

LINGUISTIC AUTHENTICITY AND BUTLERIAN PERFORMATIVITY OF
SUICIDE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF THE 1990s

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ABSTRACT

LINGUISTIC AUTHENTICITY AND BUTLERIAN PERFORMATIVITY OF SUICIDE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF THE 1990s

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The theme of suicide carries an intense force of performance and persuasion and can be studied regarded as being both free from the text and dependent on the text. Being both imprisoned by and liberated from the authority of the playwright and the dramatic text, the theatrical or text-based dramatic performance of suicide and the nontheatrical or nondramatic performativity of it influence and empower each other. The theoretical question is how the linguistic performativity of suicide is enacted in the British plays of the 1990s and how the female protagonists display vulnerability in resistance. J.L. Austin's theory of performatives has been the starting point and then the Derridean approach is referred at to describe the notions of 'iterability' and 're-signification' in the performativity of a play repeating the prior set of practices related to suicide, and then Judith Butler's argument about performativity is analyzed who argues that the meanings are performative and individual identities exist in their performativity. The selected plays of the 1990s, *Haunting Julia* (1994) by Alan Ayckbourn, *Portia Coughlan* (1996) by Marina Carr, *Attempts on Her Life*

(1997) by Martin Crimp, *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) by Shelagh Stephenson and *4.48 Psychosis* (1999) by Sarah Kane provide a basis for such reading. These five dramatists have presented the performance of their plays in a way that they reconstitute the act of self-destruction.

Keywords: Linguistic Performativity, Suicide, New Writing, Vulnerability in Resistance, British Drama of the 1990s



ÖZ

1990’LI YILLARIN SEÇİLEN İNGİLİZ OYUNLARINDA İNTİHARIN DİLBİLİMSEL ÖZGÜNLÜĞÜ VE BUTLERIAN PERFORMATİFLİĞİ

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İntihar konusu, yoğun bir performans ve ikna gücü taşır ve hem metinden bağımsız hem de metne bağlı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu konu bir yandan oyun yazarı yetkisinde ve dramatik metnin hapsedilmesinde ve diğer yandan bu yetkiden ve hapisten kurtarılmış bir şekilde çalışır ve intiharın tiyatral veya metne dayalı dramatik performansı ve bunun tiyatral olmayan veya dramatik bağımsızlığı göstericiliği birbirini etkiler ve güçlendirir. Teorik soru, intiharın dilsel performansının kendini 1990larda yazılan oyunlarda nasıl ifade ettiği ve kadın karakterlerin savunmasız ve kırılğan dirençlerinin gösterişini nasıl sergiledikleridir. J.L. Austin'in performans teorisi, başlangıç noktası olarak seçilmiştir ve daha sonra, bir oyunun performansında, intiharla ilgili önceki uygulama setini tekrar eden, “tekrarlanabilirlik” ve “yeniden ifade etme” kavramlarını tanımlamak için Derrida yaklaşımı özetlenir ve Judith Butler’ın performansla ilgili argümanı, anlamlar her zaman performanslarına dayanarak dramatik metnin kontrolünden çıkma gerektiğini savunan analiz edilir. 1990’lı yılların İngiliz oyunlarından seçilen oyunlar, Alan Ayckbourn'dan *Haunting*

Julia (1994), Marina Carr'dan *Portia Coughlan* (1996), Martin Crimp'dan *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), Shelagh Stephenson'dan *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) ve Sarah Kane'dan *4.48 Psychosis* (1999) bu tür kırılğan dirençlerin intiharla sonuçlanan performansları okuma için bir temel sağlamışlardır. Bu beş oyun yazarı, oyunlarının intihar performansını anlam olarak yeniden yapılandırarak şekilde sunmuşlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil Performansı, İntihar, Yeni Yazı Sistemi, Savunmasız ve Kırılğan Direnç, 1990'ların İngiliz Tiyatro Yazını



to my family



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the theme of suicide in the history of drama is due to its close connection with the issue of human existence. The history of suicide with the question of the possibility or impossibility of the individuals making a choice to kill themselves, and the issue of human existence go hand in hand. With its very rich dramatic history, the theme of suicide covers social, moral, political, and personal issues and has incorporated itself into modern studies in sociology, human psychology, and interiority. Suicide, in short, is a powerful act, and in this dissertation, the focus is on the power that vulnerability and resistance exercise on the female protagonists. I intend to employ Butler's notions of the individual as a performative subject, constituted temporally and relying on performance to continue its existence, an existence which is never finalized but always open to subversive possibilities (Butler, 1993, 67), to better understand the protagonists' act of self-destruction in the selected suicide plays of the nineties. The dissertation also seeks to clarify the role that attempted suicides have in forming the social identity of the characters that metadramatically refer to real life individuals, and this can lead us to understanding the act of suicide as one that obtains its meaning through its various performative forces, and whose effects continue to be performative past the individual. The performativity theory of Judith Butler is combined with psychoanalytic notions, and in the twentieth century psychoanalytic discourses redefined the concepts that have cultural meanings and significance, such as melancholia (Wald, 1, Intro.). Melancholia is invoked in literature and theatre, and contemporary drama contains much of this significant and recurring theme, which can provide explanation for the vulnerability in resistance and suicidal behaviours of the dramatic protagonists of the selected plays.

Suicide as a profoundly dramatic question has been staged since Sophocles onwards and one of the most famous soliloquies in English drama is an abstract contemplation of suicide. Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (3.1.55-87) is suggestive of the deep "connection between suicide and play-acting" and "the centrality of suicide as a dramatic topos in the English drama" (Sanderson, 199). Sanderson, who compares suicide in the real world and in theatrical discourse in 'Suicide as Message and Metadrama' (1992), argues that the 'mimetic' representation of suicide has 'metadramatic' effects with real suicide counterparts. Exploring the special place that theatrical suicide has among metadramatic acts, and, raising doubts about the reality of the world in which it exists, he clarifies that theatrical suicide is truly mimetic and truly imitates real suicide (200-212). In 'Suicides in Literature: Their Ego Function' (1975), Harry Slochower makes the same connection between suicide in reality and symbolic suicide in literature by analyzing the act of suicide of some characters in modern literature through reference to Freud's psychoanalytical ideas on death. He argues that writers of works such as *Anna Karenina* and *Hedda Gabler* have demonstrated their characters' exhibition of the 'ego' function through act of self-destruction (415). The dramatic characters gradually gather together the ego strength needed to commit suicide and consciously plan the taking of their own lives when depression aggravates. Slochower suggests that we should be alerted to realize analogous situations in real life since "to be human is to have the psychic power to *choose death*" (author's emphasis, 392-393). While also alluding to depression and through his experience with real patients suffering from acute depression, Slochower ultimately perceives suicide as an act of resistance, "an act of defiance, a rebellion against death" (392).

The American suicidologist Edwin Shneidman, influential in changing attitudes toward suicide and suicidal behavior, provides a broad definition: "Currently in the Western world, suicide is a conscious act of self-induced annihilation, best understood as a multidimensional *malaise* in a needful individual who defines an issue for which the suicide is perceived as the best solution" (*Definition of Suicide*, 203). This definition, dated back to 1985, is somehow repeated in Shneidman's 1998 work, *The Suicidal Mind*, with more emphasis on the pain and

suffering of depression: "a deliberate act of self-destruction by a person who intends to end his own life, which can be best defined as a sense of a multidimensional *grief* in a person who chooses suicide as the best way to resolve a personal problem" (my emphasis, 21). Shneidman's reference to the multidimensional nature of suicide is significant to this study which sheds light on the multidimensionality of the linguistic performativity of the act of self-destruction in selected British plays of the nineties.

In Britain, in the 1980s and 1990s, general attitudes toward suicide ranged from the very conservative, based on a view of life as sacred and not to be deliberately cut short under any circumstances, to the very liberal view that individuals have the right to intentionally end their life whenever the burden of continuing is unbearable. There has also been a moderate view that prefers to remain passive towards ending one's life, or somehow accepting suicide under specific circumstances (McDowell, Chapter 1: Suicide Then and Now). Slightly more recent studies, such as Katrina Jaworski's 2003 study, "Suicide and Gender", treats the issue of suicide as a concern that has become immensely political, public and private at the same time, from the last decades of the 20th century onward (137-138). With reference to Emile Durkheim's sociology and the articulation of suicide as a scientifically studied social phenomenon, the social aspects of suicide have since recent times been frequently researched.¹

The American philosopher Judith Butler's theory of performativity gives rise to a new approach to the analysis of suicide in literature. Considering the capacity of theatrical performance and dramatic suicide to have metadramatic effects and connecting these effects to linguistic performativity which lies within the social and political tensions between language, embodiment, and action, this thesis attempts to conceptualize theatrical self-destruction by applying the notion of Butlerian performativity. This dissertation provides a theorization of the linguistic performativity of suicide in British drama of the nineties by means of an analysis of

¹ Emile Durkheim *Le Suicide* (French), *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (translated), original work published in 1897

the selected plays that address the issue of suicide². I propose that in the suicide plays, modes of performative writing presented by Judith Butler are enacted and the theme of dramatic suicide disseminates her theory of performativity in a manner that reveals the characters' vulnerability in resistance. The following chapter explores Butler's reformulation of the two fundamental concepts of vulnerability and resistance, and explains those of her critical and theoretical ideas that are of specific importance to the analysis of suicide: citation, intentionality, parody and drag, agency, assimilation, interdependency, and recognition.

Following this, the thesis examines the system of 'New Writing' in British drama of the nineties and the influence of Howard Barker on the ways in which suicide is dramatized in the theatrical context of this last decade of the 20th century. Finally, and of more importance, the thesis explores how performativity in specific plays constructs a view of suicide that differs from normative ways of theorizing it; a view that reveals suicide as the key part of the plays' way of demonstrating how the protagonists perform 'resistance' toward what Butler refers to as 'identity scripts' and 'social victimization' ('Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance', 2016, 12-13). The audience and readers witness that this resistance is accompanied by a self-destructive level of vulnerability for the female protagonists.

Judith Butler defines the notion of vulnerability with reference to being open to harm and injury of subjectivity. Butler first wrote about vulnerability in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997). She proposed that we are dependent upon linguistic divisions; we are named and brought into being as socially intelligible subjects through our interdependent linguistic relationship with other subjects. Linguistic categorizations are beyond the control of individuals, who are both vulnerable towards categorizations and dependent on them for social recognizability³. An individual's vulnerability involves his/her inability to choose and maintain a stable subjectivity. Making sense of who we are and what the world

² I will henceforth use 'suicide plays' to refer to the selected plays of the nineties that address the issue of suicide.

³ See Kerstin Jergus's 'The Limits of Identity – Performativity, Gender and Politics', in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, University of Fribourg, Department of Educational Sciences, Vol. 19, 2018: 110-122.

around us is, according to Butler is only possible through our linguistic dependency on others and on social factors, and this interdependent subjectivity may become intolerable and painful, because it makes us susceptible to or exposes us to violence, vulnerability and loss (Butler, 1997, 24–28). This notion of linguistic vulnerability is further developed in Butler’s 2004 work, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, where vulnerability and loss are presented as the indispensable dimensions of a life that is based upon precariousness. Butler does not claim precariousness to be a condition universally shared by everyone but does note that every individual at any time and place may experience loss and violence in some way (2004, 19-20). Thus, it is not that first we resist and then we are confronted with our vulnerability, but that “Vulnerability emerges earlier, . . . and this becomes especially true when people demonstrate to oppose the precarious conditions in which they live” (Butler, 2016, 12). The suicide plays examined in this thesis show that the protagonists are first vulnerable and only after that do their desperate attempts to overcome that vulnerability through acts of resistance bring about bodily destruction.

The disciplines of literary theory, critical theory, social theory, anthropology and the other social sciences have, from the second half of the twentieth century up to the present day, largely placed the dilemmas of minorities and oppressed majorities, including women, at the forefront of their scrutiny and research interests, and the theories of Butler on the performativity of gender have been influential in a plethora of fields, including performance studies. It is not surprising that Butler addressed the issue of ‘performative subjectivity’ in her best-known work *Gender Trouble* (1990) and then expanded it into the notion of ‘subjective agency’ in her second best-known work, *Bodies that Matter* (1993). By referring to these works, I explore the act of suicide of the female protagonists in relation to two critical terms of vulnerability and resistance, as well as in relation to the issue of gender, and ask why a gendered understanding of suicide can reveal a different inquiry of the characters’ vulnerability and resistance.

The second chapter addresses the issue of the theory of performativity. The approach traces the development of the concept of ‘performativity’ from Austin to

Butler and demonstrates that performative symbolic actions are not natural. It does not mean that the signs we use in performativity do not come to possess a kind of cultural value as though they are natural, but all the repetitive acts and utterances or all performative acts come to take on the status of natural because they constantly happen and reappear over time. Parodic repetitions have the potential to construct different types of vulnerably resistant social identities. Performativity has recently been defined by Sybille Kramer as “an attribute of our *semiotic* activity”; it “belongs to the domain of the discursive and the textual. In the same way that speech act theory remains committed to the linguistic turn, Derrida and Butler (and many others) give performativity a textual twist. The equivalence of culture and text is axiomatic for them. Performativity explains the constative power of our *discursive* practices and does not go beyond the regime of signs” (230). The chapter begins with J.L. Austin who, in *How to do Things with Words* (1962), introduced the distinction between ‘performative’ and ‘constative’ utterances. A ‘performative utterance’ refers to an utterance with the power of doing what it says as it is uttered, and this ‘power’ of the performative, according to Austin, is produced by institutional practices within the society. But Austin excluded drama and poetry from his categorization of ‘felicitous’ utterances (utterances that are appropriate for their context) and considered them ‘infelicitous’ (not serious or sincere, irrelevant, trivial), even “hollow” and “parasitic” forms of discourse, in comparison with the ‘normal’ or conventional use of language (1962, 22).

Jacques Derrida problematized this omission in “Signature Event Context” (*Margins of Philosophy*, 1988, 307-330) and argued that the power of performativity, in both speech and written text, is rooted in repetition and change, which also includes non-originality or infinite citationality rather than by being part of the already embedded conventions in a society (325). Derrida criticized that Austin excludes much language use: “Is not what Austin excludes as anomalous, exceptional, ‘nonserious’, that is, *citation* (on the page, in a poem, or in a soliloquy), the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability – without which there would not even be a ‘successful’ performative?” (Derrida, 1988, 325). While Austin tried to separate theatre from

ordinary speech-act performances, Derrida characterized them both with repetition, “a pervasive theatricality common to stage and world alike” (Parker and Sedgwick, 2004, 169).

In Judith Butler’s *Excitable Speech* (1997) the notion of ‘re-signification’ is introduced; it refers to the idea that speech has the capacity to “exceed the moment it occasions” (14) since “the past and future of the utterance cannot be narrated with any certainty” (3). Butler defines language as “a ritual chain of resignifications whose origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable” (1997, 14) and this makes performatives (utterances) the creation of what is beyond the power of the performers (utterers). The repetition may not be under the absolute control of the speakers, but we are nevertheless responsible for the way in which we reiterate the words. The utterer “is responsible for the manner in which speech is repeated” (Butler, 1997, 27) and through this responsibility the utterer can become an examining agent. Thus, agency resides in the resignification and citationality of performance (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 220); it can take place both appropriately and inappropriately, and the individuals are not completely free to choose how to perform but are responsible for “establishing contexts of hate and injury” in society (Butler, 1997, 27).

Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), which initiate and expand her arguments about gender performativity or how gender identity is both a social construction and a constructor of social expressions, are frequently referred to in the theory chapter below. In *Gender Trouble* Butler firmly asserts that “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (1990, 33). As a consequence, she believes gender “to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed” (Butler, “A Bad Writer Bites Back”, 1999, 33).

According to Sara Salih, Butler’s theory of performativity “traces the processes by which identity is constructed within language and discourse” (2002, 10), and, as Christina Wald expresses, Butler’s theory has always been engaged with

theatrical performance: “Butler describes the social as the theatrical in the early stages of her conceptualization of gender performativity” (2007, 13). In a 1988 article, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”, Butler asserted that “the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts” (521). As actors cannot have full control over their performance and must perform according to a script, in Butlerian terms, actors are performed by the play while performing it (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 282). The individual in society is likewise constructed by institutions and discourse: “The one who acts . . . acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset” (Butler, 1997, 16), which also means “the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence” (Butler, 1999, 33). Performativity, in this way, becomes associated with vulnerability in resistance. The individuals are vulnerable since their maintenance is in some way dependent on iteration and imitation of gender norms that cannot continue to exist if the individuals fail in or deviate from performing them (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 14). This failure in actualizing the norms is indispensable since “the performer never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate” (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 231).

The third chapter of this thesis concentrates on British drama of the 1990s, why this decade is selected for the purpose, the characteristics that show up in the suicide plays of this decade and the influence of Howard Barker. According to Reitz and Berninger, during the 1990s in Britain, a surge of young dramatic talent was unprecedentedly ready with new productions to fill any gap in the playhouses. The phenomenon of New Writing was inaugurated, and new plays flourished. Along with ongoing political changes, tensions and frustrations in Britain, New Writing and new voices were causing decisive transformations in British theatre (Reitz and Berninger, 10). Many new creative playwrights made successful appearances in Britain starting from about 1991 and it is not difficult to find more than 100 new names. Two significant changes occurred in this decade of the history of British theatre. One was the material aspect which was demonstrated in the gradual growth of New Writing forming a considerable part of the staged

works in funded theatres. The number of new plays being performed even exceeded that of productions of Shakespeare and the classics (Reitz & Stahl, 31). The second change was a shift in the affectiveness of the plays on the audience. Many impressive young writers addressed the audiences of their own generation in new ways. Five dramatists of the nineties are selected for this dissertation; Alan Ayckbourn, Marina Carr, Martin Crimp, Shelagh Stephenson and Sarah Kane shared strong feelings of frustration towards many aspects of British society. They all used the suicide of women protagonists in their plays. The plays that contain these suicides and that are to be analyzed in this thesis are: *Haunting Julia* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) and *4.48 Psychosis* (1999).

The third chapter is also concerned with Howard Barker and his influence on the British dramatists of the 1990s. An established playwright of the time and one of the leading figures of contemporary British drama, Howard Barker, was presenting new perspectives for dramatists of the 1990s. Barker is called “England’s greatest living dramatist” (*The Times*, 5 November 2015) and his radically aesthetic and controversial form of drama, his self-crafted genre and his views regarding the responsibilities of the dramatist and drama’s relation to politics and morality, which have influenced the selected playwrights in this study, are briefly surveyed here. He started his literary career in the 1970s, and gradually established the foundations of his genre, that he called ‘The Theatre of Catastrophe’ and proposed it in his theory books on theatre and performance. The main principles of his ‘Theatre of Catastrophe’ are listed in his two books on the arts of theatre, acting and staging, *Arguments for a Theatre* (1993) and *Death, the One and the Art of Theatre* (2005). These two monumental books include elaborations on issues like dramatic language, the functions of art and the place of death and tragedy in contemporary drama. Barker’s theatre of the 1990s was distanced from the dominant theatre of conscience of the time. He no longer believed in the efficacy of giving moral and political advice. This chapter will show that the functionality of Barker’s theatre lies in its functionlessness, a quality detectable in suicide plays of this decade, and in how the spectator experiences an individually distinctive response rather than a collective one. In

this chapter we also have elaborations on the essential nature of tragedy, death and violence in contemporary drama, and on how Barker has always shown interest in the ambiguity and judgments involved in the themes of death and suicide. Barker's theatre rejects any clarity in meaning and his presentation of tragic suffering is confusing. While in the theatre of the 1970s and 1980s the author was politically popular for being "The One Who Knows", the British plays of the nineties share with Barker's plays the characteristic of making no generalizations and having no direct meanings and messages (Barker, 1993, 112). No truth is presented in Barker's theatre and the dramatists were greatly influenced by Barker's strict rejection of presenting any contextual meanings related to any kind of ideology.

The fourth chapter explains the methodology developed throughout the dissertation, and that is based on the analysis of five plays. The cases of theatrical suicide presented in this study are drawn from plays introduced into British theatre during the last decade of the twentieth century. The dramatists are all British except Marina Carr⁴. The analysis of the plays shows how flexible and applicable Butler's theory of performativity is; how female protagonists' bodies are compelled to be materialized and how this performative materialization in the plays has failed to take place through certain regulated practices and has resulted in suicide. On the one hand, reiteration of the regulatory norms empowers these norms, and on the other hand the forcible reiteration produces different kinds of resistance towards complying with these norms. Dedicated to Butler's theory which defines performativity "not as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993, 2), performativity is understood and analyzed in the selected dramatic instances as the reiterative practice by which dramatic discourse creates the various effects of the act of self-destruction. This chapter enables us to understand how banishment from the so-called proper domain of identity or how failure in conforming to this domain can

⁴ Marina Carr is a successful Irish dramatist of the nineties whose works made their way easily into London theatres. During the nineties "Irish plays were very much in vogue in London", and although Marina Carr cannot be assigned to the category of British dramatists, "her impact on the London stage in the 1990s was profound" (Luckhurst, 2002, 69). Her award-winning play, *Portia Coughlan*, which is going to be analyzed in this thesis, was "premiered at Dublin's Peacock Theatre in 1996, . . . and subsequently was transferred to the main stage of London's Royal Court Theatre" (Wald, 184).

involve a catastrophic level of vulnerability in resistance and thus demonstrate the possibility of failure in the workings of inevitable norms. In this way, these dramatic suicidal bodies come to matter.

The conclusion explains that a subject's passionate attachment to the norms necessarily limits his/her critique of them. The female protagonists of the plays fail in their pursuit of social recognition and social identity. This failure increases their vulnerability, by being accompanied by melancholia. However, while melancholia evokes death instincts and suicidal attempts, it is a means of potential revolt. Thus, the female protagonists in the plays are both sites of performance, through which the forces of society act, and possible agents of resistant subversions.



CHAPTER 2

THE THEORY OF LINGUISTIC PERFORMATIVITY

2.1. Linguistic Performativity from Austin to Butler

J.L. Austin, who initiated the concept of the performative utterance with his “ordinary language philosophy”⁵, influenced various areas of research and theory, including discourse analysis and gender and language. In his posthumous work *How To Do Things with Words*, Austin coined the term *performative*, a kind of an utterance by which we act upon the world rather than describe it⁶. The performative has no truth value since it is merely a way of doing things with words. Austin cleverly argued that each utterance is performative since the act of informing is inherent in all utterances. What Austin exposed about utterances had an immediate impact on the study of aesthetic performances and linguistic performativity. Linguistic performativity deals with acting, by language, *within* the world of ideologies rather than speaking, by language, *about* this world.

Austin began with a distinction between two types of utterances: 1) Constatives are descriptive statements or sometimes a report on something which tends to be either true or false, 2) Performatives mean doing an action with words, and with them we cannot quite apply the true/false distinction. Austin gives the example of what we say

⁵ Keith Graham in his article, “J.L. Austin: A Critique of Ordinary Language Philosophy”, explains that Austin’s philosophical reflections are placed on ordinary language, which means that he adhered to practical matters in his observations of and investigations on linguistic behavior. Austin always emphasized the importance of plain man and plain talk while at the same time he believed in the fallibility of ordinary usage. As Austin states: “Certainly ordinary language has no claim to be the Last Word, if there is such a thing. . . . Certainly then, ordinary language is not the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplanted and improved upon and superceded. Only remember, it is the *first* word” (*Philosophical Papers*, p.135). Austin also considers ordinary language the first step of “the fun of discovery” and “the satisfaction of reaching agreement” in dealing with philosophy of language (*Philosophical Papers*, p.125).

⁶ To avoid repetition, the rest of the time Austin is cited in this chapter, it is his 1962 work *How To Do Things with Words* that is used.

in a marriage ceremony, “I do”, which means we perform something by speaking the words or when it is said “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth”, the words are part of the ceremony action or ritual of launching a vessel: “To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words ‘I name &c.’ When I say, before the registrar or altar &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage, I am indulging in it” (Austin, 5-6). The distinction between constatives and performatives fades away when it comes to the sentences by which for example, we promise something or make bets. The question of ‘sincerity’ hidden in such sentences, Austin realized, problematize the primary distinction as somebody may use a performative to promise something but, being a loose promise, the sentence turns out as a constative. Similarly, a constative such as ‘There is a bull!’ can have performative implications of a warning to flee. Austin points out some necessary conditions for a performative speech act to be effective or take place, such as the necessity of an accepted conventional procedure and the necessity of a correct and complete execution of the action by the appropriate persons or sincere and serious-intended participants for the procedure. If all these conditions are met by a performative statement, Austin calls it a ‘happy’ or ‘felicitous’ statement. He attributed the power of doing or executing inherited by a performative utterance to the fixed institutional practices that operate in a society. In his characterization of felicity conditions for speech acts, Austin states that for each speech act “there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, a procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (14). However, such procedures can be very complex and are not always easily distinguishable.

Context is important; it is ever-expanding, and a statement should fit in a particular context in order to be a performative. Derrida affirms this when he notes that, “the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system” (*Of Grammatology*, 159). Austin, however, tried to retain his distinction in his early chapters by focusing on what he considered the “full normal use” of language (104) by which he means that the utterance must be sincere and serious. He excludes, for instance, the speech acts that are made under duress, with misunderstanding, by

accident, by mistake, and unintentionally and calls them “parasitic” (Austin, 22). Here is an example to clarify the problems Austin encountered with his idea of normal use of language. The statement “I challenge you” in a duel can only be effective under some specific situations (Austin, 36). There must be a convention about having a duel and a procedure to initiate it. The participants should be aware of the convention and have accepted it. Thus, this speech act does not take place in isolation and Austin refers to this larger context as “the total speech-act” (52). “I challenge you” also refers to a whole cultural background and the statement may not be effective if used in another time or culture. It is also possible that dueling is illegal in a culture or time and so here we have some ambiguity about the challenge and whether it is executed secretly or not. In this way, the boundaries between what is conventional and what is accepted are broken and begs the question whether the statement “I challenge you” really makes sense.

Towards the end of his book Austin abandons the distinction between constatives and performatives for a different model and presents another core notion regarding types of utterance. Having realized that there cannot be a dividing line between constatives and performatives which he believed to be implicit in each other, he broke down the contrast and, focusing on performatives (since almost every constative can at the very same time be performative dependent on different contexts), divided speech act performatives into three sections (Austin, 101-102):

1. Locutionary acts have a certain “grammar”, “reference” and “meaning”. In other words, they are like constatives. They describe something and possess meaning, but we do not necessarily do something by saying them.
2. Illocutionary acts are “explicit” speech acts with the power of “use” in action. They refer to the “force” of a particular locution or speech act.
3. Perlocutionary acts are consequential actions or are followed by a consequent or future result. They present the effects that a statement has on the audience which has to do with thoughts, feelings and actions.

Dependent on the context, a perlocutionary act can be an intended or an unintended action but they are all very unpredictable and we cannot be certain about the follow

up actions. After making the above experimental distinction Austin admits: “Will these linguistic formulas provide us with a test for distinguishing illocutionary from perlocutionary acts? They will not” (122). He considers his distinctions unstable since they are at times almost identical or it is difficult to completely differentiate, for example, the forces to urge and to persuade which have almost the same use; in other words, ‘meaning’, ‘use’ and ‘consequence’ are interchangeable. Austin’s discussion reveals that one single statement can have multiple levels, most of which are performative.

Austin is far from making any distinctions in language and always adheres to believing that everything always overlaps, and distinctions are almost impossible to be considered since the complexity of language and its multi-dimensionality escape categorization. However, when it comes to the theatre, Austin considers theatrical performatives “hollow”. He excludes drama and dramatic language, believing that the performance of a speech act on the stage to be the copy of the real speech act and not as normative as reality. He states “a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a particular way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. . . . Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use. . . . All this we are *excluding* from consideration” (Austin, 22). The reason given is that theatrical discourse is made up of infelicitous utterances acted out by “persons having certain thoughts and feelings” who have insincere motives or do not make a direct embodiment of their motives with their conduct (Austin, 15). He believed that sentences separated from their origin (context), are liable to the failure of being either true or false.

Ethnography scholars, interested in how Austin’s theory inform practice, turned their attention to the practices that govern a culture’s use of language. Austin’s emphasis on intention and sincerity having key roles in the success of the performativity of a statement was critiqued by some anthropologists of the time such as Michelle Rosaldo, a social, linguistic, and psychological anthropologist, who attributed Austin’s philosophical emphasis on the speaker’s psychological state to “an ethnography of contemporary views of human personhood and action as these are

linked to culturally particular modes of speaking” (228). Detailed analyses of Austin’s speech act theory rendered some distinct explanations of linguistic performance and ritual in anthropology which eventually gave a new direction to Austin’s performatives. The performative was interpreted as to be identified with the idea of “dual-direction-of-fit” which Hall describes as follows: “While the words of a performative do in some sense ‘fit’ the world, conforming to the conventions that govern their success, they also constitute it, so that by their very utterance the world is also made to fit the words” (185). During the last two decades of the twentieth century this discussion about Austin’s performative utterances having the quality of being dual was taken up by Derrida, without whom the debate about performativity as it is taken up by literary theorists, would not be complete.⁷

Derrida shared the linguistic anthropologists of the time’s criticism of Austin’s emphasis on sincerity and intentionality, with the difference that for the first time the criticism became literary. Derrida focused on literature rather than culture and rejected the notion of the intentionality of the author by deconstructing the literary text or presenting the functionality of it beyond the text. As Hall expresses: “For Derrida, context can never be identified, since speech acts work through a potential of never-ending citationality” (185). The idea of ‘iterability’ became central to poststructuralist literary theory, with the result that speech acts became (like all language) part of the poststructural text, with meanings endlessly deferred and found neither in the prior nor in any ultimate utterance.

Following Derrida’s writings, the area of the performative in linguistic anthropology received an increased attention. The widest influential focus on performative emerged with the gender and identity theorist Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, and language specialists and gender scholars have applied philosophical notions ethnographically to diverse communities. Butler argues that “gender and identity are performatively constituted” (1990, 33); they perform the acts that they have constituted by acting. Butler pushed discourse analysis, which prior to her was based on the existence of a prediscursive self, towards the identity

⁷ It should be noted that Derrida has not specifically referred to performativity. He is generally seen to be against structuralist ideas of referentiality rather than directly criticizing Austin’s performatives.

approach. The belief in prediscursive identity is unacceptable for a poststructuralist like Butler, for whom “even our understanding of biological sex is discursively produced” (Hall, 186). So, speech gains a fresh importance in this perspective, “requiring us to examine how speakers manipulate ideologies . . . in the ongoing production of gendered selves” (Hall, 186). According to Butler, individuals iterate the gendered practices that have come to exist as a result of previous iterations. We are somehow trapped in this repetitive nature of performative identity and only ‘re-signification’ frees us from repetition or can break the constructed nature of this iterability: “The future of our lives within language” is defined by language remaining “a site of contest, available to democratic rearticulation” (1997, 125). As emphasized throughout *Excitable speech*, performativity and resignification for Butler is defined within social and political domains and “the appropriation of norms to oppose their historically sedimented effect constitutes the insurrectionary moment of history, the moment that founds a future through a break with the past” (1997, 159).

When it comes to dramatic performance, Butler’s perception of language has been effective in an attempt to release dramatic performance from the charge of “obedience” to a text and to an author’s authority (Diamond, 3). As much as the vow “I do” does not actually constitute the force of marriage (either part may be insincere in his/her commitment), the text also is not exactly echoed in performance. An effective performative text, as Butler affirms, reconstitutes the text:

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that “success” is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices*. It is not simply that the speech act takes place *within* a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice. What this mean, then, is that a performative “works” to the extent that it *draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force (*Excitable Speech*, 51).

Butler criticized Austin's perlocutionary claims in saying that "the performativity of the text is not under sovereign control. On the contrary, if the text acts once, it can act again, and possibly against its prior act. This raises the possibility of *resignification* as an alternative reading of performativity and of politics" (1997, 69). "Performativity can work in precisely counter-hegemonic ways" (1997, 160). Butler believes that politics and social categories misrecognize certain people or fail to recognize them all together. The theory of performativity demonstrates that although the individuals have norms imposed upon them and constantly try to constitute themselves according to certain norms, there is failure in a complete following of the norms. The individuals experience an incomplete and therefore failed following of the norms and became vulnerable toward certain kinds of social expectations, an indispensable condition that Butler calls "vulnerability to failure" (1997, 130). She believes that the ideal invulnerability does not exist. However, the formation of self is characterized by dual-direction. The subjects are at once being socially constructed and self-constituting: "Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized" (Butler, "Gender Regulations", 43). Denaturalization is what Butler views as resistance which incorporates vulnerability.

The performativity of suicide in the selected plays of the nineties, while subversively re-signifying some behaviours and social practices, enables us to recognize the necessity of accepting our universal interdependency and vulnerability in order to be able to resist norms, laws and institutions; a resistance that would possibly lessen vulnerability and create change. We will see in chapter five how an application of Butler's theories related to performativity and performative vulnerability in resistance results in resignification of the meaning of dramatic suicide. The following section explains the formulation of a relation between linguistic performativity and drama, since in order to analyze the performativity of suicide in drama from a social point of view, it seems better first to read about the displacement of the presumed authority of dramatic text over performance as a mode of social and cultural production.

2.2. Drama, Linguistic Performativity and Authenticity

There was a crisis, during the last three decades of the twentieth century, in approaches towards the dramatic text and theatrical performance. In her introduction to *Performance and Cultural Politics*, Diamond argued that from the late 1960s “performance came to be defined in opposition to theatre structures and conventions. In brief, theatre was charged with obeisance to the playwright’s authority, with actors disciplined to the referential task of representing fictional entities” (3). She believed that no frontier remained between dramatic studies and performance studies since performance had recently been very much “honored with dismantling textual authority” (3). Performativity focused on the performative functions of language as represented in dramatic texts, and performance largely expanded and somehow drifted away from the text. In other words, while theatre was overly dependent on the power of the playwright in producing the text and caused the actors’ role to be restricted to the playwright’s frame of imagination, (Worthen, 1093), performance drifted away from theatre, and questioned the power of the text and the restricted role of the actor. As a result of this condition, the distinction between theatre studies and performance studies began to fade; the expansion of performance successfully made theatre a part of its own. So, while theatrical production was once considered a species of performance driven by texts, performance studies now sidestep the rules and restrictions of the text and theatre:

Performance studies has developed a vivid account of nondramatic, non-theatrical, non-scripted, ceremonial, and everyday-life performances, performances that appear to depart from the authority of texts (Worthen, 1093).

Thus, performativity used to be attributed to having a full and direct relation with the dramatic text and locating the authentic theatrical meanings in the scripted drama, while performance studies claim a wider and “anti-disciplinary” (Carlson, 1996, 188) perspective by not being concerned with the priority of texts and not considering performance as being merely born from the dramatic writing. On the one hand, western dramatic performances have had and still have deep roots in a discourse of textual and cultural authority. On the other hand, performance studies have manifested a new literary conception of drama where performance is more than the

scripted version of the play. What has recently become the center of discussion is a rethinking of drama as a mode of performance theory that explores the possibility of performance or, to put it simply, a rethinking of the relations between the authority of a text and the authority of a performance (Carlson, 1996, 188–189). This tension has opened the way for the emergence of a horizon of expanding fields related to performance studies, among which is Judith Butler's theoretical investigations of identity performance.

Austin's approach to speech acts has been helpful in realizing the performative relation between language and how it can be manipulated. Following Austin's ideas literary scholars turned their attention towards the performativity of a script, and literary studies, considering Austin's view of the hollowness of dramatic theatre, were driven towards performativity and performance. The aim was to empower the authority of a language free from the script or "to liberate performance (and performance studies) from its infelicitous connection to the theatrical (and to theatre studies)" (Worthen, 1095). Since a spoken statement can be interpreted beyond its constative condition, a written statement can similarly be interpreted through its hidden performative meanings. It may sound contradictory, but this shift of interest to performance and its presumed independent power was somehow the result of Austin's dismissal of theatrical performatives. Austin had the prevailing negative opinion towards a view of theatrical performatives or dramatic performances losing their effectiveness because of their separation from text. However, rather than directing interest elsewhere, this view raised interest in performativity as being two steps away from language, the first being from spoken language to text, and the second from text to performance (Worthen, 1095).

Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in 1995 used Austin to connect literary studies and performance studies, affirm that performativity has been pushed into the centre of attention (1). According to them, theatre studies, "reimagining itself over the course of the past decade as the wider field of performance studies, . . . [has] moved well beyond the classical ontology of the black box model to embrace a myriad of performance practices, ranging from stage to festival and everything in between" (2). Austin believed that theatrical utterances (script-based) were hollow

and repetitive; Parker and Sedgwick infer from this that performative speech should have also been inauthentic and repetitive. In other words, Austin's separation of dramatic discourse from normal performance cannot be true since it comes to mean the hollowness of all performative utterances in their citationality. Performative speech and theatrical performance share the same level of authenticity; they are both "reiterable" (5). This deconstructive approach reveals that we cannot distinguish theatrical speech and performative speech on the basis of originality, saying that theatrical speaking is inauthentic and repetitive while nontheatrical speaking is authentic and nonrepetitive (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995, 5).

All performatives can function when they are iterable; they repeat familiar verbal, behavioral regimes. Any single statement has multiple levels at which it works, or it can be expressed within multiple contexts and the contexts that create performatives both preexist them and are recreated by them. Even Austin, by the end of his book, cleverly notes that: "Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act" (139). In 1995, Parker and Sedgwick asked if a dramatic performance achieves all its force and meaning from its text. In other words, is the theatrical performance signified through a text-based process of citationality? They provided their answer through an analysis of Austin's reliance on the example of the marital vow ("I do") as an illocutionary performative speech act. They see marriage as theatre itself and describe it as:

[...] a kind of fourth wall or invisible proscenium arch that moves through the world (a heterosexual couple secure in their right to hold hands in the street), continually reorienting around itself the surrounding relations of visibility and spectatorship, of the tacit and the explicit, of the possibility or impossibility of a given person's articulating a given enunciatory position (11).

Marriage, according to Parker and Sedgwick, is like a modern realistic play: "Marriage is constituted as a spectacle that denies its audience the ability either to look away from it or equally to intervene in it" (11). The utterance, "I do" in a marriage ceremony has performative force since it recites certain practices, while its performativity does not depend on the text as the Austinian illocutionary

performative speech act. In other words, being an utterance and accomplishment of an act do not render the force of performativity to merely “I do”; the force is gained from being a reproduction of a genre of performance. If we model a dramatic performance on Austinian performativity, then the performance will be “reduced to the performance of language, words, as though dramatic performance were merely, or most essentially, a mode of utterance, the (infelicitous) production of speech acts” (Worthen, 1097).

But the opposing view regarding theatrical performance (acting) as a direct utterance of the dramatic text (being determined by the meanings in the text) and nontheatrical performance (ceremonies) as the well-extended citation of the dramatic text (reconstituting the meanings of the text) still remained. Theatrical acting was considered only a reproduction through the conventions of visibility and spectatorship while ceremonies, for example, go beyond relations with texts. This distinction brought speech acts and dramatic performance into detailed reconsideration. Butler, as already quoted in this chapter, emphatically asserted that “the performativity of the text is not under sovereign control” (1997, 69); the meaning of the performance is determined not by the text itself but by its construction, or, the force of performativity is created not by citing a text, but by employing the text and beyond it in a reenactment of a social vision. The meaning, in this way, enters a dense and complex interplay between the text, performance, performers, audience and social, historical practices. A performance, according to Worthen, has the power to reproduce, enact, support, prolong, strengthen, challenge, oppose, criticize, subvert and alter ideology; valuing performance as a mode of social and cultural production, its authority is determined as the authority of speech acts is: “within an elaborate, historically contingent, dynamic network of citational possibilities” (Worthen, 1099). As Conquergood confirms: “Performance studies is a border discipline, an interdiscipline, that cultivates the capacity to move between structures, to forge connections” (“Caravans”, 137).

The time has come to displace the presumed authority of text over performance, but this displacement, according to Conquergood, can create other authoritative forces. Trying to dispose rather than remake the text is certainly not desirable since if “the

Performance Paradigm simply is pitted against the Textual Paradigm, then its radical force will be coopted by yet another either/or binary construction that ultimately reproduces modernist thinking. The Performance Paradigm will be most useful if it decenters, without discarding, texts” (“Rethinking Ethnography”, 191). The reason is that this “radical force” of the “Performance Paradigm” in some ways depends on the unjustifiable binary opposition between the text and performance and there is no need to relocate the opposition or turn it, for example, to an opposition between scripted performances and unscripted performances. Joseph Roach is right to imply that even these two modes of communication, “literacy and orality” (scripted and unscripted categories), “have produced one another interactively over time” (*Cities of the Dead*, 11). So, we need to suspend our oppositional views of the binaries, and especially in the case of the texts, we cannot locate some persistent notions of authority in them because they have slippery boundaries, their typography disintegrates on the screen of the computer and we can lose the writers at any moment. Therefore, the process of change, negotiation and redefinition is always at work in the field of the texts and other similar contested fields.

Performativity in the theatre can help us understand drama as the remaking rather than decentering of the text, and so can alter the view of drama as inescapably dependent on reproduction of the text. The tools of performance theory can develop opportunities for finding ways of dealing with theatrical performances without constantly grounding them in textual meanings and without firm enactments of textual messages in action. Here is Worthen’s clarification: “The text is absorbed into the multifarious verbal and nonverbal discourse of theatrical production, transformed into an entirely incommensurable thing, an event” (1100). The conventions of performance are being rhetorically employed today by a performance in order to create a sense of “proximity” to the text or “to something we value” (Taylor, 129). But this gesture is made by the dramatic production while recreating the play in the medium of speech and action, completely incomparable to the concept of script. So, a distinct preoccupation of performance with questions of authority should not be the case.

In Butler's terms, performance is a "ritualized practice" that becomes meaningful when it "*draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized" (1887, 51). The question is how to relocate text within the realm of theatrical performance. Can we regard performance as an alternative to the text? Roach applies the word "surrogation" in *Cities of the Dead* (2–3). Under his account, we can explain the performance of a play as surrogation, a kind of uncanny act that replaces the previous acts, a current behaviour that equivocally replays the preceding performances and performers. Roach describes performance as an act of surrogation, producing "improvised narratives of authenticity and priority . . . [that] congeal into full-blown myths of legitimacy and origin" (3). This resembles the a more comprehensible description given by Schechner in "Collective Reflexivity" called "restored behaviour" (39). Performance as surrogation, is like an act of memory that recalls the past, transforms it and then creates it in the form of the present. Rather than the playing back of an authorized origin or a grounding text, "surrogation" like "restored behaviour" has the ability "to construct that origin as a rhetorically powerful effect of performance" (Worthen, 1101). The binary is broken in this way and the text loses its conventional priority over dramatic performance which has now turned into an act of nondramatic surrogation.

Joseph Grisely's point of view, expressed in his provocative study of the transmission of artworks in 1995, affirms that surrogation is inevitably at work in the transmission of all art forms such as sculpture, painting, texts and plays and "given the record of unending change physically altering artworks" Grisely finds it "disconcerting", that "many people continue to believe that art is immutable, that the artist's intentions are paramount, and that original works should be 'preserved' from various agents of change" (6). This perspective should be transformed into a view of art living in the constant "process of being unmade (as an object) and remade (as a text and as memory)" (33). This is what Grisely calls "textualterity" (1). Using the idea of "iteration" he maintains that language as "a socially shared code" is iterative but utterances (including texts) are not, and this is because when an utterance survives the death of its addressee and separates from its context, it does not stop functioning (93–94). While believing it is important not to misunderstand the concept of iteration, he sums up his views about text and performance by arguing

that when a text is the product of cultural workings during a specific historical moment, we may regard it as having the nature of iteration, but the copies of the text created later under different conditions cannot be considered as iterations of the original text (textuality is at work here). When it comes to performance, he identifies it with “edition” or a text which “is merely a site of passage of a work of literature: a site in which instabilities are both made and made manifest” (118). This is like the act of surrogation.

Therefore, neither text nor performance are, according to Grisely, ever fixed entities: “although language (*langage*) is iterable, this iterability begins to rupture when applied to utterances (*parole*)” (96). That being so, “the fixedness of a text is as illusory as the fixedness of an interpretation; neither is final, neither is authorial” (108). For instance, while *Hamlet* has a textually varied iteration history including Shakespeare’s manuscripts, the printed texts and the unprinted ones, it is also one of the plays with the richest number of surrogation forms, including the various stage performances, films, audios and videos. Each performance of *Hamlet* may both carry signs of faithfulness to Shakespeare and resist the original *Hamlet*. But what is certain is that the performativity of *Hamlet* lies in its “surrogation” and the “search for originals” in its performativity is “doomed” to constant failure (Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 3).

Looking at plays, it can be understood that the performativity of suicide gives way to opportunities for the performances of plays to be surrogations of them. In other words, the dramatic performances are not the performances *of* the texts but linguistic performatives that employ, signify and re-signify the texts in performance practices and make new interpretations related to social issues and identity matters appear. In the following section I will refer to aspects of the theory of performativity presented by Judith Butler and identify a rethinking of performativity of gender identity, individual vulnerability and cultural resistance, as resignification of social norms, while the structural and social dimensions of meaning are continuously at work in making the bodies that matter.

2.3. Judith Butler: Performativity of Gender Identity, Vulnerability and Resistance

Butler's theory of 'performativity' is connected to the speech act theory of J. L. Austin's *How To Do Things With Words* (1955) and Derrida's deconstruction of Austin's ideas in his essay "Signature Event Context" (1972). Butler uses both texts in her theorizations of language and implicitly draws from their linguistic theories in her formulations of the concepts of gender identity, vulnerability, and resistance. First, the tenets of Butler's theory of linguistic performativity are provided and then we will understand what Butler believes the trouble is with the idea of gender and identity and how a rethinking of them can turn vulnerable bodies into social agents of change while they react to the trouble by showing a specific kind of resistance.

2.3.1. The Tenets of Butler's Theory of Performativity

Citation:

The term "citation" has been employed throughout Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993) in an implicitly Derridean way and we see that citation and performativity both appear together and apart from each other. Butler, highlighting the term with quotation marks, expresses that, "it is in terms of a norm that compels a certain 'citation' in order for a viable subject to be produced that the notion of gender performativity calls to be rethought" (1993, 232). Butler uses "citation" to explain how the identity norms are, both forcefully and unforcefully, used in discourse. As explained in Chapter 1., Derrida's "Signature Event Context" refuted Austin's claim that a performative has force or is felicitous only if it is used within a proper context and set of conventions and if the performer's intentions are sincere. Instead, Derrida considered it a characteristic of all linguistic signs that they are prone to reiteration or open to Butlerian re-citation. Derrida calls this quality "the essential iterability of [a] sign" which cannot be restrained by text, convention or authorial intention (1972, 93). Derrida explains that signs can be resettled in unexpected contexts and cited in unpredictable ways. He calls this repositioning, "citational grafting" which means a writer's original intentions can be located, cited, grafted, and reiterated in ways that do not conform to his signs. In other words, Derrida exposed the inherent and

essential possibility of the failure of the sign, since this failure actually constitutes the sign (97, 101–3).

The notions of ‘failure’, ‘citation’ and ‘re-citation’ are central to Butler’s discussions of subversive gender performatives and demonstrate some inclinations to citationality. This inclination is important; to rethink performativity through citationality sounds positively effective for “a radical democratic theory” (Butler, 1993, 191), because it seems that Derrida’s citationality has the power to convert the degradation and exclusion of the disapproved or unaccepted gendered identities such as “women” into politics. As Butler asserts:

No signifier can be radically representative; . . . it produces the expectation of a unity, a full and final recognition that can never be achieved. Paradoxically, the failure of such signifiers —“women” is the one that comes to mind— fully to describe the constituency they name is precisely what constitutes these signifiers as sites of phantasmatic investment and discursive rearticulation. It is what opens the signifier to new meanings and new possibilities for political resignification. It is this open-ended and performative function of the signifier that seems to me to be crucial to a radical democratic notion of futurity. [. . .] performativity, if rethought through the Derridean notion of citationality, offers a formulation of the performative character of political signifiers that a radical democratic theory may find valuable (1993, 191).

Therefore, Butler exclaims that the intrinsic failure of citationality or the failure of all gender performatives is both necessary and useful. While in *Bodies That Matter* Butler focuses on the iterability and citationality of the sign as the new sources of hope for change, in *Gender Trouble* she focuses on parody and drag as strategies useful to subvert the acknowledged norms.

Parody and Drag:

In *Gender Trouble* Butler states: “If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity,” (1990, 136). It is in this sense

that the subject has opportunity to act in a way that will reveal the constructed nature of the so-called normal or natural identities. So, gender performance can be regarded as a kind of parody when the individual draws attention to the nature of constructedness. Butler writes: “*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency*” (1990, 137; Butler’s emphasis). This statement foregrounds the inconsistent connection between the body and performed gender and suggests that all gender identities have the imitative nature that is disclosed by parodic performances such as drag.

Butler later refers to gender as a “strategy” that can culturally survive us, and that those who do not follow the accepted as correct sequence of acts related to their gender can be punished or excluded from society. The subject repeats the copy of himself or herself and is repeated by other subjects while there is no original for the copies. This non-originality is the source of Butler’s gender parody (1990, 138–40). However, when your performativity does not conform to the accepted conventions of a society and you choose not to repeat the social standards, the accepted assumptions can also be threatened by the possibility of displacement, which will also reveal the unoriginality of the so-called natural identities. Gender takes its shape and hardens into identity as a result of the imitation and repetition of acts, but “a regulated process of repetition” (Salih, 2002, 66) can be rejected and gender can sometimes be repeated differently. Sara Salih’s wardrobe analogy clarifies the situation:

To describe gender as a ‘doing’ and a corporeal style might lead you to think of it as an activity that resembles choosing an outfit from an already-existing wardrobe of clothes. . . . To start with, we will clearly have to do away with the notion of ‘freedom of choice’: since you are living within the law or within a given culture, there is no sense in which your choice is entirely ‘free’, and it is very likely that you ‘choose’ your metaphorical clothes to suit the expectations or perhaps the demands of your peers or your work colleagues, even if you don’t realize that you are doing so. Furthermore, the range of clothes available to you will be determined by factors such as your culture, your job, your income and your social background/status.

In Butler’s scheme of things, if you decided to ignore the expectations and the constraints imposed by your peers, colleagues, etc. by ‘putting on a gender’, which for some reason would upset those people who have authority over you or whose approval you require, you could not simply

reinvent your metaphorical gender wardrobe or acquire an entirely new one (and even if you could do that, you would obviously be limited by what was available in the shops). Rather, you would have to alter the clothes you already have in order to signal that you are not wearing them in a 'conventional' way – by ripping them or sewing sequins on them or wearing them back to front or upside down. In other words, your choice of gender is curtailed, as is your choice of subversion – which might make it seem as though what you are doing is not 'choosing' or 'subverting' your gender at all (Salih, 2002, 50).

Salih argues that when we assume our gender is performatively constituted, it is like deciding what clothes to wear when our choice is predetermined, by our society, economy and context. Salih gives an example: in the novel *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne du Maurier the nameless narrator comes to the party wearing the same costume once worn by Rebecca, the dead wife of her husband. The narrator thinks that she has chosen the dress herself. However, a woman called Mrs. Danvers helped her. It is not the narrator who has created herself that night, but the malign Mrs. Danvers has recreated the narrator as the dead wife (Salih, 2002, 64). Mrs. Danvers can exemplify authority or power here, and Rebecca may provide an example of the way in which identities, far from being chosen by an individual agent, precede, construct and constitute those agents.

So, we cannot decide to have a whole new gender wardrobe. However, we can use the "tools" we have to rip the available clothes or make some changes in their length for instance before wearing them; that means we have tried to reveal the unnatural side of gender or "do" our gender in a subversive way. As Butler puts it, "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there" (1990, 145). The problem raised by this idea is that the tools are the actual determiner of how they should be taken up. So, discourses are dominant, and subversion is at least conditional if not impossible. Then, the question of how Butler's subversive parody can work under these conditions remains.

Butler warns that "[p]arody by itself is not subversive," (1990, 139) and even some kinds of drag reinforce the power and stability of existing identity structures. For example, in movies in which a man by cross-dressing pretends to be a woman, the drag performance magnifies the male/female distinction and is not subversive (Salih

2002, 67, gives the example of the film character Mrs. Doubtfire). So, we ask how, and which forms of performances have the power to destabilize gender and disrupt what is considered as the foundation of identity? This question is left unanswered in *Gender Trouble* and we can only infer from her claims that parodic repetitions can work: “The task is . . . , indeed to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself” (1990, 148). Though identity is an effect of discourse, it is not fully determined or imprisoned by it. Parodic repetitions, Butler believes, have the power to present an ‘outside’ for the dominant discourse but without knowing how to repeat, it appears that the agency would merely be another consequence of discourse.

Agency:

It is inferred that while the constructed models of identity are assumed to be fixed and final, identity repetition can potentially release identity fixedness. In other words, this fixedness of identity can awaken structured identity that may turn into a resisting agency or has the quality of being subversive. Performativity places the focus on act and agency, and as Butler affirms: “Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency” (1990, 147). In addition to the characterization of power as self-subverting, Butler refers to the deconstruction of identity, and considers both the construction and deconstruction of gender identity necessary for agency, since they both occur within the existing discourse which is the only place where any subversion seems possible: “Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized” (Butler, “Gender Regulations”, 43). But still the question remains: what or who can “do” the parodying while Butler does not accept the existence of a pre-discursive subject or a doer behind the acts? This is deducted because it appears that Butler somehow connects male or female agency to a kind of performing without a performer. So, how can the subjects change the acts by which they are constituted?

Interdependency and Recognition:

The first step in creating any change seems to be the acceptance of our interdependency. Butler's idea of 'interdependence', according to Abrams, is directly related to the body and politics. The performativity of interpersonal interdependence works in three ways: It "challenges a range of conventional legal assumptions about the body", "points toward new, or at least less familiar, ways of deploying the law", and "may help those in the legal mainstream to understand the value of that 'resistance' which takes place outside the scope of the law" (Abrams, 73-74). Butler emphasizes the role of interdependency in political action stating that:

[T]here's a limit to individualism, although each of us are obviously negotiating our individual solutions to the problems of ability, disability, gender normativity, all these issues, we can't do that as radical individuals. We can only do it by entering social space, demanding different kinds of recognition, producing certain kinds of bodily scandals in the world, and, also, acting in concert with other people as a way of changing what is normative and what is not . . .

I think underlying all of this is the idea that we are interdependent as we try and attract certain social transformations that affect us at very personal levels . . . (*The Examined Life*, 209).

The body is the source of interdependence. Butler, dealing with ethical philosophy, feels the need to explain what it means to be an embodied creature among embodied creatures and what our obligations toward one another might be. We depend on each other and the dependency and proximity can sometimes be passionate and stimulating and other times hostile and unmanageable. However, the fact is that we can never eradicate the condition of interdependency and the need to live in a world with others whom we do not choose and upon whom we are dependent. Interdependency, in interrogating dominant social and legal assumptions about embodiedness, "points toward a politics in which we acknowledge our inevitable need for each other, and explore the possibilities created by collaborative resistance, with and without the support of the law" (Abrams, 89). Working on the concept of interdependency led Butler to reflections on issue of vulnerability, and vulnerability is an issue of conscience, recognition, intentionality and mis-recognition. Once you

recognize the vulnerability of someone or a group of people systematically oppressed, what does one do with that recognition?

Intentionality:

Butler uses the term “intentional” in a specifically phenomenological sense:

‘Intentionality’ within phenomenology does not mean voluntary or deliberate, but is, rather, a way of characterizing consciousness (or language) as having an object, more specifically, as directed toward an object which may or may not exist. In this sense, an act of consciousness may intend (posit, constitute, apprehend) an imaginary object. Gender, in its ideality, might be construed as an intentional object, an ideal which is constituted but which does not exist. In this sense, gender would be like ‘the feminine’ as it is discussed as impossibility (*Bodies that Matter*, 283).

It can be inferred from the quotation above that gender is somehow a false reality. It does not really exist but is a construct created by society through an enforced set of standards, in order to make a reality that complements certain people in certain ways. Gender is simply a method or function to enforce reality, while it does not actually express how individuals really are or the truth of an individual. So, any attempt to address gender or adhere to a gender or even go against the idea of gender, means somehow reacting to a false reality, a false construct. Butler tries to convey that we should recognize the fact that we are living in a false world which exists within false constructs and we are just performers and identify in ways that are not true reflections of who we actually are. We just act, perform, do things that help us adhere to the standards of society. We continue performing in order to exist in society. We must accept false reflections of ourselves to be able to exist in a false reality called society. Thus, the important step in being true to ourselves is to understand that society itself is false and our intentions are not deliberately made but assimilated into an imaginary construction of our identity. The aim of this falsehood is somehow to keep power in certain circles and away from other circles of people. In order to resist, it is necessary for the individuals to be aware of this falsehood and the constructed nature of intentionality.

Assimilation:

Assimilation means both wanting and being forced to conform to certain norms. While leading our community lives, there is much want of entrance to the society as it is. However, when an individual assumes an identity, it is an assumption which is “quickly assimilated to the notion of a highly reflective choice” (Butler, 1993, 12); this assumption is “compelled” (12) by a regulatory social framework, reiterates itself and produces a forced identity. But there is also failure in assimilation; “there is at the start some *failure* of socialization” which is accompanied by anxiety and fear of loss of identity, because “some fear of punishment is insistently compelled” (Butler, 1993, 104). The vulnerable individual acts his or her identity, while somewhere he or she knows that it is possible to be victimized to the point of losing it. A perfect repetition of the norms is, according to Butler, impossible, since the performer “never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate” (1993, 231).

This idea finds its origins in the notion of ‘becoming’, ‘acting’, ‘making’, ‘doing’, which are the central arguments in *Gender Trouble*. According to Butler, gender and identity is always a failure. Stereotypes are not just images that we have of gender but are an accumulated fact of social relations that have become naturalized over time. While the individual never feels complete belonging to any established category, she or he can never happily transcend all the categories and slight dis-identification, Butler admits, is “a subordinate rebellion with no power to rearticulate the terms of the governing law” (1993, 111). So, on the one hand, “the failure of identificatory phantasms constitutes the site of resistance to the law”, and, on the other hand, “the failure or refusal to reiterate the law does not in itself change the structure of the demand that the law makes” (1993, 105). However, when the subjects continually fail to assimilate or instantiate the social norms and paradigms correctly and completely, this failure of iteration gradually threatens the authority of the law. As Butler points out: “Since the law must be repeated to remain an authoritative law, the law perpetually reinstitutes the possibility of its own failure” (1993, 108).

2.3.2. The Performativity of Gender and Identity

A number of questions have been raised following Butler's description of gender identity. The questions demonstrate its force and importance with all ongoing debates amongst philosophers, feminists, sociologists and theorists. The meaning of 'performativity' has, as already mentioned, also attracted attention towards how it enables agency. Both Butler and de Beauvoir claim that there is no origin and end for gender since it is not something that we 'are' but something that we 'do'. In *The Second Sex* (1949), de Beauvoir famously claims: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (281). Commenting on de Beauvoir's statement Butler writes:

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the 'congealing' is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. (*Gender Trouble*, 1990, 33)

The body is not a "mute facticity" (Butler, 1990, 129), and the discourses produce the identity. Butler denies the facticity of sex and gender and heighten their constructedness through being performatively reinscribed or recited. The constructed, vulnerable, and interdependent individual has the potential to play the role of an agency in law, who makes use of the opportunities to resist and even subvert law from inside. Identity and gender are involved in a sequence of liberating acts, while the individual is not completely free to choose among the acts:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (*Gender Trouble*, 1990, 25).

By gender Butler means the acts that bring a “masculine” man or a “feminine” woman into being. Gender identity does not precede language; it is language that constructs gender identity. In other words, discourse or language “do” gender. “I”, as a subject outside language, while being the effect of discourses, disguise the facts about how they work (Butler, 1990, 145). In this respect we can deduce that gender identity is performative. The following sentences manifest how performativity is connected to gender. Butler states that “[w]ithin the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performance— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. . . . there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (1990, 24–5). There is no pre-linguistic inner essence for Butler because she believes that it is not the subject that performs gender acts; the acts performatively construct the subject that is not the cause of discourse. The idea that the subject is an *effect* rather than a cause is key to Butler’s theories of performative identity. She claims: “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (1990, 136). Thus, the gendered body cannot exist apart from the acts that constitute it.

Thus, identity performativity describes the ways in which people perform their gender; it is centered upon acting, doing, making, becoming. The question is in what various ways can we do our gender or what are the different things we can do with gender? Butler’s answer is provided in the next section of this study, before which she asks us to accept the fact that the norms in the first place constitute our gender and identity; they ‘do’ us and ‘undo’ us. So, the norms both make us who we are and prevent us from making what we would of ourselves. Butler also criticizes the idea that the individuals do not want to be undone or want only to do themselves. That would mean privileging a certain idea of self-making, which is impossible since individuals, as interdependent subjects, are being inevitably and constantly undone by others; we are undone in our relations with others. Butler believes that a part of what it means to be ‘self’ is to be open to the idea of what ‘self’ might be in the

future and this openness, according to Butler, only manifests itself through the relations of others.

2.3.3. Vulnerably Resistant Bodies in Social Framework

Butler's theory of performativity, as clarified in the previous sections, provides descriptions of the social world along with its engagements with political agency. Moreover, she acknowledges a connection between linguistic performativity and theatrical performativity stating that: "My theory sometimes waffles between understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical. I have come to think that the two are invariably related, chiasmically so, and that a reconsideration of the speech act as an instance of power invariably draws attention to both its theatrical and linguistic dimensions" (1990, xxv). Drawing attention to the 'theatrical' dimension of everyday life in *Gender Trouble*, Butler then brings the theory of performativity to descriptions concerning the matter of the body, its signification and citation in discourse in *Bodies That Matter*. The performative body, discursively constructed, cannot be separated from the linguistic acts that constitute it. For instance, when a nurse exclaims 'It's a girl!', she assigns an identity to a body that actually does not exist outside discourse. The statement is performative. Butler argues that discourse precedes us as subjects and the vulnerable "I" gets inevitably involved in a perceived process that is based on the imposed differences between men and women and is compelled to follow the identity norms in order to be accepted in the heterosexual sphere of subjecthood:

To the extent that the naming of the "girl" is transitive, that is, initiates the process by which a certain "girling" is compelled, the term or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a "girl", however, who is compelled to "cite" the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. (Butler, 1993, 232)

Butler emphasizing the Derridean and Austinian underpinnings of performativity, provides more clear explanations of the body and gender in terms of linguistic performativity. The main message in *Gender Trouble*, as already mentioned, is that

gender is a performance. How we determine a person's gender is through their performance in society, much like in performance art. The way a person is born, or their biology is not an indicator of the individual's real self or personality. This idea carries a great deal of societal implications and Butler, in *Bodies That Matter*, presents them with the following questions:

Some open-ended questions remain: How is it that the presumption of a given version of matter in the effort to describe the materiality of bodies prefigures in advance what will and will not appear as an intelligible body? How do tacit normative criteria form the matter of bodies? And can we understand such criteria not simply as epistemological impositions on bodies, but as the specific social regulatory ideals by which bodies are trained, shaped, and formed? (1993, 54)

Butler notes that gender and identity centers on the notion of performance art, and there is more to it than performance. It is not entirely up to the performer and the way he or she performs, or it is not truly the independent action and intention of the performer that is at work. There are variables and influences that force or drive the individual to perform in certain way in order to act out the prescribed identity. Performativity, in this way, becomes associated with vulnerability and resistance. The individuals are vulnerable since their maintenance somehow depend on iteration and imitation of gender norms that cannot continue to exist if the individuals fail in or deviate from performing them (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 14). However, this failure in actualizing the norms is indispensable since "the performer never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate" (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 231). Thus, resistance is accompanied with vulnerability, a kind of vulnerability that has the potential to affect the forces and variables.

When we think about suicide as an act of self-destruction of the 'body', then the materiality of a body that suffers and prefers to die gains attention, and materiality, Butler emphasizes, is linked to the performativity of gender. Salih notes that we should not be confused with Butler's argument about the materiality of the constructed body because Butler's declaration that bodies are discursively constructed does not mean that she rejects materialism: "If we accept that the body cannot exist outside of gendered discourse, we must also concede that there is no

body that is not always already gendered. This does not mean that there is no such thing as the material body, but that we can only apprehend that materiality through discourse (Salih, *Judith Butler*, 143-144). Suicide as an attempt to end the ‘temporal duration’ of the body also becomes performative and inseparable from its discourse, when we heed Butler’s emphasis on the reiterative power of discourse in the context of the body: “*Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration*” (1990, 15; Butler’s emphasis).

While the forcible reiteration of norms constantly materializes the body, the body along with its vulnerability, exercises resistance towards norms, a resistance that can be effective and as a result of which the body has both questioned the accepted regulatory forces and their hegemonic power and rematerialized or rearticulated by the regulatory forces. Katrina Jaworski explains the link between the performativity of suicide and normative forces by referring to the intentionality of the act of self-destruction (141). Various regulatory practices produce suicidal bodies while, at the same time, the suicidal body exerts the power of choice over the norms. This double-sided effect is Butlerian, and Jaworski agrees with Butler in arguing that “the body is an important element in sustaining the prediscursive position of intent”, and then she states that “suicide does not place the body outside of discourse” (141). What Jaworski tries to shed light on is that “notions of choice and intent are already interpreted by normative gendered assumptions that stem from the institutional compulsion to look for the signs on the body” (141).

Butler asks further questions about the notion of the body such as “whether the forms which are said to produce bodily life operate through the production of an excluded domain that comes to bound and to haunt the field of intelligible bodily life? The logic of this operation is to a certain extent psychoanalytic in as much as the force of prohibition produces the spectre of a terrifying return” (54). What Butler means by these sentences is that bodies are not materialized on their own. It is the knowledge paradigm of society that materializes bodies. By saying bodies, we mean how they are expressed in society by individual people and how do the expressions of e.g. masculinity, femininity arise and come into play. According to Butler, they

come from the dominant knowledge paradigm or the sociological frame that we live in. The masculine/feminine gender binary that we live in, is the huge part of what materializes bodies or definitions of who we are as people. So, a socio-psychological situation is going on with bodies and how society interpret things goes deep into the psychological domain. It is eventually the mind interpreting how society wants you to be. Society creates a frame of what is acceptable, and it is up to the individual to psychologically analyze what is acceptable and then act out that acceptability in performance. The acting involves vulnerability in resistance. As we will see, this psychoanalytical exercise is present in the selected suicidal plays of the nineties.

Besides demonstrating the materialization of bodies, Butler also necessitates the provision of explanations regarding how power is materialized. Power, as a byproduct, does not exist on its own, or as its own entity or force. Power is the dominant realities continually reiterating sociological norms and through this reiteration, power is materialized:

There is no 'power', taken as a substantive, that has dissimulation as one of its attributes or modes. This dissimulation operates through the constitution and formation of an epistemic field and set of 'knowers'; when this field and these subjects are taken for granted as prediscursive givens, the dissimulating effect of power has succeeded. Discourse designates the site at which power is installed as the historically contingent formative power of things within a given epistemic field. The production of material effects is the formative or constitutive workings of power, a production that cannot be construed as a unilateral movement from cause to effect. 'Materiality' appears only when its status as contingently constituted through discourse is erased, concealed, covered over. Materiality is the dissimulated effect of power (1993, 251).

Thus, power is not its own object and it does not exist independently; rather, it is an effect or result of dominant realities or knowledge paradigms taking hold of reality and expressing themselves. These paradigms force themselves into existence and force people to adhere to their frame. When the body is materialized or when a person is identified as a male or female individual, the body begins to matter because it adheres to the dominant paradigm of the gender binary or to the effects of dominant knowledge paradigm which can be 'patriarchy' or 'heteronormativity'. It is in this sense that "materialization can be described as the sedimenting effect of a

regulated iterability” (Butler, 1993, 252), and performativity depends on repetition and iterability:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. [...] This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (Butler, 1993, 95).

The reiteration of dominant realities happens iteratively to materialize bodies. So, what happens is that for the dominant paradigm or for the society created as a norm for femininity or masculinity to continue to be normal, the iterations must be reiterated over and over. When people perform to an expressed gender, it becomes a way to show your gender. All the actions or performative acts are reiterations that are necessary in order for the dominant paradigm to continue. For the constructed reality to go on, it has to keep being reiterated and if it does not reiterate, it is threatened and loses its power or effect. As Wald confirms: “As the maintenance of gender norms depends on their ritualised imitation, the norms can be irritated by failed and deviant actualisations of the ‘command performance’” (15). The resistant bodies in performance, suicidal bodies, queer actions and other oppositions are all challenges to the dominant paradigm; such anti-paradigms neither reiterate it nor act in a way that reinforce the dominant patriarchal heteronormative paradigm, and by that kind of resistance, they create opportunities to potentially dismantle the paradigm.

Butler analyzes the role of vulnerability in strategies of resistance by considering vulnerability and resistance together. Social forms of interdependency and individual agency are also engaged within her analysis. She proposes to focus on some strategies of resistance that include “a rethinking of human acts”, “modes of deliberate exposure” and “opposing forms of power” (Butler, 2016, 6). Vulnerability and resistance, according to Butler, are thought as opposites because vulnerability has mostly been related to ‘protection’, and it “has not been adequately related to the existing practices of resistance” (6). However, Butler focuses on the direct relation between vulnerability and resistance, and with such a formulation, suicide, as a

deliberate act of human exposure to vulnerability, can more be looked upon as involving psychoanalytic as well as political dimensions of resistance.

The last chapter articulates a Butlerian understanding of the role of performativity of vulnerable bodies in suicide attempts as a practice of resistance in the plays of the nineties and demonstrates how dramatic discourse constructs or mobilizes the protagonists' vulnerability and eventually suggests that vulnerability and bodily resistance do not disavow each other. Discourse mobilizes vulnerability because Butler believes that "discourse of protection" is "hegemonic, undermining and effacing varied forms of resistance or political agency" (2016, 6). The social and political forces are oriented towards preserving their power. This supported social, political action means that there is an unsuccessful struggle to prevent the bodies from exercising resistance. The subjects find threat everywhere and Butler aims to "resist the frameworks that seek to underpay or refuse forms of political agency developed under conditions of duress, without presuming . . . that they always prove effective" (Butler, 2016, 6).

CHAPTER 3

THE NEW WRITING SYSTEM IN THE 1990S AND HOWARD BARKER'S INFLUENCE ON SUICIDE PLAYS

3.1. The New Writing System

With the “New” British plays of the 1990s, as the name suggests, there is the sense of a severe break from the past and of hearing new dramatic voices bringing in a sense of novelty. The plays were composed by unknown and young dramatists. They outspokenly demonstrated a dehumanized world engulfed in violence, blunt impoliteness and destruction, to which the playwrights were neither presenting an alternative world, nor suggesting a possibility of change. Human life, as depicted in New Writing, is vulnerable and entangled in a process of inevitable destruction in which there seems to be no way out. Rough and powerful pessimistic elements are intensified with a strange sense of relish that rules over the atmosphere of the plays which appear to revel in the different kinds of violence. Another significant point about these New plays is the intensified relationship between the play and audience. A ‘New play’, according to Sierz, implies experiencing something that will somehow threaten the spectator’s personal space. The emotions of the audience are the main target, as an effective way of showing the intensity of violence that occurs in social and political structures of society. Violence, as the biggest fear and threat of the decade, was directly presented in drama in the form of violation of private lives and freedom of people. Thus, we frequently witness characters torturing others or torturing and killing themselves (Aleks Sierz, 2002, 107–110).

Although New plays can be interpreted as political and cultural, direct political statements can rarely be found in them, while in the plays of the decades before the nineties the political elements were directly addressed and thus easily interpretable. The emphasis in the New plays is on the individual and personal lives since any

personal incident, politically loaded or not, was regarded as valuable enough to be presented. As Sierz stated, while “many seventies and eighties plays came from a left-wing point of view, nineties plays were based in a more ‘privatised dissent’” (2001, 39). Sierz also quotes a famous director, Dominic Dromgoole, who worked at the Bush Theatre from 1990 to 1996. Dromgoole emphatically notes the wide scope of the freedom of playwrights’ imaginations in the theatre of the nineties, calling New writing “dirty writing” (qtd in Sierz 2001, 53). He said: “In the eighties, most theatres wanted well-meaning, well-reasoned, victim-based plays. But in the nineties, theatres gave young writers complete freedom. There were no ideologies, no rules, no ‘taste’ – writers were free to follow their imaginations” (quoted in Sierz, 2001, 37). The pervasive idea of a ‘victim-based play,’ exposing the character, as a vulnerable subject, to some uncontrollably destructive powers and locating that vulnerability on the opposite side of resistance was gradually being challenged in the nineties.

In the suicide plays of this decade the concepts of victimization and vulnerability are presented to somehow reformulate the concept of resistance, along with implying the need for protection. When the plays, as concrete contexts, are analyzed from a Butlerian point of departure from the basic assumption that vulnerability and resistance are oppositional, it can be conceived that the female protagonists’ vulnerability is a part of their very action of resistance. In this way, a new idea of political subjectivity, which exists outside the binary of vulnerability/resistance, emerges. Butler presents this perspective with the following statements and questions:

Dominant conceptions of vulnerability and of action presuppose (and support) the idea that paternalism is the site of agency, and vulnerability, understood only as victimization and passivity, invariably the site of inaction. In order to provide an alternative to such frameworks, we ask what in our analytic and political frameworks would change if vulnerability were imagined as one of the conditions of the very possibility of resistance. What follows when we conceive of resistance as drawing from vulnerability as a resource of vulnerability? (2016, 1).

The free imagination attributed to the playwrights of the 1990s was inevitably connected with various political and cultural elements of the time such as the effects

of Tarantino's kind of violence in cinema, a widespread feeling of helplessness against the powerful social structures, and hopelessness regarding language, all of which resulted in a new mixture of form and content in the plays. The questioning of masculinity had been a significant issue in the previous decade and there was a strong connection between the topics of masculinity and violence, with both their personal and social effects. The plays of the nineties also tend to make the audience ask what the value of the relationship is between characters involved in the sexual act. There is a crisis depicted in modern relationships, behavior and the knowledge of how to build a relationship and the plays question the uncritically accepted distinctions in some theoretical social discourses which rely on "associations of activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity" (Butler, 2016, 3). In most of the plays of the nineties, as the next chapter will clarify, the female protagonists play the role of active agencies and, while being vulnerable, disclaim fixed suppositions about men, women and their dispositions.

In the nineties, it was no longer possible to find or accept Edward Bond's attitude that "we have to rewrite human consciousness" ("A Note On Dramatic Method", 1978, xv) and hardly any character in plays of the 1990s voices a confident sentence like the explicit last words of Wang at the end of Bond's *The Bundle* (1978): "To judge rightly what is good – to choose between good and evil – that is all that it is to be human" (78). Such an attitude was not common in the plays of the nineties, and especially the young dramatists of this decade were highly suspicious towards those claiming to know the difference between good and evil, and how to make sudden changes in human lives. The ending of almost all the plays of the nineties left audiences with the dilemma of the represented problems remaining unsolved. Not national elements but international issues were those that came to be addressed, and plays demonstrated that everybody is imprisoned by prescribed values for women and men, of which the individual is both the product and the producer. Suicide attains significance in the theatre of this period since it can be the result of the hopelessness internationally shared by human beings living in a modern world of destruction and deconstruction for which there seems to be left little hope to reconstruct something better, however the hopelessness and vulnerability takes place along with resistance. The plays of the 1990s emphasized the different personal and

private perceptions of reality and demonstrated that the privatized accepted reality can be followed by the power of agency which is central to the different forms of resistance.

With respect to the communications made or attempted by these plays, the spectator in the nineties reached an unprecedented level of importance and the understanding and interpretation of performances became prone to change and discussion. The unnamed characters, unknown times and unspecified places especially in the case of suicide plays show how strongly an interpretation of these plays depends on the kind of view that the interpreter takes, and how dependent they are on the character of the interpreter. Thus, not only does the performative identity of the dramatic character embrace incompleteness, but the performative identity of the spectator is exposed to recitation and resignification and embraces constant alterity, also. The subject, as a real individual or as a dramatic character, “is both subjected to the norm and to the agency of its use, so that . . . it will be possible to repeat and re-repeat that norm in unexpected, unsanctioned ways. Performative identity norms resemble the sign as it is characterized by Derrida, and they are vulnerable to precisely the same ‘grafting’, recitation, and semantic excess” (Salih, 2004, 9). The deconstructive linguistic performativity in drama refuses or, in other words, strategically rejects, social norms, and makes them vulnerable to resignification. As Salih points out, “rejection and resignification are key components of ‘affirmative deconstruction’” (2004, 9) which is a political mode that Butler describes by insisting that “a concept may be put under erasure *and* played at the same time” (*Excitable Speech*, 16). When the characters acknowledge incompleteness, they redeploy the terms of discourse and “exploit the productive nature of language, and the law to subversive ends in order to stage unforeseen and unsanctioned modes of identity” (Salih, 2004, 10).

The strong tendency of New Writing towards presenting private identity and the personal may have led the language in New plays to be much closer to a mimetic dramaturgy form of stage realism. However, the plays of this decade, while presenting personal lives, employed a language far removed from normal speech. As Berninger exclaims in his essay, “Variations of a Genre”, the “language . . . is dense, fragmented, poetical, and symbolic. Just as the sentences of the characters are

disrupted by pauses and sudden leaps in unexpected directions, the plot disregards conventional realist patterns” (53–54). Although it is difficult to elucidate links between theatrical roles and real social roles or draw distinctions between them, the kind of linguistic authenticity expected from a play that tries to depict real personal lives was surprisingly not the concern of most of dramatists in the nineties. But this does not mean that the plays are far from reality, or produce less proximity and identification, or want to facilitate the separation between theatrical and social roles in order to distance themselves from severe political criticisms. Moreover, Butler confirms that “although theatrical performances can meet with political censorship and scathing criticism, gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions” (Butler, *Essay* 1988, 527). Butler provides two explanations relevant to linguistic authenticity in drama. First, in the theatre, the spectator can carefully maintain a sense of reality while his or her existing assumptions regarding the reality of identity are being temporarily challenged, but no distinction exists in real life between what is witnessed and what is actually occurring. For instance, the sight of a mentally unstable woman onstage can garner the audience’s applause and pleasure while the sight of a traumatized woman on the verge of suicide in real life can be both terrifying and itself traumatic:

In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real . . .; the various conventions which announce that ‘this is only a play’ allows strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life. On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; the disquieting effect of the act is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation (Butler *Journal*, 1988, 527).

Theatre sometimes emphasizes the distinction between what is imaginary and what is real, and sometimes it plays along the borderlines, or usually it enjoys the ironic distance or closeness. In her second remark, Butler foregrounds another characteristic of modern drama, namely, that “the act is not contrasted with the real but constitutes a reality that is in some sense new” (*Journal*, 1988, 527). Thus, the established categories that have formed or constantly empower what is accepted as reality are not assimilated in drama, and the plays may even seem to contradict the

reality of the identity of an individual as a man or a woman. However, a deeply traumatized female protagonist, for example, can demonstrate more than a distinction between being mentally stable and unstable. Butler challenges “the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about . . . identity” (Butler, Essay 1988, 527). In the final chapter of this study, we will address the possibility that the identity performance of the dramatic characters in the suicide plays analyzed may be as real as the identity of anyone whose performance follows social expectations, and that in such a case there is no need of recourse to the ostensible forms of identity and linguistic authenticity, since the 'reality' of identity is constituted by the performance itself.

The established playwright of the time, Howard Barker, discusses these issues from the viewpoint of a playwright and theories of theatre of the second half of the 20th century. Barker's disregard for historical and linguistic authenticity and a refusal to construct his plays on documentary material deeply influenced the dramatists of the nineties. He explicitly outlines his vision of how theatre should be in his 1993 collection of essays, *Arguments for a Theatre*: “I discovered that the only things worth describing now are things that do not happen, just as the only history plays worth writing concern themselves with what did not occur” (23). He continues elsewhere: “The drama which I practice creates its own world, it does not require validation from external sources, either of ideology or of spurious realism, which is itself an ideology. It is compellingly imaginative and without responsibility to historical or political convention” (29). Barker's radically anti-mimetic plays, along with being very poetical, criticize the idea that theatre recreates or should recreate reality. He adds: “Drama [. . .] is not life described but life imagined, it is possibility and not reproduction” (30). Barker is deeply suspicious of tools of ideology as ‘truth’, and states that: “The theatre is not a disseminator of truth but a provider of versions. Its statements are provisional. In a time when nothing is clear, the inflicting of clarity is a stale arrogance” (45). He did not intend to confirm the expectations of the audience or win them over, as he asks: “Do you want to pay 10 £ to be told what you knew already? That is theft. Do you want to agree all the time? That is flattery” (47). He summarizes his intention thus: “The audience itself must be encouraged to discover meaning” (49) and thus leaves his plays open to a multiplicity of readings

without any efforts to teach the audience anything since in his view “the play is not a lecture” (55).

Barker’s gradual diminishing of reputation in the British theatre, particularly during the last decade of the 20th century, is not doing justice to the value and influence of his work, as shown by the respect of academics and writers, and Sarah Kane’s deep admiration for him. In the nineties, however, when the respect for Barker’s plays was considerably augmented abroad, we can witness “an increase evident in the growing number of productions of his works on the European continent” (Zimmermann, 2002, 198). Barker preferred to explore freely what he referred to as “dramatic beauty”, by which he meant to free oneself from the limitations of “naturalistic bondage” and from an attachment to ideologies (1993, 56). He gave priority in his theatre to an aesthetics of experience rather than an attempt to satisfy public interest, and this kind of theatre was exactly what, for instance, Sarah Kane wrote for: a theatre of ambiguities, a metaphoric, poetic, anti-documentary, elitist and audience-related theatre with a radical anti-mimetic dramaturgy much like the Theatre of the Absurd. In his ‘Theatre of Catastrophe’ Barker explicitly intended to sound meaningless, unclear, illogical and inconsistent. He claimed no higher insight and did not desire his ambiguous images to be reduced to meaningful messages for the audience: “As the artist chiefly responsible for what occurs on the stage I claim no superior insight or even the status of a visionary, let alone a just man with a conscience” (1993, 89).

The “*enfants terribles*” of the mid-1990s such as Patrick Marbel, Joe Penhall and David Eldridge had also been defining authentic voices and fairly successful in New-writing theatres of the time such as the Royal Court and the Bush. They sought to refresh their audience by new, in-her-face contents such as “drug taking, sexual frankness and the poetics of obscenity” and sought to cultivate a new audience by “using shock in turn with recognition” (Waters, 377 – 378). Their plays were characterized by humanist theatre or social realist theatre which looked to present violence in a shocking new style, and along with an intense level of suffering and extremity. What was most fashionable and even marketable about these theatrical productions in the 1990s was the celebration of violence and vice, and the plays,

preoccupied with the representation of violence, were a pervasive commodity in mainstream culture: “In much so-called ‘in-yer-face’ theatre, violence provides a site of ambiguous pleasure and narrative movement; it is part of the moral economy of the play” (Waters, 378). The suicide plays of the nineties constitute a huge variety in their form, content and performance, and the presentation of violence in the form of self-destruction, both psychologically and physically, is far more direct than it ever was previously in that century.

Anthony Neilson, Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, among the most important figures of in-yer-face 1990s British Playwrights, also epitomize some basic characteristics of New British plays of the 1990s. A better understanding of the explosion of creativity during the renaissance in British New Writing is possible by explaining the phenomenon of In-Yer-Face, since the real leaders of New Writing were actually a small group of in-yer-face avant-garde writers ⁸. The definition provided in the *New Oxford English Dictionary* (1998) for the phrase ‘in-yer-face’ is something “blatantly aggressive or provocative, impossible to ignore or avoid”. So, in-yer-face theatre is an extreme form of drama, that crosses the normal boundaries, produces a feeling of violated intimacy, and forces the audience to witness something close up. One of the most prominent characteristics of In-Yer-Face Theatre is its usage of stage images that depict violent scenes in an impressive and shocking way as if they are really being lived on the stage. Since the young dramatists usually had their plays performed in small theatres in which only around 100 spectators could attend, the influence of the actions, violent scenes and transgressive language imposed on the audience by this kind of drama was intense. Sierz specifies these characteristics as follows:

- 1) It is a type of drama that uses explicit scenes of sex and violence to explore the extremes of human emotion.

⁸ According to Sierz, the outburst of ‘in-yer-face’ plays and New Writing should not be considered as isolated phenomena; they use similar shock tactics. However, New Writing is a broader term comprising plays of the British theatre in the mid-1990s that cannot be always and easily assimilated into in-yer-face theatre. Overtly shocking images in in-yer-face plays become less important in the plays staged between 1995 and 1999. What becomes shocking or disrupting in these plays is the devastated emotions of the characters represented. The lasting influence of the plays produced in mid-nineties (there were more than 400 productions worldwide) seems to lie in expanding their ambitions and being more diverse than in-yer-face plays (2012, Chapter 1: Theatre in the 1990s, 28-68).

- 2) It usually involves the breaking of taboos, insistently using the most vulgar language, sometimes blasphemy, sometimes pornography, and showing deeply private acts in public.
- 3) Its basic aesthetic is that of experiential theatre. At its cruel best, it can be so intense that audiences feel – emotionally if not literally – that they have lived through the events shown on stage. (Sierz, 2002, 110)

Suicide as a dramatic performance in the New plays works with the same experiential aesthetic. It employs two of the special characteristics of In-Yer-Face Theatre. First, the audience witnesses a life-like suicide or the experiences of characters who have been impacted by a suicide, which means that while watching the play in perfect safety, they feel an intrinsic distress. Second, the dramatists use suicide to explore the darker sides of the human psyche. Nothing is technically censored in this theatre, and the writers use this opportunity to present the most private human emotions in a way that is almost impossible to be shown on television or in cinema. Both the New Plays of the nineties and In-Yer-Face theatre deal with the question of sensibility, but the more disturbing quality of New Plays is an emphasis on the sense of bleakness and the character's emotional sense of despair and devastation. Furthermore, in the suicide plays, as in In-yer-face theatre, we see a transformation of language, by dramatists who made it "more direct, raw and explicit" (Sierz, 2002, 110). The theatre of the 1990s became universally praiseworthy for being deliberately intense, aggressive, relentless, uncompromising, confrontational, and committed to extremes.

With violence, private acts, bodies and language all being presented in raw ways and the stage of In-yer-face theatre, we find that Butler's interest in vulnerability (and resistance) is a particularly significant component of this stage, as it is in the suicide plays to be analyzed below. When we speak of vulnerability and resistance, there is always the individual and his or her body and actions. Vulnerability can only be owned by an individual, and resistance can be performed by an individual and this performativity differs from one subject to another. The New Writing aesthetic illustrates the New plays' concern with private passions and personal pain. Furthermore, these plays should also be regarded as political theatre since most of them are passionately interested in "staging critiques of modern social conditions,

focusing on the problem of violence, the horror of abuse, the questioning of traditional notions of masculinity, the myth of post-feminism and the futility and injustice of consumerism” (Sierz, 2002, 116). The new dramatists of the nineties preferred the tradition of being the sentimental, utopian rebels, and many popular plays of the nineties do not imply the hope for change which a political play must somehow contain. However, Rebellato, in his introduction to Mark Ravenhill’s plays, exclaims that although Ravenhill’s plays show “the steady erosion of our common lives”, they also “affirm what needs to be preserved”, and this “sense of affirmation” is finally more significant, and as politically radical as any method employed to shock (xix–xx). Thus, an implicit reference to some kind of hope may be the innate capacity of the suicide plays of the nineties.

3.2. Howard Barker’s Influence and Suicide

3.2.1 Barker in the Nineties

In 1986, Barker’s radically new ‘Theatre of Catastrophe’ and somehow unsettling intellectual and theatrical aspirations towards playwriting attracted a group of performers and actors, who embarked on a unique project in modern theatrical history, in order to hit back at the increasing neglect of his plays by the British theatres and commercials. They founded The Wrestling School in 1988, a school that was dedicated to establishing Barker’s unconventional plays and challenging performance techniques, which did not follow the conventions and traditions of stage realism. The attack on Realism, started by Brecht, found a new form through Barker’s ideas. He argues passionately against social realism, and believes that it has caused deformations in English theatre, and has distanced it from its real purpose and essence. Barker’s focus in his theoretical works is on the importance and primacy of tragedy:

It is impossible – now, at this point in the long journey of human culture – to avoid the sense that pain is necessity; that it is neither accident, nor malformation, nor malice, nor misunderstanding, that it is integral to the human character both in its inflicting and in its suffering, this terrible sense Tragedy alone has articulated, and will continue to articulate, and in so doing, is beautiful. . . . (*Death, the One, and the Art of Theatre*, 24)

Barker's demand for tragedy finds better expression in his 'Theatre of Catastrophe', where he pushes against the idea of theatre for entertainment and makes philosophical arguments about the nature of tragedy, love, death and theatre: "It is not true that everyone wants to be / Entertained / Some want the pain of unknowing" (*The Bite of the Night*, 2). Barker became widely known for his anti-Brechtian focus and emphasis on the concept of catastrophe and explorations of irrational ventures and endeavors. Although his focus on tragedy is still Brechtian, Barker grew to find sterility in the English version of Brecht, and no longer accepted that the Brechtian Theatre of Entertainment had subversive power. Brecht, according to Barker, was unsuccessful in provoking change in precepting of reality. Barker strongly rejected any fixed distinctions between good and evil in political satire and despised the idea of the dramatist as "The One Who Knows" (1993, 112) and the one who demonstrates moral platitudes, since such a view perceived the audience as lacking imagination. The praise of the audiences' imagination was the first principle of Barker's theatre which pushed the dramatist, instead of the audience, into the position of "an ignorant person" (1993, 120).

Barker's attitudes took firm shape in the 1980s after being influenced by poststructuralism, and specifically by Lyotard's rejection of grand narratives and Foucault's evaluation of reason and enlightenment. Barker began working on "the deconstruction of the ideology of reason" and "the liberation of repressed desire, instinct and passion in the theatre" (Zimmermann, 2002, 183). Destruction and a demand for renewal is, according to Barker, a continuous historical process which can be found in all the various forms of art. New art can exist only if a new situation is created: "I suppose I really think that if art is to carry any power and conviction, it cannot reiterate what I regard as exhausted forms" (Barker, 1986: 336). With his new theatre, Barker established new forms. However, it does not have any claims to being morally didactic or entertaining and, by strictly refusing such utility justifications, it has somehow attained the right to exist on its own. While the welfare of society and the traditional humanist values are favorably supported by the characters in the Brechtian theatre, Barker's theatre questions moral and social values, and prioritizes what the individual chooses to resist and claim through the process of self-fulfillment. Zimmermann confirms this view of Barker by saying that: "The

purposefully unconventional or immoral actions of his characters uncover contradictions between will and desire, between reason and the unconscious, and explore the contradictions inherent in moral principles” (2002, 184).

Having an affinity with early Greek tragedy, Barker’s theatre in the 1990s tries to bring tragedy, pain and suffering back to the stage. According to Zimmermann’s 1999 study, “Howard Barker’s Appropriation of Classical Tragedy,” Barker intended to demonstrate the beauty of power and dignity that pain contains and how meaningful it can be. The protagonists who resist various forms of state and political power, take risk with their body, and are exposed to potential pain and harm (Zimmermann, 1999, 359–375). Barker displays in his drama a Butlerian resistance which both enhances vulnerability and overcomes it provisionally. “The presentation of excessive suffering”, as an indispensable part of Greek drama, “is common and . . . wounded characters are frequently brought on to the stage and do not attempt to conceal from us the spectacle of their agony” (Pathmanathan, 3). By opposing the modern theatre for its exclusion of showing pain and taking the authority of pain in the Greek tragedy for use, the power of catastrophe and pain in resistance turned out as the touchstone essences of Barker’s new tragedy.

3.2.2 Theatre of Catastrophe

“The Theatre of Catastrophe ignores the laws of probability. It represents what is improbable and hence surprises. It confronts its audience with ambiguity and irreconcilable contradictions” (Zimmermann, 2002, 186). Barker’s Theatre of Catastrophe is not a mimesis of the reality it questions and criticizes. It creates an imaginative alternative life beyond the barriers of rationalism. Moreover, Barker gives unstable identities to his dramatic characters since he has no belief in human essence. When his characters behave unpredictably by following their instincts, it turns out to be difficult to find a connection between the events, because no coherent structure is built up in the plays. Similar methods are employed by Martin Crimp in *Attempts on Her Life*.

Catastrophe in Greek tragedy signified the disruption of a continuity or the shattering of an order or power system which had fatal and sometimes suicidal consequences. For instance, Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, hangs herself when, due to her act of burying her brother Polynices, is condemned by Creon to being buried alive. We read in Sophocles' play: "In the cavern's farthest corner we saw her lying: She had made a noose of her fine linen veil and hanged herself" (*Antigone*, Scene V). This is a report of suicide by the messenger as an eyewitness, and despite being reported rather than acted, the act of suicide is tragically convincing for the audience. The manner in which Antigone commits suicide by hanging herself is highly tragic and, as Pathmanathan exclaims, words have the power "to convince while preserving something of their magnificence or elemental power" (7). What is signified as catastrophe in Barker's theatre is an event that has resulted in the recognition and destruction of a moral, political or cultural order, and is followed by a complete change in the character, a transformation which includes the disregard of the limits of rationalism and morality. The subjects of catastrophic speculation in Barker's theatre desire to experience a process of self-exploration and self-realisation beyond the ethical and reasonable norms. A good example is the character Portia in Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*, who follows a Barkerian experience of self-exploration through the act of self-destruction.

Barker's protagonists persistently endeavor to achieve what is beyond the limits of rationality and order through performative resistance. The recognition and then the moral consequence that the Aristotelian / classical tragic hero encounters is contrary to what happens to the protagonists in Barker's plays, and what we witness in the suicide plays of the nineties is very close to the Barkerian theatre described here; the act of self-destruction in these plays does not disclose a restoration of justice but the performativity of suicide as an act of resistance reveals an ongoing social injustice and lack of support. As Butler confirms: "We have found that that on which we are dependent is, in fact, not there for us, which means we are left without support" (2016, 13). Barker's "theatre of moral experimentation" questions the ethical standards of the modern society by exploring the results of the performativity of repressed thoughts and refusing to be a part of the moral consensus (Barker, 1993, 52). In Barker's theatre, the apparently binary oppositions of good and evil, right and

wrong create one another, each one can contain the positive or negative side of the other, and with no firm dividing line between them, their parts may be seen as being in a more dialogic than dialectic relationship, more of a re-constructive than deconstructive pairing. Butler presents similar ideas against binaries such as vulnerability being an important part of the mode of resistance and she answers ‘no’ to the question of “does resistance require overcoming vulnerability?” (2016, 13).

Barker’s Theatre of Catastrophe possesses the power to trouble the audience emotionally. His drama contains material that force the audience to question who they really are or to which category they really belong. Not provided with any definite answers to the questions raised in their minds, the audience leave the theatre outraged and possibly attack the play using words related to the accepted ideas of what is right and proper. Barker’s theatre challenges the same distinctions that most in-her-face theatre challenges: “the distinctions we use to define who we are: human/animal; clean/dirty; healthy/unhealthy; normal/abnormal; good/evil; true/untrue/ real/unreal; right/wrong; just/unjust; art/life. These binary oppositions are central to our world-view; questioning them can be unsettling” (Sierz, 2001, 6). If we consider dramatic suicide as a Barkerian catastrophe, we can imply from a Butlerian point of view that its performativity during the nineties has had the ability to suppress the feeling of pity, initiate the erosion of the supposed division between vulnerability/resistance, and reject what is considered ideology by destroying moral blocks. The pain and suffering of the protagonists are indispensable but at the same time socially and politically effective. Butler states that “even as public resistance leads to vulnerability, and vulnerability leads to resistance, vulnerability is not exactly overcome by resistance, but becomes a potentially effective mobilizing force in political mobilizations” (2016, 14). The catastrophic vulnerability has, in Barker’s eyes, such a subversive beauty, so much so that we hear Lvov, the protagonist in *The Last Supper* (1988), saying: “Only catastrophe can keep us clean” (23).

3.2.3 Performative Resistance in Moral and Political Functionlessness

Amanda Price, in her study of the dramatic writing of Barker, refers to an analogy between the functionlessness of Barker’s dramatic style and Roland Barthes’ belief

in the liberation of the text from the monopoly of the “Author, God”, as the central organizing agent of truth and meaning (Barthes, 142–148), and transferring the audience from an appointed distanced position outside of the text to a position inside the text. The functionlessness in Barker’s model releases the individual interpretation from “depending upon a practical application of thought to subjective experience, the goal being a secure understanding of one's relationship to the world of perception” (Price, 21). Barker invites us to "reach down beyond the known for once" (1988, 3), and believes that only such an attempt has power to activate creative imagination. With the following words, he criticizes the critics’ insistence upon what is considered secure understanding as the basis of appreciation:

Those who are threatened by the dictat of accessibility, 'Be understood or Perish', need to keep their nerve, since in a populist culture the abuse from certain quarters is bound to become increasingly violent. The writer of 'inaccessible' theatre will be repudiated as a poseur, or, most favoured of all English calumnies, identified as 'pretentious'. His collaborators will be seen as dupes, the actors vilified as brainless exhibitionists, and the institution which mounts the production attacked as corrupt, elitist and overdue for demolition. (Barker, 1993, 85–86)

Barker rendered a different relationship between the actor and the spectator which, instead of offering an illusion of judgmental power over that which occurs on the stage, gives the audience an active incorporative role inside the theatre walls. The structure of theatrical response resulted from the Barkerian relationship between actor and spectator appearing to be at odds with the contemporary requirements of clarity, logic and coherence assumedly essential for a committed artistic endeavor. Barker in the second prologue of *The Bite of the Night*, warns the audience: “Clarity / Meaning / Logic / And Consistency / None of it / None [. . .] No ideology on the cheap” (1993, 43). Repudiating all ideology can be considered one of the most eccentric thought processes of this writer. He has built his relationship with his audiences upon a denial of the discourse of authorship. This denial has an ideological linkage to the dramatic text established as private property.

The spectator, encountered with a self-wiped-out playwright, may find himself within a web of various ideological, moral, cultural thoughts while almost none of them carry a convincing claim to truth. Such multidimensionality reflected in the

depiction of ambiguous personalities, nonlinear stories and surprising laws provides the audience with the opportunity of experiencing a new theatre without having to interpret the content. Feeling obliged to interpret the modes of resistance performed by the protagonist may cause the spectator to try to guard his or her belief system. The British writers of the nineties influenced by Barker's plays have also incorporated this quality into their plays which on the one hand, demands a struggle for meaning on the part of both the audience and actors, and on the other hand, the struggles are not provided with the possibility of resulting in clear meaning. However, what matters is the struggle itself which Barker believes has been inserted in his performances and in the mind of his spectators. Functionlessness, in this way, can initiate such a struggle.

The material of self-destruction is employed by selected dramatists of the nineties to initiate struggle with the accepted norms within the mind of the spectator. The functionlessness of the plays works through the linguistic performativity of suicide to create a theatre that "is the witnessing of embodied language, or languages; it is the witnessing of language which has achieved the status of an action via the sensitized body of the actor" (Price, 17). This language performativity necessitates certain conditions in order to nurture the spectator's mind and will to involve, a process that Barker calls "seduction" (1993, 77). But Barker's task of seduction should not be mistaken with the task of creating simple pleasure by trying to satisfy the audience's feelings of a shared social self-image, an issue which is also strictly pushed away by the requirements of the suicide texts written in the nineties. The plays of the nineties, like Barker's, offer a kind of theatre which invites the spectator to participate directly in its process of creation. This invitation is iterated throughout the suicide plays by not looking to present an idea in the form of resistance but in trying to present an experience of complicated thoughts related to the modes of resistance.⁹

Therefore, the plays pursue a fluid process of presenting what goes beyond the restrictions of the theatrical event, as a result of which the spectator is endowed with

⁹ Sarah Kane's *4:48 Psychosis* and Alan Ayckbourn's *Haunting Julia*, as we will read in the next chapter, are good representatives of the Barkerian initiation of struggle with the accepted systems (healthcare system in *4:48 Psychosis* and education system in *Haunting Julia*) within the mind of the spectator.

the new status of being a creative participant who does not regard the playwright as the creator of a deferred or repudiated moral responsibility. As mentioned in the second chapter, the dramatist of the nineties usually does not occupy the role of “The One Who Knows” anymore, or the one privileged by the virtuous knowledge of creating coherent material (Barker, 1993, 112). The incoherence is followed by a shared struggle for meaning among the audience and even the actors. This is what Barker describes as the aim of his plays which dare to imagine “a life as it might be lived” (1993, 36). The deepest influence of Barker on the suicide plays of the nineties, can be deducted from his struggle to give birth to an intensely private performative language that is made public. Here is how he explains this process:

The dramatist explores the terrain, half-knowing, half-ignorant. His journey is mapped by the actors. The audience participate in the struggle to make sense of the journey, which becomes their journey also. Consequently, what is achieved by them is achieved individually and not collectively. There is no official interpretation (Barker, 1993, 46).

Barker preferred to use the title of ‘poet’ rather than ‘theatrical creator’, in order to distance himself from prescribed and conventional definitions. The poet searches for a language that can render the processes of his singular mind and imagination. So, the poet is committed to the task of creating a fresh and unique theatre, and Barker illuminates his view of the playwright as being a poet whose work is “to make the object visible anew” (1993, 73). The playwrights of the 1990s were attracted to Barker’s dramatist/poet idea and especially in the case of the suicide plays of this decade we see a refusal of the traditional representation of this theme by the playwright as a craftsman who finds his artistic means to express a specific arena of human experience only within the framework of theatrical structures. It is possible that the spectator of the suicide play may find it difficult or may feel reluctant to relate what is happening within the theatre’s walls to the prioritized issues of contemporary society, because the playwright/poet has given a fresh visibility to the object.

For instance, Sarah Kane’s *4:48 Psychosis* explores the traumatic mind of an unnamed character on the brink of suicide; nothing is clearly defined, not only the characters but also the scenes, directions and conversations are all unclear and

threatening. The spectator of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* gets lost among the constructions of numerous narratives about Anne; narratives that constantly deconstruct themselves and expose Anne's vulnerability. Alan Ayckbourn in *Haunting Julia* blends the paranormal and the psychological in the suicide of a young talented girl and shows how our social and educational policies can act upon a body to the point of destroying livelihood. All these plays, to use Barker's term, "multiply the body" (1993, 73) and avoid replicating the view of a unified tradition forming the foundation of social existence. The spectator confronts a list that looks into how the idea of a body is both vulnerable and resistant at the same time. The body, implicitly or explicitly, both acts and needs support; it both gets involved in threatening political issues and needs protection from injury and violence. Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* pictures a story of violence. A scientific experiment is applied on the body of a vulnerable young girl, and like the bird in the story that dies because it has had its oxygen removed, Isobel, the hunchbacked educated maid, cannot survive because she is deprived of support. So, "on one level, we should ask about the implicit idea of the body at work in certain situations of political demands and mobilizations; on another level, we should try to find out how mobilizations presuppose a body that requires support" (Butler, 2016, 15). Such theatrical events have the power of stretching the tolerance of the spectator to the limits and the so-called "honoured" spectator, Barker considers, can experience the following state:

An honoured audience will quarrel with what it has seen, it will go home in a state of anger, not because it disapproves, but because it has been taken where it was reluctant to go. Thus, morality is created in art, by exposure to pain and illegitimate thought. (1993, 47)

The focus in modern drama has predominantly been on the representation of human's repressed desires and instincts or on the human body subjected to the norms of society and we see that "from the beginning of Barker's career the body as the source of desire, lust, and pain is the focus of his plays" (Zimmermann, 2002, 187). The suicidal character's vulnerably resistant inner catastrophe is presented to the spectator in the nineties through the communication of the performative bodies that transgress norms by resisting them and require specific support in their vulnerability.

In Marina Carr's *Porta Coughlan*, we see the unique woman character, Portia, whose love for her dead twin brother is beyond a sisterly love. Her suffering and melancholia are intensified in an Irish society, the cultural norms of which forbid this kind of love and considers it incest. The terror of expressing her feelings towards her brother Gabriel in a male-dominant environment and the torment of her loss is so profound that finally everything, except meeting Gabriel in death, loses its meaning for her.

Thus, the human body gains an unprecedented importance in the suicide plays. Moreover, instead of appealing to the spectators' rational faculty and moral judgement, these plays somehow suspend the laws of reason and morality, and like the enacted violence in Barker's plays, address the audience at a level "beneath the consciously moral" (Barker, 1993, 97). Barker puts imagination and desire within a black box which he calls the "theatre of obscurity" (1993, 72). Since he believes darkness is necessary for imagination to unfold, Barker gives freedom to any criminal act or violence to be active within the black box. Darkness liberates the audience's individual imagination, breaks their solidarity, and frees their reaction from the controlling gaze. This darkness of Barker's theatre of obscurity also has control over a suicide play in the nineties, which tries to flee from any clarity and light, and the spectators, instead of being instructed, confront contradictory feelings and find themselves in moral conflicts.

Barker's audience are prevented from instantly identifying with the protagonists' irrational actions and shocking transgressions, since his theatre targets the audience's long-time repressed thoughts and feelings. The suicide plays in the nineties also confuse the spectators in their reactions by exposing them to bewilderment, consternation and fascination, since the audience's repressed desires are triggered and what they may deny or conceal about their personality and thoughts is exposed. Such an experience can be overwhelming. The dramatists during the 1990s were influenced by Barker's obscure theatre of making no distinctions possible between two poles of the binaries as good/bad and right/wrong, and thus create confusion and bewilderment. However, Barker's created bewilderment has nothing to do with catharsis.

What Barker prefers to focus on is the terror representation and assertion of the self, to be found within classical tragedy. These two factors, according to Barker, are enough to arouse fascination and confusion and force the modern audience, for whom there is no message in the play, to examine and judge the situation for themselves. Tragedy should, Barker believes, “assert nothing in its own defence – not its therapeutic essences, its cathartic effects of social behaviour, nothing Aristotelian at all (1993, 113). Most of the dramatists in their suicide plays, written during the 1990s, have followed Barker in his rejection of catharsis, his emphasis on the Greek tragedy’s view of existence as painful, contradictory and terrifying, and his focus on the desire of the vulnerable body to perform resistance and discover the true self. By resorting to classical tragedy, Barker tried to deconstruct the discourse of rationalism with its pretentious ability to overpower the contradictions that cause suffering, pain, and meaningless existence. The society’s “neurotic demand for the illumination of all dark places” is something that Barker finds unacceptable (1993, 171). However, Barker also emphasizes self-exposure, which means his dark theatre tries to reveal “the normally unspoken, the counter discourse, the private”, and there is also always an attempt to uncover the private in the suicide plays of the nineties (1993, 166).

Barker’s theatre can also be viewed as political. Although the impressions as the non-mimetic story, fragmented action, non-linear sequence of time, self-reflexivity and unknown characters are genuine postmodern elements, Barker’s plays can be characterized as avant-garde in producing an unprecedented imaginary reality. “Like the avant-garde theatre it wants to perplex its audience. By waking its audience from the sleep of reason, the Theatre of Catastrophe believes itself to be radically political” (Zimmermann, 2002, 189). There should always be this political focus on pain and suffering, so that the spectators feel an encounter with aspects of their unconscious and hidden self and Barker brings these irrational parts to the surface to show his adulation of the individual and the limits of reason. In this process, the power of language plays a very important role for Barker. By subjecting the individual to the symbolic order of language, barker tried to liberate the unconscious. His protagonists go through a phase of self-discovery, trying to recover their self of

the imaginary phase. This imaginary phase, which exists when mind and body or reason and passion are still united, gets destructed, as analyzed by Lacan (1979), with the individuals' socialization and subsequent repression of this unity. Barker attempted to reach the unconscious and uncover what is repressed by its ideological order through language, since he has "an unlimited trust in the power of language and linguistic expression" (Zimmermann, 2002, 190).

The characters in the suicide plays of the nineties also express themselves through a language freed from the ideological restrictions. They use metaphors, poetic language, ecstatic declamations, and intense rhetorical outbursts in order to unchain the unconscious. The subject that the protagonists target fearlessly is the hidden and inarticulate self, still untraced by the power of rationality and social norms. So, in their explicit and radically open style nothing is considered unsayable or unrepresentable and everything is molded into a new convincing mode of expression. This conception of theatre belongs to Barker who attempted to clarify it in all his works. For instance, in his play *The Europeans* (1990), which was refused by the Royal Shakespeare Company to have its first performance on the stage in the beginning years of the nineties, the character called Starhemberg, the glorious leader of the Austrian army, puts the writer's tenets of the Theatre of Catastrophe into words: "I need an art which will recall pain [...]. I need an art that will plummet through the floor of consciousness and free the unborn self [...]. I need an art that will shatter the mirror in which we pose. I want to make a new man and a new woman but only from the pieces of the old" (31). Barker's new art was born from the remains of the destructed tradition and the new man and new woman are those exposed to the shattering of the old self-deceptions.

We can see Barker's new man and new woman shine through the suicidal protagonists in the plays of the nineties, since the characters do not show up in a framed role of a victim. Their radical reaction and resistance to conform to the principles of reason make the audience encounter with a situation of upheaval which leads to their moral and emotional confusion. On the one hand, he/she is a suffering victim who has made the decision of self-destruction, and on the other hand, the suicidal character gives the sense of an ambiguous relation with Barker's new man or

new woman. In other words, the suicidal victim's collusion with death induces the inversion of the role of the victim, as an unidentified body. Thus, the self-destructed individual, despite being a victim, can turn into an unconventional, reckless, and threatening body.



CHAPTER 4

PERFORMATIVITY OF SUICIDE IN SELECETED PLAYS OF THE NINETIES

The plays are going to be analyzed chronologically, by date of composition. *Haunting Julia* (1994) by Alan Ayckbourn spreads an effective amount of anguished awareness by presenting the vulnerable life of a creative child in a society being threatened by her creativity. Twelve years after her suicide, the child's memories turn into an agency of resistance, by which the system of education is criticized, and her suicide facilitates an otherwise unspeakable acceptance of guilt by the parents and society. In Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* (1996) the agency of change is again a woman. Portia's self-drowning in a river is an extreme representation of the expression of female subjectivity. The play criticizes the restrictive models of femininity of the time which increased the vulnerability of women by placing them in the domestic sphere and by giving dominance to the role of mother among other models of femininity. Portia resists the gendered restrictions of her society through suicide. In Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), the woman protagonist's split identity, constructed by the individuals in the society after her suicide, structures a Butlerian 'desire' to keep an attachment to prescribed identities, even when those identities are oppressive. The construction of this vulnerability in resistance is manifested through re-significations of her most probable act of self-destruction. Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) demonstrates scientific means of domination. Science is at the core of this play, as a tool of oppression rather than liberation, and it plays a Butlerian role in increasing the vulnerability of the oppressed character to the point of suicide. The life of a hunchbacked young girl is ruined because of the degradation of what is natural by science, and because "the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the

natural by the social” (Butler, 1993, 5). In the last play, Sarah Kane’s *4:48 Psychosis* (1999), the subjectivity of an unnamed woman is constructed through domination-resistant subversions. The terror of the possibility of our vulnerable lives being ripped apart at any moment is persistent throughout the play, which is characterized by an identification with private psychological pain and trauma. The protagonist, communicating the feelings of personal pain, horror, and her radical decision to commit suicide in upcoming hours, resists ideology at all levels in response to political conflicts enacted in the name of fixed identities and categories. The analysis of these plays in this chapter will focus upon the performativity of suicide, and through that it will uncover how the plays use and expose the mechanisms that govern language, identity, and human existence.

4.1. *Haunting Julia* (1994) by Alan Ayckbourn: Recognition of Loss through Performativity of Suicide

Haunting Julia, which was first performed in 1994 in the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, presents a story of loss through suicide. It is one of Ayckbourn’s plays in which he “allows a particularly productive discussion of crucial aspects that concern the interface of melancholia and identity in the Drama of Melancholia” (Wald, 248-161). A father has lost his extraordinarily talented daughter, who committed suicide when she was 19, and years later he reacts with a melancholic denial of her loss and psychically tries to resurrect her. In Ayckbourn’s play the performativity of suicide causes a kind of malady which makes the melancholic character fail to acknowledge the border between real and unreal. Recognition of loss is an important feature in Judith Butler’s thinking about performativity, politics and interdependency. By referring to Butler’s theory of performativity, the analysis demonstrates that when the father psychologically tries to incorporate the suicide of his young daughter in his life, the recognition of loss affects his body and mind since, as Freud discusses, “in grief the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (1917, 155). The discussion here is then directed towards the performativity of suicide connecting melancholic incorporation with recognition of the loss of a body that matters. This makes the audience encounter the Butlerian questions of how “the possibility of a livable life” depends on “certain conditions that must be fulfilled” (2004, 39), how the education system is guilty, and

how disastrous the consequence of the unfulfillment of certain conditions and lack of support from the parents and friends can be.



Illustration 1 Characters of Alan Ayckbourn's *Haunting Julia*, Joe, Andy, and Ken, gathered in Julia's attic bedroom, years after her suicide, in the Julia Lukin Centre (source: Queen's Theatre Hornchurch)

Julia's father, called Joe, has now turned her room into a museum, The Julia Lukin Music Centre. She was referred to as "Little Miss Mozart" by the press (*Haunting Julia*, 20). Joe has decided to find out the cause and motive of Julia's act twelve years after her suicide. Julia's former boyfriend, Andy, and a local man who claims to be a psychic, called Ken, are invited by Joe to the museum to help him. The search causes disagreements and frights which reveal some truths about the relationship between a father and a daughter and his parenting. Joe cannot accept or realize that he could have prevented his daughter's suicide attempt and believes that Julia's horrible death has been outside of his control. The way that Joe reacts or responds to Julia's suicide affects his performance in this drama of melancholia. Since the suicide of the loved one has remained unresolved for the father for many years, he keeps preserving his daughter's presence in his imagination. As Christina Wald explains:

In the Drama of Melancholia, identity is a matter of life and death. The plays stage the impact that the reaction to death has on the identity performances of the protagonists. Struggling with the experience of bereavement, the protagonists are unable to accept the loss of their loved ones, but resurrect the dead in their imagination and thus psychically preserve their presence. Freud describes this state of unresolved or disavowed mourning as melancholia (161).

Butler's theory of performative identity uses the psychoanalytical idea of melancholia in considering the individual's reaction to loss, and employs melancholia to describe individual inner formations. While Butler's study of loss may seem mostly to account for social reactions to loss and investigations of their related political issues, she assumes that individual reactions are equally political since "to live is to live a life politically, in relation to power, in relation to others" (2004, 39). This idea is supported by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, who find the notions of melancholia and mourning to be politically significant issues, and especially from the 1990s, to have "emerged as a crucial touchstone for social and subjective formations" (2003 essay collection, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, 23). Butler establishes her concept of melancholia and loss by critically modifying Freud's concept of melancholia. Freud assumes that the ego introjects the lost object in its attempt to compensate for the loss and he finds this melancholic introjection necessary for the formation of the ego, stating that "the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes" ("The Ego and the Id", 29). Thus the lost object, according to Freud, continues to exist for the individual as the ego and more importantly, he claimed that the effect of this identification depends on the ego's "capacity for resistance"; the ego "decides the extent to which a person's character fends off or accepts the influences of the history of its object choices" ("The Ego and the Id", 29).

How the protagonists of the Drama of Melancholia react to their loss of the loved ones can be explained by Freud's concept of melancholia. The protagonists' conduct is melancholic because, from a Freudian point of view, they cannot resist the influence of their loss, and melancholic protagonists "hallucinatorily resurrect the dead and are unable to transfer their desire to a new object" (Wald, 166). The melancholic dramatic character who loses "respect for reality" makes the audience

encounter “an onstage reality that agrees with the melancholic perception of the protagonist” (Wald, 166). In order to discuss the effects that Julia’s suicide and her later resurrection have on her father, Butler’s concept of melancholia seems to be of further use. In her 1997 work *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler expands the theory of melancholy (132–198) which she already developed in *Gender Trouble* (1990, 73–91), and *Bodies that Matter* (1993, 93–120). Rather than assuming that the extent of melancholic incorporation can be determined by the individual’s “capacity for resistance” (Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, 29), Butler understands melancholia as “an ongoing, largely unconscious process of acting out” (Wald, 169). In this way the idea of performativity, which supposes that “materialization is never quite complete” (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 2), connects with melancholia. It can be comprehended that both performativity and melancholia are “ongoing, repetitive, ritualized activities” (Wald, 169) and individual identity is “an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time” (*Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 1-2). Thus, Butlerian melancholia is a condition of a body that is materialized through regulatory norms, and it is a forcible reiteration of the norms. Butler’s theory of performativity, which now not only takes into account the ways in which the subject is performed by regulatory norms and discourses, but also illuminates how such norms form the psyche, is thus demonstrated in the dramatic character’s melancholic incorporation after losing his daughter through suicide, as the following analysis will show.

The father’s melancholic incorporation of loss can be conceptualized as a kind of performative grief for the death of a loved one; it is an ongoing and unconscious form of acting out of unresolved grief which performatively forms and destroys the body. Joe, as the melancholic protagonist who increasingly incorporates a lost object, represents the effects of the performativity of suicide on those close to the suicidal character. The performative malady of the father effects his psyche, and the incorporation of the lost object goes beyond his control. This play in fact exemplifies the staging of a melancholic incorporation and psychic identification in the Drama of Melancholia, and Butler’s theory of performativity is incorporated in this incorporation since *Haunting Julia* highlights how an unconscious melancholic process after the suicide of a loved one can resist the norms. The Drama of Melancholia, as Wald confirms, “stages a psychic ‘disorder’ as an ambiguous

phenomenon that oscillates between the affirmation and subversion of norms” (2007, 170).

The play has an ostensibly isolated and distressing setting. The Julia Lukin Music Centre is, as the title indicates, a mixture of a public music centre, and a shrinelike place made by a father for his dead daughter. So, firstly the setting makes audiences feel uneasy. The whole play takes place in this room, which was Julia’s room before her suicide, but now a walkway has been installed for public viewing. Although it is called a Music Centre, the place is also therapeutic since it is where Julia had found shelter from her distress and psychological pain. Ken, who offers his services as a psychic to Joe, was once the janitor in Julia’s house, and Julia was treated with kindness by him and his family. The fact that an extraordinarily talented child finds comfort in the daily visits of a janitor, has a very quiet friendship with his family and spends hours with him and his wife rather than with her own parents links her mental distress to her family life. Ken admits that “there she was sitting in the front room of a basement flat with a group of strangers, . . . with her own parents only a couple of miles away” (56), parents that Julia, as Andy, Julia’s boyfriend, believes, “hated them for all their stifling misplaced affection” (66). Moreover, the play evokes associations with her educational life, and portrays some social and institutional expectations. But first comes the influence of her father and her sense of his surveillance as an omnipresent observer (even when he was not physically present):

Andy Julia was completely screwed up since the day she was born by a father who never let her alone for a single second. What sort of truth is that for him to face? For nineteen years that man completely dominated his daughter’s life. She told me there wasn’t a single second of her childhood when she didn’t feel him there, watching her . . . She was terrified to move on her own. Her only refuge was her music. . . . It was as if she’d been born under a rock. (*Haunting Julia*, 69).

Others are aware of Joe’s controlling gaze, but he is not: “What makes a girl of nineteen kill herself like that – without coming to me for help” (47), he asks; and then he reacts to Ken who says she was lonely: “Lonely? . . . she should never have been lonely. There was never a reason for her to be that. We were there. We were waiting. Always on hand” (53). He shows himself to be unaware of the negative

effects of his behaviour on Julia, who described herself as feeling “like a freak in cotton wool,” (66) because she had internalized her father’s gaze and control on herself. The entire play taking place in Julia’s small room with its closed door, reinforces the play’s sense of surveillance. Before her resurrection, in some scenes we hear Julia’s voice through a recorded tape as if she is also there in the room, which emphasizes James Macdonald’s interpretation that all the characters are “trapped on a microscope slide” (1998: n. pag.).¹⁰

Julia’s position in her family as a special child started with her birth, which is discussed in terms that foreshadow Joe’s later psychic resurrection of his daughter through melancholic incorporation. The child was Joe and his wife Dolly’s biggest chance of being and living different. Julia was “produced”, and Joe suddenly felt “different”, not “ordinary” anymore (21):

Joe We were neither of us that special, Dolly and me. . . . Ordinary. Essentially, ordinary people. . . . Then something came along right out of the blue that did make us different. We produced Julia. . . . there she was, Little Miss Mozart. And suddenly we’re different for the first time in our lives. Between us we’ve – made – Julia (21).

The play also resorts to memories through which audiences can partake in the feelings of the melancholic protagonist: “Two or three years old, there she is, banging out tunes on toy xylophones . . .” (21-23). Joe constantly talks about Julia with Andy to show how radically he disavows the loss of her through suicide: “**Andy**: Don’t you think it’s time you let her go? **Joe**: No! I don’t think it’s over. There are still questions about her death . . . that haven’t been answered” (24). Joe insists on not accepting her death as a suicide: “The girl had everything to live for. She had her future like a – six-lane motorway – stretching out in front of her. The reason you kill yourself is when you’re facing a damn great brick wall. That’s when you decide to kill yourself. When there is nowhere for you to go. . . . I’m telling you, suicide is not part of our family’s language. We’re fighters” (*Haunting Julia*, 24-25).

¹⁰ James Macdonald is a well-known British theatre and film director working with contemporary dramatists. He has also directed Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* (1995) and *Cleansed* (1998).



Illustration 2 Andy trying to convince Julia's father that she died by suicide (source: Queen's Theatre Hornchurch)

The way that the ghost figure of the suicidal character is presented in *Haunting Julia* is also important since it emphasizes its ghostly presence throughout the play. It differs from, for instance, Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*, the second play that is going to be analyzed in this chapter. In Carr's play a ghost figure included but is not a part of the action, and it is not the ghost of a protagonist; his repeated appearances are in the form of singing heard in a secluded space. But Julia's ghost, the presence of which is felt during the whole of Ayckbourn's play, is an integral part of the action it communicates with the protagonist: "Dad . . . Dad . . . Dad" (84), "Please . . . please . . . please" (86). The fact that *Haunting Julia* presents Julia as a dead child whose father has not let her go and the inclusion of her suffering ghost in the action and present in the setting emphasizes the questions and unresolved doubts about the reasons for her suicide.¹¹ The appearance of Julia's dead body is more than a hallucinatory status, since this performative ghost makes the audience perceive Julia

¹¹ There is an actor playing the role of the ghost in the play and she appears physically on the stage behind the door of her room and at the doorway, moving the door handle up and down, slamming the door shut, violently swinging the door open, playing the piano and calling for her dad. (in pages 57, 58, 84, 85, 86)

as a vital influencer of the father's behaviors. Julia's suicide can be called performative because the play has made use of what Wald calls 'additional double consciousness': "Because the device of the ghost figure in the Drama of Melancholia offers a *mise en abyme* that self-referentially comments on the double consciousness involved in theatrical reception" (201). This double consciousness is introduced in Ayckbourn's play by Julia's ghost which seems not to have left her room in all the years since her suicide, and offers the possibility of an uncanny communication between the dead and the living. Her hallucinatory presence is even more strengthened in those scenes when we hear Julia's voice through a recorded tape.



Illustration 3 A door onto what should be a brick wall blows open with an eerie wind and Julia manifests herself (source: Queen's Theatre Hornchurch)

In the scenes in which Ken tries to resurrect the ghost and Andy thinks "It's a load of rubbish" (39), Joe is wholeheartedly prepared to listen to every word of Ken. Scenes

like this, according to Wald, present “a theatrical version of the cross-purpose communications which clinical researchers describe as typical of the melancholic” (202). Andy blames Joe’s melancholic mood for believing in Ken: “If you weren’t so emotionally involved, you’d see it for yourself. You’d see he was having you on” (39). Joe’s behavior shows his melancholic desire to communicate with his dead daughter and offers the audience access to and sympathy with this melancholic reality. The play’s language in general can be characterized as melancholic, as Julia haunts all the three characters through their memories of her when she was alive. Ken, the janitor, talks about the days Julia spent with him and his family; Andy talks about how he met Julia, and their relationship was, and Joe recalls the times when Julia was a child. The characters’ lines contain memories and images of the past. There are very few stage directions, and the play communicates chiefly through its verbal imagery. Saunders, in a 2002 work, categorized such plays of the nineties as the ‘Theatre of Extremes’, and indicated that “the images are there to tell the story more powerfully and immediately” (Saunders, 122). The device of the ghost figure makes audiences get involved in Joe’s melancholic perception, which swings around not accepting his daughter’s death through suicide and not seeing his part in her death. This “simultaneity of internal and external reality” affects Joe’s entire use of melancholic verbal language (Wald, 203).

Thus, we know that the play is in many ways preoccupied with the issue of melancholic incorporation after the suicide of a loved one. However, it is noteworthy that while the play makes the audience involved in the father’s internal melancholic behavior, the audience and readers become aware of the external reality that remains hidden from Joe, whose last line is: “What did I do to her, to make her so unhappy?” (87). Ken answers in a way that means it does not matter anymore because she is gone: “She’s happy now, . . . Let her go. Let her rest” (ibid.), a phrase that depicts nothing can be done for the dead after their suicide; nothing can compensate for the disastrous happening. In order to extend the effects of the melancholic incorporation and at the same time to increase the audience’s awareness of the external reality, the play depicts the scene of suicide to impact the performative malady of it. Andy describes the suicide scene right before Julia’s ghost appears to Joe, and he, as the

stage directions indicate, “*stares intently at someone only he can see*” (86). Here is the suicide scene presented in verbal images:

Andy I remember standing in the doorway there . . . and the first thing I registered in the darkness was the bedspread. The last time I’d seen it, it had been white. Only now it wasn’t white it was – red. And I thought, oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus Christ. What has she done? She can’t have done it. . . She was hidden by the bed. But then as I moved in, I saw . . . She was . . . She looked as if she’d lain on the bed for a bit and – I think she must have been in that much pain she – It looked as if she’d tried to get up – maybe for help . . . Only she’d sort of slipped, you see, and was just lying there. They weren’t just sleeping pills she’d taken – she’d swallowed every bloody thing she could lay her hands on – she was bleeding from her mouth and her stomach . . . she must have been in such awful pain and I remember saying, over and over, no, no, no, no, no, no! (83-84)

Haunting Julia can be read as the visualization of Butler’s theory of performativity as it presents Julia as a body that matters, rather than a body that should be normalized according to the social norms. This perspective Butler has adopted in her 2004 book, *Undoing Gender*, in which the non-normative bodies’ legibility is emphasized (29–30). Genius bodies as Julia of the play, can live a precarious life because of not being able to control the influence of those (in the case of Julia the influence of her father on her life) who may seem to be caring about them but actually do them harm,. As Butler affirms: “That our very survival can be determined by those over whom there is no final control means that life is precarious, and it is politics that must consider what forms of social and political organization seek best to sustain precarious lives across the globe” (2004, 23). While highlighting the social threat, Butler acknowledges that “the struggle to rework the norms by which bodies are experienced” is being considered crucial for politics and movements “as they contest forcibly imposed ideals of what bodies ought to be like” (2004, 28). Thus, individuals, such as the father figure in Ayckbourn’s play, who unconsciously act according to social norms do not act properly and harmlessly, and Butler even calls the suicides of their loved ones, “killing someone” who lives “outside the sheltering norms” (Butler, 2004, 34).

Haunting Julia emphasizes that what Joe has, as a father, done to his genius daughter is part of a larger system, which Butler is critical of. As Andy says: “Poor kid. She’d

been under stone so long she couldn't face the daylight" (69). By 'stone' Andy refers to "a sad couple full of pride for a child with a talent they couldn't really appreciate or understand. The parents of Little Miss Mozart" and by 'daylight' he means that Julia had finally decided to "forgive them for all the things she felt they'd done to her" and she wanted to live without "treating them as a threat" (66). However, we should note that Andy is also unconsciously a part of the system that tries to suppress those "outside the sheltering norms" (Butler, 2004, 34). Andy could not accept Julia as she was, and expected her to behave as an ordinary girlfriend, acknowledge his feelings and respond to them:

Andy Over twelve months I'd been coming round here. . . . Sitting with her while she worked, sharpening her pencils, cooking for her . . . weathering all her sarcasm and her put-downs. I just adored her. I used to sit and watch her work for hours. She wasn't even aware of me. And all this beautiful music just pouring out of her. . . . But even so, you know, you can't hold on to your feelings for ever, can you? Not if the other person won't accept them, won't even acknowledge that you have them? If every time you try and touch them, . . . they practically bite your hand off – you tend to lose heart, don't you? (*Haunting Julia*, 67)

The night before Julia's suicide, Andy, who has been meeting another girl for a while, tells Julia that he is breaking their relationship, he is leaving her and will not come to see her anymore. This happens while Julia had finally decided to gradually learn to accept his love, forgive her parents and thus compromise on these matters with the system: "There she was, the minute I came in, standing just there, so excited. Actually waiting. For me. She'd even brushed her hair. Tidied the room. And the worst thing of all – it was the first thing I saw when I came in – she'd made that bed. Clean sheets" (67). Andy thinks it is "too late" (70) for change and he eventually tells her that night that he is leaving her. This behavior gives the last fatal blow to Julia's vulnerability, and she decides to demonstrate final resistance towards the pressures of the whole system by the act of self-destruction. Andy blames the parents without realizing his own part among the reasons of why Julia took her life.



Illustration 4 Andy, Julia's student boyfriend or an unrequited admirer of her, tells Joe and Ken about the horrible suicide scene that he witnessed in the morning that he went back to make things up with Julia (source: Queen's Theatre Hornchurch)

Even Ken, the janitor and friend of Julia, unknowingly tried to make her fit into a prescribed social framework: “(smiling) We used to say to her when she was down with us, now Julie, the rules here are you must say please and you have to say thank you. And you have to try and smile at least once every five minutes. Otherwise it’s Liberty Hall. (He laughs.)” (*Haunting Julia*, 66). Later in the play, in response to Andy, who says he is married now and has two kids who are “long way short of being a genius”, Ken considers it a “blessing”: “**Ken:** It has its blessings, doesn’t it? Being ordinary like you and me? **Andy:** (uncertainly) Yes” (70). It can be understood in a Butlerian framework that Julia, as a talented girl, does not affirm Ken’s views on being blessed by an ordinary child. The play highlights the fact that Julia’s body is among the bodies that fail “the regulatory norms that govern the materialization and naturalization of bodies” (Wald, 211).

The ending of *Haunting Julia* presents an ambivalent melancholic father who cannot respect the division between life and death, materiality and immateriality, and external and internal reality. The performativity of suicide indicates a performative

melancholia that results in the father's desire to resurrect the lost daughter, and presents all the characters as part of a system that cannot understand or appreciate a vulnerable talented body. Regarding Butler's theory of performativity through suicide and melancholia, Ayckbourn's play makes melancholic incorporation appear in the character of the father who believed that "[he] tried so hard" (87) to provide what he thought was a good life for her daughter. The play also presented the characters of a boyfriend and a friend whose answers to a Butlerian question such as "what makes a life livable?" (Butler, 2004, 39) are being what system considers ordinary and normal. According to Butler, this question means that there are "certain conditions that must be fulfilled for life to become life" (ibid). These conditions "intervene at the start, which establish minimum conditions for a livable life with regard to human life" (ibid). The right question to ask is "what humans require in order to maintain and reproduce the conditions of their own livability and what are our politics such that we are, in whatever way is possible, both conceptualizing the possibility of the livable life, and arranging for its institutional support? (Butler, 2004, 39).

4.2. *Portia Coughlan* (1996) by Marina Carr: The Suicide of a Melancholic, Violent mother

Among the successful and strong women dramatists of the nineties whose works made their way easily into London theatres is Marina Carr. As Luckhurst affirms, during the nineties "Irish plays were very much in vogue in London" (2002, 69), and although Marina Carr is born and raised in Ireland and cannot be assigned to the category of British dramatists, "her impact on the London stage in the 1990s was profound" (Luckhurst, 2002, 69). Her award-winning play, *Portia Coughlan*, "premiered at Dublin's Peacock Theatre in 1996, . . . and subsequently was transferred to the main stage of London's Royal Court Theatre" (Wald, 184). Marina Carr writes differently from other Irish dramatists of the nineties and earlier. Rather than focusing on Irish nationalism and trying to intensify nationalistic pride to disturb the dominance of the British empire over Ireland, *Portia Coughlan* presents a depressed woman who wants to be dead because she feels she cannot continue to live without the love of her twin brother, Gabriel. Gabriel has committed suicide fifteen years ago. Portia and Gabriel are part of each other's being, and Portia's severe

feeling of loneliness, her inability to love her husband and children and her problematic relationship with her parents, are finalized with her act of self-destruction by drowning, as Gabriel had drowned himself fifteen years earlier. Luckhurst describes the story as “extraordinarily haunting, consummately well-constructed, and the richest poetic play of the decade” (2002, 69).

The three women protagonists of Marina Carr’s plays of the nineties kill themselves, and Sweeney refers to “fatalism” as the most impressive feature of Carr’s works, where “female protagonists Mai (*The Mai*, 1994), Portia (*Portia Coughlan*, 1996) and Hester Swain (*By the Bog of Cats*, 1998) each commit suicide” (184). *Portia Coughlan* has probably the darkest tone, content, and the bleakest atmosphere of these plays, reflecting the destructiveness of problematic family relationship and gender division over the vulnerable central character who tries to resist the boundaries but is finally defeated by suicide. According to Sweeney, the outstanding elements that can be found in Carr’s *Portia Coughlan* are: “gender behaviour and relationships, story-telling, twinning/mirroring of characters and the staging of marginalized or extreme characters” (190). Luckhurst also refers to Carr’s exceptional, compelling and realistic portrayal of the silenced, inarticulate female characters, as Portia: “Carr’s ear for the rhythms of language is precise, her debt to Beckett clear, and there is no one who can currently match her moving portrayals of the inarticulate. For the moment she seems to be one of the few playwrights who can blend poetics with realism in ways that are startlingly evocative” (Luckhurst, 2002, 69). Sihra in the article, “‘Nature Noble or Ignoble’: Woman, Family, and Home in the Theatre of Marina Carr”, draws attention to the performativity of body and gender in Carr’s plays which challenges the conventional representations of women identity. She writes: “The plays of Marina Carr focus on the family and female subjectivity in particular, renegotiating limiting cultural notions of ‘woman’ as idealized Mother-figure and symbol of nation and addressing issues of sexuality, gender, and the body” (2005, 133).

There are supernatural elements in the play which somehow intensify the representation of psychological disturbance of Portia. A male voice singing is present throughout the play and Portia is the only character who can hear it. Carr’s plays, as

Sweeney confirms, “took on a very different direction after the early 1990s”, and in spite of the use of supernatural elements, the play has “a specificity of character and plot and a form closer to realism” (202). Sweeney also refers to the “problems of marketing Carr’s dark vision of Ireland” (202), and the fact that the psychological side of the play, depression, melancholia, violent behaviors and suicide, are undoubtedly most efficacious. The depiction of a very deep effectual and realistic psychological characterization is not common among the traditional Irish plays. Here is an example of a play that shares the same date of premiere with *Portia Coughlan*, and also includes suicide: Marie Jones’ 1996 play, *Stones in His Pockets*, is about a small rural town in Ireland and a male teenager who fills his pockets with stones and drowns himself after being humiliated by an offensive film star, who is at the town with a group of Hollywood actors and directors to make a film and they use many of the townspeople as extras in the film. Through the suicide of an Irish teenager, the play primarily reflects issues related to nationalism and socio-political problems and conflicts.

One of the few character-based psychological plays among the traditional Irish plays that also include the theme of suicide of the female protagonist is the play called *Sive* (1959) by the Irish writer John B. Keane. This example is mentioned here since it has the psychological resolution of the suicide of a young woman and the theme of hopeless love in common with *Portia Coughlan*. When *Sive*, an illegitimate young girl, is forced to marry someone against her will, the pain, poverty, and anger pushes her to make the desperate decision of suicide. *Sive* and *Portia Coughlan* are both psychologically intensified plays. Despite reflecting various harmful social and cultural issues, such as illegitimacy in *Sive* and incest in *Portia Coughlan*, these plays do not aim at reawakening the Irish emotions of fighting against political injustices. They are the depictions of the psychological falls of the two young female protagonists that have suffered a lot. Portia is a very unique woman character whose love for her brother is beyond a sisterly love. The play shows that the Irish society and its cultural norms forbid this kind of love and considers it incest. Portia is deeply suffering and expresses her melancholia by the words as “I can’t breathe anymore!” (248) in the day before her suicide. The terror of expressing her feelings towards her

brother in a male-dominant environment and the torment of her loss is so profound that everything, except meeting Gabriel in death, loses its meaning for her.

The psychoanalytic notions are incorporated in the performativity theory of Judith Butler, and the psychoanalytical definition of melancholia, as Wald expresses, is the psychological rejection of “loss”, which drowns the individual in persistent “grief” and intensified vulnerability:

In its psychoanalytical meaning, melancholia can be understood as a specific traumatic formation, since it describes the psychic reaction to an experience of loss which the subject, as in the case of traumatising, does not fully register. Rather than accepting the loss, the subject remains in a state of disavowed or suspended grief that keeps the lost object present by psychic means. The contemporary cultural preoccupation with melancholia on the one hand draws on this psychoanalytic notion of melancholia. On the other, it displays a persistent fascination with melancholia as a state of sadness that involves heightened sensitivity. (Wald, 3)

Butler has employed this psychoanalytic definition of melancholia in her analyses of social and cultural issues and characterizes her notions about gender formations as a form of social and cultural melancholia. Butler first developed her theory of melancholy in *Gender Trouble* (1990, 73–91) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993, 93–120), and then expanded it in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997, 132–98). In the chapter “Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification” in *The Psychic Life of Power*, we read about gender melancholia being a kind of unresolved grief for a lost object. The present chapter of the dissertation focuses on the dramatic realm of Butler’s cultural adaptation of melancholia and the aim is to find out how the selected play, *Portia Coughlan*, employs a concept of melancholia that can result in suicide and what kind of a role does melancholia have in the performativity of suicide. Portia’s departure by suicide is an extreme representation of the expression of female subjectivity. The performativity of suicide in the play projects psychic pain of a woman protagonist and criticizes the restrictive models of femininity of the time which increase and intensify the vulnerability of a woman. Portia tries to resist the gendered restrictions of her society and the dominance given to the role of mother, but eventually kills herself. Here is explored the relation between the performativity of suicide and representation of melancholia as a “performative malady” (Wald, 4) in

Portia Coughlan, by basing the argument on the performative quality of Butler's theory of gender identity, which argues that "[T]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender" (Butler, 1990, 33).

Gender identity has the quality of being performative, and this "model of gender as an ongoing, performative activity, which Butler has developed in her writings since the late 1980s, participates in and has considerably contributed to the cultural and academic fascination with issues of performance and performativity" (Wald, 5). At the same time, during the 1990s, depression¹² and melancholia can be frequently found in drama and while the performative malady of melancholia has gained cultural significance, its interplay with the performativity of suicide has become very illuminating. Wald even considers it a genre, and emphasizes that, "'The Drama of Melancholia' as a genre" has "evolved since the late 1980s" and has "not lost significance to the present day" (5). Butler's books from *Gender Trouble* (1990) to *Undoing Gender* (2004) all include the psychoanalytical concept of melancholia to give an innovative attraction to the ignored parts of gender performativity. *Portia Coughlan* is being looked upon here from this perspective of the relation among performativity of suicide, Butler's gender performativity and melancholia.

In Carr's play, we see that the protagonist's reaction to the suicide of her brother has an impact on her gender performance. Portia cannot accept the loss of her brother whom she loved, and she is so much indulged in her memories of him that Gabriel is almost still present for her and she can even hear him sing. This situation of desperately preserving the dead and mourning for them through rejection of their absence can be very sorrowful and melancholic (Wald, 161). What is depicted in the play even goes beyond Portia's mourning and melancholia. We also see her gendered reaction to the death of her brother which is followed by her identification with or incarnation of Gabriel. Butler's theory of performativity and melancholia can help us understand this effect of the resurrection of Gabriel on Portia's gender and her eventual suicide. But before Butler, touching upon Freud's concept of melancholia will be useful.

¹² The concept of melancholia is replaced with the notion of depression in current medical theory. They are diagnostically under the same category, but Wald believes that depression "is not invested with the same cultural meanings as melancholia" (162).

The concept of melancholia, as established by Freud in his 1917 work, *Mourning and Melancholia*, has symptoms such as not being able to love anyone, being passive towards the surroundings and feeling painful sadness. When the subject cannot accept the loss of a loved one, it cannot withdraw its attachment to the dead and begins to have hallucinations about the presence of the dead one: “This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (Freud, 1917, 244). Under normal conditions, the subject gradually begins to accept the reality through mourning for a while and then the attachment to the lost one begins to be transferred to the alive ones. However, in melancholia these “orders cannot be obeyed” and the subject fails in “reality-testing” (Freud, 1917, 245). The lost one is thereby gradually illustrated and preserved within the ego of the melancholic person, who eventually begins to identify with the lost one (Freud, 1917, 249-51). As it will be explained, Butler critically modified this concept of Freud’s melancholic incorporation.

Freud in “The Ego and the Id”, considers the impact of the identifications on a child practically abiding and ego constituting. But the effects of the identifications on an adult can alter depending on the ego’s “capacity for resistance, which decides the extent to which a person’s character fends off or accepts the influences of the history of its object choices” (Freud, 1923, 29). This concept of melancholia by Freud somehow describes the behaviour of Portia in a drama of melancholia. Regarding Freud’s explanations, Portia’s reaction to the suicide of her brother has melancholic qualities, since Portia is an adult that cannot resist the desire of identifying with Gabriel after his death, cannot transfer her desire to an alive person and begins a hallucinatory resurrection of her dead brother. However, the suicidal effects of the resurrection of the dead on the protagonist’s gender can be better explained by using Butler’s concept of melancholia rather than Freud’s. When the melancholic protagonist cannot respect the reality of loss, we see that the play “creates an onstage reality that agrees with the melancholic perception of the protagonist” (Wald, 166).

“Gender itself might be understood in part as the ‘acting out’ of unresolved grief” (Butler, 1997, 146). So, Butler argues that maintaining your gender in a society that

promotes and prefers heterosexuality is a melancholic activity. She criticizes Freud for his tacit heteronormativity which is the assumption that the feminine and masculine dispositions can be definitely decided about girls and boys. Butler asks, how this assumption is possible while Freud develops his notions acknowledging that “the child achieves its gender” through “the identifications at work in the Oedipus complex”? (Wald, 167). Butler makes an interesting point here by suggesting that Freud is not clear enough about whether the origin of gender is biological or psychic:

But what is the proof that Freud gives us for the existence of such dispositions? If there is no way to distinguish between the femininity acquired through internalizations and that which is strictly dispositional, then what is to preclude the conclusion that all gender-specific affinities are the consequence of internalizations? (Butler, 1990, 78).

Butler then uses these questions to suggest that rather than being inborn, a gender disposition takes shape by the effect of the psychological and social processes: “dispositions are not primary sexual facts of the psyche, but produced effects of a law imposed by culture” (Butler, 1990, 81). According to Butler, this social law not only forbids homosexuality but also considers incest a taboo. Wald clarifies Butler’s argument as follows: “Butler argues that prior to the (exclusively heterosexual) incest taboo, the prohibition of homosexuality must exist, and that this prohibition causes the heterosexual gender ‘dispositions’ through which the Oedipus complex then becomes possible” (168). Butler believes that in Freud’s theory of melancholic incorporation, the subject loses two objects of desire, both the same-sex parent and the opposite-sex parent. Using Freud, Butler argues that both these losses are repressed and left “ungrieved” in early childhood: “[from this twofold repression] a culture of gender melancholy in which masculinity and femininity emerge as the traces of ungrieved and ungrievable love [is ensued]; indeed, where masculinity and femininity are strengthened through the repudiations that they perform” (1997, 140).

Therefore, loss is melancholic and this melancholy, according to Butler, causes both the child’s incorporation of the lost parent and the child’s incorporation of the lost one’s gender. In this way, Butler tries to oppose Freud by saying that gender is not completely “foundational” (Butler, 1990, 82) in a biological sense, and the

heteronormative environment also determines the new-born child's gender. Here is Wald's clarification of these arguments: "Butler reverses Freud's causal narrative and argues that Freud's sexual dispositions are . . . effects of the taboo of homosexuality. . . . Butler's concern is not to contest anatomic and hormonal differences, but to question their cultural classifications, evaluations, interpretations, and explanations, especially those that validate ideological positions (such as heteronormativity) by referring to 'biological facts' as if these were independent of cultural notions" (168).

Butler, however, agrees with Freud about the process of melancholic incorporation which can have physical symptoms or include a physical incarnation of gender. She asserts that the child's melancholic incorporation of his/her parent can go beyond the psychological realm and reveal physical symptoms: "If the identifications sustained through melancholy are 'incorporated', then the question remains: Where is this incorporated space? If it is not literally within the body, perhaps it is *on* the body as its surface signification such that the body must itself be understood *as* an incorporated space" (Butler, 1990, 86). So, the body of a melancholic person can literally change and what is assumed to be the fantasy of incorporation or a fantasy that presents itself as reality (Butler calls it "literalizing fantasy"), turns into an actual incarnation of a lost object (Butler calls it "natural fact") (1990, 89). In other words, when the body experiences melancholic incorporation, it becomes part of an interaction between social ejection of homosexuality and psychological feeling of loss. While the social and cultural perception of bodies divides them into distinct sexes of male or female, the psychic experience of loss causes the subject to have a physical assumption of a gender.

So, Butler rejects the idea of the full determination of gender by child's melancholic incorporation of parent and assumes that gender is determined by the unconscious repetitions or by the constant ongoing process of acting out. This is the same as her idea of performativity, a process in which the materialization of the body is never fully complete. The performativity of gender is quite a repetitive and ritualized activity, and "'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or a statistic condition of a body, but a process whereby

regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms" (Butler, 1993, 1–2). In Butler's model of performativity, the subject and his/her psyche are formed and performed by norms and discourses. This is why Wald calls Butler's theory of gender melancholia "performative malady", which means "an ongoing, largely unconscious form of acting out (of unresolved grief) which performatively fabricates gendered and sexed bodies" (170).

Instead of showing the beginning stages of gender assumption in child's first melancholic incorporation, Carr's play presents the maintenance of gender through the later stages of melancholia which can complicate the first assumptions about gender self-identity. Portia, the melancholic female protagonist of the play, who deeply incorporates her lost twin brother, features the effects of a cross-gender identification on her gender performance and the play shows how far Portia's incorporation of Gabriel can go. Butler's theory of performativity of gender, proposing a direct relation between gender identity and melancholia, seems very useful in this reading of the play, and from now on, I will focus on the play itself and try to show that Portia's suicide is the result of her performative malady and its effect on her gender identification, and psychological and physical transformation. Portia is psychologically and physically fused with her dead twin brother and the play focuses on her unconscious melancholic experience that both resists and violates gender norms and increases her vulnerability to the point of suicide. The performativity of suicide in this drama of melancholia is the performance of an ambiguous psychic disturbance moving back and forth between undermining gender norms and surrendering to them.

The play opens with the thirtieth birthday of Portia, for whom it is a death anniversary rather than a birth celebration, since she has lost her twin brother fifteen years ago on the same day. Gabriel committed suicide on their fifteenth birthday, and Portia still constantly talks about her brother through memories, which are sometimes not even true. Portia's desperate situation is also presented in her drinking in the early morning. She cannot accept her loss and still lives obsessively with her false memories of her twin brother: "though everything' tells me I have to forget him, I cannot" (*Portia Coughlan*, 255). Gabriel is still alive in Portia's melancholic

psyche and the play demonstrates this state by making Gabriel appear as a ghost that sings, for many times throughout the play. There are many comments about Portia's appearance and behaviour that bring the issue of gender into mind. For instance, her mother, Marianne, aggressively complains, "you were never taught how to Hoover a room or dust a mantel; bloody disgrace, that's what ya are" (209). Raphael, her husband is annoyed by the fact that Portia is different: "It's not normal the way you are talkin' and thinkin', not normal at all" (234). Her aunt, Maggie, and her uncle, Senchil, think that Portia is in a "queer mood" and "lonely in herself" (200). Portia's lover, Damus, ruthlessly calls her "bitchy" (202), "cracked" (203), and "strange bird" (224). Even the stage directions ask Portia to "erupt like a madwoman" (221). All these comments and accusations strengthen the gender construction of the female protagonist.



Illustration 5 A scene from Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*, which shows Portia barefoot, smoking, staring forward, and ignoring her husband, Raphael, who walks around impatiently and reminds Portia that their children need her care (source: The Old Red Lion Theatre)

Gabriel, before and after his death, seems to have the power to control Portia's whole life and decisions. Portia has completely surrendered herself to her twin brother's ghostly spell. For example, Gabriel is very important in Portia's selection of a

husband for marriage. She marries Raphael because his name, like Gabriel's, was an angel's name and she hoped that Raphael would someday be like Gabriel. Portia explains:

Do ya know the only reason I married Raphael? Not because you and daddy says I should, not because he was rich, I care nothin' for money, naw. The only reason I married Raphael was because of his name, a angel's name, same as Gabriel's, and I thought be osmosis or just pure wishin' that one'd take the qualities of the other. But Raphael is not Gabriel and never will be (210).

Although she decidedly selects Raphael to marry, the reasons Portia gives for marrying him, show that she is also selected by him. According to Wald, it means that her melancholic conduct is a combination of performing and being performed: "The ambivalence of choosing and being chosen is central to the performative malady of melancholia, which . . . unites modes of performing and of being performed" (185). Portia has not been able to find a substitute for her loss and reacts scornfully towards Raphael who has not fulfilled her wishes: "I despise you, Raphael Coughlan, with your limp and your cheap suits and your slow ways. I completely and utterly despise you for what you are in yourself, but more for who you will never be" (222). She also calls him "useless" (222) since neither physically nor emotionally he has been able to be a remedy for her grief. As Wald clarifies, Raphael cannot heal Portia's melancholia since he also needs to be healed: "While the archangel Raphael personifies the power of healing, Raphael Coughlan's physical deficiency, his limp, foregrounds his own vulnerability and his need for rather than power of healing" (Wald, 185).

The characteristics that Freud attributes to melancholia are, for instance, "a profoundly painful dejection", "inhibition of all activity", "cessation of interest in the outside world", "loss of the capacity to love", and "a lowering of the self-regarding feelings" (1917, 244). Portia displays all these melancholic characteristics in her gloomy speeches, not having any control over her life, and not being able to love her husband. She should have been able to transfer her love and desire for her dead brother to a new person, but she could not do so, since she is still being directed by the past. Portia's past is now her present and they work as the kind of norms that,

Butler believes, govern gender; they both “constrain and enable life” and they “designate in advance what will and will not be a livable existence” (Butler, 2001, 3). Portia can hear Gabriel’s loud singing voice and believes that she is receiving messages from him: “I can hear him comin’ towards me, can hear him callin’ me” (251). Gabriel is, physically and emotionally, still a clear part of the present for Portia and the opening image of the play is a vivid portrayal of this presence and thus Portia’s melancholic state. The scene shows two bright spots, different settings, but no border between them. It highlights the penetrable space between Portia’s living room and Gabriel’s suicide setting, the Belmont River:

Two isolating lights up. One on Portia Coughlan in her living room. . . . Dishevelled and barefoot, she stands, staring forward, a drink in her hand; curtains closed. The other light comes up simultaneously on Gabriel Scully, her dead twin. He stands at the bank of the Belmont River, singing. They mirror one another’s posture and movements in an odd way; unconsciously. Portia stands there, drinking, lost-looking, listening to Gabriel’s voice. Enter Raphael Coughlan, Portia’s husband. . . . He stands there, unnoticed by Portia, ... As soon as he speaks Gabriel’s voice fades. Lights on Raphael. (193)

Portia exists and performs in interaction with her past and present. Gabriel’s voice sometimes fades with the coming of a character from the play’s real world, such as Raphael, and sometimes Portia is simultaneously talking to other characters and hearing the ghostly song of her dead brother. For instance, in Act I, scene ii, “*Gabriel’s voice has come over and taken her away*” (200), while Portia continues talking with her aunt and uncle. So, as Wald presents, Portia can never fully indulge in hallucinations of Gabriel: “despite Portia’s desire to dwell in her (aural) hallucinations, she is never fully able to do so (187). She cannot separate herself entirely from the real world and this connection, that she cannot rip of, prevents her from what she hopelessly desire, recovering her twin brother’s lost presence. Gabriel’s fading voice shows that Portia, while living, cannot reach Gabriel and be with him; her real world intensifies her vulnerability by not leaving her alone enough to feel Gabriel: “*We hear the sound of Gabriel’s voice. Portia wakes to this. It grows fainter, she strains to hear it. It stops. Portia . . . lights a cigarette*” (*Portia Coughlan*, 232). We see Portia always struggling very hard to recuperate Gabriel, but the ghost escapes her. When Portia psychologically performs in reality, Gabriel’s

voice “fades” (*Portia Coughlan*, 235). She cannot even once see Gabriel’s ghost, whose appearance is very illusive in the play. The following scene displays this situation:

Sound of Gabriel singing. Portia registers this, runs from the living room. Gabriel appears by the bank of the Belmont River. Disappears as Portia arrives, out of breath. Sound of singing fades. She looks around. Silence, except for the flowing river and birdsong. Damus stands there watching her, unobserved.

Portia: Can’t ya leave me alone or present yourself before me? . . .
(close to tears) Do ya miss me at all? (235)



Illustration 6 Portia desperately desiring a reunion with her dead twin brother, Gabriel (source: The Old Red Lion Theatre)

Portia is only able to visualize her deep desire of being fused with Gabriel in her dreams: “I dreamt about him again last night, was one of the dreams as is so real you think it’s actually happenin’. Gabriel had come to dinner here and after he got up to leave and I says, ‘Gabriel, stay for the weekend,’ but Gabriel demurs out of politeness to me and Raphael. And I says, ‘Gabriel, it’s me, Portia, your twin, don’t be polite, there’s no need with me’ – And then he turns and smiles and I know he’s goin’ to stay and me heart blows open and stars fall out of me chest as happens in

dreams” (210–11). These dreams demonstrate how Portia’s melancholic state functions. She lives in two different worlds, her internal world, in which Gabriel is still alive and with her, and the external world, in which Gabriel is forever dead and lost. In her performative melancholic state, both worlds are real. The internal world can be considered her past, that she yearns for, but which can never be back again. As Wald comments: “Gabriel’s appearances thus illustrate the paradoxical status of the past for Portia, which intrudes, as typical of melancholia, into the present but yet remains irrecoverable (Wald, 187).

The severity of Portia’s melancholia is also emphasized by the many references to the twin’s close bodily connection. According to Wald: “The device of congruent body language and mirroring, . . . signifies the onset of melancholic incorporation” (188). Though fifteen years has passed from Gabriel’s suicide, Portia still identifies herself with him and passionately claims that their movements were in unison even before they were born. Conjuring physical and psychological similarity with the dead, as in Portia’s case, signifies the intensity of her vulnerable and desperate state, and thus foreshadows her suicide. The stage direction of the very first scene refers to the twin’s similarity: “They mirror one another’s posture and movements in an odd way; unconsciously” (193). Then Portia promotes this similarity:

Portia: [S]ometimes I think only half of me is left, the worst half. . . . We were so alike, weren’t we, Mother?

Marianne: The spit; couldn’t tell yees apart in the cradle.

Portia: Came out of the womb holdin’ hands – When God was handin’ out souls he must’ve got mine and Gabriel’s mixed up, aither that or he gave us just the one between us and it went into the Belmont River with him (*Begins to weep uncontrollably.*) (210-211)

Portia even takes her memories of physical and gestural unison with her twin brother beyond the time that she can ever possibly remember anything. She reveals her fantasies about having sexual union with Gabriel in their mother’s womb. Portia both yearns to return to that assumed blissful past and knows that this origin is irrecoverable and deeply grieves for it (“only half of me is left” (210)). According to Schor, a melancholic person can display such a desire: “Ultimately the sadness of the melancholic involves an impossible desire: the desire to make love with the dead”

(1996, 14). Thus, fantasizing an incestuous relationship with her dead brother is another indication of her desperate melancholic state. She vulnerably incorporates her loss through her visions of her past psychological and sexual oneness with Gabriel. Here is Portia's "myth-like" (Wald, 188) expression of her feelings:

I think we were doin' it before we were born. Times I close me eyes and I feel a rush of water around me and above we hear the thumpin' of me mother's heart, and we're a-twined, his foot on my head, mine on his foetal arm, and we don't know which of us is the other and don't want to, and the water swells around our ears, and all the world is Portia and Gabriel packed forever in a tight hot womb, where there's no breathin', no thinkin', no seein', only darkness and heart drums and touch. (253-4)

Portia claims that she remembers the time when she and her twin brother did not know and did not want to know which of them was the other, and this started before they were even born, or before they were separated after being born. In Portia's psyche, her femininity and Gabriel's masculinity have no boundaries, because "their sexed and gendered positions" have already "dissolved and exchanged" (Wald, 190). Again, in the following extract, earlier to the above scene, Portia rejects the idea of separate bodies and "troubles the binarism of discrete sexes and genders" (Wald, 189). Portia uses both the present tense and past tense in the telling of her memories, which emphasizes the importance of the past and its ongoing effect and importance in the present: "Everythin's swapped and mixed up and you're either two persons or you're no one. He used call me Gabriel and I used call him Portia. Times we got so confused we couldn't tell who was who and we'd wait for someone else to identify us und put us back into ourselves" (241). The barman Fintan and Portia's lover, Damus, refer to Gabriel's femininity, while talking to each other after Portia's suicide, and looking at the same spot by the Belmont River, where both the twins committed suicide. Gabriel "looked like a girl", "[s]ang like one, too" (224). So, Gabriel's appearance is described as lacking masculinity, while Portia's hysteric weeping and melancholic behaviours are considered non-feminine by her mother: "*Marianne*: If ya passed your day like any normal woman" (211). How Portia passes her days by rejecting the separation of bodies is in accordance with the point that Butler makes in almost all her writings, and it is the point that gender categories are not copies of an original heterosexuality:

The so-called originals — men and women within the heterosexual framework — are similarly constructed and performatively established. So the ostensible copy is not explained through reference to an origin, but the origin is understood to be as performative as the copy. Through performativity, dominant and nondominant gender norms are equalized” (Butler, 2001, 15).

Portia cannot behave according to what is expected from her. Her environment wants her to be a normal woman, wife and mother, and although she wishes that she “could be a natural mother” (233) to her children, she cannot do “the things a mother is supposed to do” (233). She feels no motherly love and affection towards her sons, and she confesses this with the following words: “I never wanted sons nor daughters and I never pretended otherwise to ya; told ya from the start. But ya thought ya could woo me into motherhood. Well, it hasn’t worked out, has it? You’ve your three sons now, so ya better mind them because I can’t love them, Raphael. I’m just not able” (221). Portia’s performativity of suicide is related to her inability to fulfill the gender expectations of those who surround her and force her to feel and behave interested in the real world. As much as Portia feels that she has failed the expectations, her vulnerability increases. It may even seem that she deliberately neglects her sons because she wants to escape the motherhood duties. However, her neglect is due to her fear; she is afraid that she may hurt them. She cannot trust herself since her melancholic state has created “fantasies of violence and infanticide” in her mind (Wald, 190):

I’m afraid of them, Raphael! What I may do to them! Don’t ya understand! Jaysus! Ya think I don’t wish I could be a natural mother, mindin’ me children, playin’ with them, doin’ all the things a mother is supposed to do! When I look at my sons, Raphael, I see knives and accidents and terrible mutilations. Their toys is weapons for me to hurt them with, givin’ them a bath is a place where I could drown them. And I have to run from them and lock myself away for fear I cause these terrible things to happen. Quintin is safest when I’m nowhere near him, so teach him stop whingin’ for me for fear I dash his head against a wall or fling him through a window. (233)

Portia’s relationship with her mother is also troubled. There is no bond of love between them. Marianne confesses: “I wished to God ye’d never been born!”, “Gabriel was the one I loved, never you!” (249), and Portia reveals, “I’ve always

wanted to like ya, mother, but I never could” (247). Portia always looks at her mother with complete hatred and even violently hits her mother twice (248, 250). Maternal affection is lacking in Carr’s play, which questions naturalized notions about woman, motherhood, and femininity in Ireland. Wald mentions that the assumption of ‘natural mother’ in the Irish social context regards the words ‘mother’ and ‘woman’ the same: “How firmly motherhood is built into notions of femininity in Ireland is underpinned by the fact that even to this day the word ‘mother’ is used interchangeably with the word ‘woman’ in the Irish constitution” (191). Portia not only neglects her maternal and domestic duties, as we hear her mother Marianne complaining: “Your home is a mess, your children is motherless.” (248), but also refuses to be sexually faithful to her husband, Raphael. However, she is not emotionally involved in her extra-marital affairs and she uses straightforward and almost rude language in talking with her lover, Damus, and the barman, Fintan. When, for instance, Fintan asks her out for dinner, she answers: “If ya want to screw me, Fintan Goolan, have the decency to ask me like a man instead of fussin’ round me like an auld cluckin’ hen!” (PC 208). Portia, being sexually frank and disinterested in romantic affairs, presents a contradictory image to the traditional assumptions of femininity, and violates gender norms. Her resistance is definitely linked with her vulnerability, since it is Portia’s melancholic yearning for Gabriel that has turned her into a rebel against feminine ideals and normative gender roles: “The play demonstrates the degree to which Portia’s unresolved mourning for her twin brother troubles normative femininity” (Wald, 191).



Illustration 7 Portia's mother, Marianne, complaining about why Portia cannot pass her day like any normal woman (source: The Old Red Lion Theatre)

Portia's long-term grieving over the death of her twin brother, has both made her brave and strong enough to violate the restrictive and traditional gender roles, and vulnerable enough to be a total failure in fulfilling gender roles, and to eventually commit suicide. From a Butlerian point of view, Portia's melancholia is demonstrated as a state of mind that is both performing and being performed. She tries but fails to love and care for her sons. How she behaves with those close to her is always affected by her melancholic obsession with her loss. Her sexual affairs and meetings take place at Belmont river, where she desperately yearns to see her brother's ghost, or at least hear him sing. Here is an extract where Portia answers to her lover's question "What keeps ya comin' here?" as follows: "I come here because I've always come here and I reckon I'll be comin' here long after I'm gone. I'll lie here when I'm a ghost and . . . watch ye earthlin's goin' about yeer pointless days" (203). Later she also claims that she feels no pleasure in sex: "I'm past all pleasures of the body, Damus, long past . . . I've always found sex to be a great let-down, . . . I'd liefer sit by the Belmont River for five seconds than have you or any other man beside me in bed" (236). So, Portia's ideal masculine figure is Gabriel, and no matter dead or alive, no one can compete with him. The imaginary world in which she lives there with Gabriel, whom she assumes herself, is much different for Portia, from the

real world and its harsh boundaries. However, this imaginary world of her and her vision of Gabriel as the most ideal masculine version turns out to be destructive to her.

Portia feels her brother's ghostly presence everywhere: "He's everywhere, Daddy. Everywhere" (213). Gabriel gradually turns out to be a harmful vision that intensifies Portia's vulnerability. Portia's father explains his son in demonic images: "times . . . the thought would go through me mind that this is no human child but some little outcast from hell" (230). Portia's mother refers to how violent and dangerous Gabriel has always been towards his sister: "Gabriel was fierce difficult", "he was obsessed with you! Came out of the womb clutchin' your leg and he's still clutchin' it from wherever he is" (247). Gabriel is also depicted to have a kind of magical control over his sister: "How he used to start ya chokin' by just looking at ya! How he used draw blood from ya whenever ya tried to defy him!" (249). However, Portia still idealizes Gabriel and her vision of their emotional closeness: "Mother, he was doin' them things to himself for he thought I was him" (249). This sentence, according to Wald, "subverts the boundary between self-punishment and aggression towards the other" (192). Portia yearns for a blissful union with her dead twin, and her yearning is also a part of her sense of guilt. In her melancholic incorporation of Gabriel, Portia manifests self-punishment and thus maximizes her vulnerability. As Wald states: "*Portia Coughlan* characterises Portia's melancholic yearning for her brother as moulded by her repressed guilt about his suicide" (193).

Portia, near to her suicide, reveals that she actually lost Gabriel and her physical and emotional bond with him when, fifteen years ago, she slept with Damus. After Portia's sexual betrayal Gabriel stopped singing and talking with her. Moreover, Portia confesses that they had planned to commit suicide together, to preserve their birth union also in death. But in the last moment she decides not to drown herself with him and did not prevent Gabriel from doing so. Portia then accuses her mother for raising her up in Gabriel's shadow. Portia believes that she was always forced to compete with her brother, Gabriel, "something beautiful and rare" (*Portia Coughlan*, 230) with "a voice like God" (*Portia Coughlan*, 216). Marianne also injures her daughter saying: "He had all the gifts and you had none! . . . You were only his

shadow, trailin' after him like a slavish pup" (249). In her utmost vulnerability, she resists her parents' accusations and tries to reject the idea of her guilt in Gabriel's suicide, by emphasizing that she was just trying to survive:

Marianne: And ya didn't stop him?

Portia: Stop him! One of us was goin', were killin' each other, and ye just left us to fight it to the death. Well, we fought it to the death and I won. (251)

...

Portia: I didn't kill your precious Gabriel! (251)

However, Portia feels guilty deep inside. She has incorporated Gabriel, and her melancholic struggle with loss continues in her mind. She is in fact afraid of his coming back and taking revenge: "Mother, I can hear him comin' towards me, can hear him callin' me", " 'Portia,' he says, 'I'm goin' now but I'll come back and I'll keep coming back until I have you.' " (250-251). The fear of punishment is crucial in her act of self-destruction. So, it is revealed that Portia's early demonstrations of a state of unconditional love and closeness with her twin brother, is actually tinted with her deep horror of being guilty of Gabriel's suicide. Eventually, she cannot tolerate Gabriel's menacing presence and kills herself in the way Gabriel had killed himself by drowning. Wald explains Portia's suicide as follows: "Her suicide is as ambivalent as her feelings for Gabriel and her memories of their relationship, since it oscillates between an act of love and an act of hatred" (193). She both attempts to join to their pre-born blissful union and to put an end to this union and her melancholic suffering. Portia's self-destruction also means the destruction of her twin brother, and this is what her psychic wants, since the presence of Gabriel's ghost does not sooth her; the ghost agonizes and threatens her.



Illustration 8 Raphael taking Portia's dead body in his arms, after she is raised out of the Belmont River (source: The Old Red Lion Theatre)

Portia ending her life by drowning in a river, is also meaningful. Gabriel's singing sound can be heard while Portia's corpse is pulled out from "the exact same spot" (*Portia Coughlan*, 224) where Gabriel's dead body was found. The river can metaphorically represent watery womb, where the boundaries of sex and gender are dissolved, and masculinity and femininity are united. In other words, as Sihra explains, the importance of water is in its representation of "resistance to fixity and the solid, where the force of the water offers the possibility of exceeding boundaries, of flooding and diluting dominant structures" (Sihra, 2003, 25). Portia's melancholic incorporation and terribly entrapped and vulnerable psychic state is visualized by her drowning herself in the flowing river, which shows her resistance towards separating femininity and masculinity, the living and the dead, the past and the present from each other.

The play includes two suicides, and Portia's suicide gains even more significance because it is related to an earlier suicide. Repetition, in this play, has increased the power of the performativity of this act of self-destruction, and the play warns the audience about the inescapability of such disasters as long as the gender boundaries

and dominant structures remain unresolved. Marianne says after her daughter's corpse is pulled out: "It's happened again. It's happened again" (223). Carr's play highlights a socially imposed vulnerable body, and Portia is a central character that represents vulnerability in resistance. Such resources, according to Butler "develop new modes of collective agency . . . [and] alliance . . . characterized by interdependency" (2016, 81). It is important to understand that Portia's present vulnerability has roots in her past. Her melancholic perception is profoundly preoccupied with the past and her future action responds to her past vulnerabilities. Portia resists social constructions through her melancholic obsession with her pre-born blissful unity with Gabriel, which eventually makes her vulnerable enough to commit suicide. As Sihra emphasizes: "In Carr's plays, female subjectivity is afforded agency through the protagonists' access to sites of imaginative "otherness," be it through storytelling, folktale, poetic expression, or communing with nature and the dead, which offer a powerful means by which to articulate the ontological immobility of their patriarchal relegation to the limited roles of daughter, wife, and mother" (2005, 133). The fate of the twins is the same and Portia's family history repeats itself because her psychic injuries could not be healed and eventually shatters her life.

In the last act, though Portia tries to reconcile with Raphael, the audience know that her attempts are futile, since the previous act has provided a flash forward of her suicide. So, while the audience try to find the reasons for Portia's suicide in the third act, they are also aware that she is unable to change anything about her unfulfilled life as a loveless mother and wife. What is expected from her, Portia cannot imagine becoming, through anything other than the act of self-destruction. Even she predicts that after her death, her ghost will still ramble around the river. She imagines herself as a living dead: "I reckon I'll be comin' here long after I'm gone. I'll lie here when I'm a ghost and smoke ghost cigarettes and watch ye earthlin's goin' about yeer pointless days" (203). Although it is Gabriel who appears as a ghost, Portia also seems not to be a fully real figure and has some ghostly character. She both communicates with other characters and hears the ghost of Gabriel singing. Thus, as Wald explains, "Portia is placed between the untroubled 'realness' of the other characters and the 'etherealness' of Gabriel. Portia's final words affirm her status as

a figure that oscillates between the solidness and realness represented by her husband Raphael and the elusiveness and ethereality represented by Gabriel” (197). Portia, in her final words, tells that she was attracted by Raphael’s realness, and wanted him to notice her, so that she can enter the real world, or she can exist outside of her imaginary world:

I seen you long before you ever seen me, seen ya fishin’ one Sunday afternoon and the stillness and sureness that came off of you was a balm to me, and when I asked who ya were and they said that’s Raphael Coughlan, I thought, how can anyone with a name like that be so real, and I says to meself, if Raphael Coughlan notices me I will have a chance to enter the world and stay in it, which has always been a battle for me. (255)

Finally, Portia’s melancholic state positions her between being a body that matters (a material figure) and being a body that does not matter (an ethereal figure). As I have presented in the theory chapter, Butler offers explanations about the bodies that matter and the bodies that do not matter in terms of sex and gender. She interrogates the distinctions made between materialized bodies (bodies that society considers normative since they behave according to established norms) and immaterialized bodies (bodies that are considered to behave in unruly ways). Butler lays out the meaning of normativity as follows:

Normativity refers to the process of normalization, the way that certain norms, ideas, and ideals hold sway over embodied life and provide coercive criteria for normal ‘men’ and ‘women’. And . . . when we defy these norms, it is unclear whether we are still living, or ought to be; whether our lives are valuable, or can be made to be; whether our genders are real, or can ever be regarded as such (Butler, 2001, 3).

Thus, the play questions the accepted notions about normative bodies that behave in a culturally appropriate way to their sexed body and unruly bodies that act or even fantasize non-normative behavior. *Portia Coughlan* applies this Butlerian interrogation of the materiality and immateriality of bodies through the performativity of Portia’s ambivalent body. Portia, rejecting the boundary between her dead brother and her own living body and by her eventual suicide, repudiates the border between those gendered bodies that matter and those that do not matter. According to Wald, “Butler’s theory offers an explanatory pattern for the twins’

[Portia and Gabriel's] ambivalent bodies, which oscillate between materiality and immateriality as well as between normative bodies and an unruly anatomy of melancholia" (197). Thus, the Butlerian point, which elaborates that bodies are being continually materialized by the society's regulatory norms that govern two discrete genders, shows the danger of the norms. Such a system, according to Butler, excludes those bodies that behave out of the norms, and keeps them as immaterialized bodies or bodies that do not matter. Portia's melancholic incorporation and bodily desire of being merged with her brother is demonstrated as a performative psychic process. The protagonist's performative grief and suicide destabilizes the border between material and immaterial presences and between femininity and masculinity. In this way, the performativity of suicide in *Portia Coughlan* questions the accepted notions about which bodies matter, while living and dead, and which do not matter, dead or alive.

4.3. *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) by Martin Crimp: Parodic Display of Anne's Vulnerability and Suicide

Martin Crimp is the enigmatic British dramatist of the nineties and the exceptional translator of French plays, whose name the billboards of the best theatres all over the Europe have carried. Being among the leaders of the New Writing for the British stage during 1990s, he produced his masterpiece, *Attempts on Her Life*, in 1997; the staging of which at the Royal Court Theatre "secured his reputation as the most innovative, most exciting and most exportable playwright of his generation" (Sierz, 2006, 48). *Attempts on Her Life* is one of "the most distinctive and original" plays that demonstrates the controversial world of New Writing system in the nineties (Sierz, 2011, 20). What Sierz calls as "Crimp's dazzlingly experimental play" (2011, 20) includes 17 scenarios, and various unspecified voices in each scenario discuss a different aspect of a character, most of the times called Anne and sometimes Annie, Anya, Anny, Annushka, the character who has enigmatically and most probably committed suicide. We cannot be sure about Anne being a murderer or a victim or both, but each scene builds up a powerful picture of her. The play is replete with dashes that indicate a change of speaker and / indicating where the speech overlaps. It is a mysterious play with an unsettling content, presenting various images of a crushed and disintegrated modern woman, whose life can be interpreted as, has

ended up in suicide. It is a play that has almost no resemblance to a dramatic text, and it is all unclear where it begins, and where it ends; a crumbled piece, with no playlist, no script for the performance, no setting and no names for the characters.



Illustration 9 Nameless characters from Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*, giving interrogating accounts of Anne's life before suicide (source: Zuzu Hudek Design)

The professional capacity of Crimp which disrupts the categories of theatrical order and meaning and “goes beyond traditional forms” (Sierz, 2011, 59), resulted in a play contained of confusingly numerous stories, made up by unnamed characters symbolizing the society's reaction to the probable suicide of the protagonist. Sierz describes the play as follows: “The complexity of the piece highlights the fact that all stories are artificial constructs and also suggests that the contemporary world is too complex to grasp” (2011, 60). Many believe that order and meaning make the functioning of society, as a whole, continue, and they view traditional theatrical categories, which carried order and meaning, as the foundation of interest in theatre. *Attempts on Her Life* places a deconstructed and exploded ‘whole’ before the spectators, so that the diversity of the details and particulars is shockingly revealed.

The chaotic energy of the diverse ‘particulars’, according to Barker, neither forms an intelligible pattern nor discharges any productive ends. Barker has been an influence on Crimp as he explains what his work delivers to, and what it holds back from his audience:

As a form of theatre it is so overloaded with particulars, so apparently excessive in language, metaphor, event, diversity of form and image, so promiscuous in its speculation, it denies the very concept of the ordered life even as an ideal (1993, 122).

No careful management of time and effort Crimp has applied on his play, which is just like how Barker’s ‘promiscuity’ works in his dramatic works. In other words, throughout the play a denial of boundaries is at work, and the categories of knowledge and wisdom are all looked upon in doubt. This results in the creation of a plethora based on ambiguity and individual anxiety, a condition of the play for which even the writer denies taking the responsibility. As Price explains, “‘promiscuous’ theatre is calculated to produce individualized and individualizing anxiety. Barker’s immanent theatre devotes its energies to immanence as action. In place of the ‘good’ or ‘moral’ playwright who serves his society by offering cultural clarification, he commits the untenable sin of blasting apart the hard-won categories of consensual wisdom and refusing to take responsibility for the mess he may leave behind him” (36). The spectators of *Attempts on Her Life* are challenged to pick their way through the seventeen distressing scenarios, and Crimp presents all the different scenarios knowing that most of them have no truth. But he demands his audience to validate their pathway by self-fashioning the performance. Crimp has followed Barker in his speculations upon the responsibility of the playwright; his play is the creation of an artist who feels responsible only for his own imagination:

The dramatist’s obligation becomes an obligation not to a political position . . . but to his own imagination. His function becomes not to educate by his superior political knowledge, for who can trust that? but to lead into moral conflict by his superior imagination . . . In an age of unitary thought and propaganda, this is his first responsibility (Barker, 1993, 48).

Crimp in *Attempts on Her Life* has been successful in his use of the imaginative faculty as an end in itself. The play overtly multiplies the perspectives on a dead woman character. Each of the 17 scenes depicts Anne in a different role. In the first scene she is the absent recipient of numerous telephone messages. Then she is the heroine of a movie. The 15 left scenarios show her as follows: a victim of civil war, a typical customer, a megastar, a tourist guide, a kind of car, a physicist, an international terrorist, as American survivalist, an artist, a refugee's dead child, a victim of aliens, the girl next door, the object of a police investigation, a porn star, and a conversation subject among a group of friends. Any fixed identities or linear narratives are denied and Anne, being a suicidal figure, increases the attacks of Butlerian performativity on limiting definitions, especially while her death has happened under ambiguous conditions, and it is hard to recognize who she was and almost impossible to find a true reason behind her action.

According to how Butler widely and openly discusses in *Undoing Gender*, the social norms govern our gender and identity by trying to sketch recognizable and acceptable personhoods and forcing us to give accounts of coherent identities limited by the recognizable and acceptable personhood sketches created by the norms, even before our birth. Crimp's play frees the audience from any judgmental interpretations that can be related to social norms. This section of the dissertation attempts to show that the play's linguistic performativity disrupts the relationship of the self with ideological belief systems perpetuated by society. The female protagonist's probable suicide and absence in the play is accompanied by the presence of numerous accounts given by unknown figures about her life. The accounts of Anne, which constantly change from one scenario to another, carry no authority, but make the denunciation of the absence of a dead female body in a society which tries to judge her after her suicide, possible. The more the unnamed characters try to give accounts of Anne and condemn her life before suicide, the more Anne becomes unrecognizable to the audience. The spectators hear and watch more than 20 nameless characters on the stage restlessly busy with offering different imaginative images of Anne, which based on Austin's beforehand explained performative theory of speech acts, we can see that each image implies or entails another image and questions its own sincerity. Among the people who talk about Anne are her mother

and father, official interrogators, advertisers, political spokespersons, art critics, film directors, border security guards, show performers, friends, lovers, and abusive followers. Anne has geographically stepped through the globe; she has been seen in distant continents, European capitals, and North African countries. She is sometimes a teenager and sometimes a woman of thirty or forty. In this way, Crimp offers a unique view of the world to the spectator with a play which has no suicide scene or any self-destructed bodies on the stage but is replete with performative assumptions made about Anne and her life after her death through suicide. In the 17th scenario, 'Girl Next Door', one of the two rhymed scenes of the play, Anne is described as everything and the fluid identity of her reaches its climax:

She's the girl next door. She's the fatal flaw. She's the reason for the Trojan War. She is royalty. She practices art. She's a refugee in a horse and cart. She's a pornographic movie star. A killer and a brand of car. A KILLER AND A BRAND OF CAR! She's a terrorist threat. She's a mother of three. She's a cheap cigarette. She's Ecstasy. She's a femme fatale. She's the edge of the knife. She's one helluva gal. She's Intelligent Life. She's a presidential candidate for every little warring state. EVERY LITTLE WARRING STATE! She winters in the south. She collects antiques. She has a big mouth. But she never speaks. She's given a spade at the edge of a wood to dig her own grave by a man in a hood. She drives a tank over neonates while choosing to bank at competitive rates. She bombs by stealth. Has unlimited wealth. White knobbly knees. WHAT? KNOBBLY KNEES? Yes. Knobbly knees. And speaks fluent Japanese. . . . She's an artificial tan. She's the fat in the pan. She's the film in the can. She's the shit in the fan. She's the one who ran when the shooting began. She's a girl with a plan. She's a boy with a man. She's a dyke with a femme. She's a man with a van. She's a dedicated football fan with limited attention span. LIMITED ATTENTION SPAN! She's the predator. She's the god of war. She's the fatal flaw. She's the girl she's the girl. She's the girl she's the girl. She's the girl she's the girl. SHE'S THE GIRL NEXT DOOR! (Crimp, 263-5)

The play's engagement with the dynamics of performativity begins with its title, *Attempts on Her Life*, which immediately brings the questions of who are going to make the attempts and how they are going to do attempts on the female protagonist's life; other questions the title brings into the mind such as should we prioritize some cultural or social violence responsible for the attempts or is the protagonist herself most responsible for the fatal attempt on her life? Crimp's playful questions are also followed in the original text's back-cover blurb, questions such as: "Attempts to describe her? / Attempts to destroy her? / Or attempts to destroy herself? / Is Anne

the object of violence? / Or its terrifying practitioner?” These meditations become multiplied during the play without being answered. There is the possibility of Anne being a mother or a daughter to a terrorist, a tourist hostess, a pornographic star and even a performance artist who takes her suicide attempts onto stage. With these propositions, the play cultivates the capacity of the audience for diverse speculation upon alternative modes of being and the continuous critique of how the modes of being are evaluated within a society, not as an individual’s identity, but as a part of the functioning of that society. Therefore, the performativity masquerading different forms of perception proves how “imagination may differ in response to the cultural context” within which a play is to be received (Price, 38).

The idea is again raised here concerning the role of the playwright which is somehow transformed from being the author of the text to someone with specific ambiguous relations to the product. Then the play is preoccupied with the question that, according to Worthen, can be applied to any dramatic performance: “How does performance mark its relation to, its surrogation (and so its constitution) of, the text?” (1103). The performance, on the one hand, inevitably distances itself from the text of the writer and extends beyond the lines of Crimp’s play and, on the other hand, is self-consciously engaged with its origin, and, inspecting the diverse perceptions implied by Crimp’s text, reenacts his authority in performance. Crimp has followed Barker in eschewing the ideological crucial factor inherent in the concept of clarity and in avoiding producing any solutions for the problem raised by the play. Barker attributed these tasks to the moralists, ideologues, scientists, and politicians and made a very particular use of the word playwright as someone in the position of non-identity or as Price explains “a function without a role” (38). There is no one speech assigned to a named character, and genders are never indicated. Anne, the dead woman of the play, is placed by Crimp among these numerous unnamed, genderless characters who are committed to formation of a unified ‘she’ with a stable functioning. But, Crimp’s purposefully ‘no-role’ or ‘non-identity’ position makes possible an exceptional capacity to imagine much beyond the productive forces, within which the ‘she’ is embedded. Such a commitment in the case of the playwrights of the 1990s such as Barker, Kane and Crimp, Price summarizes as “the

maintenance of the possibility of non-identity as the basis of theatrical endeavor” (38).

Sierz agrees most critics in their futile struggle “to impose a coherent explanation on the play”, and he accepts others who see Crimp’s play as a representative of “the brave new theatre of the 21st century” (2006, 51). Sierz also considers *Attempts on Her Life* “a private drama” in which the “heroine is defined by her absence” (2006, 51). The absence of the protagonist is accompanied by the facts that she can have so many different identities or can even have no identity because “like a metaphor, she carries meanings that aren’t literal” (2006, 52). For instance, Anne is clearly a vehicle in the scenario in which she is presented as a mark of a car. Crimp, also in scenario 6, somehow parodies this notion of the absent character: “— Some of the strange things she says to her Mum and Dad as a child: ‘I feel like a screen.’ . . . — She says she’s not a real character, not a real character like you get in a book or on TV, but a *lack* of character, an *absence* she calls it, doesn’t she, of character. — An absence of character, whatever *that* means . . . ” (229).

Zimmermann, in his 2003 article, explains that while various and contradictory images of Anne render her presence, her death and absence are at the same time emphasized in the play. The unnamed characters speak about “reflections of Anne in various media such as photographs, videos, film scripts, recordings on an answering machine, a commercial, trial proceedings, her suicide notes and personal objects such as her medicine bottles or her ashtray – in short, an archive of the absent central character (Zimmermann, 2003, 79). Zimmermann focuses on Crimp’s depiction of the response of a female body to a society in which the male gaze desperately and unsuccessfully attempts to wipe out women. *Attempts on Her Life* denounces “the absence of woman in a culture in which male projections of her conceal her reality” (Zimmermann, 2003, 84). Among many reviewers of the US premiere of Crimp’s play in 2002, the American dramatist Ken Urban states:

Over the course of the play, Anne never appears; instead, various figures discuss her life. Anne could, perhaps, be a terrorist, a victim of violence, an underage porno star or even an expensive car. *Attempts on her life* is not about discovering the truth of Anne’s identity, but the process by which we

try to discover that truth. The play is after the big question: how is it that we come to know the other? Crimp suggests that the process of knowing is never a neutral one, and in fact, that the subject perpetuates a violence on the object that it seeks to know. It is no coincidence that the object of investigation in this play is a woman, since the female other has been the object of the male gaze since time immemorial (Review of *Attempts on Her Life* by Martin Crimp at Soho Rep, New York).

So, Anne is both an “absent character” (Sierz, 2006, 52), and, in spite of the self-contradictory nature of the stories told about her, her absence is actually filled by the stories, opinions and ideas that some have real-life counterparts. The atmosphere of the play may seem chaotic because of the numerous real and unreal stories but, as a piece, the play has a “satisfyingly symmetrical form” (Sierz, 2006, 52), and each story refers to another one or draws attention to itself. Here is an example for a story with a real-life counterpart: the story of Anne the suicidal artist is told by means of a discussion among characters about the merits and demerits of her life and art. When one of the characters claims that “what we see here is the work of a girl who quite clearly should’ve been admitted not to an art school but to a psychiatric unit” (251-2), and another character asserts that “*listen to yourself: you are saying that this artist should not be allowed to produce work but should instead be compelled to undergo psychiatric treatment*” (253), Crimp is referring directly to a real-life event; Charles Spencer’s review of Sarah Kane’s *Phaedra’s Love*: ‘It’s not a theatre critic that’s required here, it’s a psychiatrist.’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 1996).

At a first glance, it may seem that Butler’s theory of performativity of the self and identity and emphasizing the elaborations of this theory in Crimp’s play promote or celebrate incoherent self-narratives and shattered or fragmented identities ended up in suicide. However, it would not be right to interpret Butler as complicating matters for individuals who seek narrative coherence in their lives. As Kurt Borg declares in his recent 2018 article: “Unfair critics may argue that a negative portrayal of narrative coherence amounts to a dangerous postmodern flirtation with fragmentation or an insensitive celebration of non-closure” (451). Borg refers in detail to some critics who believe Butler is “radically insensitive” towards reconciling “the feelings of terror and pain that accompany personal fragmentation” (451). Catharine MacKinnon harshly criticizes postmodernist theorists, philosophers, and writers such

as Judith Butler and Martin Crimp for dealing with the issue of fragmented self, stating that: “Postmodernists ought to have to confront the human pain of the ideas they think are so much fun’ (2000, 707).

Narrative coherence or giving a coherent account of oneself is defined as a need that various individuals seek in order to be able to protect their life from the painful feeling of loss accompanied by identity fragmentation. We are, according to Borg, “individuals who do not and cannot ‘afford’ to relish in any virtues that can be associated with a fragmented subjectivity” (451). Based on this view, incoherence and shattered identity is not tolerable since it involves inevitable pain. In Crimp’s play, the performativity of suicide incorporates narrative incoherence, and the audience are presented with witnessing how an identity goes through the process of fragmentation applied by society members. Butler does not believe that an individual can have complete control over self; narrative incoherence is an inevitable failure and a sign of the precariousness of life of the individual who lives in a social world beyond its grasp, and has to deal with the social relations that are beyond its power to choose. Butler writes: “This vulnerable exposure, this fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that ‘I’ can will away” (2004a, xii).

However, we cannot understand “I” apart from its social conditions since “I” emerges within its social conditions and Butler calls it an “error” to “detach ‘I’ from its social and historical conditions. . . . there is no ‘I’ that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence, no ‘I’ that is not implicated in a set of conditioning moral norms, which, being norms, have a social character that exceeds a purely personal or idiosyncratic meaning” (2005, 7). The question is how this “I” gives an account of itself or what happens when it seeks to do so? The self immediately feels the limitations of this accounting, the limitations of its capacity for a coherent narration, and feels being indispensably dependent on social relations and norms because “the ‘I’ has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation— or set of relations —to a set of norms” (Butler, 2005, 8). David Edgar describes Crimp’s purpose as “not only to question whether we can truly know another human being, but whether we can regard other people as existing at all independent of the models we construct of them” (1999, 31).



Illustration 10 A scene representing the inability of the self to give an account of oneself, or showing Crimp's characters being puppets of a controlling system (source: Bart DeLorenzo)

In the play, the protagonist is dead and her suspicious death which has most probably brought about by suicide, requires giving an account of itself. The inability of the self to give an account of itself is rendered to its extreme condition as represented in the play by a subject already dead. The play demonstrates a system that has become instituted over time and includes people who are reduced to creatures with weak and fallible thinking, reckoning and inferring, and an unfortunate dead creature over whom the established system powerfully works on, and her life before suicide is constantly being addressed and has many different acts attributed to her. The accounts are interrogating and carry a certain threat of punishment. For example, in the second scenario, *TRAGEDY OF LOVE AND IDEOLOGY*, people give an account of Anne's personal love life. Here is an extract (*Attempts on Her Life*, 211-12):

- Anne wakes up in the solid walnut bed, hears his faint male voice in the adjoining room. The exquisite Louis Quatorze clock beside her chimes three by means of a tiny tiny naked gilt shepherd striking a tiny tiny golden bell

held between the teeth of an enamelled wolf, no doubt a reference to an ancient myth well known to the seventeenth-century French nobility but now totally erased from human consciousness.

- Ting ting ting
- ...
- His political masters / calling him.
- His political masters, that's right, calling him. Just as they have always called him. The very political masters that she hates with every fibre as it were of her being. The very men and women, that she, Anne, in her youthful idealism holds responsible for the terminal injustice of this world.
- The leaders who in her naïve and passionate opinion have destroyed everything she values in the name (a) of business and (b) of laissez-faire.
- ...
- The basic ingredients in other words of a whole tragedy.

Various thoughts and deeds are attributed to Anne for which she cannot offer her response or reconstruct her ideas and deeds. The attributions and accusations made by people are, as it is in the above extract, in a position to spread fear and terror. Being addressed by other people carries at least anxiety, if not always fear and terror. How passionate the characters in the play are desiring to know about and understand things about Anne's life, even if the queries and attributions, being fueled by the desire to punish, do not have the power to punish (in the case of Anne who is dead), can be very distressing for the audience and the readers of the play. When an unnamed character calls Anne's whole life, her valley, relationship and family, a destroyed one, the other unnamed characters sympathize with the anger and pain that may have caused her and anyone in her situation eventual self-destruction (*Attempts on Her Life*, 219):

- She's angry.
- She's very angry.
- Silence.*
- She's very angry, but she has a *right* to be.
- She has - well obviously - a right to be angry. Everything destroyed. A way of *life* destroyed. A relationship / with *nature* destroyed.
- And this is why we sympathize.
- Of *course* we sympathize.
- Not just sympathise, but *empathise*. Empathise because . . .
- Yes.
- . . . because Anya's valley is *our* valley. Anya's trees are *our* trees. Anya's family is the family to which we all belong.
- So it's a universal thing / *obviously*.

- It's a universal thing in which we recognize, we strangely recognize ourselves. Our own world. Our own pain.
- Our own anger.

However, while on the one hand, the scenarios, that all address Anne in numerous ways, show the vulnerability of her pre-suicide body, on the other hand, Anne's post self-destruction body, which even does not appear in the play, presents a kind of power in possibility to remain silent in the face of the social queries and attributions. Silence can be a kind of fighting back with resistance. Silence means the inquirer has no right to make comments or ask questions or it is not for the inquirer to know what he/she wants to know. As Butler explains: "Silence articulates a resistance to the questions. . . . Silence either calls into question the legitimacy of the authority invoked by the question and the questioner or attempts to circumscribe a domain of autonomy that cannot or should not be intruded upon by the questioner. The refusal to narrate remains a relation to narrative and to the scene of address. As a narrative withheld, it either refuses the relation that the inquirer presupposes or changes that relation so that the one queried refuses the one who queries" (Butler, 2005, 12). So, Anne's absent body is endowed with the presence of the resisting quality of silence.

Social vulnerability, according to Butler, cannot be a matter with which we make do; human subject inevitably recognizes it socially through apprehension. In the recognition and apprehension of vulnerability, lies an ethical potential, "perhaps, an ethics based on our shared, invariable, and partial blindness about ourselves" (Butler, 2005, 41). Recognition is one of the essential concepts that supports the struggles of the individuals against social vulnerability. So, Butler gives human power to the concept of social recognition and emphasizes that: "vulnerability is fundamentally dependent on existing norms of recognition if it is to be attributed to any human subject" (2004a, 43). The other essential concept in vulnerability is apprehension which provides the concept of recognition with a different view. The facts that we are vulnerable, and our lives are precarious can only be recognized through apprehension: "If letting the other live is part of any ethical definition of recognition, then this version of recognition will be based less on knowledge than on apprehension" (Butler, 2005, 43).

The apprehension is real, and despite being directed to Anne, the audience feel it instead of her. Anne is a silent character about whom stories are being told. The stories are allegations made about Anne who is not alive to react or response. Anne is silent and her silence has power, but also no response can mean that Crimp gives no Butlerian agency to her victim. Butler asserts: “Not all narrative takes this form, clearly, but a narrative that responds to allegation must, from the outset, accept that the self has agency” (Butler, 2005, 12). Anne does not respond and having no agency and no demonstrations of the suffering she feels because of the accounts, gives some authority to the accounts, and increases the recognition and feeling of apprehension in the audience. Crimp’s narrative establishes that the performativity of Anne’s suicide persuades the audience about the various plausible accounts being the cause of Anne’s suffering before her death. The protagonist’s silence because of her act of self-destruction gives some authority and persuasiveness to the narrative which has the capacity to constitute different accounts of Anne and assume responsibility for her act of suicide through that means. Butler writes: “Giving an account takes a narrative form, which not only depends upon the ability to relay a set of sequential events with plausible transitions but also draws upon narrative voice and authority, being directed toward an audience with the aim of persuasion” (Butler, 2005, 12).

Scenario 16, *Pornó*, is replete with disturbing laughs, distressing and confusing overlapping voices, repetition of the word suffering, sudden language changings, spoken words and translations being uttered simultaneously, and intensifying passionate gypsy violin music. This scenario creates the horror and terror that Anne must have tolerated before her suicide. However, as Luckhurst makes the comparison, unlike Ibsen who used loud and wild music in *Hedda Gabler* to convey his woman protagonist’s rebellion response to social oppressions before suicide, Crimp presents Anne with no agency, as a protagonist who does not rebel, cannot show resistance to the accounts, has no opportunity to show any transgression, has already committed suicide, and is forever silent. Here is Luckhurst’s comparison of Ibsen’s and Crimp’s use of music:

The music acts as an ironic counterpoint to the horror that ‘Anne’ must suppress and to her apparent breakdown, the voices of the oppressors uniting to drown her out with a repellently euphoric construction of her as a

woman with all-powerful, divinely redemptive qualities. ... Crimp may be borrowing from Ibsen's use of musical irony in Nora's tarantella scene and Hedda's wild piano playing moments before her suicide, but whereas Ibsen's musical notation indicates a space for rebellion and sexual liberation, (though occupied in desperation and strictly regulated) 'Anne' is not permitted even a brief transgressive moment. Unlike Nora and Hedda 'Anne' is not allowed agency (2003, 59).

In Scenario 11, 'Untitled (100 Words)', Crimp writes that Anne would probably "find the whole concept of 'making a point' ludicrously outmoded. If *any* point is being made at all it's *surely* the point that the point that's being made is *not* the point and never has in fact *been* the point. It's *surely* the point that the search for a point is pointless and that the whole point of the exercise — i.e. these attempts on her own life — *points* to that" (*Attempts on Her Life*, 250-1). This scenario is a parody: Crimp's parody of social life, a life that he knows he and everyone are inevitably a part of. Crimp exposes the perversions in current culture and its discourses, and it seems that there can be no alternatives for the current discourses to be offered. What has maximized Anne's vulnerability to the point of suicide are forms of address and queries made not only from within a legal framework in which punishment is threatened but also, as Crimp demonstrates, originated from a life that entails a certain amount of injury, suffering, exploitation and destruction. A part of Butler's understanding of life is "an original aggression" that she believes to be "part of every human being and, indeed, coextensive with life itself" (Butler, 2005, 14). Here is a related extract from the play: (*Attempts on Her Life*, 253-55):

- 'This poor girl.'
- . . . this poor girl, yes, requires help – and I have not as you well know at any point suggested that she should be / 'compelled'.
- Requires help? Oh really? And in whose opinion? The opinion of Goebbels? The opinion perhaps of Joseph Stalin? Isn't Anne actually anticipating the terrifying consequences of that argument and asking us what 'help' actually means? Isn't she saying, 'I don't want your help'? Isn't she saying, 'Your help oppresses me'? Isn't she saying the only way to avoid being a victim of the patriarchal structures of late twentieth-century capitalism is to *become her own victim*?
Isn't that the true meaning of these attempts on her life?
- Her own victim – that's fascinating.
- Oh really, this is such flabby reasoning.
Silence.
. . .

- (Cue ‘sexy’.) That really is such flabby reasoning. Her own victim? If she really is – as it appears – trying to kill herself, then surely our presence here makes us mere voyeurs in Bedlam. If on the other hand she’s only play-acting, then the whole work becomes a mere cynical performance and is doubly disgusting.
- But why not? Why shouldn’t it be / ‘a performance’?
- Exactly – it becomes a kind / of theatre.
- It’s theatre – that’s right – for a world in which theatre itself has died. Instead of the outmoded conventions of dialogue and so-called characters lumbering towards the embarrassing *dénouements* of the *theatre*, Anne is offering us a pure dialogue of objects: of leather and glass, of Vaseline and steel, of blood, saliva and chocolate. She’s offering us no less than the spectacle of her own existence, the radical *pornography* – if I may use that overused word – of her own broken and abused – almost Christ-like – body.
- An object in other words. A *religious* object.
- An object, yes. But not the object of *others*, the object of *herself*. That’s the scenario / she offers.

Butler writes that “I am always other to myself, and there is no final moment in which my return to myself takes place” (Butler, 2005, 27). What transforms the self in a way that ‘I’ lose the self and cannot return to what it was are the encounters with others. After the transformation, the ‘I’ cannot remember its past since through the act of recognition the past is altered. Butler defines recognition as “an act in which the return to self becomes impossible for . . . an encounter with an other effects a transformation of the self from which there is no return” (Butler, 2005, 28). In the process of exchange the self recognizes both the other and its new self which is now “the sort of being for whom staying inside itself proves impossible. One is compelled and comported *outside oneself*; one finds that the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself, exterior to oneself, by virtue of a convention or a norm that one did not make” (Butler, 2005, 28).

Crimp, in scenario 13, COMMUNICATING WITH ALIENS, refers to this impersonal condition that occasions our personal condition and makes us feel disoriented. Here the speaking character expresses his/her recognition of the other which is addressed “alien”; aliens, on the other hand, have already recognized us, penetrated into our minds, altered our perspective and made us “invisible” (*Attempts on Her Life*, 262). This exchange of recognition, according to Butler, is “conditioned and mediated by language, by conventions, by a sedimentation of norms that are social in character and that exceed the perspective of those involved in the exchange”

(Butler, 2005, 28). This structure is presented in the following extract which reveals the existence of a system of social life more sustainable and more powerful than the struggle that the self, shows against life and death, an alien system that exceeds our perspectives and acts upon us in the context of being addressed (*Attempts on Her Life*, 262):

- *Then* we discover that she is being penetrated by mysterious rays which make her invisible in photographs.
- What? X-rays?
- No, not X-rays. It's a new kind of ray. It's a new kind of ray produced by a catastrophe in *deep / space*.
- You mean – okay – that she is in communication are you saying via these rays with *aliens*?
- Not *communication*. No. The aliens are *using* her. They are using her, but *without her / knowledge*.
- The aliens – that's right – are using her mind as a kind of Trojan Horse by which they can gradually invade all of human / *consciousness*.
- And the frightening thing is, is she could be any one of us.

Crimp's scenarios giving various accounts of who Anne is, while, on the one hand, show that others try to know, perceive and understand things about Anne, on the other hand assume that Anne cannot be fully apprehended or is not fully knowable to the characters. This is implied by even not considering her a human and calling Anne "a brand of a car" (*Attempts on Her Life*, 263). So, Anne is constantly and necessarily exposed to others both in her vulnerability and singularity since, according to Butler, "this exposure that I am constitutes, as it were, my singularity" (Butler, 2005, 33).

The characters' efforts to fully identify Anne necessarily fail because of two reasons. The first has to do with Anne's uniqueness and distinction as the other. The second reason is the operation of norms and the fact that it is in fact the norms that make recognition, identification and giving account possible. When the characters give various accounts of Anne, it seems that the accounts are based on these nameless characters' psychological and critical skills. However, according to Butler, the norms are controlling the accounts, and we cannot control the operation of them. Neither the nameless characters nor Anne can have control over Anne's exposure and singularity. The norms and the accounts that have roots in them are not limited to

Anne's living life. Even when her life is finished by death the accounts of her life continue to live because the norms have an unlimited temporality. This situation seems oppressive and threatening while also makes Anne recognizable or maintain her recognizability after the termination of her life. The accounts of Anne, to use Butler's termination, 'interrupt' or 'dispossess' her life even when she has destructed it intentionally; this interruption is both indifferent to Anne's life and death and enables her recognizability after death:

The norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable are not fully mine. They are not born with me; the temporality of their emergence does not coincide with the temporality of my own life. So, in living my life as a recognizable being, I live a vector of temporalities, one of which has my death as its terminus, but another of which consists in the social and historical temporality of the norms by which my recognizability is established and maintained. These norms are, as it were, indifferent to me, to my life and my death. Because norms emerge, transform, and persist according to a temporality that is not the same as the temporality of my life, and because they also in some ways sustain my life in its intelligibility, the temporality of norms interrupts the time of my living. Paradoxically, it is this interruption, this disorientation of the perspective of my life, this instance of an indifference in sociality, that nevertheless sustains my living (Butler, 2005, 35).

So, the accounts of Anne, which Crimp calls attempts on Anne's life, given in or done through discourse can never fully express her. The nameless characters' words are taken away as they utter them and the various accounts that have an unlimited temporality (have emerged before Anne was born and will persist after her death) interrupt the time of Anne's life and maintain her recognizability while also being indifferent to her life and death. These 'interruptions' of Anne's life show that the accounts are not grounded only in Anne herself, since the structure of the interruptions are indifferent towards her and belong to a sociality that exceeds her. Interruption of Anne's life takes place in different ways. One is the way the norms operate socially and condition what will be recognized about Anne through the accounts. Anne is used by the norms to the degree that the nameless characters use them, and all the accounts about Anne to some extent conform to the norms that have control over Anne's recognizability. However, the accounts of Anne that the characters give to the audience can be interrupted by the addressees of the accounts

who can feel and decide which account is not Anne's. The characters send various accounts off, at the very moment that the audience or the readers establish the authenticity of them in their minds: "No account can take place outside the structure of address, even if the addressee remains implicit and unnamed, anonymous and unspecified" (Butler, 2005, 36).

If I try to give an account of myself, if I try to make myself recognizable and understandable, then I might begin with a narrative account of my life. But this narrative will be disoriented by what is not mine, or not mine alone. And I will, to some degree, have to make myself substitutable in order to make myself recognizable. The narrative authority of the "I" must give way to the perspective and temporality of a set of norms that contest the singularity of my story (Butler, 2005, 37).

Crimp's nameless characters surely tell interesting stories about Anne. What a character tells or asks is sometimes confirmed or answered by other character, sometimes is followed by silences and sometimes one or more character provide reason for the statement. For instance, in scenario 15, THE STATEMENT, stories are made about Anne and evidence is given to show the authority of the supposition. But the question is how much it can be trusted while the character pronouncing it is unknown. Here is an extract from the play (*Attempts on Her Life*, 267):

— Now why do you suppose she does that? Why do you suppose she takes these, what, these tomato plants in yoghurt pots, why do you suppose she takes them on her bike in a cardboard box to fêtes in all weathers?

Long silence.

You state quote as a child she often shared a bed with two or three of her younger siblings unquote. Do you abide by that statement?

— Yes.

— Why?

— Because she did.

— 'Because she did.'

— Because she did, yes. Because they were poor. Because they had nothing.

The characters are not able to be very authoritative when they try to give an account with a narrative structure. Crimp presents nameless characters that could have heard witness neither to the conditions of Anne's living nor to any state of affairs related to Anne's bodily history, since, according to Butler, we as subjects cannot be present in

what has emerged prior to our emergence and so what we can narrate is only based on our limited knowledge of a set of origins. A nameless character begins the 9th scenario of the play by quoting a sentence from Anne: “She says, ‘I do not / recognize your authority.’” (*Attempts on Her Life*, 241).

Narration is not at all impossible under such circumstances, but it can only be a “fictional narration” (Butler, 2005, 37). Crimp’s fictional narration is in accordance with what happens in real life when for many reasons we try to tell our or others’ stories. Since there can be no referent found, all our stories or narratives can have possibility of truth. In the play, the stories are being told about Anne after her suicide and they are being reproduced by numerous characters because the original referent is irrecoverable. “The irrecoverability of an original referent does not destroy narrative; it produces it in a fictional direction, . . . I can tell the story of my origin and I can even tell it again and again, in several ways.” (Butler, 2005, 37). But, though the characters’ accounts in the play carry the condition of possibility, they are not consistent with one another. So, “to have an origin means precisely to have several possible versions of the origin” (Butler, 2005, 37). Any one of the versions about Anne is a possible narrative, but none of the versions we can assume to be the absolute truth about Anne. All the various versions Crimp presents in the play refer to a body that matters, point to the condition of a body before its annihilation and narrate stories about what a body did and did not do when it was alive. A body is, however, not fully narratable: “To be a body is, in some sense, to be deprived of having a full recollection of one’s life” (Butler, 2005, 38). Anne as a body has a history that no one can recollect.

Whatever stories Crimp’s characters give arrive to the audience belatedly, missing some of the preconditions of Anne’s life, a life that is curiously being sought to be narrated in the play. Even if Anne became alive and desired to narrate or give an account of her life before suicide, she also would missed some of the constitutive beginnings of her life because her temporality is different from the temporality of her beginnings or the time when she had not gained the ability of self-reflection. Neither she nor others can ever be present to this temporality. On the other hand, this absence or being unaware of the beginnings or past lives actually make story-makings and

fictionalizing possible in speaking and writing, as we witness in Crimp's play. That is why giving accounts of oneself, according to Butler, always begin "*in media res*, when many things have already taken place to make me and my story possible in language. I am always recuperating, reconstructing, and I am left to fictionalize and fabulate origins I cannot know. In the making of the story, I create myself in new form, instituting a narrative "I" that is superadded to the "I" whose past life I seek to tell. The narrative "I" effectively adds to the story every time it tries to speak, since the "I" appears again as the narrative perspective" (Butler, 2005, 39).

As an example, we can take scenario 6, MUM AND DAD, which I think even the title provides a hint of *in medias res* perspective, since as human beings we have all missed the temporality of our parents' lives before our birth and we can never devise a definitive story of their lives. In this scenario the characters indicate Anne's suicide attempts at various times before and after she left her mum and dad's house on her sixteenth birthday and specify that all they have are photos and all accounts they can give are based on the large numbers of photos they see. Other people are in the photos of Anne, people about whom what the nameless characters can only know and see are their smiles, people who have come into and go out of Anne's life without leaving traces of themselves except their visible smiles in the photos. I believe these sentences can show how much our accounts of others can be partial and haunted by irrecoverable dispositions. Here is an extract from the 6th scenario of the play (*Attempts on Her Life*, 225-6):

- It's not her first attempt.
- It shouldn't be her first attempt. She's tried at various times. Even before she leaves home / she tries, doesn't she?
- She tries at various times throughout her *life*.
- We see the other times.
- We live *through* the other times. We live through these harrowing times.
Silence.
- We see photos, don't we.
- We see large numbers of photos.
- We see them close to, so close you can make out the little dots. Funny, isn't it, how everything at a certain point turns into just these little dots – even her smile.
- ...
- Everything at a certain point turns into these little dots – eyes, hair, smile.
- Smiles from all over the world.

- *People* from all over the world. People from all over the world photographed with Annie. Smiling with Annie. Characters I suppose who just popped in and / out of her life.
- And then popped out again.
- And then – yes – popped straight out again.



Illustration 11 The nameless figures in Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*, the identical costumes and appearances represent their mutual blindness of the events about Anne's life before her death (source: zuzuhudek.com)

It is important to be able to affirm what is incoherent in us and others. Crimp's play presents how a character is being seen by others after committing suicide and how this character is being recognized by others after death. This recognition shows that there is always "opacity" in trying to give an account of oneself and others. In recognition "precisely my own opacity to myself occasions my opacity to confer a certain kind of recognition on others" (Butler, 2005, 41). The nameless characters of the play share a blindness about Anne who is no longer alive. They all fail in some ways when they claim to know and to present Anne. If Anne were alive, she would also share the same partial blindness about herself. We cannot expect anything different from any character including Anne. The nameless characters' constant story-makings about Anne's life demonstrate the recognition that Anne is, at every turn, not quite the same as how the story tellers present her in discourse.

The question that comes to the mind is that if this incoherency in Anne had been affirmed by the people around her while she was alive, would she have ended her life with suicide. Does the inability of those around us to affirm what is contingent and incoherent in us increase our vulnerability? Butler's answer to this question would be yes. Butler sees violence in this inability to recognize and Crimp's play can be a picture of this situation. In return, the recognition of incoherency in us, as Butler states, can imply "a certain patience with others that would suspend the demand that they be self-same at every moment. Suspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly, for complete coherence seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same. For subjects who invariably live within a temporal horizon, this is a difficult norm to satisfy" (Butler, 2005, 41). It can be understood from the play that Anne has always been overwhelmingly addressed by others before her self-destruction and to be addressed can be experienced along with psychological harm and trauma. We are always being addressed in ways that we cannot fully control, and this can increase any person's vulnerability. While acknowledging that language is uncontrollable, we should feel and be responsible for how we address others and even ourselves.

4.4 *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) by Shelagh Stephenson: The Performativity of Isobel's Dismembered Body

Shelagh Stephenson is a playwright, scriptwriter, actress and radio dramatist. Her second drama, *An Experiment with an Air Pump*, is a science play which involves the suicide of a young girl and discoveries related to biology and genetics. Theatre in the 1990s did not remain uninvolved in the radical shifts occurring in the area of human science since it was "a time when scientific advances increasingly impinge on every aspect of life" (Innes, 'Science on the Stage', 95). The discovery of 'DNA Structure' and the development of 'Chaos Theory' in 1950s led to the birth and completion of the 'Human Genome Project' in the late 1990s. While science has got the power to manipulate DNA structure, the play proves it to be dreadfully shocking to find out what ethical problems can be resulted from surveying human genome and how dangerous it can be to try to turn from natural to artificial selection and to make

genetic discriminations in society. Stephenson's play is a character-based and deep psychological play and employs scientific elements to stimulate the desire to investigate the cost of scientific advancements and the effects of them on human psychology. Luckhurst states: "Stephenson is perhaps at her best writing tense psychological drama from a woman's point of view and her mastery of craft exploits suspense and atmosphere in ways that make for a compelling night at the theatre" (70). There are many images of vulnerably resistant bodies in the play that keep recurring during the play's two story-lines, separated by a span of 200 years, and the main victim of the science of genetics is a well-educated hunchbacked young servant called Isobel who commits suicide. This chapter aims to utilize science theories of genetics as a perspective to analyze the performativity of suicide in Stephenson's 1998 play on behalf of the real vulnerable bodies whose resistant identities can be at risk of annihilation.

During the 1970s and 1980s the world of theatre included topics related to physics, but in the late 1990s the dramatic attentions turned towards biology, a topic that Rothenberg believes "generates both awe and fear" (407). *An Experiment with an Air Pump* is among the science plays that, according to Barr, deal with issue of "the public responsibility of the scientists" and scientific communities and the ethicality of what they look for. The play has provided theatre, during the nineties, with the opportunity to be the area of "substantive interaction between the hard sciences and the humanities" (Barr, 1-3). This area exposes the destruction of the life of a body, acted on by scientific activities. The play demonstrates how the vulnerable body of a young, deformed girl resists the power of genetics and how we should understand this form of resistance. Such bodies, as Butler states, "enact a form of resistance that presupposes vulnerability of a specific kind, and opposes precarity" (2016, 15). Biology and genetics make direct relations with society and individuals; this relation "has become ingrained in popular culture, [and] its dramatic potential has been effectively realized in theatre" (Rothenberg, 407). Theatre embodies how threatening these scientific areas can be when they make promises based on social discrimination. While analyzing the performativity of suicide in Stephenson's play, Khalid Ahmad Yas's paper, "From Natural to Artificial Selection: A Chaotic Reading of Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump*" will be

instrumental in understanding the scientific structure of the play and scientific ideas it deals with.

Yas reveals that in Stephenson's play the chaos theory is at work. Order and disorder had been binaries until mid-1980s. While order was always being embraced in life, chaos was always being rejected because of its presumed unpredictability and uncontrollability. However, this binary was broken in the nineties with the development of chaos theory which brought the unthought and unordered into spotlight. Chaos theory "upholds that there is an order in an apparent disorder. Chaotic systems are replete with order. It is only their erratic behaviour that makes them look chaotic to the casual observer" (Yas, 23). The prevailing view during the 1990s was that chaos either has order hidden within it or it leads to order (Hayles, 3). The idea of butterfly effect, revealing that tiny alterations in an area can cause big changes in another area, is at the core of chaos theory. Chaos is incorporated in every bit of nature in a way that we may not even notice or predict it. No external forces are at work in the production of order by chaos since chaos inherits a natural self-organizing quality. So, both order and disorder are realities that have internal structures and are equally active within the world we live in, and the individuals are both dependent on their structures and independent from them. This connection between order and chaos, as Yas indicates, makes various manifestations of itself in diverse areas including cultural studies and literary studies:

Everything in the universe is connected to everything else in one way or another. With such a middle ground it secures between order and disorder and between determinism and indeterminism, chaos theory widely spreads, and considerably utilised in various disciplines including cultural and literary domains (24).

An Experiment with an Air Pump is structurally and thematically based on two views towards chaos: order exists in chaos and order comes out of chaos (Hayles, 3). I employ these two methodological frameworks and how they are at work in the play in shaping a Butlerian theoretical framework for analyzing the performativity of suicide. The action in the play is initiated by the core idea in chaos theory, the butterfly effect or the notion of cause and effect, and the conflicts grow by a performative system that shows how bodies guide the actions and how the system

compels the characters to follow an appalling course. There are two story-lines interwoven in a way that create a plot that may seem chaotic, confusing and fragmented by constantly going back and forth in time, but the nonlinear plot also inherits order in depicting similar characters in different time zones and the recurring images are traceable which eventually an overall picture of the performativity of suicide is hopefully achieved. Let me begin with what Luckhurst thinks of the play, its dual-narrative plot and themes:

In 1998 Stephenson caught the mood for the dawning millennium with *An Experiment with an Air Pump* by creating dual narratives set on new year's eve in 1799 and 1999, and by exploring scientific advancements and ethics, romance, and death at the end of both centuries. In a memorable final tableau the figures from 1799 gather round a coffin containing the body of a young woman as the bells chime midnight on new year's eve and riots sound from the distance. Awe-struck the characters stare into the dark, as one whispers: "Here's to whatever lies ahead ... here's to uncharted lands ... here's to a future we dream about but cannot know ... here's to the new century." (2.5.78) (Luckhurst, 70)

Each and every individual in real life has the right to freedom and should be able to move and breath and live without desiring to be subjected to scientific experiments. But subjects are also significantly shaped by a norm of what the body is and what is natural about it. This situation rejects the individual bodily right and ignores the individual's vulnerability. Every single body, on the one hand, is surrounded by forces that have control over him or her and, on the other hand, inherits some natural freedom from the bounds. This freedom shapes the performative power of the individual while at the same time the performative body enforces the norms by repeating them. I believe that there is analogy between this view of the body promoted by Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993, 14) and the idea of chaos or "orderly disorder" (Hayles, 1). The chaos theory highlights its indeterministic, nonlinear worldview and celebrates probabilities over the absolute. This radical shift in 1990s rejected firm beliefs and began to reshape the individual's perception of the world. At the same time, chaos has been the constant reminder of long-held traditional view of the world, the Newtonian deterministic, linear, and narrow approach, the domination of which is considerably debilitated but not completely wiped out. In drama, the traditional approach proves not to be in accordance with

dynamic and diverse structure of a post-modern play like Stephenson's work. Gillespie believes that a narrow critical approach produces narrow interpretations that suppress the potential of literary expression and focus only "on a central idea, weighing the evidence, and balancing opposing views to arrive at a conclusion" (5). The dynamic and chaotic structure of Stephenson's play, I am going to expose in the following paragraph.



Illustration 12 *An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump* by Joseph Wright (1768), the inspiration painting to Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (source: en.wikipedia.org)

Science of biology is at the core of Stephenson's play, the action of which moves in a nonlinear way between the last day of 18th century and the last day of 20th century. There is the dilemma of death and suicide mixed up with a kind of science that performs the role of creating catastrophic changes rather than being a tool to understand the world. The play is full of scientists and humanists who give a chaotic atmosphere to the story by their scientific notions and unethical aspirations and show that "instead of being a means of liberation, science in the wrong hands can be a tool of oppression" (Yas, 24). The inspiration to the play has come from a painting in

1768, by Joseph Wright, with the same name as the title of Stephenson's play and even the characters and central argument of the play are all based on this painting. People, in this painting, are gathered to witness the creation of a vacuum by an air pump and there are various human responses depicted in the painting. Each character's reaction is unique: an excited scientist captivated by science potentiality, two scared young girls, a pensive philosopher anxious about the loss of old certainties, and an indifferent, self-involved young couple. Brigitte Glaser asserts that, this painting has cleverly "captured a transitional moment in the ethical and philosophical thinking of the eighteenth century" (189). A combination of science fascination and human sensibility during this century is accomplished in the painting.

The play makes a bridge between two centuries, 1799 and 1999, when two fresh eras are about to be born, the Industrial Revolution and the modern age of biology. The setting to the modern time story is the same house from 1799 called Newcastle-on-Tyne. The old house belongs to Dr. Fenwick, who lives with his wife Susannah, the two daughters Harriet and Maria and their young hunch-backed housemaid Isobel. Dr. Fenwick is an active scientist making experiments and having discussions with his two assistants, Armstrong a cold and unethical man and Roget an ethical and sensitive man. In their first appearance in the play, they are conducting an experiment with an air pump as a vacuum to find out how long a bird can stay alive in it. In the play's modern world of genetics, we see a woman biologist and scientist called Ellen who is arguing with her husband Tom, a jobless literary lecturer, about a profitable scientific job recently offered to her. In the basement of their house lies the body of Isobel with her dark suicide secret remained unnoticed for 200 years. The home surveyor, Phil finds the cadaver.

Science is, according to Yas, at the center of the play "to address a cornucopia of provocative issues, science versus morality, ambition versus responsibility channelling in-between notions like the stereotypical image of women, the sanctity of human life and passion" (25). What I have the eye on here in this chapter is value of the life of a young woman and an alternative image of the body as a young woman in the play, who exists in the presence of social and scientific conflicts and which proves that an individual, as a performative body, can continue its existence through

the dependency on other performative bodies. It would be wrong to examine the performativity of suicide of Isobel as an individual body distinct from other characters. From a Butlerian point of view, this is not to say that social bodies are blended into each other lacking a clear social structure for themselves. But the consideration of the relations in which Isobel's dramatic body acts and thrives, can make the best possible speculations about the performativity of her act of self-destruction. Bodily vulnerability should be analyzed within such a conception of social relations. Judith Butler specifies this condition as follows:

What I am suggesting is that it is not just that this or that body is bound up in a network of relations, but that the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that make its own life and action possible. We cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside this conception of social and material relations (2016, 16).

In the opening scene of Stephenson's play, Ellen, a geneticist in 1999, comes in and begins talking about her childhood infatuation with Wright's painting, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*: "I've loved this painting since I was thirteen years old. I've loved it because it has a scientist at the heart of it, a scientist where you usually find God. Here, centre stage, is not a saint or an archangel, but a man....This painting set my heart racing, it made the blood tingle in my veins: I wanted to be this scientist; I wanted to be up there in the thick of it, all eyes drawn to me, frontiers tumbling before my merciless deconstruction. I was thirteen. Other girls wanted to marry Marc Bolan. I had smaller ambitions. I wanted to be God" (8). Ellen claims that she simply wants to be a god and passionately appreciates the killing of a bird for the sake of science. Ellen's overenthusiasm about the painting makes us worried about the God-like authority of scientists who should actually be merciful protectors of the vulnerable individuals in society rather than annihilators or sources of violence which both provoke the feeling of resistance and increase vulnerability in humankind.

In the stage directions we read that, while Ellen is talking, two stagehands come in and make changes in her clothing. Ellen transforms into the 18th century woman in the tableau, Susannah, wife of a distinguished physician, Dr Joseph Fenwick who

completely ignores her. He is surrounded by two scientists, Armstrong, and Roget, trying to do the vacuum experiment and the daughters, Harriet, and Maria, are there too. Men are shown mentally and educationally superior to women in this picture and Armstrong scornfully declares: “Keep infants away from the fireplace and women away from science” (10). Such statements create and generate certain frameworks for gender. What may be taken as natural or truth can actually be illusory norms that have penetrated deep and abidingly into the thoughts and beliefs. Armstrong’s discourse produces a set of gender norms that inhabits in his gestures and actions and are even somehow essential to who he is. As Butler affirms: “We cannot cast off abiding and governing images, norms, and ideals such as these without losing a sense of who we are. That essential sense of who we are is to some extent the workings of a set of social norms” (2016, 17). Does it mean that we are not free in choosing our gender because the frameworks are already chosen for us to fit in?

Butler’s answer is no, since she views identity and gender as performative which may seem a contrary interpretation to her previous indication of the individuals being determined by identity norms. Performativity inherits a dual dimension. On the one hand, language, and norms act upon us and in every moment that we act or perform, they shape us, and we reproduce them in our performances. On the other hand, our acts inherit the possibility of choice. “Choice, in fact, comes late in this process of performativity” but “deviations from norms can and do take place” (Butler, 2016, 17). A statement can deviate from its apparent aims and a minute ‘deviation’ has the possibility of turning into a movement of thought and language that performs against a naturalized form of authority. In consequence, new desires can be born from the relationship between performance and performativity, “showing that speech acts deviated from their aims, very often producing consequences that were altogether unintended, and oftentimes quite felicitous” (Butler, 2016, 16). We can find an analogy between this process and the butterfly effect that pushed Stephenson to write this notable play.

The experiment shows how much it is interesting for both men and women. Armstrong ridicules and criticizes the presence of women, while at the same time pointing towards their passionate presence. The play presents a scientific moment

which will create big changes in future and women are presented, however scornfully, within the picture. The butterfly effect discovered in 1962 demonstrated that tiny changes in any conditions may cause significant impacts on other conditions and this can occur in any system. In a social or literary context, the dynamism of this phenomenon, reveals that “minor” events can “lead to momentous and long-lasting changes in the course of human affairs” (Kellert, 5).

The play constantly travels in time to give us the opportunity to realize how symbolic the two years, 1799 and 1999 as the thresholds of two new centuries that are going to witness change, are. Medicine and genetics developed a lot respectively in 19th-century and 21st-century. These developments while being beneficial were also causing new difficulties for humankind. In the play’s 1799 story, people are violently rioting outside while Dr. Fenwick, Roget and Armstrong are preparing futuristic lectures for New Year, his two daughters are quarreling, and his alcoholic wife is struggling with depression. In 1999, the inhabitants of the house are Tom, an unemployed professor of English literature and Ellen, a geneticist, who is offered a lucrative job offer of scientific research by her old colleague Kate. They are in need of money, but Tom does not believe in the ethicality of his wife’s job offer and wants to sell the old house because “it just eats up money” (1.II.26) and there are human bones found in a box in the basement by Phil, the building surveyor. The topic of the dead young girl in the box in the basement keeps constantly reappearing and takes the story time to 18th century. The main emphasis throughout the play is on science’s merciless destructions, the bird’s death, Isobel’s suicide and killing humans for the sake of scientific progress. The main characters whose behaviors are consequential are Thomas Armstrong from 1799 story and Ellen and her colleague, Kate, from the 1999 story. These three ambitious scientists can remind us of Dr. Faustus, with the difference that Faustus’s quest for knowledge had personal impact but these characters’ scientific ambitions irreparably hurt others.



Illustration 13 The characters of the second time period of the play (1999), Ellen, Kate, and Tom sitting quietly and thinking about the dead body of a young girl, found in the basement of their old house (source: uwaterloo.ca)



Illustration 14 Isobel Bridie and Thomas Armstrong, from the first time period of the play (1799), Armstrong seducing Isobel by giving a book of poetry to her (source: middlebury.edu)

Armstrong is a true example of a corrupt pitiless scientist who is ready to do anything in the name of science. He is obsessed with human anatomy and Isobel

becomes his target of examination because of her deformity. Dr. Fenwick explains him as a “clever young bastard, but cold of heart” (1.3.40). He destroys the life of an educated serving girl by making her believe he loves her. He gives gifts to her, a necklace, a book of poetry, tells her she is beautiful and kisses her passionately. When Isobel finds out about his real motive, she hangs herself. When Armstrong finds her body, she was still not dead; her “heels flutter almost imperceptibly” (2.5.74). But he strangles her to death with his own hands. To him, Isobel was an object for scientific examination. Isobel was awakening in him a desire for power which also sexually delighted him. Armstrong tells Roget: “I make sure she takes her clothes off, that’s the whole point because then I get to examine her beautiful back in all its delicious, twisted glory, and frankly that’s all I’m interested in” (2.3.68). Then he continues confiding that the first time he saw Isobel he even “got an erection” because her deformity excites him in the same way as “electricity exciting, or the isolation of oxygen, or the dissection of a human heart” (2.3.68). Discovery and sex mean the same for him. Roget also terrifyingly discovers that Armstrong and another doctor impatiently wait for deaths of those who are sick or have a disease. They “have got eyes on an undersized fellow, about three foot tall. He’s not at all well. He’ll not see out the winter” (2.2.57). He justifies his actions by referring to the goal of progress in anatomy. “Ethics”, Armstrong believes, “should be left to philosophers and priests” and they do not dig up corpses; “it would be death to science” (2.2.57).

Ellen and Kate are close friends and Kate, an independent careerist woman, tries to persuade Ellen, a geneticist, to take the job offered by the company she works in. Kate has a similar personality to Armstrong since she also believes that morality and ethics have no place in science and discovery. Ellen’s husband, Tom, is against the offer and is seriously anxious about how dangerous and threatful can genetic interventions be “not only for those who are socially susceptible but also for those who are outside the boundaries of normality” (Yas, 27). Kate views the problematic genes as a cluster of cells that should be identified and destroyed and Tom views them as fetus. Phil agrees with Tom and talks about his schizophrenic uncle Stan: “My uncle Stan was manic depressive, and he was magic. He built us a tree house covered in shells and bits of coloured glass. He used to play the Northumbrian pipes” (1,2,47). Phil cannot imagine how life would have been if Kate’s project selects and

exterminates Uncle Stans, and he is exasperated as Kate cannot understand this man: “[you] don’t know anything about what went on in his life, or what things meant to him” (1.2.32-33).

Tom also accuses his wife Ellen of not being able to understand the world because she does her “experiments in a vacuum” (2.4.72). Tom is here referring to the air pump and Isobel as the symbolic bird that is killed in it. Kate cannot see the problem with modern science pursuing ends only and supports the idea of the quick elimination of the genes that cause cancer for instance by “gene therapy in the womb” (1.2.32), but Tom considers such genes ‘states of mind’ that sometimes carry creative powers and are sometimes confusingly paralyzing but should never be “swatted like a fly” (2.4.72). Kate is even ready to dissect her own mother after her death, if she could come to an answer by doing that. However, the immorality of Armstrong goes beyond the amorality of Kate and for Ellen it is the excitement that is irresistible: “Science is too exciting. I can’t resist it, basically. It wasn’t an intellectual decision. It was my heart.” To Ellen, science is an “urge to pursue, it is passion. . . . it’s more than that. It’s sexy” (2.4.71). However, the play shows that this seemingly innocent excitement can be lethal for those outside the boundaries of so-called normality.

The play confronts us with the question of whether a scientist has the right to kill or not. Isobel’s suicide and murder alarms us about the consequences of science not guarded: “Isobel, the looming possibility of science, has lost parts of the ribcage and vertebrate” (Yas, 27). Kate makes speculations about the bones found in the basement that students of medicine in ancient times robbed the graves and used human body for research. But modern researches seem not to be much different from these students (Yas, 27). Tom refers to the danger that can come from the market-driven culture. Insurance companies, private health institutions or mortgage lenders may take advantage of new discoveries and science in this way will increase the vulnerability of precarious lives rather than being beneficial to them. Phil also believes that the marketplace and perfectionist scientists can demean science and humanity and predicts that one day we may have Gene Shops and “little plastic cards with [our] DNA details on [it]” (2.2.56). But Ellen is also somehow right in saying

that “once you know something, you can’t unknow it” (2.4.71). It is very difficult to reject or ignore a discovery after it is made. So, while progress is irreversible, what can be done to control its dangers and save the vulnerable bodies from the possible decision of taking their own lives? While scientific developments should not be completely transcended, how can we somehow relax the coercive hold of these scientific norms on individuals in order to give the chance of living a more livable life to the vulnerable individuals?

The answer may be found by referring to Butler who suggests the idea of ‘support.’ Butler first distinguishes between two different actions that a norm, such as the scientific norm, can be followed by. First, “the norm is interpellated” (2016,18). In the context of Stephenson’s play, the interpellating action means that while the scientific norms have played a considerable role in forming the characters and even precede the individuals that are going to be born, the forms of agency are also being formed within the same norms by time. So, we have characters like Roget in the past and Tom and Phil in the present who, not being able to completely overcome their formations, move in different direction from the norms and become agents for change. Second, the norms may not be precisely against our sense of agency; they may, Butler believes, “constitute the intersubjective and infrastructural conditions of a livable life” (2016, 19). Then the individual may rather desire to make the norms better, more just, equal, and supportive rather than wanting to precisely eliminate the norms and conditions in life. This is the case in the context of scientific norms and discoveries. Both actions, interpellating, and infrastructuralizing, expose us to the power of the norms or embody us as “dependent on the structures that let us live” (Butler, 2016,19). Thus, since performativity of agency cannot go precisely beyond the constituting elements of social normativity, Butler considers dependency and vulnerability as indispensable parts of any performative agency. In *An Experiment with an Air Pump* the performativity of Isobel’s suicide is dependent on scientific norms and broad social structures. It depends on her relations with the scientific infrastructures and the social conditions that do not support her body. Isobel is vulnerable to her environment not only because she is dependent on norms but also because she is unsupported by norms. Butler describes as follows:

We cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body and what its relation to that support – or lack of support – might be. In this way, the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living. Thus, the dependency of human and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported, when those infrastructural conditions characterizing our social, political, economic lives start to decompose, or when we find ourselves radically unsupported under conditions of precarity or under explicit conditions of threat (2016,19).

What we do or how we act needs support and depends on conditions that support our acting body. The “politics of mobility” and the “idea of support” are closely connected and “quite important” for “the acting body” (Butler, 2016,19). If Isobel were supported by the infrastructural conditions of a livable life, suicide attempt would have been out of question. The performativity of the suicide of the young woman character in this play is closely related to the lack of social and scientific conditions of support for her. The science of chaos is also based upon dependency and support since it aims at studying “how the interaction between parts participates to the functioning of the whole” (Yas, 27). A chaotic system cannot function if reduced to its primary components. The interaction and similarities between various components of the play in two different time zones give us an understanding of the chaotic system in which Isobel’s character performance takes shape. It is recognizable that the components of the play repeat themselves and their meaningfulness depends on their repetition, while also tiny changes occur in the system. In the following paragraphs the performativity of suicide is attempted to be looked at through the recurring images within the chaotic system, in the two narratives of the play, the structures of which are overlapped.

Stephenson’s play, as already mentioned, emphasizes the relation between value of human life and scientific development. There are many self-similarities in the play that repeat the question of “whether science should be utilized to change or understand the world” (Yas, 28). The recursive symmetries show up in the nonlinear movement of action between two time periods and these recurring images present an overall picture of the story. The prologue sets the thematic structure and then two narratives follow in the setting of a house while the time goes back and forth between the Eves of 1799 and 1999. This double narrative technique helps the

audience compare them, a “quite popular technique usually used by socially aware writers” (Yas, 28). Each narrative depicts a different experiment in scientific revolutions, but the consequences are the same, Isobel’s suicide in the eighteenth century and Uncle Stan’s suicide in the twentieth century. The final scene gives the final message through Isobel’s cadaver. Different readings are possible in the play but the theme of the victimized bird in the cage seems to matter most. The play has a chaotic logic and, according to Barnett, such logic of antitheses of “past and future, man and God, life and death, brain and heart” can “inform the structure of the play and create its basic tensions” (208). The past, while thematically juxtaposed and blended with the present, is also a separate entity in the performativity of the play.



Illustration 15 Isobel hangs herself after overhearing Armstrong's scientific intentions about examining her naked body and twisted spine (source: theaterstudies.duke.edu)



Illustration 16 Armstrong finds Isobel hanging but not still dead, and speeds up the process (source: theaterstudies.duke.edu)

The performativity of Isobel's suicide as an act of the destruction of a self that is excluded from the domain of what society and science presuppose natural is also connected with how the play presents the position of women in society and in the world of science in 1799. This is embodied in the characters of Susannah, Harriet, and Maria Fenwick. The relationship between Susanna and her husband is turbulent because of Dr. Fenwick's lack of attention towards his wife who is only good at needlework. Harriet and Maria have also been kept away from the world of science. Harriet is forced to write poetry and plays, and Maria is engaged in correspondence with someone for a marriage opportunity. Isobel, in her mind, has already chosen and accepted an inferior position for herself as an ugly servant not worthy of others' love and attention. She knows many different words that she believes describe her position. While the play shows that she is a learned and talented girl interested in reading books, we realize that she cannot free herself from general paradigms. For example, in the following extract she calls herself the variants of the word servant:

Isobel "I know what I am. I am a serving girl, a waiting woman, a maid, hireling, drudge and skivvy. I am a lackey, an underling, a menial and a minion. I am all these things but I am not pretty.

...

[I am] a slave.

A dogsbody.

I know twenty-seven words for what I am, sir” (32).

According to Butler, to use specific words for someone or to call someone names can cause “linguistic vulnerability”: the language we use, and the language used by others who surround us has a crucial impact on our identity formation and our survival abilities and as Butler reveals, “one clear dimension of our vulnerability has to do with our exposure to name-calling and discursive categories . . . throughout the course of life” (2016, 16). Being called names plays an important part in speech act because speech acts act on the individual even more than the individual acting through the speech act. When Isobel calls herself for instance ‘slave’, the word has a distinct performative effect on her life. She regards herself belonging to a specific category that she believes she has not chosen, and she does not have control over. In this way, her vulnerability is increased. When Armstrong keeps complimenting her and calling her ‘pretty’, she gradually begins asking herself if she really is a beautiful girl being loved by a scientist. By this state of questioning, she gradually starts showing resistance towards the negative names. However, the lack of a network of support makes the situation turn into a case of catastrophic vulnerability in resistance and leads her to suicide. The force and effect of the words that Armstrong uses in speaking to Isobel are crucial; his words actively work on her performativity of suicide.

This acting of speech act on women is demonstrated by almost all the male characters of the 1799 story who have been given the important roles of scientists. The areas that women speak about and act are only reading, painting, poetry, and needlework; they are ignored or completely excluded from the political and scientific conversations (*An Experiment with an Air Pump*, 37-38). Harriet, for instance, invents a bonnet puffing steam. She aims her invention to speak loud enough so that her father may see her, but prior to her act to speak the male thoughts begin to act and she is only smiled at. Not only Harriet’s father is a believer in the scientific world of men, but her mother’s thoughts are also trained to favour Shakespeare to Newton and to locate the role of a woman only within the domains of artistic ambition and marriage. Harriet cannot free herself from the impositions of society of her time, though she is a resistant character; she rejects to marry, invents things and

reluctantly acts a dramatic play for her family in which she plays Britannia, a symbol of future and progress. Her sister, Maria is another victim of her status and is struggling in a distant relationship with a man who even does not remember the colour of her eyes. In the 1999 story the roles are reversed. Ellen and Kate are leading geneticists whose discoveries and experiments have the potentiality to change the world. They are no longer marginalized woman figures and Kate, as a recurred image of Harriet, plays the role of a passionate doctor who is impatient to tear the world apart “to see what it is made of” (*An Experiment with an Air Pump*, 2.4.71).

In the play’s 1999 story the masculinist conception of bodily action is actively criticized. Dependency here is exposed to be more at the heart of male bodies rather than women. Tom and Phil are afraid of what the female scientists intend to do with human genes. The feminist ideals of independence are portrayed in the characters of Kate and Ellen as the ambitious geneticists who want to utilize science to change the world. They are now highly connected to what is going on in the world and any tiny change initiated by them can create big reaction. Now it is the male characters such as Tom who is more vulnerable because of the fear of what ‘change’ can bring and threat of the disappearance of support of masculine self-sufficiency. He is now financially dependent on the lucrative job of his wife.

The beginning and the ending of the play are somehow the same. In the beginning the characters are gathered around a bird which may die in an air pump and in the ending scene the same people are gathered around the dead body of Isobel, a victim of scientific passion. In her coffin, Isobel has taken “the place of the bird in the air pump” (2.5.77). The bird is deprived of oxygen but still lives through the experiment but Isobel, deprived of her feelings and self-worth, has committed suicide. The thought that her precarious life is only being looked at as an object for scientific examination was unbearable for her. Armstrong sees her as a perfect corpse for dissection. Yas specifies the situation as follows: “The message is delivered: there is no place among us for those who are socially and physically vulnerable. It is a new type of selection: an artificial one” (29). The appalling image of Isobel’s destroyed body creates a variety of reactions in the modern story: Tom feels somehow

responsible for her death, Phil lights a candle for her, and Ellen deduces that Isobel's corpse has been used for medical research. What is remained from Isobel's suicide in 1999 is merely not a pile of bones. It is an embodiment of the precarious life of a vulnerable individual that warns against what can be the consequence of pursuing science without any moral considerations. As Yas indicates: "Isobel becomes a symbolic gauge for modern man's attitudes toward the dichotomy of science and morality" (29).



Illustration 17 Joseph Fenwick and his family ring in the new year standing over the dead body of Isobel (source: theaterstudies.duke.edu)

Isobel's suicide letter shows that her agony and disappointment have been beyond words and she was not able to cope with her surroundings anymore. She confesses that words with which she was infatuated with, cannot express her anguish: "Loving words as I do, I now find my vocabulary insufficient to describe my anguish. How may I explain to you my fall from contentment to despair? I was never a loved thing; it was not a condition I had ever known. . . . He caused dreams in me where none had

thrived before, and I am without hope or consolation” (2.4.73). Words may not depict the extremity of her agony but her destroyed body do so. Science, at the beginning of the play, was the messenger of a bright future and had a fascinating potentiality for Dr. Fenwick who at the end of the play finds himself in “a fog of bewilderment” and, while gathered with his family and friends around Isobel’s dead body, confesses that his optimism and enthusiasm are lost and tells Isobel that “the future looks less benign now, Isobel. We’re a little more frightened than we were” (2.5.77). The lectures that were supposed to celebrate the arrival of a new century turned into funeral. The angry mob rioting outside also symbolically refers to an obscure and unpredictable future.

However, there is a little hope in this morbid chaotic situation that the play presents. As Butler argues, vulnerability is not the opposite of resistance. Isobel’s vulnerability, even to the point of suicide, does not rob her of her agency, because if we understand her vulnerability and suicide as a “deliberate exposure to [destructive social and scientific] power”, it becomes “part of the very meaning of social resistance as an embodied enactment” (Butler, 2016, 22). The performativity of suicide may seem but is not disjointed from resistance because it is in fact a form of deliberate and agentic politics. If we objectively presume Isobel’s suicide a weak act, we have opposed her vulnerability in the name of agency, which implies that we see agency presented by subjects who are only acting, but not acted on. Dr. Fenwick also admits that “pure objectivity is an arrogant fallacy . . . good science requires us to utilize every aspect of ourselves in pursuit of truth [and] sometimes the heart comes into it” (1.3.40). Otherwise, according to Butler, we cannot explain the ethical regions that “presume that our receptivity is bound up with our responsiveness, a zone in which we are acted on by the world, by what is said and shown, by what we hear, and by what touches us” (2016, 23).

At the end of the play, all the conflicting dichotomies are reconciled which suggests that “morality and science can work in collaboration, not always in contradiction” (Barnett, 216). Ellen finally accepts this fact by confessing that science is not “value free... [or] morally neutral” and adds that “an exquisitely balanced formula is a poem” (2.4.71). Tom responds that they are actually not completely different from

each other: “Art and science, waves and particles, it’s all the same thing” (2.4.71). We can presume the final words spoken between Ellen and Tom in 1999 quite suggestive and expressive. Tom says, “let’s start again” (2.5.76). In the chaotic system of the play what Tom suggests as a humanist to his wife Ellen as a scientist is to try to reshape and adapt, since this is the only way of begetting order out of disorder and preventing appalling things from happening.

1960s onwards witnessed unprecedented developments in science and a growing social awareness about the complexity of the world, the chaos inherent in it and human beings’ interdependency on each other and on the system. Another issue that followed the developments was manipulation of nature and crossing the boundaries that divide the natural and artificial. The chaos theory shows that what causes serious and destructive happenings in the environment are in fact tiny and obscure events. Science of genetics is one of these obscure causes that “can help to eradicate certain malignant diseases as it allows an access not only to the genetic material but also to change it” (Yas, 30). Stephenson’s play demonstrates the close relationship that promise, and peril can have with each other, and the bridging of the two centuries show the continuous conflict between science and ethics. Imposing a forced order on an inherently chaotic world can repeat the appalling misfortunes, such as suicide.

Science, as the play demonstrates, involves various topics such as emotional, cultural, religious and political and is never apart from these contexts. The experience with an air-pump in the play presents the social, cultural, religious, and political mentality of the age. Human beings began to feel empowered with the ability to give and take life. But genetic technology, Phil and Tom believe, has become a horribly unethical and dangerous tool rather than being liberative, since it extends the natural selection to society, follows its own rules, and will be used in business and commercial market. In the characters of Armstrong in 1799 and Kate in 1999 we see a desire to practice God-like authority. Thus, scientific ambition is capable of “luring the best scientists away from pure, unmatched research into nefarious exploitive purposes” (Barr, 123). It is becoming more and more difficult to control scientific progresses and to avoid unpredictable irreparable consequences as the suicide of young individuals.

Isobel's suicide is a shockingly concrete image that represents the domain of the excluded miserable bodies, "a field of deformation, which, in failing to qualify as the fully human, fortifies the regulatory norms" (Butler, 1993, 16). However, Isobel as an excluded and wretched body also produces a kind of a challenge to the regulatory norms, a challenge that may "force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as 'life', lives that worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving" (Butler, 1993, 16). There is a play within a play that the Fenwick daughters perform in celebration of the advent of a new century. Isobel, in this play has the role of a sheep representing pastoral innocence, which is no longer considered ideal. Isobel's body as a sheep in the play within a play represents a body that seems not to matter or reminds an unworthy life excluded for the sake of progress and development. But the performativity of suicide here asks if all these scientific progress and achievements worth it and shows that Isobel's body does matter.

In conclusion, it is mainly the chaotic situation of the world that Stephenson demonstrates by using double narratives, the comparison and the contrast between them and the performativity of suicide. There is no one single truth in the play and science is not presented as morally neutral. The closing image of the play is almost the same as its beginning. There is a vulnerable bird in the first image and there is Isobel's dead body in the last, both of which are the victims of the uncontrolled scientific passion. However, a glimpse of hope is also offered at the end; there is a small possibility of change or reshape in the system. Scientific objectivity being a fallacy is finally accepted by both Dr. Fenwick in 1799 and Ellen in 1999. Science is not morally neutral, and scientist should make his or her heart involved in it. Science, like poetry, can work rightfully only when it has rhythm, otherwise it will cause horrible results. This final reconciliation between the two conflicting dichotomies "exhibit that science and ethics can work together. They are not always at war. The drama promotes what chaos theory preaches that opposing things can and should coexist together" (Yas, 30). Renewal of norms is possible in a chaotic system if some social and political resistance is rightly operated within the norms. Isobel's suicide as a kind of resistance informed by vulnerability is neither fully active nor fully passive.

Its performativity in Stephenson's play works in the middle ground and represents the body as an individual that is both affected by science and acting on it.

4.5. 4.48 *Psychosis* (1999) by Sarah Kane: A Suicide Note Beyond Despair

David Greig writes in the introduction to Sarah Kane's *Complete Plays*: "Sarah Kane is best known for the way her career began, in the extraordinary public controversy over *Blasted*, and the way it ended: in her suicide and the posthumous production of her last play, *4:48 Psychosis*. Both were shocking and defining moments in recent British theatre and their shadows are bound to haunt any reading of her work" (ix). Kane's suicide "opened up a wound in the theatre that has yet to be healed" (Waters, 371). However, Greig also believes that the assessment of her life and death should not distract us from the exceptional qualities of Kane's plays, such as "explosive theatricality, the lyricism, the emotional power, and the bleak humour" (ix). Kane's work challenged the limits of performativity and Waters, as one of Kane's peers, witnessed "her constant struggle with what she saw as the normative culture of the course, of the theatre as such" (381). Kane in 1990s, was both admired for her willful refusal to be restricted by mundane practicalities of dramatic representation and criticized because of the problems and difficulties her plays created in theatricality and performance. Kane's exceptional bleak vision is unprecedented and incomparable with her contemporaries and her work "proved so profoundly unintelligible to critics, audiences and the theatre culture" of her time (Waters, 380). The abstract context and unconventional performativity of a play as *4:48 Psychosis* (1999), is far from the demands of the commercial stage. With her brave and radical voice, Kane attacked the theatre's shared codes of value and freed herself from the constraints of 'grand narratives' (Waters, 381)¹³.

¹³ In Mary Luckhurst's *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama 1880–2005*, grand narrative is explained as follows: "It is a teleological narrative of dramaturgy, performance style, and production and industrial practices which focuses on the development of English theatre towards realist staging, naturalistic performance styles through internalized and psychological representations of dramatic character and play texts that embodied high cultural 'literary' qualities, rather than visual spectacle. It is class-based and class-bound, and it leaves out more of English (and British) theatrical culture than it includes" (36). For a more extended explanation about the establishment and ideological motives of grand narratives, see Jacky Bratton. *New Readings in Theatre History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 10–14.

The theme of suicide and its performative relation with life in Kane's play, is so deeply received by readers and audiences that for instance, the theatre professor and director David Ian Rabey surprisingly entitled one of his articles, "The Mark of Kane: how should we die?". Rabey believes that the most influential part of Kane's theatre is the way she died in real life; nothing can be compared with her suicide as the zenith of performance (204). The last play of Kane has been described as "a seventy-five-minute suicide note" and the central and inevitable issue in mind while looking at *4:48 Psychosis* is the playwright's personal experience of mental illness and her eventual suicide at the age of 28 in 1999 (Sierz, 2012, 128). Though the question of gender is ambivalent, and we cannot be certain about the gender of any of roles in this play, the autobiographical connection has made many consider the protagonist as female¹⁴. However, Kane was in favor of keeping her plays away from what Waters calls "exact social observation" (372), a tradition which was very common in theatre during the decades before the nineties, but Kane found no use in it. She included unidentifiable characters, unspecified time and location and there is almost no plot in the play and no indication of the scenes. *4:48 Psychosis* has a complex poetic open-ended structure. There are 24 fragmented episodes, presenting a traumatic struggle with depression.

The performativity of suicide in the play criticizes the behavior of social structures with mental illnesses or assesses "the way mentally ill patients are treated by the NHS" (Sierz, 2012, 128). The play is analyzed here through lenses of the relation between the performativity of suicide and mental instability. The focus of this study is the way in which the linguistic performativity of suicide in *4:48 Psychosis* interrelates the play's autobiographical theme of self-destruction and the play's function of being resistant to closure (open-endedness) as a respond to blurring subjectivities, and fragmented self-expressions and melancholic witnessing. By approaching the play in this way, the audience's melancholic witnessing of suicide of the protagonist, and criticism of the mental health system are ensued, and the play's political component is appreciated.

¹⁴ In Aleks Sierz's *Modern British Playwriting: The 1990s*, a detailed study of the work of Sarah Kane is provided by a scholar Catherine Rees who believes "Although many automatically see the patient as female (presumably by making connections with Kane's own struggle with depression), there is no certainty about the gender of the protagonist and any of the roles within the text could be equally well portrayed by a male or female actor" (129).

Both Kane's plays and her life bear a strong traumatic force and the trauma that she inserted into *4:48 Psychosis* is not intended to reveal a depressing social reality, but rather presents a melancholic view of the social norms. As Waters stated, her work "has an inner didacticism which resides precisely in its refusal to tell and its compulsion to show (379). Kane from the beginning, as Waters explains, did not destined her work for persuasion but for presentation: "Conventional politics aim to reach and persuade majorities and theatre audiences, but in their disregard for conventional audience pleasure or approbation, Kane's plays [...] seek not to persuade but to present" (374). Influenced by Howard Barker's work, there is no clear expression about any political agenda and Kane tried to avoid the signs that could indicate political meaning. Any state-of-the-nation speech in the end or near the end was avoided by Kane since she believed that such techniques did not work. Her eventual suicide in 1999 gave a very poetic atmosphere to her last play. As Waters affirms: "When in 1999 Sarah Kane's career was so tragically cut short,... her work increasingly uncoupled from political intentions and salvaged instead as poetry or as an anatomy of passion" (372). There are many seemingly meaningless numbers, letters and words in the play which give a highly poetic and textual quality to it.

Kane always wrote to explore human drives and instincts, when unbounded from the rational and moral chains and *4:48 Psychosis* fully carries this intention of presenting the human drive freed from the fetters of rationality. This aspect of Kane's dramaturgy strongly recalls Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe and the perplexing deconstruction of rationality and moral issues. *4:48 Psychosis* have similarities with Barker's tragedies in representing a relentless psychological and physical pain without any cathartic release. We confront the vulnerable lost selves in Barker's plays as well as Kane's and as Zimmermann specifies: "Both in Barker's and in Kane's plays the human body becomes a central means of dramatic expression" (2002, 197). Barker believes that real tragedy in contemporary drama is to be found in the vulnerable individual and his or her resistance towards accepted ideology and religious and political ideas. Tragedy in a post-modern society, according to Barker, is "the most devastating to social orders, . . . the darkest and yet simultaneously the

most life-affirming”; tragedy stands “so close to the rim of abyss” and expresses the “inexpressible, and stages emotions the so-called open society finds it impossible to contemplate” (1993, 172).



Illustration 18 4.48 *Psychosis*, staged at the Royal Court in 2000, a year after Sarah Kane’s death (source: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian)

The structural and linguistic performativity of *4:48 Psychosis* demonstrate individual fear and vulnerability; it is about the fear everyone shares and can relate to, the fear of the possibility of our lives being ripped apart at any moment, the situation that Butler, in *Precarious Life*, explains as ‘precariousness’ and believes vulnerability to be an indispensable dimension of our lives (19), since we are living with the threat of violence coming from others and ourselves. Violence brings the fear of loss and we are vulnerable to loss. She observes that the experience of losing something or somebody “we have had, that we have desired and loved” is shared by everyone and loss makes “a tenuous ‘we’ of us all” (20)¹⁵. The play is centrally characterized by an

¹⁵ Vulnerability is also in direct relation with bodily existence. The body can act both as an agent and as a receiver of harm and pain. Corporeal existence constantly reminds us of our precarious lives. As Butler in *When is Life Grievable?* explains: “Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident” (2009, 25). The body is exposed to physical and mental illness and destruction. It is at the same time socially vulnerable since it makes the individual “attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure” (Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20). So, body is more surrounded with public dimensions than private aspects: “My

identification with precariousness related to private psychological trauma, and the unnamed protagonist of the play cannot communicate her the feelings of personal pain and fear with self-mastery. Her expressions flourish fragmentedly from her mental instability and this is because the precariousness of her life has to do with the patient's dependency on others. The traumatic patient cannot show unity of expression because she has lost a unified, fixed, or definable self as a result of what Butler calls 'interdependency'. Waters affirms that: "Her [Kane's] plays resisted ideology at all levels in response to political conflicts enacted in the name of fixed identities and categories" (373).

In *4:48 Psychosis* the speeches lack any prehistories and no motive is elucidated. The gestures do not generate understandable responses, the exchanges between the patient and the doctor are not logical and an emotion of numbness rules over the play. Kane's linguistic tone shows her rejection of any dialogic standard. She subjects the language of her play to reduction and so the dialogues do not make advancements in the story. There is a repetitive turning back to the beginning and everything remains unclarified. Any story-like development and any disclosure of what is going on in the play are denied to the audience. Here is how *4:48 Psychosis* begins (205):

(A very long silence.)
But you have friends.
(Along silence.)
You have a lot of friends.
What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?
(A long silence.)
What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?
(A long silence.)
What do you offer?
(Silence.)

Later the unnamed character reveals to the doctor that she has cut her arm, but the dialogue does not serve to make sense of her action or clarify the reason (216):

body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life" (Butler, *Precarious Life*, 26).

- Oh dear, what’s happened to your arm?
- I cut it.
- . . .
- Did it relieve the tension?
- No.
- Did it give you relief?
- (Silence.)
- Did it give you relief?
- No.
- I don’t understand why you did that.
- Then ask.
- Did it relieve the tension?
- (A long silence.)
- Can I look?
- No.
- (Silence.)

The fragmented and disunified self-expressions are intensified by the play’s textually emotional and poetic structure. When the play is read instead of watched, its poetic qualities become strongly effective, since its “lyrical structure lends the play a rhythmic value which can be appreciated as one would read poetry – as words on the page” (Sierz, 2012, 132). Barker explains such plays as follows: “I repeat that no one is educated by a play of this sort – no information, useful or otherwise, is communicated, nor is communication the essence. . . . The production must become, in essence, a poem, and, like a poem, not reducible to a series of statements in other forms” (1993, 123). We read at one point in the play: “A glut of exclamation marks spell impending nervous breakdown / Just a word on the page and there is the drama” (213). This textual section is significant in showing the mental breakdown of the protagonist and her impending suicide and the exclamation marks on the page show how intense these feelings are. Here are some accordant poetic examples from different parts of the play:

At 4.48
 when desperation visits
 I shall hang myself
 to the sound of my lover’s breathing

I do not want to die (p.207)

. . .

Everything passes
Everything perishes
Everything palls

my thought walks away with a killing smile
leaving discordant anxiety
which roars in my soul (p.218)

...

I don't imagine
(clearly)
that a single soul
could
would
should
or will (p.222)

...

How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?
How do I stop?

heart

A tab of pain
Stabbing my lungs
A tab of death
Squeezing my

I'll die
not yet
but it's there (226)

...

the capture
the rapture
the rupture
of a soul (p.242)

The dark atmosphere of the play, as the extracts clarify, is poetic and creates high emotional impact. Some parts appear to be in the form of dialogue, perhaps between a patient and a dictatorial clinician and in the other sections a single voice pulsates with anxiety, and other records sardonic clinical notes such as: "Lofepramine and Citalopram discontinued after patient got pissed off with side effects and lack of

obvious improvement” (224). In her soliloquies, the protagonist concomitantly desires to express the pain and trauma and portrays a mind in the throes of breakdown. Her stream of consciousness reveals her state of mind in the extremity of catastrophe. Even when there is a dialogue (if there is any intended by the writer) going on between the character and the patient, language loses its chain of give and take. In other words, the text is reduced to disunified speeches. By disunified speech, I mean the dialogues repudiate advancing the story; they broke up into fragmented expressions and in this way depart from the legible dramatic context.

The idea of the blurred subjectivities in Kane’s last play comes from Alicia Tycer who believes “the play’s innovative form” presents suicidal melancholia in such a way that it responds to “overwhelming losses, blurring subjectivities, and remaining resistant to closure” (24). Turning to the writings of Judith Butler would clarify how her account of performativity and vulnerable subjectivity explains the protagonist’s fragmented expressions of herself and her future suicide attempt. The protagonist as a trauma-stricken patient is unable to show self-mastery in her speech while the doctor tries to impose it on her. Self-mastery or self-unity is incompatible with Butler who rejects any emphasis on the conception of self-expression based on unity or mastery, because, according to her, subjectivity is inter-connected with ‘interdependency’ which means the individual as a subject is basically formed through his/her relations to other subjects (*The Examined Life*, 185–213). The individual is unable to have full authority over the construction and expression of self because the self is constructed and can only be expressed through relationality. When the interdependency of subjectivity is accepted, it is understood that the self which is emerged through the subject’s engagement with other subjects and social factors cannot make stable expression of self, and this is somehow beyond the subject’s power of choosing. The traumatic patient in the play challenges a self-mastered and coherent conception of self-narration by revealing her inability to choose to do so.

While the play reveals the world of depression and its high risks, it triggers a kind of melancholic identification with an indefinable loss. The performativity of suicide in 4.48 demonstrates that the decision of self-destruction is made in collaboration with

the subject's sense of emptied ego and the feeling of emptied surrounding society. Sigmund Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia" states that the melancholic person experiences "an identification of the ego with the abandoned object" (159). The individual is unable to express himself or herself and bring closure to his or her grief because he or she is unable to define what is lost in a definite way. As Freud expresses, "in grief the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (155). Tycker points out this relation between the patient's melancholia and Freud's idea of lost self by mentioning that "Kane utilizes similar psychological terminology" (25), when, for example she writes that the protagonist suffers from "pathological grief" (223) and needs "to vindicate the ego" (234). Tycker also indicates that "Freud originally characterized . . . melancholia as a pathological state" and a condition "with no medical cure" (25).

The play is full of scattered details, gaps, pauses and silences, all of which, according to Graham Saunders, cause strong identification and empathy on the part of readers and audience. So, while the performativity of suicide pushes towards an autobiographical interpretation of the protagonist's suicidal attempt, it also prevents the audience from being totally concerned with the connection between the protagonist and the dramatist since the technique of mixing the gaps and silences with sparse sentences makes the audience "place themselves into the account" (107) or feel something lost within themselves rather than within the outside world. Here is an example from the play: "Sometimes I turn around and catch the smell of you and I cannot go on . . . I cannot believe that I can feel this for you and you feel nothing. Do you feel nothing? (*Silence.*) Do you feel nothing? (*Silence.*)" (214). Then in the following page, we read again about this feeling of loss: "I've never in my life had a problem giving another person what they want. But no one's ever been able to do that for me. No one touches me, no one gets near me. But now you've touched me so deep I can't believe and I can't be that for you. Because I can't find you. (*Silence.*)" (215). This experience of loss, Tycker believes, does not easily leave the mind but continue to disturb the reader or audience long after the play is finished:

When readers and audience members experience silences within such a detailed passage, they become inclined to include their own personal details. By the end of the play, they have lost not only the definable author

and/or character, which could be classified as a loss pertaining to the outside world, but may also have experienced a less definable loss within the ego. Therefore, instead of experiencing catharsis, 4.48's melancholic after effects linger with readers and audience members long after the play's conclusion (26).

These dialogues or better to call failures in communication may seem to explain nothing, because they circle back on themselves and refuse to elucidate. The suicidal patient and the doctor communicate in subjectless titles and the only feeling disseminated from them is a kind of numb violence which, like the act of cutting of the arm, refers to the character's decision of self-destruction. The patient's world is chaotic, disordered and darkened by suicidal thoughts and this experience is ironically contrasted with the formal, ordered and rigid form of health care structures and medical notes, such as "Venlafaxine, 75mg, increased to 150mg, then 225mg. Dizziness, low blood pressure, headaches. No other reaction. Discontinued" (p.225). The minimalistic technique of including "silences", "long silences" and "very long silences" gives the readers or audience the opportunity to think about their own similar experiences and feelings. The obscurity of the language of performativity of suicide in this play not only does not make the text meaningless but provide the character's suicide attempt with subjective meaningfulness for the audience and readers. The poetic lines, words in columns, scattered numbers and a blank page make the readers more involved or urge them to respond and interact. Here are two of the shortest but tense examples in the play, "RSVP ASAP"¹⁶ (214) and near the end "watch me disappear" (244).

¹⁶ "répondez s'il vous plaît", or, "please respond"



Illustration 19 The patient's hand showing words about her suicide intentions and scattered numbers related to her confused and tormented mind, (Scene Four) she may have been given a test such as counting down from 100, and the patient cannot do it. (In some performances the numbers are spoken, and in some others, they are written on the skin or paper) (source: Pinterest)

The performativity of suicide in *4.48* can be better understood by analyzing the mutual characteristics of suicide with psychic trauma. We cannot decide on a beginning or an ending point for melancholia; in other words, the origin of the melancholic thoughts, their progressing process in an individual's mind and what they are going to cause for the individual and the witnesses are undeterminable. Both trauma and suicide can be regarded as reaction to an obscure loss within the individuals' ego and both resist closure. Even if suicide may seem to have closure for the doer, it is not so for the witnesses who continue interpreting and reinterpreting the act, whether as a successful attempt or not. Felman and Laub specify this fact about suicidal trauma, which resists completion and concrete representation since it is "an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after . . . an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending,

attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present” (69). This is relatable to the nonlinear structure of Kane’s play which is in accordance with the obscure nature and open-endedness of the act of self-destruction. The protagonist in the play defines depression in a way that shows something traumatic has happened to her in the past: “Depression is anger. It’s what you did, who was there and who you’re blaming” (212). The play begins with doctor saying “(A very long silence.) But you have friends. (A long silence.)” (205) and towards the ending the doctor repeats the opening words: “(A very long silence.) But you have friends. (A long silence.)” (236). Moreover, the play adds to the ambiguous traumatic atmosphere with many fragmented sentences and distressing repetitions that make us more focused in our witnessing of the everlasting ongoing trauma: “No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope” (218), “How do I stop?/ How do I stop?/ How do I stop?/ How do I stop?” (226), “yes or no yes or no yes or no yes or no yes or no yes or no” (240), and the last example “oh no oh no oh no” (240).

We cannot passively witness our melancholic identifications. The individual reader, listener, or the spectator of *4.48* is an active observer of the performativity of trauma and suicide and is vulnerably susceptible to the effects of witnessing. On the other hand, the process of witnessing, which can create future agencies for change, cannot take place without the intimate witnesses. As Felman and Laub confirm: “Bearing a witness to a trauma is, in fact a process that includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other*—in the position of one who hears. Testimonies . . . cannot take place in solitude” (70–71), and they also give warning: “He [or she] needs to know that such knowledge dissolves all barriers, breaks all boundaries of time and space, of self and subjectivity” (58). So, in the identification that comes with witnessing there is almost no dividing line between the self and what is witnessed because subjectivity is blurred and there is the risk of the individual experiencing the same severe feeling of loss as the patient in *4.48* refers at. In this way, the play also becomes politically loaded and the effects of theatrical trauma reaches beyond the theatrical experience. Taylor explains that the iterability of performativity of trauma allows it to be publicly present and active in society, and “by emphasizing the public, rather than

private, repercussions of traumatic violence and loss, social actors turn personal pain into an engine for cultural change” (2003, 168). The transmission and broadening of the scope of performativity of suicide and theatrical trauma is possible through political considerations which can help the survived individuals in their political actions.

In *4.48 Psychosis*, Suicide is performative in the melancholic identifications with the patient, identifications which are easier to be made and repetitive as the result of the “direct instructions from the play text itself” (Tycer, 29). The aggressive protagonist repeats shouting, “LOOK AWAY FROM ME” (227) and actually makes the audience even want more to keep their eyes on her, while in the ending we hear or read the opposite command, “Watch me” (234). Rabey infers that “Kane makes her audience choose to look differently in unusually immediate terms: faced with startlingly explicit physical images of abjection and attack the audience has to choose: to look *directly* or to look *away*” (207). The last line of the play can be the most melancholia extending performative sentence of the play: “please open the curtains” (245). This obscure ending words can have various interpretations. A stage direction is used as a part of dialogue that requires the play to begin rather than end. This can be interpreted as the performativity of suicide and the theatrical experience of melancholia, trauma and suicide are beginning to show their effects on the audience from the moment the play is finished. Tycer deduces: “By choosing to end the play in this manner, Kane highlights that the theatrical experience is not meant to end at the curtain fall, but to linger with the audience” (30).

Thus, we are somehow left with a lasting feeling of something lost within our ‘selves’ after the play is ended. This melancholic feeling of loss can be politically creative because it is incomplete; it has no beginning, no ending and can contain political potentialities. Apart from its nonlinear narrative structure, *4.48*’s political interventions lie in its confirming of Butler’s idea that identity is performative. In other words, the identities of the playwright and the characters are rendered fluid which eventually causes an ambiguous understanding of self. When the writer and disunified characters can provide no meaning for the play, the boundaries of subjectivity is broken, and identity formations are challenged. In this way, the

performativity of suicide in the play becomes socially and politically meaningful. According to Urban, this is an important part of Kane's work: "Kane reminds us that change is possible, but not as the end point of some utopic political narrative. Rather, change occurs in those moments where comfortable designations break down (Woman/man, victim/victimizer, native/foreigner, self/other) and everything must be rethought" (46).

The performativity of suicide in *4.48* assigns various positions to the reader or audience in relation to power dynamics and complicates audience's conventional role of being just a spectator. Melancholic identification with the protagonist who claims, "I gassed the Jews, I killed the Kurds, I bombed the Arabs . . . I'm going to make your life a living fucking hell" (227), is less related to autobiographical interpretations than embracing the position of someone who has witnessed violence, feels victimized by it and is vulnerable towards it, and feels guilty of not being able to resist or prevent it. Thus, the "I" in the sentence is not the doer of violence but the horrified, depressed, and vulnerable spectator of it. Tycker elaborates as follows: "The 'I' to whom Kane refers has not been depicted as a despot, but rather as a spectator who, exposed to inconceivable violence, has transferred culpability to him/herself" (31). The traumatic experience of suicide presented in the play is ambiguously deep and better not to analyze it by considering a division between the positions of a victim and a perpetrator. In other words, the issue of self-destruction combines these two positions since it is both a crime or a violent behavior and a vulnerable individual's cry for help.

The play's performativity also questions normative social categorizations and blurs the identities. In an interview with Kane in 1997, she asserted her critical view of societal divisions: "I don't think of the world as being divided up into men and women, victims and perpetrators. I don't think those are constructive divisions to make, and they make for very poor writing" (133). So, the readers or audience members of her last play feel the risk of not being able to get hold of a fixed subjectivity. To witness how subjectivity is prone to change and has the potential to simultaneously have the positions of victim and perpetrator can increase social responsibility, even if you have not directly experienced a traumatic happening.

According to Taylor: “trauma-driven performance protests offer a cautionary note . . . to remind spectators not to forget their role in the drama. Most of us addressed or implicated by these forms of performance protests are not victims, survivors, or perpetrators — but that is not to say that we have no part to play in the global drama of human rights violations” (2003,188). Suicide in *4.48* is performative because it can turn the audience from the position of being passive observers to the position of active witnesses who feel guilty of remaining silent and doing nothing. The protagonist in the final lines refers to this witnessing of her unending trauma by imploring the audience: “Validate me, Witness me, See me” (243). In this way, the performativity of suicide in *4.48* that can blur identities and challenge familiar divisions, can lead to political engagements.

Among the explicit political interventions that *4.48* makes is its indictment of a society that excludes individuals with mental health problems. The protagonist has the role of a patient who is going through some psychiatric treatments and sometimes gets very angry with the doctor who believes has complete authority over the situation. However, the doctor first interprets what is going on as “professional”: “We have a professional relationship. I think we have a good relationship. But it’s professional” (237). Then enforced to admit that the patient is a friend, the doctor confesses: “I fucking hate this job and I need my friends to be sane” (237). Despite trying to apologize, this behaviour of the doctor figure makes the patient feel utterly wretched and unhappy as she keeps repeating aggressively: “It’s not my fault” (238). In this way, Kane criticizes the doctors who differentiate the so-called sane majority from insane minority. Moreover, the doctors’ crowded community seems quite useless to the patient:

A room of expressionless faces staring blankly at my pain, so devoid of meaning there must be evil intent.
Dr This and Dr That and Dr Whatsit who's just passing and thought he'd pop in to take the piss as well. Burning in a hot tunnel of dismay, my humiliation complete as I shake without reason and stumble over words and have nothing to say about my 'illness' which anyway amounts only to knowing that there's no point in anything because I'm going to die. And I am deadlocked by that smooth psychiatric voice of reason which tells me there is an objective reality in which my body and mind are one. But I am

not here and never have been. Dr This writes it down and Dr That attempts a sympathetic murmur. . . .

Inscrutable doctors, sensible doctors, way-out doctors, doctors you'd think were fucking patients if you weren't shown proof otherwise, ask the same questions, put words in my mouth, offer chemical cures for congenital anguish and cover each other's arses (209-210).

Then the patient talks about “the chronic insanity of the sane” which means even those who look ‘sane’ or try to distance themselves from the ‘insane’ have some kind of “chronic insanity” that cannot be detected but is widespread among the majority who feel being safe in their position (229). However, the linguistic performativity of suicide strengthens the readers’ melancholic identification with pathological conditions since there are lines in the play directly drawn from Edwin Shneidman’s *The Suicidal Mind*, that “link the lack of fulfillment of certain key needs to suicide attempts” (Tycer, 33). The patient in 4.48 makes a long list of the things that, if unaccomplished, can prompt the character to attempt suicide. The list begins in page 233 with “to achieve goals and ambitions, to overcome obstacles and attain a high standard” and continues for two more pages with sentences such as “to be seen and heard . . . to be free from social restrictions, to resist coercion and constriction, . . . to repress fear, . . . to be accepted, to draw close and enjoyably reciprocate with another to converse in a friendly manner, to tell stories, exchange sentiments, ideas, secrets, . . . to win affection of desired Other, to adhere and remain loyal to Other . . . to be loved, to be free” (233-35).

We encounter almost similar need forms in *The Suicidal mind*: “To draw near and enjoyably cooperate or reciprocate with an allied Other; to please and win affection of a cathected Other; to adhere and remain loyal to a friend; to have companions with similar interests, to affiliate and form friendships; to avoid wounding and to allay opposition; to converse in a friendly way, to give information, to tell stories, to exchange sentiments; to confide, to exchange secrets” (122). The list continues, according to which, it is very probable that any person decides to commit suicide and as Tycer confirms, “even the comparatively healthy psyche can identify with frustrations of meeting the listed needs” (34). Shneidman believes the “needs” as “to achieve difficult goals, . . . to be loved by someone, . . . to belong or to be affiliated, .

. . to overcome opposition, . . . to be free of social confinement”, can create our “worst psychological pain” (176).

Listing the needs that can encourage the individual to commit suicide and the fact that every individual has these needs in life is a way of criticizing the relation between the doctors and their patients and breaking the hierarchy in medical world. Also, “in order to build skepticism about the psychiatric establishment”, the play refers to the failed diagnoses and medications and how the psychiatric establishment increases the vulnerability of the patients (Tycer, 34). We become skeptical of the treatments when we read a variety of strange medical words as ‘Lofepramine and Citalopram’, ‘Fluoxetine hydrochloride’ (224) and prescribed dosages that constantly go up and down and cause terrible side effects rather than relieving any mental and physical pain: “Sertraline, 50mg. Insomnia worsened, severe anxiety, anorexia, (weight loss 17kgs,) increase in suicidal thoughts” (223). The prescriptions and side-effects continue inexorably: “Lofepramine, 70mg, increased to 140mg, then 210mg. Weight gain 12kgs. Short term memory loss. . . . Citalopram, 20mg. Morning tremors. No other reaction. . . . Prozac, 20mg, increased to 40mg. Insomnia, erratic appetite, (weight loss 14kgs,) severe anxiety, unable to reach orgasm, homicidal thoughts towards several doctors and drug manufacturers. . . . Venlafaxine, 75mg, increased to 150mg, then 225mg. Dizziness, low blood pressure, headaches” (224-225).

Obviously, there is no improvement and all these combinations of prescribed drugs even increase the patient’s suicidal attempts such as “walking out in front of cars” (224). It is ironic that the patient eventually resorts to her own logical decision and rejects continuing the drugs: “Refused all further treatment” (225). However, the side-effects are so unbearably severe that patient turns to drinking alcohol for its numbing effects and swallowing pills to die: “100 aspirin and one bottle of Bulgarian Cabernet Sauvignon, 1986. Patient woke up in a pool of vomit” (225). Tycer believes that these are all very sharp political criticisms of what she calls “incompetent medical bureaucracy” that is responsible for prolonging the individual’s life (34).

The analysis of the performativity of suicide has hopefully made both the biographical and nonautobiographical aspects of Kane's play more prominent and, while mourning Kane's death, the audience and readers become actively involved in an identification with a traumatic and melancholic experience that is both personal and general. *4.48* has no ending and this lack of closure causes a variety of political interpretations which, according to Tycker, eventually blur and destabilize "commonly held distinctions among victim, perpetrator, bystander, the sane and insane" (35-6). By looking at the performativity of suicide in this play, we are introduced to a group of audience members who bear witness to extreme melancholia and coping mechanism of an individual whose vulnerability in resistance is increased as a result of being exposed to the unprofessional medical system.



Illustration 20 The final scene from *4:48 Psychosis*, showing the patient in the deepest helplessness and submission to death (source: TheaterMania)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the introduction I briefly touched on some articles about the relationship between suicide in reality and the symbolic suicide in literature. I tried to reveal that the mimetic representation of suicide has metadramatic effects that are counterparts of people's real-life responses to suicide. I mentioned the present day interest in social aspects of suicide, and explained at length Judith Butler's theory of performativity as it can give rise to a new approach to the analysis of suicide in literature, the approach used in this dissertation. In almost all of her works, Butler mainly focuses on the kind of individuals and bodies that do not conform or fit the established norms, and that are consequently resistant, vulnerable, and excluded from society. Butler's theory of performativity lays bare the image of a normal body as a constructed one. These analyses of the suicide plays, were able to demonstrate that the protagonists' maintenance is in some way dependent on iteration and imitation of the constructed norms, as hypothesized in accordance with Butlerian ideas.

The topic of the Butlerian performativity of suicide, quickly leads to the question of vulnerability in resistance. The two fundamental concepts of vulnerability and resistance, I have, from the second chapter on, conceived to be indispensable parts of the act of suicide. In Butler's theoretical discourse, these concepts are not the opposite of one another, and the pervasive supposition that vulnerability strengthens gender norms and social forms of power is challenged. To understand the acts of self-destruction of the female protagonists of the selected plays, the hidden reasons behind their decisions, and the performativity of their suicide, a rethinking of the concepts of vulnerability and resistance was needed. Butler's emphasis on the dual position of performativity, how we exist both by acting and by being acted on, proved itself to be crucial. What was emphasized in the analysis of the plays was

performativity and suicide not being an individual performance, and vulnerability being viewed and understood beyond victimization. The suicidal protagonists, as I have emphasized, each live in a world of narratives and descriptions which were created way before their birth. The female protagonists' critical approach to the world they live in or sometimes their deliberate or undeliberate endeavors to change their surrounding situation increased their vulnerability towards what they could not make on their own. However, I demonstrated that this vulnerability occurs in a cooperative relationship with resistance, which means that the protagonists presented a psychologically deep resistance to vulnerability both before committing suicide and by making the decision of suicide. As Butler clarifies, "the psychic resistance to vulnerability wishes that it were never the case that discourse and power were imposed on us in ways that we never chose" (2016, 24).

Butler also emphasizes her notion of body. For Butler, our bodily existence does matter since it exposes us to others and the pain and injury others can cause us. Moreover, vulnerable bodies or bodies exposed to power can be sites of agency. The analyses of the plays demonstrated that, in conformity with this Butlerian idea, while the body is one's private realm and one can wipe it out deliberately, it acts interdependently, is attached to others, and has a public dimension: "my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life' (Butler, 2004a, 26).

The analytic chapters used Butler's works to reveal the performativity of female suicide. In selected plays, Butler's notions on vulnerably resistant identities proved to be the most helpful and relevant for critically examining these dramatic texts. The selected plays all focused on female characters who were damaged by some kind of violence and terror, and whose relationships with their selves were complicated; and their vulnerability and suicide emerged in the plays as part of social relations and power. The plays are Butlerian in the sense that they question notions about identity and gender and they centre around the fluidity of identity. Indeed, Butler's ideas seem deeply ingrained in all of these plays, which demonstrate the deep influence of Judith Butler and postmodern ideas of performativity on the English stage from the 1990s.

As I examined the five plays of the last decade of 20th century, it turned out that all the female protagonists who commit suicide demonstrate resistance, bodily exposure, vulnerability, and the power of freeing their bodies from a condition of pain. Julia, Portia, Anne, Isobel, and Kane are characters pushed to the darkest and most vulnerable corners of their minds by the society's instituted terms of gender and identity. The performativity of suicide in the plays presented for us the fact that what is horrible even to think about can be acted out by a subject when vulnerability and resistance are represented in his/her self-system. What creates that extreme despair that leads to suicide was analyzed, and the plays were found all to show that the idea of killing herself was not planned by the female protagonist. As Artaud writes, before committing suicide people "do not even invent the thought of it"; they suddenly feel uprooted and "[t]he very idea of the freedom of suicide falls down like a lopped tree" ("On Suicide", 57).

Suicide can be understood through the act itself. This act requires a rejection of the body, since it is the body that has first introduced the individual to nature, conditioned the individual's organs and has adjusted them to his/her inner self. The body must be destroyed in order for suicide to happen, and destroying the body means presenting a new origin where one can trace the course of its existence. Suicide is thus a reformulation of the self into the beyond-the-self. In the plays analyzed, the notions of choice and intent were already embedded in normative gendered assumptions and institutional forces, and thus for instance, in Kane's play an interpretation of the nameless protagonist's intentions was produced through the medical system, in Crimp's play Julia's choice of suicide could not be investigated outside the education system, and Ayckbourn lodged suicide in a female body through the mass media.

Thus, this dissertation found that the plays it analyzes reconceptualize the act of self-destruction of the protagonists through the idea of performativity and follow a Butlerian consideration of suicide as performative. In other words, suicide is considered in the plays as an act performed simultaneously by the individual and institutional powers. Representing a bodily act, the suicides of characters are shown to have, over time, communicated that personal choice and intention are more

important than the factor of institutional powers. This dissertation showed how the selected plays present the practices of power as, indeed very effective in the production of the act of suicide, while remaining concealed within various social structures and normative assumptions. The individual in these plays is shown to be not free in performing and not fully deliberate in making any choice. The analyses of the plays demonstrate how and why the selected dramatic suicides are unfree as citational practices, which means they repeat things that are historically recognizable. The act of suicide, in this way, is proved to be performative.

I have tried to display what the performativity of suicide of the female protagonists, in Butlerian terms, means: it means that suicide creates itself, just as how in the theory of gender performativity, gender creates the idea of gender itself with repeated performances. In the case of suicide, its repeated linguistic performance creates its meaning and impact upon others. In other words, the suicidal protagonist as an agent, performs in a particular way in a play, as a result of both his/her personal and social perceptions of his/her living condition. As Butler said in an interview: “the performance of gender is compelled by norms that I do not choose” (Butler, 2000, 345). Then she continues: “Gender performativity is not just drawing on the norms that constitute, limit, and condition me; it’s also delivering a performance within a context of reception, and I cannot fully anticipate what will happen” (Butler, 2000, 345). The plays demonstrate the high level of vulnerability that perceptions and illusions can cause in an individual, who is at the same time an agent of change by showing a specific kind of resistance (resisting survival). So, what is finally emphasized here is suicide not being a personal and controlled decision at all. Though it is the individual’s personal act of destroying the body, each and every ‘body’ is interdependent and socially matters. Eventually it turns out that the vulnerable individual is not the doer of the self-destructive act, but in fact others and society are the real performers of suicidal behaviour or form the performativity of suicidal acts.

These plays’ explorations of Butler’s approach to suicide, although typical of the 1990s British stage, are increasingly relevant to the early decades of the 21st century. Injustice, bigotry, homophobia, inequality, brutality, lack of support, scientific greed,

and even pandemics have formed the social, cultural, and political world of the present day, and they all interact with each other. Trauma, mourning, grief, and melancholia seem to be increasing the precarious conditions of life, or perhaps this is an effect of a modern focus on discourse of sensibility and psychology, and not a real change. The question posed in the current time can be how can we recognize a suicidal individual and prevent their act of self-destruction? The media moves from the news of a suicide case on to the next thing, and any change we wish to see in the world is not possible without long term commitment to the cause and providing support for the vulnerable beings and those who have experienced a loss of any kind. Butler is always concerned for the vulnerable beings, and I have tried to show in this dissertation that her theory of performativity does not reduce everything to mere language.

I would like to close down this conclusion, by proposing further investigations that can be made to understand how suicidal behaviours can emerge within resistance and, as a deliberate mobilization of bodily exposure, create deforming in the tensions of society and power. More critical analyses of dramatic texts that deal with the theme of suicide can be carried on in order to show that the characters' self-destruction can deal with a resistance to unjust system that mobilizes vulnerability as part of its own exercise of power.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

Feb 2014–Nov 2020

PhD in English Literature

Middle East Technical University, Ankara (Turkey)

Title of the Dissertation: Linguistic Authenticity and Butlerian Performativity of Suicide in Selected Plays of the 1990s: *Haunting Julia* (1994) by Alan Ayckbourn, *Portia Coughlan* (1996) by Marina Carr, *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) by Martin Crimp, *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) by Shelagh Stephenson, and *4.48 Psychosis* (1999) by Sarah Kane

Sep 2009– Jun 2012

Master of Arts in English Literature

Middle East Technical University, Ankara (Turkey)

Title of the Dissertation: The Application of Derrida's Ideas of Mourning and Deferral of Meaning on Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*

Sep 2003–Aug 2007

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature

University of Tabriz, Tabriz (Iran)

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Ronaghzadeh Samindokht, *The Application of Derrida's Idea of Mourning to Bronte's Villette*. 21st METU British Novelists Conference: The Bronte Sisters and Their Work, Dec. 2013.
- Ronaghzadeh Samindokht, *Crisis of Suicide as an Act of Liberation in the Works of Ibsen and Sartre*. The 2nd Annual Meeting and International Conference of the Consortium for Research in Political Theory, The Crisis: Future Prospects on Politics, Culture and Governance, July 2018.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Sep 2011 – Jun 2012

Goldis English Language Institution, Tehran (Iran)

- Preparing the students for the TOEFL and IELTS exams
- Private English language tutor working with the advanced level students

Sep 2005 – Jun 2007

Safir Danesh English Language Learning Institution, Tabriz (Iran)

- Teaching elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate level English
- Coordinating the English movie classes

CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE

- Trieste James Joyce Summer School, University of Trieste, Italy, 23-29 June 2019
- Coursera TESOL Program offered by Arizona State University, a Program to learn theory and the practical strategies of English as a Second Language teaching, May-June 2019
- 2nd Annual Meeting and International Conference of the Consortium for Research in Political Theory, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey, 16-20 July 2018
- 23rd METU British Novelists Conference, "Agatha Christie and Her Work", 13-16 March 2017
- Udemy (online learning platform for professional adults), 27 lectures of preparation for CELTA Teacher Training, May-June 2015
- 22nd METU British Novelists Conference, "Zadie Smith and Her Work", 24-27 March 2015
- 21st METU British Novelists Conference, "Brontë Sisters and Their Work", Ankara, Turkey, 10-13 December 2013
- 20th METU British Novelists Conference, "Salman Rushdie and His Work", March 2012
- 18th METU British Novelists Conference, "Jane Austen and Her Work", March 2010

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

1990’li Yılların Seilen İngiliz Oyunlarında İntiharın Dilbilimsel zgnlğ Ve Butlerian Performatifliğ

İntihar teması ok zengin bir dramatik tarihe sahiptir ve İngiliz tiyatrosunun merkezi bir dramatik temasıdır. Teatral intihar ile gerek intihar arasında bir baėlantı vardır. Teatral intihar, gerek intiharı taklit eder. E. Shneidman gibi psikologlar, kasıtlı bir kendini yok etme eyleminde etkili olan depresyonun acısını ve ıstırabını vurgularlar. Durkheim gibi sosyologlar ise intiharın sosyal ynlerini vurgularlar. Judith Butler gibi filozoflar ise intiharın hem sosyal hem politik ve hem de zel ynleriyle ilgilenirler. Butler, bu etkileri dil, somutlařtırma (embodiment) ve eylem arasındaki gerilimlerin iinde yatan dilsel performatifliğe baėlar. Butler’ın teorisi bu tez iin en uygun olanıdır, nk seilen intihar oyunlarındaki dramatik intihar temasına, Butler’ın performatiflik teorisini uyguladıėımda, kadın kahramanların direniřteki savunmasızlıėı (vulnerability in resistance) ortaya ıkmaktadır.

Bu doktora tezi, 1990’li yılların seilen ingiliz oyunlardaki kadın kahramanların Butler’ın 'kimlik senaryoları' ('identity scripts') ve 'sosyal maėduriyet' ('social victimization') olarak adlandırdıėı řeye karřı nasıl performatif bir 'direniř' sergilediklerini intihar ynnden incelenmektedir. Butler’a gre her birey, herhangi bir zamanda ve herhangi yerde veya herhangi bir řekilde kayıp ve řiddete maruz kalabilir. Bu durum nce direndiėimiz ve sonra savunmasızlıėımızla karřı karřıya kaldıėımızdan deėil; oyunlarda, kahramanların nce savunmasız olduklarını gryoruz ve ardından, direniř eylemleri yoluyla bu savunmasızlıėı ařmaya ynelik umutsuz giriřimlerinin bedensel yıkıma yol atıėına řahit oluyoruz.

Butler’ın performatif birey kavramları geici olarak oluřturulmuřtur ve varlıėını srdrmek iin performatifliğe baėlı olan kadın kahramanların kendi davranıř

biçimini daha iyi anlamaya yardımcı olur. Bu kahramanların varlığı her zaman yıkıcı olasılıklara açık bir varoluştur.

Butler'a göre Cinsiyet ve kimlik performansı, oyunculuğumuz veya rol oynamamız için, yani bu dünyaya sunduğumuz kimlik için çok önemli olduğu anlamına gelir. Cinsiyetin performatif olduğunu söylemek biraz farklıdır, çünkü bir şeyin performatif olması bir dizi etki ürettiği anlamına gelir. Bireyler kim olduklarına dair izlenimi pekiştirecek şekillerde hareket ederler. Bir erkeğin ya da bir kadının cinsiyetine karşı, o cinsiyetin kalıplarına göre davranırız; fakat bu kalıplar aslında sürekli yeniden üretilen bir olgudur. Bu performatiflik kavramı kimliğe ve cinsiyete bakışımızı değiştirmektedir. Butler, bu tür toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının nasıl oluşturulduğunu ve denetlendiğini ve bunları bozmanın en iyi yolunun ne olduğunu sorguluyor. Butler, toplumsal cinsiyetin kültürel, sosyal ve politik olarak şekillendiğini ancak aynı zamanda bir eylemlilik potansiyeli yarattığını veya özgürlük alanı (domain of agency) olabileceğini düşünüyor.

İdeal toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının, özellikle cinsiyet veya kimlik sunumuna uymayanlara yönelik, uyguladığı şiddete direnmek çok önemlidir. Tezin ikinci bölümü bu konuları ele almaktadır. Yaklaşım, Austin'den Butler'a 'performans' kavramının gelişiminin izini sürerek başlar. Bu yaklaşım, performatif sembolik eylemlerin ve parodik tekrarların, doğal olarak kendilerinden ortaya çıkmadıklarını, ve savunmasız dirençli sosyal kimlikler kurduklarını göstererek sona erer. Teori bölümünde sıklıkla atıfta bulunulan konu, performatifliğin cinsiyet ve kimliğin ne kadar hem sosyal yapılar olduğunu hem de sosyal ifadelerin kurucusu olduğunu tartışmasıdır.

J.L. Austin, kültürlerin dil (tiyatro) kullanımının bir parçası olan uygulamalara gösterilen ilginin değerini güçlendirdiği için doğru bir başlangıçtır. Austin, olumsuz bir şekilde olsa da, tüm bu ilgiyi başlatmıştır. Austin'in konuşma eylemlerine yaklaşımı, dil ve onun nasıl manipüle edilebileceği arasındaki performatif ilişkinin gerçekleşmesini başlattı.

Austin, tiyatroyu 'isabetli' ifadeler (felicitous utterances) kategorisinden çıkarırken, Butler'ın teorisi her zaman teatral performansla ilişkilendirilmiştir. Butler, toplumsal olanı, toplumsal cinsiyet performatifliği kavramsallaştırmasının ilk aşamalarında, teatral olarak tanımlamaktadır. Derrida Austin'i edebi olarak ilk eleştirenlerdendir. Derrida için, bağlam (context) asla tanımlanamaz, çünkü konuşma eylemleri asla bitmeyen bir alıntı yapma (never-ending citationality) potansiyeli taşır. Bir başka deyişle bağlamın tekrarlanabilirlik özelliği var: konuşma eylemleri durmadan, yaratıcı bir şekilde tekrarlanır ve orijinal bağlam kaybolur. Derrida'dan sonra performatiflik üzerine en geniş etkili odak, cinsiyet ve kimlik teorisini Judith Butler'ın performatiflik kavramıyla ortaya çıkarmıştır. Butler'a göre cinsiyet ve kimlik performatif olarak oluşturulmuştur ve performatiflik yoluyla eylemleri gerçekleştirirler. Bireyler, önceki yinelenmelerin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan toplumsal cinsiyetli uygulamaları yinelerler. Performatif kimliğin bu tekrarlayan doğasına hapsolmuşken, yalnızca 'yeniden anlamlandırma' (re-signification) bizi tekrardan veya bu yinelenebilirliğin yapılandırılmış doğasından kurtarır.

Tiyatro dünyasında, oyuncular, performansları üzerinde tam kontrole sahip olamazlar, ancak senaryoya göre performans göstermeleri gerekir. Yani oyuncular oyunu oynarken aynı zamanda oyun tarafından oynanıyorlardır. Toplumdaki birey de aynı şekilde kurumlar ve söylem tarafından oluşturulur ve tam olarak bir aktör olarak oluşturulduğu ölçüde hareket eder; bu nedenle, kısıtlamaları en başından mümkün kılan dilsel bir alanda faaliyet gösterir. Performans, bu noktada direnişteki kırılganlıkla ilişkilendirilir. Bireyler savunmasızdır, çünkü yaşamı sürdürmeleri bir şekilde normların tekrarlanmasına ve taklit edilmesine bağlıdır. Bu normların uygulanmasında bireyler başarısız olurlarsa var olmaya devam edemezler. Diğer bir taraftan, normların gerçekleştirilmesindeki başarısızlık kaçınılmazdır; çünkü bireyler yaklaşıma zorlandıkları ideale asla tam olarak ulaşamazlar.

Performativite teorisi, bireylerin kendilerine empoze edilmiş normlarla yaşarken ve bu normlara uyumlu olmaya çalışırken, normlara tam olarak uymaktaki başarısızlığın, bireyleri belirli türden sosyal beklentilere karşı savunmasız hale getirdiğini göstermektedir. Butler'ın bu koşulu "başarısızlığa karşı savunmasızlık" (vulnerability to failure) olarak adlandırmaktadır. Bireyler aynı anda sosyal olarak

yapılandırılıyor ve kendi kendilerini oluşturuyor. Toplumsal cinsiyet, eril ve dişil kavramlarının üretildiğı ve doğallaştırıldığı bir mekanizmadır. Aynı zamanda bu tür terimleri yapışöküm (deconstruct) yapar ve doğallığını yitirmesine neden olur (denaturalization).

Butler doğallığı yitirmeyi, savunmasızlığı içeren bir direniş olarak görmektedir. Performativite, iki boyutludur; bir yandan, dil ve normlar bize etki eder, hareket ettiğimiz her an bizi şekillendirir ve bunları performanslarımızda yeniden üretiriz. Öte yandan, eylemlerimiz seçim olasılığına sahiptir. Ancak bu performatiflik sürecinde seçim sonradan yapılır ve bazen normlardan sapmalar (deviations) olabilir. 1990'ların seçilen oyunları da intiharın performatifliği, bazı davranışları ve sosyal uygulamaları yeniden ifade ederken, normlara, yasalara ve kurumlara direnebilmemiz için evrensel karşılıklı bağımlılığımızı ve savunmasızlığımızı kabul etmemizin gerekliliğini gösterir.

Toplumsal cinsiyet hem kültürel olarak bizi ayakta tutan hem de cezalandıran veya toplumdaki dışlayan bir mekanizmadır. Cinsiyet, eylemlerin taklidi ve tekrarı sonucu şeklini alır ve kimliğe dönüşür, ancak eylemlerin tekrarı reddedilebilir ve bazen cinsiyet farklı şekilde tekrarlanabilir. Bireylerin performatifliği bir toplumun kabul edilen sözleşmelerine uymadığında, sosyal standartları tekrar etmemeyi reddetmiştir. O zaman kabul edilen varsayımlar yerinden edilme olasılığı tarafından tehdit edilebilir ve sözde doğal kimliklerin orijinal olmadığını ortaya çıkarır. Kimlik, söyleminin (discourse) bir etkisi olmasına rağmen, tam olarak belirlenmez veya söylem tarafından hapsedilmez.

Bu tezde Butler'ın cinsiyet ve kimliğin gerçekliğini reddedişini ele alınmıştır. Savunmasız ve birbirine bağımlı bireyler, kanuna direnme ve hatta hukuka müdahale potansiyeline sahiptir. Bireyler bir dizi özgürleştirici eylemde yer alabilirken, eylemlerin tamamında seçim yapmakta özgür değildir. Cinsiyet kimliği dilden önce gelmez; cinsiyet kimliğini oluşturan dildir. Öznenin bir nedenden çok bir sonuç (effect) olduğu fikri, Butler'ın performatif kimlik teorilerinin anahtarıdır.

Toplumdan beklenen normların gerçekleştirilmesindeki başarısızlık kaçınılmazdır ve bu nedenle direniş, güçleri ve değişkenleri etkileme potansiyeline sahiptir. Butler, performatiflik teorisini bedenin meselesine bağlar (the matter of the body). Butler'ın beden bağlamında söylemin yineleyici gücüne yaptığı vurguyu dikkate aldığımızda, bedenin 'zamansal süresini' (temporal duration) sona erdirme girişimi olarak intihar da performatiflik söyleminden ayrılmaz hale gelir.

Butler, performatiflik konusu dâhilinde, gündelik hayat içinde var olan fakat unutulmuş edimleri, beden ve bedenle birlikte oluşturulan nesneler üzerinden yaratılan imalar biçiminde incelemiştir. Butler'a göre, bedenlerin siniri olan tenlerin eril ve dişil cinsiyet ikilisi egemen bilgi paradigmasından (dominant knowledge paradigm) veya içinde yaşadığımız sosyolojik çerçeveden geliyorlar. İçinde yaşadığımız eril ve dişil cinsiyet ikilisi, bedenlerimizi veya insan olarak kim olduğumuzun tanımlarını somutlaştıran kapsamın büyük bir kısmıdır. Yani, bedenlerle ilgili sosyo-psikolojik bir durum var ve devam etmekte ve toplumun olayları nasıl yorumladığı psikolojik alanın derinliklerine inmektedir. Toplum neyin kabul edilebilir olduğuna dair bir çerçeve yaratır ve neyin kabul edilebilir olduğunu psikolojik olarak analiz etmek ve sonra bu kabul edilebilirliği performansta harekete geçirmek bireye kalmıştır. Oyunculuğa her zaman direnişte kırılganlık (vulnerability in resistance) eşlik eder ve bu psiko-analitik egzersizin doksanların intihar oyunlarında yer aldığını görüyoruz.

Tüm eylemler veya performatif eylemler, egemen paradigmanın devam etmesi için gerekli olan tekrarlamalardır (reiteration). Oluşturulmuş gerçekliğin devam etmesi için tekrar edilmeye devam etmesi gerekir ve tekrarlamazsa oluşturulmuş gerçeklik tehdit edilir ve gücünü veya etkisini kaybeder. Performanstaki dirençli bedenler, intihara meyilli bedenler, eşcinsel eylemler ve diğer muhalefetlerin tümü, baskın paradigmayı zorlamaktadırlar; bu tür anti-paradigmalar (anti-paradigms), ne onu tekrarlar ne de egemen ataerkil heteronormatif paradigmayı pekiştirecek bir şekilde hareket eder ve bir tür direnişle, paradigmayı parçalamak isterler.

Tezin üçüncü bölümünde, 1990'ların İngiliz tiyatro yazını, bu on yılın neden seçildiği, bu on yılın intihar oyunlarında ortaya çıkan özellikler ve Howard Barker'ın

1990'lar İngiliz oyunları üzerindeki etkisi incelenmektedir. İngiliz tiyatro tarihinin bu on yılında bir önemli değişiklik meydana gelmiştir. Oyunların seyirci üzerindeki etkinliğinde bir değişim olmuştur. Yani yazarlar izleyicilere yeni yollarla hitap etmiş ve çoğu oyunlarında kadın kahramanların intiharlarını kullanmışlardır. Bu bölümde, Barker tiyatrosunun işlevselliğinin nasıl işlevsizliği ile (functionlessness) iç içe olduğunu, bu on yılın intihar oyunlarında tespit edilebilen bir nitelik olduğunu ve izleyicinin kolektif olmaktan çok bireysel olarak farklı bir tepkiyi nasıl deneyimlediğini görürüz. Bu bölümde, aynı zamanda, çağdaş dramda trajedi, ölüm ve şiddetle uğraşmanın gerekliliği ve Barker'ın ölüm ve intihar temalarında yer alan belirsizlik ve yargıya her zaman ilgi gösterdiğine dair ayrıntılar da yer almıştır. Doksanların İngiliz oyunları Barker'in oyunlarıyla, hiçbir genelleme yapmama ve doğrudan anlam ve mesaj içermeme yönünden benzerdir. Barker'in tiyatrosunda hiçbir gerçek sunulmamaktadır ve oyun yazarları, Barker'in herhangi bir ideolojiye ilişkin bağlamsal anlamlar sunmayı katı bir şekilde reddetmesinden büyük ölçüde etkilenmişlerdir.

Genç oyun yazarları, alternatif bir dünya sunmadığı ya da bir değişim olasılığı önermediği şiddet içeren bir dünyayı açık bir şekilde gösterdiler. New Writing'de tasvir edildiği gibi, insan yaşamı savunmasızdır ve içinden çıkış yolu yokmuş gibi görünen kaçınılmaz bir yıkım sürecine girmiştir. "Yeni oyun" (New Play), izleyicinin kişisel alanını bir şekilde tehdit etmektedir. İzleyicinin duyguları, toplumun sosyal ve politik yapılarında şiddetin yoğunluğunu göstermenin etkili bir yolu olarak, ana hedeftir. On yılın en büyük korkusu ve tehdidi olan şiddet, tiyatro yazınında özel hayat ve özgürlüğün ihlali şeklinde sunulmuştur. Bu nedenle, Aleks Sierz'e göre, bu dönemde sık sık başkalarına işkence eden veya kendi kendilerine işkence eden ve intihar eden karakterlere tanık oluruz. Karakteri savunmasız bir özne olarak bazı kontrol edilemeyen yıkıcı güçlere maruz bırakan ve bu savunmasızlığı direnişin karşı tarafında konumlandıran yaygın 'kurban temelli oyun' (victim-based play) fikrine doksanlı yıllarda yavaş yavaş meydan okundu. Bu on yılın intihar oyunları, mağduriyet ve savunmasızlık kavramları, korunma ihtiyacını ima eder ve direniş kavramını bir şekilde yeniden formüle etmektedir.

1990'lar İngiliz tiyatrosunda ele alınan konular ulusal değil, uluslararası konulardı. Oyunlar herkesin belirlenen değerlere hapsedildiğini ortaya koymuştur. İntihar bu dönemin tiyatrosunda önem kazanmaktadır, çünkü yıkılmış modern bir dünyada yaşayan insanların daha iyi bir dünyayı yeniden inşa etmek için çok az ümide sahip oldukları görünmektedir. İntihar oyunlarındaki isimsiz karakterler, bilinmeyen zamanlar ve belirsiz yerler, bu oyunların yorumlanmasının izleyicinin bakış açısına ne kadar bağlı olduğunu gösterir. Yeni oyunlarda dramatik bir performans olarak intihar, In-Yer-Face Theatre'in iki özel özelliğini kullanır. Birincisi, seyirci canlı bir intihar deneyimine tanık oluyor, bu da oyunu izlerken, içten bir tehlike hissettikleri anlamına geliyor. İkincisi, oyun yazarları hiçbir şeyi teknik olarak sansürlemezken, insan ruhunun karanlık ve özel yanlarını ve kişisel acıyı keşfetmek için intiharı kullanırlar. Hem doksanların Yeni oyunları hem de In-Yer-Face Theatre duyarlılık sorununu ele almaktadır. Bu tür oyunların en rahatsız edici nitelikleri, bir kasvet duygusu ve karakterin duygusal umutsuzluğudur. Doksanların yeni yazarları duygusal, ütöpik asiler olma geleneğini tercih etmişlerdir ve doksanların pek çok popüler oyunu, bir siyasi oyunun bir şekilde içermesi gereken değişim umudunu içermeyiz. Ama aynı zamanda 1990'lar oyunlarında korunması gerekenler vurgulanmaktadır. Bu vurgulama politik olarak radikal bir yöntemdir.

Doksanların intihar oyunlarında şahit olduklarımız, Barker tiyatrosuna benzemektedir. Kendi kendini imha etme eylemi adaletin yeniden tesisini açıklamaz, ancak intiharın bir direniş eylemi olarak gerçekleştirilebilirliği, devam eden sosyal adaletsizliği ve destek eksikliğini ortaya çıkarır. Butler'ın da açıkladığı gibi: Bağımlı olduğumuz şeyin aslında bizim için orada olmadığını gördük, bu da desteksiz kaldığımız anlamına geliyor. Dramatik intiharı bir Barker felaketi (Barkerian catastrophe) olarak düşünersek, Butlerci bir bakış açısıyla, doksanlı yıllardaki intihar performansının acıma duygusunu bastırma, kırılabilirlik / direniş arasındaki varsayılan ayrımın erozyonunu başlatma ve reddetme yeteneğine sahip olduğunu ima edebiliriz. Kadın kahramanların acı ve ıstırapı vazgeçilmezdir, ancak aynı zamanda sosyal ve politik olarak etkilidir. Butler, halk direnişi kırılabilirliğe yol açsa ve kırılabilirlik direnişe yol açsa bile, kırılabilirliğin tam olarak direnişle aşılmadığını, ancak siyasi seferberliklerde potansiyel olarak etkili bir mobilizasyon gücü haline geldiğini belirtmektedir.

Kendini odak noktasından çıkarmış bir yazarla karşılaşan izleyici, kendisini çeşitli ideolojik, ahlaki, kültürel düşüncelerden oluşan bir ağın içinde bulabilirken, oyun izleyiciye hakikat konusunda inandırıcı hiçbir iddia sunmamaktadır. Kadın kahraman tarafından gerçekleştirilen direniş tarzlarını yorumlamak zorunda hissetmek, izleyicinin kendi inanç sistemini korumaya çalışmasına neden olabilir. Barker'in oyunlarından etkilenen doksanlı yılların İngiliz yazarları, bu niteliği oyunlarına dahil etmişlerdir. Bu bir yandan hem seyirci hem de oyuncular açısından bir anlam mücadelesi talep ederken, diğer yandan mücadelelerin net bir anlamla sonuçlanma olasılığı yoktur. Ancak önemli olan Barker'in performanslarına ve seyircilerinin zihnine yerleştirildiğine inandığı mücadelenin kendisidir. Doksanların drama yazarları intihar konusunu izleyici tarafından kabul edilen normlara mücadeleyi başlatmak için kullanmışlardır. Doksanların oyunları, Barker'in oyunlarında olduğu gibi, izleyiciyi yaratılış sürecine doğrudan katılmaya davet eden bir tür tiyatro sunmaktadır. Bu davet, intihar oyunları boyunca, direniş biçiminde bir fikir sunmaya değil, direniş tarzlarıyla ilgili karmaşık düşünceler deneyimini sunmaya çalışarak yinelenir. Örneğin *4:48 Psychosis* ve *Haunting Julia* oyunları, izleyicinin zihninde kabul edilen sistemlerle Barker tarzında bir mücadeleye başlamasının iyi temsilcileridir. (*4:48 Psychosis* 'da sağlık sistemi ve *Haunting Julia* 'da eğitim sistemi eleştirilmektedir)

Doksanlı yılların intihar oyunları yoğun bir şekilde özel performatif bir dili içermektedirler ve bu durum Barker'ın oyunlar üzerindeki etkisinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Barker bu durumu şöyle açıklıyor: Oyun yazarı, yarı bilen, yarı cahil bir şekilde araziye keşfeder. Yazarın yolculuğu oyuncular tarafından haritalandırılmıştır. Seyirci, yazarın yolculuğunu anlamlandırma mücadelesine katılıyor, bu katılım da onların yolculuğu oluyor. Sonuç olarak, seyirciler toplu çıkarımlardan ziyade, bireysel çıkarımlara ulaşmaktadırlar. Topluluğun kabul ettiği genel bir yorum yoktur.

Sarah Kane'in *4:48 Psychosis* 'i intiharın eşiğindeki isimsiz bir karakterin travmatik zihnini araştırmaktadır. Bu eserde hiçbir şey net olarak tanımlanmamıştır, sadece karakterler değil, sahneler, yönlendirmeler ve konuşmalar da belirsiz ve tehditkârdır.

Martin Crimp'in *Attempts on Her Life* oyununun izleyicisi, Anne hakkında isimsiz karakterler tarafından yapılan sayısız kurguların arasında kaybolur. Bu kurgular sürekli olarak çürütülmektedir (deconstruct themselves) ve Anne'nin savunmasızlığını açığa çıkarmaktadır. *Haunting Julia*'da Alan Ayckbourn, yetenekli genç bir kızın intiharında paranormal ve psikolojik durumları harmanlamaktadır. Sosyal ve eğitimsel politikaların bireyi intihar etme noktasına kadar nasıl sürükleyebileceğini göstermektedir. Shelagh Stephenson'un *An Experiment with an Air Pump* oyununda savunmasız bir genç kızın vücudu üzerinde bilimsel bir deney yapılır ve hikâyede bilim yolunda öldürülen kuş gibi, kambur eğitilmiş hizmetçi Isobel de destekten yoksun olduğu için ölür. Tüm bu oyunlar, Barker'in deyimiyle toplumsal varoluşun temelini oluşturan geleneksel görüşü kopyalamaktan kaçınmaktadır. Seyirci, kadın bireyin aynı anda hem savunmasız hem de dirençli olabileceğini anlamaktadır. Birey hem eylemde bulunur hem desteğe ihtiyaç duymaktadır hem de siyasi konuları tehdit etmektedir.

Modern dramının odak noktası, ağırlıklı olarak insanın bastırılmış arzularının, içgüdülerinin ve toplumun normlarına tabi olan insan vücudunun temsili olmuştur. İntihara meyilli karakterin dirençle beraber savunmasızlığı, doksanlı yıllarda, normlara direnerek normları aşan ve savunmasızlıklarında özel desteğe ihtiyaç duyan performatif bedenlerin iletişimi yoluyla izleyiciye sunulur. Örneğin, Marina Carr'ın *Portia Coughlan*'ında, eşsiz kadın bir karakterin ölen ikiz kardeşine olan sevgi ötesindeki aşkını görüyoruz. Kültürel normları bu tür bir sevgiyi yasaklayan ve ensest olarak kabul eden İrlanda toplumunda, Portia'nın çektiği acı ve melankoli yoğunlaşıyor. Erkek egemen bir ortamda intihar ederek ölen ikiz kardeşi Gabriel'e olan duygularını ifade etmenin dehşeti ve kaybının eziyeti o kadar derindir ki nihayet Gabriel'i ölümle karşılaşmanın dışında her şey onun için anlamını yitirir.

Tezin son bölümünde 1990'ların seçilen oyunlarının incelenmesi bulunulmuştur. Bu bölümdeki oyunların analizi intiharın dilsel performansına odaklanmıştır. Bu sayede oyunların performatif dili, kadın başkarakterlerin kimliği ve bu karakterlerin insan varoluşunu yöneten mekanizmaları nasıl kullandığı ve açığa çıkardığı anlatılmıştır. Bu tezde oyunlar kronolojik sırası ile incelenmiştir.

Alan Ayckbourn'ın *Haunting Julia* oyununda (1994), intihar performansının iki parçalı analizi yapılmıştır: a) Genç kızının intiharını babanın kabullenememesi, onun bedenini ve zihnini etkiler. b) intiharın performatifliği, babanın melankolik duyguları ile kızının intiharının farkına varmasını birleştirir. Eleştiri eğitim sistemi ve aile kurumuna yöneliktir. Butler'ın performatiflik teorisi, sevilen birinin intiharından sonraki melankolik sürecin normlara nasıl direnebileceğini vurguladığından dolayı bu çalışmada ele alınmıştır.

İntihar nedenleri arasında babasının kontrol edici bakışları ve gözetimi vardır. Oyun, Joe'nun melankolik algısı, kızının intiharını kabul etmemesi ve onun ölümündeki rolünün farkında olmaması şeklinde ilerlemektedir. Oyun, izleyiciye babanın melankolik davranışlarını gösterirken, izleyici Joe'nun görmediği gerçekliğin farkına varır.

Haunting Julia, sosyal normlara göre normalleştirilmiş bir karakter yerine Julia'yı olağanüstü yeteneği olan bir kadın karakter olarak sunmaktadır, böylece bu oyun Butler'ın performatiflik teorisinin görselleştirilmesi olarak okunabilir. Julia gibi dahi karakterler, onlara değer veriyor gibi görünen ama aslında onlara zarar verenlerin etkisini kontrol edemedikleri için güvensiz bir hayat yaşamaktadır. Baba karakter, Joe gibi bilinçsizce toplumsal normlara göre hareket eden bireyler tehlikeli davranışlarda bulunabilirler ve hatta Butler sevdiklerinin intiharlarını “normların dışında yaşayan birini öldürmek” olarak adlandırır (“killing someone” who lives “outside the sheltering norms” (Butler, 2004, 34)). Bu oyun, Joe'nun bir baba olarak dahi kızına yaptıklarının, Butler'ın eleştirdiği daha büyük bir sistemin parçası olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Julia'nın erkek arkadaşı, Andy de, bilinçsiz olarak normların dışında kalanları bastırmaya çalışan sistemin bir parçasıdır. Andy Julia'yı olduğu gibi kabul edememiştir; sıradan bir arkadaş gibi davranmasını ve ona cevap vermesini beklemektedir. Julia'nın kapıcısı ve arkadaşı Ken bile farkında olmadan onu önceden belirlenmiş bir sosyal çerçeveye uymaya zorlamışlardır.

İntiharın performatifliği, babanın kayıp kızı diriltme arzusuyla sonuçlanan performatif bir melankoliye işaret eder ve oyunun tüm karakterlerini savunmasız yetenekli birini anlayamayan veya takdir edemeyen bir sistemin parçası olarak sunar.

Julia'nın Erkek arkadaşı ve bir diğer arkadaşının, "bir hayatı yaşanabilir kılan nedir" gibi bir Butlerian soruya yanıtları şu şekilde olur: sistemin sıradan ve normal olarak gördüğü normlara uymaktır.

Tezin incelediği ikinci oyun, *Portia Coughlan*'ın (1996), odak noktası kadın öznelliğidir (female subjectivity). Bu oyun idealize edilmiş baş karakter ve ulusun sembolü olarak kadın kültürel kavramlarını yeniden tartışmaktadır ve cinsellik, cinsiyet ve beden konularını ele almaktadır. Butler, toplumsal ve kültürel melankolinin bir türü olarak toplumsal cinsiyet oluşumlarıyla ilgilenir. *Portia Coughlan* oyunu intihara neden olabilecek bir melankoli kavramı kullanır. Portia'nın intiharla dünyadan ayrılması, kadın öznelliğinin ifadesinin sert bir temsildir. Oyundaki intihar, bir kadın kahramanın ruhsal acısını yansıtır ve bir kadının kırılganlığını intihar noktasına kadar artıran ve yoğunlaştıran kısıtlayıcı kadınlık modellerini eleştirir. Ölülerin yokluklarını reddederek onlar için yas tutmak çok üzücü ve melankolik olabilir. Ancak oyunda tasvir edilenler, Portia'nın yas ve melankolisinin ötesine geçmektedir. İkiz kardeşinin ölümüne cinsiyetçi tepkisini ve ardından onunla özdeşleşmesini (identification) görüyoruz. Butler'ın performatiflik ve melankoli teorisi, Gabriel'in dirilişinin Portia'nın cinsiyeti ve intiharı üzerindeki etkisini anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir. Toplumsal cinsiyetin kendisi çözülmemiş kederin canlandırılması olarak anlaşılabilir. Bu yüzden, Butler heteroseksüelliği destekleyen ve tercih eden bir toplumda cinsiyetinizi korumanın melankolik bir aktivite olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Bu tezde, Portia'nın intiharının performativite sonucu olduğunu ve bunun cinsiyet kimliği ve psikolojik dönüşümü üzerinde etkisi olduğunu göstermeye çalıştım. Portia'nın geçmişi onun aslında şimdiki zamanıdır ve bunlar, toplumsal cinsiyeti yöneten normlardır. Bu iki zaman Butler'a göre, hem yaşamı kısıtlar ve yaşam sağlar, hem de bireylerin yaşanabilir bir varoluşu olup olmayacağını önceden belirler. Portia kendini gerçek dünyadan tamamen ayıramaz ve koparamadığı bu bağlantı, onu umutsuzca arzuladığı ikiz kardeşinin kaybolmuş varlığını geri getirmekten alıkoyar. Portia kendi dünyası ve dış dünya olmak üzere iki farklı dünyada yaşamaktadır. Portia'nın performatif melankolik psikolojisinde her iki dünya da gerçektir. Portia'nın intiharı, kendisini çevreleyen ve onu gerçek dünyayla

ilgilenmeye zorlayanların cinsiyet beklentilerini karşılayamamasıyla ilgilidir. Portia'nın, eşinin ve ailesinin ondan olan beklentilerini yerine getiremediğini düşündüğü için kırılabilirliği artar. Portia'nın ölen kardeşine duyduğu melankolik özlem, onu kadınsı ideallere ve normatif cinsiyet rollerine karşı bir isyana sürüklemiştir. Portia'nın ikiz erkek kardeşinin ölümü üzerine uzun kederi, onu hem kısıtlayıcı ve geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini ihlal edecek kadar cesur ve güçlü kılmış, hem de toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini yerine getirmede tamamen başarısız olacak ve sonunda intihar edecek kadar savunmasız hale getirmiştir. Butlerian bakış açısına göre, Portia'nın melankolisi hem iç dünyasında hem de dış dünyasında yaşayan bir zihin durumu olarak gösteriliyor. Portia'nın mevcut savunmasızlığının geçmişinde kökleri olduğunu anlamak önemlidir. Portia'nın melankolik algısı geçmişle derinden meşgul ve onun gelecekteki intihar eylemi geçmiş kırılabilirliklerine cevap verir. Portia, ölen ikiz kardeşiyle anne rahmindeki mutlu ve özgür birlikteliğine olan melankolik saplantısıyla sosyal yapılara direnir ve bu da sonunda onu intihar edecek kadar savunmasız hale getirir.

Teori bölümünde sunduğum gibi, Butler cinsiyet açısından önemli bedenler (bodies that matter) ve önemi olmayan bedenler (bodies that do not matter) hakkında açıklamalar sunuyor. Butler maddileştirilmiş bedenler, toplumun yerleşik normlara göre davrandıkları için normatif olduğunu düşündüğü bireyler, ile maddi olmayan bedenler, asi şekillerde davrandığı düşünülen bireyler, arasında yapılan ayrımları sorgular. Bu teori açısından bakarsak, Marina Carr'ın oyunu cinsiyetlendirilmiş bedenlerine kültürel olarak uygun bir şekilde davranan normatif bedenler ve normatif olmayan davranışta bulunan ve hatta fanteziler kuran asi bedenler hakkındaki kabul edilmiş kavramları sorgular. *Portia Coughlan* oyunu, yukarda açıklanan Butlerian sorgulamasını, Portia'nın kararsız bedeninin (ambivalent body) performatifliği aracılığıyla gösterir. Portia, ikiz ölü kardeşi ile kendi canlı bedeni arasındaki sınırı reddederek ve aynı kardeşi gibi kendini suda boğarak, önemli olan cinsiyetli bedenler ile önemi olmayanlar arasındaki sınırı reddeder. Butler'ın bakış açısına göre, toplumun iki ayrı cinsiyeti yöneten düzenleyici normları bireyler için tehlikelidir. Butler'a göre böyle bir sistem, normların dışında hareket eden bireyleri dışlar ve onları önemsiz bireyler olarak tutar.

Martin Crimp'in *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) adlı oyunu bu tezde incelenen üçüncü oyundur. İntihara meyilli bir figür olarak tersim edilen Anne karakteri, Butlerian performansının sınırlayıcı tanımlara (limiting definitions) yönelik saldırıları üzerine kurulmuştur. Anne oyunda ölü bir karakter olarak ortaya çıkıyor ve ölümü belirsiz koşullar altında gerçekleştiği için kim olduğunu anlamak zor ve intihar eyleminin arkasında somut bir neden bulmak neredeyse imkânsızdır.

Toplumsal normlar, tanınabilir ve kabul edilebilir kişilikleri (recognizable and acceptable personhoods) çizmeye çalışarak ve bizi tutarlı kimliklerle (coherent identities) ilgili hesaplar vermeye zorlayarak, cinsiyetimizi ve kimliğimizi yönetir. Crimp'in oyunu, izleyiciyi sosyal normlarla ilgili olabilecek herhangi bir yargısal yorumdan uzak tutmaktadır. Kadın kahramanın olası intiharına ve oyunda yokluğuna, bilinmeyen karakterlerin Anne'ın hayatıyla ilgili verdiği sayısız anlatılar eşlik etmektedir. Anlatılar sürekli olarak bir senaryodan diğerine farklılık göstermektedir ve intiharından sonra Anne'ı yargılamaya çalışan bir toplumda ölü bir kadın bireyin yokluğuna bir anlam verilmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu oyunda sayısız, isimsiz ve cinsiyetleri belli olmayan karakterler ölü bir kadını, genel kabul görmüş bir kadın çerçevesine oturtmaya çalışmaktadır. Anne'ın çeşitli ve çelişkili görüntüleri seyirciye onun varlığını sunarken, ölümü ve yokluğu (silence) aynı zamanda oyunda vurgulanmaktadır. İsimsiz ve cinsiyetsiz karakterler kadın karakter üzerinde çeşitli anlatılarla şiddetlerini onun yokluğunda sürdürmektedirler.

Butler'a göre bireyler yaşamlarını kimlik parçalanmasından (identity fragmentation) uzak tutmaya çalışırlar, çünkü bu parçalanma acı verici kayıp hissi yaratır. Bu kimlik parçalanmasını önlemek için bireyler kendileri hakkında yapılan açıklamaların tutarlı (unified) olmasını tercih ederler. Tutarsızlık ve parçalanmış kimlikler, acı içerdiği için dayanılmazdır. Crimp'in oyununda izleyiciye toplum üyeleri tarafından uygulanan parçalanma ile yeni bir kimlik oluşumu gösterilmektedir. Butler, anlatı tutarsızlığının kaçınılmaz bir başarısızlık olduğuna ve seçme gücünün ötesindeki sosyal ilişkilerle uğraşmak zorunda kalan bireyin hayatının güvencesizliğinin bir işareti olduğuna inanmaktadır.

Bireylerin kendileri hakkında bir açıklama yapamaması, oyunda zaten ölmüş bir özne tarafından temsil ediliyor. Anne onun hakkında yapılan yorumlara ve yargılamada yanıt veremez veya isimsiz ve cinsiyetsiz karakterlerin fikirlerini ve eylemlerini yeniden inşa edemez. İnsanlar tarafından yapılan yorumlar ve suçlamalar korku, dehşet ve kaygı yayar. Anne ölü bir karakter olarak suçlamalara karşı sessizdir. Butler'a göre sessizlik, yapılan yorumlara bir direnişi ifade eder. Sessizlik, sorgulayıcı otoritesinin meşruiyetini sorgulayarak sorgulayanın yaptığı yorumların gücünü sınırlamaya çalışır. Anne'ın yokluğunda, onun sessizliği direniş niteliğindedir. Anne'ın sessizliğinin gücü vardır, ancak Crimp'in kurbanı hiçbir yanıt vermemekle anlatılara bir miktar güç verir. Bu güç izleyicide tanınırlık ve tedirginlik hissini artırır.

Karakterler Anne hakkında çeşitli anlatımlar yaptığında, anlatılanlar bu isimsiz ve cinsiyetsiz karakterlerin psikolojik ve eleştirel becerilerine dayanıyor gibi görünmektedir. Ancak Butler'a göre, normlar bu karakterleri kontrol ediyor ve bu normların işleyişini kontrol edemiyoruz. Ne isimsiz karakterler ne de Anne, Anne'ın hakkında yapılan anlatımlar üzerinde kontrol sahibi olamaz. İçlerinde normların kökleri olan anlatımlar, Anne'ın yaşamıyla sınırlı değildir. Yani normların sınırsız bir zamansallığı vardır (unlimited temporality). Bu durum baskıcı ve tehdit edici görünürken aynı zamanda Anne'ı tanınır hale getirir ve hayatının sona ermesinden sonra Anne hala tanınabilirliğini (recognizability) korur. Yine de bu durum, Anne'ın hem yaşamına ve ölümüne kayıtsızdır hem de ölümden sonra tanınmasını sağlar. Oyunun izleyicileri veya okuyucuları isimsiz ve cinsiyetsiz karakterlerin yorumlarının gerçekliğini akıllarında belirledikleri anda çeşitli anlamlandırmalarda bulunmaktadır.

Hikayeler hep kendilerini yenileme gücüne sahiptirler, çünkü orijinal referansa asla ulaşamaz (irrecoverable). Butler'a göre orijinal bir referansın ulaşılmazlığı anlatıyı yok etmez. Bu nedenle, bir kökene sahip olmak, tam olarak orijinin birkaç olası versiyonuna sahip olmak demektir. Anne hakkındaki versiyonlardan herhangi biri olası bir anlatıdır, ancak versiyonların hiçbirinin mutlak gerçek olduğunu varsayamayız (opacity). Öte yandan, bu yokluk (absence of the original referent) ya da başlangıçlardan ya da geçmiş yaşamlardan habersiz olmak, aslında Crimp'in

oyununda tanık olduğumuz gibi, konuşma ve yazmada, hikâye oluşturmayı ve kurgulamayı (fictionalising) mümkün kılıyor.

Doksanların seçilen dördüncü İngiliz oyunu, Shelagh Stephenson'ın *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998), bilimsel ilerlemelerin bedeli ve bunların insan psikolojisi üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak için bilimsel unsurlar kullanır. Dirençli kimlikleri (resistant identities) yok olma riski altında olabilecek savunmasız bedenler adına Stephenson'ın oyunundaki intiharın gerçekleştirilebilirliğini analiz etmek için, oyun bir perspektif olarak genetik bilim teorileri kullanır. Oyun, genç ve özürlü bir kızın savunmasız vücudunun genetiğin gücüne nasıl direndiğini ve bu direniş biçimini nasıl anlamamız gerektiğini gösteriyor. Butler'ın belirttiği gibi bu tür bedenler, belirli bir türden savunmasızlığı öngören ve güvencesizliğe (precariousness) karşı çıkan bir direniş biçimini gösterir. Oyun, bilimsel kavramları ve etik olmayan özelemleri ile hikâyeye kaotik bir hava katan ve yanlış ellerde bilimin bir kurtuluş aracı olmaktan çok bir baskı aracı olabileceğini gösteren bilim adamı ve hümanistlerle doludur. Bilim adamları, bu oyunda hem direniş duygusunu kışkırtan hem de insanlıkta savunmasızlığı artıran karakterler olarak gösterilmiştir. Bu karakterler toplumdaki savunmasız bireylerin merhametli koruyucuları olmaları gerekirken Tanrı benzeri bir otorite rolüne büründükleri görülmektedir.

Oyun boyunca ana vurgu, bilimin acımasız yıkımları, kuşun bilim için öldürülmesi, Isobel'in intiharı ve bilimsel ilerleme uğruna insanları öldürmesidir. Kate ve Armstrong, ahlak ve etiğin bilimde ve keşifte yeri olmadığına inanıyor. Ellen'in kocası Tom, bu duruma karşıdır ve genetik müdahalelerin yalnızca sosyal olarak duyarlı olanlar için değil, aynı zamanda normallüğün sınırları dışında olanlar için de ne kadar tehlikeli ve tehdit edici olabileceği konusunda ciddi şekilde endişelidir. Tom, para odaklı kültürden (market-driven culture) gelebilecek tehlikeye değiniyor. Sigorta şirketleri, özel sağlık kurumları veya ipotek kredisi verenler yeni keşiflerden faydalanabilir ve bu şekilde bilim, güvencesiz hayatların (precarious lives) kendilerine fayda sağlamaktan ziyade savunmasızlığını (vulnerability) artıracaktır. Bu oyun 'Bilimsel gelişmelerin tam anlamıyla aşılması gerekirken, savunmasız bireylere daha yaşanabilir bir hayat yaşama şansı vermek için bu bilimsel normların

bireyler üzerindeki baskıcı tutumunu nasıl gevşetebiliriz?’ sorusunu izleyiciye soruyor.

Butler 'destek fikrini' (idea of support) öne sürüyor. Yaşamamıza izin veren yapılara bağımlıyız ve Butler bağımlılığı ve savunmasızlığı herhangi bir performatif ajansın (performative agency) vazgeçilmez parçaları olarak görüyor. Isobel'in intiharının performansı, bilimsel normlara ve geniş sosyal yapılara bağlıdır, ve bununla beraber bilimsel altyapılarla ilişkisine ve vücudunu desteklemeyen sosyal koşullara bağlıdır. Isobel, yalnızca normlara bağlı olduğu için değil, aynı zamanda normlar tarafından desteklenmediği için de çevresine karşı savunmasızdır. Genç kadın karakterin intiharının edimselliği, ona sosyal ve bilimsel koşulların desteğinden yoksun olması ile yakından ilgilidir.

Oyunun başlangıcında bilim, parlak bir geleceğin habercisiydi. Ama oyunun sonunda Isabel'e geleceğin artık daha az iyi görüldüğünü söyleyen Dr. Fenwick için bilim iyimserliğini ve coşkusunu kaybetmişti. Oyunun sunduğu bu korkunç kaotik durumda az da olsa umut vardır. Butler'ın iddia ettiği gibi, kırılganlık (vulnerability), direnişin (resistance) karşıtı değildir. Isobel'in savunmasızlığı, intihar noktasına kadar bile olsa, onu direniş gücünden mahrum bırakmaz, çünkü Isobel'in intiharı, eğer onun savunmasızlığını ve intiharını yıkıcı sosyal ve bilimsel güce kasıtlı olarak maruz kalma olarak anlarsak, toplumsal direnişin tam anlamının bir parçası haline gelir. Tom'un söylediği son sözler “yeniden başlayalım”, bu Tom'un oyunun sonunda her şeyi yeniden başlatmak istediği anlamına geliyor. Tom, bir bilim insanı olarak karısı Ellen'e bir hümanist olarak, düzensizlikten düzeni sağlamanın ve korkunç şeylerin olmasını önlemenin tek yolunun yeniden başlamak olduğunu söylüyor. Isobel'in intiharı, dışlanmış sefil bedenlerin (excluded miserable bodies) alanını temsil eden şok edici derecede somut bir görüntüdür. Bununla birlikte, dışlanmış ve sefil bir vücut olarak Isobel, düzenleyici normlara bir tür meydan okuma yaratır. Isobel normları önemli olarak kabul eden yaşam biçimlerini zorluyor. Bu kadın karakter korunmaya değer, kurtarılmaya değer yaşamlar, kedere değer yaşamları temsil ediyor.

Sarah Kane'in *4:48 Psychosis*'i (1999), bu tezde analiz edilen son oyundur. Bu oyun yirmi dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bu oyunda intihar edimselliği ile zihinsel istikrarsızlık arasındaki ilişki analiz edilmektedir. *4:48 Psychosis*'deki intihar performatifliği ve oyunun otobiyografik teması oyunun odak noktasını, parçalanmış kendini ifade edemeyen ve melankolik bir karakterin yaşama karşı bir yanıt olarak kapanmaya dirençli (resistant to closure / open-ended response) bir psikolojik davranışını sergilemektedir. Böylece, seyircinin kahramanın intiharına melankolik tanıklığı ve akıl sağlığı sistemine (mental health system) yönelik eleştiriler ortaya çıkar. Oyunun böylece politik yönü dikkat çeker. Kane'nin hayatı, sosyal normların melankolik yönünü göstermek için bu oyunla birleşir ve oyuna aşırı travmatik bir güç ekler.

Barker'ın ve Kane'nin oyunlarında insan vücudu, dramatik ifadenin merkezi bir aracı haline gelir. Barker, çağdaş dramadaki gerçek trajedinin savunmasız bireyin kabul ettiği ideoloji ile dini ve politik fikirlere karşı direnişinde bulunacağına inanıyor. Barker'a göre postmodern bir toplumdaki trajedi, sosyal düzenler için çok yıkıcıdır (most devastating to social orders). Bireyler hep korku ve endişe içinde yaşar çünkü hayatımızın her an parçalanma ihtimali korkusu vardır. Butler güvencesizlik (precariousness) olarak açıkladığı ve kırılganlığın hayatımızın vazgeçilmez bir boyutu olduğuna inanıyor. Çünkü her an başkalarından ve kendimizden gelen şiddet tehdidiyle yaşamaktayız.

Oyundaki başkarakter acıyı bazen kendine zarar vererek ifade eder ve psikolojik bir çöküşün sancıları içinde olan bir zihni (a mind in the throes of breakdown) tasvir eder. Metin, hikâyenin ilerleyişini reddeden parçalanmış konuşmalara, anlamsız tekrarlar ve uyuşuk cümlelere (numb exchanges) dönüşür. Butler kendine hakimiyet (self-mastery) veya öz-birlik (self-unity), veya ustalığa dayalı kendini ifade etme kavramına yapılan herhangi bir vurguyu reddeder. Öznellik karşılıklı bağımlılık (interdependency) ile bağlantılıdır, yani öznellik bir bireyin temelde diğer konularla ve bireylerle olan ilişkileri yoluyla oluşur. Bu oyunda travmatik hasta, karşılıklı bağımlılığı kendi isteği ile seçmediğini ortaya koyarak, kendine hâkim ve tutarlı bir anlatımdan (self-mastered and coherent conception of self-narration) aciz kalır. Hastanın dünyası kaotik, düzensiz ve intihar düşünceleri ile karanlıktır ve bu ağır

psikolojik durum, sađlık sistemi ve tıbbi notların resmi, düzenli ve katı formuyla ironik bir şekilde zıttır.

İntihar travması, başlangıcı ve sonu belli olmayan bir olay olduđu için tamamlanmaya ve somut temsile (concrete representation) direnir. Kane'in oyununun doğrusal olmayan yapısı kendini yok etme eyleminin belirsiz doğası ve açık uçlu olmasıyla uyumludur. Seyirci, travma ve intiharın performansının aktif bir gözlemcisidir ve başkarakterin savunmasızlığına karşı hassastır. Bu tanıklık, deđişim için geleceğin kurumlarını yaratabilir ve deđişim yakın tanıklar olmadan gerçekleşemez. Tanıklık ile gelen özdeşleşmede benlik ile tanık olunan arasında neredeyse hiçbir ayırım çizgisi yoktur çünkü öznellik bulanıktır (blurred) ve bireyin başkarakterin hissettiđi şiddetli kayıp hissini yaşama riski vardır. Yani intiharın performatifliđi, seyircinin hastayla melankolik özdeşleşmelerinde edimseldir. Bu şekilde oyun da siyasi olarak anlamlı hale gelir.

4:48 *Psychosis*'in siyasi yönü Butler'ın kimliđin performatif olduđu fikrini doğrulamasında yatar. Kane'in ifade etmek istediđi kabul görmüş tanımlamaların (normalized designations), kadın / erkek, mağdur / fail, yerli / yabancı, ben / diđer, bozulduđu anlarda ve her şeyin yeniden düşünülmesi gereken anlarda deđişim meydana gelebileceđidir. Sunulan travmatik intihar deneyimi ve onu bir mağdur ile failin (victim and victimizer) pozisyonları arasında bir ayırım göz önünde bulundurarak analiz etmemek gerekir. İntihar hem suç hem de şiddet içeren davranış ve savunmasız bir kişinin yardım çağrısı olduđu için bu iki noktayı birleştirir. Öznellik deđişmeye yatkındır, yani mağdur ve fail konumları arasında gidip gelme potansiyeline sahiptir. Travmatik bir olayı doğrudan yaşamamış olsak bile bu durumu anlamak sosyal sorumluluđu artırabilir. 4:48 *Psychosis*'deki intihar, seyirciyi pasif gözlemci konumundan, sessiz kalmaktan ve hiçbir şey yapmamaktan suçlu hisseden aktif tanıklara dönüştürebilir. 4.48 *Psychosis*'in yaptıđı açık politik vurgular arasında, akıl sađlığı sorunları olan bireyleri dışlayan bir topluma yönelik ithamlar vardır.

Sonuç olarak, 1990'ların seçilen İngiliz oyunlarda intihara meyilli kadın başkahramanlar sosyal tanınma ve sosyal kimlik arayışlarında başarısız oluyorlar. Bir

bireyim normlara olan aşırı bağıllığı normlara yönelik eleştirisini sınırlar. Ancak sosyal tanınma ve sosyal kimlik arayışındaki başarısızlık, melankolinin eşlik ettiği savunmasızlığı artırır. Butler'a göre melankoli ölüm içgüdülerini çağrıştırırken, potansiyel bir isyan aracıdır. Kadın başkahramanların intihar eylemi hiç de pasif bir girişim değildir. Bu tezde incelenen oyunların yazarları, izleyicileri tarafından fark edilmeyen çatışmaları aydınlatmayı ve onları sosyal gücün tehditleri konusunda daha bilinçli hissetmelerini sağlamaya çalışmışlardır.



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SUICIDE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF THE 1990s

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