ı birûn*) ifadesi, çalışmanın temelini oluşturan öz ve biçim çatışmasını çok net özetlemektedir. İnsanlar bir ameli görür, beğenir ve alkışlarlar; çünkü onların bakışı amelin sadece zahirî kalıbına, yani vitrinine yetişebilir. Kalbin derinliklerindeki niyetin saflığını veya çürüklüğünü süzmeye beşerin gücü yetmez. Şair bu durumu, edebiyat tarihinin en sarsıcı benzetmelerinden biriyle somutlaştırır: Dışarıdan bakıldığında huri gibi kusursuz ve büyüleyici görünen, ancak elbisesinin altında cüzamlı bir ten taşıyan bir köle tasvir edilir. Buradaki huri yüzü amelin zahirî güzelliğini (biçimini), gizlenen cüzamlı ten ise riya ile lekelenmiş niyeti (özü) simgeler. Dışarıdan alkışlanan pek çok büyük ibadet, niyet tashihi yapılmadığı için aslında içten içe manevi bir cüzamla maluldür.

Son beyitte ise riyanın ömrünün kısalığına ve ilahi huzurdaki akibetine vurgu yapılır. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, hileyle ve

yapmacık tavırlarla cennete girilemeyeceğini açıkça ilan eder. İnsan, ameline ne kadar dindarlık süsü verirse versin, bu dünyevi tiyatro mahşer günü sona erecektir. Ölümle ya da hakikat anıyla birlikte o sahte örtü yüzlerden çekildiğinde, niyetlerin gizli defterleri açılacak ve çirkinlikler ifşa olacaktır. Netice itibarıyla şair bu kıssa vasıtasıyla, niyetin ihlasla bezenmesini sadece ahlaki bir tavsiye olarak sunmaz; bunu, amelin eninde sonunda uğrayacağı ilahi mahkemede rezil olmamanın biricik şartı olarak niteler.

Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî, beşinci babın bu kapanış beyitlerinde, amelin biçimsel ve zahîrî görünüşü ile onun arka planındaki niyet boyutu arasındaki farkı edebî ve fikrî bakımdan zirveye taşır. Şair, dindarlığın salt bir toplumsal kimlik, sahte bir saygınlık veya taklitçi bir gösteriş unsuru haline getirilmesini sert bir dilsel deşifreye tabi tutar. Metinde inşa edilen anlam örgüsü, amelin görünen kabuğundan onun manevi özüne doğru derinleşen bir eleştiri üzerine kuruludur.

به دوزخ در افتادم از	بگفت ای پسر قصه بر من مخوان نردبان
به از نیکنامی خراب	نکو سیرتی بی تکلف برون اندرون
به از فاسق پارسا پیرهن	به نزدیک من شبرو راهزن
چه مزدش دهد در قیامت	یکی بر در خلق رنج آزمای خدای؟
به کفرش گواهی دهند اهل	کسی گر بتابد ز محراب روی کوی
گرت در خدا نیست روی	تو هم پشت بر قبله‌ای در نماز نیاز
پپرور، که روزی دهد میوه	درختی که بیخش بود برقرار بار

از این بر کسی چون تو  
گرت بیخ اخلاص در بوم نیست  
محروم نیست  
جوی وقت دخلش نیاید به  
هر آن کافکند تخم بر روی سنگ  
چنگ  
که این آب در زیر دارد  
منه آبروی ریا را محل  
وحل(437-438)

*"Dedi ki: "Ey oğul, bana masal anlatma; ben merdivenden tam  
yükselecekken cehennemine dibine düşmüşüm!"*

*Dış görünüşü yapmacıksız ve sade, iç dünyası ise güzel ahlaklı  
olan bir kimse; adı iyiye çıkmış ama içi harabeye dönmüş,  
çürümüş kimseden çok daha hayırlıdır.*

*Benim nezdimde geceleri yol kesen bir haydut; derviş hırkasına  
bürünmüş, zâhîr görünen bir günahkardan daha iyidir.*

*Ömrünü kul kapısında, onların beğenisini kazanmak için zahmet  
çekerek harcayan birine, kıyamet gününde Allah ne diye mükafat  
versin?*

*Bir kimse zâhîren yüzünü mihraptan çevirse, mahalle halkı onun  
kâfir olduğuna hemen şahitlik eder.*

*Eğer namazdaki niyaz yüzün hakiki anlamda Allah'a dönük  
değilse, sen de zâhîren namaz kılıyor olsan bile aslında kibleye  
arkasını dönmüş birisin!*

*Kökü toprakta sağlam duran ağacı besle, büyü ki, günün  
birinde sana meyve ve mahsul versin.*

*Eğer senin gönül toprağında ihlas kökü yoksa, bu manevi  
kazançtan senin kadar mahrum kalmış başka hiç kimse yoktur.*

*Kim tohumu kaya üzerine serperse, hasat vakti geldiğinde eline  
tek bir arpa tanesi bile geçmez.*

*Riyanın o sahte parıltısına, itibar dünyasına asla değer verme;  
çünkü bu berrak görünen suyun altında aslında kapkara bir  
çamur ve balçık vardır.”*

Şairin tahliline ilk beyitte yer alan “merdiven” sembolü üzerinden başlamak, amelin biçim ve öz dengesini anlamak adına son derece işlevseldir. Bu tasavvurda merdiven, kulun zâhiren gerçekleştirdiği ibadetler, züht ve dindarlık iddialarıyla manevi katlarda yükselme çabasını simgeler. Ancak niyetin ihlastan mahrum kalışı, bu zahirî yükselişi bir anda felakete dönüştürür. Kul, tam manevi basamakların zirvesine ulaştığını, dindarlık iddiasıyla göklere tırmandığını zannederken, niyetindeki riya ve gösteriş arzusu yüzünden merdivenden aşağı, cehennem en dibine yuvarlanır. Şair bu sarsıcı tespitle, amelin zahirî çokluğunun veya biçimsel kusursuzluğunun, niyetin sahteliğini örtmeye yetmeyeceğini ifade etmiştir.

Bu bağlamda Sa’dî, insanı iç dünyası ve dış görünüşü üzerinden iki zıt kutba ayırarak toplumsal ahlakın kökenlerine iner. Dışı gösterişsiz, yapmacıksız ve sade olan ama iç dünyası ahlaki güzelliklerle tezyin edilmiş bir kimse ile adı iyiye çıkmış fakat kalbi bir harabeyi andıran kimse arasında keskin bir mukayese yapar. Bu tezat, dindarlığın zahirî bir etiket haline gelmesine yönelik keskin bir itirazdır. Hatta şair, eleştirisini daha da ileri götürerek toplumsal algının sınırlarını zorlar: Geceleyin yol kesen bir haydut, derviş hırkası altında günah işleyen ve takva maskesi takan bir riyakârdan çok daha hayırlıdır. Çünkü haydudun kötülüğü zâhirdir, eylemi ile niyeti arasında bir hile barındırmaz. Oysa takva örtüsüne bürünen sahte zâhit, kutsal değerleri dünyevi çıkarlarına alet ederek hem ilahi iradeyi hem de kulları aldatmaya yeltenir. Bu durum, amelin biçimsel formunun arkasına gizlenen ahlaki çürümüşlüğün, açıkça işlenen bir günaha çok daha yıkıcı olduğunu gösterir.

İslâm dininin temel ilkeleriyle çelişen ve haram kabul edilen riya, kişiyi Allah'ın gazabına uğratan kaçınılması gereken bir olgudur (Gazâlî, 2014: 100). Riyanın varoluşsal anlamsızlığı, kulun amelini sunacağı merciyi karıştırmasıyla doğrudan ilgilidir. Şair, ömrünü ilahi rıza yerine kul kapılarında, insanların takdirini kazanmak ve onlardan menfaat devşirmek için harcayan birinin içine düştüğü acı trajediyi deşifre eder. Kul, kendi hemcinslerinin gözünde yücelmek adına zahirî ibadetlerin zahmetine katlanmaktadır. Ancak asıl hakiki fail olan Allah, kulun kendisi için değil, kulların beğenisi için sergilediği bu amele ahirette hiçbir değer biçmeyecektir. Sâ'dî, toplumsal algının ve mahalle baskısının aldatici doğasını şu çarpıcı örnekle ortaya koyar: Bir kimse zâhiren yüzünü mihraptan çevirse, içinde ne olduğuna bakılmaksızın mahalle halkı onun hemen kâfir olduğuna hükmeder. Toplumun ölçüsü tamamen zâhirdir ve sadece şekle odaklanır. İşte bu yanılgıya düşen kul, namaz kılariken yüzünü zâhiren kibleye dönmüş olsa bile, eğer kalbindeki niyaz yüzü, beklentisi ve arzusu Allah'a yönelmemişse aslında kibleye arkasını dönmüş biridir. Kulun zâhiren secdeye gitmesi amelin biçimsel yönünü; kalbin bütünüyle Hakka yönelmesi ise o amelin bâtinî özünü temsil eder. Özü ıskalanmış bir ibadet, ne kadar kusursuz görünürse görünsün, mekânsal bir yöneliştten öteye geçemez.

Analizin son kısmında Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî, bu soyut felsefi ve teolojik tartışmayı tabiattan aldığı somut metaforlar üzerinden mühürler. Şair; kök, ağaç, toprak, tohum ve kaya sembollerini kullanarak ihlas ile riyanın doğasını betimler. Bu alegoride, toprağa sağlamca tutunmuş bir ağaç kökü, amelin zeminini oluşturan hakiki ihlası simgeler. Eğer kök sağlam ve yerindeyse, o ağaç beslenmeli ve büyütülmelidir; çünkü zamanı geldiğinde mutlaka sahibine meyve ve hasat verecektir. Ancak gönül toprağında bu ihlas kökü mevcut değilse, kulun zâhiren sergilediği bütün dindarlık çabaları boşa gitmeye mahkûmdur.

İhlassız ameller üretmek, tohumu sert bir kayanın üzerine serpmeye benzer. Kaya üzerine ekilen tohum, zâhiren bir ekim eylemidir, biçimsel olarak tarımın kurallarına uygundur; fakat tohumun tutunacağı, besleneceği köklü bir zemin bulunmadığı için hasat vakti geldiğinde el açan kimsenin eline tek bir arpa tanesi bile geçmeyecektir.

Nihayetinde şair, riyanın toplumsal hayattaki o parıltılı ve itibar kazandıran yapısını, üstü berrak ama dibi çamurlu bir su imgesiyle tamamlar. Riya, dışarıdan bakıldığında temiz, berrak ve gıpta edilen bir su gibi akar; sahibine şan, şöhret ve saygınlık (yüz suyu) getirir. Fakat bu parıltılı görünüşün hemen altında, kapkara bir balçık ve çamur gizlidir. Sa'dî, okuyucunun dikkatini bu aldatıcı parıltıdan çekerek, zahirî suyun temizliğine değil, dibindeki balçığa bakmaya davet eder. Ameli sahte bir biçimden ve riyakâr bir gösteriştten kurtarmanın yolu, dıştaki o aldatıcı parıltıyı reddedip, içteki ihlası ve samimiyeti korumaktır.

## **2.2. Mutlak Takdir Karşısında Beşerî Acziyet: İlahi İrade ve Rıza Makamı**

Rıza'nın hâl mi veya makam mı olduğuna dair Horasanlı melâmetîler ve Iraklı sûfiler aralarında ihtilaf etmişlerdir. Horasan melâmetîleri rızanın makam olduğunu Irak sûfileri ise rızanın hal olduğunu savunmuşlardır. Rızanın tarifi ile ilgili mutasavvıflar farklı görüşler nakletmiş olsalar da en genel ifadeyle rıza, kulun Allah takdiri söz konusu olduğunda onun her dilediğine gönülden razı olma durumudur (Kuşeyrî, 2014: 276). Sa'dî, rızanın bu kavramsal çerçevesini felsefi bir münazara konusu olarak bırakmaz; onu kulun kâinattaki pratik konumu ve teslimiyetiyle doğrudan irtibatlandırır.

Bu doğrultuda Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, beşinci babın kavramsal zeminini inşa ederken öncelikle kulun kâinattaki konumunu ve ilahi irade karşısındaki acziyetini metafizik bir çerçeveye oturtur. Şairin irfânî yorumuna göre, yeryüzünde gerçekleşen her bir

hadise, sebep-sonuç ilişkilerinin ötesinde, doğrudan doğruya Allah'ın mutlak takdiriyle vuku bulur. Hak dilemediği müddetçe, beşerî düzlemde hiçbir varlığın bir diğerine yarar sağlaması yahut zarar vermesi mümkün değildir. Hakiki failin tekliği üzerine kurulan bu kozmolojide; elde edilen maddi-manevi kazanımlar, makamlar ve hatta hayatta kalınan süre ancak ilahi meşietin nasip etmesiyle şekillenir. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, bu kozmik ve teolojik gerçekliği sarih kılmak adına şu beyitleri serdeder:

نه در چنگ و بازوی زور	سعادت به بخشایش داورست آورست
نیاید به مردانگی در کمند	چو دولت نبخشد سپهر بلند
نه شیران به سرپنجه	نه سختی رسید از ضعیفی به مور خوردند و زور
ضروری است با گردش	چو نتوان بر افلاک دست آختن ساختن
نه مارت گزاید نه شمشیر	گرت زندگانی نبشتهست دیر و شیر (429)

*“Saadet Allah'ın bahşetmesiyledir, güçlü pazu ve pençeyle  
değildir.*

*Felek devlet bahşetmezse erlik ile (devlet) kemende girmez.*

*Ne zayıflıktan dolayı karınca aç kalır ne de aslan güçlü  
pençesinden ötürü karnını doyrur.*

*Elin feleklere erişmesi mümkün değildir, (bu nedenle) onun  
dönüşüne ayak uydurmak gerekir.*

*Sana uzun bir hayat yazılmışsa eğer ne yılan seni ısırır ne kılıç  
(keser) ne de aslan (parçalar).”*

Şairin bu dizelerde kurduğu diyalektik yapı, amelin özü ve biçimi tartışmamız açısından kurucu bir öneme sahiptir. Sâ'dî-yi Şîrâzî; karınca ve aslan gibi tabiatın iki zıt kutbu üzerinden rızık,

güç ve saadet kavramlarını analiz ederken, insanın dünyevi hırslarla şekillendirdiği sahte çabaları deşifre eder. Bu genel kozmolojik bilgilerden sonra şair; kişinin ilahi takdiri değiştirme yönünde herhangi bir hükmünün veya dahlinin bulunmadığı bir varlık aleminde, huzur ve saadete erişebilmenin yegâne yolunun Hakk'ın dilediğine rıza göstermek olduğunu vurgular. Bu tarife göre feleğin çarkına, yani Allah'ın takdiriyle şekillenen hayat akışına uyumlu ve razı bir vaziyette yaşamak hem ontolojik bir zaruret hem de hakiki saadet sebebidir. Tasavvufî terbiye metoduna göre kulun meydana gelen olaylar karşısında tam teslimiyet hali göstermesi ve olaylara karşı herhangi bir girişimde bulunmaması fena haliyle irtibatlandırılmaktadır (Tûsî, 2012: 400).

Kulun kâinattaki tüm mecazi güçlerden sıyrılarak bu fena ve teslimiyet iklimine yönelmesi, niyetin riya kısılcısından kurtarılmasında kurucu bir argüman üretir: Eğer güç, saadet ve rızık kulun kendi "güçlü pazusuyla" ya da diğer insanların takdiriyle kazanılmıyorsa; kulun amellerini başkalarına beğendirmek, onlardan çıkar ve saygınlık devşirmek adına riyaya sapması varoluşsal bir yanılığdan ibarettir. Riya, kâinattaki hakiki faili (Allah'tı) unutup mecazi faillerden (insanlardan) medet umma gafletidir. Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, rıza makamının bu metafizik zorunluluğunu ilan ederek, okuyucunun niyetini dünyevi nazarlardan çevirip ilahi iradeye teslim etmesini sağlamakta; böylece ameli sahte bir "biçim" (riya) olmaktan çıkarıp ihlaslı bir "öz"e (rıza) kavuşturmaktadır.

Nitekim bu teslimiyet ekseninde şekillenen rızanın, sadece nefse ağır gelen durumlar karşısında gerekli olduğunu düşünmek doğru değildir. Bilakis rıza, karşılaşılan Hak'tan gelen her şeye karşı kayıtsız şartsız bir hoşnutluk ve teslimiyet göstermek manasına gelmektedir. Bu bağlamda fakir kişi fakirliğine rıza gösterirken zengin kişi de zenginliğe rıza göstermelidir; çünkü hem zenginlik hem de fakirlik kendi içinde

barındırdığı dünyevi imtihanlarla insana birer azap olabilir. Sonuçta irfân yolunun yolcusu, dünyanın her haliyle mutlak bir rahatlık mekânı olmadığını bilerek ilahi taksimata rıza göstermekle mükelleftir (Nesefî, 2009: 108). Dünyevi imkânların ve zahiri üstünlüklerin bu aldatıcı doğası, insanoğlunun kendi mukavemetine yüklediği anlamı da kökünden sarsar.

Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, ilahi takdir ile rıza makamı arasındaki ilişkiyi beşerî ihtiraslar ve maddi güç unsurları üzerinden somutlaştırmaya devam eder. Bu bağlamda kaleme aldığı bir diğer hikâyede, İran'ın Erdebil şehrinde yaşayan meşhur bir okçunun, sıradan bir kepenek (keçe giysi) giyen gence mağlubiyeti anlatılmaktadır. Okuyla en sağlam zırhları bile delemek kadar mahir ve şöhret sahibi olan bu okçu, savaş meydanında elli adet ok atmasına rağmen karşısında savaşan gencin kepenegini dahi delememiş ve nihayetinde ona esir düşmüştür. Yaşanan bu sıra dışı mağlubiyetin ardından, gencin uşaklarından biri, sabaha kadar utancından ve şaşkınlığından uyuyamamış olan usta okçuya, demirleri bile delip geçen oklarına rağmen neden böyle bir bozguna uğradığını sormuştur. Mağlup okçu, hakikatin farkına varmanın verdiği bir hüznle ağlayarak şu ibretlik cevabı vermiştir:

ستبری پيلم ندم می نمود	چو بازوی بختم قوی حال بود
نمد پیش تیرم کم از پیل	کنونم که در پنجه اقبیل نیست نیست
ز پیراهن بی اجل	به روز اجل نیزه جوشن درد نگذرد(432)

*“Bahtımın pazusu güçlüyken kalın demir keçe gibi görünürdü.*

*Şimdi ise pençemde ikbal bulunmadığından keçe okumun  
önünde demir kürekten aşağı değil.*

*Ecel günü mızrak zırhı deler ecel gelmediyse mızrak gömleği  
(bile) delemez.”*

Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî bu hikâyede, kişinin zahiren ne kadar büyük bir güç, kuvvet, maharet ve şöhret sahibi görünse dahi, galibiyet ve mağlubiyetin ancak Hakk'ın takdiriyle gerçekleşeceğini çarpıcı bir tezatlıkla ifade etmektedir. Okçunun dilinden dökülen "demir" ve "keçe" sembolizmi, amelin özü ve biçimi arasındaki yarılmayı anlamak bakımından oldukça işlevseldir. Şair, zahiren en zayıf koruma aracı olan "keçeyi", ilahi takdir öyle hükmettiğinde "demir bir küreğe" dönüştürerek beşerî mukavemetin sınırlarını sarsar. Savaş meydanındaki ok ve zırh gibi maddi aparatlar amelin zahirî biçimini; arka planda işleyen ilahi irade ise o amelin neticesini tayin eden bâtinî özü temsil eder.

### 3. SONUÇ

Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî'nin *Bostan* adlı eserinin beşinci babı ekseninde yürütülen bu çalışma, klasik İslam ahlak felsefesi ve tasavvuf literatürünün en temel meselelerinden biri olan "amelin özü ve biçimi" arasındaki diyalektik ilişkiyi somut verilerle ortaya koymuştur. Şairin manzum hikâyeleri ve kavramsal örüntüleri üzerinde yapılan tematik analizler, zahirî kusursuzluğun kalbî niyet tashihiyle desteklenmediği müddetçe varoluşsal bir yanılgıdan öteye geçemeyeceğini göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışmadan elde edilen temel çıkarımları şu şekilde hülasa etmek mümkündür:

İlk olarak, niyet kavramının sadece zihinsel bir tasarı olmadığı, amelin manevi ve ontolojik değerini tayin eden kurucu bir nitelik taşıdığı görülmüştür. Sa'dî'nin tahlillerinde sıklıkla başvurduğu "içsiz kabuk" (*bî-mağz pûst*) metaforu, biçim ile öz arasındaki yarılmayı en etkili biçimde özetlemektedir. Kulun zâhiren gerçekleştirdiği ibadetler, zühd ritüelleri ve sergilediği dindarlık formları amelin kabuğunu oluştururken; ihlas, samimiyet ve mutlak anlamda Hakka yöneliş ise bu kabuğun içindeki özü temsil eder. Temeldeki niyet tashihi yapılmadan inşa

edilen muazzam ibadet katmanları, şairin "merdivenden cehennem dibine düşmek" tasviriyle eşleştirdiği bir felaketle neticelenmektedir.

İkinci olarak, toplumsal görünme arzusu ve sahte saygınlık arayışı olarak teccüm eden riyakârlığın, amelin özünü tamamen boşaltarak onu yatay düzlemde bir imaj yönetimine indirgelediği tespit edilmiştir. Şairin derviş hırkası ile Mecusi zünnarını aynı düzlemde mukayese etmesi, eylemin değerinin dış biçiminden ziyade yöneldiği merciyle ölçüldüğünü kanıtlar. Halkın zannı ve övgüsü için yapılan her ameli biçim, fani gözleri kandırabilse de kalplerin gizemini bilen "Mutlak Sarraf"ın huzurunda değersiz bir bakırdan ibarettir. "Huri yüzlü cariyelerin altındaki cüzamlı ten" imgesiyle zirveye taşınan bu eleştiri, riyanın sadece ahlaki bir kusur değil, bireyin kendi hakikatine ve ilahi esmaya karşı bir samimiyetsizlik girdabı olduğunu doğrulamaktadır.

Son olarak, ameli sahte formlardan kurtararak hakiki bir öze kavuşturmanın, kâinattaki yegâne failin mutlak iradesini idrak etmekten geçtiği anlaşılmıştır. Erdebilli okçu hikâyesinde sembolize edilen "demir" ve "keçe" tezatlığı, beşerî maharet ve zahirî güç unsurlarının ilahi takdir karşısındaki çaresizliğini ilan eder. Güç, rızık ve saadetin kulun kendi pazu kuvvetiyle ya da diğer insanların takdiriyle kazanılmadığı bir kozmolojide, amelleri fanilere beğendirme çabası anlamsız bir gayrettir. Dolayısıyla niyetin riya kıskacından temizlenerek ihlas zeminine taşınması, kulu sahte biçimlerin esaretinden kurtararak rıza makamının mutmain iklimine ulaştıran yegâne esastır.

Nihayetinde Sa'dî-yi Şîrâzî, yüzyıllar öncesinden sunduğu bu insan manzaralarıyla dindarlığın salt bir toplumsal kimlik veya taklitçi bir gösteriş unsuru haline getirilmesine kesin bir itiraz yükseltmektedir. Kaya üzerine ekilen tohumun hasat mevsiminde arpa vermeyeceği gerçeği gibi, ihlas kökünden

mahrum amellerin de manevi bir mahsul üretmesi imkânsızdır. Bu çalışma, klasik bir edebi metnin satır aralarındaki ahlaki tenkitlerin, günümüz insanının iç dünyasında yaşadığı anlam daralmalarına ve biçimsel dindarlık sancularına karşı hâlâ güçlü, taze ve rehberlik edici bir ayna sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

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**STAGING THE NEUROCHEMICAL SELF:  
PSYCHOPOLITICS, PHARMACEUTICAL  
CAPITALISM AND AFFECTIVE AMBIGUITY  
IN LUCY PREBBLE'S *THE EFFECT***

**Kaya ÖZÇELİK<sup>1</sup>**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Lucy Prebble's *The Effect* (2012) explores psychiatric debates concerning antidepressants but also uses the clinic as a means of representing the clinic as a theatrical device. In *The Effect* (2012), Lucy Prebble examines contemporary psychiatric debates about antidepressants and reshapes the clinic as a theatrical mechanism so that she can reflect how emotion is observed, measured, and institutionally interpreted. Following this approach, this chapter seeks to help modern audiences make sense of themselves through concepts such as dosage, diagnosis, side effects, risk, and responses. With a limited four characters, namely, Dr James, Toby Sealey, Connie Hall, and Tristan Frey, Prebble crafts an institutional microcosm that highlights the pressures, vulnerabilities, and emotional states experienced by ordinary individuals. In such an atmosphere, love, depression, sexual desire, professional authority, and pharmaceutical funding all merge in a single theatrical setting and portray how the most profound emotional experiences are connected to the systems that observe, categorise, and commercialise them.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Mudanya Üniversitesi, Sanat ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı, ORCID: 0000-0001-5648-7186.

Describing the play initially as “A play for four people, in love and sorrow” (2012, p. 1), Prebble offers her reader a lyrical subtitle and establishes a dual emphasis on personal emotion and the frameworks of clinical experimentation. Love and sorrow are presented throughout the play as fundamental human themes of theatre, but they are reduced to neurochemical signals, behavioural cues, and institutional records. This is best clarified by Angelaki’s observations of the play’s original staging, through which the characters are staged as “real humans, but also as specimens” (2017, p. 232). From another perspective, this also serves as a formulation that aptly mirrors the play’s balance between human intimacy and experimental clarity. Then, the play’s theatrical concern is revealed to be not just whether Connie and Tristan genuinely feel, but also whether feeling can ever be separated from the interpretive systems that aims to identify, verify, and explain it.

Drawing on this critical insight, this chapter contends that *The Effect* dramatises psychopolitical power by stressing how neoliberal medicine, pharmaceutical capitalism, psychiatric discourse, and clinical experiments are likely to change emotions such as love, depression, desire, and selfhood into measurable, manageable, and marketable affective and cognitive data. The clinical trial functions not simply as a setting but as the main driving force of the play; here, bodies are observed, timed, scanned, and dosed. Meanwhile, the primary focus of power centres on the psyche, covering mood, expectation, attraction, memory, anxiety, and the individual’s personal account of their inner life.

By mixing these processes within the play’s theatrical structure, Prebble seems to illustrate how subjectivity becomes an object of knowledge, regulation, and institutional evaluation. At this juncture, the notion of psychopolitics is especially useful for analysing the play as its presentation of power is revealed not

merely as overt repression but as a subtle form of influence anchored in consent, care, clinical methods, and voluntary emotional exchange. Although volunteers' consent, doctors' care, and the trial appear to be procedural and employ medical language that implies safety, this surface of autonomy actually allows a more subtle form of emotional control throughout the play. While the consent of volunteers, the care provided by doctors, and the structure of the trial seem to be procedural and use medical language of safety, this apparent autonomy facilitates a more multilayered form of emotional control throughout the play.

In Prebble's play, the manipulation is not limited to digital networks or motivational self-help. It rather involves the clinical creation of emotionally perceptible subjects, aligning well with Han's (2017) definition of neoliberal psychopolitics as a "technology of domination" maintained through psychological manipulation (p. 79). This is especially reflected in the position of the volunteer, insofar as the volunteer initially enters the trial voluntarily; however, this autonomy is quickly reorganised through protocol, compliance, and affective self-reported feeling. Such a reading expands on the current scholarship regarding *The Effect*, which already acknowledges the play's focus on psychopharmacology and affective regulation, as Barouta discusses that the play "dramatises the subversive potentialities of affective encounters" against "profit-minded forms of posthumanisation" (2024, p. 1). However, this chapter focuses more on the literary and theatrical processes involved in producing this critique. Thus, the chapter portrays *The Effect* as a dramatic work in which psychopolitical power is perceived through form, procedure, hesitation, visual display, and embodied excess, together producing the play's critique.

This approach also underscores the broader significance of *The Effect* within contemporary British drama, in which public

crises are often explored through compact theatrical settings and close personal relationships. Steiner's assertion that "[d]rama is the most social of literary forms" helps conceptualise theatre as a way for private emotions to be conceived publicly and collectively (1961, p. 113).

In a more distinct British context, Rebellato's emphasis on how the play engages with current social realities is quite to the point, suggesting that modern drama emphasises "the world we live in now" (1999, p. 8) by depicting wider social and political issues through authentic human experiences. Thus, Prebble's play fits within a broader tendency in contemporary British drama, where institutional settings render larger social crises easier to understand on stage. This also emphasises the theatrical tradition that *The Effect* draws from, one that actively engages "directly with the audience's political and social realities" (Rebellato, 1999, p. 10).

By depicting the relationship between Connie and Tristan, Prebble transforms broader social, medical, and economic issues into a personal and compelling drama in her play. In this regard, Angelaki (2017) suggests that twenty-first-century British theatre tends to foster change by "acknowledging the problem" and "attacking it dialectically" (pp. 2-3). Prebble's play exemplifies this dialectical method by resisting the need to choose between science and emotion, cure and commodification, care and control, or love and chemistry.

While earlier scholarship has explored *The Effect* in the contexts of medicine, psychiatry, and psychopharmacology, Venn notes that theatre can offer a "reimagination of diagnosis" by "situating and troubling the role of the psychiatric user" through works such as Lucy Prebble's *The Effect* (2020, p. 8). Nonetheless, there has been less focus on how the play's dramatic techniques, theatrical structure, and stagecraft reveal the

psychopolitical mechanisms that monitor, regulate, and clarify emotions. For this reason, this chapter resists two simplified interpretations simultaneously. Instead of simply regarding the play as a criticism of medicine, this chapter argues that Prebble challenges the broader cultural and institutional dynamics that link psychiatry, neuroscience, and antidepressant treatments to power, emotion, and personal identity. From this perspective, the play's moral concern lies in its rejection of oversimplified ideas. That's why Toby's reliance on medication is questioned by the institution, although it remains partially compassionate, while Dr James's scepticism is revealed as intellectually convincing while it is manifested as personal vulnerability. Toby's trust in medication is questioned on an institutional level but stays partly humane, while Dr. James's doubt is intellectually persuasive yet personally vulnerable. Rather than considering the play as a psychological case study, this chapter portrays Connie, Tristan, and Dr. James as theatrical characters through whom Prebble can explore the changing nature of diagnostic labels. Throughout the play, the dialogue between characters, their behaviours, and their relationships with each other do not reinforce clinical categories, but the flexibility and temporariness of these labels are deeply connected to ways of interpretation. Beyond all these, this chapter also aims to highlight drama as a distinct form that suggests interiority indirectly through voice, gesture, pause, stage directions, and the arrangement of dramatic space.

In this context, *The Effect* illustrates this notion by suggesting that psychology is not a hidden depth, but a public display moulded by institutional contexts and dramaturgical framing. To contextualise the chapter's theoretical framework in relation to its dramatic analysis, the discussion begins by exploring psychopolitics and neurochemical subjectivity. It then places the play within the context of contemporary British drama's larger themes of institutional power, crisis, and the

theatrical portrayal of subjectivity under strain. Next, it aims to analyse the clinical trial as a stage device and views love, placebo, and psychiatric authority as dramatic spaces where psychopolitical knowledge develops and faces challenges. Although scholarship on *The Effect* is growing, a comprehensive study that integrates psychopolitics, neurochemical subjectivity, emotional capitalism, and affect theory within a dramaturgical framework has yet to emerge. Within this critical context, this chapter addresses this gap by examining how Prebble's play changes these interconnected theoretical issues into a theatrical expression, offering a new insight into the relationship between affect, power, subjectivity, and modern British drama.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FROM PSYCHOPOLITICS TO DRAMATURGY**

In its essence, psychopolitics refers to a type of power that affects people's mental and emotional states. Psychopolitics becomes particularly significant critical approach in drama based on Fuchs' statement that "a play is not just a simple piece of literature" but "a different world unfolding before you in time and space" (2015, p. 403). Prebble's drama underscores the shift in power from physical punishment to the influence of inner states through freedom, care, clinical observation, and scientific objectivity.

At this very point, Foucault's ideas on modern power are crucial in that it is the modern way of power that functions not only through prohibitions but by influencing behaviour, as he claims: "To govern ... is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790).

As discussed so far, the theoretical framework of this chapter is thus built on interrelated critical approaches. Han's notion of psychopolitics functions as the primary framework for

analysing how the play handles emotion, consent, and self-disclosure. Rose's concept of the neurochemical self explains how emotional experiences are understood in biological terms; Illouz's idea of emotional capitalism shows how affective life is incorporated into economic and institutional frameworks; and the approaches of Ahmed and Massumi on affect illustrate the bodily and relational intensities that go beyond clinical measurement. Together, all these perspectives collectively provide a theoretical context through which the play's treatment of affect, cognition, and subjectivity can be analysed within its theatrical language, dramatic form, and staging of institutional power. In this hierarchy, these theories do not function as separate frameworks but as interrelated analytical tools subordinated to the chapter's central concern to elucidate how *The Effect* theatricalises psychopolitical power through its clinical setting, dramaturgical structure, and staging of affective ambiguity.

While psychopolitics establishes the governing framework for this study, Rose's notion of the neurochemical self explains how this governance functions via biochemical models of subjectivity. Her concept of the neurochemical self provides a valuable framework for analysing the play, since his question, "How did we become neurochemical selves?" and the following ones (2003, p. 46), is repeatedly explored and animated through *The Effect*. This question is particularly important for the analysis of Prebble's play, as it consistently depicts how emotions are converted into biochemical signals before they are acknowledged as personal or relational experiences. For the purposes of this chapter, Rose's formulation lays the foundation for understanding affective experience as measurable through neurochemical evidence. If depression is regarded as a chemical process, love as dopamine, and anxiety as a measurable neural response, then the self appears both understandable and alienated. It can be reduced to brain activity; however, the individual can no longer determine

whether the feeling originates from the self, the drug, or the pharmacological environment that produces it.

To contextualise this discussion of psychic governance within the play's economic world, the framework also requires an understanding of emotional capitalism. At this stage, Illouz's concept of emotional capitalism, in which "emotional and economic discourses" mutually influence each other, is especially pertinent to Prebble's play at this point (2007, p. 5). The clinical trial frames emotion not merely as a personal or pathological experience, but as an economically significant field in which mood, attraction, compliance, and risk acquire value precisely to the extent that they can be measured, recorded, regulated, and potentially converted into pharmaceutical profit.

Affect theory is used here not as an alternative to psychopolitics but as a means of clarifying what lies beyond psychopolitical measurement and regulation. Yet this economic perspective on emotion does not fully account for the play's more fluid treatment of feeling, since Prebble also presents affect as something that moves beyond calculation, classification and commercial exploitation. Building on this premise, affect theory provides a further basis for the study, as the play consistently distinguishes between what can be measured and what can be truly perceived. This aligns with Ahmed's account of emotions as not confined to individuals or society but as modes that "shape the very surface of bodies as well worlds" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). Such a view clarifies why Connie and Tristan's attraction cannot be based solely on brain chemistry, as it also involves their bodies, language, judgements, environments, institutional norms and observers. Ahmed's focus on the social and bodily movement of emotion also prepares the ground for the distinction between codified emotion and affective intensity. In this sense, Massumi's distinction between "emotion and affect" is particularly relevant in this study because Prebble's drama illustrates this tension

precisely while the clinic seeks named emotions and measurable effects, the stage evokes intensities that exceed their assigned categories (2002, p. 27). The transition from affective excess to psychiatric knowledge is methodologically significant here, insofar as it clarifies how psychological discourse is used as an interpretive tool without being allowed to override the literary and dramaturgical analysis. Therefore, this chapter regards psychology and psychiatry not as ultimate authorities that diagnose characters externally, but as historically and institutionally influenced discourses through which the play itself explores the construction, contestation and theatrical fluidity of psychic meaning. Studies on placebo response, expectation and antidepressant efficacy are important because *The Effect* focuses on the difficulty of differentiating drug effects from belief, emotional interaction and institutional influence. In keeping with this, Kirsch argues that in antidepressant trials, many benefits are attributable to “the placebo effect” (2014, p. 128), namely, to expectancy and therapeutic context rather than to the drug’s specific pharmacological action, while Rutherford et al. (2017) show that expectancy can mediate clinical response. Likewise, debates about the serotonin hypothesis, discussed by Lacasse and Leo (2005) and Moncrieff et al. (2023), clarify the cultural authority of simplified biochemical accounts of depression. Although the present chapter does not attempt to decide the medical question from outside the play, the literary question is instead how Prebble turns such undecidability into dramatic structure. Mark Fisher’s criticism of neoliberal mental health discourse adds much to this methodological division, especially with his argument that the prevailing social ontology “denies any possibility” of social causation in mental illness (2009, p. 37). With regard to *The Effect*, this denial is not only repeated, but also the tension between biological explanation and social relations is focused, as is especially through Dr James’s refusal to consider depression as a simple biological malfunction.

Establishing this methodological distinction, the chapter aims to use an interdisciplinary approach centred on literature by exploring how psychopolitics influences the mind, how emotional capitalism renders affect into economic value, how affect theory addresses the excess of intensity beyond simple interpretation, and how theatre studies illustrates these tensions through unique dramatic form. Overall, these perspectives enable the chapter to examine psychopolitics both as a recurring theme in *The Effect* and as a dramaturgical element. Together, they reveal psychopolitical power not only through the play's focus on mind, drugs, and emotion but also through its clinical setting, fragmented dialogue, bodily responses, and spectatorship, portraying how inner experiences are made visible, interpreted, and controlled. Within this critical context, the present study addresses this gap by examining how Prebble's play transforms these interconnected theoretical concerns into theatrical form, thereby offering a fresh perspective on the relationship among affect, power, and subjectivity in contemporary British drama.

### **3. CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMA AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTEXTS**

*The Effect* plays a vital role in contemporary British drama by changing institutional spaces as venues for social critique. It is through this dramatic tendency that the play focuses on settings such as schools, offices, detention centres, financial firms, and hospitals as crucial sites for examining the connection between personal experiences and institutional power in modern theatre studies. Throughout the play, Prebble's clinic functions as a neutral realist setting where she represents late-capitalist society. Put another way, it amalgamates medical research, pharmaceutical development, bioethical regulation, professional

hierarchy, data collection, and emotional vulnerability into one staged environment.

Overall, the chapter views English literary studies, cultural studies, and psychology not as isolated disciplines but as interrelated modes of interpreting a text, each revealing different layers of meaning. This relation between culture, meaning, and social practice is clear in Williams's definition of culture as a "particular way of life", suggesting that cultural meanings are not only in "art and learning" but also in "institutions and everyday actions" (1961, pp. 57–61). In the same way, Hall offers that culture is a matter of "shared meanings" and discusses that language serves as the primary medium through which meaning is both "created and communicated" (1997, pp. 1–3).

As the play concerns the inner life as a private experience shaped by social relations, institutional practices, and cultural language, a psychological approach to analysing the play becomes inescapable. In this regard, Vygotsky's idea that psychic development initially appears "on the social level" and only later "on the individual level" has much to do with the play (1978, p. 57). Through these common critical angles, *The Effect* is more than just a literary text to be analysed technically and a cultural artefact to be explored sociologically, or a psychological case to be diagnosed. However, it is a theatrical form that expresses British institutional life, neoliberal healthcare, psychiatric discourse, gendered intimacy, and affective self-understanding through drama and a specific theatrical language. The methodological significance of this interdisciplinary context lies in clarifying how *The Effect* transforms cultural formations into theatrical experience, showcasing dramatic form, and how institutional structures shape the intimate languages of feeling, diagnosis, and selfhood. It is this interdisciplinary emphasis that also illustrates why Prebble's play can be regarded as part of the broader field of crisis, institutions and social pressures in modern

British drama. Viewed in this light, Angelaki's reading of twenty-first-century British theatre offers a more precise understanding in her argument that contemporary drama responds to crisis by "acknowledging the problem" and "attacking it dialectically" - a position that helps situate *The Effect* within a wider theatrical concern with institutional precarity and social pressure (2017, p. 2). Angelaki's interpretation of Prebble's work highlights the playwright's resistance to the impulse to simplification, particularly through her focus on "beautiful, chaotic moments" that resist simple judgement or explanation (2017, p. 226). In this context, *The Effect* does not reveal a crisis in dramatic catastrophe but a crisis more subtle and more personal - a crisis of uncertainty as to whether love, despair, or desire ever comes to be intrinsically bound up with pharmacological treatment and clinical analysis. Nevertheless, this intimacy is intrinsically connected to the political dynamics of society as well. Prebble's achievement lies in demonstrating that what seems to be private emotion is, in fact, a privileged space through which modern power exerts its ultimate influence through the political dynamics of society. This relationship ensures that the interdisciplinary approach supports the chapter's literary objective by justifying the transformation of institutional language into theatrical form.

The minimalist structure of *The Effect* supports this argument through its use of a four-character cast, and, in this way, it evokes the intimacy characteristic of chamber drama. At the same time, the play's dramaturgy cannot be disregarded, as it expands this intimate setting to reveal the institutional, clinical, and economic systems that shape the characters' emotional experiences.

Accordingly, Toby comes to embody the institutional and commercial language of pharmaceutical development. In other words, he speaks from within a discourse and transforms uncertainty into therapeutic promise and experimental risk into

professional advancement. Dr James, in contrast, holds a more conflicted position because her psychiatric authority is repeatedly challenged by professional scepticism, emotional exposure, and the residual force of her own clinical history. As for Connie, her role adds further complexity to this structure by contributing psychological knowledge and social-scientific self-awareness, along with a growing ethical concern about how feelings are observed, measured, and interpreted. When Tristan is analysed, it is noticed that he figures the body already habituated to experimentation. As an experienced trial volunteer, he understands the clinic's procedures, but his wit, evasions, and resistance to discipline prevent him from being reduced to a passive medical subject.

Prebble, through these overlapping roles, effectively turns the clinic into a tense, dramatic space where biomedical authority, emotional doubt, commercial drive, and bodily fragility constantly intersect, as is clear in the dialogue between Dr James and Connie, where interruptions, hesitations, overlaps, and comic deflections go beyond natural speech markers. Starting right from the play's opening clinical exchange, Connie's broken phrasing, "I've felt depressed. But" and "I -, it's an illness, isn't it", shows how emotional uncertainty is interrupted, reorganised, and conveyed through psychiatric discourse (Prebble, 2012, p. 5). This speech pattern also proves how the characters reveal the pressure placed on language when subjective experience is forced into institutional explanations. This is exactly where Scarry's note that "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it" becomes meaningful, based on the way bodily and affective suffering in the play often disrupts the speech form intended to contain it (Scarry, 1985, p. 4). As can be deduced, Prebble's fragmented verbal rhythms reveal that the clinical order relies on coherent articulation. However, it should not be disregarded that the experiences or feelings the clinic tries to

classify, such as pain, desire, depression, attraction, and uncertainty, frequently exceed the explanatory language imposed on them. Seen in this light, Connie's analytical intelligence reaches the boundaries of self-knowledge while Tristan's humour serves as a form of seduction, resistance and evasion. In parallel to them, Dr James's clinical precision is influenced by personal history, whereas Toby's rationalism is ultimately subordinated to the institutional goals he upholds.

Within the play, the protocol aims to gather clear and stable data from volunteers while the drama produces fragmented speech, thus making Prebble's language intentionally reflect the uncertainty that the trial seeks to remove. This reminds one of Styan's claim that "drama is not made of words alone, but of sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses", thus supporting the chapter's emphasis on gesture, sound, pause, and bodily expression as central to conveying meaning (Styan, 1975, p. vii). Similarly, the stage directions enhance the play's literary and theatrical qualities by creating visual and auditory structures for observation rather than simply supporting dialogue scenes. The tablet, screen, scans, EEG, and ECG all externalise internal processes, thereby changing unseen psychic and bodily activities into a spectacle. This is essential to prove that theatre itself relies on rendering hidden states, relationships and tensions visible and perceptible through sight and sound. *The Effect* leverages the similarity between clinical and theatrical displays, underpinning the ethical risks of this connection. In a way, it invites the audience to observe the transformation of life into information and to feel discomfort about their own pleasure in watching this process.

Prebble's play is revealed as self-reflexive without becoming abstractly metatheatrical through its formal self-awareness arising from the clinical experiment it stages. The opening command, "Experiment begins" (Prebble, 2012, p. 5),

names the beginning of the trial while also framing the theatrical event as an experiment in emotional interpretation, so that the audience is invited to test not only the effects of RLU37 but also its own desire for certainty about love, chemistry, illness and manipulation. The core question is not only whether Connie and Tristan's attachment is love, chemistry, illness, or manipulation, but how the dramaturgy of the playwright sustains these possibilities at the same time through drama. Prebble's decision to leave this ambiguity in the play is presented not as a deficiency but as an intentional artistic strategy that effectively turns psychopolitical undecidability into a distinct theatrical effect.

#### **4. THE CLINICAL TRIAL AS DRAMATIC APPARATUS**

The opening movement of *The Effect* presents the clinic as a setting in which bodies and identities are linguistically simplified before receiving medical treatment. In this regard, the play's first movement demonstrates how the clinic applies the institutional logic described earlier. The character list is inherently diagnostic as each figure in the play is introduced with age, weight, and height before any ethical, emotional, or dramatic context is revealed. This seemingly factual presentation is theatrically meaningful in that it drives the audience to view people as data-driven beings. This dramaturgical stress on bodily measurement is evidenced by Angelaki's claim that the scientific line in the play is marked by the listing of "height and weight", which confirms that measurement is not incidental to the drama but built into its form (2017, p. 232). This diagnostic logic is depicted clearly, especially in the opening interview; Connie's effort to differentiate sadness from depression exemplifies how the reduction of the subject to measurable terms permeates

language, exemplified in one of the play's earliest and most revealing exchanges:

**Dr James** Have you ever suffered from depression?

**Connie**, *one arm across herself, leaning back slightly.*

**Connie** No. I've felt depressed. But.

**Dr James** In what way?

**Connie** What I mean is, I've been sad.

**Dr James** But not depressed.

**Connie** No.

**Dr James** There's a difference(?)

**Connie** Yeah. I –, it's an illness, isn't it.

**Dr James** Mmhm.

**Connie** Well, you tell me. I just mean I haven't got an abnormal amount of chemical – in the brain or anything. (Prebble, 2012, p. 5)

The exchange is dramaturgically precise, as it distils the core epistemological issue of the play into the hesitations of everyday speech. Connie's fragmented response, "I've felt depressed. But", exposes the instability of a vocabulary where common sadness and psychiatric depression overlap without exactly coinciding (Prebble, 2012, p. 5). Meanwhile, Dr James's medically neutral questions reveal how her emotional uncertainty is immediately reframed as diagnostic possibilities. Connie's apparently casual utterance, "abnormal amount of chemical", is particularly suggestive in that it indicates that the neurochemical model is already circulating as cultural common sense before the drug is given. Canguilhem's assertion that "disease is still a norm of life but it is an inferior norm" further enhances the play's concern with diagnostic classification (Canguilhem, 1978, p.

183). Rather than introducing an entirely new language to Connie, the clinic consolidates a vocabulary she has already partly internalised, recalling Conrad's description of medicalisation as the process by which "nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems" (Conrad, 1992, p. 209).

The trial's procedures then transform this linguistic uncertainty into choreographed regulations. Since volunteers are dressed in standardised clothing, undergo measurement, testing, feeding, hydration, and monitoring, clinical routine shifts into a theatrical exhibition rather than a symbol of medical realism. The synchronisation of bodies enables differences to be separated, quantified, and causally linked, transforming the logic of clinical standardisation into a rhythmic process (Prebble, 2012, p. 12).

The countdown serves both as medical timing and a theatrical cue, transforming ingestion into a performance, while examining mouths adds a nearly disciplinary intimacy to the scene. The volunteers' bodies are rendered available to institutional inspection, including even the smallest acts of compliance. The scene exposes volunteers' bodies to institutional scrutiny at every possible level, from measurable medical reactions to the smallest gestures of obedience, including waiting, swallowing and opening the mouth for inspection. Beyond that, Prebble's phrase "It continues, theoretically, with other volunteers" is also stylistically suggestive, as it hints that what seems to be a complete scientific process is, in fact, revealed as a carefully chosen theatrical act. Therefore, the play reveals enough of the system to make its reasoning understandable, while avoiding turning theatre into mere documentary reproduction.

In the play, the clinic also serves as a space of confinement, yet Prebble stages this enclosure as more complex than a mere imprisonment. The complexity becomes apparent, especially when Tristan agrees to remain in the facility for four

weeks and to surrender all electronic devices (Prebble, 2012, p. 8). In a way, this arrangement resembles a disciplinary restriction, but Prebble complicates its coercive logic by presenting it as one legitimised by safety, scientific validity, and consent. In this regard, it is quite similar to a disciplinary restriction, yet it is justified by concerns related to safety, scientific validity, and informed consent. *The Effect* presents the clinical trial as a scenario in which Connie and Tristan are not forced but they take part voluntarily as paid participants. This can well be evidenced by Tristan's agreement to "stay within the facility for four weeks" and to "hand over all electronic devices", although it requires compliance with institutional regulations and oversight (Prebble, 2012, p. 8). A very similar case is also noticed when Dr James reminds the volunteers, "You signed a protocol," and subsequently says that Connie "signed a consent form committing to refraining from sexual activity" (Prebble, 2012, pp. 41-42). The following lines shift this argument from spatial restriction to behavioural regulation, thereby proving that consent functions exclusively as an enforceable protocol. In this viewpoint, the loss of the phone is especially significant as it alienates the subject from routine social interactions and increases reliance on institutional environments, as is obvious in the scene where Tristan understands the political rationale for the rule and humorously observes that controlling a group is "really hard if they've got phones" (Prebble, 2012, p. 34).

As can be observed, his response extends beyond simple humorous resistance and reveals the strong relationship between communication, surveillance, and governability. In this context, consent is not simply invalidated by the trial but is transformed into a series of ritualised duties, thus making freedom inseparable from regulation. More importantly, this is also where Prebble's dramaturgy clarifies this logic to the core by presenting the clinic's symbolic significance not simply as a setting but as a

performative mechanism through which clinical authority is produced and maintained. In other words, the protocol in the play does not simply symbolise the clinical order but also serves as a mechanism that generates this order through repetition, surveillance, measurement, and the regulation of bodily and affective responses. However, this meticulously organised structure is often disturbed by emotional outbursts, such as flirtation, laughter, sexual arousal, fear, hesitation, and disobedience, which break the trial's effort to separate distinct effects and associate them closely with the scientific cause-and-effect relationships, aligning with Barouta's argument on affective encounter as a disruption to "medically induced (self-)regulation of emotion" (2024, p. 1). Taken as a whole, the play reveals that the characters' emotional reactions are not simply governed by scientific methods; rather, the clinical system cannot fully reduce desire, fear, attraction, and uncertainty to measurable outcomes.

Interestingly, the use of projected text further enhances the idea that the clinical process serves not only as medical documentation but also as a theatrical tool that renders emotional and bodily experience visible and measurable, as is clear in the description of Dr James's tablet as "the modern equivalent of a clipboard" (Prebble, 2012, p. 11). In this sense, the projected text shows that the mechanism of clinical authority is clearly visible, revealing how the language of documentation takes a role in reducing complex emotional and bodily experience to manageable forms of knowledge necessary for the authority.

From another angle, this projection functions as one of the most significant formal devices in the play, externalising the bureaucratic logic of the experiment. Feeling must become writing before it can become knowledge, and it must become knowledge before it can acquire institutional and pharmaceutical value. Thus, this process functions not simply administratively

but also dramaturgically, concerning the role of the stage in revealing how inner life changes into institutional evidence. In this way, this approach changes the clinical trial from a thematic setting into a framework that shapes how emotions are managed, evidence is produced, and affective meanings are inherently unstable.

## 5. NEUROCHEMICAL SUBJECTIVITY AND THE THEATRICALITY OF INTERIOR LIFE

*The Effect* repeatedly questions whether the self can endure the explanatory power of its own biochemical description, introducing this idea through Connie, who serves as both a subject and a semi-analyst in the experiment. As a student of psychology and social sciences, she is notably aware of the tests performed on her, but the play does not equate this knowledge with freedom, as is evident in the scene where Connie tells Dr James that her previous knowledge of the Stroop Test may enable her to sway the results, the play implies that self-awareness can become an element of the experimental setup itself, rather than ensuring independence, as it reads:

**Connie** Sorry, I don't know if it matters. But I thought I should say. I know about the Stroop Effect. I know it's about

how long you take to say the colour, that the more meaningful the word, the longer it takes. I don't know if it matters. If you know.

**Dr James** No.

**Connie** Really? I thought knowing might make me try to . . . beat it. (Prebble, 2012, pp. 18-19)

At this stage of the play, the attribution test is equally significant, extending the play's concern with psychological assessment into a more explicitly theatrical problem of self-representation. Connie is asked to explain why an imagined business succeeds, but she challenges the premise of the exercise by noting that "Even the me is kind of fictional" (Prebble, 2012, p. 20). This moment stands out as one of the clearest instances of theatrical self-consciousness in the play, since the psychological test requires Connie to interpret the motives of an invented version of herself. Within the fictional structure of this test, she is asked to analyse the psychology of a created self, while on the stage, an actor performing Connie embodies that very resistance before an audience. This layered theatricality changes the scene from a mere psychological assessment into a performance of selfhood itself, in line with what Goffman notes: "The observed become a performing team and the observers become the audience. Actions which appear to be done on objects become gestures addressed to the audience" (1956, p. 162). Against this backdrop, Connie's self-awareness emerges not simply as a psychological phenomenon but also as a theatrical performance of subjectivity. The scene, thus, builds multiple layers of fiction to reveal the vulnerability of psychological categorisation, as is clearly illustrated in Dr James's explanation that people prone to depression often attribute success to external factors and failure to internal ones – a paradox that Connie quickly recognises when she observes that a "healthy" mind might need to be "Wrong" (Prebble, 2012, p. 21). As elucidated, Prebble's paradoxical formulation here draws attention to the psychological normality sustained not by exact perception but by adaptive forms of misrecognition. Considering this, it seems that this is the only way that the subject can sustain himself/herself within such uncertainty.

This scene also foregrounds the practical consequences of neurochemical subjectivity, depicting how emotional experience is no longer viewed as a complex relation among self, body, and context, but is instead transformed into biological evidence within clinical interpretation. Yet, Prebble not only reproduces this logic but also presents its theatrical form, especially through the recurring uncertainty of the question “How do you feel?”, which shifts among emotional, physical, and experimental meanings (Prebble, 2012, pp. 92-93, 95). When Connie remarks, “A bit awkward”, Dr James immediately corrects her by uttering, “No, I mean physically” (Prebble, 2012, p. 21). This brief correction can be regarded as slight but quite important dramaturgically, as it reveals how the clinical frame limits what may count as relevant experience. Awkwardness, viewed as a social and relational feeling, is replaced by bodily sensations, clarifying how the experiment renders subjective discomfort into a measurable clinical category. This narrowing of response clarifies the value of Ahmed’s affective theory, as emotions, in forming the boundaries between self and world, reveal the trial’s focus on bodily response as more than a clinical simplification. It becomes an epistemological operation through which Connie’s awkwardness is dramatised within an intersecting relationship between subject and doctor, woman and institution, volunteer and observer. However, the experiment aims to change this aspect into bodily data. Thus, the dramatic impact of the scene comes from the enduring social remnant even after the clinical categorisation has been applied.

Here, Dopamine serves as the central biochemical link that connects love, novelty, and pharmacological intervention in the play. Dr James explains that the agent is designed to increase dopamine, “and that’s what’s stimulated by new, exciting experiences generally” (Prebble, 2012, p. 22). Her anecdote about the medic who tries to induce love through bungee jumping is

comic while also providing one of the play's major metaphors, encapsulating the central question of whether love stems from genuine emotional attachment or can be artificially induced by biochemical and physiological stimuli. The anecdote therefore suggests that the body can be arranged, conditions can be staged, and chemistry can be solicited, but desire may still attach itself elsewhere as the instructor, rather than the calculating medic, becomes the object of attraction. The scene between Connie and Tristan on bodies and belief makes the philosophical stakes explicit:

**Connie** Everything we do is just about what's pumping round inside us, isn't it?

**Tristan** Well that's a cold way of looking at a person.  
**Connie** Why?!

We are our bodies, our bodies are us . . . there's not something more . . . And that's fine. That's enough. It's like, the world is incredible and beautiful, even though we know there's no god behind it. (Prebble, 2012, p. 34)

As it reads, Connie's materialism is revealed as neither crudely reductive nor fully consoling in that her attempt to ground experience within the apparent sufficiency of the body becomes increasingly unstable once the body itself is placed under pharmacological alteration. Based on this, the play raises a more unsettling question in its context: If identity is grounded in bodily processes, can biochemical intervention transform not only feeling and attachment but selfhood itself? This question then draws attention to Tristan's objection and shows that it is not simply due to a spiritual resistance but to a scientific explanation, exposing the emotional and ethical consequences of defining personhood solely through physiological mechanisms alone. With such an approach, this scene does not stage a direct opposition between science and religion but rather illustrates a more intricate clash between two models of being. Furthermore,

it becomes clear that Connie's secular materialism pursues beauty without transcendence, as is evidenced by her insistence that "We are our bodies", while Tristan's reply that this is "a cold way of looking at a person" reveals his fear that the beloved can disappear into process, dosage, and mechanism (Prebble, 2012, p. 34). Fisher's argument on mental health privatisation intensifies this tension through his focus on reducing psychic life to chemical causes that obscure what he addresses as "social causation of mental illness" (Fisher, 2009, p. 37), including the affective and relational conditions that influence suffering. This criticism by Fisher offers a new perspective on the tension over how framing psychic life primarily in chemical terms can obscure the social and relational conditions through which suffering is formed and experienced. In Prebble's play, love appears as a byproduct; depression can be reinterpreted through chemical causes; and the self is revealed as confined within explanatory systems it cannot fully control. Thus, the neurochemical self presents a significant dramatic dilemma concerning the psychopolitical dimension, which becomes clear when characters are required to articulate their inner experiences using categories that are simultaneously medical, institutional, and economic.

## **6. LOVE, PLACEBO AND THE DRAMATIC CRISIS OF AUTHENTICITY**

Within the play, the romance between Connie and Tristan functions as the primary narrative catalyst. This is because their attraction disrupts the experimental framework through the entanglement of the drug, the placebo, the institutional environment, expectation, confinement, transgression, and personal desire. In that case, the love plot in the play does not offer a way to escape the clinical narrative but instead originates from within it as its most destabilising factor. Although the trial

aims to isolate a pharmacological effect, Prebble tends to show that affect is structured through relational, theatrical, and overdetermined processes that cannot be separated from each other. In the play, this is reflected in the scene where Dr James proposes that Connie and Tristan's neural activity and physical symptoms could stem from mutual attraction and thus hide the drug's influence, although Toby challenges this by asking, "Unless it is what the drug itself is doing" (Prebble, 2012, p. 44). All in all, the body in *The Effect* offers a contested interpretive space, with the same physiological signs supporting different explanatory models. This tension serves as one of the play's pivotal moments, as is clearly noticed in the dialogue between Connie and Tristan:

**Connie** I think I'm going to take advantage of you.

**Tristan** I think I'm in love.

**Connie** Yeah. Are you?

**Tristan** Maybe you are too.

**Connie** Maybe. I'm not sure what it is.

**Tristan** I feel it really though.

**Connie** Do you? Yes.

**Tristan** Don't you?

**Connie** Oh god. I don't know.

**Tristan** If you're in love there's nothing you can do about it.

**Connie** But if it's something else, something else controlling me – (Prebble, 2012, p. 54)

As it reads, Prebble reconceptualises love as a loss of control within a late-capitalist medical environment, framing

such loss as a potential side effect. Berlant's idea of cruel optimism helps to clarify why this romance is ethically delicate on the ground that a relationship may become cruel when the object of desire turns into an "obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). This instability also supports Ahmed's argument that happiness is closely linked to proximity to certain objects, such as relationships and aspirations, that guide individuals toward specific emotional outcomes. Based on Berlant and Ahmed, it can be noted that the love in the play is neither merely a form of liberation nor a symptom, but an attachment that disturbs the experiment while also drawing the subjects more deeply into the crisis of self-knowledge within the trial. Moreover, the placebo heightens this uncertainty by seeming to differentiate between authentic and chemically caused feelings, only to blur that line almost immediately. As is seen when Dr James tells Connie that Tristan is "on a placebo" (Prebble, 2012, p. 62), authenticity seems momentarily recoverable; however, Tristan's placebo status does not eliminate doubts, since factors such as expectancy, environment, and desire continue to influence. In a similar vein, Connie's drug status does not necessarily invalidate her drug status for the reason that the play presents uncertainty as an interpretive issue rather than a pharmacological problem, as Connie confesses: "But if I'm on a placebo, he's saying all this stuff, I can't believe him. It's driving me mad!" (Prebble, 2012, p. 60).

This unresolved tension is central to the play's brilliance because it rejects the false comfort of either stance, acknowledging that, even if Tristan is not pharmacologically affected by the drug, love can still be influenced by the experiment. Conversely, even if Connie is affected by the drug, love can still be genuine. This is where Prebble's work surpasses a purely psychology-focused interpretation of the play by framing placebo not as a clinical issue but as a theatrical concern to be

embraced. Theatre itself relies on familiar fictions that evoke real physical and emotional effects, with the audience aware that Connie and Tristan are fictional characters, even as the performance prompts feelings, judgments, and doubts. In this way, placebo functions as a theatrical parallel, whose impacts can be genuinely tangible even if its basis is uncertain. The lovers' subsequent conflict further makes it harder to view resistance sentimentally, as Tristan's violence, jealousy, and verbal abuse prevent the romance from serving as a pure alternative to institutional power, as is evident when Connie gets injured during their fight, and the play challenges the idea that affective intensity is always automatically liberating:

**Connie** *is hitting* Tristan *with his own hand*.

**Connie** What are you hitting yourself for? What are you hitting yourself for?

**Tristan** I want you to hit me.

**Connie** Why?

**Tristan** Cos then I can show how much I don't mind. (Prebble, 2012, p. 55).

As is clear, this provides an important correction to any simple account of love as resistance. Affect may exceed psychopolitical classification, but excess is not necessarily ethical. For this reason, the play is at its strongest when it allows love to be both a challenge to the experiment and a source of danger within it. Connie's care for Tristan after his transient global amnesia redefines love as an ethical relationship rather than merely a romantic one, as his anxious question, "You're not going are you? Who are you?", is replied by Connie's practical reassurance, "And then we'll go from there" (Prebble, 2012, p. 92). Here, her feeding, explaining, and attending to him turn attachment that survives even when the characters can no longer

be sure of what it means, as is clear in the scene when Tristan asks, “Am I your boyfriend?”, and Connie replies, “I don’t know, are you?” (Prebble, 2012, p. 94). This understated dialogue highlights the play’s emotional dynamics while also showing that the relationship endures even when its name is unclear.

## **7. DR JAMES AND THE INSTABILITY OF PSYCHIATRIC AUTHORITY**

Dr James holds a significant role in shaping the play’s literary and ethical context by questioning the binary opposition between institutional power and vulnerable subjects. She observes Connie and Tristan, but she is also being observed, analysed, and ultimately evaluated throughout the play. It is through Dr James’s professional scepticism that the play develops a sustained critique of pharmaceutical discourse, especially in her disputes with Toby, which highlight the epistemological instability of evidence within a market-driven regime of medical knowledge, as is clear in the scene when Toby claims that earlier critiques of antidepressant trials have themselves been invalidated and Dr James exposes the institutional circularity of pharmaceutical evidence with the pointed reply, “In new studies by you” (Prebble, 2012, p. 24). This brief utterance is particularly effective because it refrains from an explicit exposition of corporate science and destabilises the authority of evidence by exposing the institutional and commercial interests behind the scenes. The rhythm of the exchange also matters at this point as Toby’s thoughtful explanation contrasts with Dr James’s brief counter-accusation, creating the scene’s intellectual tension through this brevity.

Prebble deliberately avoids portraying Dr James as a character who represents truth. This choice adds significantly to the play’s complex structure. Toby continually frames Dr James’s

scepticism as a sign of pathology, resentment, or unresolved depression. It is exactly this dynamic that generates a troubling psychopolitical process in which her criticism of pharmaceutical authority is deprived of intellectual legitimacy, reinterpreted as a symptom, and eventually reintegrated into the psychiatric system she interrogates. This repeated stance of Dr James also reveals a political logic of the clinical discourse, whereby dissent is rendered as proof of illness, and her rejection of medication may then be viewed as a sign of illness requiring treatment rather than an act of judgment. On the other hand, if she accepts it, her criticism seems weakened by her reliance on the system she opposes. As discussed, the play frequently highlights this trap, illustrating how psychiatric authority can include and invalidate opposition, as is best revealed in the scene where Dr James has her pivotal confrontation with Toby:

**Dr James** I'm not even sure you really believe all that. I swear Toby we're going to look back at all this chemical imbalance shit like it's the four humours all over again. I mean, why am I here?

**Toby** What, here?

**Dr James** Yes. Why would you offer me work? This isn't what I do. I sit with people, I talk to them, I -  
(Prebble, 2012, p. 82)

This passage combines intellectual criticism together with professional identity, and personal accusation. Dr James directly rejects the pharmacological model of affect and contrasts it with the usual objectivity found in pharmaceutical discussions. In doing so, Dr. James's comparison between modern biomedical certainty and an outdated medical theory places scientific authority in a historical context, suggesting that what we consider obvious now is liable to be questioned later. From another angle, Dr James's partial defence of her clinical practice shifts the focus from theoretical models to a sense of professional duty and

emphasises that psychiatric care depends on building relationships, not simply on chemical treatments in contrast to what is expected. Therefore, the unfinished nature of her sentence is important because it draws attention to both an emotional interruption and the challenge of advocating for a slower, dialogic approach to care in an institution driven by measurable pharmacological outcomes. This idea is supported further by Illouz's discussion of emotional capitalism, aligning well with the scene where Dr James's conflict with Toby reveals a society in which distress is considered valuable if it can be interpreted, shared, and commodified through specialised systems. Her concern is not simply the enterprise of pharmaceutical companies that seek profit, but the way in which profit influences the interpretive framework through which suffering becomes recognisable. This is exactly what makes the line "... they're just effects you can't sell" crucial among the play's most powerful formulations (Prebble, 2012, p. 78), manifesting that the difference between therapeutic effect and side effect is never purely scientific in the world of the play, but quite economic and rhetorical.

Toby's role is revealed to be complex because, while he has a strong commercial and professional stake in the drug, the play ensures that the audience does not see him as a caricature of pharmaceutical capitalism. Toby's desire to help Dr. James may be genuine, but it is influenced by self-interest, guilt, and manipulation. This complexity prevents Toby from being seen solely as a symbol of pharmaceutical capitalism, as Han's argument points out: "friendly power proves more powerful" than repressive power (2017, p. 15). As discussed so far, the psychopolitical power in the play is not revealed all at once, but it often comes from care, expertise, ambition, kindness, and agreement within institutions. Toby's statement, "It's love that means we treat people so they can live at home, in the community,

rather than locked away,” clarifies this very notion by highlighting how the language of care can support psychiatric power while also hiding the disciplinary systems that support it (Prebble, 2012, p. 30). Dr. James’s final action adds to the play’s uncertainty further rather than offering a resolution, as shown in the stage direction clearly: “Dr. James alone, looks at the door, looks at the cup/pills beside her, decides, and takes them” (Prebble, 2012, p. 101). Instead of giving a clear conclusion to her struggle with pharmaceutical authority, this moment makes medication a personal choice influenced by outside pressures. Yet the scene’s strength lies in its uncertainty. As the play proceeds, Prebble’s approach reveals this vividly as she neither shames Dr James for taking medication nor presents it as a neat resolution. Furthermore, her choice does not invalidate her criticism, nor does it fully restore her sense of control. Instead, it shows her position as fragile, compromised, and affected by the systems she questions, as is evidenced in the final soundscape that highlights this unresolved feeling by contrasting Connie and Tristan’s exit with the sounds of EEG and ECG, described as “electrical activity in the brain produced by neurons firing” and “the bass of a heartbeat” (Prebble, 2012, p. 101). This auditory ending is important because it rejects the idea that love can be separated from biological processes, showing that biology alone cannot fully explain love. The play’s final image combines emotion, embodiment, and measurement without simplifying them, leaving the audience with a theatrical expression of psychopolitical ambiguity in which care, chemistry, authority, and desire remain closely linked. Significantly, the stage direction also emphasises this point by stating that “[t]hese are the sounds of human love” (Prebble, 2012, p. 101).

## 8. CONCLUSION

*The Effect* stands at a productive crossroads of literary, cultural, and psychological studies, exploring how emotions are influenced by personal experiences, cultural significance, and institutional practices. Based on this preliminary context, this chapter contends that Lucy Prebble's noteworthy play *The Effect* portrays the psychopolitical context as its core, in which emotion, subjectivity, and bodily experience are presented as subjects of clinical analysis, pharmaceutical significance, and theatrical ambiguity. This analysis has examined how Prebble transforms the clinical trial into a theatrical device rather than considering the play as a drama about antidepressants or romantic uncertainty. It has been observed that the play's strength lies in its refusal to distinguish between emotion and the systems that aim to explain the affective experience. In this light, it has been elucidated that Connie and Tristan's relationship is not merely an emotional alternative to medical regulation outside the experiment, given that it arises from the experimental context and reveals the boundaries of pharmacological explanations. It can also be concluded that their attraction, influenced by the drug, placebo, expectation, confinement, transgression, and mutual vulnerability, clarifies that affect is neither purely biological nor ultimately autonomous. From another perspective, it has been observed that *The Effect* manifests as relational, embodied, theatrical, and overdetermined. In this way, it shifts the placebo concern into a dramaturgical challenge to illustrate the very uncertainty that complicates the trial and also underpins theatrical interpretation. Likewise, Dr. James's conflict with Toby is revealed as a major factor that blurs simple divides between science and humanity, or care and control. Toby's use of treatment and compassion is intertwined with institutional goals and pharmaceutical interests, whereas Dr James's scepticism is intellectually convincing but also influenced by personal

exposure and vulnerability. Her ultimate choice to take the pills does not settle this tension but maintains a continuous negotiation between psychiatric authority, bodily suffering, and personal agency all along the play. In doing so, the play justifies that Prebble intentionally sidesteps both anti-medical oversimplification and naive therapeutic optimism.

All in all, *The Effect*, despite its minimal cast, proves that modern subjectivity is positioned at the crossroads of chemistry, capital, institutional discourse, emotional intensity, clinical environment, projected data, fragmented dialogue, bodily symptoms, and concluding soundscape of neural signals. All of these contribute greatly to the significance of the play in modern British drama, as revealed through its formal and ethical complexity. It not only explores and exposes that the modern power merely represses feelings from the outside but also shapes the languages through which all feelings are named, authorised, doubted, and conveyed meaningfully. Ultimately, the play suggests, through its theatrical representation, that the self in pharmaceutical modernity is inescapably influenced, challenged, and expressed by the complex interplay of body, emotions, and institutions, from which it seems impossible for a modern subject in the grip of capitalism to escape.

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# **THE PORTRAYAL OF NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM IN SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRY IV*, *PART I***

**Berna KÖSEOĞLU<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

When William Shakespeare’s history plays are taken into consideration, they can be regarded as the political analogies of his time, which mirror English history, the reign of monarchs, and the idea of nationalism. Especially the concept of patriotism can be regarded as one of the most significant issues that Shakespeare stresses in his plays. In Shakespeare’s time, the Hundred Years Wars and the Wars of the Roses enormously influenced English history, the nation itself, and the idea of nationalism. Especially the Hundred Years War enabled the English to feel that they were nationalistic, so this war had a cultural effect upon the mentality of the English nation and the national identity. Considering the reign of Queen Elizabeth and Henry VIII, it can be stated that the idea of patriotism and Englishness reached its peak as well. Since the English nation was going through its Renaissance, its economic, cultural, political and social prosperity in these times, national feeling was high against the “other” (Mittag 109). Having experienced these developments in England, Shakespeare focused on English identity, unity, the characteristics of English kings, and nationalism in his history plays.

When the significant features of Shakespeare’s history plays are taken into consideration, one can observe some

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr., Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, ORCID: 0000-0001-7706-4115.

distinctive characteristics of these plays. First of all, in Shakespearean history plays, private and public situations are combined, because Shakespeare believes that the history of a nation is shaped by small groups of individuals whose relations with one another contribute to shaping the history of a nation. Therefore, behaviours of leaders and political figures play a fundamental role in the progress of a nation. Moreover, the history plays deal with the fortunes of many characters rather than one character and his attitudes, so the death and victories of a character do not attach great importance in the wider sense in historical plays. Moreover, these plays include the aspect of continuity, so that the present is created by the past (Wilders 2-7). In this sense, Shakespeare's history plays portray the panorama of his time, the situation of the nation, the reign of the kings, and their understanding of Englishness and nationalism.

In this respect, one of the most remarkable history plays, *Henry IV, Part I*, represents the reign of Henry IV, who usurped the throne of Richard II, and presents the English identity as well as the attitude of the English towards the other nations. Thus, the play underlines the unity of the English and their devotion to their harmony, therefore Shakespeare created these plays with a public concern to emphasize the importance of patriotism:

The History Plays were more topical in their concerns than Shakespeare's other drama. They were also uniquely 'public' plays in that they dealt with the political anxieties and patriotic enthusiasms, the shared memories and aspirations which make people conscious of their oneness and destiny as a nation. (Ornstein 35)

The history plays of Shakespeare are regarded as public plays as they pay special attention to the political problems in English society, reflecting the needs of the public to protect the idea of nationalism and their harmony as a state. In this regard, in

Shakespeare's history plays, the nationalistic and patriotic topics are more foregrounded than stylistic aspects, so the ultimate goal of Shakespeare is to underline the significance of devotion to one's country, highlighting the importance of self-sacrifice and fidelity to the nation.

## **2. THE REFLECTION OF NATIONALISTIC AND PATRIOTIC CONCERNS IN *HENRY IV, PART I***

In *Henry IV, Part I*, the attempts of the king, Henry IV to struggle against the enemies and to stress the necessity of unity to foster the notion of Englishness can be recognized. In the beginning of the play, the king invokes patriotism as well in order to get support for the Crusade to the Holy Land as follows:

We are impressed and engaged to fight,  
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy,  
Whose arms were moulded in their mother's womb  
To chase these pagans in those holy fields  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet  
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our advantage on the bitter cross... (I, i, 21-27).

In this sense, the idea of nationalism and patriotism can be observed in the efforts of the king to inspire his countrymen to support the Crusade. So, the English are devoted to their Englishness and patriotism, sacrificing themselves for the sake of their nation. On the other hand, the son of Henry IV, Prince Hal's involvement in taverns, theft and the street life with his friend Falstaff is incompatible with the idea of patriotism to protect England against the enemies and to keep the unity of the English.

As a result, due to the worries of the king for his son's situation, the Prince indicates the identity he does not reveal and his consciousness of nationalism under the mask of irresponsibility as follows:

So, when this loose behaviour I throw off,  
And pay the debt I never promised,  
By how much better than my word I am,  
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,  
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,  
Shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes,  
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.  
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,  
Redeeming time when men think least I will.  
(I, ii, 200-209)

It can be assumed that Prince Hal might turn out to be serious and responsible in the future, in other words, for the sake of English nationalism, protecting the king against the enemies, Prince Hal will reveal his patriotism when he recognizes any threat against his nation. When the idea of Englishness is concerned, it can be indicated that in Shakespeare's play, England is faced with many rebellions and wars owing to the plots designed to share the country, so the English come to the fore united. In this sense, in the play the British land is divided equally among Mortimer, Glendower and Hotspur (53), portraying the prominence of Britain as a state. Moreover, the problems that arise due to the ransoms between England and its enemies cause conflicts experienced by the political leaders in England. As

Saccio argues, “the argument about the usurpation, the money problem, and the quarrel over ransoms all contributed to the worsening relationship between the king and his former allies” (43). Consequently, having usurped the crown from Richard II, Henry IV has to protect the kingdom and preserve the unity in his country. In this perspective, the King warns Prince Hal about his irresponsibility and his lack of concern towards the political problems of English nation by stressing the necessity to unite:

Could such inordinate and low desires,  
Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean attempts,  
Such barren pleasures, rude society,  
As thou art matched withal, and grafted to,  
Accompany the greatness of thy blood,  
And hold their level with thy princely heart?

(III, ii, 12- 17)

Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes,  
This infant warrior, in is entreprizes  
Discomfited great Douglas, ta'en him once,  
Enlarged him and made a friend of him,  
To fill the mouth of deep defiance up,  
And shake the peace and safety of our throne.  
And what say you to this? Percy, Northumberland,  
The Archbishop's grace of York, Douglas, Mortimer,  
Capitulate against us and are up... (III, ii, 112-120).

In response to the King's warning, his son replies as “I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord, Be more myself” (III. 2. 62). Therefore, it can be pointed out that the Prince has a tendency

to get away from his early life in the taverns with his ordinary friends, and will perform his task considering his royal blood, his position in the kingdom for the sake of patriotism. Thus, the idea of Englishness and nationalism reaches its peak in these words of Prince Hal:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head,  
And in the closing of some glorious day  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son,  
When I will wear a garment all of blood,  
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,  
Which washed away shall scour my shame with it.  
And that shall be the day, when'er it lights,  
That this same child of honour and renown,  
This gallant Hotspur, this all-praised knight,  
And your unthought-of Harry chance to meet.  
For every honour sitting on his helm  
Would they were multitudes, and on my head  
My shames redoubled! For the time will come,  
That I shall make this northern youth exchange  
His glorious deeds for my indignities.  
(III, ii, 132-146)

Thus, Prince Hal rises as a national hero who is so self-confident and self-determined that he challenges everybody who can be defined as a threat to the throne and to the English country, as a consequence, a hero committed to his mission to defend his nation, dedicated to nationalism and patriotism, comes to the fore.

Similarly, *Howard* and *Rackin* assert that “these plays incited patriotic interest in England’s past and participated in the process by which the English forged a sense of themselves as a nation” (18). Therefore, one can recognize the rise of nationalistic feelings of the public due to the emergence of Shakespeare’s history plays like *Henry IV, Part I*. In the play, Sir Richard Vernon also realizes the English nation united as a nation, dedicated to save and protect the unity of the country:

All furnished, all in arms;  
All plumed like estridges that wing the wind,  
Baited like eagles having lately bathed,  
Glittering in golden coats like images,  
As full of spirit as the month of May,  
And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer,  
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls.  
I saw young Harry with his beaver on,  
His cushes on his thighs, gallantly armed,  
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury.  
(IV, i, 97-106)

It can be assumed that the allies of England are aware of the fact that the English defend themselves strongly without any hesitation. Furthermore, Prince Hal is likened to feathered Mercury, which underlines the magnificence and power of Hal against the enemy. In the same manner, the English army is associated with youthful goats and eagles glittering in golden coats; so the English army is related to the symbols of power and supremacy. In addition, the reference to the month of May and the sun at midsummer also stands for the energy, vitality and

strength of the English army for the sake of nationalism. With great eagerness, courage, consciousness of nationalism, and with a strong determinism to preserve the unity of the English against the enemies, Prince Hal challenges Harry Percy as follows:

I am the Prince of Wales, and think not, Percy,  
To share with me in glory any more:,  
Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,  
Nor can one England brook a double reign,  
Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.

(V, iv, 64-67)

Prince Hal declares his determination and courage to protect England from double reign, in other words, from the threat of the enemies, and points out that two stars cannot remain in one sphere, so in *Henry IV, Part I*, the idea of Englishness, nationalism and patriotism against the 'other' can clearly be observed. The understanding of 'otherness' and the representation of the 'other' can also be seen in the play. The English is united against the 'other,' all the forces that aim to conquer the English land, therefore thanks to the spirit of Englishness and patriotism, the English achieve defeating the allied forces, the 'other,' Hotspur, Glendower and Earl of Douglas. Thus, the 'other' comes together against the English to compete with the power of the country. For instance, Hotspur, the son of Northumberland, is described as a passionate, heroic and hot-tempered warrior, who is destroyed because of his impulsiveness. Due to his commitment to his passion to defeat the English, his wife Lady Percy complains about his dehumanization and loneliness:

Tell me, sweet lord, What is' that takes from thee  
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?  
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,  
And start so often when thou sit'st alone?  
Cry 'Courage! To the field!' And thou hast talked  
Of sallies and retire, of trenches, tents,  
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,  
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,  
Of prisoners' ransom, and of soldiers slain...  
(II, iii, 42-45, 52-56)

Therefore, committing himself to the war and state affairs, "Hotspur's attempt to place heroic militarism at the centre of sovereignty" can be observed (Holderness, *Shakespeare* 161). Furthermore, the leader of the Scottish rebels, Earl of Douglas represents the hot-headed, fearless warrior so that Hal respects him due to his bravery despite the fact that he is the enemy of England. Moreover, the leader of the Welsh rebels, Owen Glendower is presented as a superstitious magician who suggests that he has magical power. In this sense, Shakespeare mocks the Welsh by means of Glendower, who is devoted to magic, so the Welsh identity is associated with dark power and black magic. Consequently, Shakespeare subverts the Welsh identity by mocking them. Since the sixteenth century English were strongly united against the other, Shakespeare highlights the other by introducing the Welsh. Furthermore, Shakespeare also refers to the Welsh as the other in order to emphasize that England was surrounded by the enemies within the nation as well. So, the Welsh is presented as the superstitious nation that deals with

magic. In addition, mocking their interest in magic, he makes fun of the Welsh language as well. Mortimer, who is married to Glendower's Welsh daughter, Lady Percy, cannot communicate with her, and the conflict between the language of the English and the Welsh shows the contradiction between the two nations, and the Welsh language is regarded as a primitive and improper language as follows:

*Mortimer.* This is the deadly spite that angers me –  
My wife can speak no English, I no Welsh.  
(190-91).

*Mortimer.* I understand thy looks. That pretty Welsh  
Which thou pourest down from these swelling heavens  
I am too perfect in, and but for shame  
In such a parley should I answer thee. (198-201)

*'The lady' speaks again 'in Welsh'*  
I understand thy kisses and thou mine,  
And, that's a feeling disputation,  
But I will never be a truant, love,  
Till I have learned thy language... (202-06).

It can be suggested that the conflict between the English and the Welsh is reflected through lack of communication between Mortimer and his Welsh wife, Lady Percy. As a consequence, the Welsh is portrayed as the 'other' in terms of

their language as well. In *Henry IV, Part I*, the idea of otherness and Englishness is also reflected by means of popular culture and the elements of comedy. Falstaff, who wastes his time in the taverns with women and who is involved with theft, contributes to the feature of comedy. For example, by hiding the horse of Falstaff, the Prince and his friend Poins make him believe that somebody has stolen his horse (26), therefore Falstaff becomes a figure mocked by the others. Furthermore, when the Prince asks Falstaff, with patriotic and nationalistic feelings, to give his sword for the sake of the war, Falstaff gives his pistol, which can be regarded as a comic element as well. Moreover, like Shakespeare's braggart soldier figure in his comedies, in this history play, Falstaff also represents the boastful figure who exaggerates the events he experiences and behaves as if he is a hero. For instance, he claims that he has fought with a hundred men and praises himself as follows:

*Prince.* What's the matter?

*Falstaff.* What's the matter? There be four of us here have ta'en a thousand pound this day morning.

*Prince.* Where is it, Jack? where is it?

*Falstaff.* Where is it? Taken from us it is: a hundred upon poor four of us.

*Prince.* What a hundred, man?

*Falstaff.* I am a rogue, if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. (II, iv, 154-163)

*Prince.* What, fought you with them all ?

*Falstaff.* All! I know not what you call all, but if I fought not with fifty of them am a bunch of radish: if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, Then am I no two-legged creature. (II, iv, 181-185)

When his boastful manner is taken into consideration, it can be stressed that he pretends to be a brave and heroic man who does not hesitate to challenge fifty men, so “Falstaff is at the centre of a popular comic history, located within the deterministic framework of the chronicle-history play” (Holderness; ‘Henry IV’ 151). Therefore, history and comedy are interwoven within Shakespeare’s history play, *Henry IV, Part I*. In addition, Falstaff’s boasting, which gives the play the quality of comedy, continues throughout the play. At the end of the play, Falstaff states that he killed Hotspur with great courage as follows: “I grant you I was down and out of breath, and so was he, but we rose both at an instant, and fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock. I gave him this wound in the thigh” (V, iv, 145-150). Therefore, by means of this character, the history play acquires a sense of comedy, demonstrating the elements of comedy in a nationalistic atmosphere.

Another significant characteristic in *Henry IV, Part I* that should be emphasized is the fact that the scenes move rapidly from the court life to the street life of London, from the poetry of the nobles to the ordinary language of the common people in the tavern, therefore the play reflects not only the lives of the reign of the monarch and the life in the kingdom, but also the life styles of the lower class. In this respect, Shakespeare’s use of popular culture can be recognized, attracting the attention of audience by blending the notion of patriotism with

popular culture and comedy. As a result, Pearlman points out that “Shakespeare very much widens the scope of the history play to include a broad sampling of English society. He also incorporates elements of comedy that gather around Falstaff and his company” (88). Creating Falstaff and his company in such a history play, Shakespeare enlarges the variety of characters and contributes to comedy and popular culture as well. The significant difference between the two worlds, the court life and the ordinary life of lower class can be seen through Falstaff’s habits and wasting his time as observed along these lines:

*Falstaff.* Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?

*Prince.* Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches afternoon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldest truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day. (I, i, 1-7)

In this perspective, it can be asserted that the life style of Falstaff, the friend of Prince Hal does not coincide with a nobleman’s living manners. In order to hide his royal blood and position at court, Hal spends time with Falstaff and his company, who deal with theft, women and fun. With Falstaff, Prince Hal makes fun of people (the drawer, Francis), plays roles by imitating the King, and runs after pleasure and futile things.

It is a commonplace that the figure of Falstaff, or the ‘world’ that figure inhabits or creates, constitutes some kind of internal opposition to the ethical conventions, political priorities and structures of authority and power

embodied in the sovereign hegemony of king, prince and court: the state (Holderness; 'Henry IV', 151).

The contrast between the life of the common and the noble portrays the contradictions between the two different worlds. In other words, "[t]here is Falstaff's world – a social milieu of taverns, the underworld, deception, violence, lower-class morals, language, and behaviour. Prince Hal alone is able not only to move from one world to the other, but also to cope with all of them" (Iser 122). Therefore, it is obvious that Shakespeare sheds light on the social and political condition of his time by portraying the two opposite worlds.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Considering the end of the play, Prince Hal rejects his street life, his friendship with Falstaff, and his company with women in taverns. In this sense, it can be highlighted that his rejection Falstaff and his company portrays that he has become an ideal Prince, taking the responsibility from his father. Thus, Shakespeare idealizes the values of the English in the personality of Prince Hal, the significant example of patriotic values of the English. Participating in the street life of the lower class and behaving as if he is one of them, Prince Hal observes how life is experienced in the streets of England and becomes familiar with the people in his society, therefore spending his time with the lower class people like Falstaff's company, Prince Hal gains experience about the living manners and problems of common people, which reflects his intelligence to rule the country; in other words, his time spent in the taverns with these people can be regarded as a significant experience for him to witness the lives of these ordinary characters and attain their habits of life. Thus, the streets of London become a laboratory for Hal to learn in depth the nature of ordinary people; human being as a coward,

as a liar, as a survivor, and as an ambitious being can be recognized within Prince Hal's observation of street life, as a result he has become familiar with the people he will govern in the future. In this respect, the existence of the lower class not only contributes to the depiction of popular culture in the play, but also Hal's self-education and self-improvement process and maturity.

To conclude, in *Henry IV, Part I*, Shakespeare sheds light on the political and social condition of his time by stressing the idea of Englishness, nationalism and patriotism in English nation. These notions that can be observed in the attitudes of the English monarch can also be recognized in the play through the descriptions of characters and incidents highlighting the significance of devotion to nationalistic concerns. Hence, Shakespeare stresses that the English are united against the 'other' and determined to preserve the unity of their country despite the attempts of the enemies to seize the country.

Together with the understanding of nationalism and patriotism, the portrayal of the conflict between the characters who belong to court life and the street life of London is also depicted effectively in the play. Therefore, the popular culture can be realized through the attitudes of the company of Falstaff in the streets of London reflected in the play. In this sense, the elements of comedy come to the fore through the manners of Falstaff and his company. Thus, in *Henry IV, Part I*, Shakespeare underlines the issue of nationalism and patriotism, blending these concepts with comedy and popular culture, so he depicts the English society by demonstrating the lives of the nobles at the court and those who belong to the street life, therefore Shakespeare portrays the panorama of his time, emphasizing the significance of loyalty to the nation through the reflection of his characters devoted to unity of English nation.

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DÜNYA DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ALANINDA  
AKADEMİK TARTIŞMALAR

**yaz**  
yayınlari

YAZ Yayınları  
M.İhtisas OSB Mah. 4A Cad. No:3/3  
İscehisar / AFYONKARAHİSAR  
Tel : (0 531) 880 92 99  
yazyayinlari@gmail.com • www.yazyayinlari.com