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**SELF-COMPOSING WOMEN: THE KENOTIC
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE LIBERATED FEMALE
CHARACTERS IN FOWLES', MCEWAN'S, AND ACKROYD'S
SELECTED POSTMODERN NOVELS**

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2025



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written in accordance with academic and ethical principles at Manisa Celal Bayar University, Institute of Graduate Studies, Department of Social Sciences. I confirm that all the literature and sources used in the thesis have been properly cited, that this study is entirely my own work, and that I have provided references for every quotation. I also affirm that I have not used any artificial intelligence or software in a manner that violates academic and ethical guidelines during the writing of this thesis.

Signature

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ÖZET

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Bu tez, postmodern İngiliz edebiyatında kadın karakterlerinin özgürleşmesini, yazarlarından bağımsızlaşmalarını ve geleneksel anlatı yapılarının ötesine geçmelerini incelemektedir. Tarih boyunca kadınlar ikincilleştirilmiş ve edebiyat uzun süre erkek seslerinin egemen olduğu bir alan olmuştur. Ancak postmodern bakış açısı, edebiyatla daha eşitlikçi bir yaklaşım sunmuştur. Bu araştırma, postmodern erkek yazarların eserlerinde kadın karakterlerin tasvirlerini analiz ederek edebi kurguda kadın temsillerinin nasıl evrildiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, postmodernizmin geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini nasıl sorguladığını ve kadınların daha çeşitli ve karmaşık şekilde tasvir edilmesine nasıl olanak sağladığını araştırmaktadır. Araştırmamın önemi, kenotik postmodern yazarlarla gelişen yeni yazım ve ifade tekniklerinin, postmodern İngiliz edebiyatındaki kadın karakter temsillerini nasıl etkilediğini ve bu yeniliğin edebi bir karşılık bulma sürecini incelemektir. Tezimin tamamlanması sürecinde, Mikhail Bakhtin ve Judith Butler gibi belli kuramcılarının ilgili teorileri incelenmiş ve bu alanda kapsamlı bir tarama yapılmıştır. Bu tez, birkaç ana başlıktan oluşmaktadır: araştırmanın tanıtımı ve teorik çerçevesi, kenotik yazarlık üzerine bir keşif, postmodernizmin ve cinsiyet temsillerine etkisinin tartışılması ve performativite. Bulgular, postmodern erkek yazarların anlatı yeniliği aracılığıyla geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini sorguladığını, kadın karakterlerin daha fazla özerklik ve karmaşıklık kazandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Kenosis, diyalogizm, polifoni, heteroglossia, karnavalesk ve performativite gibi kavramları içeren bu yazarlar, kadın temsillerini patriyarkal sınırlamaların ötesine taşır ve kadınları kimliklerini inşa eden aktif ajanlar olarak sunar. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma postmodern edebiyatın cinsiyet rollerini nasıl yeniden tanımladığını ve marjinalleşmiş karakterlere nasıl ses verdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Performativite, Postmodernism, Kenotic Authorship, Mikhail Bakhtin, Kadın Kimliği

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the liberation of female characters in postmodern British fiction, focusing on their detachment from their authors and transcendence beyond traditional narrative structures. Throughout history, women have been subordinated, and literature has long been a field dominated by male voices. However, the postmodern perspective has introduced a more equitable approach to literature. This research aims to examine how the representation of women in literary fiction has evolved by analyzing the depictions of female characters in the works of postmodern male writers. This study explores how postmodernism challenges traditional gender roles and provides a platform for more diverse and complex portrayals of women. The importance of my research is to examine how the new writing and expression techniques developed with kenotic postmodern authors affect the representations of female characters in post-modern British literature and how this innovation finds a literary response. During the completion of the thesis, the relevant theories of specific theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Judith Butler are investigated, and a comprehensive survey is made in this field. This thesis is divided into several key chapters: an introduction to the study and its theoretical framework, an exploration of kenotic authorship, a discussion of postmodernism and its impact on gender representation, and performativity. The findings reveal that postmodern male authors challenge traditional gender roles through narrative innovation, allowing female characters to achieve greater autonomy and complexity. By incorporating concepts such as kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and performativity, these authors create female representations that transcend patriarchal constraints, presenting women as active agents in the construction of their identities. Ultimately, the research demonstrates how postmodern literature redefines gender roles and gives voice to marginalized characters.

Key Words: Performativity, Postmodernism, Kenotic Authorship, Mikhail Bakhtin, Female Identity

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study explores the liberation of female characters in postmodern British fiction as they break free from their authors and transcend traditional narrative structures. By examining how kenotic authors incorporate Bakhtinian concepts and how these elements contribute to narrative polyphony, the research also engages with Judith Butler's concept of performativity to analyze the construction of female identity.

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Firdevs Merve KAFKAS ÇETİN

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I. FRAMING THE STUDY: VOICE, IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVE

Postmodernism, as a philosophical and literary movement of the mid-20th century, is distinguished by its innovative nature. It challenges the notion of absolute truth, emphasizing the significance of multiple perspectives and interpretations. In essence, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct established myths, hierarchies, and Grand Narratives to foster a more fragmented yet inclusive understanding of reality. One of its defining characteristics is pluralism, which entails acknowledging and accepting diverse ethical principles, cultural practices, and standpoints. Another fundamental aspect of the postmodern mindset is relativism, which posits that meaning and reality are context-dependent and inherently arbitrary. Thus, postmodernism remains a highly complex and multifaceted movement. As Stanley J. Grenz states: “Postmodernists attempt to destroy what they see as the modernist ideology of style, replacing it with a culture of multiple styles. To achieve this end, many postmodern artists confront their audience with a multiplicity of styles, a seemingly discordant polyphony of decontextualized voices” (Grenz, 21). In this study, postmodernism’s tendency to challenge and subvert norms is examined primarily through Bakhtinian concepts such as dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque. This study particularly explores how these Bakhtinian concepts are intertwined with the notion of kenosis. Derived from Christian theology, kenosis refers to the act of self-emptying, specifically Christ’s renunciation of divine attributes to assume human form. In postmodern literature, this concept manifests in the author’s withdrawal from a position of authority, aligning themselves with characters and readers rather than dictating a singular perspective. Postmodern authors often relinquish control over narrative direction, allowing characters to shape the story and readers to derive their own interpretations. Rather than enforcing a fixed, unambiguous reality, they construct polyphonic and polysemantic structures that disperse monocentric authority, fostering multiple perspectives. This egalitarian structure is evident in *The Magus*, *Atonement*, and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, where authors relinquish their narrative dominance, permitting characters and the readers to guide the unfolding events.

For instance, John Fowles surrenders the flow of *The Magus* to Conchis’ Godgame, allowing figures such as Conchis and Julie/Lily to drive the plot. He refrains

from directing the reader toward a singular conclusion, instead fostering uncertainty surrounding Conchis' character, a figure implicitly equated with the author himself. Consequently, the reader remains unmanipulated, neither perceiving the author as an authority nor being led toward a definitive interpretation. A similar kenotic approach is employed by Ian McEwan and Peter Ackroyd, reinforcing the idea that in narratives where authorial authority is dismantled, alternative mechanisms emerge to ensure that no single perspective dominates. One of the most significant methods in such narratives is the amplification of marginalized voices. By allowing socially and literarily excluded figures to actively engage in the text, postmodern works construct a polyphonic framework where meaning emerges through the dynamic interplay of diverse voices. Dialogic narratives thus evolve, not only through the interactions of characters but also through intertextual engagement, wherein texts themselves engage in conflict, reshape one another, and generate layered interpretations.

Moreover, each character is afforded the autonomy to represent both themselves and their social group, employing distinct speech genres reflective of their identity. Language and expression vary according to factors such as age, gender, nationality, and beliefs, ensuring that speech is not homogenized but rather preserved in its diversity. Different dialects, accents, and registers coexist, reinforcing polyphony and fostering a more nuanced understanding of perspectives. This linguistic heterogeneity extends beyond character dialogues to the structural level of the text. Within postmodern narratives, poetry, theater, journalism, academic discourse, and prose coalesce without hierarchy, maintaining their unique forms while collectively enriching the text. Intertextuality, in this context, enables disparate textual voices to exist in dialogue, preserving their characteristics while contributing to a broader, multifaceted meaning-making process. Heteroglossia also plays a crucial role in this structure by underscoring how each character's linguistic expression is shaped by their sociocultural background. Age, gender, class, and nationality influence speech patterns, allowing for diverse voices to be represented authentically rather than subsumed into a monolithic narrative voice. This diversity is maintained beyond the characters' dialogues. It extends to the textual composition itself, where diverse literary forms coexist. Novels, poetry, journalism, and academic discourse appear alongside one another without hierarchical privileging, reinforcing the egalitarian ethos of postmodern literature.

This interplay fosters a carnivalesque atmosphere, one that is egalitarian and disruptive of conventional hierarchies. The carnivalesque, as employed in this study, denotes a sociological space wherein independent voices coexist, suspending traditional structures of authority. Within this framework, the carnivalesque emerges as an order of equality, extending across both character and textual dimensions. In these narratives, upper- and lower-class characters, as well as historically privileged and marginalized groups, contribute equally to the unfolding of events. Furthermore, grotesque elements, theatricality, and the use of masks amplify the carnivalesque dynamic, illustrating Bakhtin's notion that bodies, identities, and narratives are never complete but remain in a state of continual transformation. This rejection of hierarchical structures, rigid social norms, and imposed standardization underscores the subversive potential of the carnivalesque within postmodern literature.

This study systematically examines gender equality within this carnivalesque structure, particularly concerning gender roles. Judith Butler's concept of performativity is central to this analysis, demonstrating how these forms of narrative expression destabilize rigid gender norms. By liberating characters from conventional roles, postmodern literature challenges entrenched societal prejudices and reconfigures gender identities as fluid rather than fixed constructs. Therefore, this study examines Bakhtinian concepts and Butler's theory of gender performativity through the lens of the kenotic voice. The egalitarian nature of kenotic narratives aligns with postmodernism's resistance to authoritarian structures and monosemy, fostering a literary environment where multiple voices, perspectives, and interpretations coexist.

In these narratives, polyphony and dialogism do more than accommodate diverse perspectives; they create a dynamic space where identities are constructed and redefined through performative acts. In *The Magus*, *Atonement*, and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, traditionally incompatible voices and social groups collaboratively construct the narrative. Dichotomous categories such as men and women, upper and lower classes, or racial groups, which conventional narratives often reinforce, are instead equalized in these works. Particularly, marginalized groups are empowered to articulate their perspectives, ensuring that no singular viewpoint dominates. The ideological and philosophical clashes among characters further prevent any one perspective from being imposed on the reader. As characters navigate and negotiate their roles within this polyphonic structure, performativity emerges as both a

consequence and a mechanism of this narrative openness. The kenotic narrative form, by dismantling hierarchical structures and foregrounding polyphony, inherently facilitates the reevaluation of gender roles. Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which posits that gender identity is not innate but rather enacted through culturally determined behaviors, is particularly relevant here. By subverting traditional gender roles through alternative performances, kenotic postmodern writers challenge the sociopolitical subordination of women. Postmodern literature, by deconstructing these norms through its narrative techniques, offers an alternative framework for gender identity, liberating characters from essentialist constraints and redefining power dynamics within the literary canon. Judith Butler is one of the key figures who has sustained scholarly inquiry into gender roles, offering a distinct theoretical perspective. Butler argues that gender is not an inherent or biologically determined characteristic but rather a performative act, continuously reinforced through cultural and societal norms. She challenges the conventional understanding of gender as a fixed binary and instead asserts that it is an ongoing process of enactment and reiteration. As Butler explains: "Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (Butler, 2002, p. 9).

Thus, Butler employs the term 'gender' to refer to socially and culturally constructed identities that are independent of biological sex. Gender roles, in this sense, are shaped through repeated performances that align with prescribed notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity.' To articulate this idea, Butler coined the concept of performativity, emphasizing that gender is not merely an expression of an innate identity but rather a set of stylized acts within a highly regulated cultural framework. Butler further critiques the dominant ideology's insistence on binary gender structures:

Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy. Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure, but if this continuous act is mistaken for a natural or linguistic given, power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds. (Butler, 2025, p. 531)

By demonstrating that gender roles are products of a patriarchal system that constructs rigid and restrictive definitions of femininity and masculinity, Butler challenges the assumption that gender identity is biologically determined. She argues that gender should not be confined to binary categories, as this dualistic structure serves to maintain hegemonic power relations. In questioning the supposed naturalness of gender, Butler deconstructs its historical and ideological foundations:

What is 'sex' anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses that purport to establish such 'facts' for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary operations as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? (Butler, 2005, p. 116)

Butler's critique of conventional gender philosophy stems from its exclusionary nature, which negates any possibilities beyond the male-female binary. She contends that the assumption of gender as fixed and natural is a tool used to reinforce social hierarchies and perpetuate hegemonic control. Instead, she advocates for a fluid and performative conceptualization of gender that allows for diverse and self-determined expressions.

The implications of Butler's theory are particularly evident in the ways women are socialized to internalize and perform submissive and compliant roles. To conform to societal expectations, women must embody passivity and subordination across various domains of life. These norms have become so deeply ingrained that many women, whether consciously or unconsciously, embrace these roles. Consequently, societal structures continue to marginalize, exclude, and subordinate women. Literature, as a reflection of broader cultural ideologies, has historically played a significant role in shaping and reinforcing these gendered constructs. Women were often denied access to education and, by extension, to literary production. Even those who managed to enter the literary sphere struggled to gain recognition in a male-dominated field. Women were systematically excluded not only from writing but also from being accurately represented in literary narratives. Their experiences were either

rendered invisible or filtered through a male perspective, leading to reductive and stereotypical portrayals. As Cynthia Griffin Wolff asserts:

To a greater or lesser extent, then, this kind of feminine characterization must be termed prejudiced or stereotyped because it tends always to emphasize one aspect of character while leaving out others of equal or greater importance. To be more explicit, the bias is carefully chosen so that certain types of masculine behavior (toward women and toward the world in general) might be justified. The stereotypes of women vary, but they vary in response to different masculine needs. The flattering frequency with which women appear in the literature is ultimately deluding: they appear not as they certainly not as they would define themselves but as conveniences to the resolution of masculine dilemmas. (Wolff, 207)

In patriarchal societies, male-dominated literature perpetuates gendered hierarchies, ensuring the continued dominance of male perspectives. Within such a framework, women are valued only insofar as they serve male interests. Even when female characters in traditional literature exhibit agency or defy societal expectations, they are often demonized or punished. This structural exclusion of women from literary discourse has contributed to the broader societal marginalization of women, reinforcing their subjugation both within and beyond the literary canon. By challenging these entrenched norms, postmodern literature, through its polyphonic and kenotic structures, creates space for alternative gender narratives. The deconstruction of rigid gender binaries in literature aligns with Butler's assertion that gender is a performative and socially constructed category, rather than a fixed biological or linguistic reality. In doing so, postmodern literary works not only critique patriarchal structures but also offer new possibilities for gender expression, challenging essentialist conceptions and expanding the cultural field through subversive performances.

Nevertheless, it is significant to emphasize that, thanks to numerous advocates of egalitarianism who argued for the inclusion of all voices in literature, this unjust dominance was largely dismantled. It can be claimed that Judith Butler, one of the prominent figures of 21st-century feminist theory, made a groundbreaking impact with her concept of performativity. According to Butler, gender roles are performances.

Butler, who is an outstanding thinker and theorist in the field of contemporary gender studies, argues that gender is socially constructed, reinforced, and basically a performance. In this context, she criticizes the traditional mindset and claims that these norms are political and serve the government in power. She shook conventional concepts and belief systems with this critical perspective she presented, winking at postmodernist understanding.

The arguments advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin will also be utilized in this study. Bakhtin's emphasis on concepts such as polyphony, dialogy, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque is also compatible with the ongoing discussions concerning gender equality. Therefore, Bakhtin's theories will be employed alongside Butler's theory of performativity and the general framework of postmodernism. Arguing that literary works should be polyphonic and that they should reflect the perspective of everyone, Bakhtin paved the way for postmodern understanding in this context. While emphasizing the significance of this diversity, he states that the most important tool is language. He says that meaning is built through ongoing conversations and interactions and that all expressions are dialogical in nature. Language is not a solitary act but a social phenomenon that arises from and contributes to a continuous exchange of ideas and perspectives. "Bakhtin presents an essentially dialogic conception of meaning and of language not as an autonomous system, but as continually remade in settings of its use" (Smith 4). Moreover, Bakhtin's dialogism questions the idea of definitive and authoritative meaning by arguing that meaning is constantly changing and open to negotiation and reinterpretation. Likewise, heteroglossia acknowledges the diversity and complexity of language usage while challenging the concept of a single authoritative language or discourse. "Heteroglossia means the simultaneous use of different kinds of speech or other signs, the tension between them, and their conflicting relationship inside one text" (Ivanov, 252). In any given social or cultural context, there are multiple language varieties, dialects, and speech genres, each associated with different social groups, professions, or cultural traditions. The meaning and perception of texts, as well as the social interactions in which they are embedded, are shaped by the coexistence and mutual impact of these many voices.

Lastly, Bakhtin coined the concept of carnivalesque to express the challenge of established norms and hierarchies. It is characterized by its emphasis on laughter, parody, and the temporary inversion of social roles.

Bakhtin's understanding of the carnivalesque, therefore, involves a temporary suspension of the normal order, breaking down barriers, norms, prohibitions, and etiquette as well as revealing the existing hierarchical distinctions. In addition, for Bakhtin, the carnivalesque encourages active participation by all by creating an arena in which received ideas and truths are endlessly tested and contested, and in which all demand equal dialogic status. (MacMillian, 260)

In brief, Bakhtin offers a more egalitarian approach to literature, which creates a platform that also accepts the portrayal of women in every aspect. Within this light, three postmodernist novels, namely *The Magus* (1965), *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), and *Atonement* (2001), will be discussed seeking the answer to the question of how male writers reflect the female characters in postmodernist works and deal with gender issues from various point of views.

Initially, John Fowles' *The Magus* stands as one of the pioneering examples of postmodern literature, characterized by its blurred distinction between reality and fiction, its intricate narrative games, and its self-conscious narrator. The novel challenges conventional storytelling by engaging readers in a labyrinthine plot that constantly shifts perspectives and meanings. Central to its postmodern nature is the interplay between various narrative styles, intertextual references, and the deconstruction of literary authority. In doing so, *The Magus* embodies key theoretical concepts such as kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and performativity, all of which contribute to its destabilization of fixed meanings and hierarchical structures. The novel follows Nicholas Urfe, a disillusioned young man who accepts a teaching position on a remote Greek island, Phraxos. There, he encounters the enigmatic Maurice Conchis, a wealthy recluse who draws him into a series of psychological games known as the Godgame. These orchestrated illusions blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, forcing Nicholas to question his perception of truth, free will, and personal identity. Conchis manipulates Nicholas through a series of staged scenarios, incorporating historical reenactments, philosophical dilemmas, and theatrical performances. The presence of various female figures, particularly Alison and Julie/Lily, complicates Nicholas's understanding of love, autonomy, and morality. As the novel progresses, Nicholas finds himself entangled in a web of deception where every revelation leads to further ambiguity,

culminating in an open-ended conclusion that compels the reader to construct their own interpretation of the events.

Fowles employs *kenosis*, a self-emptying of authorial control, by refusing to impose a singular interpretation on the novel. Instead of a traditional omniscient narrator dictating meaning, the text relinquishes authority to the reader, mirroring the protagonist's own existential uncertainty. This approach aligns with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, wherein multiple voices and perspectives coexist without being subordinated to a singular ideological framework. Throughout the novel, the reader is exposed to conflicting viewpoints, reinforcing the idea that truth is subjective and constantly shifting. The polyphonic structure of *The Magus* ensures that no voice holds ultimate authority, further emphasizing the novel's resistance to fixed meanings. Each character, including Nicholas, Alison, and Conchis, contributes to a multiplicity of perspectives, creating a layered, self-referential narrative that both invites and frustrates interpretation.

Furthermore, heteroglossia, the coexistence of diverse linguistic and ideological perspectives, permeates the novel. Fowles weaves together a medley of textual forms, including letters, diary entries, theatrical scripts, and historical documents, disrupting the notion of a singular, authoritative narrative voice. The novel's engagement with intertextuality, particularly its allusions to *The Tempest*, reinforces this multiplicity. Parallels between Conchis and Prospero, Nicholas and Ferdinand, and Julie/Lily and Miranda underscore the fluidity of identity and the performative nature of human experience. By integrating disparate literary genres and styles, Fowles challenges traditional literary structures and underscores the constructed nature of reality. This postmodern sensibility is further reinforced through the carnivalesque, which disrupts social and narrative hierarchies by embracing disorder, inversion, and playfulness. Conchis' elaborate psychological manipulations function as a form of carnival, dismantling Nicholas's preconceived notions of selfhood and authority. Through role reversals, masked identities, and theatrical absurdities, *The Magus* subverts conventional power dynamics, placing Nicholas in a destabilized position where he must continuously renegotiate his understanding of reality. The carnivalesque elements within the text contribute to a sense of perpetual flux, eroding rigid distinctions between truth and illusion.

Moreover, Judith Butler's theory of performativity becomes a crucial lens through which to analyze the novel's depiction of gender and identity. Butler argues that gender is not an innate essence but rather a series of performed behaviors dictated by cultural norms. In *The Magus*, the female characters are initially presented through Nicholas' narrow, often misogynistic perspective, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Historically, literature has often portrayed women in limited, stereotypical roles, positioning them as subservient to male protagonists (Bernard, 39). Female characters have traditionally been confined to narratives centered around romance, marriage, and domesticity, reinforcing their subordinate status within patriarchal structures. Women in literature have frequently been faced with two rigidly defined options: conforming to societal ideals of femininity or being demonized for their defiance. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes evident that these women, Alison, Julie/Lily, and even the seemingly passive Mrs. de Seitas, are not simply objects within Nicholas' narrative but autonomous agents engaged in their own forms of performance and subversion. Fowles deliberately manipulates the reader's expectations, leading them to question whether these women are victims, conspirators, or something entirely beyond conventional categorization. By challenging these predetermined roles, Fowles disrupts essentialist notions of gender and exposes the performative nature of identity itself. The characters in *The Magus*, particularly the women, exemplify this dynamic, as they shift between different personas, perform various roles, and ultimately defy the expectations imposed upon them. This subversion of gender norms aligns with Fowles' broader postmodern critique of fixed identities and absolute truths.

Through its interplay of kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque elements, and performativity, *The Magus* stands as a seminal work that challenges literary conventions and societal constructs alike. By dismantling rigid hierarchies and embracing narrative uncertainty, Fowles not only redefines the boundaries of fiction but also invites readers to question their own assumptions about identity, truth, and power. Ultimately, *The Magus* does not provide definitive answers but instead revels in ambiguity, encouraging a participatory reading experience that mirrors the novel's central thematic concerns. In doing so, Fowles crafts a work that is as elusive as it is intellectually provocative, ensuring its continued relevance in postmodern literary discourse.

Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is a novel rich in postmodernist elements, as well, incorporating numerous literary, cultural, and historical allusions. As Pulham notes, "Ackroyd's novel presents characters which mirror both imagined and real Victorian personages including Dan Leno, Karl Marx, and George Gissing, while retrospectively 'doubling' the figure of David Rodinsky in the Jewish scholar, Solomon Weil" (203). The novel blurs the lines between fiction and reality, integrating intertextual references and mythological elements that place it in a continuous dialogue with various literary traditions and cultural histories. The novel's engagement with the mythical figure of the Golem is particularly significant in its postmodern structure. The Golem, rooted in Jewish mythology, represents both protection and destruction, existing in a liminal space between humanity and monstrosity. As Ackroyd mentions in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, "'Golem' is the medieval Jewish word for an artificial being, created by a magician or the rabbi; it literally means 'thing without form'" (4). The Golem's presence in the novel parallels the city of London, which, as Mahinur Akşehir argues, is portrayed as an entity that "exists only by eating the souls of human beings," drawing a metaphorical link between urban violence and the monstrous (Akşehir, 2022, p. 25). This intertextual dialogue between history, mythology, and literature exemplifies Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, where multiple voices and discourses intersect to challenge singular interpretations of truth.

Ackroyd also employs polyphony in the novel, presenting multiple perspectives that resist narrative authority. The use of different textual forms, diaries, trial records, newspaper articles, and dramatic scripts, creates a fragmented, multi-layered narrative structure. This technique, as seen in the testimonies of Elizabeth Cree and the various accounts of the murders, allows the novel to maintain its ambiguity and prevents any single voice from dominating the interpretation of events. The theme of performance, both literal and metaphorical, is central to the novel's engagement with gender and identity. As a celebrated music hall performer, Dan Leno exemplifies carnivalesque disruption, embodying the fluidity of identity through theatrical cross-dressing and comedic subversion of social norms. The music hall itself serves as a liminal space where societal expectations are temporarily suspended, reflecting Bakhtin's theory of the carnival as a momentary inversion of hierarchical structures. Furthermore, Elizabeth Cree's own performance, both as an actress and as a

manipulator of her own narrative, aligns with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Elizabeth's ability to navigate and subvert Victorian gender expectations challenges the rigid dichotomy of male and female roles. Lin Pettersson highlights this critique, noting that "Elizabeth is tried and convicted for the least violent of the murders she has committed and the crime that reveals the least evidence. This is mainly because the police reject the possibility that the serial killer is a woman" (Pettersson, 5). This reflects how patriarchal structures impose limitations on female agency, reinforcing stereotypes rather than considering the individual complexities of a character.

Ackroyd further engages in kenosis by withdrawing from traditional authorial dominance, allowing historical voices, fictional characters, and intertextual references to coexist without a clear hierarchical structure. The novel does not impose a single, definitive interpretation but instead invites readers to question the constructed nature of truth and narrative reliability. This aligns with dialogism, as the novel continuously engages with past texts, historical events, and competing ideologies, forming an intricate web of interrelated meanings. The crime fiction genre itself is both employed and subverted in the novel. As Reyyan Bal suggests, Ackroyd "satisfies and thwarts, maintains and subverts, accepts and makes metacommentary on the generic conventions of crime fiction so that the work is simultaneously a compelling work of crime fiction and a postmodern parody of the genre" (Bal, 2). This dual approach exemplifies the self-referential and metafictional nature of postmodernism, wherein the novel simultaneously engages with and critiques the very conventions it utilizes. In conclusion, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is a work that embodies postmodern literary techniques through its use of intertextuality, multiple narrative perspectives, mythological references, and thematic complexity. By incorporating kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and performativity, Ackroyd crafts a novel that resists singular interpretation and challenges traditional notions of identity, authorship, and genre. Through its engagement with both historical realities and fictional constructs, the novel becomes a site of continual dialogue, reflecting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of storytelling itself.

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* is the final novel examined in this study. The novel employs both first-person and third-person narration, offering multiple perspectives and emphasizing the diversity of reality. By presenting events through different

viewpoints, the novel allows readers to engage with various interpretations of truth. Furthermore, the narrative structure integrates chapters set in different times and places into a single, cohesive story. The novel shifts between past, present, and future, challenging conventional notions of time and providing an alternative understanding of temporality. Uncertainty regarding reality is another prominent postmodern element in the novel. Characters' recollections and interpretations of past events are subjective, reinforcing themes of illusion and the unreliability of memory. The most significant postmodern technique in *Atonement* is its use of an unreliable narrator. As Bruno Zerweck explains, "If there is no such thing as normative or even absolute factual reliability, what indeed happens to the idea of the unreliable narrator? Since the turn from late modernism to postmodernism, it seems that unreliability can no longer be considered as the 'odd' exception to an otherwise 'reliably' reported world" (Zerweck, 13). This unreliability is crucial to postmodernism because it destabilizes the traditional definitions of truth that were dominant in previous literary movements. The novel's structure encourages the reader to question the narrator's honesty and memory, emphasizing that reality is fluid and subject to reinterpretation. The central conflict revolves around a 13-year-old girl, Briony Tallis, who misinterprets events with devastating consequences. Her misperception of a significant event leads to a tragedy that affects multiple lives. The contrast between Briony's recollections and the actual events forces the reader to question the reliability of the narrative, blurring the line between reality and fiction. By the end of the novel, uncertainty remains, compelling readers to reflect on what aspects of the story are real and what are fake.

A major reason behind Briony's misconceptions about Robbie Turner stems from class distinctions, reflecting the novel's polyphonic narrative style, because *Atonement* reflects the marginalized voices of lower-class people. The rigid social hierarchy of early 20th-century England predisposed individuals to certain biases. As Ross McKibbin notes, "The English had no doubt, at least for most of the period 1918-1951, that there was an upper class, though they would not necessarily have agreed as to its boundaries" (McKibbin, 1). The novel highlights the prejudices ingrained in this class system. Robbie, the son of a housekeeper employed by the Tallis family, is an intelligent and ambitious young man who has been given the same educational opportunities as Cecilia Tallis, the daughter of the household. However, his background prevents him from being fully accepted as an equal. Despite being a part

of the Tallis family's social circle, Robbie is immediately presumed guilty when a crime occurs, illustrating the inescapable class prejudices of the time.

Briony's biases extend beyond Robbie. In her attempt to rectify her initial mistake, she assumes that Danny Hardman, another working-class character, must have been the true perpetrator. As Peter Finney argues, "Using this text within the larger narrative text, McEwan subtly suggests the invidious nature of a class system permeates even those seeking to reverse its effects and works to protect the upper-class rapist from exposure throughout his life" (Finney, 10). Cecilia, who has broken away from her family due to their treatment of Robbie, expresses in a letter that she does not blame him. Instead, she recognizes that he was an easy scapegoat due to his class. Meanwhile, the actual culprit, Paul Marshall, a wealthy and well-connected man, escapes suspicion entirely. The novel underscores how societal norms dictate perceptions of guilt and innocence. Paul's wealth and status shield him from blame, while Robbie, despite his education and moral character, is condemned due to his lower-class origins.

In addition to critiquing class divisions, the novel provides a nuanced portrayal of its female characters. *Atonement* does not relegate its women to the background; instead, they play pivotal roles in shaping the narrative. While Cecilia represents the upper class, her character is not defined solely by her social standing. She rejects societal expectations, choosing love over convention, and ultimately distances herself from her family. Briony, despite her privileged upbringing, is also an outsider due to her unique perspective and individualism. Judith Butler's concept of diverse femininities aligns with Briony's marginalization, not due to her class, but because of her personal differences. Briony's character is not simply an archetype of an upper-class woman; she is a fully realized individual with complex emotions and motivations. McEwan does not idealize or vilify her but instead presents her as a deeply human character. Similarly, Cecilia challenges traditional gender roles. Although she has inherited some class prejudices, she defies expectations by choosing to stand by Robbie, despite the repercussions. She is depicted as a woman with her own agency, emotions, and desires, rather than merely a symbol of her social class. McEwan's approach to his female characters reflects a contemporary feminist perspective, reshaping historical narratives to highlight women's passion and autonomy. As Sebastian Groes explains, "McEwan's ingenious transplantation of a

contemporary possibility of women's emancipation into a past setting complicates the topical narratives of feminism, suggesting that the emergence of new aspirations and hopes that attended what has been called 'first-wave feminism', in fact, involved contradiction and even regression in the specific historical context of the war" (Groes, 33). McEwan thus employs a retrospective feminist lens to challenge traditional gender roles and engage with feminist discourse through historical fiction. In brief, from a Bakhtinian perspective, *Atonement* exemplifies key postmodernist techniques by creating female characters who seek their own freedom and integrating them into a historical narrative that subverts conventional social structures. By doing so, McEwan disrupts both traditional literature and societal norms, aligning with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. The interplay of multiple perspectives, unreliable narration, and the critique of class and gender hierarchies contribute to the novel's postmodern complexity.

Taking everything into consideration, women have historically been oppressed, marginalized, and silenced in almost every society for centuries. Positioned within a male-dominated world, they have often been defined through the lens of the male perspective, both in societal structures and literary traditions. The emergence of female writers in literature, a field long dominated by men, is a relatively recent development. Many successful women writers initially published under male pseudonyms to gain acceptance and, even when they gained recognition, often reinforced patriarchal ideologies within their works in order to conform to literary expectations. Although feminist movements have challenged and disrupted these patriarchal structures, gender inequality in both literature and society remains pervasive. In this regard, the advent of postmodernism has provided a crucial platform for re-examining and deconstructing dominant narratives. Postmodernism, which embraces multiplicity, fluidity, and the rejection of absolute truths, allows for the inclusion of historically marginalized voices, particularly women. Thus, it is essential to analyze to what extent women, previously excluded or relegated to passive roles, are incorporated into postmodernist literature and how their representations challenge or perpetuate traditional gender constructs.

This study has explored how female characters in *The Magus*, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, and *Atonement*, all written by male authors, are depicted as agents of their own narratives, shaping and directing the course of their respective

stories. In this study, kenosis and performativity serve as the foundational theoretical pillars to understand the dynamic and relational nature of female identity in contemporary narratives. However, these two concepts alone do not fully capture the complexity of identity construction as portrayed in the novels. Here, Bakhtinian concepts such as dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque act as critical mediators by illuminating how identities are dialogically constructed, contested, and performed within multiple voices and discourses. Dialogism frames identity as a process of interactive meaning-making, while polyphony reveals the coexistence of diverse, often conflicting voices that resist singular definitions of self. Heteroglossia introduces linguistic diversity, reflecting social stratifications and ideological variation, and the carnivalesque disrupts normative power structures, providing a space where performativity can transgress and reimagine gender roles. Together, these concepts enrich the theoretical framework by connecting the inner transformation of self-emptying with the socially enacted repetition of gendered performances, revealing the multi-layered and performative constitution of female characters in the selected texts.

Ultimately, this research underscores the evolving role of female characters in contemporary literary discourse. The inclusion of women as complex, self-determining figures in postmodern fiction not only challenges the historical erasure of their voices but also contributes to a broader understanding of how literature can serve as a site for renegotiating gender norms. By integrating theories of gender, polyphony, heteroglossia, kenosis, and carnivalesque elements, this study highlights how postmodernist literature creates a dynamic space where identity and narrative control are continuously redefined. While the struggle for gender equality in both literature and society is ongoing, postmodernist approaches provide a critical space for questioning, reconstructing, and amplifying the voices that have long been silenced.

II. KENOSIS: THE EMPTYING OF SELF IN NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Hierarchical structures and binary oppositions have been a part of the human condition as represented in religion, politics, and literature to such an extent that it has been perceived as a natural and inextricable part of the human experience. Moreover, this hierarchical order has been perpetuated and constantly recreated through various social institutions such as language. The fact that the world is perceived in terms of binary opposites such as light/dark, angel/evil, and beautiful/ugly has been one of the most significant elements reinforcing this understanding. God-man, writer-reader, and writer-character can also be given as examples of binary oppositions that are created and reinforced. These opposites, which may appear unrelated to each other, are, in fact, inherently parallel and encompass a hierarchical system, involving one's authority over the other. The creation and reinforcement of these binaries is one of the outstanding discussions of postmodernism. Within this context, the main focus of these postmodern texts, literary and non-literary, has been the identification, questioning, discussion, and undermining of these binaries. Specifically, the authoritative relationship between the author and the character, the possibility of creating a truly liberated fictional experience, and similar questions have been addressed by postmodern intellectuals, novelists in particular. Therefore, an ancient concept, Kenosis, has been reintroduced to the field of literature within this context.

To elaborate on this discussion further the concept of Kenosis should be defined in further detail. To begin with, although Kenosis is an ancient Greek term, it was conceptualized as such within the Christian theology during the Middle Ages. Basically, as Wayne E. Ward points out, the etymology of the name kenotic is the word 'kenoo', which means to empty. Ward goes on to argue that in the nineteenth century, kenotic theory was revisited to explain how "Christ 'emptied' himself, taking the form of a servant, when he came incarnate into the world" (Ward, 1). To be more precise, the act of emptying oneself serves as an act of undermining one's own authority. In this respect, Kenosis provides an intriguing comparison: Christ empties himself to equate with people, whereas postmodernist novelists empty his/her own authority to equate himself/herself with both the readers and the characters. As it is highlighted in the Bible, this is an act of humbling. "Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied

himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death” (as quoted in McClain, 1967, p. 3) which echoes in the poststructuralist concept of the death of the author. This kind of self-emptying or self-humbling of the author functions as an invitation to the readers and the characters to “engage in an active process of production [...] not as a repository of stable meaning but as an invitation to make it” (Harkin, 413). Thus, when writers consciously give up their superior position, readers and characters emerge who play an active role in the process of creating meaning.

Although postmodernism and Kenosis as a concept of Christian theology might seem irrelevant, there is a close philosophical and conceptual connection between the two. Initially, when considering the concept of kenosis, one must look at its roots to understand Christ’s equation of himself with humans. Kenosis, which means to empty in Greek, symbolizes Christ’s leaving aside his existence as God and coming to the world as a human. This idea maintains that Christ, in a sense, experienced a process of “self-emptying,” highlighting the idea that his self-sacrifice is a powerful example of the use of human agency. It can be argued that kenosis invites people to consider human will and identity and questions their positions by examining the relationship between God and humans in terms of existence and identity. As Nigrini Jacques states, “In attempting to answer the question of how God, human beings, and the natural world have been connected and are different, we need to pause and reflect on the ontology of everyday existence. Reflection on kenosis and identity invites one to work out the question of the sense of being and identity and to do so concretely” (Nigrini, 53). This concept posits that individuals possess a multitude of alternatives in life, allowing them to select the path that resonates with their perception of righteousness in the context of a higher authority. Consequently, they possess the autonomy to wield influence in determining the course of their lives, and it is imperative for them to select morally upright alternatives, emulating a virtuous exemplar.

The emergence of the concept of Kenosis and the reevaluation of Christ’s existence has instigated a paradigm shift in the way both humanity and religion perceive God. This transformation is rooted in the fact that, while embodying God, Christ also embraced the human experience. As a result, this circumstance has fundamentally altered the hierarchical structure within the human-God relationship, reducing the perceived distance between them. This can be evaluated as a conscious

act of humanizing the divine. As Tomasz Dekert suggests, the most remarkable aspect of Trinity relationships is the feature of self-emptying, and the application of self-limiting by the divine person consciously and willingly creates this kenotic relationship (Dekert, 196). Stressing that this act of self-emptying is voluntary demonstrates that this sacrifice and humility are intended to be a revelation of the possibility of human will. Through this communicative bond, God relinquished its superior attributes and actively engaged with humanity, thereby setting an exemplary illustration to enhance their comprehension. As people witnessed God communicating with them in this manner, it precipitated a transformation in the perception of God from an entity that was once perceived as unapproachable, fearsome, and authoritarian. This approach, over time, eroded the hierarchical relationship between God and humankind.

The concept of Kenosis has been engendered as a recurrent subject within postmodern literature. Postmodern novelists have been testing the possibility of liberating their readers and their characters from their own authority by emptying and humbling themselves in a kenotic sense by voluntarily announcing their own death within their texts. This multifaceted concept, amenable to diverse interpretations, has found a salient place in postmodern literature, primarily as a means to interrogate and reconstruct the author-reader-character relationship. The philosophical basis of the author's voluntary emptying of himself is the postmodern understanding that there can be no absolute universal meaning. From the postmodern mindset,

it is a world of rapid change, of bewildering instability, where knowledge is constantly changing and meaning 'floats' without its traditional teleological fixing in foundational knowledge and the belief in inevitable human progress. But the significant thing is that in postmodernity uncertainty, the lack of a centre, and the floating of meaning are understood as phenomena to be celebrated rather than regretted. In postmodernity, it is complexity, a myriad of meanings, rather than profundity, the one deep meaning, which is the norm. (Edwards et al., 10)

Therefore, it is a movement that draws attention to the ambiguity of meaning in life and accepts this ambiguity as a positive situation that does not restrict humanity to a single understanding of reality but provides a polyphonic and rich diversity of

perspectives. Accordingly, works written with a closed meaning in literature and in which the author had an imposing attitude were replaced by a new, more egalitarian understanding. In this context, examining the concept, which, from a religious perspective, brings God and humanity into closer proximity, reveals its literary significance in the diminution of the distance between author and reader, effectively rendering them nearly synonymous in many instances.

The concept of Kenosis, which contributes to these inquiries, is conspicuously present, both explicitly and implicitly, in numerous postmodern works. While the questioning and change of the unwavering authority perception in the religious dimension, specifically Christianity, started with kenosis, the sharpest questions in literature were put forward in the postmodernist period. In fact, one of the factors that makes kenosis possible to relate to postmodernism, in general, is the fact that authoritarianism no longer holds as strong a position as it once did, at least on the fictional level. To investigate the change in stance regarding authority, as mentioned before, we can first revisit the concept of binary oppositions. By deciphering the habit of perceiving the world through binary oppositions, which is one of the phenomena that strengthens authority and hierarchy, postmodernism aims at transforming the existing authoritarian system through a philosophical attitude that can be conceptualized as postmodern cynicism or skepticism. As Stuart Sim also highlights “One of the best ways of describing postmodernism as a philosophical movement would be as a form of scepticism- scepticism about authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms” (Sim, 3). This new understanding stands against hierarchical systems. The postmodernist approach, which opposes all hierarchical relationships created through binary opposites, is basically a rejection of the imposed superiority of any phenomenon or party over another.

This scepticism, in turn, leads to another central concept, namely polysemy. With the introduction of the concept of polysemy to literary studies with the discovery of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work, the role of binary oppositions has begun to be questioned. This attempt to question the binary oppositions and to highlight polysemy is solidified in the concept of deconstruction. As Jim Powell argues “Deconstruction first focuses on the binary oppositions within a text. Next, it shows how these opposites are related, how one is central, natural, and privileged, the other ignored, repressed, and marginalized” (Powell, 30). In the world perceived through binary opposites, these

opposites are no longer elements that complement each other and reinforce each other's meanings. The new insight accepts the foundation of the language structure with these contrasts as one of the elements that strengthen the hierarchical system. Binary oppositions such as man/woman, white/black, rich/poor, and God/human, created in social, religious, and political contexts and engraved in the minds, reinforce each other's meanings, as epitomised in the Hegelian master-slave dialectics, and create a hierarchical system. While one is seen as superior to the other, the other is defined by the characteristics it does not have and the authority it cannot obtain.

Within the framework of this study, the focus will be on the binary opposition between author-reader-character. These parties, which complement and need each other, symbolize a contrast. This binary opposition includes the superiority of the author over the reader and the character in the work in the conventional literary understanding, and the understanding of an authoritarian and directing author. However, with poststructuralism and postmodernism, the author has gone through a kenotic experience and voluntarily has fallen from this divine position "much of which has been conducted in the shadow of the poststructuralist pronouncement of the 'death of the author'" (Donovan et al., 1). In his work *What is an Author?* Michel Foucault suggested that the way of perceiving an author was socially constructed and considered imagining a culture without writers. He talked about a world where it doesn't matter who speaks. The other philosopher, Roland Barthes, who also questioned the role of an author, had a shrewd idea on it, and he officially announced the death of the author. The death of the author represented the loss of the author's control over the text after the text was published. Thus, the idea of an understanding in which the author was trivialized, or in other words, equated with the reader, was put forward (Bently, 1). Texts containing a closed meaning and directing the reader towards a certain ideology, belief, or thought are replaced by works in which the reader cooperates with the author in creating the meaning. In addition, the role of the reader is of great importance in Postmodernist and post-structuralist understandings. The reader is seen as an active participant in the process of interpreting the text and creating meaning. The text may have different meanings for each reader. Postmodernist and post-structuralist approaches emphasize that meaning is not fixed and certain. The meaning of a text is full of ambiguities and depends on the reader's interpretations. As Linda Hutcheon states, "In the postmodernist emphasis, both critical and literary, on the addressing of

the reader as co-creator or at least as a collaborator, we must not forget the role of conscious artistic production in that call to action” (Hutcheon, 4).

Postmodernism not only creates an egalitarian approach by bringing the reader and the writer to the same position but also destroys the traditional understanding with the polyphony of the characters it creates and the characters and plots that are open to interpretation from different perspectives. Maxine Greene emphasizes that the acceptance of the author as a manipulative creator has changed by proposing fictional character transformations that have evolved with the postmodernist approach. Maxine Greene continues as follows: “What is called postmodernism entails the rejection of the idea of language as a medium expressing or representing what pre-exists. At once, it focuses upon perspectivism and divergence of point of view: voices of the long disqualified, and the long silenced are being attended to and, where possible, decoded” (Greene, 4). Thus, postmodernism respects differences in perspective and emphasizes diversity, giving a voice to the marginal segments that could not make themselves heard before. Considering this evolving comprehension of literature, one that fosters the emergence of diverse voices and seeks to comprehend and resolve them, it has become increasingly implausible for the author to unilaterally construct meaning and assert it authoritatively. Guided by the conviction that a text should not solely rely on the author’s intentions or identity, its significance now derives from the interpretations and intertextual connections established by readers.

The postmodern approach that refuses to accept the truths and values of a single authority allows intertextual relationships to be emphasized because this creates an atmosphere where different texts and perspectives are equally valued. Concurrent with this paradigm, intertextuality acknowledges this heterogeneity and posits that disparate texts might engage in mutual interactions. Therefore, intertextuality refers to a text gaining meaning by referring to other texts or by reshaping other texts. This highlights the significance of intertextual connections. In other words, it is no longer the author, but the connections established between texts that hold a crucial influence in the creation of meaning. Moreover, by presenting the diversity of different texts, it also becomes an indication that the perception of reality constantly changes according to time, place, and point of view. In this respect, intertextuality reinforces the purposes of postmodernism, refusing any authoritative figures or texts and presenting diversity.

For that reason, polyphony and the acceptance of different perspectives in the postmodern understanding are supported by the ambiguity of meaning. In postmodern works, writers' conscious use of sentences that are ambiguous and can create multiple meanings by using the flexible structure of the language is one of the strategies that prevent the emergence of a single authoritative voice. Therefore, this approach questions the traditional notion that a single author creates the text. Since in a world with ambiguity, there cannot be a definitive and single truth. Particularly with the emergence of postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives, the articulation of uncertainty has garnered significance. Stephen Ball states that this new approach is "theorising that rests upon complexity, uncertainty, and doubt and upon a reflexivity about its own production and its claims to knowledge about the social" (Ball, 269). The formation of fixed meaning in works is being challenged in this new literary era. Discourse and meaning have a structure that constantly changes and transforms due to many different factors. Language is not a steady, ongoing thing that can be talked about like a set formal text. Since it's where power and knowledge meet, it changes how it looks and what it means based on who's talking, their position of power, and the place they are speaking from in an organization (Foucault, 100). Hence, in the postmodernist era, where the meaning of the world is questioned and found impossible to ascertain, it is inconceivable for any authoritarian figure to unilaterally create and impose meaning. On the contrary, it is suggested that everyone can have a different perspective and none of them can be accepted as absolutely correct, but especially in order to form the meaning of a text, different perspectives should be embraced by including characters and readers from different upbringings. In short, text is seen as a product resulting from many different interactions. Writing can be thought of as a collective effort of not only the author but also the reader and, what's more, the kenotic character.

In postmodernist works, characters who are liberated from the author and who construct meaning frequently appear. These characters question the traditional superiority of the author within the text and actively participate in the reader's meaning-formation process. As Charles Russell highlights, in such a text, "Characters can synthesize alternate versions of themselves out of their dreams, memories, subconscious, social roles and fantasies, while at the same time remaining almost totally dependent upon the vagaries of experience" (Russell, 5). There are some methods used to help them play an active role in the text. For instance, some characters

hide their identities, making it difficult for the reader to understand who they are. This increases ambiguity in the text and causes the reader to more actively search for meaning. Moreover, in postmodernist works, the characters' behaviors and discourses often have multiple meanings. This allows the reader to interpret the characters' actions and words in different ways and to be suspicious about the truth. As Graham Allen states, "The polyphonic novel presents a world in which no individual discourse can stand objectively above any other discourse; all discourses are interpretations of the world, responses to and calls to other discourses" (Allen, 23). With this approach, the works were made open to different interpretations of the reader, and diversity was created in the characters. Today, characters from diverse backgrounds, encompassing various identities, are increasingly appearing and even assuming leading roles in their own narratives within literature. Since postmodernism aims to destroy the traditional understanding of characters, the concept of character has become questionable within the context of postmodernism (Fokkema, 14). Postmodernism has given the characters a new spirit by removing them from the restrictive role assigned to them. For example, one of the most widely used techniques is to present characters who write their own stories. These characters deviate from the classical story structure by playing a role that reshapes the meaning within the text and challenges the reader's expectations. One of the most striking aspects of postmodernism is the creation of characters that can replace the author. In some postmodernist works, characters take on the role of the author and shape the text from their own perspectives. In those works, characters that intervene in the flow of the story emphasize the equality in the author-character relationship. As Henrique Heraldo Janzen designates;

The author ceases to have, at least in part, the monological control of the other characters. The author's truth lies, in this new fictional construction, on the same level as his characters. In a polyphonic work, the characters have the power to directly signify, that they have the possibility of being subjects of the discourse, thus not being only objects of an author's discourse. In creating these characters, authors give up a traditionally superior and dominant position. (Janzen, 5)

These characters attain a degree of autonomy within the text, enabling them to influence the narrative trajectory without necessitating the author's direct intervention in postmodern literary works. Consequently, this phenomenon challenges the

conventional notions of authorial superiority and the author's decisive role, ultimately enhancing readers' comprehension of the text. Thus, in postmodernist literature, the author-character relationship assumes a more egalitarian and collaborative nature.

In this respect, postmodernism is compatible with kenosis and benefits from it because the concept of kenosis emphasizes identity confusion and handles the diversity of characters. As Jeffrey Adams points out; "Such postmodern kenosis also offers the reader an opportunity to reconsider, perhaps redefine, previously fixed identities. As Freud theorized, an effective mourning of ideals and the ensuing self-reconstitution must take place in an intersubjective context- there must be a public acknowledgment of pain and loss" (Adams, 271). Based on this parallelism, it can be understood that kenosis and postmodernism are two concepts that can be studied in cooperation because they emphasize that there is not a single and fixed character structure, but a diversity of thoughts and interpretations.

That's why the authors' loss of superiority in postmodernist works can be metaphorically associated with the concept of Kenosis. The reason for this is that a strong parallel can be seen between Christ giving up his divine characteristics and equalizing himself with humans, and the author giving up his/her superior position and collaborating with his/her readers and the characters he/she creates. This parallel relates both to Christ's equation of himself with humans and to the authors' desire for a more equal relationship with their characters and readers. Both require some form of reduction or self-emptying; while Christ renounces his godly powers, authors agree to share control of their own works with their readers. Both seek to establish a closer and more collaborative relationship with people, which allows for greater flexibility and commonality in the author-character-reader relationship in postmodernist works.

In a parallel fashion, Postmodernism adopts a similar perspective by challenging and transforming the conventional dynamics within the author-character-reader relationship. Moreover, it has blurred the distinct demarcations between them, rendering their positions more ambiguous and raising inquiries into the delineation of the author's role regarding the reader's role. Joseph Natoli emphasizes the fluid nature of postmodernism, arguing that "The postmodern writer must do without heroes and without heroic conflicts; he can only fictionalize the 'malaise' of the 'increasingly shapeless' world he lives in and of his 'increasingly fluid' experience" (Natoli, 30). In postmodernist works, the authority of the author decreases, and the reader assumes a

more active role. This represents an approach that questions the traditional hierarchy between writer-character-reader.

In conclusion, as seen throughout the text, there are interesting parallels between the concept of Kenosis and postmodernism. The kenotic self-emptying functions as a means to question and transform traditional hierarchical structures and authority structures within the postmodernist mindset. Throughout history, people have understood the need for the presence of authority in different areas and have constructed and accepted these authority figures. However, Kenosis within the postmodern frame of mind stands out by questioning and changing the traditional hierarchy between God and man in a religious context. On the symbolic level, Christ's desire to abandon his divine attributes and liberate human beings from his authority by attributing to them 'free will' undermines the traditional power relationships. Postmodernism, in this regard, tries to transform the relationship between author, character, and reader in a literary context from a traditionally defined authority-based structure to a more egalitarian and cooperation-oriented model. Traditionally, the author has absolute authority over the text, and the character and the reader are subject to this authority. However, postmodernism questions and subverts this authority by granting free will to the character and a room for the free play of meaning formation for the reader. Through this attitude, the authorial position is tested, certainties are undermined, and a comprehensive polysemy is highlighted. Therefore, postmodernism changes the role of the author and characters through the concept of Kenosis, representing a transformation in the divine role of Christ/author, encouraging characters to play a more independent and active role in shaping meanings, enabling polysemy in action and discourse.

III. BAKHTINIAN THEORIES

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin is a preeminent philosopher and literary theorist of the previous century. His groundbreaking theories went on to shape fundamental aspects of postmodernism. He was known for his influential contributions to the fields of linguistics, literary theory, and cultural studies. His theories and literary studies, presented under various headings, advocated a more equitable understanding of literature. Bakhtin contends that language lacks a unified structure and instead exhibits diversity, wherein various social, cultural, and ideological voices, namely speech genres, converge, which he calls heteroglossia. Bakhtin argues that speech genres are diverse and varied. The complexity and heterogeneity of speech genres make it difficult to establish a universal set of principles or rules that apply to all of them. He implies that each speech genre may need to be examined and understood on its terms, considering its unique characteristics and context (Bakhtin, 2014, p. 61). This feature resonates strongly with the postmodern perspective. The diversity of linguistic forms and expressive styles found within the language has been a great source of inspiration for postmodern writers. Apart from the diversity of language and expression, the other inspiration in postmodern literature is differences in perspective. Bakhtinian theory incorporates traces of individuals from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, economic strata, and varying sexual orientations. It actively amplifies the voices of differences, which Bakhtin conceptualizes as polyphony. According to Bakhtin, Polyphony is the coexistence of multiple independent voices, each with its own perspective, interacting and influencing one another, creating a dynamic and dialogic texture in language and discourse (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 21). Literature is considered a realm that ought to mirror and rejuvenate such diversity. "For Bakhtin, polyphony in literature essentially means an attempt to refute the objectification of man through the pluralistic intervention of the dialogue" (Bakhtin, 2013, as cited in Malcuzyński, 1984). Another Bakhtinian concept proposed to reflect this pluralism is carnivalesque, which refers to the celebration of polyphony, chaos, and the grotesque. Bakhtin, as one of the figures in whose works the roots of this postmodern feature can be most clearly seen, conceptualized these features and introduced many terms, such as polyphony and carnivalesque, to the literature. In short, Bakhtin's attitude that allows polyphony in a

carnavalesque atmosphere and opposes traditional hierarchies demanding that authoritarian voices be silenced makes him a leading figure in postmodern studies.

Bakhtin's literary theory emphasizes diversity and polyphony, promoting a literary environment where everyone can express themselves. In his work *Rabelais and His World*, where he develops and presents many theories that serve this purpose, he introduces concepts such as dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque as mentioned before. By doing so, he chose to examine François Rabelais regarding his opposition to the social and literary conventions. François Rabelais, a 15th-century French priest and physician, was one of the significant figures of the Renaissance Period. His works contained significant criticism, with a satirical and humorous tone, challenging his time's social, religious, and literary norms. Bakhtin praises Rabelais's daring and revolutionary writing and appreciates his originality (Berrong, 7). Alongside this, through his analysis of Rabelais' works, Bakhtin explains that norms should be broken and how they could be broken, and in this context, he opposes the authoritarian order.

Bakhtin claims that discourse in literature must be created with this nontraditional, free approach, and he supports this view with the concept of dialogism. Bakhtin's understanding of dialogism argues that language not only expresses the inner world of the individual but also acquires meaning within the social, cultural, and historical context. "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of a person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 110). According to Bakhtin, who searches for meaning in dialogical integrity, Socrates offers an important example of this interaction because, in Socratic dialogues, meaning is tried to be reached based on the conflicts of different ideas. "His reading of the Socratic dialogue is also a response and an alternative to what Bakhtin perceives to be the dogmatism and one-sided seriousness of the rhetorical tradition" (Zappen, 45). As Krystyna Pomorska points out in the foreword of *Rabelais and His World*;

Bakhtin repeatedly points to the Socratic dialogue as a prototype of the discursive mechanism for revealing the truth. Dialogue so conceived is opposed to the "authoritarian word" in the same way as the carnival is opposed to official culture. The "authoritarian word" does not allow any other type of speech to approach and interfere

with it. Devoid of any zones of cooperation with other types of words, the “authoritarian word” thus excludes dialogue (Pomarska, x).

While stating that the language, discourse, and perspective in communication through dialogue should be diverse, he benefits from Socrates’ views by exemplifying pluralistic discourse. In brief, as a key figure in laying the groundwork for postmodern literature, Bakhtin rejects the creation of monophonic, univocal, and norm-based works. He analyses Rabelais as representative of a different era, contending that diversifying literature is achievable through various elements. He uses the understanding he wants to create by exemplifying Rabelais’ unruly and innovative attitude and the nature of Socratic dialogue. According to Bakhtin, Socrates develops a dialectical discourse technique that reinforces an innovative meaning-making process, and Rabelais sets a positive example on the path to a more just literature. He also shows Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s novels as innovative and polyphonic writings, and he examines his style in the context of polyphony. In this part, Bakhtin’s concepts such as dialogism, polyphony, carnivalesque, and heteroglossia, which characterize postmodern literature, will be explained in further detail, along with specific narrative techniques and forms that contribute to the carnivalesque spirit as represented in postmodern literature.

a. Dialogism: Meaning Through Interaction

In Bakhtinian terminology, dialogism is a natural consequence of polyphony, a convergence of diverse sounds and forms of expression. The concept highlights how language and literature are constituted of a kind of dialogue between polyphonic discourses rather than being a monologic structure. Dialogism is one of the fundamental concepts brought forward by Mikhail Bakhtin and has a great impact on his philosophy of language. Bakhtin created a novel theory of language that had significant effects on literary theory, philosophy, and linguistics. Though Bakhtin does not propose a codified system of philosophical language, his ideas and theories are nonetheless relevant to comprehending the nature of communication and language. In fact, to understand Bakhtin’s contribution to the field of linguistics, his perspective on

language must be comprehended. Bakhtin sees language as a tool people use to make sense of life and the outside world, in Michael Holquist's words, "to bridge the gap between matter and consciousness, when the mind represents the world" (Holquist, 309). It should be noted that rather than seeing language as a natural structure, he considers that it is culturally constructed. He remarks that language is not a static structure and constantly changes and transforms by specific influences, which Bakhtin conceptualizes as centripetal and centrifugal forces in language. Bakhtin argues that while centripetal forces tend to unify and standardize language, centrifugal forces favor diversity and disorganization (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 425). Inspired by Bakhtin's vision, Holquist argues that:

Human beings are acted out in a logosphere, a space where meaning occurs as a function of the constant struggle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart and in motion that increase difference and tend toward the extreme of life and consciousness, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere, to stay in place, and which tend toward the extreme of death and brute matter (Holquist, 309).

What Bakhtin tries to argue here is that the centralizing and marginalizing effects of these forces might as well be observed influencing how individuals live, comprehend, and engage in dialogue.

Although Bakhtin, who demonstrates that he has a more democratic understanding of society and literature, does not explicitly use the expressions 'centre' and 'margin', he discusses many of the concepts he introduced around centripetal and centrifugal forces in language. Centripetal forces support the centralization of language and its use to consolidate certain norms. In this context, centralization refers to the arrangement of language in a certain order and hierarchy. The official language approved by the authority is centralized in such a way as to enable the language to operate to serve the construction, reproduction, and sustainability of the dominant ideology. Bakhtin argues that the centripetal forces shape language to project the existing hierarchical structure that serves the dominant ideology and central system, and that it is culturally constructed. On the other hand, the centrifugal forces espoused by Bakhtin tend to ensure that different social groups, cultures, or subcultures preserve and develop their own unique forms of language. The diversification and

differentiation of language occur under the influence of centrifugal forces. In brief, Bakhtin argues that language is in constant conflict and interaction. Centripetal forces tend towards a certain order and unification, while centrifugal forces promote diversity and disorganization in the language. In his view, a language or culture that was too dominated by centripetal forces would become stale, monolithic, and oppressive. However, his theories and philosophy were dependent on the idea that language and literature needed to be rescued from one-dimensional discourses. He suggests that all kinds of voices should be demonstrated in a narrative body. Bakhtin sees these forces as being in constant tension with each other and argues that the operation of language and culture depends on maintaining a dynamic balance between them, arguing that “the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a ‘unitary language,’ operate amid heteroglossia. Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their interrupted work, alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward” (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 272). In Bakhtin’s perspective, centripetal and centrifugal forces, although they seem to be opposite to each other, are forces that nourish each other and work together for the enrichment of language and culture. In this context, Bakhtin is describing the dynamic interplay within language. The centripetal forces, represented by a unitary language, are the cohesive elements that seek to unify and centralize linguistic expression. These forces simultaneously work to decentralize and disunify language, countering the tendencies of centralization and unification driven by verbal and ideological influences. In essence, Bakhtin is highlighting the simultaneous existence and interaction of these opposing linguistic forces, the centripetal forces aiming for unity and centralization, and the centrifugal forces promoting diversity and decentralization. This dynamic interplay contributes to the complex and ever-evolving nature of language.

Bakhtin claims that literature, one of the most prominent fields where various voices can be reflected, should be utilized as a space for the free play of centrifugal forces, rather than vice versa. That’s why he sees literature as a means of exploring the social, cultural, and historical contexts, and he advocates that every segment of society and every difference should be represented in this fictional universe. Since Bakhtin asserts that social stratification results from differences in how meaning is conveyed

and the expressive aspects of various belief systems. Language and literature have the power to shape these meanings.

Bakhtin goes on to elaborate on different techniques that can be utilized as centripetal forces, such as the usage of standardized language and style and restricted point of view. For instance, the adoption of a uniform language or style fosters reader solidarity, and such works impose a singular meaning on the reader, disallowing their active participation in the meaning formation process. Besides, writing or narrating the work from a certain point of view creates a centripetal effect by directing readers to a certain focal point. On the contrary, language diversity, multiple perspectives, and sub-stories are among the features that can make literature a centrifugal structure. To illustrate, using various dialects, languages, or slang within the work enriches the text and represents different cultures. Additionally, a centrifugal force may be produced by narrating the work from the views of many characters or narrators, and this diversity brings disparate perspectives together, providing the reader the opportunity to embrace the meaning of his/her choosing. In this type of work, not only the characters but also the readers are in an important position as active participants in the production of meaning. As Benjamin Spencer indicates in a centrifugal discourse, the reader is allowed to “give critical precedence (but not absolute and unqualified authority)” and he/she lacks “a fixed predisposition toward meanings” when reading the work from within (Spencer, 141). Works created with centrifugal elements allow the reader to be included in the openness of language and form, without condemning them to a restricted flow and narrowness of meaning. Thus, both a literary work and the characters in it and the readers become free from conventional centralization. On the contrary, as Spencer continues to explain, “In most centripetal criticism, indeed, art and literature are implicitly denigrated as inferior modes of knowledge and insight, and the rich complexities of the imagination are sacrificed to doctrinaire conclusion” (Spencer, 144). In the centripetal and unifying approach, it is questioned whether the work complies with certain norms and how suitable it is with certain values and standards. Since diversity, imagination, and polyphony can be found in art and literature, they can be problematic fields for centripetal criticism. That’s why literature is one of the most appropriate fields to implement centrifugal elements.

Specifically, according to Bakhtin, a novel is the most suitable genre to convey centrifugal elements, which is also the most central quality of dialogism. In a novel,

which is marked by its grotesque, diverse open structure as Holquist argues (90), an author can give voice to individuals from different segments of society and create a more egalitarian basis. The novel's ability to include various language forms belonging to different social groups, characters, and times, which often have nonlinear plot structures, gives it a norm-breaking feature. The most effective quality of the novel genre in enabling a dialogic space is its ability to represent the human experience in its complexity. Bakhtin argues that dialogue is not just a conversation between characters, but rather an interaction between different forms of thought, voice, and language. By adopting this structure, which Bakhtin calls dialogism, the novel brings together different voices, views, and language styles. In addition, changing the perspective throughout the novel and demonstrating the perspectives of different characters prevents a single and imposing narrative and allows the formation of alternative meanings. Bakhtin particularly refers to this kind of novel form that employs diversity of voices and perspectives as the polyphonic novel.

The main feature of the polyphonic novel, Bakhtin argued, was the unique positioning of the author concerning heroes: the plot did not develop as an objective account of the world from the author's point of view; instead, events were presented as seen through the eyes of heroes and from their outlooks on life (Belova et al., 494).

So, the author gives up his authoritarian position and provides the opportunity for different narratives through the characters he creates. In brief, Bakhtin argues that dialogism stands in contrast to monologues and the overpowering influence of a sole narrator. Within the novel, diverse social voices, linguistic forms, and thought processes, along with exchanges between various characters, collide or engage with one another. This enhances the novel's depth, enabling it to mirror the intricacies and variations found in everyday language.

From Bakhtin's standpoint, François Rabelais was one of the most outstanding figures who undermined the conventional perspectives, norms, and classical closedness.

From the people's point of view, as expressed in the novel, there were always wider perspectives, reaching far beyond the limited progress of the time. Rabelais' basic goal was to destroy the official

picture of events. [...] He summoned all the resources of sober popular imagery to break up official lies and the narrow seriousness dictated by the ruling classes. Rabelais did not implicitly believe in what his time 'said and imagined about itself'; he strove to disclose its true meaning for the people, the people who grow and are immortal. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 439)

Rabelais employs centrifugal forces to reflect a pluralistic approach by turning conventional stories upside down by giving voice to multiple subjects. In this process, he makes extensive use of comedy to undermine the hierarchy. The comical effect prevents the idealization and the internalization of the dominant ideology, closing down the epic distance between the text and the character, therefore, disrupting the operation and the imposition of the ideology in question.

Another epitome of polyphony, as argued by Bakhtin, is the Socratic dialogue. In the Bakhtinian viewpoint, Socratic dialogue is not a platform for Socrates to assert his own ideas through rhetorical methods. Instead, it is a space where he scrutinizes his own ideas in conjunction with others, allowing them to remain open-ended. Socrates' questioning and non-conclusive style is expressed through the character Thrasymachus in Plato's *The Republic*. Thrasymachus, an ancient Greek sophist, is one of the substantial characters in the book because he considers that Socrates is someone who constantly criticizes people and refutes their answers but cannot come up with an answer himself (Plato, 16). This feature of Socrates, which seems problematic, has a positive structure for Bakhtin because the meaning is not something that can be easily reached, but some claims can be put forward by brainstorming different ideas, and the correct answer varies according to different perspectives. As James P. Zappen explains:

Bakhtin's Socrates is different. He is a figure who speaks and listens to many voices, none of them certain; who is more concerned with living than he is with knowing; and who practices something that we might call 'rhetoric' only if rhetoric is a means of testing people and ideas, including our own ideas and ourselves, rather than a means of persuading others to accept our ideas, whether deviously or legitimately. (Zappen, 71)

In Bakhtin's dialogic approach to discourse, there is no room for monologues. In this context, Socratic dialogues are composed with the participation of different perspectives that enable the multiplicity of voices. Bakhtin's philosophy of language argues that language is in constant interaction with the social context and that this interaction shapes the meaning of the language. Socratic dialogue provides a platform where different views, thoughts, and expressions come together, and this is one of the dynamics that attracts Bakhtin's attention. Bakhtin argues that language reflects not only individual expressions but also social and cultural power dynamics. In Bakhtin's own words,

All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day, and the hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293)

In Socratic dialogue, diversity unfolds as each individual bears imprints of various ideologies, fostering the formation of contextual connections through their interactions. In Socratic dialogue, words are not merely neutral conveyors of meaning but are imbued with the intentions and perspectives of those who use them. In a parallel with Bakhtin's emphasis on the dialogical nature of language, these specific contexts and diverse perspectives are essential to the process of meaning-making. Therefore, it is a very useful practice in Bakhtin's dialogism that Socrates reveals social conflicts by including different views in the dialogues he establishes with the rhetorical method and provides clues about how both language and meaning are created.

In closing, it is worth noting that within the framework of Bakhtin's dialogism, Socrates is among the substantial figures who turn language into a centrifugal power, and Rabelais distances literature from centripetal features. According to Bakhtin, language and speech acts are not only something that originates from the inner world of the individual but also a product of social interaction and dialogue. Likewise, Rabelais breaks the norms by spoiling the official seriousness in his narratives. Rabelais uses irony to convert the traditions to comical elements moulded with

dialogism and polyphony. Rabelais, in Bakhtinian terms, brings centrifugal forces into play to employ a subversive social critique.

b. Polyphony: Multiple Voices in the Narrative

‘Polyphony’ is a term of Greek origin. It comes from the combination of the Greek words ‘Polus’ (many) and ‘Phone’ (sound). This term essentially means playing multiple independent melodies or sounds simultaneously in a piece of music. The development of polyphony provided a basis for more complex structures and emotional expressions in music. It is used to express and bring together various sounds. Mikhail Bakhtin was the name who conceptualized and made important this inclusive structure in the field of literature. Bakhtin’s work paved the way to use the concept of polyphony in literary theory and criticism, and the term became a tool used to understand the narrative and grammatical structure of literature in a broader context. According to Bakhtin, the convergence of diverse characters, voices, and perspectives within a literary piece enhances its depth and fosters a polyphonic richness within the narrative. The retention of individual linguistic nuances, worldviews, and expressive styles by each character serves to mitigate the tendency towards a singular, monolithic interpretation within the work, which allows the work to have a more complex and rich structure. This polyphony, in conjunction with dialogism, ensures that different voices constantly interact with each other. While the concept of polyphony describes different voices and perspectives within a work, the concept of dialogism emphasizes the interaction of these voices with each other. In other words, dialogism emphasizes what kind of dialogue this polyphony is in. In Bakhtin’s words, “The polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through” (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 40). When the two concepts are considered together, a narrative structure emerges in which the meaning of a work is constantly shaped and developed. To facilitate the creation of polyphony in literature, events are portrayed from various perspectives throughout the text. Consequently, the unique linguistic attributes, cognitive patterns, and affective reactions exhibited by individual characters are accentuated. This approach effectively conveys the notion that individuals are diverse and not merely constrained by stereotypes. Moreover, to further underscore this emphasis, the inclusion of characters’ internal monologues is

employed, thereby preventing their portrayal from appearing superficial. By utilizing interior monologues, wherein characters directly express their innermost thoughts, readers are afforded a deeper insight into the characters' mentality and the worldviews they represent. This, in turn, reveals multiple voices and streams of thought. Additionally, rather than adhering to a singular plotline, the bifurcation of the narrative into different directions allows readers to engage with the diverse stories of various characters.

Bakhtin examines and epitomizes the presentation of different perspectives to the reader and the creation of distinct characters through deep, multi-layered stories in Dostoevsky's novels, and evaluates them as examples of the concept of polyphony. Fyodor Dostoevsky is considered one of the pioneers of polyphony in literary history.

Dostoevsky is the creator of the polyphonic novel. He created a fundamentally new novelistic genre. Therefore, his work does not fit any of the preconceived frameworks or historico-literary schemes that we usually apply to various species of the European novel. [...] the task of constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the fundamentally monologic (homophonic) European novel. (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 7-8)

Bakhtin evaluates Dostoevsky as an innovative writer because he attaches importance to psychological depth and character development. So, according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky sheds light on individual and social differences by enriching his texts with a polyphonic narrative structure. The basis of the polyphonic structure in Dostoevsky's works is the internal monologues of different characters, conflicting world views, and complex characterization that creates psychological depth. Furthermore, polyphony in Dostoevsky's works goes beyond uniting the voices of various characters; it also encompasses social, moral, and philosophical conflicts. In the context of social conflicts, polyphony may be seen as a reflection of the diversity of perspectives and opinions within a society. Conflicts often arise from differing viewpoints, and acknowledging and incorporating these conflicts and multiple voices through polyphony can contribute to a richer understanding of the issues at hand. Different voices between characters may reflect conflicts, often arising from different social classes, ideologies, or moral values. Polyphony reflects the internal conflicts of not only individuals but also society. Bakhtin argues that

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices, is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather, a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 6)

Hence, this structure in Dostoyevsky's works also enables the conflict arising from different views in society to be felt. Mikhail Bakhtin's exploration and conceptualization of polyphony in the context of Dostoevsky's works emphasizes the diverse and independent voices that emerge in the novels. Considered one of the pioneers of polyphony in literary history, Dostoevsky transcends traditional narrative structures by allowing various characters to maintain their distinct voices, worldviews, and modes of expression.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky places significant emphasis on allowing the characters to express their voices in his works, independent of the author's stance. Dostoyevsky allows his characters to have a distinct and authentic presence, enabling them to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideologies within the narrative. Cedric Watts also elaborates on the issue, asserting that "It could be said of numerous writers that they permit the expression of a remarkable diversity of views while maintaining 'an authorial position'. [...] Some authors are more capable than others of giving a persuasive presentation to viewpoints that may differ from the author's own, or that at least differ from those the author predominantly holds" (Watts, 17). From Bakhtin's perspective, Dostoevsky is the perfect epitome of the latter type of authorship that is highlighted by Watts. The fact that Dostoevsky is among the writers in the second group and that he attaches importance to differences rather than his position is one of the features that make his works polyphonic. This approach contributes to the richness and complexity of his novels, as the characters become more than mere conduits for the author's ideas; they emerge as independent entities with their own perspectives and voices, adding depth and authenticity to the storytelling. In a polyphonic novel by Dostoevsky, the elements that seem entirely incompatible are divided among various worlds and independent consciousnesses. Instead of being presented within a single

perspective, these elements are distributed across multiple perspectives, each being complete and equally significant. The focal point is not the material itself, but rather the worlds and individual consciousnesses with their distinct perspectives. These various worlds and consciousnesses come together in a higher unity, a unity of the second order. This unity is akin to polyphony, where the combination of these diverse elements creates a complex and harmonious whole in the novel (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 16). In this way, he touched on individual and social differences in each of his works and attached importance to making the voices of differences heard. As Bakhtin elaborates, in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's internal conflicts carry meaning not only on an individual level but also on a social level. Conflicts between characters often represent various aspects of Russian society and ideological divisions at the time. This is a natural consequence of giving voice to characters with different beliefs, social status, sexual orientation, and many other differences because, in this way, a multiplicity of standpoints in a society is voiced. In this context, polyphony enables the reader to move beyond the intended social perceptions and instead concentrate on authentic distinctions and issues.

The Brothers Karamazov can be shown as the other example of Dostoyevsky's polyphony because this novel contains the perspectives of different characters, namely Dmitri, Ivan, and Alesha. Each deals with their internal conflicts and ideals. As Jostein Bortnes states, "Its central characters, the brothers Ivan and Alesha, their elder half-brother Dmitrii and the bastard Smerdiakov, all reflect different and opposing ideas and ideologies in their internal and external speech, [...] The brothers come forth as images of the ideologies they represent" (Bortnes, 404). Ivan's atheism, Dmitri's passionate nature, and Alesha's piety form the rich polyphonic structure of the novel. This novel holds significance as it illustrates that individuals within the same family can exhibit vastly different character traits and make unrelated choices. It underscores the existence of individual distinctions alongside the separations resulting from social differences.

To conclude, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's innovative contribution to literature relates to his deep understanding and use of the concept of polyphony. Dostoyevsky's works exhibit polyphony, in which the characters not only represent their individual viewpoints but also serve as mouthpieces of various social standpoints. It is a representation of moral, intellectual, and social tensions. In addition to reflecting the

psychological conflicts of people, the existence of opposing ideologies, socioeconomic classes, and moral beliefs among many characters also reflects the larger societal tensions of the day. Dostoyevsky's works are elevated to a greater unity by the incorporation of polyphony into his narrative framework, which creates a rich and intricate tapestry of voices and views. Dostoyevsky establishes a unity of the second order, a unity typical of a polyphonic novel, by dividing incompatible parts among several autonomous consciousnesses and displaying them inside diverse fields of view. Furthermore, Dostoyevsky's commitment to allowing characters to express their voices independently, detached from the author's own stance, reinforces the polyphonic nature of his works. This approach not only adds depth to the characters but also enhances the overall narrative, making it more authentic and reflective of the multifaceted nature of human experience. In essence, Dostoyevsky's polyphonic novels transcend the constraints of traditional storytelling, providing readers with a nuanced exploration of individual and societal complexities and thus liberating the reader from the authority of the authorial voice. He has left an enduring legacy as a literary pioneer who redefined the parameters of the novelistic form. Thus, this polyphonic structure he established in his novels enabled Bakhtin to examine these features and transform them into a concrete concept, laying the foundations of a more inclusive and innovative perspective in literature.

c. Heteroglossia: Layered Languages Within Texts

Heteroglossia holds an important place in Bakhtin's literary theory that indicates how multiple voices and language forms come together in the form of a set of intertextual entities. According to Bakhtin, language is not a single homogeneous system but rather a combination of various speech genres. Heteroglossia involves the convergence of various types of language, styles, slang usage, and speech patterns. There are many languages, and everyone has their own language, style of expression, and pronunciation. Heteroglossia emphasizes the inherent diversity of language and explains how works are enriched by combining these different linguistic elements. According to Bakhtin, language has a dynamic and constantly developing and changing structure, not a fixed one, and therefore heteroglossia deepens and expands as long as the language exists. In his own words, "heteroglossia widens and deepens

as long as a language is alive and developing” (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 272). Bakhtin suggests that language is fluid and constantly evolving, resulting in the ongoing enrichment and complexity of heteroglossia as language develops.

Moreover, Bakhtin argues that heteroglossia works hand in hand with polyphony. As it has already been pointed out, the inclusion of multiple characters, perspectives, or styles of speaking in a work enriches the narrative. The polyphony inherent in the text precludes it from possessing a singular, unequivocal meaning or interpretation, thereby presenting the reader with a realm ripe for diverse interpretations. Like polyphony, the concept of heteroglossia not only offers diversity in terms of language, but it also reflects different social and cultural echoes, allowing diverse viewpoints to be heard. Heteroglossia also includes social and cultural differences. Heteroglossia differs from polyphony in that it encompasses not only multiple voices or perspectives but also their social, cultural, and ideological contexts. While polyphony focuses on the coexistence of various voices without a single dominant narrative, heteroglossia introduces these voices as reflections of different social hierarchies and power dynamics. In this sense, heteroglossia highlights the dialogic nature of language as it reflects society’s diversity, whereas polyphony primarily addresses the narrative complexity arising from the interplay of voices. Bakhtin attaches importance to the coming together of voices from different social classes, cultures, and ideological perspectives in his works. Social and cultural heteroglossia is the source of various voices, debates, and conflicts within the work. This can cause the work to create a kind of ‘social carnival’ atmosphere. According to Bakhtin, who examines this broad perspective especially through the novel, “What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own belief system in someone else’s system” (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 365). Heteroglossia contributes to the enrichment of this understanding through the diversity of different language forms and modes of expression. According to Bakhtin, who argues that language is not static but is in constant evolution, heteroglossia shows that language is a living and dynamic entity. This polyphony offers an area where works can change their meaning and expand over time.

Another important aspect of heteroglot works is their capacity to challenge social norms and temporarily subvert traditional hierarchies. Bakhtin emphasizes that

there is a dominant ideology in every period and every society and adds: “There are always some verbally expressed leading ideas of the ‘masters of thought’ of a given epoch, some basic tasks, slogans, and so forth” Therefore, “the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others’ individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation-more or less creative-of others’ words (and not the words of a language)” (Bakhtin, 2014, p. 89). Thus, for Bakhtin, emphasizing the interaction of different discourses is essential for understanding the characters and for undermining conventional thoughts. By using the polyphonic and heteroglot atmosphere in this context, Bakhtin emphasizes the potential of the works to question norms and traditions, temporarily change them, and bring together and test voices from various social classes and cultures. The inclusion of different language forms and sounds causes the work to add depth by increasing the internal conflict of the narrative. This conflict allows the work to offer the reader the opportunity to consider various perspectives. Heteroglot works encourage reader participation and allow freedom of interpretation. Consequently, according to Bakhtin, heteroglossia emphasizes the evolving nature of language, social diversity, and reader participation in the process of meaning formation. These works contain the potential to explore the riches of language and understand the complexities of society, but also the freedom to question norms and bring together diverse voices.

Bakhtin explores the concept of heteroglossia within the context of François Rabelais’ works. Rabelais’s works, especially *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, richly reflect Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia in terms of language games and diversity. These works are notable for their diversity among various language forms, characters, and social classes. Rabelais draws attention with his large number of characters, each character having his own unique use of language. This creates an atmosphere of heteroglossia in the work.

The wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible, and because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex. Special emphasis should be

placed on the extreme heterogeneity of speech genres. (oral and written) (Bakhtin, 2014, p. 61)

Social stratification, as described by Bakhtin, is primarily shaped by the differences in language usage and expressive styles originating from various belief systems. This acknowledgment of diversity not only enriches communication but also underscores the complexity of social interactions (Bakhtin, 2014, p. 89). Language acts as a powerful tool in questioning social norms and highlighting diversity among different social classes and characters. For instance, church representatives often employ a discourse rooted in Latin or featuring official religious terminology, while villagers and folk characters tend to use a more localized, informal, and natural form of expression. This deviation from a one-dimensional discursive texture, coupled with the incorporation of elements from daily life and folklore, serves to enrich the representation of existence in its multiple forms. Furthermore, such linguistic and textual diversity also reflects underlying social conflicts, evident in the distinct language, discourse, and attitudes exhibited by characters and texts belonging to different social groups.

The conflict between vernacular and official language is a prominent feature in Rabelais' works. This conflict creates tension within the work, and vernacular becomes a reflection of heteroglossia, often associated with deviation from norms and countercultural expressions. For instance, the character Pantagruel stands out as an intellectual figure and uses sophisticated, metaphor-filled language in his speeches. Pantagruel's use of metaphor-filled, sophisticated speech serves to underscore his intellectual capacity. However, this intellectual discourse is itself parodic in nature, as it often deviates from the expected, making it somewhat absurd and satirical in its context. Rabelais uses this exaggeration to poke fun at the conventions of high culture and the idea that intellectualism must always be expressed through complex, elevated language. With his highly intellectual expressions, Pantagruel occupies a prominent place within the heteroglossia, reflecting the intellectual dimension of the work. On the other hand, the character Gargantua has a more relaxed and local language use. Their conversations are full of natural expressions and slang. Rabelais's use of discursive diversity provides an example of heteroglossia, reflecting various modes of being across social classes. Rabelais' word games and sense of humour add a

humorous dimension to his works. Word games and use of slang contribute to the heteroglot texture of the work.

Humour in Rabelais primarily serves to challenge social norms. Social criticism is a prominent feature in Rabelais' works, and heteroglossia is the most prominent tool of this criticism. Inclusion of different speech genres, such as mythology, medical science, and legal discourse, in a parodic manner allows for the expression of criticism of the church, the educational system, and social norms. This increases the intellectual diversity of the work and further strengthens Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. In conclusion, Rabelais's word games and discursive and textual diversity provide an important example for understanding Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. These works richly reveal the heteroglossia, diversity, and potential of social criticism in language.

Dostoevsky is another writer in whose works Bakhtin examines the concept of heteroglossia. The social diversity in Dostoyevsky's works becomes evident in the language used by characters from different social classes. This forms the basis of the concept of heteroglossia because characters in works are represented by forms of language specific to their social and cultural context. At the same time, Dostoyevsky's characters are representatives of different speech genres. These styles contribute to the formation of heteroglossia by reflecting the worldviews, personal experiences, and psychological states of the characters (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 37). Besides, the relationship between monologue and dialogue shapes the dynamics of language in Dostoyevsky's works. Monologues allow characters to express their individual voices, while dialogues reveal the interaction and conflict of different linguistic forms, reinforcing heteroglossia. Moreover, the presentation of these differences reveals the importance of interacting ideas. For instance, while Bakhtin examines the different attitudes of Dostoyevsky's two conflicting characters towards the same situation through the dialogues between them, he also expresses the richness caused by this heteroglot structure. Raskolnikov's and Ivan Karamazov's ideas gain a living quality by interacting with other ideas around them. However, if these ideas are transformed into a theoretical form and presented monologically, they may lose their abstract purity and become ideological constructs that can be easily refuted (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 90). Hence, with the discursive and linguistic differences in the dialogues of people from different modes of life, the reader witnesses the conflicts between different segments of society,

while also seeing alternatives rather than being exposed to a single narrative or point of view. As Otto Kaus states, Dostoevsky brings together contradictory perspectives and reveals various aspects of all... This also coincides with Bakhtin's view that narratives have a dynamic and changing structure and can accommodate differences. "In every real part of the existing world, as well as in every real individual, positive and negative traits are always combined, because there is always a reason for praise as well as for abuse" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 416). For instance, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, he brings together several characters from different social classes, representing different social discourses. When Dmitri's passionate and emotional speaking style is compared to Ivan's intellectual and philosophical use of language, a heteroglot atmosphere is created. Just as he stated in his perspective on Socrates' dialogues, Bakhtin attaches great importance to the dialogue of different and especially opposing voices and believes that the truth can only be achieved through the reasoning of these opposites or differences. "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of a person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 110). Thus, Dostoyevsky's works both deal with many issues from a social dimension and emphasize these differences and their consequences by using a heteroglot structure.

d. Carnavalesque: Subverting Norms Through Laughter

Carnavalesque, frequently employed in postmodern literature, is another concept formulated by Bakhtin. The concept of carnival which is the source of inspiration for the term carnivalesque, in Bakhtin's guiding principle, is a crucial observational spot since it momentarily disrupts hierarchies. Essentially, the origin of the carnival atmosphere is based on a Christian custom. The carnival is derived from the term 'Carnevale' in the Catholic tradition. This term comes from the Latin 'carne levare' (removal of meat) and refers to the beginning of carnival, which marks a period traditionally celebrated before fasting in the Catholic world. According to Christian beliefs, this festival is celebrated on Tuesday, the last day of Shrove Tuesday, before the Lent period, and usually takes place on the main streets of cities in an atmosphere dominated by colorful parades, costumes, music, dance, and entertainment. However,

one of the most significant features distinguishing this carnival from others is that the guests can hide their true identities by attending the party with strange costumes and masks, and everyone can represent themselves on an equal plane. In this carnival, a program that is compatible with the hierarchical order in society is not created. Likewise, the egalitarian structure of this Christian carnival, Bakhtinian carnival, is the temporary suspension of the hierarchical structure (Ewald, 333). Everyone sits at the same table and eats the same food. A king can dance with a jester. A merchant could make jokes at a priest, and none of it would be considered strange. It is as if the entire social system is halted for that day. All participants gather solely to enjoy themselves, delighting in food and drinks to their fullest extent before the fasting period commences. In this carnival, no one expects anyone to act with their social identity, and this creates a space of freedom. This permissiveness can be seen as a moment of catharsis because the social order that is questioned by the people but cannot be opposed is turned upside down, granting everyone a sense of equality (Bakhtin, 1984, 81). An individual from a lower social class may not always view themselves as oppressed or inferior, as their social status does not consistently shape their self-perception. On the other hand, someone from a higher social class is not always burdened by the expectations and responsibilities that come with their elevated status. This allows them to avoid the seriousness typically associated with being above others. To provide a concrete example, an authoritarian figure may engage in unconventional or carefree actions without jeopardizing his/her authority. Similarly, Individuals may, on occasion, engage in behaviors that would normally be considered socially unacceptable because they are experiencing a temporary freedom from societal norms due to their position or circumstances.

Such a carnival, which temporarily halts the hierarchical system in a society, is called a 'folk carnival' by Bakhtin. One of Bakhtin's starting points when examining these carnivals is to compare official culture and folk culture and examine the opportunities triggered by the latter. First, official culture refers to cultural elements that are generally supported, defined, and managed by the state, government, or other authorities. This culture usually includes official symbols and values, such as the official language, history, education system, state flags, and national anthems. Official culture aims to establish norms that are constructed to impose a particular ideology or belief on the part of the government or dominant group. This culture is used to bring

society together, to create a specific national identity, and to unite society around a common value system. While it may appear unifying and essential for the cohesion of larger entities, the practice raises questions due to the enforced ideologies and beliefs that uphold a monolithic perspective and lifestyle, contributing to the formation of stereotypes. In other words, it is known that this culture affects the society's perspective on each other and life, and the points they criticize. In this context, official culture, especially the official language as one of the elements that make up this culture, can be seen as imposing and discriminatory. When examined from Bakhtin's perspective, official carnivals serve exactly this purpose and reinforce social norms by supporting them. It does not allow extremism or exuberance; it causes everyone to take part in their social identity, and this includes seriousness and rules even in entertainment. For instance, in contrast to the carnivalesque ambiance elucidated by Bakhtin, a graduation ceremony, despite encompassing diverse festivities such as music, dance, and entertainment, is fundamentally a formal celebration. This distinction arises from the inherent adherence to prescribed protocols, entrenched traditions, and governing rules within graduation ceremonies. These institutionalized elements exert a considerable influence on social norms and manifest societal expectations, thereby precluding the spontaneous and unrestrained atmosphere characteristic of Bakhtin's carnival. Guests who attend with a certain dressing style follow a predetermined protocol. There is a certain order and hierarchy. Students go on stage in the designated order and receive their graduation certificates. Additionally, people speaking on stage adopt a certain style. Speeches are made that meet expectations and do not go beyond them, and that will not be strange. In short, what people will wear, where they will stand, and what they will talk about are certain, and neither the guests, students, nor professors deviate from this. Based on this example, it can be argued that such a ceremony or celebration has the atmosphere of a formal carnival, and in such an environment, norms and order are supported and maintained.

On the other hand, folk culture consists of such practices as rituals, stories, songs, and other forms of expression that often occur in the daily lives of individuals and communities. These elements often emerge as some kind of reaction or alternative to official norms, institutions, and authorities. It would be wrong to attribute this tendency to all folk cultures, but Bakhtin recognizes this flexibility and alternative creation power in folk culture and describes carnivals with this tendency as folk

carnivals (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 275). Starting from folk culture is important because it allows for the questioning of official norms through irony, parody, and humour. Folk songs, jokes, and other humorous expressions tend to have a sarcastic effect on certain aspects of society. Moreover, the official language, crafted by official culture, is sidelined with local languages and expressions. Therefore, according to Bakhtin, folk culture can create and present a more inclusive and egalitarian perspective. Thus, he classifies the carnivals, which erase social distinctions and highlight pleasure while avoiding normative limitations, as folk carnivals.

Especially in the context of literature, the most widely and effectively used method to spread the structure and understanding of both official and folk culture is language. Language, which is very effective in the formation and spread of a culture, can turn into a weapon created by the dominant ideology (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 271). Language enables communication within society and is an effective tool in transferring cultural values, norms, and ideologies. A common language plays an important role in bringing society together and creating a common identity. Furthermore, it is socially and politically constructed. As Bakhtin claims “language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 677). Especially when this common language is built on binary oppositions and defines something and a person through its opposite, language becomes the most effective way of constructing the dominant ideology. According to Derrida, the idea of binary opposition suggests that meaning is often created through the contrast between two opposing and mutually exclusive concepts or terms. As Jacques Derrida states,

The superior term belongs to presence and the logos; the inferior serves to define its status and mark a fall. The oppositions between intelligible and sensible, soul and body seem to have lasted out the history of Western philosophy, bequeathing their burden to modern linguistics: the opposition between meaning and word; The opposition between writing and speech takes its place within this pattern. (Derrida, lxix)

These oppositions are believed to be fundamental in shaping our understanding of the world. They generally construct a hierarchy for political reasons. One is privileged over the other (Jim Powell, 23). Language plays a role in both reflecting

and influencing power dynamics within a society. It categorizes and characterizes individuals or groups, either positively or negatively, shaping social classifications and discriminatory actions. Stereotypes and generalizations stemming from language influence societal perceptions, potentially leading to the marginalization of specific groups or individuals, which may strengthen social prejudices. Furthermore, the use of a specific language can highlight a particular social identity and group association, fostering an inclination to label other groups as outsiders. On the contrary, folk culture can challenge official language and official narratives, tupsy-turvy binary oppositions through the subversion of traditional language use and traditional narratives. Folk culture, primarily transmitted through oral traditions, triggers a transformation shaped by the varied linguistic structures and representation of diverse individuals. This phenomenon allows for the existence of distinct accents and expressions within this cultural context. This challenges the official culture's standard language usage and highlights the various linguistic variations from different dialects. Bakhtin criticizes the reductionist tendency to view things in terms of binary opposites, which oversimplifies reality by ignoring the complexities and gradations that exist between two extremes (Holquist et al., 7). Moreover, folk songs and stories often provide a backdrop to social issues, political events, or power relations. It may aim to criticize, question, and protest the official language and culture. Language can be used as a tool of resistance in such discourses, and this resistance most often appears as ridicule or anger. Both emotions are signs of opposition, which provides the backbone of folk carnivals.

These two cultural categories, evident in both the structure of carnivals and societies, as well as in language and consequently in literature, lead to the contemplation or defiance of a dominant ideology in literary works. As one of the first names to mention the reflections of folk carnivals in literature, François Rabelais includes many features of carnivalesque texts in his works. Evaluating him initially as a Renaissance writer reveals the roots of his works' carnivalesque nature, shedding light on the distinctive features that transcend his era. François Rabelais, who was in a transition period between medieval literature and the Renaissance period and is considered one of the founders of modern European literature, is one of the substantial reflectors of the change in that period. Initially, medieval literature had a restrictive and directive style because it served the ideology of the period and presented idealized

concepts. In this period, literature played a significant role in both reflecting and reinforcing the hierarchical system that characterized the societal structure of the time.

The medieval hierarchical system was deeply rooted in the feudal structure, where society was stratified into distinct classes with an obvious hierarchy. In such an order, everyone was limited to their role in society and could not go beyond the living conditions defined for them. Moreover, to clarify these boundaries between classes, a single, unified, universal worldview was constructed, and that worldview was idealized as the absolute truth. Namely, people, beliefs, or thought systems were represented as uniform structures in literature and imposed as the absolute truth. The use of standardized forms, such as poetic structures, genres, and themes, helped create a sense of continuity and tradition. This standardization served to reinforce cultural and social norms, providing a familiar and accepted framework for storytelling. Idealization in medieval literature involved the portrayal of characters, events, and societal structures in an idealized or perfected manner. This idealization often served to convey moral, religious, or political messages by presenting an aspirational vision of the world. In Rabelais' time, the medieval hierarchical order was breaking down, and the traditional, rigid model of a world with a fixed top and bottom was being redefined. As Bakhtin states, "In the struggle for a new conception of the world and for the destruction of the medieval hierarchy, Rabelais continually used the traditional folklore method of contrast, the 'inside out,' the 'positive negation'" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 403). Hence, Bakhtin explains that Rabelais deliberately swapped the top with the bottom, meddled with hierarchical levels to reveal the true essence of the object, freeing it from predetermined norms and values. For instance, nobility and chivalric ideals were frequently idealized in literature, depicting knights as paragons of virtue, honor, and courage. Such idealization aimed to inspire emulation of these virtues within the noble class and reinforce the social order.

One of the most common is the idealization of the body, which was often intertwined with cultural, religious, and societal beliefs of the time. The portrayal of the human body reflected not only aesthetic standards but also moral, spiritual, and social values. The body was frequently idealized in religious, chivalric, or romantic contexts. The idealized body, especially for women, often represented moral virtue, spiritual piety, and pureness. As for men, they had to be powerful and brave. Therefore, the physical attributes of knights emphasize strength, agility, and prowess in battle.

The knight's body became a symbol of honour and courage, reflecting the ideals of chivalry. In the relations between men and women, both sides should have been reflected following the understanding of the desire of the period. Women were supposed to be beautiful and innocent, and men were supposed to be strong and tough. Body descriptions made in this manner also contributed to the maintenance of this understanding. Nonetheless, when we look at Rabelais' bodies, we do not see characters that are developed in accordance with certain standards and have ideal aspects. On the contrary, people with especially disturbingly extreme characteristics can be encountered. Their bodies are far from being objects of desire, and the true characteristics of humans that are rejected in romantic and classical contexts are reflected.

At this juncture, it can be inferred that Rabelais, by using grotesque realism, which is one of the most outstanding features of carnivalesque, put forward an understanding that changed with the Renaissance and targeted the norms of the medieval period. Briefly, societies were suppressed, especially with religious devices, in the medieval era, but with the Renaissance period, people began to discover the importance of individuality, and Rabelais was one of the writers who reflected this undermining of the previous structures and the changing understanding in the fields of literature. While reflecting individuality without idealization Rabelais uses certain elements which represent a human's realities.

Initially, grotesque realism, which is encountered in Rabelais's innovative works, is one of the carnivalesque features in a text from the Bakhtinian perspective. Grotesque realism refers to a literary style that focuses on the exaggerated, absurd, deviant, and bodily aspects of human existence, often challenging societal norms and conventions. Grotesque realism in Rabelais's writing involves the exaggeration of bodily functions, body size, and other physical characteristics. For instance, characters in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* are often portrayed in an excessive and larger-than-life manner, emphasizing the absurd and the grotesque. Furthermore, grotesque realism highlights the materiality of the body and bodily functions. Images of 'becoming' signify the celebration of the body and the material world. As Shanti Elliot states,

The carnival's emphasis on orifices, both physical and conceptual, emphasizes the absence of individual boundaries in the medieval imagination. Mouths, for instance, are always open, eating and

drinking, laughing, shouting: they take in and commune with the outer world and never shut it out. This openness corresponds to a cosmic openness: nothing is fixed in Bakhtin's carnival world, and everything is in a state of becoming. (Elliot, 130)

Examining the intricate connections among objects like body parts, food, and excrement, Bakhtin unveils an underlying system of values. The concept of becoming in these images signifies optimism for the future, a sentiment that Bakhtin juxtaposes against the 'official' fixation on the past, which portrays life as predetermined and unalterable (Elliot, 131). According to Bakhtin, examining and celebrating the human body and the material world undermines conventional understanding. In this way, facts about people and the world are handled and serious traditions are undermined through ridicule with methods such as exaggeration, parody and irony, which are the elements of grotesque realism. For instance, Rabelais' characters engage in comical and grotesque activities, bringing attention to the corporeal aspects of human existence. This emphasis on the physical realm contributes to the subversive nature of his writing.

As a seconder of carnivalesque, the grotesque has other bizarre sides except for the realism of the human body, creating marginal effects such as huge masks or excessive attitudes. At this juncture, the mask plays a significant role as it serves as a theme that gives rise to several other carnivalesque concepts. The mask, a central theme in folk culture, is intricately connected to the joy of change, reincarnation, and a merry rejection of uniformity. It symbolizes transitions, metamorphoses, and the playful essence of life, reflecting the interplay between reality and image found in ancient rituals. Parodies, caricatures, and comic gestures all derive from the mask, revealing the essence of the grotesque concisely (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 40). What makes that environment grotesque is not only the different costumes and huge masks, but also the excessive ways of behaving and the fact that everything can go to extremes. Grotesque generally represents an aesthetic approach based on deviation from normal, distortion, and exaggeration. Extremism that challenges the norms of society is a distinctive feature of the grotesque style. Ironically, this extremism and exaggeration in the context of grotesque realism is used to demonstrate the true nature of men and reflects his/her most basic needs and weaknesses, saving them from idealization and standardization. Society's habitual perspective is questioned through this extremism by shaking or exaggerating these norms. The concept of grotesque deals with the

inexhaustible and constantly renewing structure of life and the body. Bakhtin states, “If we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 318). In particular, the instability of the human body and its variability between birth and death are emphasized. The grotesque structure has an important place in the presentation of an alternative life because the features of the human body, which are normally despised and unrepresented, are handled, especially in an exaggerated way. Thus, it becomes clear that grotesque actions and situations that are considered to be lower characteristics of humans, such as overeating, excretion, vomiting, sex, or disease, happen to everyone, and that this does not make anyone less human, less wise, or uglier. This is effective in closing the class gap.

Grotesque realism bridges class differences by showing the universality of the body and that everyone experiences the same biological processes. Bodily functions such as eating, defecation, sexuality, and disease, which are generally denigrated, are exaggerated and exhibited through grotesque expression, and this reveals that the upper and lower classes are basically the same. Thus, the artificiality of social hierarchy and the permeability of class boundaries are emphasized. Caricatured characters, especially parodying the figures of power, cause these powerful figures to appear weak or become the subject of ridicule. In short, the meaning of humour and laughter has changed, and it is included in carnivalesque features such as irony and grotesque. Excess can increase conflict and tension at work. Deviation from ordinary and extreme situations can increase the tension of the story, thus making the reader’s emotions more intense.

As mentioned before, Bakhtin examines carnivalesque and grotesque elements in the work *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, written by Rabelais. Carnivalesque features, which continue to exist in literature as an opposition to official norms, involve a rebellion against authorities and hierarchies. This situation is usually conveyed in literary works through rebellious marginal characters and unusual situations or events. Inverted hierarchies are seen in such works. Just like in folk carnivals, hierarchical order is not in a significant position. Differences between social classes, balance of power, and norms may change within the work because Bakhtin considers that the

world has a lasting period to change. There is a constant state of change arising from the very nature of life; some ideas are born and die, dominant ideologies change places, and since nothing can last forever, it cannot be accepted as absolute. Therefore, they should be questioned and not examined one-sidedly. In Bakhtin's own words,

The conception of the world as eternally unfinished: a world dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies. The dual image combining praise and abuse seeks to grasp the very moment of this change, the transfer from the old to the new, from death to life. Such an image crowns and uncrowns at the same moment. In the development of class society, such a conception of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 166)

Hence, like Rabelais' works, carnivalesque texts reflect both negative and positive sides of social groups or certain institutions to question them. One of the main elements that creates this change is the language because it works with a polyphonic and pluralistic language and expression style. Thus, it involves the gathering of various social groups and subcultures. It highlights pluralism and difference by preventing the effort to integrate and unify.

Carnavalesque elements in literary works combine different voices and allow various forms of expression. The language becomes richer and more diverse in this context. In addition, this pluralistic language emphasizes naturalness and casualness, not to express idealized people, institutions, or situations, but rather to create a representation of the world with all its multiplicity and richness in contrast to the uniform view of the world that the official culture idealizes. "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in all their indissoluble unity" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 19-20). In other words, the focus on the mundane and uncertain facets of life serves to illuminate the complexities and realities of human existence, rather than presenting them as undesirable or hopeless. This perspective seeks to reveal the inherent unpredictability of life without implying that such characteristics are negative or indicative of a pessimistic worldview. Instead, it emphasizes the richness and diversity of lived experiences. It accepts the flow of life itself, instead of things that are created and predetermined, and glorified to serve a

certain ideology. Hence, owing to the ever-changing and dynamic nature of life's inherent naturalness, the acceptance of anything idealized and standardized becomes impractical. Furthermore, in this reality, the human body mirrors the fluid, adaptable, and constantly evolving nature of life itself. At this juncture, it is imperative to underscore the departure from conventional normative and idealized perspectives on corporeal perception. Classical literature tends to avoid in-depth discussions or praise regarding the inherent structural aspects of the human body. In contrast, literary works infused with carnivalesque elements assign significance to the body that goes beyond its utilitarian role in satisfying fundamental human needs. Within such works, emphasis is placed on the corporeal needs and the metamorphosis of the body, marking a departure from the conventional treatment of the body in traditional literary discourse (Shabot, 229). While emphasizing the body's natural cycle between life and death, it is inevitable to handle sexuality as the most animalistic and instinctive human need in traditional understanding. In literary works, these characteristics tend to break taboos and obviously address issues related to sexuality. While explaining the grotesque body, Bakhtin describes it, asserting that "it is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 27).

Finally, while revealing all these rebellious and disruptive features, an important weapon is used, which is irony and humour. In carnivalesque works, the behavior of the characters, the development of events, or the use of language in the works may contain comic and ironic elements. Irony typically involves a mode of expression where the true thoughts and feelings of the author or character are not straightforwardly conveyed; instead, it carries a meaning opposite to the literal expression, creating an ambiguity. This creates conflict with serious or authoritative statements. Thus, it can lead the reader to think, question, and understand the text more deeply. It encourages him/her to discover the hidden criticism and conflict beneath the text. While Bernadette Mayer examines Bakhtinian texts, she describes what irony is, arguing that: "The ironic or dialogical sentence can be conceived either as an answer that contains the question preceding it or a question implying its own answer" (Mayer, 109). The questioning nature of irony makes the reader more active. While questioning and criticizing are features that are avoided and punished in traditional society, doing so by ridiculing them deeply shakes the values that dominate society. Irony and humour are often used together. While ironic humour expresses a meaning beyond the

obvious, it also aims to make people laugh. This allows the reader to understand the underlying criticism of the work. To illustrate, Rabelais uses ironic language and expression in his works to create social criticism. In *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, he uses irony to criticize the church and religious institutions.

In particular, the obsessions of priests and religious figures with sexuality serve as Rabelais's aim to question religious norms and practices. Rabelais caricatures the church, making it the target of his humour because he believes that the church, along with religious figures, reduces people to uniform entities and thus aims to provoke questioning (Schiffman, 136). In addition, the work contains a humorous tone regarding the absurd criticisms he brought to the education system of his time and the inadequacies of this system in the real world. While creating these ironies, Rabelais uses the double meanings and wordplay by taking advantage of the ambivalent structure of the language. For example, character and location names, as well as dialogues, are not only imbued with meaning but also laden with sexual connotations and humorous nuances. As an illustration, in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Rabelais depicts a priest who is a representative of the Pope in a rather absurd way. This priest is obsessed with sexual behavior and displays these obsessions in a way that is contrary to his religious teachings. This is a criticism of Rabelais, questioning the teachings of religion and the power of the church.

The most striking thing in this irony and humour is laughter. The history of laughter in literature is important because the meaning attributed to laughter and what is laughed at has changed. Especially Aristotle's words on comedy reflect the change in this understanding because, according to him, people laugh at people who are worse than themselves, belong to a lower class, and have worse characteristics than the hypothetical reader or audience has. "And by this very difference tragedy stands apart concerning comedy, for the latter intends to imitate those who are worse, and the former better, than people are now" (Aristotle, 19). That's why the people who are the elements of comedy have always been characters who are below average and from the lower class, such as servants and merchants. However, the act of laughter that Bakhtin draws attention to is shown oppositely, against those who are superior and figures of authority, who are idealized as role models and are feared and respected as superior agents. In this way, the person closes the social distance between himself and the superior person, because it becomes clear that he is not as idealized as he is, that he

can fall into ridiculous situations, and is full of mistakes and shortcomings. Now the superior can also be ridiculed, and this turns social roles upside down and gives a more egalitarian understanding.

One of the most important reflections of this situation in contemporary theory is given by Helene Cixous through the analogy of the Medusa. One of the first examples in which her laughter could be seen as a threat is undoubtedly Medusa. Medusa's laughter has often been used as a symbol in mythology, art, and literature. In ancient Greek mythology, Medusa is known as a member of the Gorgons, a terrifying creature that can turn those who look at her face to stone. Medusa's laughter, as a symbol, can often contain a variety of meanings, including beauty, fear, danger, and the complexity of femininity. Medusa's laughter can be described as a resistance against the traditional understanding of femininity and social female roles. The mythological story of Medusa can often be interpreted as a reaction to mythological motifs of the disempowerment or exclusion of female figures. Medusa's laughter is a rebellion against women's gender inequality. As Helene Cixous claims, "That would be enough to set half of the world (i.e., women) break out laughing" to break the social resistance (Cixous, 885). From Cixous' perspective, women must be liberated by defying these limiting myths, defying social norms, and expressing their own identities. In this case, the phrase 'start laughing' refers to women casually rebelling against these restrictions and discovering their own power and freedom. In this context, laughter is represented as an ideological tool for subversion, and Medusa's laugh is an outstanding symbol of resisting and rebelling.

Turning back to carnivalesque and grotesque features, they are also among the most important elements that cause laughter. Everyone seems to become an object of parody, and this absurd situation brings out laughter, which symbolizes an undermining of power and resistance, especially in the context of carnivalesque literature. Laughter creates a parody atmosphere by emphasizing the absurd situation within the work. It involves making everyone look like an element of parody, a mockery of social norms, values, or events. Laughter, with its inclination to challenge conventional values, underscores irony directed at clichés, stereotypes, and particularly those in elevated positions. In this context, laughter has almost always been used as a technique of questioning and ridicule. In Bakhtin's words,

Deeply ambivalent also is carnival laughter itself. Genetically, it is linked with the most ancient forms of ritual laughter. Ritual laughter was always directed toward something higher: the sun (the highest god), other gods, and the highest earthly authority were put to shame and ridiculed to force them to renew themselves [...] Carnivalistic laughter likewise is directed toward something higher –toward a shift of authorities and truths, a shift of world orders” (Bakhtin, 2013, p. 126-7).

The laughter effect and comic elements that Bakhtin presents as a feature of carnivalesque works maintain their meaning in this context. Opposing solemnity, events like these carnivalesque texts embrace vulgarity, obscenity, and indulgence. It can be thought of as a kind of environment of exuberance, but the point that should be emphasized is that the expression of exuberance here does not have a negative meaning. On the contrary, it symbolizes an alternative life. Within the carnivalesque and grotesque framework, there is a pronounced emphasis on the constant flux of life, culture, and people. Consequently, the acceptance of predetermined uniform rules is rejected, as neither stability in human structure nor language is upheld. Understanding that it is conceivable to transcend the gravity and hierarchical structures imposed by norms and the concept of ‘normal,’ it becomes apparent that people share similar feelings and vulnerabilities, irrespective of their roles as kings or clowns.

Rabelais prioritizes ridicule in his works, making the characters real rather than the norm of society, and combining grotesque realism with laughter. This provides the reader with both humour and thought. Additionally, the representations of characters are ironic; for example, Gargantua, as a gigantic figure, inverts the concepts of seriousness and grandeur. Its name is derived from the word ‘gargantuan’ (exceedingly large), which refers to its enormous size. Gargantua’s appetite for everything to excess ironically criticizes the greed in human nature (Bakhtin, 1984, p.342). This and similar methods are used as an important tool of irony criticism in literature and are prominent ways to oppose hierarchy. Besides, humour, as the greatest weapon in post-modern works, tends to lighten serious or heavy topics. It undermines the meanings socially assigned to them by not taking them seriously. It may criticize authority figures or social norms through humour and sarcasm. This aims to shake the balance of power and question official institutions. Thus, both tools aim to provide an environment of

social criticism and questioning. At this point, humour should be underlined once again because the state of laughter that is tried to be achieved as the feedback of humour is very important. Especially in works that oppose the order, laughter is seen as an opposition that resists power. Laughter and ridicule are a power that shakes authority, and Bakhtin attaches great importance to this power and examines and emphasizes it specifically in the works of Rabelais. Carnavalesque humour can be a powerful tool to change or shake social structures, and laughter is rebellion against norms.



IV. JUDITH BUTLER: PERFORMING IDENTITY

Judith Butler, known as an American philosopher, feminist, and gender theorist, has greatly influenced queer theory, feminist theory, and gender studies in the social sciences in general. One of Butler's most famous works is the book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, which argues that gender is a socially constructed concept and that gender is not natural. Butler claims that gender is a performance, and it is determined by exhibiting behavior in accordance with social norms. Butler's views, which argue that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon and that gender identity is different from biological sex, have significantly changed the research on gender and sexuality. According to Butler, biological sex is the bodily, innate sexual characteristics. However, gender roles or gender identity are concepts that are socially and culturally constructed and determined. She asserts, "There is no 'proper' gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex's cultural property" (Butler, 2013, p. 722). Arguing that gender is not a destiny determined by biological sex and that gender is flexible and determined by cultural and social factors, Butler opposes the understanding that biology is seen as fate. "Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (Butler, 2002, p. 9). Although biological sex has some natural characteristics, how gender is expressed, experienced, and given meaning depends on social and cultural factors. Hence, Butler emphasizes that gender has no direct connection to biological sex but is instead subsequently constructed.

In order to understand the theories developed by Butler regarding the construction of gender roles, it is necessary to examine the concept of 'performativity', which she also coined. According to Butler, gender identity and expression are a performance created by repeated behaviors that conform to certain social and cultural expectations. While explaining performativity, Butler states that these performances involve individuals expressing their behavior following socially accepted gender roles. These performances restrict the individual to the definitions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' predetermined by society because people create every detail, from their clothing style to their behavior, under those definitions. For instance, a man adhering

to the societal norm of wearing trousers and a shirt confirms his gender performance, while similarly, a woman conforming to society's expectation of wearing a skirt and blouse is also a result of gender performance. Moreover, behaviors that comply with society's gender norms can express gender identity. For example, men are expected to be strong and brave, while women are expected to be kind and sensitive. These behaviors are patterns that are instrumental in fitting individuals into a predetermined gender identity. Judith Butler claims, "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" (Butler, 2002, p. 25). When gender is a performance, individuals construct their identities by playing certain gender roles or displaying certain gender attributes. However, these performances are not actions performed by a pre-existing 'subject' of individuals; on the contrary, the performances are shaped by certain social and cultural norms and determine the person's identity. So, she continues, "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" (Butler, 2002, p. 25). Therefore, while it is emphasized that sex is always an act of doing, it is stated that this action is not performed by a subject, and the subject does not exist before the action. This indicates that gender is flexible, changeable, and constantly reproduced by social norms.

Butler argues that hegemonic gender norms are rigid and divisive, and she suggests that these norms are not natural or fixed. According to her, gender identity and roles are created and maintained through social constructions and repeated behaviors. Therefore, she adopts an approach that challenges hegemonic gender norms and advocates the recognition of alternative identities because these norms not only impose strict rules on men and women, causing them to perform certain roles, but also reduce gender to only men and women. In her own words, "There is no reason to assume that gender also ought to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (Butler, 2002, p. 10). Butler's perspective emphasizes the need to recognize greater diversity and flexibility in terms of gender and sexuality. As one of the foundations of queer theory, this perspective argues that gender and sexuality are not fixed and that the pressure of uniform norms must be resisted. Butler believes that it is necessary to resist and reshape the traditional

understanding of gender, which she believes is a social construct. Butler sees a potential for resistance and change in the fact that sexual identity is revealed as a result of a certain performance. In this context, the way to challenge gender roles may be to develop alternative behaviors and expressions. Individuals can emphasize diversity by performing beyond what is expected of them. Furthermore, Butler emphasizes the importance of resistance and politics to question and change gender roles and norms. Indeed, examining how the notion of gender is shaped by societal expectations being performed, and the resistance demonstrated against the power structures enforcing these norms, becomes clearer through Butler's reevaluation of Lacanian gender roles perspective and Foucauldian views of power.

Initially, Butler's idea that gender is constantly reproduced through performance becomes more revealing when considered as a challenge to Lacan's more rigid and deterministic views on the symbolic and structural arrangements of gender. According to Lacan, the concepts of gender and existence are shaped within the language structure and the symbolic order. The first critical period in Lacan's developmental theory is the mirror stage. This period usually occurs during infancy, and the baby discovers his/her own reflection in the mirror (Lacan, 1988, p. 146). During this period, individuals begin to compare themselves with others and establish their uniqueness. In Lacan's own words,

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal dynamic shifts from insufficiency to anticipation, a drama that, for its subject, caught in the mirage of spatial identification, vehiculates a whole series of fantasies that range from a fragmented image of the body to what we will term an orthopaedic form of its unity, and to that ultimate assumption of the armature of an alienating identity [ego], whose rigid structure will mark the subject's entire mental development (Lacan, 1966, p. 87).

Hence, gender identity and existence as an individual began to take shape during this early period. In other words, the mirror stage involves the period in which an infant, who previously perceives himself/herself as one with the universe, separates from the cosmos and forms an 'I.' Butler's idea of gender as performative challenges Lacan's notion of gender identity as something fixed and determined by the symbolic order. In Lacan's mirror stage, the infant initially perceives a fragmented image of the self,

which eventually leads to the construction of a coherent ego. This process, according to Lacan, is crucial in the development of both gender identity and personal existence, as the infant starts to identify with a stable image of the self. However, Butler disrupts this linear and deterministic model by arguing that gender is not an innate essence or a result of fixed identification but is instead continuously enacted through repeated performances. In this way, while Lacan's theory suggests that gender identity is solidified within the symbolic order, Butler's perspective opens space for gender to be fluid, dynamic, and subject to change rather than a rigid structure formed during the mirror stage.

Nevertheless, the real identity development process begins with the individual's encounter with the culture, namely his/her acquaintance with language. According to Lacan, humans are innately socially formed beings and are under the influence of language and symbols. Lacan calls the stage in which the child meets culture the name of the father, and the father is associated with culture and order here. The Name-of-the-Father is not actually directly related to the physical father figure that the child has. Instead, in Lacan's usage, The Names-of-the-Father represents a symbolic role and a law-making authority. The discovery of the Name-of-the-Father begins the process of disintegrating the sense of integrity that the subject perceives in the mirror stage and adapting to the requirements of the symbolic order. This phase, which is the beginning of the process of a child realizing that he/she is a separate individual after noticing himself/herself in the mirror, understanding the order he/she is in, and establishing his/her place in society, is called the Symbolic Order. Lacan, who refers to this phase as the mirror stage, considers this stage as an acquisition of identity (Lacan, 1966, p. 76). Symbolic order is defined as a structure in which language and symbols shape an individual's perception and identity. As John Shannon Hendrix states "The development of the child in the mirror stage is the passage from behavior based on object identifications which is not regulated by any kind of conscious logic to the insertion of the subject into the symbolic order, language, where the object identifications are reconciled with conceptual structures" (Hendrix, 2019, p. 2). Gender identity and existence are constructed and maintained within the symbolic order.

According to Lacan's concept, gender identity and existence are formed by the individual's placement in the symbolic order. This is a process in which the individual

internalizes and accepts social roles and expectations. Gender norms and roles play an important role in this symbolic establishment process. In Lacan's perspective, language and symbols significantly influence the formation of identity within this culture. The structure that Lacan calls 'symbolic order' is the individual's perception and understanding of the world through language and symbols. This order enables the individual to be positioned within the social and cultural context. In the symbolic order, the child must leave the special relationship with his mother and accept the social authority of the father. The presence of the father enables the child to position himself/herself in the social order and plays a substantial role in determining his gender identity. The father's role also relates to the child's 'visibility'. According to Lacan, when the child sees himself/herself in the mirror, he/she recognizes himself/herself through the father's gaze and becomes 'a subject.' This is part of the child's process of relating himself/herself to others and settling into the social order.

Additionally, the most effective factors in the process of the child getting to know the culture through his father and positioning himself/herself in the culture are language and symbols. Certain gender norms and roles of society are transmitted through language and reinforced by symbols. Therefore, individuals' gender identity and perception of existence are shaped under the influence of language and symbols and are expected to comply with these specific norms. The individual relates himself/herself to others through symbols and internalizes social roles. Therefore, in the construction and maintenance of social structures, language and symbols are developed to reflect the dominant ideology, which significantly affects the way a person perceives the world when positioning himself/herself and others. Thus, within this patriarchal system of language and symbols based on binary oppositions, individuals must find a role for themselves as either male or female. For example, as soon as children are born, they are directed to gender roles associated with colours such as blue and pink, in line with society's expectations. While boys are given 'masculine' objects, such as toy cars, girls are given 'feminine' objects, such as dolls, as an example of binary gender roles within this system. The importance that the father's law attaches to sexual difference is a fundamental prerequisite for the establishment and meaning of gender, and the structure of language determines and shapes the gender identities as concepts.

Besides the importance of the role of the Phallus, it is seen as the determinant of masculine desire and plays a central role in determining sexual identities. The phallic concepts of 'to be' and 'to have' represent different sexual positions within the language, and these positions are limited to men and women only, as mentioned before (Butler, 2002, p. 56). Lacan emphasizes that attempts to establish identity within this binary distinction return to fantasy structures in which the Phallus represents its symbolic power. This reveals the complex interactions of the self within the symbolic order and the critical role of the Phallus in determining the meaning of existence. Butler continues to explain "Symbolic order creates cultural intelligibility through the mutually exclusive positions of 'having' the Phallus (the position of men) and 'being' the Phallus (the paradoxical position of women)" (Butler, 2002, p. 56). However, analyzing Lacan's reconsideration of the Freudian approach, Butler emphasizes that sexual difference is not a simple dichotomy, and that gender cannot be approached only with a material-based understanding. She states that masculine and feminine roles are created under the prohibitive influence of symbolic laws and are shaped by these prohibitions. For example, the prohibition of incest allows the son to distance himself from the mother and thus establish hierarchical relationships within the family. Similarly, the rejection of the daughter's desire for both mother and father requires her to embrace the maternal role and maintain the family structure. In this context, Butler examines Lacan's theories and contends that the concept of sexual difference should not be regarded as a straightforward dichotomy. She contends that gender does not merely stem from biological differences, but is also influenced by the constraining impact of symbolic laws. To illustrate this point, Butler draws upon Lacan's concept of the prohibition of incest, which she contends leads to the establishment of hierarchical relations within the family unit through the distancing of the son from his mother. In a similar vein, she posits that the rejection of the daughter's desire for both mother and father compels her to adopt the role of motherhood, thereby ensuring the continuity of the family structure. This construction is a complex process that enables individuals to accept and adopt gender roles (Butler, 2002, p. 37).

Butler essentially agrees with Lacan up to a certain point. Both emphasize that gender is a phenomenon constructed by culture rather than a biological reality. In particular, Butler underlines the fact that the construction of gender is constantly ongoing and reconstructed through language and cultural practices. As opposed to

Lacanian conceptualization of the mother and the father, according to Butler, the concepts of 'being' and 'having' of gender are not fixed and specific but are constantly restructured and culturally constructed. The mirror stage, in which the baby begins to define himself/herself as 'I' and the other people as 'others', and then the Symbolic Order, in which this distinction is reinforced by language and culture in line with a certain ideology, has many common aspects for Butler's and Lacan's theories.

However, the part in which Butler questions and reverses Lacanian theory is Lacan's conception of 'The Real'. Lacan makes a clear distinction between the concepts of 'the real' and 'reality'. According to him, reality is shaped by language and culture, serving as a structure we utilize. However, the 'real' is depicted as existing beyond language, culture, and historical context; it is a non-discursive and ontological entity, akin to a fixed location or object. This aspect of Lacan's philosophy challenges post-structuralists who reject fixed categories, including Butler. Lacan's inclusion of the category of 'the Real' as a distinct position within his system contributes to the controversy surrounding his ideas (Özdoyran, 2020, p. 1043). According to him, truth is that which 'defies the symbolic,' represents 'the unattainable' (Lacan, 2005, pp. 322-325). In this context, 'the Real' remains a 'nothingness' that cannot be expressed or symbolized. Hence, Lacan defines 'the Real' as an objective world that lies outside discursively constructed cultural systems. People can no longer perceive the world objectively, as it is. Conversely, our subjective experience exceeds the limitations of the symbolic framework we've built, unable to fully grasp our organic existence. At this juncture, Butler argues that Lacan's concept of 'the Real' encourages an understanding based on fixed categories and thus contributes to the rejection of changing, flexible, and diverse identities and experiences (Butler, 2002, p. 3). Furthermore, according to Butler, it is impossible to perceive the world and people as they are again because identities and experiences are constantly constructed. In brief, unlike Lacan, Butler argues that the inclusive, comprehensive, and rhizomatic nature of 'the Real' is not an unreachable ideal. From her perspective, there is still room for diverse and changing identities and experiences, and people constantly re-evaluate their perceptions and understandings within this diversity. According to Butler, social norms and cultural values play an important role in determining gender. However, there are still gaps that enable individuals to navigate these norms and values, which

are subject to change over time, which, in turn, help them to create their own genuine experiences and identities.

Secondly, it's worth noting that Butler's emphasis on the variability of social norms and the reproductive power within them can be examined through her reconsideration of Foucault's discourses of power. Michel Foucault, an important philosopher, social theorist, and historian of the 20th century, focused his studies on power and social structure. His thoughts, especially revolving around his analysis of the concepts of potency and power, contributed to the understanding of the social structures of the modern world and their underlying mechanisms. According to Foucault, power is a relational and diffuse phenomenon, so power is not limited to the state and institutions. Foucault argues that power is the ability to direct and determine human behavior. From his standpoint, power spreads to every layer and relation of society. However, he argues that this does not occur through direct pressure or coercion, but rather through various tools and mechanisms such as values, disciplines, and knowledge systems. In his own words, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1976, p. 93). Hence, Foucault argues that power does not come only from a particular institution or authority position but rather spreads from everywhere and exists at every level of social relations. With this statement, he expresses that power is a widespread, continuous, and heterogeneous influence. Furthermore, he argues that power is not a structure or entity, but a constantly reproduced network of relationships. He states that "Power is not an institution and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1990, p. 93). Power is constantly reproduced and takes different forms in different social contexts. Therefore, according to Foucault, power is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon at both individual and social levels.

One of the points that Butler focuses on in Foucault's work is that Foucault emphasizes that the disciplinary mechanisms of modern society are a substantial part of power. Institutions such as schools, prisons, and hospitals are tools of disciplinary mechanisms that regulate and control the behavior of individuals. According to Foucault, these power dynamics and systems of 'order,' juridical systems in particular, function at both institutional and individual levels, shaping people according to particular norms. These systems manage every single aspect of life by limiting,

regulating, and controlling the behavior of individuals. In other words, juridical powers generally must regulate individuals within the framework of certain rules and norms, and put society into an orderly structure. Moreover, these rules and norms are also created and determined by these powers. Therefore, the issues managed by juridical systems are shaped and defined in accordance with the requirements of these systems. Foucault observes that norms often manifest in legal frameworks, with normative principles being most prominently evident in constitutions, legal statutes, and the ongoing and vocal activities of legislative bodies (Foucault, 1998, p. 85). While this situation enables individuals and society to act in a certain order, it also plays an effective role in creating and maintaining this order. Foucault examines the power of juridical systems as part of discipline and control mechanisms (Foucault, 2016, p. 130). In particular, he focuses on institutions such as prisons and asylums. These institutions are used to control individuals that society excludes or does not accept, and to force them to act under the predetermined norms. As Foucault emphasizes in his works, the concepts of criminal and patient are shaped and determined within a social structure. However, the dominant power structures of society are generally effective in determining these concepts. That is, the power to identify criminals and patients is generally exercised by dominant institutions and authorities. Thus, behaviors that threaten the power mechanisms and dominant ideology in society may be labelled as either crime or insanity, causing these people to be excluded from society. In this context, Foucault argues that juridical systems are not only institutions that punish criminals but also a tool that reproduces a certain form of power and preserves certain norms of society. While juridical systems reinforce certain power relations and hierarchies of society, they also increase control over individuals and force them to behave and be in a certain way. Therefore, according to Foucault, juridical systems play an important role in the functioning of power and are a powerful tool in the regulation of society. That's why, he argues that "The real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent, to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence that has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them" (Chomsky and Foucault, 2015, p. 41). Hence, the oppression and imposing ideologies carried out with the support of these institutions can be questioned and resisted.

Foucault proposes resistance towards this system because the problem here is that the power system has full control over deciding who deviates from established norms and which segments of society are deemed marginal. This unjust situation means that a certain part of society, usually the dominant one, retains the power to monitor and control others. Based on this, Butler questions the emergence of gender roles because the order and power relations established by the dominant ideology, especially by using certain juridical systems and many other systemic tools, affect how individuals position themselves in society and how they interact with each other. These power relations at the individual level have an impact on people's daily interactions, social roles, and identities. For example, within families, groups of friends, or work environments, power dynamics and hierarchies between individuals can encourage or suppress certain forms of behavior. The power dynamics and interpersonal connections regulated by societal norms guarantee the perpetuation of this societal structure. Foucault applies his ideas on the concept of power to gender identities as well. In this context, he argues that,

Power is essentially what dictates its law of sex. This means first of all that sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden. Secondly, power prescribes an 'order' for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility: sex is to be deciphered based on its relation to the law. And finally, power acts by laying down the rule: power's hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. (Foucault, 1998, p. 83)

In other words, power places sexuality within its own legal framework and ensures that it operates within certain norms and rules. This shows how sexuality is shaped and controlled within power relations.

Inspired by Foucault, Butler also examines the impact of juridical systems on gender roles formed as a social structure and states that the emerging norms are the common result of this entire system. For instance, gender-based legal norms and rules may encourage women and men to accept or reject certain roles and behaviors. While discussing the universality of laws and their dysfunctionality and bias in this context, Butler highlights the partial nature of the juridical systems stressing that "What is most

important is to cease legislating for all lives what is liveable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unliveable for some (Butler, 2004, p. 8). She claims that, for this reason, power institutions that determine the roles of men and women and reduce gender to only men and women, and exclude and even crucifix the misfits, need to be undermined. Butler argues that this mechanism of inclusion and exclusion operates mainly on the discursive level, which is one of the power institutions as highlighted by Foucault. In Butler's own words, this mechanism operates in such a selective way that "The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist', that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender" (Butler, 2002, p. 24). Inspired by Foucault, who thinks that power is a network that plays a role in shaping social relations and structures, Butler investigates how this network can be undermined, and she proposes the concept of performativity in this context. According to Butler, resistance develops within and under the influence of power relations. Therefore, resistance against gender roles is shaped as a struggle against gender norms and hegemonic gender ideologies. She claims that all laws and political instruments that reinforce these gender norms should be opposed.

Taken together, while introducing the concept of performativity and developing her theories on gender roles, Butler touches upon Lacan's theories on the formation of the individual and Foucault's ideas on power and resistance. Firstly, according to Lacan, after a person realizes that he/she is an individual and he/she meets the culture, namely language, he/she realizes that he/she must position himself/herself within this order. Butler argues that the problem here is that the culture into which the person is born is shaped through a language full of binary oppositions. Within these binary oppositions that lead to the establishment and maintenance of a hegemonic order, the individual understands that he/she must construct himself/herself as a woman or a man as society expects. Thus, he/she creates a gender through repeated performances. In this way, gender is reduced to just men and women, and individuals begin to play socially constructed roles of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. According to Lacan, this situation is inevitable because the person becomes separated from the Real and can never access it again. On the contrary, while Butler opposes this deterministic attitude, she draws on Foucault's theories and states that this order must be resisted. From

Butler's standpoint, instead of adopting and continuing to perform these roles, it is necessary to produce new alternatives that undermine them. In this way, the concept of performativity turns into a positive factor in the process of breaking social rules, because people can reveal alternative selves with clothing styles and behaviors other than what is expected. Furthermore, everyone can experience their own 'real'.



V. OPENING REFLECTIONS: THE MANY VOICES OF *THE MAGUS* BY JOHN FOWLES

The first novel that will be the focus of this study is John Fowles' *The Magus*. Fowles, one of the significant names of postmodern literature, skilfully examines philosophical questioning and psychological depth in his works. His writing style features a unique structure that combines classical narrative techniques with postmodern elements, and he employs a multi-layered approach by utilizing the stream-of-consciousness technique and metafiction in his works. His works usually use suspense and ambiguity to create this atmosphere (Eddins, 2006). Especially in works such as *The Magus*, ambiguity, irony, and playfulness are prominent; the author deliberately disrupts the linear progression of the narrative, allowing the reader to engage actively with the text. Published in 1965, *The Magus* is both a story of growing up and a narrative in which reality and illusion are intertwined. The novel centres on the extraordinary events that Nicholas Urfe, a young English teacher, experiences on a small island in Greece. Maurice Conchis, a mysterious man he meets on the island, leads Nicholas into strange, psychological tricks. These experiences, in which reality and fiction are intricately interwoven, turn into a transformation process that will radically change the character's perception of himself and the world. However, one of the most important points that makes this work special for this study is that the reader is left in complete uncertainty during this transformation process, and their feelings and thoughts are constantly changing just like Nicholas'. In other words, the reader also undergoes a process of searching and creating meaning. In this context, *The Magus* has a structure that aims not only at Nicholas Urfe's transformation process but also at the reader's similar experience. Throughout the novel, Fowles leaves the reader in a constant state of hesitation with uncertainty, illusions, and unexpected changes of direction, just like Nicholas. The non-linearity of the narrative and the intertwining of different perspectives push the reader into a search for meaning and a process of creation. Thus, the novel ceases to be merely a reading experience and becomes a process of play and discovery in which the reader actively participates.

To put it another way, this narrative technique reinforces the idea that Fowles is a kenotic writer because kenosis means that the author renounces his authority and gives both the reader and his characters an active role. He equalizes himself with both

his characters and his readers. Instead of building the narrative on absolute truths, Fowles deliberately creates ambiguity and draws the reader into Nicholas Urfe's search for meaning. As Roberta Rubenstein states, *The Magus* is like an "intellectual puzzle" in this context (3). In *The Magus*, Fowles renounces the traditional narrator's authority and prevents the reader from perceiving the story through a single absolute reality. Throughout the novel, Conchis' narratives become contradictory from time to time, the identities of the characters become unclear, and the reality of the story is in constant change. For this reason, the reader, whose curiosity is constantly renewed, has the chance to interpret the story for themselves instead of taking the truths imposed on them by the author, because they, like Nicholas, experience a constant contradiction and try to solve the events. At this juncture, rather than being an authority figure who influences and directs, Fowles himself stands aside and allows each reader to go through their own process of inference and meaning-making. Hence, the readers follow the plot through Conchis and Nicholas. They are exposed to their manipulation or misunderstandings, and they try to comprehend or create the reality during the novel because Fowles does not interfere with the flow. Thus, the existence of Fowles is not felt in the novel, yet he leaves clues about the unreliable and unpredictable nature of the truth about Conchis' stories. For example, the stories Nicholas hears and experiences when he first meets Conchis initially appear to be a fascinating but coherent narrative. However, in the following chapters, Conchis' stories about his past begin to contradict each other. In one scene, we learn that Conchis helped the French Resistance during the Nazi occupation, while in another scene he claims to have collaborated with the occupiers. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the reader to believe in any of his stories.

The reader, just like Nicholas, becomes unable to distinguish what is fact and what is fiction. Moreover, after a while, Conchis begins to openly admit that some things are a play and a deception. Therefore, the reader becomes unable to recognize which things are true and which are lies or fiction. Especially with the later emergence of the Lily-Julie duality and the inclusion of the twins in the scenario, the confusion of identity grows, and the distinction between reality and fiction becomes blurred. Hence, showing that the concept of identity is also volatile and misleading, Fowles leaves the narrative to the reader's control. As Barbara L. Hussey continues to explain the position of the readers in *The Magus*,

This denial of the satisfaction of an ending, as well as the multiple false endings of the masque, has the important function of throwing back at the reader the way in which he reads—both book and world—for the meanings that the endings of aesthetic orders presume to confer on life. To construe in such a fashion is to construct; the reader's role becomes homologous to that of the author. (Hussey, 25)

At the end of the novel, neither Nicholas nor the reader is given a definite and comprehensible explanation. The author offers multiple meanings, and the reader should add his or her own interpretation to the text.

Furthermore, the kenotic narrative in John Fowles' *The Magus* opens a direct space for Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque. By withdrawing authorial authority and structuring the narrative in a way that leaves meaning to the reader, Fowles enables the emergence of the multiple voices and perspectives suggested by Bakhtin. Initially, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, as highlighted before, is the coexistence and constant interaction of different voices within the text without being under the control of a single authority. In a dialogic novel, meaning does not emerge from the absolute authority of the author; rather, it is created through a process of negotiation between the voices within the narrative. In other words, no single voice offers absolute truth; each produces new meanings in interaction with the others. In *The Magus*, this is particularly evident through the dialogues between Conchis and Nicholas. Conchis constantly tells stories to Nicholas, but these stories change, contradict, and reshape with each new scene. Nicholas' questions to Conchis lead to the emergence of new versions of the story. Here, dialogue becomes a continuous process not only between the characters but also within the narrative because different text types and works interact with each other to create new meanings. For instance, the stories told by Conchis are not only intended to provide information between the characters; each narrative gives rise to another narrative, eliciting contradictory answers and ultimately preventing an absolute meaning. Thus, the ever-changing meaning is formed by the constant conflict and change of each voice with the other.

Another crucial factor in the change of meanings is the polyphonic structure of the novel. Each character in the novel has a multi-layered narrative form, and all these

narratives can exist independently of each other. In a polyphonic novel, the characters are not merely instruments reflecting the author's ideas; each has his/her own voice, worldview, and independent existence within the narrative. *The Magus* has a polyphonic structure precisely for this reason. In the novel, characters of different ages, countries, and social statuses not only serve as figures for Nicholas' transformation but also represent their own ideologies, values, and views of the world. Characters such as Conchis, Lily/Julie, and Alison do not get lost in a monologic narrative with Nicholas at the centre; each of them has a unique background, mindset, and motivations. For instance, the coexistence of both Greek and English characters and their ability to reflect the characteristics of their origins, and the fact that male and female characters are equally active, strengthen the polyphonic structure. It should be noted that the heteroglot structure also reinforces these dialogic and polyphonic elements because the characters' own expression styles, speech genres in Bakhtinian terms, can take place in the polyphonic interaction and, moreover, the different text types that are intertwined with each other increase the depth of the narrative with their own forms of expression, which increases the multilayeredness and polysemy of the narrative. For instance, each type of text that Conchis presents to contribute to the narrative he constructs features a distinct mode of expression. At times, he introduces newspaper articles, letters, official documents, or even poems, each of which enriches the text with its unique style and discourse.

Besides, it contributes greatly to the postmodern and kenotic structure of the carnivalesque novel, a narrative technique in which authority is temporarily deactivated, roles are exchanged, and social hierarchy is turned upside down. *The Magus* proceeds entirely in a carnival atmosphere; Conchis constantly puts Nicholas into different roles, identities constantly change, and the boundaries between reality and fiction disappear. Nicholas tries to become a manipulator over time; in the process, he realizes he is like a student or a pawn in a complicated game. These transformations show that social and individual identities are not fixed, and throughout the novel, authority is constantly questioned. As Mahinur Akşehir states, there are no certainties in the novel, and she asserts, "The idea that Fowles tries to convey to the reader here is the rejection of ultimate authority, the divine power, which might also be referring to the authorial power. The novel tends to refuse to uphold anything constructed, such as science, religion, nationality, and so on" (Akşehir, 2013, p. 35). Moreover, in that

chaotic and ambiguous atmosphere, there are absurd and grotesque elements in *The Magus* that support Bakhtin's carnivalesque structure. To illustrate, when Nicholas is drawn into the plays directed by Conchis, he repeatedly encounters masked figures. In one scene, people dressed in bizarre costumes organize a court scene and ask him questions that blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. In a different chapter, he is interrogated and briefly detained by actors wearing military uniforms. These scenes create a grotesque and absurd atmosphere.

Moreover, throughout the text, characters constantly assume different identities, both metaphorically and literally. In addition to such identity shifts, there are also strange and frightening performances. Throughout the novel, strange rituals are occasionally performed, and it is left unclear whether these events are jokes or real. Finally, the master-slave relationship is often reversed in Carnavalesque works. Although Nicholas initially thinks that he can have control over Conchis and that he is important, in time he realizes that he has become a figure who is completely controlled, manipulated, and tested. Likewise, although Nicholas adopts a patronizing and sarcastic attitude towards Joe as the mute black slave, he eventually comes to realize that Joe is in a more advantageous position than he is, which presents a carnivalesque structure that shows the transience of the social order and the fluidity of power relations.

Finally, the kenotic structure in the novel can also be associated with Judith Butler's concept of performativity because identities are ambiguous and variable in the chaotic and uncertain environment created by the author. With the concept of performativity, Judith Butler presents a very similar view in terms of gender roles. According to Butler, identities are shaped through repeated social practices and performances rather than individuals having predetermined essences. In *The Magus*, the kenotic structure makes it possible to experience precisely this process of identity formation and prepares the ground for equality between the sexes. To give an example in the context of male-female relations, at the beginning of the novel, Nicholas has a traditional understanding of masculinity: He relies on his own rationality, establishes his relationship with women within the framework of power dynamics, and assumes superiority. Nevertheless, Fowles does not present this masculinity as a power, instead, he ridicules it, and he demonstrates how fragile it actually is (Strout, 74). Additionally, as Conchis' plays progress, he realizes that this identity is not fixed and is shaped by

external factors. Nicholas, who thinks that he is superior to women and rules them in many ways, realizes that he is the one who is deceived by the fiction of women, and thus the roles are reversed. Julie/Lily, in particular, uses the role of the ideal woman as a tool of manipulation and plays with Nicholas by making him believe that she is innocent, elegant, weak, and in need of his help. In short, John Fowles does not present male-female relationships within the traditional narrative; he creates equality, and even women are the ones who construct the fiction.

As stated above, *The Magus* is a novel that equates in many ways. Firstly, it equalizes the author with both the readers and the characters. For example, Conchis, not Fowles, makes himself heard throughout the novel, and control appears in him. However, Fowles makes it clear to the reader many times that he is also an actor and a liar, and prevents them from being deceived by him. Thus, the characters are not completely under the influence of either Fowles or Conchis. On the contrary, he enters the process of creating meaning together with Nicholas and tries to analyze the events. The author's renunciation of his own authoritarianism prepares the ground for other postmodern, egalitarian elements. For example, the fact that characters and different texts are in constant dialogue and conflict with each other and that each character and each work have a different form of expression contributes greatly to the multiplicity of meanings. The reader is not under the control of a single character or a single work. They are motivated to deduce meaning not through the authorial imposition of the narrative but through the conflicts and interactions between the characters. This way, they are liberated to make up their own interpretation of the text.

Moreover, character choices are not limited to a certain audience. Individuals from different professions, races, and genders come together and contribute equally to the narrative. They can exist both as individuals and represent the group to which they belong; they all have their own voice. Hence, it becomes easier for different identities to coexist in a carnivalesque manner. In such an environment where identities are blurred and traditional distinctions are challenged, it is realized that characters can come together in a carnival atmosphere. Irony, absurd elements, and grotesque structure play an important role in creating this carnival-like atmosphere. In this way, everyone can step outside the lines set for them by society; there is no room for stereotypes. This also includes women. Female characters can play an active role in meaning-making by stepping outside the traditional ideal female role they have

acquired through performance. For this reason, John Fowles' *The Magus* is a work that provides equality in many ways and questions all authorities by representing important postmodern elements.

a. Kenosis in *The Magus*: The Self-Emptying Author

John Fowles, employing many postmodern elements in *The Magus*, often adopts an attitude that questions traditional narrative patterns and offers multiple perspectives in his works. Questioning the nature of fiction and offering alternative creations, Fowles constantly makes the reader doubt and question the reliability of the narrator or the author, thus preventing them from drifting towards an absolute meaning. That's why the events and the ending in his novels generally do not have absolute meanings but are based on interpretation. One of the most important factors in the establishment of this open-ended structure is the author's relinquishing of his absolute authority and equating himself with both his characters and the reader, because thanks to this approach, the reader plays an active role in the process of creating meaning and can reshape the work with his/her own interpretations. Kenosis, which has become one of the important concepts of postmodern literature, provides a tendency to question the authority in the narrative. For instance, in *The Magus*, it is not obvious whether the events Nicholas experiences are real or fictional. Therefore, the reader, who is constantly in doubt about what happened, cannot trust either the narrator or Conchis, who directs the flow, because Conchis' stories are constantly changing, and their veracity is uncertain. The reader, like Nicholas, does not know whom to believe. Moreover, since Nicholas is presented as a character who sees himself and the world from a limited point of view and has not yet grasped life and his emotions, even he describes himself as a selfish person before the god-game (12), the reader cannot immerse himself in Nicholas' predictions or feelings.

The reasons why John Fowles' *The Magus* has become a kenotic work can be categorized under two main headings: the author's equation of himself with Conchis through the God-Conchis relationship and the reader's equation with Nicholas, the protagonist of the novel. Firstly, Conchis is not only a puppeteer who directs Nicholas' life, but also a figure who breaks the traditional authority of the author over the

narrative by creating variability and ambiguity within it. Through Conchis' constant telling of different stories and the ambiguity of reality, Fowles positions himself not as an absolute omniscient author, but as a creator of fiction who shares experience with the reader on the same level. In this context, just as Conchis transforms Nicholas' thoughts and perception of reality by putting him through a series of tests, Fowles involves the reader in a similar process. For this reason, the reader, like Nicholas, is left with question marks throughout the novel. Nicholas' confusion turns into an emotion the reader feels, blurring the clear distinctions in the classical narrative structure. With this strategy, Fowles applies the basic principles of kenotic authorship by ensuring that the reader ceases to be a passive observer and participates in the narrative. In this way, the author, the characters, and the reader come together to create different meanings.

To elaborate further, one of the striking factors in the context of the concept of kenosis is the character of God-Conchis. Throughout the novel, Conchis is constantly compared to God by other characters. To illustrate, while Julie/Lily and Nicholas try to understand Conchis, Nicholas says, "With himself cast as God" (351). And Julie does not reject this idea, and she answers "But not out of vanity. Out of intellectual curiosity. As a hypothesis. To see how we react. And not one kind of God. Several" (351). Furthermore, Conchis deliberately creates this perception. He even purposely remains silent when Nicholas tells Conchis that he sees him as a god, leaving the answer to both Nicholas and the readers (454). This demonstrates how Fowles empties his literary authority and equates himself with his character. Abandoning his own position, Fowles leaves the flow to Conchis, but he does not present him to the reader as the absolute authority, nor does he allow Conchis to manipulate them by making the readers constantly doubt them. "The ambiguity of Conchis- is he an agent or evil? - remains an important element of tension in both plot and meaning for the duration of the novel" (Rubenstein, 329). Conchis can constantly make the reader and Nicholas have different ideas about him. He never explicitly presents the facts about himself and thus makes them active in the process of meaning-making. Hence, in this way, Fowles retreats, gives Conchis a chance to show his presence, and makes the readers active.

There is no doubt that Conchis, one of the most fascinating characters of the novel, is positioned as a kind of God-like figure for the protagonist Nicholas Urfe. He

is an authority figure who dominates his story, shaping events and testing Nicholas through manipulations. In this sense, at first glance, Conchis may seem to overlap with the traditional God-Writer model because he is like a writer who constantly presents events to Nicholas, tests him, and intervenes in the flow by constantly observing him. He draws Nicholas into the fiction of his own creation in such a way that he blurs the distinction between reality and fiction. Thus, the presence of Conchis, the author and director of his own theatrical play, is more heard than that of Fowles, the author of *The Magus*. His role is shaped not only as a character who directs events but also as a god-author figure who sets the rules of the narrative and constantly reconstructs the meaning of the text. Conchis is not only an actor who shapes events, but also a narrator who constantly transforms Nicholas' reality and gives it new meanings. In this process, Nicholas becomes a figure in Conchis' story, acting as a pawn in the narratives he creates. Conchis' narrative authority emerges as a figure who dominates the flow of events, like a classical author's intervention in the narration. Nicholas' ability to make his own decisions is shaped by Conchis' guidance and the narratives Conchis presents to change the way Nicholas perceives the world. In fact, the judgment they make about Nicholas in the role of the doctor at the end of their play is the conclusion they want to reach at the end of their story. Therefore, they also aim to shape Nicholas' thoughts and expectations about himself. They make the following comment about Nicholas in the court scene, they enacted the role of the doctor:

In the usual way, the subject identifies God with the father figure, aggressively rejecting any belief in Him. [...] To sum up, he is behaviourally the victim of a repetition-compulsion that he has failed to understand. In every environment, he looks for those elements that allow him to feel isolated, that allow him to justify his withdrawal from meaningful social responsibilities and relationships and his consequent regression into the infantile state of frustrated self-gratification (526).

After sharing these observations about Nicholas, it is emphasized that he had a paranoid sympathy for people who can be defined as "fellow-rebels and non-conformers in conflict" (526). The psychological conclusions concerning Nicholas himself, which are forcefully presented, subsequently prompt his following reflection: "What had they said in the trial? *He seeks situations in which he knows he will be*

forced to rebel" (571). As a result of the comments made about him, Nicholas starts to question himself and decides to get rid of his past and social identity in order to stop the cycle he is in (571).

Nevertheless, it would not be right to precisely associate Conchis with a traditional writer because his plays are characterized by doubt and questioning. In addition to his interventions that affect the flow, he also has an attitude that keeps the sense of curiosity alive. While Conchis leads Nicholas on a search for meaning, he does not give him definitive answers; on the contrary, he keeps both the character and the readers' suspicion alive by constantly changing the narratives he presents. In this context, Conchis does not construct a fixed and unchanging narrative like a classical God-author; his authority is layered and constantly self-defeating. The narratives Conchis presents are inconsistent with the linear flow of time, contain contradictions, and prevent Nicholas from reaching a definitive reality. Thus, rather than representing absolute authority, Conchis becomes a narrator who makes the reader, and the character, consider and determine the direction of the narrative, but never provides the final meaning. At this juncture, while Fowles withdraws himself as a kenotic author, he does not place another author in a position of absolute authority. Although Fowles presents Conchis as the master of the narrative, he does not leave his authority as an absolute power. Conchis is a figure who constructs and directs the narrative, yet Fowles' textual strategies ensure that he is always questioned. Throughout the novel, Nicholas and the reader are constantly forced to debate the veracity of the narratives presented by Conchis, which is part of Fowles' attempt to empty the traditional authorial authority.

While in traditional narratives the author presents the reader with a certain reality, Fowles does the opposite, never allowing the narrative to acquire a fixed meaning. This prevents even Conchis from being a God-writer because the realities he presents are also open to questioning. Indeed, Conchis also wants to be questioned and plays games within games, always leaving a clue, never allowing Nicholas to fully believe any story he tells. He even forges documents and, at times, lets Nicholas know that they are lies. In this case, Conchis' experimental techniques also prevent him from being a traditional storyteller. In other words, although Conchis seems to be presenting a manipulative narrative, in fact, Conchis' authority is constantly questioned, and the reader cannot become fully influenced by anyone. This reveals the philosophical view

that *The Magus* adopts, that nothing is certain, that there are only possibilities, but that they cannot be trusted, which is also emphasized in the story about the prince who seeks the truth left for Nicholas to find. As with all the other clues provided, this story reinforces the notion that the absolute truth is unattainable. Ultimately, Nicholas realizes that he has been left in a state of undecidability, and that any discovery he makes will only serve to exacerbate his confusion (568). The plot and characters are left open to interpretation. Thus, Fowles' kenotic narrative abandons the classical figure of the author and opens up the meaning to the reader.

At this juncture, it should be noted that the second significant factor of the novel's kenotic structure is the Nicholas-Reader similarity. Fowles equates the reader first with the characters and then with himself because the reader, who goes through a similar process of meaning creation and analysis with Nicholas, intervenes in the flow at least as much as Conchis or Fowles. Both Conchis' and Fowles' techniques of keeping suspicion alive prevent the reader from fully believing anyone, any document, or any event. In this way, authority is dispersed because no definite authority figure can dominate the main narrative, *The Magus*, and instead, a multi-layered and multi-faceted process of interpretation takes place. In this process, it is important to look at the plot and the process of Nicholas, and therefore the readers' discovery of themselves, the world, and what is happening. From the beginning, *The Magus* offers the readers the opportunity to identify with Nicholas. Fowles' narrative strategy is constructed in such a way as to prevent the reader from knowing more than Nicholas.

Whereas in traditional novels the narrator usually creates a kind of dramatic irony by presenting the reader with some facts that the character does not know, in *The Magus*, this is reversed. Both readers and Nicholas get through the same experience. As Barbara L. Hussey states, "Nicholas, like the reader, runs through his labyrinth looking for the meaning at its centre; however, this labyrinth has no centre, indicating the unsuitability of aesthetic orders for providing answers to existence" (Hussey, 21). They are on the same level in the novel. They are looking for the truth, but they cannot reach it. As Rubenstein mentions, the mystery draws the reader in as well, and "Nicholas' skepticism at what is happening to him, his constant attempts to de-mystify the unusual incidents by explaining them, and his relation to Conchis (the magus/magician) parallel the reader's attitude toward the events described, his attempt to make sense of them, and his relation to Fowles (the magus/author)" (Rubenstein,

330). Not only does the reader not have more than Nicholas knows, but they often fall into the same misconceptions as Nicholas. The narratives Conchis presents and the events he stages are also ambiguous for the readers, and the question of which information is true and which is fiction is never fully answered. This closes the distance between the reader and Nicholas, making their experience of the narrative common. The substantial point here is that the readers are kept in a position of constantly searching for answers but never reaching a definitive conclusion. This breaks the expectation of resolution offered by traditional narrative and shows that meaning is not absolute but fluid and plural. As Julius Rowan Raper states, "In allowing the story to speak for itself, Fowles creates a major character who defies understanding from a single psychological perspective. The character's complexity thus makes multiple interpretations possible and generates new readings" (Raper, 61). This conscious ambiguity allows the reader to take a more active role in the process of creating meaning. Hence, whereas in traditional novels the reader is usually assigned the role of a passive observer, *The Magus* transforms the reader into a meaning-maker by integrating him/her into the character's experiences. The multi-layered structures and transitions between narratives that the novel presents cause the reader to develop a different interpretation each time. In this sense, *The Magus* becomes not just a written text, but a narrative that is constantly reconstructed by the reader.

To illustrate, the Julie/Lily duality is one of the main situations in which Conchis leaves the readers and Nicholas in a state of uncertainty. Whenever Nicholas and the readers decide that she is Lily or Julie, they are immediately presented with reasons to strengthen the opposite opinion, and even at the end of the novel, there is no clear information about the young woman's true identity. It is not clear whether her name is Julie, Lily, or something else, whether she is an actress, a student of literature, a teacher, or a doctor. Therefore, the possibilities are not entirely conclusive and are subject to diverse interpretations. Furthermore, "The sense of the unknown increases when a twin to Lily appears" (Rubenstein, 330). Conchis puts forward different theories about Julie/Lily throughout the play. The first one is that she is a schizophrenic, but then she lets Nicholas and the reader know that this is a lie.

Conchis also makes many contradictory statements about his own identity. His ethnicity, his profession, his past, whether he was a traitor in the war, and many other issues are left unanswered in an open-ended ending. For instance, the war experience

of Conchis, who recounts to Nicholas through his own narrated past that he was one of the victims of the war and was misunderstood by the islanders, remains an enigma. After returning to England, Nicholas visits Mitford, one of the victims of the Godgame before him, and he hears a contradictory account from Conchis. Mitford says, "Actually, he did a deal with the Germans. Personally, organized the shooting of eighty villagers. Then got his kraut chums to line him up with them. See. As if he were all brave and innocent" (630). At this juncture, we cannot know which narrator is telling the truth and whether Conchis is a traitor or not. Both Mitford and Conchis can be presumed unreliable.

Furthermore, the readers and Nicholas have reasons to believe any of them because different reasons and evidence are presented for each of them. Since it is emphasized many times in the novel that different documents can be forged, it is quite possible not to believe any of them. Nicholas is confronted with the invalidity of all the documents previously presented to him as evidence.

In many things, I merely wanted to discover some trace, some fingerprint: just to catch them out at their own skill at deception. *The newspaper cutting about Alison*. A different type from that of the *Holborn Gazette*, where the inquest report would have appeared. *Foulkes pamphlet*. Is in the British Museum Catalogue. Conchis' are not. (596)

Nicholas confronts the fact that he has been deceived by an illusion of reality by uncovering the forged documents one by one. He even learns that the artworks he saw in Conchis' house were not original (600). Another illustration is the moment when, after Nicholas is convinced that he has been left out of the game, June comes to him, first pretending to be in a difficult situation and wanting to stay with Nicholas, and then, when Nicholas confesses to Alison's suicide, pretending that she has stopped the game in earnest and is going to explain everything to him, making Nicholas believe that they have taken off their metaphorical masks (491).

Furthermore, in addition to all these contradictory statements and situations, Conchis repeatedly tests Nicholas psychologically. For example, he organizes a masked ritual and deliberately puts Nicholas in a state of fear and confusion. Moreover, he repeatedly introduces elements of fear before this final act. For example, he stages

a scene in which he is captured by soldiers in the forest, but later Conchis admits that it is all a performance (417). Amidst these contradictions, Nicholas struggles to comprehend whether the events being staged are a play, reality, or a psychological experiment, and the readers remain in the same uncertainty as he. Toward the end of the novel, Nicholas asks Conchis to reveal the truth, but the answers he receives plunge him into even greater uncertainty. Every clue left for Nicholas in his pursuit of the truth causes more confusion, such as seeing Conchis' grave and discovering that Alison is alive. Conchis constantly emphasizes that reality is relative and that what Nicholas thinks he understands is false. Constantly playing with the concept of reality, Conchis confuses Nicholas and the readers. Thus, they are constantly misled by new possibilities, and it is left to them to choose which one they want to believe or whether they create their own possibilities. The novel ends in confusion.

In essence, Fowles' kenotic novel *The Magus* has a structure that does not put its readers in a mould, does not narrow the meaning, and does not singularize. Throughout the novel, no event or document is presented as a reality. It has a plot in which nothing is clear and in which there are contradictory characters. The two main factors that enable this kind of narration, which puts the reader in a very active role, are Fowles' equating himself with his characters and the reader, and establishing God-Conchis and Nicholas-Reader similarities. The effective role of Conchis, who is presented many times throughout the novel as a god-like figure, is undeniable, but even he cannot become a clear authority figure because the most important and dominant element in the novel is the sense of doubt. By putting the reader in the same position as Nicholas, Fowles makes them doubt everyone and everything and distrust the characters and the plot. He does not bring the narrative to a clear conclusion, and, moreover, he creates a very meaningful ending. It becomes a pluralized structure of meaning, where Nicholas and every reader can make different inferences. Considered a kenotic writer for all these reasons, John Fowles renounces his own authorial authority and refrains from imposing his own ideas and beliefs. Similarly, he does not allow any character to manipulate the reader by making his ideology dominant. Thus, *The Magus* is not only a story of manipulation but also a narrative that questions the nature of the narrative and the role of the reader. The readers do not merely read the novel; they become a part of the narrative by making sense of it and thus become active subjects in the narrative universe of *The Magus*. In this process, even though they are

subjected to Conchis' manipulations and tricks, they do not trust him, and even though they sometimes fall under his influence, Conchis does not lead them to a final and absolute conclusion.

b. Dialogic Encounters in *The Magus*

John Fowles' 1966 novel *The Magus*, which follows Nicholas Urfe, a young man lacking maturity and a full understanding of himself and the world, who moves to a small Greek island to work as a teacher, stands out as a significant work to examine key postmodern elements. The novel explores how Nicholas undergoes a transformation after becoming entangled in the psychological plays and experiments orchestrated by Conchis. One of the most important features used to make such a mystery story more layered and deeper is the dialogic structure of the text because the voices of different characters and discursive textures of different works interact with each other, and out of this dialogy new meanings come out. When Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is examined in *The Magus*, it is seen that people and texts in dialogue intertwine and create the depth of meaning of the story. The layers created by Fowles begin with the dialogues between characters of different genders, opinions, and nationalities, and the hierarchical structure of the relationship between them. The dialogues between the characters in the novel not only convey information but also create a dynamic space where different voices, perspectives, and understandings of reality collide. In particular, the interactions between Nicholas Urfe and Conchis create a dialogic structure by intertwining different perspectives on power relations, identity dilemmas, and the concept of truth. Especially through the dialogues in the Godgame throughout the novel, a dialogic environment is created that causes Nicholas to question his own reality and meaning to acquire a constantly changing, non-fixed structure. In this context, Conchis' mode of communication, rather than directly conveying a particular truth, exhibits a structure that opens up meaning to negotiation and allows different perspectives to collide. In fact, Conchis himself is a huge part of the complicated ambiguity in the novel. As previously discussed, the nature of Conchis, whether benevolent or malevolent, remains shrouded in enigma throughout the narrative (Rubenstein, 330). Moreover, any clear and single meaning is disallowed.

It is crucial to note that it would not be correct to say that only Conchis and Nicholas are involved in this dialogic structure; almost all characters actively contribute to it. Although each character Nicholas encounters throughout the novel seems to have a specific identity, these identities turn out to be fluid over time. While this strengthens the polyphonic structure of *The Magus*, it also shows that the characters do not carry static and fixed meanings. Each character engages in a conflict with Nicholas and creates different meanings by supporting the main text. For instance, Alison seems to be real throughout the novel and is thought to have a genuine voice, but at the end of the novel, it becomes unclear whether she is also involved in Conchis' game or not. Yet she serves as a bridge to Nicholas' life before he enters Conchis' world with her dialogues and relationship with Nicholas. On the other hand, the sisters Julie/Lily and June/Rose, who are directly in this world, strengthen this dialogical network as characters who increase the mystery and confusion and confuse Nicholas by interacting with him many times in different ways with the many distinct roles they assume throughout the game. To illustrate further, even Mrs. de Seitas, one of the most seemingly insignificant characters throughout the narrative, initiates a conflict with Nicholas and creates the possibility of new meanings. At the end of the novel, Nicholas meets Mrs de Seitas, the mother of Julie/Lily and June/Rose. This character plays an important role in the dialogical structure of *The Magus* because she is a figure who shows that Nicholas cannot reach a certain reality even after leaving the world of Conchis. While talking about the answers to the reasons for the complicated Godgame, she says "Maurice once said to me, when I had just asked him a question rather like yours, he said, 'An answer is always a form of death'" (646). Thus, she makes it explicitly clear that the Godgame and the mysterious nature of life and the game are unfinalizable. In brief, everyone he encounters in the Godgame creates a different conflict. Alison, as an Australian, otherworldly, ill-equipped, reckless but also hysterical character, often clashes with Nicholas' thoughts. Moreover, throughout the game, the twin sisters take on different roles such as schizophrenic, actress, doctor, etc., becoming the voice of different segments of society and creating a different conflict each time. The characters in the novel interact with Nicholas in some way through verbal or non-verbal dialogue and become factors that increase the ambiguity and confusion of meaning in the novel. The most important dialogue occurs between Conchis and Nicholas because Nicholas is positioned below Conchis in terms of the dynamics of their relationship, and this situation causes Nicholas to search for meaning

constantly. Conchis' superiority of knowledge leads Nicholas to a process of learning and questioning.

Conchis makes use of many different artifacts, historical figures, and events in establishing his superiority of knowledge and his divine position. The second pillar of the dialogic structure of the novel is the gathering together of different texts in the process of meaning-making. *The Magus* contains many different artifacts and establishes a network of relationships between them. Apart from real historical figures such as Jung and many texts that are narrated as messages before the scenes to be staged throughout the game, it can basically be analyzed under three titles: *The Magus* and Conchis' *Godgame*, *The Godgame* and *The Three Hearts*, and *The Godgame* and *The Tempest*.

Initially, it can be argued that there are two master narratives in the novel because John Fowles equates himself with another writer, Conchis, and allows his game to exist within *The Magus*, shaping it. These two works greatly influence each other. Conchis' *Godgame* activates *The Magus*' readers. As Hans-Jochen Sander states: Events in *The Magus* present the first-person narrator initially as an onlooker, later on as an increasingly attentive reader of, and participant in, transactions of which Maurice Conchis, the novel's 'magus' seems to be the author" (Sander, 147). Their relationships with Nicholas and the readers are closely similar to each other. In this process of meaning-making in which Fowles equates himself with Conchis and his readers with Nicholas, it is Conchis' psychological plays in his game that complicate the narrative and make Nicholas and the readers more active. Likewise, the *Godgame* is in dialogue with many other works, but the two most prominent are the tale about *the Three Hearts* and *The Tempest*.

To begin with, *Three Hearts*, which tells the story of a man who has feelings for both twins at the same time, is used many times throughout the novel to show Nicholas what kind of story he is being drawn into, and becomes one of the options Nicholas considers when trying to interpret events. In other words, he begins to evaluate his complex situations and relationships in parallel with the predicaments of the characters in the movie. Nicholas tries to make sense of his own emotional contradictions through the relationships of the characters in the movie, which gives him different perspectives to interpret what is happening. Moreover, Nicholas himself,

a man with weaknesses, is really pushed to think about the twins. While he is looking at June/Rose, he thinks as follows:

I looked secretly at her profiled face, and had a glimpse of a world where they did both play the same part, where I had both the dark and the pale; Renaissance bawdy stories about girls who changed places in the night. I saw a future where, all right, of course, I married Julie, but this equally attractive and evidently rather different sister-in-law accompanied, if only aesthetically, the marriage (330).

Hence, Nicholas' weaknesses make him vulnerable to deception and manipulation, especially as an immature man who is particularly susceptible to sexual manipulation.

Another important work that is being referred to in the novel is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It helps layer *The Magus*, providing Shakespearean allusions (Wight and Grant 85). As Douglas A Wight and Kennet B. Grant also mention, "Obviously, *The Tempest* is the main literary allusion of the novel, original and revised versions alike. In both, Fowles makes extended reference to Shakespeare's enchanted setting by providing the Magus Island, the Bourani estate of Conchis, with a cast including Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand, and Caliban" (Wight and Grant, 86). Prospero, the protagonist of *The Tempest*, is a figure exiled to an island where he begins to control nature and human psychology. Similarly, Conchis is a playwright with his own magical power on the island of Phraxos. Prospero's influence on Ariel and Caliban creates a hierarchical relationship similar to Conchis' influence on Nicholas and other characters. Constantly emphasizing these parallels, Fowles uses a familiar Shakespearean play to give the reader an idea of Conchis' position and plans and to help the reader try to unravel Nicholas' role, but he does not bring these parallels to a clear conclusion. Several times throughout the novel, Fowles explicitly links Prospero, Ferdinand, and Miranda with Conchis, Nicholas, and Julie/Lily, but an examination of the endings of *The Tempest* and *The Magus* reveals that Fowles is reworking the Shakespearean play by writing an indefinite ending in which nothing is resolved, no question is answered. He does not allow a definite meaning to emerge. At the end of the original play, Prospero accepts the compromise and decides to return to Naples, finally revealing his true identity and allowing Ferdinand and Miranda to marry. Ferdinand, who has endured Prospero's ordeals for a long time, finally marries the woman he loves and prepares to become the future king of Naples. Nonetheless,

Nicholas, Fowles' Ferdinand, realizes that the girl he loves cannot be his Miranda. Prospero, Conchis, is not reconciled, but rather confused. Instead of gaining power and love, Nicholas is left in the middle of a mess with question marks, and his story goes nowhere. Lastly, all the stories Conchis tells about war and execution, the many artifacts he leaves for Nicholas to read, and the story of *the Prince and the Sorcerer*, which emphasizes the search for ultimate meaning, create a multi-layered meaning and all of them can play an active role in the interpretation of one another. Thus, many different perspectives and artifacts interact and contribute to the meaning of the work, in which dialogue is established in both the characters and the work's dimensions.

Firstly, Nicholas' conflicts with different characters in *The Magus* offer a rich field of analysis in terms of dialogism. Regarding different voices, perspectives, and beliefs clashing with each other and creating new meanings, Nicholas interacts with different characters on many different occasions, because throughout the novel, almost no one shows their true identity, but takes on many different roles. Each role represents a different section of society and has its own stance, and they are effective in the meaning-making process (Docherty, 120). Therefore, the novel is constantly reshaped by the interaction of different ideas. In the context of dialogism, it can be said that the main network of relationships in the novel is between Nicholas and Conchis, but others also influence the flow considerably. To illustrate, Alison represents the practical and emotional world. Her world is much more real than Nicholas' intellectual and abstract perspective. Her working-class background is quite different from Nicholas' privileged position. Her communication with Nicholas is crucial because while Nicholas tries to manipulate Alison emotionally, her loyalty and emotional intelligence reflect the truths that Nicholas does not want to face. Alison shows the true value of human emotions and relationships that Nicholas is always running away from.

Furthermore, the dialogue between them, which contributes a lot to the novel, changes as the plot thickens. In the beginning, Alison is emotional, hysterical, and in need of love, while Nicholas is callous and selfish, so there is an emotional conflict, and his relationship with Alison and his attitude towards her give the reader a lot of clues about Nicholas' personality and feelings. For example, in the following line, one can understand Alison and Nicholas' power relation and their contrasts, which do not change at first: "I don't want to hurt you and the more I ... want you, the more I shall. And I don't want you to hurt me, and the more you don't want me the more you will"

(35). What Alison says to Nicholas indicates that she is obsessed with him. Moreover, Nicholas insults her for her Australian identity and places himself in a superior position to Alison. "Apart from anything else, it was so much happier physically. Out of bed, I felt I was teaching her, anglicizing her accent, polishing off her roughnesses, her provincialisms; in bed, she did the teaching" (31). In the beginning, Alison's place in Nicholas' world is rather superficial. Nicholas rejects emotional ties in favor of his own independence, while Alison tries to explain to him that love is not a game. This conflict later causes Nicholas to grow emotionally and makes him more realistic in relationships. Moreover, this evolving relationship between Alison and Nicholas exemplifies dialogism, as their differing social backgrounds, emotional needs, and perspectives constantly clash and create new meanings throughout the narrative. After the power dynamic changes in the aftermath of the Godgame, Nicholas becomes a man with feelings and powerlessness, while Alison is indifferent and distant, left uncertain whether she was in cahoots with Conchis from the beginning. At the end of the narrative, Nicholas tells Alison, who says she hates him, that: "You can't hate someone who's really on his knees. Who'll never be more than half a human being without you" (676). In this last scene, for the first time in the novel, he speaks with real feeling, not manipulation. Again, this moment reinforces the dialogic structure of the novel, where relationships are not fixed but constantly negotiated through emotional and ideological exchanges. In short, his relationship and emotional conflict with Alison allow him to mature emotionally and recognize his feelings.

Other female characters also play a major role in his emotional transformation. Nicholas, who is quite self-centered at the beginning of the narrative and abuses women, tries to manipulate them and condescends to them. Towards the end of the novel, he manages to love a woman, or even any human being, as he/she is, without any interest. His relationship with the character Jojo helps the reader to understand this. Nicholas, who can now connect with a woman without even having sex, thinks about Kemp and Jojo, his companions, as follows: "I felt for her almost exactly what I felt for Kemp; great affection, and not the least desire" (657). At this juncture, the reader realizes that Nicholas is now able to care about people and love them unconditionally, but the twins, like Alison, have also contributed a lot to Nicholas' transformation. In particular, Nicholas' dialogical conflict with the character Julie/Lily reshapes his attitude towards women. Nicholas often tends to see the characters

Julie/Lily and June/Rose as twin fantasies. He treats them as girls in need of his help and puts himself in the role of a heroic savior, but his perception changes at the end of the narrative when he learns that he is the one who has been put in a difficult situation. Nicholas, who humiliates women in every way, finds himself ridiculed and humiliated by them. Realizing that he is being mocked throughout the Godgame, Nicholas notices that the characters Julie/Lily and June/Rose, in particular, love to humiliate him and deduces that they both want to play the 'abominable' ending of the game. In Nicholas' own words, "Probably they would have liked me to be thus doubly humiliated" (505). Moreover, he has feelings for Julie/Lily. He sees her in many different characters: schizophrenic, innocent lover, virgin, doctor. In each role, the way they relate is reshaped. It should be noted that Julie/Lily's different identities show Nicholas that women cannot be confined to a fixed role and that they are much more complex than he thinks. This process is a challenge to Nicholas' objectification of women.

Apart from women, the other characters with whom Nicholas is in conflict are lower-class individuals. Joe and the other supporting figures represent the segments of the population that Nicholas despises and considers intellectually worthless. They are a mirror against Nicholas' tendency to see himself as superior to other people. Nicholas initially ignores or belittles characters like Joe. For example, when Nicholas is furious at Joe, who interrupts his meeting with June and comes to take June away, he realizes that Joe, whom he had seen masked before, is black. With a condescending manner, Nicholas comments: "You look prettier with your jackal mask on" (332). When he finds out that Joe is mute, he continues: "I thought black eunuchs went out with the Ottoman Empire" (332). As can be inferred from Nicholas's attitude and discourse, he humiliates Joe through his blackness. However, he does not know that Joe, who plays the role of a stereotype as a mute and obedient black man in the Godgame, is actually a key figure who pawns Nicholas by undermining his pride in his identity and nationality.

As the game progresses, it becomes clear that the marginalized individuals are part of the game, and Nicholas is forced to confront his own condescending attitude. Nicholas acts with arrogance, thinking that he belongs to an elite class in society. However, when he finds himself in the most humiliated and helpless situation in the game, he realizes how misleading this perspective is. In the scene where the decor is dismantled and the house is abandoned, Joe approaches Nicholas in a superior but

understanding manner, and it becomes clear that he is actually superior to Nicholas and that he is not a dumb slave but an active participant in the game (460). In fact, when he returns to London after the Godgame, Nicholas spends time with lower-class people like Kemp and Jojo, who need their attention, giving up his intellectual arrogance, and getting rid of his whims. In brief, in Nicholas' transforming character and mindset, every character serves a purpose, none of them is unimportant or purposeless. They all interact with, conflict with, and change Nicholas in some way.

Nevertheless, the biggest conflict Nicholas experiences is between him and Conchis. Unlike other characters, the balance of power between Conchis and Nicholas never changes throughout the novel. There is always a God-creature, experimenter-subject, and master-apprentice relationship between them. Conchis forces Nicholas into a process of transformation through his manipulation and psychological coercion. In doing so, he shows no empathy or sympathy. Conchis represents intellectual elitism, the debate between free will and fate, embracing those outside science and imposing irrational ideas like mediumship. When Conchis talks about being psychic and traveling to other worlds, Nicholas apparently looks down (108). He is a God-like figure who holds knowledge and power in his hands and directs events. Nicholas, on the other hand, has a rational, materialist point of view, and wants to explain events logically but has not completed his development because for him everything is as solid and clear as black and white. Indeed, in one of his stories, Conchis alludes to the difference between Nicholas and Henrick, who is both blind and insane:

Here for the first time in my life, I was unsure of my standards, my beliefs, and my prejudices. I knew the man out there on the point was having an experience beyond the scope of all my science and all my reason, and I knew that my science and reason would always be defective until they could comprehend what was happening in Henrik's mind. I knew that Henrik was seeing a pillar of fire out there over the water, I knew that there was no pillar of fire there, that it could be demonstrated that the only pillar of fire was in Henrik's mind (319).

In this case, where Conchis claims to have lived in the past, readers can understand that the young Conchis is associated with Nicholas and Henrick with the old Conchis

and that this story serves Conchis' game, showing Nicholas that everything cannot be explained through logic.

Additionally, Nicholas categorizes events and people and cannot think deeply. By testing Nicholas, Conchis wants to accelerate his character development and shake his rigid worldview, convincing him that there can be no single, absolute truth. Before being subjected to Conchis' game, Nicholas differentiates women and races in very rigid ways. To illustrate, he categorizes women through different social norms. He has both beauty standards and moral prejudices. Before joining a party, he considers: "So I went down when I could hear that a lot of people had already arrived. The ugly girls – they always arrive first – would, I hoped, have been disposed of" (17). Then, he has really worthless and superficial ideas on women at the party. "A girl with spectacles, myopic eyes in an insipidly soft face, one of those soulful-intellectual creatures born to be preyed on and exploited by phonies, smiled coyly from the other side of the room" (21). Nevertheless, throughout the Godgame, Nicholas comes together with women whose identities are constantly changing, whom he cannot categorize, and thus overcomes his patronizing and limiting attitude towards women.

As mentioned before, Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic novel revolves around the idea that multiple consciousnesses exist independently and interact dynamically without a single, authoritative voice resolving their contradictions. Conchis embodies this principle by refusing to offer Nicholas definitive answers, thus preventing the closure of meaning. His language is evasive, paradoxical, and riddled with alternative possibilities, which forces Nicholas into a state of perpetual uncertainty. Conchis compels Nicholas to participate in the construction of meaning. Nicholas initially embodies a modernist, empirical mindset, seeking logical coherence in his experiences. He perceives Conchis as an enigma to be solved, believing that there must be an objective truth behind the Godgame. However, Conchis operates from a postmodern perspective, embracing ambiguity, paradox, and multiplicity. Their interactions create a constant dialogic struggle between rational certainty and interpretive fluidity. Nicholas, caught in the middle of these dialogic conflicting ideas, reacts throughout the novel "to resist a mystery, by trying to find reasonable and rational explanations for what is happening to him" (Rubenstein, 330). Nevertheless, Nicholas undergoes a transformation that aligns with Bakhtin's notion of becoming, where identity is shaped through an ongoing dialogic process rather than a fixed, static

essence. Conchis' influence forces Nicholas to abandon his initial arrogance and embrace a more fluid, self-reflective identity.

In addition, Conchis utilizes many different artistic and historical artifacts throughout the Godgame that he constructs while trying to cause this change. This creates the novel's intertextual dialogue. Fowles constructs *The Magus* in such a way that many works are intertwined and create meanings together, and uses intertextuality by preventing a single work from offering a single meaning. Throughout the novel, many works help *The Magus* to be better comprehended and, at times, to increase its mystery and complexity. It is possible to mention many artifacts in this context, but they can basically be grouped under a few headings. Undoubtedly, first, the artifact that most influenced and shaped the meaning of *The Magus* is Conchis' Godgame, in which layers of deception, performance, and shifting identities blur the line between fiction and reality. It positions Conchis as both a character within the text and a surrogate for Fowles himself. The metatextual dimension of *The Magus* is most evident in the parallel between Fowles and Conchis. Both figures operate as architects of illusion, constructing a layered reality that forces their subjects, Nicholas and the reader, to question truth and meaning. Conchis' manipulations reflect Fowles' own authorial techniques, particularly his use of unreliable narration, shifting perspectives, and open-ended storytelling. Moreover, the Godgame contributes greatly to the novel because it amplifies the novel's sense of narrative disorientation by denying closure and ensuring that no single interpretation prevails. Just as Nicholas believes he has unravelled the mystery, a new layer of deception is revealed, making it impossible to arrive at a final, monologic truth. By immersing Nicholas in an ever-evolving theatrical illusion, Conchis embodies the destabilizing force of intertextuality itself. His character orchestrates a living, evolving fiction within the fiction, making *The Magus* a novel that self-reflexively examines its own construction.

Apart from these two works, which coexist and produce meaning together, enabling a better understanding of each other, another work that facilitates the reader's interpretation is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Fowles presents a well-known play by a famous playwright and offers the reader the opportunity to connect and understand these stories and characters. It can be claimed that *The Tempest* and *The Magus* affect each other mutually. *The Tempest* can be re-evaluated, analyzed, and given new meanings by the reader and the author through Fowles' reworking. Initially, to recall

The Tempest, it is a tale of magic, power, and reconciliation set on a mysterious island. Fowles borrows from *The Tempest* both in structure and character archetypes, refashioning Shakespeare's magical experiment into a psychological and philosophical ordeal. In the novel, obvious similarities are drawn between Conchis and Prospero. Like Prospero, Conchis controls his isolated domain, manipulating Nicholas through elaborate deceptions. Nicholas often sees himself as Ferdinand. For instance, after having a good time with Julie, Nicholas thinks:

We had one last brief whispered discussion about the following weekend, but all that had receded now. The old man had been as good as his word, we had not been spied on, and I was at last sanctioned as the Ferdinand to his salt-haired, clinging, warm-mouthed Miranda. Whatever happened, the summer ahead, all life ahead, was ours. (382)

In his romantic relationship with Julie/Lily, he sees himself as Ferdinand and Julie/Lily as Miranda, but Fowles, of course, undermines these roles and transforms the characters in the original text. Initially arrogant and self-assured, Nicholas, like Ferdinand, is subjected to trials that force him to reconsider his identity and values. His journey through the Godgame parallels Ferdinand's emotional and intellectual transformation.

Other characters with similarities and associations are Julie/Lily and Miranda. Julie, one of the central figures in Conchis' manipulations, embodies aspects of Miranda's role as both a romantic interest and a symbol of an idealized feminine figure. As Sofia Muñoz Valdivieso states: "We could say that the text of the play erases Miranda as the virtuous and rather bland daughter whose main role is to obey her father and serve his purposes" (Valdivieso, 299). However, unlike Miranda's innocence, Julie/Lily's role is enriched with deception and ambiguity. At this juncture, it is imperative to underscore how Fowles reinterprets *The Tempest*, bestowing upon it a postmodern dimension. For instance, both works blur the line between reality and performance, but Shakespeare's play concludes with reconciliation and restored order, as Prospero forgives his enemies and prepares to leave the island. *The Magus*, however, offers no such clarity. Conchis vanishes, leaving Nicholas with more questions than answers, and the novel resists any singular interpretation. Furthermore, just as Prospero wields absolute control over the island's inhabitants, Conchis asserts

dominance over Nicholas' perceptions. However, while Prospero ultimately renounces his magic, Conchis remains enigmatic, leaving Nicholas in a state of uncertainty. Conchis is not an absolute authority, he wants Nicholas to seek and create meaning himself. In other words, by reframing Prospero's orchestrated lessons as a psychologically complex, unresolved play, Fowles creates a mutual dialogic interaction between these two works to allow for alternative meanings.

Intertwining and serving each other are the novels, documents, scripts, stories, and historical records that Conchis tells and makes Nicholas read. One of the most prominent throughout the *Godgame* is the *Three Hearts*, which they convince Nicholas they are trying to draw him into. They leave clues for Nicholas by creating fiction within fiction. *Three Hearts*, as told by the twins to Nicholas, is about the daughters of the British Ambassador who, on vacation on a Greek island, meet and fall in love with a Greek man with tuberculosis and on his way to death. The man falls in love with both girls in turn, and in the end they all end up miserable (346). Even at first glance, one can recognize the similarities between this story and the game set up for Nicholas. It is presented to Nicholas almost as a foreshadowing. Ultimately, the game is not shaped in this way, but it is enough to confuse Nicholas and manipulate him into fantasizing about the twin sisters. Indeed, the fact that they tell him that this scenario will be played out on him is to direct how he will think and feel, and he starts to think about both girls.

As a matter of fact, they employ this method on Nicholas over and over again. In fact, it is often like a forewarning of the next act to be staged. To illustrate, immediately after Conchis tells Nicholas the story of Colonel Anton and the resistance fighters, he is subjected to a similar experience in the forest, as if the stage is curtained and Nicholas is taken prisoner by the soldiers (391). Thus, a connection is established between this story and the psychological experiment Nicholas undergoes, and Nicholas is given the tools to interpret the events and search for meaning. Aside from the numerous references to other texts in *The Magus*, the last one to be considered is the story of *The Prince and the Sorcerer*. The story of a prince who does not believe in the existence of princesses, islands, and God and goes to neighboring lands in search of the truth can be paralleled with Nicholas' attitude towards women, non-European countries, and God because he does not believe in or value them either. In the story, the prince, having learned of the existence of other islands, princesses, and gods, turns

to his father and blames him for deceiving him. But when his father tells him that he was deceived by a sorcerer, the prince returns to the other island to settle accounts. There he learns that the person who previously introduced himself as a god is a sorcerer, but the prince's father is also a sorcerer, so both are deceiving him (567). Therefore, the prince cannot come to an absolute conclusion about life, about the existence of princesses, islands, and gods. At this point, the role of sorcerer-god belongs to Conchis, who shows Nicholas that it is impossible to arrive at a single, true meaning in life. Therefore, this story in *The Magus* presents the lesson Nicholas must learn from the Godgame. In this way, it sheds light on both the Godgame and *The Magus*, reinforcing its meaning.

For the reasons mentioned earlier, unlike classical works that present a single narrative from a single perspective, *The Magus* strengthens its narrative in the intertextual dimension, creating a plurality of meaning within itself and adding new interpretations to external texts. With many works mutually influencing and contributing to each other, an intertwined, complex structure is formed, which both increases the mystery and makes the work open to interpretation. While the great interaction of *The Magus* directly with the Godgame makes the work multifaceted, the text becomes multi-layered thanks to the different works used within the Godgame, and the reader has the chance to bring new interpretations by seeing many different parallels. In this context, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is key because it offers a postmodern interpretation of that work, and through that work, *The Magus* can be understood more clearly. Apart from this, Nicholas is presented with many artifacts and documents that serve as foreshadowing throughout the novel, so that both he and the reader collect many different clues and pursue the truth, but with the story of *The Prince and the Sorcerer* at the end, it is stated that this search for truth is futile and that there will be no absolute truth in *The Magus* or the Godgame. Apart from this complex dialogue established in the intertextual dimension, the dialogue between characters is also very important because *The Magus* presents an interaction in which all characters interact with Nicholas and influence and direct him in some way. In this novel, which draws attention with its polyphonic structure, many different characters are created, and each of them is given an active role and included in the dialogic conflict. Thanks to the characters and narratives that interact with each other in this way, the novel draws attention with its multi-layered structure.

c. Polyphonic Voices in *The Magus*

In the dialogical structure of *The Magus*, one of the most striking features supporting it is polyphony. The coexistence of multiple voices and their representations from different segments of society gathering to form polyphony is one of the defining features of the novel. Polyphonic structure in the Bakhtinian sense is especially the voice of individuals who are subordinated and marginalized in society and classical literature. Throughout the novel, the events Nicholas experiences and the characters he encounters are equated with each other, representing different ideologies, worldviews, and perceptions of reality, creating a polyphonic narrative. In this context, *The Magus* presents a rich and complex structure because its polyphonic structure can be analyzed on two levels. The first is the fact that individuals from different backgrounds, ages, and beliefs, such as men and women, black and white, peasants and urbanites, can act together in Conchis' game. The second is that the different roles they take on in the play are the representations of stereotyped characters in society, and all of them are given a voice in Conchis' game. In other words, in *The Magus*, this polyphony is constructed through the ever-changing perception of the protagonist Nicholas Urfe; throughout the novel, different characters, especially Conchis, take on a new role each time, guiding and manipulating Nicholas within ever-changing narratives. This dynamic demonstrates not only the multi-dimensionality of the characters but also that fundamental concepts such as truth, identity, and free will cannot be explained by a single authoritarian discourse. It is emphasized that these concepts, which are handled and interpreted in a polyphonic structure, can have different meanings and representations for everyone. The Godgame, organized by Conchis and the ever-changing roles of the other characters, makes a monological narrative impossible, positioning the reader as a part of this dialogic process. Thus, the novel presents an open-ended and polyphonic narration that causes not only Nicholas but also the reader to question their own perceptions.

To elaborate further, one of the most powerful aspects of polyphonic narrative is the inability of a particular group or authority to establish absolute dominance. Fowles' egalitarian and postmodern narrative style is also very evident in *The Magus*

(Salami, 268). In this context, *The Magus* equates Alison, an Australian woman who feels alienated, and Nicholas, an Englishman, in the same narrative. Similarly, the intellectual Conchis, the peasant Maria, the actor Anton, the mysterious characters Julie/Lily and June/Rose, and Joe coexist in the novel, creating many different representations. The most significant point here is that although Conchis appears to be the initiator and director of the play, he is not allowed to remain an absolute authority within the polyphonic structure of the novel. The other characters in the game are not only figures that support Conchis' narrative but also actors/actresses who contribute to the meaning of the novel with their own independent voices and perspectives. This allows the novel to move from a monological narrative to a polyphonic structure. In this kind of narration created by Fowles, women and people of different nationalities are not only part of Conchis' plan but also bring their own perspectives into the game, constantly changing Nicholas' perception. Although Conchis' role is directive, these characters are not passive carriers of a particular message; on the contrary, they contribute to the meaning of the novel in various ways.

To demonstrate, although the female characters of the novel initially seem to be trapped in Nicholas' standpoint since the novel is told from his perspective, in time they transcend these boundaries and create their own stories because Fowles does not allow either Nicholas or the readers to know their actual identity or the real reasons behind their acts. That's why Nicholas cannot narrate them from his own standpoint. Moreover, Julie/Lily, Alison, and other female figures are treated not only as instruments that shape Nicholas' experience but as individuals who exist with their own unique narratives. Although Julie/Lily seems to be only a mysterious and seductive character at first, she constantly assumes different roles in the game, causing Nicholas to question his reality. However, in this process, she too becomes not only a figure guided by Conchis but also an individual who, at times exceeds Nicholas' expectations and perceptions. In a similar vein, although Alison is a prominent figure in Nicholas' past, he is not the sole determining factor in her romantic life. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that she, too, has her own experiences, choices, and psychological depth. Alison's presence causes Nicholas to question his perception of women, while at the same time providing the reader with a different voice without being confined to a one-sided male narrative. Furthermore, the reader witnesses what people of different nationalities, like Alison, feel and think. When Nicholas meets

Alison, he realizes that she has two accents; one Australian, the other almost British (18). From the beginning of the novel, Alison is a character with a double identity, who cannot feel that she belongs to both nationalities and feels alien wherever she goes. Again, in a different part, Nicholas thinks about Alison as follows: “And her voice, only very slightly Australian, yet not English, veered between harshness, faint nasal rancidity, and a strange salty directness. She was bizarre, a kind of human oxymoron” (19). Throughout the novel, Alison’s in-between, not fully belonging structure is indicated many times by her accent, movements, thoughts, and feelings. Moreover, Alison herself expresses these complex and intense feelings on several occasions. Alison emphasizes how society alienates her as an Australian woman and how she is made to feel because she is a free-spirited woman. In other words, she is not a character without a voice, unable to shout out her feelings and express how she is doubly marginalized both as an Australian and as a woman, but she expresses herself to the reader and Nicholas. Thus, we do not read Alison from the perspectives of Nicholas or society, but rather we hear her own voice and sense of rebellion. In other words, her sense of not belonging and alienation from others is sometimes emphasized or the distant attitude of the European individuals is contrasted with the warmer and friendlier stance of the Greeks, but all are allowed to show themselves rather than a biased narrative.

When these independent characters are examined in more detail, the importance of the roles they play becomes clear because these characters, who can take on different characters, act freely and create fluidity in the personalities they create, portraying stereotyped people in society, following Nicholas’ weaknesses and prejudices throughout the novel. These portrayals are crucial in terms of giving representation to different segments of society. Furthermore, these stereotyped and prejudiced marginalized individuals are liberated in a postmodern context. One of the characters that Fowles liberates from being stereotyped and silenced is Lily Montgomery. The first appearance of the character Julie/Lily is as Lily, a woman from Conchis’ past. With her clothes, speech, mannerisms, and demeanor, she is portrayed as a traditional Victorian woman. For this reason, Nicholas perceives her as a completely innocent, traditional, and emotional woman, although he knows it is a psychological game of Conchis and she is not Conchis’ ex-fiancée. Her delicacy and her gentle and quiet nature coincide with Nicholas’ conventional expectations of

women. At this juncture, although Lily seems to be a figure that completes Conchis' story, she is also a representation of the ideal female figure imposed by society. In Western literature and culture, the representation of the ideal woman has historically been constructed as a submissive, gentle, emotional, sacrificial figure who exists in the shadow of the man. As Michael Benjamin Warren Sinclair states, while mentioning the history of women: "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues-piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Sinclair, 76). Especially in Victorian and early 20th-century narratives, the ideal woman is a figure whose sexuality is repressed and whose body and desires are controlled. Moreover, instead of displaying an individual will, she is defined as dependent on her family or husband. Her speech and thoughts must remain within social boundaries. Women, whose main role is to be a mother and a wife, whose access to the public sphere is restricted, are usually defined by their emotional world, while reason and logic are attributed to men. The character of Lily Montgomery is employed in the novel as a representation of this period and of the stereotypical woman. This character, however, is also part of the polyphonic structure of the novel, as her role in the narrative is not just one-dimensional but becomes a platform for multiple voices and interpretations. By portraying her as both an idealized Victorian woman and a subject of postmodern liberation, Fowles invites readers to challenge these fixed categories and explore the complexity of identity beyond simple stereotypes. The polyphony in her portrayal allows for a more nuanced understanding of gender and societal expectations.

To put it another way, Fowles, in *The Magus*, consciously uses the traditional ideal female figure but radically subverts it. Due to Nicholas' mind categorizing women as virgins and whores, Julie/Lily's innocence is used to manipulate him. As Katherine Tarbox notes about Nicholas Urfe, he has always had difficulty understanding the complex relationship between sex and love. He divides women into two classes: those who are meant to be loved and those who are meant to be used. Consequently, his affairs with women are deformed by his inability to see beyond arbitrary categories" (Tarbox, 28). For this reason, Julie/Lily gives voice to this representation of femininity by assuming the roles of an innocent, virgin and docile, shy woman. In this polyphonic structure, the representation of women who are relegated to a secondary position in society can both reflect the marginalization of

women due to these prejudices and use the hierarchical order between men and women as a means of manipulation against Nicholas.

For instance, when Julie/Lily first appears, Nicholas sees her as a woman from the past, fragile, delicate, demure, and angelic. The way she dresses, the way she speaks and her attitudes appeal to Nicholas' subconscious image of the ideal woman. Thus, the illusion is created that she is a woman who fits the roles the male narrator ascribes to her. However, Julie/Lily wears a mask, and in time we realize that Julie/Lily is much more than this passive woman. She does not have a single identity; she represents the fluidity of identity through the different roles she plays. However, Nicholas' categorization and stereotyping of women causes her to play a role not far from Lily when she turns into Julie. Although Julie is a more modern and working version of Lily, she is shy and pure, which bewitches Nicholas very much. Thus, Julie/Lily actually uses these prejudices in society as a weapon against Nicholas. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that she is actually one of the mysterious and unreliable narrators. Especially in the sexual scene with Joe, it is revealed that she is not at all the woman she portrays and that she is a free, intelligent, and untrustworthy woman who mocks Nicholas (537). For this reason, Nicholas, who throughout the novel treats Julie/Lily as the brave and knowledgeable man who saves the innocent and passive woman, realizes that he is actually the weak one. Thus, Fowles undermines the traditional image of women in the classical narrative.

The other unconventional character, June/Rose, similarly outwits Nicholas by manipulating his conventional perception. June/Rose is presented as a seductive and mysterious figure who confuses Nicholas when she first appears before him. June/Rose appears much more independent and dangerous than her sister. She is a morally ambiguous character who seduces men. June/Rose does not openly offer him anything, but she constantly stimulates his curiosity. Especially in the scene where she undresses in front of Nicholas and lies down recklessly, it is clear that she is trying to draw Nicholas into the story of the *Three Hearts*. June/Rose manages to attract Nicholas' attention and shows that he can desire both twin sisters, and Nicholas thinks: "I began to have trouble keeping my eyes off that body. The bikini top barely covered the breasts, and the bottom half was tied at the hips by white laces that let the skin show through (358). She aims to make Nicholas question his thought patterns and desires. In this role, Fowles plays a stereotypical seductress, the opposite of the ideal woman

in society and in the canon, making the reader feel as if they are reading an ideal woman-marginalized woman dichotomy in the service of a typical male story, but both Julie/Lily and June/Rose are acting. Both are strong characters who are actively involved in the game and manipulate Nicholas. The important point here is that different representations of femininity coexist to form a polyphony, and moreover, none of them serve Nicholas' patriarchy. In this way, Fowles introduces a polyphonic structure wherein multiple representations of femininity, the innocent ideal woman and the seductive, morally ambiguous one, coexist and challenge each other.

Last but not least, black people, marginalized in the traditional understanding, are also given a new perspective. Fowles equates black and white people, allowing them to serve the polyphonic structure together, using social perception in doing so. The prejudices of Nicholas, an arrogant Englishman, against blacks are one of the substantial factors used in the game. In the Godgame, Joe plays a mute black servant. He cannot question or refuse, he only follows the orders of his master Conchis. He is often turned into a horrible and marginalized object in the Godgame. He appears as a trivial figure who gets things done by brute force and intimidates people. Most importantly, there are references to the social repression symbolized by muteness because, for centuries, black people have been on the side of being humiliated and denied a voice in society. As mentioned before, Nicholas dislikes Joe throughout the game, and insults and ridicules him. However, when the game ends and the scene is shot, it is realized that Joe is not actually mute; he is just a good actor who plays his role very well. A black character, whom Nicholas despises, is actually one of the important figures who plays an active role in the game, in which Nicholas turns into a pawn, and when his role is over, he turns into someone who shares his wisdom with Nicholas. Moreover, he appears to be in love with Julie/Lily, with whom Nicholas is in love, and Joe is in every respect in a better position than Nicholas. Indeed, after the Godgame, Nicholas goes through a process of transformation and he starts to accept others like the blacks and people from the middle or lower classes. As Barbara Bell Filippidis states: "His acceptance of middle-class social and racial prejudices becomes apparent with his reaction to Joe, the black American who acts the role of Annubis in the masque, and to Kemp, the bohemian landlady of the flat he takes while waiting for Alison to reappear" (Filippidis, 37). Thus, Fowles breaks the traditional prejudices against blacks and criticizes Nicholas' limited worldview, because, due to his

traditional, limited, and discriminatory point of view, he is subjected to all kinds of manipulations and is eventually humiliated.

To conclude, John Fowles, in *The Magus*, supports polyphonic structure in many different ways. In this novel, which highlights the plurality of meaning, the impossibility of reaching truth from a single perspective, and the multifaceted nature of truth itself, Fowles, as a kenotic writer, expands meaning through a dialogic structure. In order to do this, he needs people of different cultures, beliefs, thoughts, ages, and genders to interact with each other, and *The Magus* is rich in this polyphonic structure. This is because Fowles also unfolds polyphony layer by layer. None of the characters in the novel just exist, they all serve a purpose, they all have an effective role, and they can represent themselves and give life to different identities. Therefore, while characters can bring polyphony when they already exist as themselves, their ability to shed light on different segments of society through acting and subvert centuries-old traditional narratives contributes significantly to the pluralization of meaning. This novel challenges traditional hierarchical distinctions by establishing an egalitarian framework that equalizes men and women, Europeans and Orientals, urbanites and peasants, as well as different racial groups. By creating a space in which all these identities can represent themselves, the text subverts the conventional monologic structure and instead constructs a postmodern, polyphonic narrative that embraces multiplicity and inclusivity. This text, which constantly confuses the reader along with Nicholas, constantly changes the scenario by establishing a dynamic narrative, making the readers a part of this polyphony, involving them in the process of creating meaning, and obliging them to evaluate different perspectives rather than adhering to a single interpretation. Thus, *The Magus* becomes a dynamic and open-ended narrative that includes not only the polyphony of the characters but also the intellectual participation of the reader, because one of the most important consequences of this structure is that the readers, just like Nicholas, realize that they cannot reach absolute truths. The fact that each character wears different masks, assumes different identities, and that meaning is constantly shaped on an unstable ground emphasizes through this polyphonic structure that the truth presented in the novel can never be reduced to a single person or point of view.

d. *The Magus* and the Language of Multiplicity

In the Bakhtinian sense, heteroglossia sheds light on differences in language and discourse from a social perspective, because the discursive differences and speech genres of people, which vary according to their age, gender, nationality and the dynamics of their relationship with the person they are speaking to, provide insight into their position in society. As mentioned earlier, Bakhtin's theorized concept of heteroglossia illuminates the backgrounds and social roles of characters. Therefore, within the framework of postmodern literature, heteroglossia helps to understand relationship dynamics and conflicts in polyphonic works. In this context, language emerges as a pivotal element in comprehending the dialogic structure of polyphonic works. Postmodern writers demonstrate the flexibility and variability of language, the roles of specific groups within the social structure, and how these boundaries are delineated by language (Ganaie, 628). They also illustrate how these boundaries can be subverted by linguistic changes. John Fowles, who can be seen as one of these writers, utilizes the important effect of language while allowing different ideas and beliefs to clash with each other and create new meanings in the polyphonic and fair environment he creates in *The Magus*. While *The Magus* brings together male-female, white-black, old-young, western-eastern characters and includes representations from different segments of society in the Godgame, it allows everyone to use a unique form of expression. This way, the characters not only represent the groups to which they belong, but also reveal the power relations between these groups. However, it should be noted here that Fowles creates a structure that mocks these power dynamics and subverts them by emphasizing their artificiality. In order to achieve this, it is demonstrated that different characters use different discourses in different roles and dynamics, and often turn these linguistic differences into a tool to manipulate others. Therefore, the rich heteroglot structure in *The Magus* serves multiple purposes, deepening the text and contributing to its critical structure.

Furthermore, the heteroglot structure of the novel, which makes it more layered, is created not only by the language used by the characters, but also by intertextuality, which is another factor that creates its dialogue, and it is comprehended that different texts have different forms of discourse. The mysterious and complex texts and psychological games created by Fowles and Conchis become more difficult

to understand with the combination of distinct texts, increasing the tension for both Nicholas and the readers. Within such a rich structure, supporting texts such as letters, newspaper clippings, declarations, poems, scripts, and plays each have a different style. These differences show that language is differentiated at the textual level and appeals to different groups in different ways. Thus, Fowles, who aims to present a polyphonic and polysemous narrative instead of a single portrayal, opposes traditional singularism with texts. Since each text has its own language, narrator, and discourse, multiple narrative dimensions and standpoints are created within the novel. For example, letters use an intimate and colloquial language, while newspapers and communiques use an objective and distanced style. On the other hand, poems and other literary texts contain a more abstract, symbolic, and open-to-interpretation language. They nourish the mystical and unknowable structure of the novel and lead the reader to think in terms of the subconscious and metaphors. Moreover, these texts can directly increase the kind of impact of the novel on the reader, because just when we think the narrative has settled on a point, a text with another form of discourse enters and subverts expectations. To illustrate, a personal letter of confession following an official document undermines the certainty of the previous information, causing the reader to lose trust. In brief, throughout the novel, different texts and the discursive variations they contain become crucial factors that support the novel and make it no longer a traditional narrative. Fowles utilizes both characters and different texts to critically and parodically address the place of language in society and the literary world.

Initially, one of the reasons that makes it easier and important to examine the concept of heteroglossia in *The Magus* is that almost every character becomes more than one representation because they take on many different personas throughout the novel, and each character has a unique form of discourse and way of relating to others. For this reason, the power dynamics between the characters change frequently and the discourse and tone they use towards each other also vary. If we first analyse the heteroglot structure of the novel in terms of assuming different roles, we can consider the character of Julie/Lily, because Nicholas sees Julie/Lily in two different names and in many different roles. First, Julie/Lily appears on the stage as a reflection of Lily Montgomery, an old acquaintance of Conchis, a noble English lady from the old days. In this role, Julie/Lily uses a very distant and polite language. She reflects the past she represents not only in the way she dresses and behaves, but also in the way she speaks

and her choice of words. As an illustration, her dialogue with Nicholas Urfe in a part can be mentioned.

I walked beside her. She was only an inch or two shorter than myself, and she walked slowly, slimly, a shade self-consciously, looking out to sea, avoiding my eyes, as if she now was shy. I looked around. Conchis was out of hearing. 'Have you been here long?' 'I have not been anywhere long.' She gave me a quick look, softened by a little smile. We had gone round the other arm of the terrace, into the shadow cast by the corner of the bedroom wall. 'An excellent return of service, Miss Montgomery.' 'If you play tennis, I must play tennis back.' 'Must?' 'Maurice must have asked you not to question me.' 'Oh, come on. In front of him, okay. I mean, good God, we're both English, aren't we?' 'That gives us the freedom to be rude to each other?' 'To get to know each other.' 'Perhaps we are not equally interested in ... getting to know each other.' (176)

Hence, Julie/Lily's gestures and her responses to Nicholas suggest that she is aloof, and her language is very formal and cold. Her relationship with Nicholas, who treats her sceptically, is very superficial and limited. Knowing that his perception is being manipulated, Nicholas does not believe in the role of Julie/Lily as this mysterious woman from the past, who is very similar to the woman he sees in the paintings as Lily Montgomery. Then, when Julie/Lily is introduced to him as a schizophrenic patient who takes on different roles and believes herself to be one of these personalities, Julie/Lily's speech becomes irritable and hysterical as she plays this role overtly. In the scene where Conchis interrupts Julie/Lily's conversation with Nicholas, Julie/Lily behaves in a way that reinforces the schizophrenia play.

Julie's voice was scalding, very nearly hysterical. 'You gave me a shock! How could you do that!' I jerked another look back at her. Her eyes were dilated, as if mesmerized by Conchis. She almost spat her next words at him. 'I hate you!' 'My dear, you are over-excited. Go and rest.' 'No!' 'I insist.' 'I hate you!' (301)

When she moves out of the role of Lily Montgomery and into the role of the schizophrenic Julie, the differences in her behavior and the way she speaks are remarkable. Her verbal expression is characterized by an uninhibited manner, marked by the overt and enthusiastic articulation of her emotions. An intricate web of relationships begins to form between Nicholas and Julie/Lily, who is also skeptical of this role. Nonetheless, in the Godgame, the role she takes on and maintains for a long time becomes that of an actress on Nicholas' stage. Julie/Lily appears more realistic and normal in this place that Nicholas believes in and connects with, using a much more sincere language. In this role, Julie/Lily uses a more colloquial language and makes her language more innocent and submissive, often creating the image of a woman who trusts and takes shelter of Nicholas. She therefore appears to cooperate with Nicholas and allows him to feel useful and intelligent.

June/Rose, Joe, and Mrs. Seitas are the other characters who display different forms of discourse through their different roles. First of all, June/Rose's first appearance on stage is as Julie/Lily's reckless and brave twin. In this role she always uses a more relaxed language with Nicholas and her sister. For instance, in a scene where she meets Nicholas and kisses him pretending to be Julie/Lily, she behaves indifferent and sarcastic.

'Now. Where is she?' 'She couldn't come. And don't be so rough.'
 'Well, where is she?' The girl was silent. I said, 'That wasn't funny.'
 'I thought it was rather exciting.' She sat, then glanced up at me.
 'And so did you.' 'For Christ's sake I thought you ... 'but I didn't
 bother to finish the sentence. 'You're June?' 'Yes. If you're
 Nicholas.' (323)

She continues this relaxed way of speaking in the scenes where she spends time with Julie/Lily and Nicholas. However, in the scene where she persuades Nicholas to halt the play, she abruptly adopts a more serious and distant demeanour in her role as a psychiatrist (487). She convincingly persuades Nicholas that she is not an actor, but rather a representation of an alternative group. Likewise, Joe undergoes a major change in the text. Since he plays the role of a mute black servant, he does not speak in words, but his language can be supplemented by his gestures and facial expressions. His facial expressions and physical interventions throughout the Godgame, when he plays a wild

and rude man, contrast with his polite and gentlemanly nature as the scene dissolves. It is understood that he is actually more intelligent and elite than he appears in the play.

Mrs. Seitas is another one of the characters who draws attention with the changes in her words and the way she uses language, because she reveals the role she plays in a very short time and changes the language and discourse she uses instantly. Thus, she very sharply emphasizes the artificiality of the roles and hierarchical structure created by language. When Nicholas first finds her, she plays the role of the girls' half-witted, uncultured mother, unable to pronounce words correctly, unable to form coherent sentences, and portraying the image of a woman who is not at all intelligent. She is too silly at first. Upon Nicholas' arrival, she adopts the following attitude:

She said, 'I honestly don't think I can tell you anymore.' Benjie whispered something. She laughed and stood up in the sunlight and took his hand. 'We're just going to show Mr Orfe a picture, then it's back to work.' 'It's Urfe, actually.' She put her hand to her face, in shame. 'Oh dear. There I go again.' The boy jerked her other hand; he too was ashamed of her silliness. (612)

Mrs. Seitas, with this attitude and manner of speaking, plays the role of someone who does not know how to speak or behave. On the other hand, when Nicholas leaves the house and soon returns, realizing that he has been lied to, she directly removes the metaphorical mask from her face and shows Nicholas, who has just treated her in a patronizing manner, that she is actually the one who has the knowledge and power in their relationship. Mrs. Seitas employs a language that is characterized by crafty and nuanced changes in pronunciation and word selection. "'You do know who I am?' It was her calmness; I could not believe she knew what they had done at Bourani. 'Yes, Mr Urfe. I know *exactly* who you are.' Her eyes warned me, and annoyed me (615). From this point on, she is much more informed, calm, and cunning. In this way, she indicates to Nicholas their roles and positions through language. In short, each player in the Godgame changes style many times and plays with Nicholas by making language a tool.

The heteroglot structure formed by the characters' use of different languages can also be analysed in the context of power dynamics because language is an

important weapon that reinforces and stabilizes social structure and hierarchies, while Fowles shows that this power of language is created and artificial by using its flexibility. For instance, Conchis consciously uses language to manipulate Nicholas and stabilize the hierarchy between them. His use of language is based on strategies of manipulation, establishing authority, and questioning reality. Conchis often uses ambiguous phrases and vague descriptions in his conversations, creating a constant state of doubt in Nicholas' mind. Much of Conchis' information is contradictory. First, he implies that something is true, then he presents another plot point that invalidates his previous knowledge, such as in the scene where he explicitly states that he is lying. Therefore, instead of questioning the truth of what Conchis is saying, Nicholas is caught up in her logic games and is controlled by him in his attempts to understand the truth. Nicholas can only get as close to Conchis or ask as many questions as Conchis allows him to. Although he resists this order on many occasions by trying to mock Conchis, his control is always felt in the language between them from beginning to end. Moreover, in maintaining this power dynamic, Conchis often speaks with a conscious theatricality. Not only what he says but also how he says it is quite important. Conchis often uses formal and academic language, placing himself in a position intellectually superior to Nicholas. In his complex and literary language, he uses long sentences embellished with philosophical and mythological references. Conchis' speech in the ongoing line about the war can exemplify his way of speaking with definitions: "I will tell you what war is. War is a psychosis caused by an inability to see relationships. Our relationship with our fellow men. Our relationship with our economic and historical situation. And above all, our relationship to nothingness. To death" (425). He analyses life and people with his speeches in an imposing and judgmental tone. Therefore, Conchis, who often uses the storytelling technique in his speeches, speaks like a sage, constantly offering teachings and messages to Nicholas, which supports his superior position.

Moreover, he uses the imperative mood in his discourse, but he does so as if he is stating an inescapable truth rather than giving a direct command. Opposing Nicholas, who is skeptical and questioning, who constantly expects clear answers and tries to act rationally by using plain language, stands Conchis with his theatrical narrative style and his cold but instructive style that creates uncertainty. In short,

language is one of the most effective tools in the formation of the hierarchical situation between these two and in determining their roles in this relationship.

Other linguistic power dynamics that support the heteroglot structure are Alison and Jojo's relationship with Nicholas. First of all, Alison, one of the key characters of the novel, displays complex attitudes in her relationship with Nicholas. One of the most ambiguous situations in the novel is Alison's involvement in the Godgame from the beginning. When Nicholas returns to England and witnesses the preparations for the next sacrifice of the game, the reader may suspect that Nicholas met Alison soon after he decided to go to Greece, but this remains one of the greatest enigmas of the novel. In this case, it is quite possible to say that the power dynamic in Alison's relationship with Nicholas is initially in Nicholas' favour, even though she is acting or not, because when they first meet, Alison is an Australian girl who does not know what to do, who does not feel like she belongs anywhere and who behaves outside the norm. For Nicholas, who thinks of himself as a cynical, intellectual Englishman, this of course, leads to Alison's inferior positioning. Alison, especially when they first meet, is reckless, incoherent, and slang-speaking, a character outside the ideal woman defined by society. For instance, when she goes to Nicholas' house to take a shower, they have the following conversation: "‘I’ve been warned off you.’ ‘Maggie?’ ‘She says she doesn’t want a rough-house.’ ‘Fucking cow. She’s my potential sister-in-law’" (20). Alison behaves out of the norm for a woman by being reckless and abusive. This leads Nicholas, who embraces social prejudices, to categorize her in a bad way. Nicholas sees her as rude, uneducated and incompetent. Therefore, he uses a patronizing and suggestive language, thinking that he is mentoring her (31). Alison's expression is completely sincere and natural, even at times hysterical, exuberant and overly emotional. Before Alison reads her suicide note to Nicholas, she says: "‘If I killed myself, you’d be pleased. You’d be able to go round saying, she killed herself because of me. I think that would always keep me from suicide. Not letting some lousy shit like you get the credit’" (26). Moreover, after Nicholas reads the note, the following dialogue takes place between them: "‘You can’t mean this.’ ‘I wrote it today in coffee-time. If I’d known how to quietly kill myself in the canteen I’d have done it.’ ‘It’s ... well, hysterical.’ ‘I am hysterical.’ It was almost a shout" (26). Afterwards, Nicholas comforts the crying Alison by making promises he will not keep. Seeing her as inadequate and needy, Nicholas satisfies his ego by

taking advantage of this relationship dynamic. Her style initially strikes Nicholas as exaggerated, calculated, and vulgar, but after confronting the insincere and manipulative forms of discourse in the Godgame, he longs for Alison's sincerely real, human self. Therefore, Nicholas, who had placed himself in a superior position vis-à-vis Alison, later comes to appreciate the intimate language and style that Alison offers.

Finally, after witnessing the complexities of Julie/Lily, June/Rose, and Alison and becoming a victim of the Godgame, Nicholas changes the way he relates to Jojo. Although he approaches her with pure and human feelings without trying to benefit or manipulate her, he actually feels wise around her and is the one who guides Jojo and takes the advantage of the power dynamic between them. Jojo appears as a naïve, uncultured, and lonely girl. Her language and style are inadequate and far removed from the intellectual environment. Her word choices and pronunciation are unique and reflect her social and educational background. Her specific expression is in the following lines: "I couldna help it. That night we went to Stonehenge. I didna sleep a wink all the wa' back. Ijuist sat there pretendin' [...] 'Not always. Mebbe a wee once in a while'" (660-662). Her adoption and use of this form of expression affects the way Nicholas approaches her and makes her perceive him as more real but more helpless. Hence, the language he uses towards her is shaped by this relationship, Nicholas tries to speak more calmly and wisely. Additionally, as can be seen in the ongoing dialogue, Nicholas is the one who speaks sincerely but is in a superior position in their communication: "'Sposin' she...' 'Doesn't come?' 'Yes.' 'I'll marry you.' 'That's a fib.' 'Give you lots of fat babies with fat cheeks and grins like monkeys.' 'Och you cruel monster'" (662). Ultimately, the way Nicholas interacts with different characters throughout the novel is shaped by the language and discourse they use.

Last but not least, in *The Magus*, heteroglossia is highly supported by intertextual structure. The discursive differences used in different literary forms, which intertwine and together form a set of meanings, increase the depth of the novel. Language is used in different ways in the many texts and documents that are presented to Nicholas as evidence or foreshadowing during the Godgame. We can start with the letters, which have an important place in the novel because Nicholas corresponds with many different people, and these letters serve different purposes. First of all, Nicholas frequently corresponded with Alison for a while. Their letters use an intimate daily

language. Alison even makes hysterical statements expressing her feelings. An excerpt from Alison's letter to Nicholas reflects the frank language she uses:

Dear Nicholas,

I thought you were dead. I'm on my own again. More or less. I've been trying to decide whether I want to see you again -the point is, I could. I come through Athens now. I mean, I haven't decided whether you aren't such a pig that it's crazy to get involved with you again. I can't forget you, even when I'm with much nicer boys than you'll ever be. Nicko, I'm a little bit drunk and I shall probably tear this up anyway. (162)

In her letters, Alison uses straightforward language that directly expresses her feelings. Nevertheless, when the conversations between Nicholas and the people he exchanges letters with in order to find clues about the Godgame are analysed, it becomes clear that everyday language is used again, but with a more distant discourse. To illustrate, it is noticeable that John Leverrier uses a distant language in his response to Nicholas.

Dear Mr Urfe,

Your letter has been forwarded to me. I at first decided not to reply to it, but on reflection I think it is fairer to you if I write to say that I am not prepared to discuss the matter that you wish me to discuss. My decision on this is final. I should greatly appreciate it if you would not renew your request in any way.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN LEVERRIER. (552)

In the letters, it is recognized that the style and language can change according to the sender. The use of these letters and the different forms of discourse in them is very important for the novel because they contribute to Nicholas' and the readers' efforts to solve the mystery.

In the novel, letters can be contrasted with newspaper clippings and the declaration of the Logic Society. In contrast to personal narratives, newspaper clippings and leaflets claim to emphasize objective reality. The language seen in newspaper clippings is a reflection of public discourse and plays a framing role in how

individuals perceive events. However, as reality is constantly questioned in the novel, these texts are not presented as an absolute source of truth, like the revelation that the news about Alison's death is fake (596). The Society for Reason also uses short, descriptive, and direct statements of the values and aims of the group. It can be seen in the following lines that emotions and interpretations are not included:

We, doctors and students of the faculties of medicine of the universities of France, declare that we believe:

1. Man can progress only by using his reason.
2. The first duty of science is to eradicate unreason, in whatever form, from public and international affairs.
3. Adherence to reason is more important than adherence to any other ethos whatever, whether it be of family, caste, country, race, or religion. (194)

This dull and rational language is similar to the academic texts presented in the novel. However, in contrast to these, a more enthusiastic style of expression is adopted in the theatre play examples given in the literary references used. For instance, a theatrical and poetic expression is seen in the excerpt from the play *Othello*.

Othello, Act I, Scene III.

She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted/
By spells and medicines
bought of mountebanks;/ For nature so preposterously to err,/ Being
not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,/ Sans witchcraft could not.

And:

A maiden never bold;/ Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion/
Blush'd at herself; and she – in spite of nature,/ Of years, of country,
credit, everything –/ To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
(601)

With this quote, the idea of the role of 'Julie Holmes' is formed. The striking language used in the play also reinforces Nicholas' feelings of shame and anger. Another work that helps to understand the meanings that can be drawn from the Godgame is the story of *The Prince and the Sorcerer*, in which the everyday and didactic language used ironically teaches that no definite meaning can be drawn from all its didacticism.

Finally, the short but striking statements used in the short porn film, which is presented as if it were a documentary, have a discursive structure that directly emphasizes the fluidity of roles and how Nicholas is deceived in the Godgame. A section from the scene where the film is shown to Nicholas shows the language used in the short film, which is understood to be promoted with short but striking expressions.: “POLYMUS FILMS PRESENT/The screen went white for a moment/ Then: THE SHAMEFUL TRUTH/ The black wheel. Then: WITH THE FABULOUS WHORE IO/ A blank/WHOM YOU WILL REMEMBER AS ISIS ASTARTE KALI” (537). By exposing the many different perceptions of reality presented to Nicholas up to that point and trivializing his experience, this short film mocks his emotions and sexual desires.

Taking everything into consideration, in creating a polyphonic and dialogic structure in *The Magus*, John Fowles uses the dominant influence of language on individuals and relationships but trivializes it by emphasizing its transience and mutability. However, the hierarchies between characters, especially Conchis' authority over Nicholas through conscious linguistic strategies, reveal the decisive role of language in power dynamics. Throughout the novel, language, which becomes the greatest tool of manipulation, becomes decisive for different forms of communication. For example, Conchis, as a classically educated intellectual, uses sophisticated, poetic, and sometimes theatrical language in his speeches, while he manages to manipulate Nicholas by using silence as an element of pressure when necessary. Conchis' style is at times formal, distant, and erudite, at other times dramatic and playful; this variation is part of his strategies to establish superiority. Thus, he establishes a dominance over Nicholas and declares his superiority. Nicholas, on the other hand, is initially presented as an ordinary and overconfident man who has no command of the power of language. His language is more ordinary, modern and subjective in tone. Particularly at the beginning of the novel, he uses language arrogantly and condescendingly; he occasionally uses fancy expressions to give the impression of being an intellectual, but this is insufficient in the face of Conchis' wordplay and narratives.

Nicholas' use of language changes in the later parts of the novel under the influence of Conchis; he becomes defensive, sceptical, angry or fearful at times. The language of Julie/Lily and other female characters is mostly ambiguous and slippery. They relate to Nicholas in different ways in different parts of the novel, and as their

relationship changes, so does their language. Overall, *The Magus* is shaped as a text in which characters gain power, are manipulated and transformed through language. It is not only Conchis' knowledge that gives him the upper hand, but also his knowledge of how to use language. The process of divine play that Nicholas experiences shows that language can also be a means of creating illusion and that no discourse is absolute. Additionally, apart from the linguistic differences between characters, intertextual discourse differences also contribute to the dialogic structure of the novel. Textual diversity not only enriches the narrative but also reveals how language changes in different contexts and how each discourse reflects a particular perspective. The appearance of different texts with different linguistic tones both contributes to and complicates Nicholas' and the readers' search for meaning, because an official document with a distant and formal tone can shape their thoughts, while a letter written in a friendly tone can prevent them from getting the same idea. Thus, the sense of mystery and chaos increases, and meaning becomes blurred.

e. Carnavalesque in *The Magus*: Trivializing Social and Literal Norms

In his novel *The Magus*, John Fowles employs Bakhtinian carnivalesque theory, thereby challenging established hierarchical structures and social identities. This novel masterfully utilizes a carnivalesque atmosphere to explore themes of equality and freedom, characterized by the ambiguity of identities, the inherent uncertainty and chaos, the incorporation of grotesque elements, and the use of masks in both a literal and abstract sense. In this atmosphere that Fowles and Conchis create together, the unreliable and complex structure of Conchis' Godgame and Fowles' ability to bring people from different backgrounds, thoughts, and beliefs together in this ambiguous game play an essential role. Furthermore, with this structure, which initially equalizes Conchis and Fowles, social roles are rendered irrelevant, hierarchical, and social norms are undermined. Individuals from diverse nationalities, genders, and economic backgrounds coalesce to contribute equally to the narrative. The transience of these identities, the metaphorical masking of them, and the fluidity engendered by this temporary nature collectively create an atmosphere significantly divergent from the conventional narrative. Conchis and Fowles construct an

atmosphere in which individual identities and social roles become unimportant. In this environment, characteristics such as gender, race, wealth, and educational background are trivialized. Everyone suspends their roles in this game. Individuals who, under ordinary circumstances, would likely have no interaction beyond Conchis' Godgame actively participate in this constructed reality together. For example, Joe, the black character that Nicholas despises, takes on many different roles and becomes an important character for the game. Moreover, beyond being equalized with Nicholas, he takes advantage of him. To put it another way, in contrast to the limited role of women in society at the time of the events in the novel, the female characters in the play are highly intelligent, active and decisive. Therefore, these different characters that Fowles brings together take on many different representations in Conchis' game, directing the flow and suspending the hierarchical structure of society in their own game.

The novel's carnivalesque structure is not solely attributable to its status as a polyphonic work or its equalization of characters; Conchis' employment of grotesque elements ironically and ridiculously throughout the Godgame is equally significant. In the Bakhtinian sense, the grotesque and irony are crucial elements in the creation of the carnivalesque setting because they disrupt gender by rendering absurdity and horror ridiculous. The incorporation of grotesque elements serves to reinforce the carnivalesque structure of the novel, contributing to its thematic richness and complexity. Bodily deformation, excess, and exaggerated scenes create a carnivalesque world, while at the same time increasing Nicholas' sense of alienation. Conchis' manipulative games, in particular, blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, creating a grotesque atmosphere. The grotesque manifests itself not only in the physical characteristics of the characters, but also in their moral and psychological decline. Nicholas is constantly tested in the game; his perception of reality is distorted, and he encounters grotesque experiences. Thus, throughout the novel, the grotesque is used as an important tool to represent the inner conflicts of the individual, the subversion of social norms, and the questioning of authority. Moreover, the mask does not only appear as a metaphorical element; many times, throughout the novel, characters wear strange masks and costumes. Exaggerated and strange costumes and eerie masks reinforce the grotesque nature of the Godgame. However, irony also plays a central role in the narrative structure of the novel. The stories Conchis tells, the way

he manipulates Nicholas, and the unexpected development of events create an environment in which the reader and Nicholas are constantly deceived. Throughout the novel, irony appears as an element that supports the carnivalesque structure and undermines authority. One of the most prominent examples of this irony is that Nicholas sees himself as a strong and independent individual at the beginning, but in the later stages of the play, he realizes that he is actually a completely manipulated figure. Fowles skilfully uses irony in the structure of the novel, forcing the reader to constantly question and unravel the reality behind the narrative.

First of all, it should be noted that in this novel, where different elements gather together to form a carnivalesque structure, Fowles also reduces the seriousness of the elements that make up the carnival atmosphere or grotesque horror. One of the most striking situations in the novel, especially the Godgame, is that it is free and egalitarian like a playground, but in order to create uncertainty on this free and slippery ground, concepts such as identity and social roles are emptied with players wearing masks both metaphorically and literally, and the seriousness of elements such as grotesque that support this environment is reduced with absurd and ironic structure. Moreover, the use of masks is frequently mentioned throughout the novel. Both Nicholas and the reader clearly recognise that the other characters conceal their true selves with masks in every sense. For example, in a chapter where Nicholas thinks he is beginning to understand the events, he thinks the following about Conchis: “so many pretences were being dropped” (427). It is kept obvious throughout the novel that everything is a game. Immediately afterwards, he feels the following about Conchis, who will tell him about the war period: “His mask-face looked as concentrated, as inward, as I could remember having seen it” (428). In brief, the masked faces are clearly presented to both Nicholas and the reader, but the mystery behind the mask is not revealed. The players of Godgame, who show themselves wearing masks on several occasions, do not only hide their identities. Furthermore, different tricks are played on Nicholas, and it is made clear that they are also fakes. For instance, in the brief but terrifying scene in the forest where he is taken prisoner by soldiers, Nicholas is beaten and confused (391). Immediately afterwards, however, both Nicholas and the reader are informed that this is a costume play, and the mystery and tension of the event are destroyed. In this way, the novel and the Godgame reduce their own seriousness and do not allow the readers to immerse themselves. For this reason, they not only constantly imply

that Nicholas wears a mask in a metaphorical sense, but also that they put him through a psychological test and keep him in mystery. Sometimes they include real masks in the game, making it bizarre and ridiculous. Thus, the novel prevents both Nicholas and the reader from experiencing these chaotic and uncertain events in fear and suspense with its structure, which ensures constant suspicion almost from the very beginning and at times explicitly states that all of this is a masquerade.

Furthermore, while this seriousness is reduced, it is also emphasised that humour and laughter are tools of resistance at many points in the novel. As it has been emphasised before, laughing in the Bakhtinian sense has strong meanings such as resistance against authority and producing alternative meanings, and there is a parallel understanding in the novel. To illustrate, Conchis recounts the story of a resistance fighter who was brutally executed during the war and died smiling: "That experience made me fully realize what humour is. It is a manifestation of freedom. It is because there is freedom that there is the smile" (452). These stories of Conchis, whose authenticity is never known, are, as already mentioned, in a dialogism with the Godgame and are told to give messages to Nicholas. Indeed, after the fake execution scenes, Conchis comes to Nicholas and tells him that he must learn to smile. After he comes to Nicholas in his weakest and most desperate moment and tells him to smile, Nicholas, who has been greatly humiliated in that execution scene, responds as such:

It came to me that he meant something different by 'smile' than I did; that the irony, the humourlessness, the ruthlessness I had always noticed in his smiling was a quality he deliberately inserted; that for him the smile was something essentially cruel, because freedom is cruel, because the freedom that makes us at least partly responsible for what we are is cruel. So that the smile was not so much an attitude to be taken to life as the nature of the cruelty of life, a cruelty we cannot even choose to avoid, since it is human existence. He meant something far stranger by 'Learn to smile' than a Smilesian 'Grin and bear it'. If anything, it meant 'Learn to be cruel, learn to be dry, learn to survive.' (546)

In postmodernism, laughter can be an act that questions authority, traditional meanings, and fixed identities. In grotesque literature, laughter is seen as a challenge to the chaotic world and a form of adaptation to the meaninglessness of life. Thus,

Conchis, and indeed Fowles, presents all these absurd and ironic scenes as a way of shattering seriousness and challenging rigid social norms. Therefore, this can be read as a reference to why Fowles inserts ridiculous elements into scenes that could be serious. In this novel and *Godgame*, in which all hierarchical structures and norms in traditional society and narrative are suspended and eviscerated, Nicholas often tries to undermine Conchis' authority by adopting a cynical attitude towards him, and in fact, he often tries to undermine Conchis' authority by trying to trivialise him.

While creating this ridiculousness and rebellion, many grotesque elements are also used. The grotesque usually refers to situations that are frightening, disturbing, or taken to extremes. However, in *The Magus*, these elements do not create direct horror as in classical gothic or tragic narratives; on the contrary, they often seem absurd and ridiculous to the reader. To illustrate, in the episode in which Nicholas is kidnapped and held against his will, the way they dress him for the mock execution scene reduces the tension of the scene because they prepare him for an absurd ritual and dress him in a ridiculous disguise, as in the following paragraph:

The next move took me by surprise. Adam knelt and pushed my right trouser-leg up to above the knee and fastened it there with an elastic garter. Then I was made to stand again. With a warning gesture that I was not to be alarmed, he pulled my sweater back over my head and forced it down till it hung from my wrists behind me. Then he unbuttoned my shirt to the bottom and forced the left side back until the shoulder was bare. Next, he produced two-inch-wide white ribbons, each with a blood-red rosette attached, from the grip. He tied one round the top of my right calf, another under my armpit, and over the bare shoulder. Next, a black circle, some two inches in diameter and cut in adhesive tape, was fixed like a huge patch on the middle of my forehead. (513)

While this preparation increases the mystery of the event, it also makes the scene absurd and ridiculous. This ridiculousness, intertwined with the horror element, continues throughout the execution scene. Nicholas, who surrenders to them with his hands tied and powerless, waits helplessly, not knowing what will happen to him, and the dark, gothic environment in which he is taken evokes a tension, curiosity, and fear in both him and the reader. On the other hand, the costumes worn by the actors in this

scene are disturbing but ridiculous, because they come into the dark room filled with strange masks, severed human limbs and skulls, and they wear strange costumes such as a witch, a she-demon, a crocodile head, a stag head and a fish woman (515). In the Bakhtinian framework, such grotesque and fantastic disguises emphasise concepts such as masquerades, the temporary dominance of chaos, and the transience of identities. These grotesque and symbolic masks are part of the process of ritualistic transformation that Nicholas experiences. *The Magus* is a carnivalesque narrative of reversal: Nicholas, as a disempowered, humiliated, masked figure, plays the role of both hero and victim. Yet a scene that could be tragic in this way is not presented as such, because the masks are removed one by one, and the costumes are discarded. Nevertheless, the removal of these costumes and strange masks does not make identities clear because everyone continues to wear their metaphorical masks and act in different roles. While Nicholas' fear is expected to be presented as a tragic climax in this scene, which contains many theatrical elements, grotesque costumes, absurd rituals and ambiguities turn this moment into a carnivalesque chaos.

Nevertheless, in the novel, the grotesque structure is not only presented with ridiculous and ironic scenes, masks, and costumes. The incomplete, reproduced, shape-shifting bodies seen in grotesque works are also presented with horrible and disturbing depictions. For example, in Conchis' account of the tragedy of the war period, what happened to the resistance fighters and the peasants is presented in disturbing detail, and the traditional completed and aesthetic image of the human body is distanced. An illustration of torture is what happens to a rebel who is symbolically deprived of his power: "Where his genitals should have been, there was nothing but a black-red hole. They had cut off his penis and scrotal sac. With a pair of wire-cutting shears" (440). While the disembodied limbs and disfigured bodies are presented in disturbing detail, Conchis emphasises that there is a disgusting smell of excrement and urine around. These details, which are far from the aesthetic structure of traditional narrative, continue with the narration of two rebellious girls: "There was the naked body of the cousin with its terrible wound. And there were the naked bodies of the two girls. They had been disembowelled. A slit cut from their breastbones down to their pubic hair and the intestines pulled out. Half-gutted carcasses, swaying slightly in the noon wind" (445). Again, the sight of organs overflowing from the body is very important in terms of the grotesque element. The deformation of the body is based on

the idea of a body that opens, expands, and overflows against a closed, organised, and completed body. The disruption of order and the abnormalisation of bodies also support the chaotic atmosphere. Conchis describes this brutality in detail, concluding with a description of those whose teeth were knocked out, fingers crushed, and fingernails pulled out, as well as a man whose tongue was burnt to the root with hot coals (427-428). Although it is not known whether these events are true or not because Conchis is the unreliable narrator, the incomplete, damaged, and disfigured bodies depicted are in line with Bakhtin's understanding of the incomplete and constantly changing body.

When everything is taken into account, Fowles' and Conchis' narratives overlap with Bakhtinian grotesque and carnivalesque structures in many contexts. One of the most important features that gives the novel and the Godgame a carnivalesque atmosphere is that these narratives, thanks to their polyphonic structure, bring together characters from different sections of society with an egalitarian approach and dissolve the traditional hierarchical structure between them. Male and female, white and black, rich and poor characters contribute equally effectively to the narrative and use masks, both metaphorically and literally, to enrich the characterisation and increase the mystery, which strengthens the carnivalesque structure of the novel. Nevertheless, *The Magus*, while creating this structure, the grotesque frequently uses elements that are outside the norms, disturbing and incompatible with traditional aesthetic concerns. For example, with dismembered bodies, human bodies that are reshaped out of the body form, disgusting elements such as the smell of urine, both the traditional aesthetic narrative norm is broken, and Bakhtin's understanding of the incomplete and shapeshifting body is used. In addition, Nicholas is played with masks on several occasions. The costumes, masks, and plot create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense, but Fowles and Conchis deliberately diffuse this atmosphere. Since the strongest element in the novel is suspicion, and since the events are often discredited, and it is even openly stated many times that everything is a game, the impact of the events is diminished. Moreover, the seriousness of the events is undermined by deliberately ridiculing them, and the importance of laughter is emphasised through this cynicism. In the novel, it is emphasized many times that laughter has a purpose of rebellion and has the power to challenge norms, and in fact, a message is given about this purpose in the novel, and *The Magus* presents an ironic structure by containing

absurd, ridiculous elements. Thus, the grotesque and ironic elements supporting the concept of carnivalesque intertwine throughout the novel, shaking the social norms and hierarchical structure in the space of freedom created.

f. Performativity in *The Magus*: Performing Gender and Self

One of the significant postmodern features of the kenotic structure in *The Magus* is its ability to offer equality in terms of gender roles. As a kenotic writer, Fowles creates a space where authority is undermined by equalizing himself, his characters, and the readers. Within this atmosphere, characters marginalized in the traditional understanding of polyphonic structure can have an equal sphere of influence with those kept in the center. In this narrative form, in which single meaningfulness is opposed, many different alternatives are presented with the meanings emerging from the conflict of other voices. Therefore, unlike traditional monologues in which social norms dominate, *The Magus* presents an egalitarian and slippery structure. In this way, characters are given the right to represent themselves. Women are an important group who have the chance to go beyond their restrictive roles in traditional literature. Fowles creates a realm of freedom for the female characters and allows them to create alternative performances in the context of Butler's concept of performativity. *The Magus* is thus a narrative in which women, who become independent of the author, have a significant influence. Throughout the novel, women transcend being passive background figures serving Nicholas' story. Nicholas even becomes a pawn serving the women's games. What is crucial in the novel is the continuation of the Godgame. The male victims change every year, they are almost like test subjects, but the women are always in the game and are the most important characters shaping it. The hierarchical structure between the roles of men and women is thus subverted, and the submissive and secondary position assigned to women is one of the important factors undermined.

To elaborate further, if it is necessary to analyse the methods used for the formation of this innovative and egalitarian structure in the specific case of *The Magus*, it is crucial to mention the great influence of the Godgame because gender roles, which, as Butler claims, are not fixed and can be reshaped through alternative

performances, are at a very key point in the Godgame. The reason for this is that throughout the play, the female characters use the stereotyped roles and stories in the traditional narrative as a weapon against Nicholas and indirectly against the patriarchy. The roles played by Julie/Lily and June/Rose serve Nicholas' fantasies in the patriarchal world and weaken Nicholas because of his foibles. For instance, the fantasy of twin sisters is created in the game, where one plays the shy and innocent girl idealized by society, while the other is more reckless, free, and seductive. This clichéd scenario keeps Nicholas' interest alive throughout the game and makes him easy to deceive. At the end of the game, Nicholas, who has allowed the girls to see him as a hero of indispensable charm, is confronted with the fact that he is in fact a mocked pawn. Moreover, Julie/Lily, June/Rose, and Alison, who is left ambiguous about whether she plays or not in the Godgame, appear in different guises. Julie/Lily in particular changes roles several times, and in each role her behaviour, speech, and approach to Nicholas changes, which reinforces the idea that gender is, in fact, an artificial phenomenon created through repeated behaviour, thought, dress, and speech. In short, Fowles opens a free space for the female characters in his novel, making them active and emphasizing the artificiality and falsity of gender roles by breaking the traditional understanding.

Initially, it should be noted that there is a distinct tone in the novel that ridicules traditional notions of masculinity because Nicholas often adopts a possessive, superior, soothing attitude, especially towards Julie/Lily and Alison. Nonetheless, he is not at all the erudite, cultured, and powerful male hero he sees himself to be. On the contrary, Nicholas, weak, ignorant, and cowardly, is not a saviour hero but a helpless victim in the women's game. To illustrate, in literature, the act of seeing serves as a powerful symbol of dominance while being seen places a character in a passive and subordinate role. In traditional narratives, women are consistently positioned as the observed, reinforcing their oppression under patriarchal power. As Şenay Tanrıvermiş mentions, the power of the gaze is really effective and substantial: "The power of the gaze can be intricately linked to knowledge and control mechanisms. Those with intense, large, forceful, penetrating, and operative eyes exert more power, while others become diminished, inconsequential, stranger, weird, and abnormal. The observed individuals must adapt more in accordance with the powerful gaze" (Tanrıvermiş, 72). What makes this power important in terms of gender roles is that, in the traditional

understanding, it is the man who has the power of the gaze, and the woman is constantly under observation (Yu, 428). In this novel, there is a male character who is constantly watched, observed, and manipulated. Nicholas feels that he is being watched many times throughout the novel. For example, at the end of the book, when he is talking to Alison, he rages at those who are constantly watching them, but he does not actually know whether they are being watched or not; he develops paranoia because he is constantly under surveillance throughout the Godgame (675). This emphasizes that a man is oppressed and manipulated, and his power of gaze is taken away. This time it is women who look.

Throughout this game, in which Nicholas is demoted from his powerful position in the traditional understanding, the actors/actresses take advantage of his attitude that embraces social prejudices because Nicholas looks at masculinity and femininity in the context of the meanings attributed to them by society. This makes him easy to deceive because the female actresses, in particular, play the conventional roles of femininity in society and draw Nicholas into the game. Mrs. Seitas even explains to Nicholas at the end of the game that his weaknesses are being used and that they are taking on these roles in order to confront Nicholas himself: “My daughters were nothing but a personification of your own selfishness” (621). It can be concluded that the game is all about revealing Nicholas’ selfish and flawed sides.

Furthermore, in this game, which changes Nicholas’ attitude towards women, first, his traditional understanding is strengthened, and his true thoughts are revealed. Then these prejudices are broken, and the social hierarchy is destroyed. In this context, Conchis emphasizes the place of women in society and literature with some of the stories he tells throughout the novel and creates a perception in Nicholas by pretending to create a fiction that supports these social prejudices. For example, throughout the novel, a connection can be made between women and madness. Julie/Lily is shown as schizophrenic. Moreover, both Alison and Julie/Lily are shown to be overly emotional and uncontrolled in their thinking, exhibiting hysterical behaviour, as expected of a traditional woman. For instance, Alison constantly creates the image of a woman who experiences her emotions in extremes and is unable to use her reason. In the scenes where she makes love to Nicholas in tears (26) and punches the bed in anger at Nicholas for not responding to her feelings the way she wants (286), she is seen as a woman who loves Nicholas uncontrollably and is in need of his love. However, at the

end of the novel, Alison is one of those who torments Nicholas as part of the game being played on him. Instead of being in a position of powerlessness against Nicholas, she becomes one of the important female characters who keeps him in limbo and renders him helpless.

Nevertheless, it is emphasized many times throughout the novel that loyalty and sacrifice are expected from women. For example, Conchis says the following about Julie/Lily, who sees God as a man: “‘Just then she paid us the compliment of making God male. But I think she knows, as all true women do, that all profound definitions of God are essentially definitions of the mother. Of giving things” (307). Throughout *The Godgame*, he speaks to Nicholas many times with sexist references, as if he is addressing femininity and masculinity within certain stereotypes. The remarkable part of the novel, however, is that Conchis’ game is not sexist at all, but that he supports these views in order to reinforce Nicholas’ thoughts. Therefore, this traditional understanding shapes Nicholas’ perception throughout the game and confronts him with the flaws of his own personality. In fact, after the clichéd scenarios and the stereotyped roles played, Nicholas believed for a long time that he was part of the texts of classical literature. For example, in one part he thinks about himself and Julie/Lily:

Perhaps it was partly a nostalgia for that extinct Lawrentian woman of the past, the woman inferior to man in everything but that one great power of female dark mystery and beauty; the brilliant, virile male and the dark, swooning female. The essences of the two sexes had become so confused in my androgynous twentieth-century mind that this reversion to a situation where a woman was a woman and I was obliged to be fully a man had all the fascination of an old house after a cramped, anonymous modern flat. (249)

Nicholas, fully immersed in traditional stereotypes and social norms, relishes his typical male role in this scenario and thinks he is in a privileged position.

From the very beginning of the novel, readers realize that Nicholas has an egotistic and selfish attitude towards women, despising them and only taking advantage of them. Moreover, Nicholas uses women as a means to make himself feel powerful and competent, both sexually and intellectually. His superiority is subverted

by the female characters in the novel. The novel repeatedly shows how false and recreated gender roles are. For example, Julie/Lily first portrays Lily Montgomery as a very polite, distant, and moral woman who dresses, acts, and speaks accordingly (157). In later episodes, however, the same person may act like a porn star and display highly explicit images (540). Julie/Lily adopts distinct behaviours depending on her role, she presents herself one way when portraying a woman from the past, another as an expert psychiatrist, yet another in a short porn film, and differently still in her speech and appearance. With all these different roles, she presents alternative identities. Furthermore, it is revealed that June/Rose and Julie/Lily have exchanged roles for Mitford. In the game played on Nicholas, the twin who appears innocent takes on the opposite role in Mitford's scheme. Mitford, who claims that in his own experience, June/Rose is completely secretive and shy, says the following about Julie/Lily: "All that stuff about their being the old boy's godchildren. All my eye. Course they weren't. They were a pair of high-class tarts. Language the Julie one used gave the game away. Damn funny way of looking at you ... suggestive'" (635). This shows that different roles can be assumed in different people's stories and that a person can change their identity many times if he/she wishes. Therefore, gender roles are not only acquired but can also change shape. A very similar example of this is shown with the twins' mother. Mrs. Seitas, who at first pretends to be a half-witted, ignorant woman who only cares about her appearance and her home in order to manipulate Nicholas, later shows that she is actually a very independent, intelligent, and even cunning woman. While playing her role to deceive Nicholas, she adopts an absurd way of speaking and makes herself look like a fool (612). Thus, it is clearly shown that different forms of femininity can be adopted if desired, and that these roles are not fixed and consist entirely of performances.

Nevertheless, what makes Nicholas the ideal victim for this complex game in which roles are constantly changing is that he is a man who does not believe in the existence of alternative identities, who constantly categorizes women, and who has a limited perspective, which can be seen in many of the ideas he develops while trying to make sense of the game. His perception of women under categories and attributing them only to limited roles prevents him from perceiving the truth about Julie/Lily and Alison. As Renate Brosch states: "His insistence on perceiving Lily-Julie as a dichotomic opposition to Alison's promiscuity is based on his classification of women

along the binaries of Madonna and whore” (Brosch, 4). Nicholas, who evaluates the world, especially women, through binary opposites, makes mistakes in analysing events and people. For example, at one point, while considering the possibility that Julie/Lily and June/Rose are also in cahoots with Conchis, he thinks as follows:

Although he might have found some lie to tell the girls, some reason for my not being able to come that weekend, there remained the possibility that they were all three deceiving me. But how could I believe that now? All those kisses, franknesses, caresses, that token coupling in the night water ... no girl could pretend to want and to enjoy such things unless she was a prostitute. It was unthinkable.
(400)

Nicholas does not believe that women can take on different roles, that they can be successful in their work, be good actors, or create alternative identities. Because of this limited perspective, Nicholas cannot see the games being played on him and becomes a subject of ridicule.

To conclude profoundly, the Godgame, which exists on the egalitarian and free ground prepared by John Fowles, turns into a playground where women can go beyond limited roles and direct the flow. In this novel, where the usual understanding of femininity and masculinity in classical literature is turned upside down, roles are constantly changing. No precise information is given about the identities of Julie/Lily and June/Rose, the essential female characters in the novel. It is not the real identities that matter, but the roles in the Godgame. Furthermore, this shows that they are perceived through the identities they represent rather than their real identities. This situation reveals how femininity is played by reducing it to certain roles on the social plane. Nonetheless, the women in this play skilfully take advantage of this perception in society. The female characters not only challenge Nicholas’ perception of masculinity but also demonstrate that female identity cannot be reduced to a single narrative, constantly assuming different voices. These roles are stereotypes that turn social prejudices into a weapon against Nicholas. The clichéd storylines and the characters’ traditional stereotypes of women’s roles create a certain perception in Nicholas and the readers, but the main purpose of the novel is precisely to break down these perceptions. Thus, no woman is as passive or powerless as she appears. On the contrary, they are among the most important characters who constantly test Nicholas,

change the flow, and shape the narrative. They can break out of their passive, subordinate position through the alternative identities they present. They use gender roles strategically, not as victims or seductive figures, but as active subjects constantly constructing new identities. This is because players in the Godgame in particular are the ones who manipulate men, who are more knowledgeable than men, and who are aware that the roles imposed on them by society are performances. Therefore, they know that to behave like a proper woman in society is to wear certain clothes, speak, and think in a certain way, so they can portray these roles skilfully. However, these strong women are just actresses doing their job very well. One of the meanings of the novel in this context can be said to emphasize that gender roles in society are just good performances in this way. In short, the existence of alternative femininities and the constant change of roles throughout the novel overlap with Judith Butler's concept of performativity and emphasize the artificiality of traditional gender roles in society. Moreover, the true identities of the women who constantly portray different forms of femininity and act in different personalities are never known in the novel. This demonstrates that rather than adhering to a fixed gender role and identity, a person can transform their appearance, alter their thoughts, manner of dress, and speech, and adopt personas that either align with or challenge societal expectations.

VI. LAYERS OF TRUTH AND VOICE IN *ATONEMENT* BY IAN MCEWAN

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* stands as a complex narrative that interrogates themes of memory, guilt, and redemption, set against the backdrop of World War II. However, the novel's intricate layering of voices, temporal shifts, and character perspectives offers a fertile ground for a deeper theoretical examination. This essay aims to analyse *Atonement* through the lens of several theoretical concepts, kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and performativity, drawing upon the ideas of thinkers like Mikhail Bakhtin, Judith Butler, and others. Through this examination, it becomes evident that McEwan not only engages with the intricacies of individual and collective consciousness but also subverts the traditional narrative of victimhood and responsibility, offering a postmodern reflection on how stories are constructed, deconstructed, and performed.

Initially, the concept of kenosis, derived from Christian theology, refers to the act of self-emptying or self-renunciation. In the context of *Atonement*, this concept is deeply tied to Briony's guilt and desire for redemption. Briony's atonement for her past actions is portrayed not just as an intellectual realization, but as an emotional and existential act of self-emptying. The kenotic process is echoed in her desire to construct a version of the past that will enable her to attain moral and spiritual purification and her attempt to set aside her youthful mistakes. Her development throughout the novel underscores how individual consciousness is shaped by moral responsibility and the yearning to erase or transcend one's past mistakes.

At the heart of *Atonement* lies the tension between memory and reality. The novel traces the lives of Briony Tallis, Cecilia Tallis, and Robbie Turner, whose fates are irrevocably altered by an event of misperception. The young, naïve narrator Briony makes the mistake of accusing Robbie of a crime he did not commit, which causes years of psychological and emotional suffering for everyone concerned. The narrative's nonlinear structure, shifting perspectives, and unreliable narration challenge readers to reconsider the boundaries of subjective experience. McEwan's work illustrates Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, in which several voices, opinions, and interpretations coexist and intersect, forcing readers to grapple with competing truths. This dialogic structure resists a singular interpretation, thereby highlighting the role of

memory, language, and perspective in shaping human experience. Simultaneously, *Atonement* also embodies Bakhtin's polyphony, a term used to describe the coexistence of multiple, independent voices within a narrative. Every character in McEwan's book embodies a unique voice and perspective, particularly through various points of view changes that occur throughout the book. In addition to hearing Briony's voice, these changes help us comprehend Cecilia and Robbie's viewpoints and the larger social framework in which their lives are situated. In *Atonement*, the voices do not coalesce into a unified whole; rather, they persist in their independence and, at times, present contradictory perspectives, thereby reflecting the fractured and fragmented nature of memory itself. Through this polyphonic structure, McEwan emphasizes the complexity of human experiences and the tension between personal and collective histories.

Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, the multiplicity of voices within a single text, also resonates in *Atonement*. McEwan's novel is marked by the inclusion of various registers of language, from Briony's youthful idealism to the mature, contemplative voice of the adult Briony, from Robbie's letters to Cecilia's passionate and complex inner world. Each of these voices represents a different social class, education level, gender, and emotional state, and they reflect how language and power are intertwined. The interaction between these voices reveals the intricate relationship between identity, language, and authority. Additionally, the conflict between the voices of the characters and the larger social narrative draws attention to how some voices, particularly those of working-class characters like Robbie, are marginalized and how social mechanisms try to regulate or suppress them.

The carnivalesque, a concept developed by Bakhtin to describe a temporary inversion of societal norms, is also evident in McEwan's treatment of gender roles and social expectations. The relationship between Cecilia and Robbie is a subversive one, as they both challenge the class structures and societal expectations that seek to keep them apart. Cecilia, the privileged young woman, and Robbie, the working-class man, represent two worlds that are not supposed to intersect. Their love affair disrupts the established order, reflecting the Bakhtinian idea of the carnivalesque, where traditional hierarchies are upended and the 'low' is elevated. However, this carnivalesque rupture is fleeting and ultimately tragic, as the social order reasserts itself through the false accusation against Robbie and his eventual imprisonment. McEwan's depiction of this

relationship both critiques and complicates the notions of class and identity in early 20th-century British society.

Finally, the concept of performativity, as articulated by Judith Butler, can be applied to the way the characters in *Atonement* construct their identities through actions, speech, and gestures. The novel explores how gender and social roles are performed and how these performances are influenced by the expectations of society. Briony's literary production, for instance, can be regarded as a performative endeavour, a means of creating and asserting control over her own identity and the identities of others. Her desire to rewrite the past, to construct a narrative of redemption and self-purification, reflects how individuals perform their sense of self and seek recognition within a broader social context. In the case of Cecilia and Robbie, their relationship is also a form of performativity, as they challenge societal norms through their interactions and their defiance of social and class boundaries. In conclusion, Ian McEwan's *Atonement* is a rich text that invites analysis through a variety of theoretical frameworks. By exploring the novel's use of kenosis, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and performativity, we can gain deeper insight into the ways McEwan constructs his narrative and how the characters negotiate their identities within the constraints of societal norms. The interplay of these concepts illuminates the complex dynamics of memory, guilt, and redemption, offering a profound commentary on the nature of storytelling itself and the power of language in shaping our understanding of the world and our place within it.

a. Kenotic Narrative in *Atonement*

As previously discussed, the concept of kenosis, originating from the Greek word 'emptying,' involves the voluntary self-emptying or self-denial of one's own will and desires. This theological notion, often associated with Christian doctrine, has found resonance in postmodern literature, where the author, characters, and narratives undergo a process of self-emptying or deconstruction in search of deeper truths or personal liberation. The notion of kenosis in postmodern literature encompasses not just characters but also the author's position and interaction with both readers and characters. The lines between authorial presence and narrative voice are frequently

blurred by postmodern writers, who frequently practice a type of self-emptying. By giving up any feeling of total power or control over the work, the author permits characters to grow independently and engage with readers in dynamic and engaging ways. In order to blur the boundaries between creator and created, postmodern writers usually include themselves in their works, either as overt characters or through subliminal self-references. Readers are encouraged to interact with the text on several levels and acknowledge the constructed character of the narrative and the fluidity of meaning as a result of this self-reflexive approach that questions established notions of authorship. Furthermore, postmodern writers frequently explore the concepts of plurality and fragmentation, equating themselves with their characters and readers. Just as characters undergo processes of self-emptying and deconstruction, so too do authors, embracing a plurality of voices and perspectives within their work. This dissolution of authorial presence and the embrace of collective storytelling align with the ethos of kenosis, emphasizing humility, openness, and a willingness to relinquish the self in service of deeper truths or communal understanding. In essence, kenosis, in postmodernism, entails not only the self-emptying of the characters in the story but also the self-emptying of the writer, who invites readers to contribute to the continual production of meaning while obfuscating the distinction between creator and creation.

Analysing the concept of kenosis within the novel *Atonement* by Ian McEwan offers a rich opportunity to explore the themes of self-emptying and authorial engagement within a postmodern framework. Many features make Ian McEwan a kenotic writer in his novel *Atonement*. McEwan employs a narrative structure that blurs the boundaries between the author, characters, and readers, inviting readers to question the reliability of the narrative and their own interpretations. The main features that make this novel kenotic are that it presents two different authors and plots, as the novel is written with the 'text within text' technique. McEwan puts himself on equal terms with Briony, one of the characters he created, and most importantly, he keeps the reader's feelings of curiosity and doubt alive throughout the novel by making the reader question the author and authorship, including himself, with the unreliable narrator he uses. Thus, McEwan leaves the characters independent without interfering with the flow of the novel; at the same time, the reader is free to interpret the novel because the novel is open to many different alternatives. Therefore, McEwan makes himself, his characters, and the reader equally active in the meaning-making process

in the novel. The kenotic structure of the novel can be examined in detail under certain headings.

Initially, the employment of the 'text within the text' technique in the novel is a characteristic of postmodern literature, marked by its propensity to offer the reader a nuanced and multifaceted experiential journey through layers of narrative construction. In postmodern works, this technique often questions the perception of reality and brings together meanings at different levels. This technique gives the reader a more complex and in-depth experience. For example, different texts such as the diary of a character in a novel, letters, newspaper clippings, or a fictional novel are examples of this technique. These additional texts enrich the meaning of the main text, offer the reader different perspectives, and question the perception of reality. Examining what makes the work kenotic reveals that this strategy contributes to challenging the author's authority and creating a participatory experience with the text. By challenging traditional narrative structures, it weakens the author's tendency to place himself/herself at the center of the text. It gives the reader more freedom in interpreting and making sense of the text. Therefore, the text-in-text technique makes the text more open-ended and encourages reader participation. Additionally, another aspect of this technique that makes the novel kenotic is that it blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. Transitions between different textual layers question the reader's perception of reality and bring together different levels of reality within the text. This leads the reader to go beyond the story on the surface of the text and look for deeper meanings.

When evaluated specifically in *Atonement*, it can be stated that this technique makes the novel multi-layered because the reader is actually faced with two *texts* in one novel. McEwan and Briony, the authors of these two works that are different from each other in many aspects but exist together, represent two different types of writers. In the previous section, the distinction made by Ian Watts on the types of writing is stated. According to these two types of authorship, even if they both include different perspectives, some do this by not giving up their 'superior authorship' rights, thus affecting the reader's meaning-making process, while others eliminate their own views by giving up the position of authorship. If one adapts this distinction to the novel *Atonement*, it becomes plausible to assert that Briony and McEwan embody these two distinct categories of writers. In the novel, to demonstrate Briony's obsessive and

manipulative authorship, McEwan gives hints about her character in many senses. For instance, she acts like a complete order obsessive in her room. Her belongings are always in certain places and in a certain order. Her room is never messy, and her belongings cannot be moved. She cannot even bear to see his older sister Cecilia being disorganized and untidy. She gets angry because she wants to keep everything under control. In addition to these clues given to the reader about her room, it becomes clear that Briony secretly has the ambition to be noticed and cared about by people. She wants to be known and appreciated as a writer and also wants to gain a solid position for herself in the family. Charmaine Falzon states as follows;

In the course of the novel Briony is seen longing for different kinds of power – the power that comes from being recognized as a good artist; the power involved in at once writing, directing, and starring in play; the power of being privy to other people’s secrets and the power that comes from being acknowledged and looked up to by one’s family members. (Falzon, 59)

She is very eager to touch people’s lives and even become their hero. Briony wants to be the leading lady in life. For this reason, she is seen to intervene in people’s lives divinely many times throughout the novel. “The second page of the novel presents her as ‘one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so’ (p. 4), ‘just so’ being the way Briony herself thinks things should be” (Falzon, 61). Her obsession with order and her desire to shape other people’s lives around norms are also noticeable in her family relationships.

Briony’s vision of the world is initially depicted as self-oriented and meticulously ordered, as she believes that art can correct the messiness of life. This belief reflects her desire to impose her sense of order on others. For instance, as David K. O’Hara mentions;

Art, she believes, will act as a corrective to the untidiness of life. It is important to note, in these initial stages of the novel, just how self-oriented—how ordered around herself—Briony’s vision of the world really is. (O’Hara, 3)

Consequently, her desire to impose what she perceives as the correct ‘order’ on everyone becomes evident. Moreover, while burning with this desire, she is unaware

of personal differences because “In a generally pleasant and well-protected life, she had never really confronted anyone before” (20).

These characteristic features of Briony, of course, also reflect her experience as a writer. In Briony’s *Atonement*, where the reader thinks he/she is reading McEwan’s work until the last section of the book, although there are different perspectives, they are all reflected through Briony’s lens. In other words, one can never be sure of the other characters’ true feelings and thoughts because they all turn out to be the product of Briony’s mind. Briony brings fiction and reality together, presenting the facts by fictionalizing them in her own imagination. Especially in the first part of the novel, Briony’s desire to fictionalize everything is emphasized. “Briony understands both life and fiction through the processes of fiction: schematization and assimilation” (Ciorogar, 154). Therefore, the story Briony writes dramatizes real events and is a product of her imagination. Emotional impact and drama are highlighted rather than realism. In her fictional story, Briony plays with reality and affects the reader’s perception. For example, by mixing unreal events with real events in her story, she tries to make the reader see the events from a different perspective. Especially in the first chapter of the novel, McEwan implies Briony’s characteristics in many senses. The reader can realize the difference between real life and Briony’s perception. As James Phelan states;

What’s vibrating in the pages is not life itself but her romantic imagination and her belief in the power of the verbal formulas she has learned. At this point in the narrative, there is no significant ethical consequence to Briony’s interpretive misjudgment, though there are aesthetic consequences for her stories since they are all melodramatic, romantic, and formulaic. Our awareness of the gap between her interpretive judgment and our own sets up the potential for ethical and aesthetic consequences within McEwan’s novel. (Phelan, 113)

Briony’s romantic imagination and the verbal formulas she uses suggest not only her personality but also her authorship. Even with her word choices, the personality and order she tries to create can be noticed. “At the very outset of the book, Briony tries to use more sophisticated words, but it only gives the impression of her being absurd. Her extreme attempts to enrich her writing with new terminology demonstrate her

foolishness and naivety” (Kobližková, 26). Furthermore, McEwan allows the reader to approach the narrative with care by making it obvious that he frequently employs an unreliable narrator. Briony is convinced that Robbie was the person she saw running away, not due to clear visual evidence, but because it aligns with the story she’s developing from her previous interactions with him. Her judgment is shaped by her belief that anyone who could write that line in the letter to Cecilia must be a ‘maniac,’ and therefore Lola’s rapist.

This reflects her earlier idea about the direct link between words and their meanings. Essentially, Briony is now guided by the interpretive, ethical, and aesthetic vision from her youthful romantic stories, rather than the insights she gained from observing Cecilia and Robbie (Phelan, 118). Evaluating life with sharp judgments, Briony reaches absolute conclusions, but life is much more complex than that. In her world, people and events are black and white; It is classified as good or bad, right or wrong. This narrow perspective is especially evident when she falsely accuses Robbie. Her labelling him a ‘maniac’ after reading Robbie’s letter and then branding him Lola’s rapist shows Briony’s inability to grasp complex human nature and the nuances of events. Yet real life is much more complicated than Briony’s teenage novels and melodramatic imagination. People cannot be completely defined by a single action or word; Each individual has a multi-layered history, motivations, and emotional depths. Additionally, Briony is obsessed with romances that embrace gender norms and societal expectations, so her characteristics influence her decisions and perceptions. “Realizing that Robbie does not meet her fantasy of a prince according to the standard principles of good and evil, there is no other way than to punish him” (Kobližková, 24). Therefore, it is obvious that Briony cannot evaluate events objectively, and this casts doubt on her narrative.

On the other hand, McEwan, as a kenotic writer, empties himself of his own self as a writer, emotions, or prejudices in the writing process and devotes himself entirely to the flow of the text and the needs of the characters. This type of approach puts the author’s own presence in the background, centers the reader’s experience, and allows for a deeper connection. While Briony focuses on her own needs and desires in the writing process, McEwan almost eliminates his own existence. As a postmodern writer, McEwan’s ‘kills God’ and removes the intrusive power over art. From a neutral perspective, he allows Briony to be herself and introduce her own story. In doing so,

he aims to arouse a feeling of doubt in the reader. He enables the reader to read by questioning by confronting the power of manipulation inherent in authorship. Thus, the reader shows complete surrender neither to Briony's work nor to McEwan's *Atonement*. As Kathleen D'Angelo states,

The 'reality' that she renders as fiction is not material; it exists only within the pages of the novel. McEwan's move to reveal Briony as the author makes transparent another narrative aspect that the novel explores: the relationship of the reader to the text. For if *Atonement* is a novel concerned with the 'making of fiction,' it is also a novel concerned with the reading of fiction, as well as the reading of experience. (D'Angelo, 89)

For this purpose, the novel draws the concept of 'time' to the centre of the text to enable the reader to examine the fiction from different layers. As Paul Ricoeur reckons, "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of a temporal existence" (Ricoeur, 52). The concept of time is used masterfully in this novel because the transitions between periods enable the reader to have a multi-layered experience, while at the same time, the reader realizes that he/she is reading fiction within fiction, thanks to the dates in the novel. Thus, time becomes an essential element and directs the text.

The only authentic sense of time is found in the epilogue, which is dated in 1999. This is the only clear and real reference within the fictional world. The measurement of time (in the first three parts) is an imaginary measurement of an imaginary time. This is why we can come back to it, re-read it, and interpret it from an entirely new perspective. This re-evaluation of time is assessable only from the point of view of the last chapter because this is the only stable account of time. Evidently, if we view it from the perspective of its real author, the last part also becomes untrustworthy. (Ciorogar, 154)

McEwan also uses time as a deceptive element, causing the reader to question the process they are experiencing once again because they understand that they are actually reading the events as written by old Briony in 1999, rather than from the

perspective of the date they happened. This is a strong clue that Briony is an unreliable narrator.

Another important factor that creates the kenotic structure in this novel is that the reader, deceived by Briony's work, confronts the truth in McEwan's *Atonement* because McEwan reveals that Briony is an unreliable narrator. First of all, when she was writing about the events that took place in the 1930s in 1999, we cannot be sure how much she remembered. This makes it very difficult to understand where reality ends and imagination begins. Furthermore, readers know that old Briony is suffering from dementia. At this point, it can even be claimed that McEwan chose this disease consciously because at the point when the facts are revealed, the reader leaves Briony's *Atonement* and moves on to McEwan's fiction. In that part, the reader learns that the old Briony who wrote this novel is a sick woman who is slowly losing her memory. It can be claimed that McEwan once again 'killed God' within the story as Briony's memory is erased and she begins to fade, forget, and be forgotten. Moreover, when McEwan reveals Briony's true face, she loses her authority to intervene like a god, because McEwan wakes the reader up and reminds them that they are in a fictional universe.

Along with the revelation in the last chapter that Briony has created a fiction, other aspects of her unreliability are also revealed. In the opening chapters of the novel, Briony emerges as a solitary figure, a child enveloped in loneliness. Complex family relationships and adults' expectations can be cited as the factors that closed her off to the field of literature and imagination. One of the themes that can be felt in the background of the novel is the adult-child dichotomy. At the beginning of the novel, Briony and other child characters live a life away from the world and the responsibilities of adults. However, this inexperience gives Briony, in particular, a naive and idealistic perspective. The interpretation of the main events in the novel through the childish perspective of Briony also makes her narrative unreliable. Even though the old Briony writes it, the events first pass through the filter of the child Briony. Young Briony is a lonely child in a big house. Although she seems to be everyone's favourite because she is the youngest child, she actually lacks a guiding figure. During her childhood, Briony's older siblings depart for school, leaving her in a world where her father's constant absence and distant presence render him more of a figurehead than a parent. In this case, while she needs her mother, who is the only

adult staying at home, her mother often locks herself in her room and closes herself off to the outside world due to migraine pains. While growing up in such an atmosphere, Briony, who tries to get to know life and herself through literature, develops an imagination independent of the real world. Therefore, in this limited world, Briony is left with little choice but to adopt social norms.

Knowing that there are expectations from her due to the classical literature she reads and her family's position and being a woman, Briony holds on tightly to these. She is closed to alternative stories and endings, both in her understanding of literature and in her real life. Briony adheres strictly to traditional moral and social values. These values strengthen the desire to comply with the norms accepted by society and to adopt certain behavioural patterns. Briony wants to behave in accordance with social expectations in order to maintain her family's social status and maintain their reputation. Such a child's character interpretation of events cannot be expected to be objective. Briony perceives and interprets events within the framework of the prejudices she has been taught. Both social norms and her own personal ambitions, which the reader realizes later in the novel when Robbie remembers the past, make her an unreliable narrator. While the norms she has learned push her to blame someone from the lower class, the jealousy and anger she feels towards Robbie, with whom she has a childish love, also mislead her.

Nevertheless, one could argue that as Briony emerges from the confines of her sheltered existence, grappling with the consequences of her actions and maturing into adulthood, she also endeavours to undergo a form of kenosis, a self-emptying or relinquishing of ego. Just as McEwan abandons his superior position, elderly Briony tries to purify herself from her prejudices and arrogance.

Briony debases herself by becoming a nurse and caring for "the other," thus fulfilling a very urgent requirement of Christianity – to heed "the other". Briony's kenosis is when she gives up a place at Cambridge and becomes a nurse. The word kenosis comes from the Greek word for self-emptying, namely "κένωσις". This essentially refers to the self-emptying of one's own will and the process of becoming completely receptive to God's will. [...] To serve others seems a far cry from Briony's self-absorbed life, in which she manipulates those around her in her fictional dramas. It is through

caring for the wounded and the maimed in World War II that Briony finally realizes that other people are as real as she is. (Romylos and De Lange, 37-38)

Briony, who experiences kenosis as a character, cannot be said to do the same as a writer. Because even in the last sentences of the novel, she emphasizes how she can change the fate of the reader and her characters. “If I had the power to conjure them at my birthday celebration... Robbie and Cecilia, still alive, still in love, sitting side by side in the library, smiling at *The Trials of Arabella*? It’s not impossible. But now I must sleep” (334). In these closing words of the novel, Briony does not hesitate to emphasize her power of creation. Robbie and Cecilia are already dead and cannot be found. It is never known whether they would still fall in love with each other in a scenario they lived in, whether they would want to come there, or whether they would watch that play. Yet Briony states that their fates are put on paper by Briony’s hands. So, they will be shaped however Briony wishes. In brief, the novel’s kenotic structure reflects McEwan’s approach of dedicating himself entirely to the flow of the text and the needs of the characters. This allows the author to put his/her own self in the background and center the reader’s experience. At the end of the novel, by emphasizing Briony’s creative power, it becomes clear that McEwan questions his authorial authority and gives more importance to the reader’s experience. While providing this kenotic structure, he provides the reader with the experience of examining two different authorships by making a comparison between himself and Briony.

b. Dialogic Structure in *Atonement*: Voices in Conflict

As a Kenotic writer, Ian McEwan creates an objective atmosphere by eliminating his own personal views, beliefs, and prejudices, and produces a multi-layered work. By equating himself with his readers and characters, he breaks away from the traditional interventionist writer’s attitude and gives the work some features that undermine traditional literature. These features include dialogism, polyphony, and heteroglossia. These concepts help the reader understand the complexity and depth of literary works. When they exist intertwined with each other, dialogism, polyphony, and

heteroglossia enable the text to move dynamically. First of all, a Kenotic work leaves aside the author's own voice, making more room for the voices and experiences of the characters. This allows the novel to be polyphonic because the perspectives, experiences, and inner worlds of different characters are presented to the reader. The polyphonic structure created makes it possible to produce a more egalitarian work. At the core of the novel is a rich network formed by the coming together of different characters, perspectives, and narratives.

First, dialogism is found in *Atonement* in many different forms, including intertextual dialogue, intercharacter dialogue, and author-reader dialogue. The works inspired by McEwan as a writer and Briony's inner works in the text emphasize the dialogue in literature because McEwan creates a dialogue among different literary texts. "McEwan points out that trying out other writers' voices was his 'own way of finding [his] own voice' [...] McEwan's narratives like a conversation with past and present writers about writing, rather than being an imitation of other writers' style" (McLeod, 5). This dialogic approach is realized through implicit and explicit references, thematic parallels, and literary allusions among McEwan's texts. For instance, in *Atonement*, references to classic works like Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* deepen the internal worlds and moral dilemmas of McEwan's characters. At the same time, this interaction between different texts helps the reader better understand how McEwan addresses universal themes such as time, memory, and reality in his works. In this way, he establishes a dialogue not only among his own works but also with the great narratives in literary history, offering readers a broader perspective. To illustrate, before starting the novel, the reader is greeted with a piece from Jane Austen's work.

To Annalena

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, and your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive with them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social

and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?" They had reached the end of the gallery, and with tears of shame, she ran off to her own room. (Austen, 1818, as cited in McEwan, 2001)

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is about the adventures of young and dreamy Catherine Morland. She is a young girl with a wide imagination, naive and prone to romance. She goes to Bath with the invitation of a family friend and participates in social life there. Inspired by horror novels at the Northanger Abbey mansion, where she is invited, she misinterprets the events around her, and this puts her in some funny situations. However, over time, she understands the truth and discovers the boundaries of her dream world with reality. This work, in which Jane Austen makes fun of the gothic literature of her time, is about Catherine, who has not yet been able to fully integrate into real life and understand people and interpret the people around her from an immature and dreamy perspective. To illustrate, Catherine perceives fictional horror scenarios as reality due to her misunderstandings about the atmosphere of the mansion and some events. Catherine's perception of fictional scenarios as real raises suspicions about the mansion's past and discredits General Tilney and his family. Catherine's misunderstandings also affect her relationship with Henry Tilney. Due to the scenarios Catherine makes up, Henry has a hard time understanding the fears in Catherine's mind, damaging the communication between them. Thus, she harms herself and others because of the perspective she shapes in her own imagination.

McEwan's direct encounter with one of the famous works serves as a foreshadowing for *Atonement*. Moreover, McEwan does not hide that he is inspired by some aspects of Jane Austen's work and creates a dialogue between the texts because Catherine Morland and Briony Tallis, with their comparable mistakes, serve as illustrations that complement, illuminate, or broaden one another for the reader's benefit. Additionally, someone who has read *Northanger Abbey* before may thus have a certain perspective on *Atonement*. Both novels deal with the conflict between reality and imagination. Both of them deal with fiction in which immaturity has a great impact as it turns into experience, and the development and maturation of the main characters play an important role in the meaning-making process in the novel. Additionally, a

reader who discovers that Catherine Morland is an unreliable narrator may also suspect Briony Tallis. Thus, two different novels written in two different periods can reinforce each other and give a message to the reader together.

Atonement is not just in dialogue with *Northanger Abbey*. Creating a text within a text, McEwan designs other fiction in the novel to contribute to the main text and creates a dialogue between them. The most obvious example of this is that McEwan's *Atonement* reveals the truths in Briony's *Atonement*. The two novels interact with each other and make each other more comprehensible. While McEwan shows the reader the impact and misdirections of Briony's fictional work, he also describes Briony's process of coming to terms with the facts. In this way, a dialogical relationship is established between the main text of *Atonement* and Briony's fictional work. Briony's fictional work highlights the fine line between reality and fiction, helping the reader understand events and characters more deeply. This intertextual dialogic interaction contributes to the reader's more holistic understanding of the story and allows McEwan to explore the depths of his novel. The impact of Briony's fictional work on the main text enriches the themes, characters, and events of the novel and offers different perspectives to the reader.

The other work that is in dialogue with the main text is the play *The Trials of Arabella*, written by Briony. This play offers a clue as to how Briony perceives reality and how she expresses it. It is a tool through which Briony expresses her inner world, emotions, and thoughts. It can be argued that this play is a synecdoche for the main text because Briony's role as both the author and a character within the play mirrors her role in the broader narrative of the novel. Just as Briony shapes the events and characters within the play, she also shapes the events and characters within the novel through her writing and her perceptions. The reader meets Briony through her rush to write and perform this play, and at the very beginning of the book, important clues are given about how controlling a person Briony is. The themes, conflicts, and emotions explored within *The Trials of Arabella* likely parallel those found throughout the entire novel. Briony's creation and presentation of this play offer insight into her own inner world, her understanding of reality, and her attempts to grapple with guilt and atonement. Therefore, the play acts as a microcosm of the novel, encapsulating its essence and serving as a representative part of the larger narrative. Thus, the works of

Briony Tallis, another writer in the text, are in a dialogue with McEwan's *Atonement*. Intertwined, they make each other more revealing.

Another feature covered by the concept of dialogism is the dialogue between characters within the text. In a Kenotic work, dialogues are often used to deeply explore the characters' inner worlds and relationships. In such works, dialogues can be used to emphasize the interactions, conflicts, emotional bonds, and lack of communication between characters. Moreover, dialogue occurs not only when one person speaks, but also when the other person listens, understands, and responds. This means that communication is not one-sided, and both parties influence each other. For this reason, in a kenotic work, conflicts and disagreements between characters can be clearly revealed through dialogues. This type of dialogue occurs when the characters' different ways of thinking, values, and beliefs clash. These conflicts can contribute to the progress of the story and the development of the characters because the dialogue that occurs within the text can also be shown through the consequences that arise as a result of disagreement or misunderstanding between the characters. Thus, the effects of the characters on each other are emphasized. In dialogism, meaning is enriched by the interaction and conflict of different perspectives. Conflicts between different characters, speakers, or language forms can increase the depth and complexity of the text. These conflicts allow the reader to navigate between different perspectives and create their own meaning.

Atonement is a very rich work in this context because events are told again and again from different people's perspectives, so the reader can dive into a process of creating meaning through the dialogue between characters, rather than obtaining a forced meaning from a single point of view. The conflict of these perspectives from different strata, different genders, and different age groups gives rise to possibilities of meanings. *Atonement* is a novel that stands out in this context because its plot is based on the effects of individuals' perspectives on each other's lives. "Over the course of McEwan's perspective-shifting narrative, we find characters, again and again, realizing that they are bounded by otherness, by other minds with their own plans, their own interiorities, their own ways of perceiving the world" (O'Hara, 75). For instance, Briony's internal conflict about 'I and others' is presented. Questioning whether others are as alive and individual as herself, Briony thinks: "If the answer was yes, then the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and

everyone's thoughts striving in equal importance and everyone's claim on life as intense, and everyone thinking they were unique when no one was" (37). The novel focuses on the questions of where the individual begins and ends, how different they are from each other, and how these different perspectives affect each other. McEwan suggests through his novel that "It was not only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy, but it was also confusion and misunderstanding; above all, it was the failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you" (41) because he has an egalitarian standpoint. So, he reflects the impression between different individuals with each other, equating them.

Therefore, the dialogue between the characters in the text not only affects each other but also creates a dialogue between the author-character-reader and enables understanding to be achieved. For this reason, the dialogue between the author and the reader in a kenotic work is shaped differently from the traditional author-reader relationship. With a kenotic approach, the author gives more space to the characters' experiences and encourages the reader's participation in these experiences. The reader can participate more deeply in the inner worlds and emotional experiences of the characters and empathize with them. A kenotic work demonstrates that the reader is open to interpretation and participation. Rather than dictating his own interpretation, the author encourages the reader to interpret the text from his or her own experiences and perspective. This allows the reader to make sense of the work based on their own unique experience. Thus, the creation process of the work is never completed, and each reader re-creates the text by entering into a dialogue with the author. While establishing the plot, especially around Briony, Cecilia, and Robbie, McEwan gives a lot of space to the inner worlds of these characters and does not leave their dialogues with each other superficial. Nonetheless, the impact these characters have on each other is shaped by a lack of communication and prejudices rather than their verbal communication. This silent communication and misunderstandings reveal the dialogue of the characters affecting each other. Thus, the reader can create meaning by following the dialogue that occurs without being influenced by these misunderstandings. In this way, the characters interact with the reader

c. *Atonement* as a Polyphonic Novel

The reason why a strong and multi-layered dialogue can be formed is the polyphonic structure of the text. A kenotic work is often conceived as an in-depth text with different meanings at many levels and layers of the text. Polyphony means multiple sounds or multiple meanings. Therefore, in a kenotic work, polyphony occurs when many different voices and meanings converge within the text. McEwan gives voice to different segments of society in his novel. *Atonement* provides its characters with a chance to represent themselves. Instead of serving merely as a physical representation of a social group, each individual is depicted as a fully realized human being with emotions, thoughts, and internal conflicts. The polyphonic structure of the novel can be examined through its depiction of female characters and lower-class individuals, both of whom have traditionally been relegated to stereotypical roles in literature. McEwan challenges and moves away from this conventional framework by ensuring that women and maids are not just background figures but fully developed individuals with their own perspectives. However, the mere presence of individuals from different societal segments does not automatically render a work polyphonic. For true polyphony to exist, the characters must have depth, allowing them to express themselves to the reader in a way that extends beyond superficial or one-dimensional portrayals. McEwan accomplishes this by crafting a narrative that allows female characters and working-class individuals to articulate their own thoughts, emotions, and struggles.

First, women have often been used by male writers in traditional literature as figures who support or accompany the stories of male protagonists. Women are frequently presented as tools to shape familial roles, romantic relationships, or the emotional development of male characters. This often gives the impression that female characters lack independent desires, goals, and challenges. In this restrictive, traditional framework, women are portrayed as passive companions who serve social norms and rarely assert their own ambitions and desires. However, in *Atonement*, McEwan subverts this by ensuring that his female protagonists have distinct ambitions and desires of their own. He begins by questioning traditional gender dynamics, allowing his female characters to possess their own voices and agency rather than merely existing in relation to men. As Sylvia Faye McLeod states, “Increasingly

complex techniques of narrative voice in *Atonement* include disenfranchised ‘other’ voices which are represented in ways that raise questions about generalizing assumptions about ‘other’ groups. The modes of narration of the women and men in societies past and present are used by McEwan to challenge conventional plots and cultural myths” (McLeod, 94).

Throughout the novel, the inner worlds and thoughts of female characters are explored in depth. Briony and Cecilia, in particular, emerge as complex figures who actively shape their own narratives. For example, Cecilia rejects traditional female roles and pursues both sexual freedom and personal passion. She is a character who acts on her own initiative, prioritizing her own desires rather than conforming to societal expectations. By choosing to follow her own path rather than adhering to her family's expectations, Cecilia resists the passivity associated with conventional female characters. Through her, McEwan illustrates that female protagonists can experience contradictions, doubts, and passions just as male characters do. Similarly, Briony is not depicted as a submissive female character; rather, she insists on her own perspective, demonstrating her autonomy and agency.

Another crucial element that supports the novel’s polyphonic structure is its depiction of the lower class. McEwan provides depth and humanity to his working-class characters, allowing them to be fully realized personalities with their own internal conflicts, desires, and histories rather than reducing them to background figures. One of the most significant aspects of this approach is McEwan’s attention to language and narrative style. He ensures that lower-class characters express their thoughts and feelings in a way that aligns with their social reality, making their experiences feel more authentic and impactful. Class conflict and social discrimination are central themes in the novel, particularly in the interactions between lower-class and upper-class characters. However, McEwan treats these themes with complexity, delving deeply into the lived experiences of his working-class characters. Unlike traditional literary depictions of class struggle, which often simplify these conflicts, McEwan presents a nuanced perspective by allowing the reader to see the world through the eyes of lower-class individuals. Robbie Turner serves as a key figure in this exploration of class dynamics. “According to Fraser, Robbie is ‘the embodiment of class dislocation’ (qtd. in Chvátalová, 25). Although he was raised among the Tallis family due to his mother’s work as their maid, he remains an outsider who can never fully

belong to their world. In public, he may appear to be of the upper class due to his education and demeanour, but social barriers continually remind him of his lower status. This is exemplified by the way other soldiers question his speech and behaviour, highlighting the class-based prejudices that persist even in wartime.

Robbie's struggle with class expectations is further complicated by his relationship with Jack Tallis, who has financially supported his education. Although this support has enabled Robbie to pursue higher education and aspire to a medical career, opportunities typically unavailable to men of his social standing, he remains acutely aware of his dependence on the Tallis family's patronage. This sense of obligation creates an internal conflict in Robbie, as he simultaneously benefits from and resents the limitations imposed by his social status. McEwan meticulously portrays Robbie's internal dilemmas, conveying his feelings of entrapment and the broader implications of social mobility. Despite his intelligence and ambition, Robbie ultimately finds that societal prejudices continue to restrict his opportunities. His tragic arc underscores the rigidity of class divisions, illustrating how even the most determined individuals can struggle to escape the constraints imposed by their birth.

If *Atonement* were presented solely from the perspective of an upper-class character, the depth and complexity of Robbie's experiences would be lost. Instead, McEwan's polyphonic structure allows for a richer and more nuanced exploration of class struggle, providing a voice to those traditionally marginalized in literature. By incorporating diverse perspectives from all walks of life, ages, and genders, McEwan creates a novel that challenges the conventions of traditional storytelling and offers a more egalitarian and multi-dimensional portrayal of human experience. In other words, McEwan's *Atonement* exemplifies the power of polyphony in literature, allowing for a nuanced and egalitarian exploration of both gender and class. Through his depiction of female characters and working-class individuals, McEwan challenges traditional literary norms that often render such figures passive or one-dimensional. By granting them independent voices, desires, and conflicts, he not only enriches the narrative but also underscores the broader social inequalities that shape their lives. The novel's polyphonic structure ensures that no single perspective dominates, allowing for a richer engagement with the complexities of human experience. Women in *Atonement* are not confined to roles that serve male narratives, and lower-class individuals are not relegated to mere background figures. Instead, McEwan presents

them as fully realized individuals, shaping their own destinies within the constraints of their social realities. This multiplicity of voices strengthens the novel's thematic depth, reinforcing the fluidity of identity and the persistent influence of societal hierarchies. Ultimately, *Atonement* does not merely reveal the rigid structures of gender and class, it actively resists them. McEwan's dedication to polyphony assures that historically marginalized voices are not only included, but given the opportunity to challenge and redefine their role in literature. In doing so, the novel moves beyond a simple narrative of guilt and redemption, offering a profound meditation on the power of storytelling to reshape our understanding of history, identity, and justice.

d. Heteroglot Structure in *Atonement*: Reflecting Different Speech Genres

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* stands as a compelling example of a polyphonic and heteroglot novel, where multiple voices, styles, and textual forms intertwine to create a rich and layered narrative. The novel's polyphonic structure, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, emerges through the presence of multiple character perspectives, each carrying its own distinctive voice and worldview. This polyphony is reinforced by the novel's heteroglot nature, where different speech genres, narrative styles, and textual formats contribute to the diversity of linguistic expression. By analysing these elements, one can better understand how McEwan employs language to reflect the fluidity of meaning and the complexities of human perception. The polyphonic nature of *Atonement* is evident in its shifting perspectives, particularly as the narration moves between Briony, Cecilia, Robbie, and other characters. Each character's viewpoint is not merely a retelling of events, but a unique interpretation shaped by their individual emotions, experiences, and biases. This multiplicity of voices prevents the novel from adhering to a single, authoritative narrative, instead presenting a world where truth is fragmented and subjective. Heteroglossia, as another Bakhtinian concept, is woven throughout *Atonement* in several ways. First, the novel includes different modes of speech and expression among characters, shaped by their social positions, relationships, and emotional states. Briony, for instance, exhibits a formal, structured, and imaginative prose style, reflecting her youthful naivety and desire for narrative control. In contrast, Cecilia's sections adopt a more emotionally charged yet

introspective tone, mirroring her inner turmoil and romantic longing. Robbie's perspective, particularly in his wartime experiences, shifts to a more disjointed and visceral style, capturing the chaos and trauma of war. These variations in language reinforce the novel's heteroglot structure, ensuring that no single linguistic register dominates the narrative.

One of the key aspects of heteroglossia in *Atonement* is the presence of different speech genres, distinct forms of language shaped by context and purpose. McEwan integrates formal letters, intimate diary entries, theatrical scripts, and everyday conversation into the novel, each carrying its own stylistic markers. A crucial example of speech genre variation occurs in Robbie's letter to Cecilia. The original letter he intended to send contained refined, affectionate language, but in a moment of impulsiveness, he instead delivers a sexually explicit version: "In my dreams, I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts, I make love to you all day long" (81). This letter, written in a private, intimate register, becomes highly problematic when it falls into the hands of Briony, who, due to her limited understanding of adult relationships, misinterprets its meaning. The stark contrast between Robbie's polite and controlled speech in public settings and the rawness of his private correspondence highlights the adaptability of language to different social contexts. It also underscores the dangers of misinterpretation when language is stripped from its intended communicative space. Similarly, the twins Pierrot and Jackson's runaway note demonstrates how childlike language functions within the novel's heteroglot framework: "We are gong to run away becace Lola and Betty are horid to us and we want to go home. Sory we took some frute And there was'nt a play" (131). The note's phonetic spelling, grammatical errors, and simplicity distinguish it from the sophisticated prose of Briony or the reflective introspection of Cecilia. These linguistic markers reinforce the distinctiveness of each voice, further enhancing the novel's polyphony.

Beyond variations in character speech, *Atonement* exemplifies heteroglossia through its incorporation of multiple textual forms, each carrying distinct stylistic and tonal characteristics. Heteroglossia, as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, refers to the coexistence of multiple voices, discourses, and perspectives within a text. In McEwan's novel, this manifests through letters, diaries, and dramatic scripts, each of which introduces a unique mode of narration, reinforcing the novel's thematic

concerns with truth, interpretation, and authorship. To illustrate, letters in *Atonement* serve as personal and unmediated expressions, directly engaging the reader with the characters' inner lives. Robbie's letters to Cecilia communicate his love and longing in a way that bypasses narrative mediation, while Briony's later letter to her sister functions as an attempt at self-reinvention and atonement. The epistolary form, with its personal and confessional tone, contrasts with the novel's retrospective third-person narration, thereby creating a dynamic interplay between subjective experience and retrospective storytelling. Another intimate discourse can be seen in diaries. They further contribute to the novel's heteroglot structure by offering an introspective and self-justifying perspective. Briony's diary, for instance, is a space where she constructs her own version of events, reinforcing her persistent desire for control over storytelling. Unlike letters, which are addressed to others, diary entries represent internal discourse, often fragmented and contradictory. This contrast highlights the tensions between private and public narratives, self-perception, and external truth.

Another striking example of heteroglossia is Briony's childhood play, *The Trials of Arabella*. The theatrical presentation, structured by dialogue, stage directions, and a moral resolution, adopts an exaggerated and simplified narrative mode. The play's performative nature stands in stark contrast to the psychological depth of the novel's prose sections, highlighting Briony's youthful belief in clear-cut justice and narrative resolution. This naive perspective is later undercut by the complexities and ambiguities of the novel's unfolding events, illustrating how different narrative modes can be in tension with one another. By integrating these distinct textual forms, McEwan creates a novel in which competing voices and modes of storytelling coexist, challenge, and redefine one another. This heteroglot structure underscores the novel's central preoccupations with the instability of truth, the subjectivity of narrative, and the ethical implications of storytelling.

To conclude, the presence of heteroglossia in *Atonement* serves as more than a mere stylistic feature; it is an essential structural and thematic force that underpins McEwan's exploration of truth, interpretation, and the instability of narrative authority. By embedding multiple textual forms within the novel, letters, diaries, plays, and shifting narrative perspectives, McEwan crafts a complex literary landscape where no single voice dominates. This multiplicity challenges the reader to engage with the text more dynamically and critically, forcing them to navigate the intersections of personal

subjectivity and objective reality. The novel's engagement with heteroglossia ultimately mirrors its thematic concern with the construction and reconstruction of truth. One of the most striking aspects of McEwan's deployment of heteroglossia is how different textual forms not only coexist but also interact, contradict, and reframe one another. The epistolary elements in *Atonement* exemplify how personal narratives can both reveal and obscure meaning. Robbie's letters to Cecilia convey passion and sincerity, yet they are also subject to misinterpretation and manipulation, as seen in Briony's misreading of the infamous letter. Similarly, Briony's own letters later in the novel attempt to rewrite history, seeking absolution for her past actions. This interplay of texts underscores the novel's central tension between the permanence of recorded words and the fluidity of their interpretations.

Briony's diary further complicates this dynamic by illustrating the subjectivity of self-narration. Diaries, by their very nature, are private and introspective, yet Briony's writing is not merely an honest recounting of events but an attempt to impose coherence upon her own fractured reality. Her diary functions as a space where she crafts her self-justifications, demonstrating how internalized narratives can shape external perceptions. Utilizing this literary technique, McEwan underscores the perils associated with a singular, authoritative voice idea reinforced by Briony's initial, flawed testimony against Robbie. Through the heteroglot layering of personal writings, McEwan suggests that history is not an immutable entity but rather a series of competing discourses shaped by power, perspective, and memory. The inclusion of Briony's childhood play, *The Trials of Arabella*, introduces yet another distinct textual form with its own stylistic conventions. The play's exaggerated moral clarity and theatrical dialogue stand in stark contrast to the novel's more nuanced prose. As a dramatic form, it imposes inflexible structures of justice and resolution, which Briony, in her childish state, perceives as universal truths. However, as the novel progresses, the contrast between the simplistic morality of the play and the ambiguous realities of adulthood becomes increasingly apparent. This disparity underscores Briony's naive yet persistent desire to impose order upon chaos, illustrating how narrative forms can both reflect and distort the truth.

McEwan's use of heteroglossia reaches its peak in the novel's final revelation: that Briony herself is the ultimate author of *Atonement*. This metafictional twist forces the reader to reassess the reliability of every preceding text within the novel. Briony's

confession that she has altered elements of the story, including the fates of Robbie and Cecilia, reinforces the notion that no narrative is ever entirely free from the biases and desires of its author. Here, McEwan fully embraces the implications of heteroglossia, presenting a novel where multiple discourses coexist but no single version of reality can claim absolute authority. The novel itself becomes a site of contested narratives, reflecting the broader human struggle to reconcile competing truths. Ultimately, McEwan's incorporation of heteroglossia in *Atonement* does more than enrich the novel's structure; it deepens its thematic resonance. By embedding multiple textual voices within the narrative, McEwan not only challenges conventional notions of storytelling but also forces the reader to grapple with the instability of truth and memory. Through letters, diaries, plays, and shifting perspectives, *Atonement* becomes a meditation on the power and limitations of narrative itself. In this way, McEwan does not simply tell a story, he invites the reader to question the very nature of storytelling, reinforcing the idea that reality is always mediated through language, perception, and the multiplicity of voices that shape it.

e. Performativity in *Atonement*: Gender Roles as a Repetition

By creating a kenotic, polyphonic, and dialogic narrative structure, the novel lays the groundwork for performativity by opening space for the interplay of diverse voices, identities, and perspectives. Set in a period when class and gender norms were dominant in England, the novel draws attention not only to the class conflicts of the period but also to gender distinctions. It examines the impact of gender roles on individuals, especially women. In the years in which *Atonement* is set, that is, the 1930s and 1940s, the role of women in England was quite rigid and distinct in society and literature. At that time, the place of women did not change in society or literature. The expectation for women was to get married and take care of their children at home. While women were associated with domestic work, men took a more active role in business life. In academic life, women had only recently begun to be able to go to university, but this opportunity was quite limited. In addition, they were generally not even given a diploma; they were met with prejudice and were not accepted in the business world. Therefore, women were separated from social life and turned into

passive individuals in the home, as they had been for centuries. Working women were only members of the lower classes and had little employment other than as caretakers and maids. Such sharply defined roles are certainly reflected in literature as well. The number of female authors was quite low, and those who were female writers couldn't freely write about their own experiences to establish themselves in the male-dominated literary sphere. Consequently, women, as presented through the male gaze for years, still hadn't fully found their place in literature. Female characters in literary works were generally background figures serving the stories of male protagonists. They would not have a direct impact on the course of events and would be conveyed through idealized norms of femininity. As Donatella Izzo also states, throughout history, in literature, "Countless plots have conspired in disciplining women into submissiveness and chastity, dealing out rewards and punishments according to a shared social pedagogy that both mirrored and circulated patriarchal values" (Izzo, 347). If they were loyal, obedient wives and mothers who would not disrupt the continuity of the male-dominated society, they were considered 'sacred', but women who went against the grain and wanted to have their own voice were marginalized and portrayed as devils. So, there were only two options for women in literature; wedding or death. Which ending they would have been determined by whether they followed the norms or not. In this 2001 novel, McEwan shed light on this limiting structure of the past and used many methods to undermine these norms while criticizing it. While using these, he includes Briony in his work as an author who has adopted the norms and creates characters suitable for social roles in order to emphasize both social and literary differences.

The first unconventional feature that draws attention is that there is a female narrator in the novel. Unlike female characters who have no voice, there is a character who is the voice of the entire plot: Briony. The use of female narrators plays an important role in literature because it provides diversity and representation by reflecting the female experience more deeply and realistically, facilitates empathy, and allows us to explore the inner worlds of female characters more closely. Additionally, it questions traditional gender roles, emphasizes women's strength and originality, paves the way for social and cultural criticism, and raises social awareness by addressing the difficulties and inequalities experienced by women. These narrators invite readers to a richer experience by increasing the diversity and depth of literature.

Briony breaks out of the mould where traditional female characters are often passive or secondary. She is a character with a strong will, determined and focused on her goals. Briony is a character who is passionate about writing and creativity. While traditional female characters are often associated with household chores or family-related matters, Briony stands out for her intelligence and creativity. Her passion for writing her own stories makes her different from other female characters. Moreover, she plays an active role in influencing events and making the decisions that shape her life. She even affects the lives of others and presents them from her own perspective. Briony almost takes on the role of God, but it cannot be claimed that she is a good and innocent God. For example, when discussing Robbie's accusation, which is the crux of the plot, Charmaine Falzon makes the following analogy: "If Robbie, upon his arrival, resembles the merciful Christ figure of the New Testament, the role claimed by Briony is that of the jealous, judgemental god of the *Old Testament*" (Falzon, 66). Briony, who takes on a divine appearance as well as her childish immaturity, embodies the complexity of a Gray because she is not easily classified as purely good or bad; her character is morally ambiguous or multifaceted, inviting empathy from the reader while also wielding the power to disrupt lives according to her biases and desires. Her character is a tapestry of flaws and inner struggles, shaping the narrative with her actions and decisions. While traditional female characters are often idealized, Briony's dark sides and mistakes are also reflected. This makes her a more human, more real, and deeper character.

Although McEwan presents a strong female narrator who challenges norms to his readers, it's noticeable that Briony, especially when she's young, is fixated on traditional understandings and order while writing. In fact, this circumstance illustrates the ups and downs and inner conflicts that women go through while attempting to exercise their free will in a society that does not share their preferences. Little Briony thinks that her life consists of the culture dictated to her and her surroundings and tries to do everything perfectly within the framework of those norms. For example, although McEwan's *Atonement* begins with the knowledge that a girl creates fiction, it becomes clear that the play Briony wrote is not far from the traditional understanding.

The reckless passion of the heroine, Arabella, for a wicked foreign count is punished by ill fortune when she contracts cholera during an impetuous dash toward a seaside town with her intended. Deserted

by him and nearly everybody else, bed-bound in a garret, she discovers in herself a sense of humour. Fortune presents her a second chance in the form of an impoverished doctor—in fact, a prince in disguise who has elected to work among the needy. Healed by him, Arabella chooses judiciously this time, and is rewarded by reconciliation with her family and a wedding with the medical prince on ‘a windy sunlit day in spring.’ (9)

Although having a female lead in *The Trials of Arabella* is a positive feature, the fate of this female character does not progress much differently because it is again a ‘prince’ who saves Arabella, a woman punished by society for pursuing her own passions. More importantly, at the end of the text, there is no alternative happy ending other than marriage. Other passages show Briony being quite obsessed with the issue of marriage. “A love of order also shaped the principles of justice, with death and marriage the main engines of housekeeping, the former being set aside exclusively for the morally dubious, the latter a reward withheld until the final page” (13). In this section, where Briony’s way of perceiving the world is conveyed, it is understood that she has adopted social and literary norms. She has no alternative story.

Briony, created by McEwan as an alternative to traditional understanding, is ironically obsessed with social order. This situation is actually an example of how women are being raised with a limited vision and why they embrace these norms because they cannot believe in any other possibility, even if their nature is completely against it. Briony also perceives the world from this limited perspective and is still unaware of individual differences. She expects everything and everyone to be exactly where they should be, in the predetermined order. Another indicator that she thinks within the boundaries of the norms is her ideas about divorce.

She vaguely knew that divorce was an affliction, but she did not regard it as a proper subject and gave it no thought. It was a mundane unravelling that could not be reversed and therefore offered no opportunities to the storyteller: it belonged in the realm of disorder. Marriage was the thing, or rather, a wedding was, with its formal neatness of virtue rewarded, the thrill of its pageantry and banqueting, and the dizzy promise of a lifelong union. A good

wedding was an unacknowledged representation of the as-yet unthinkable sexual bliss. (14)

In a thought world with such sharp boundaries, divorce is seen as an indisputably inappropriate situation, while marriage is regarded as a reward for individuals. Moreover, she perceives sexuality and passion as happiness that should only be experienced within the framework of marriage. Therefore, the reader can sense the contrast and conflict between Briony's immature and limited perspective and her interventionist and self-willed nature.

Apart from the fact that the protagonist and narrator of the novel are female characters, McEwan frequently references the pressures faced by these characters, as well as the norms they adopt and the methods by which they do so. When examined in the context of performativity, female characters' conflicts regarding performing in accordance with the norms are encountered. First, Cecilia and Briony's mother, Emily Tallis, is portrayed as a truly traditional English mother figure. In the sections narrated from Emily's perspective, it can be understood more obviously how this order in society is transmitted and maintained. As the matriarch of an upper-class family in England, Emily is known for coolness and control. It has a strict discipline, strictly adhering to the expectations of society. However, beneath this exterior appearance lies a complex realm of emotion and conflict within. Her character has a rich inner world shaped by the conflicts between the social norms of the period and her personal desires. Emily prioritizes conforming to the expectations of her family and her social milieu and wholeheartedly adopts the role of a figure esteemed by society. Additionally, she tries to gain control over family members and household members and imposes certain norms of behaviour on them. Throughout the novel, Emily exhibits a sense of anger toward two female characters: her sister Hermione, and her daughter Cecilia. The reasons underlying this anger actually emphasize the negative effects of performativity on individuals. Emily has taken on exactly the role that society expects from her, and she performs following these norms. Emily takes on the role of matriarch in the family and tries to play the role of an 'ideal' woman under society's expectations. She is obsessed with performing well in the eyes of society. This role involves a figure who is elegant, controlled, cool-headed and protects the reputation of the family and society. Emily constantly repeats this role and constructs her own gender identity by exhibiting behaviour in accordance with society's gender norms. However, as Butler's

concept of performativity shows, these performances are not just an externally perceived presentation of identity, but also an internal process. Emily's inner world can be conflicting and complex beneath the strict and controlling exterior she projects on the outside. This may suggest that her performative identity is only a surface appearance, and that other emotions and thoughts exist beneath her true self. In this way, we can also see the internal conflicts underlying Emily's performances.

McEwan makes these internal conflicts felt throughout the text. While Emily never gives up on performing, she is very angry that her sister Hermione creates an alternative identity for herself and does not behave following the norms. "It was her sister Hermione she was soothing—Hermione, stealer of scenes, little mistress of histrionics, whom she pressed against her breasts" (134). Emily gets very angry every time she thinks of her sister, as it forces her to confront her own stagnation and dullness. "Hermione had lisped and pranced and pirouetted through their childhoods, showing off at every available moment with no thought—so her scowling, silent older sister believed—for how ludicrous and desperate she appeared" (134). This contrast between them is more like an obligation created by society than personal differences because Emily is well-mannered, quiet, and well-behaved, as expected from her as a girl. On the other hand, her sister chose to experience her childhood and youth freely. Maybe Emily herself is quite unhappy and grumpy because she never has the courage to step out of the norm. After all, Emily is always soulless and unhappy throughout the novel. She has a constant headache and has to lock herself in a dark room. Migraine disease may be the physical and psychological expression of his unhappiness. Because the life she lives does not satisfy him deep down, she constantly withdraws into his shell. But the real problem here is that she cannot even admit to herself that she is not satisfied with the identity she has adopted through repetitive performances since the moment she was born. She has adopted her role so much and sees it as an absolute path that she does not like people who deviate from it. As a matter of fact, she feels the same anger towards her daughter Cecilia as she feels towards Hermione. She constantly criticizes her because Cecilia, as a woman who is willing to go beyond the norms, dreams of studying and working, does not talk about getting married, and behaves 'unbecomingly' for a woman in society. While she is lost in thought about her family, she becomes depressed when it comes to Cecilia.

One day he might bring home a friend for Cecilia to marry, if three years at Girton had not made her an impossible prospect, with her pretensions to solitude, and smoking in the bedroom, and her improbable nostalgia for a time barely concluded and for those fat girls in glasses from New Zealand with whom she had shared a set, or was it a gyp? (62)

She fears that going to college and hanging out with groups considered marginal could lead to the possibility of her daughter getting married. The fact that she feels unhappy by looking at it very strictly, instead of being happy that her daughter is educated and free, shows that the most important thing for Emily is society's point of view. She also finds Cecilia's smoking unbecoming of a woman. However, for Cecilia, although smoking is seen as an indecent act, it is not seen as a problem if it serves the social female role.

Cecilia went down to meet the visitors, and soon, spreading through the gloom, the faintest tang of a cigarette—she had been asked a thousand times not to smoke on the stairs, but she would be wanting to impress Leon's friend, and that in itself might not be a bad thing. (64)

While deviating from the norms is typically a significant issue, if this behavior is used for the continuity of societal order, namely for marriage, it can be tolerated. In other words, performing outside of societal gender roles may only be acceptable if it still serves this order, as the most important thing for a woman is seen as marrying and having children, and embracing her secondary position in society by staying at home. Any behavior or speech that would lead to an incident other than this is not accepted by society. At this point, Emily symbolizes the general view of society. Later, she once again expresses her discomfort with Cecilia's intellectual personality. "Cecilia should lend a hand, but she was too wrapped up in herself, too much the intellectual to bother with children..." (63). A woman is expected not to be an intellectual and improve herself, but to be responsible for her home, children, and siblings. She must suppress her passions and desires, only feeling attached to her home. Women who follow their own desires instead of performing the role of a good wife and a good mother are thrown out of society and marginalized. Moreover, this time, women are again limited to only two possibilities. They either become revered wives and mothers or they are

seen as irresponsible and inappropriate, pursuing education and careers. There is no such option for a woman to get married and follow her own desires. A woman is definitely forced to give up one of them. Emily also limits her daughter to these categories. Therefore, it is no coincidence that this woman, who shapes her life according to these rules, is quite uneasy. When contemplating herself, Emily acknowledges, "She also knew that, ultimately, it was her own peace of mind she strove for," expressing her dissatisfaction with life (68). Adherence to norms does not bring her peace and happiness, but he never thinks of drawing an alternative path for himself. For this reason, she is resentful of any woman who can find his way.

Emily Tallis does not reflect her internal conflicts onto her personality, fully embracing the role she plays. Meanwhile, Cecilia Tallis experiences a more pronounced tension between societal expectations and her own desires. The conflict between societal gender roles and Cecilia's independent personality is a significant theme throughout the novel. She has a desire for independence against the restrictions of her time and strives to find her own identity. Her aspiration for independence is essential, especially considering the limited roles assigned to women at the time. The fact that she wants to make her own decisions and shape her life reflects her strong character, daring to challenge social expectations. As an educated and intellectual woman, Cecilia's dreams do not consist of spending the rest of her life in her family's or husband's home. The desire to stand freely on her own feet is dominant, which shows her courageously challenging social norms and trying to find her own way. Cecilia gives some performances that transcend traditional social roles. For instance, Cecilia, who does not fully embrace the expected role, is not a regular woman. She creates an alternative identity as a messy and wasteful woman. Apart from this, chatting freely with whomever she wants and smoking whenever and wherever she wants can be seen as her extraordinary performances. In fact, Emily is not the only character who cannot stand her extravagance, Briony also finds these aspects of her sister quite strange because Briony is still trying to adopt these norms and keep up with the order at that age. On the other hand, with the influence of the university, Cecilia is on the way to discovering her own self, so she questions social rules and does not accept them all as they are. She is someone who can follow her passions.

Nevertheless, when Cecilia returns home from university, she remembers again the social norms that she began to discover there, a reality that operates beyond her

free self, and she becomes very bored in this limited world within them. She often even considers returning before the holiday ends but somehow does not act. Inactivity suppresses the voice of the woman who wants to escape from her inner world because even though she has improved herself, it is not that simple to break away from the norms. It is seen that Cecilia, who is torn between her desire to re-involve herself in life and her inactivity at home, also falls into this dilemma. Cecilia, a young woman who is in the process of finding her own way, cannot quickly get rid of the attitudes she has developed in certain patterns since her childhood. Cecilia thinks about the pressure her father has on her, like a representation of culture.

Three years among the sophisticates of Girton had not provided her with the courage to confront him. The light-hearted ironies she might have deployed among her friends deserted her in his presence, and she heard her own voice become thin when she attempted some docile contradiction. In fact, being at odds with her father about anything at all, even an insignificant domestic detail, made her uncomfortable, and nothing that great literature might have done to modify her sensibilities, none of the lessons of practical criticism, could quite deliver her from obedience. (46)

Although she began to discover her own identity at university, the cultural and social norms represented by her father still have a strong influence on her. The fact that Cecilia feels uncomfortable at even the slightest disagreement with her father emphasizes her devotion and obedience to her father's authority. In spite of Cecilia's deep longing for freedom, the situation demonstrates the strain that society structures and familial relationships place on her. Her experiences at university increase Cecilia's desire for freedom and independence, while also trying to cope with the expectations of her family and society. This deepens the complexity of Cecilia's character and her inner struggle. McEwan emphasizes that no matter how much a woman has improved herself, she is forced to be afraid of a man within the patriarchal system and cannot easily break social norms.

Another contradiction Cecilia grapples with is the societal pressure surrounding marriage, one of the most heavily enforced norms. Despite expressing a desire to live independently within her family and conflicting with her mother about it, marriage is a topic she indeed contemplates. "Cecilia wondered, as she sometimes

did when she met a man for the first time, if this was the one she was going to marry, and whether it was this particular moment she would remember for the rest of her life—with gratitude, or profound and particular regret” (47). Since women are restricted by the marriage scenario, this turns into one of the internal conflicts because a woman is not given the chance to be both married and free. Unfortunately, marriage in society has become an institution that confines women to the home and destroys their identity by restricting their freedom. In this case, being happy in marriage for a woman may only be possible by adopting the norms, and McEwan eliminates this option by presenting a character like Emily, who is unhappy despite embracing the norms. Cecilia also thinks about whether marriage will be a blessing or a punishment for her. An alternative form of marriage is not uncommon. Just as gender is transformed into certain norms of femininity and masculinity, marriage does not go beyond the domination of men over women. Therefore, this becomes one of the biggest dilemmas for Cecilia.

Taken together, in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*, the deep-seated societal pressures that confine female characters under social norms and force them to adhere to these norms are thoroughly examined. Throughout the novel, the specific roles and behaviours imposed on women by the English society of the time are clearly delineated. Particularly, characters like Cecilia Tallis are brought to the forefront when they begin to clash with the expectations of their families and society, highlighting their internal conflicts and struggles. Caught between complying with the authority of their fathers and the norms of society, these women are stuck in an effort to find their own identities. By skilfully handling these contradictions, McEwan emphasizes how women are oppressed under social pressures and how these pressures hinder their personal freedom and happiness. However, readers witness female characters who choose their path by coming out strong in all these internal conflicts, such as Cecilia and Briony. Through these non-traditional female characters, McEwan criticizes women’s not the right word, paralysis? under social norms, while also revealing women’s strong will and independence. Additionally, McEwan’s use of a female narrator plays an important role in criticizing and undermining the social norms in his work. A female narrator’s perspective allows the novel to present its events and characters from a different perspective. It may be possible to examine gender roles and pressures more deeply through the eyes of a female narrator. The inner worlds,

emotions, and experiences of female characters can be told more effectively from this perspective. Since a female narrator is preferred, readers can see what pressures these norms put on women and how they make them unhappy and uneasy.



VII. VOICE AND CHAOS IN *DAN LENO AND THE LIMEHOUSE GOLEM* BY PETER ACKROYD

It is noteworthy that Peter Ackroyd's writing style incorporates interweaving historical and cultural layers. While incorporating historical events into his narratives, Ackroyd employs a technique wherein he relinquishes the author's authority, thereby providing his characters and readership with a greater degree of autonomy. This style is also clearly observed in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. As the novel progresses in the dark atmosphere of 19th-century London, accompanied by a series of murders and social turmoil, Ackroyd's journey into history goes beyond merely narrating events; it transforms the text into a multi-layered, intertextual narrative. Nevertheless, the most notable aspect of Ackroyd's novel is his deliberate relinquishment of authorial dominance and his embrace of a kenotic perspective on authorship. This perspective not only alters his relationship with his characters but also profoundly influences his connection with his readers. In this work, Ackroyd maintains the role of the narrator in a background position, instead allowing the characters and the reader to drive the narrative. This is exemplified throughout *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, where the characters are permitted to construct their own narratives without the author's direct involvement. This results in Ackroyd effectively removing himself as a central authority figure within the narrative and aligning his role more closely with his characters. In particular, the character of Elizabeth Cree exists as both a writer and a character throughout the novel. While positioning Elizabeth as a narrator and creative figure, Ackroyd equates her with his own authorial identity. Thus, kenotic authorship establishes a balance between author and character. At the same time, it also makes the reader a part of the text; Ackroyd's withdrawal allows the reader to actively participate in the process of meaning-making. However, the real significance of this kenotic conception of authorship for his study lies in the fact that it provides a strong basis for Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque.

The inherently equalizing nature of a kenotic work opens the door to Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and polyphony. Instead of a single authority, Ackroyd constructs a narrative in which many different voices coexist. The fact that *Dan Leno and the*

Limehouse Golem has more than one narrator and each character interprets the events from his/her own point of view supports polyphony. In this polyphonic structure, dialogism can correlatively be seen because the novel's structure facilitates a continuous dialogue between characters, events, and different kinds of texts, shaped by the interplay of diverse voices. For example, the blending of George Gissing's literary world with real-life historical figures like Karl Marx creates a dialogue between fiction and history, shaped by the interplay of diverse voices. The concept of heteroglossia also serves to further extend the dialogic structure of the text, with the convergence of a multitude of historical, cultural, and class-specific languages, presenting distinct styles of discourses in the intertwined texts and in the dialogues and the characters' different forms of expression. That's why it can be asserted that the inclusion of characters from different social classes and various kinds of texts serves to exemplify the phenomenon of heteroglossia. To illustrate, this is evident in the contrast between the refined language of literary figures and the slang of music hall performers like Dan Leno. This results in a narrative developing in a manner that is beyond the control of the author. The other outstanding technique used in the novel is carnivalesque, which is arguably the most tangible illustration of Ackroyd's egalitarian perspective. As articulated by Bakhtin, carnivalesque represents a domain where social stratification is effectively reversed, and distinctions based on gender and class are effectively erased. This concept is also evident in the novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. For example, the chaotic and grotesque atmosphere of the music hall performances allows lower-class characters to mock societal norms, destabilizing traditional social orders. The traditional social order is destabilized by the coexistence of life in the lower classes of London, staged performances, murders, and academics or poets. Ackroyd's kenotic approach, combined with the carnivalesque, results in a reversal of the inequality between the characters.

Ackroyd's kenotic writing not only establishes a parity of power between the author, characters, and readers but also interrogates the conventional gender roles. In particular, Elizabeth Cree serves as a focal point for this exploration of equality. As a figure who does not conform to traditional female roles, Elizabeth rejects the identities imposed on her by society and instead creates her own identity. This situation also coincides with Judith Butler's concept of performativity. Butler posits that gender is not a fixed identity, but rather a social construction created through repeated

performances. By prompting Elizabeth to question her performance of femininity, Ackroyd enables her to recreate this social construction. Consequently, while ensuring equality between men and women, Ackroyd's kenotic understanding also reveals the performative nature of the characters concerning gender roles. In brief, Ackroyd's kenotic writing not only dismantles the traditional hierarchy between author, character, and reader but also has the potential to challenge and potentially subvert social inequalities between men and women. This part of the study will examine how a kenotic and egalitarian ground is prepared and how this atmosphere creates space for certain concepts.

a. Kenotic Patterns in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Peter Ackroyd uses many techniques to make himself and his work kenotic. All the methods used lay the groundwork for each other, making the author, the characters, and the reader equally active in cooperation. One of the most significant aspects that distinguishes Ackroyd as a kenotic writer is his ability to allow Elizabeth to maintain her autonomy and direct the narrative course independently, without undue influence or interference. To comprehend this egalitarian structure, it is crucial to concentrate on Elizabeth Cree who shapes the course of the events and who is equal to Ackroyd. She is a complex character who appears in Victorian London as both a stage performer and a female murder suspect. She has both an extroverted and impressive personality and attracts attention with her psychological depth and mystery. Elizabeth's character plays an important role in the main theme of the novel. It should be noted that Elizabeth Cree becomes a multi-layered and deep character because of her rich background knowledge and the traumas of her past. As Henry De Guise Laurie states, while describing Elizabeth's process of coming to terms with herself and the construction of a coherent narrative encompassing her past and present.

Lizzie is simultaneously aware of her remembered presence in the past and her present knowledge of the world's potential danger projected onto the past. She remembers this past being vividly and

in detail. The sensuality of her past experiences — involving smells, sights, and sounds — articulates her excitement, which momentarily obscures the unpleasantness of her narrating consciousness. (Laurie, 167)

Elizabeth's emotional connection between her past and present makes her inner world more complex. Her traumas are vividly conveyed to the reader, leaving deep clues to Elizabeth's personality and state of mind. Ackroyd ensured that every aspect of Elizabeth was acknowledged and that she was able to express herself fully.

Elizabeth, who transcends the limitations of a stereotype, is presented as a complex individual, encompassing a range of experiences and characteristics, including trauma, mistakes, aspirations, and flaws, while engaging in a direct and intimate dialogue with the reader. For instance, the circumstances of her childhood and early youth had a profound effect on her personality and psychology. Elizabeth, who was born into a disadvantaged family and endured a challenging upbringing, was compelled to assume responsibility at an early age. However, beyond the fact that she was compelled to assist her mother instead of pursuing her own studies, it was her mother's unloving and abusive demeanour that resulted in irreparable emotional trauma. Her mother, who keeps Elizabeth under strict discipline, hates her daughter, perceiving her as a consequence of her father's misdeed, and her mother makes her believe her father is dead. Nevertheless, Elizabeth learns that her father is not actually dead. He left her mother. "He was not her husband but some masher, some fancy man who had got her in the family way. I was the family, and I was the one forced to bear her shame" (11). Abandoned after the birth of her child and unable to create a stable family unit, she instills in her daughter a disdain for family life and the idea of having children. That's why she frequently engages in reading and encourages her daughter to do the same, focusing on passages from the Bible that illustrate the potential consequences of misbehaviour, presenting being in a relationship as a sin. Furthermore, she abuses Elizabeth and tortures her vagina. Elizabeth recounts the horrors of her past in the following words,

There is a place between my legs that my mother loathed and cursed — when I was very little, she would pinch it fiercely, or prick it with her needle, in order to teach me that it was the home of pain and punishment. But later, at the sight of my first menstrual issue, she

truly became a demon. She tried to stuff some old rags within me,
and I pushed her away. (12)

Hence, she aims to make her daughter perceive the vagina as a place of sin and thus distances her from her femininity. In essence, Elizabeth, who cannot fully engage with her childhood and adolescence, develops a negative perception of womanhood as a result of this lack of experience and trauma.

Elizabeth's difficulties and traumas allow the reader to empathize with her. The troubles she experienced in her childhood and adolescence allow us to see her as a human being trying to survive under these difficult conditions, instead of seeing her only as a criminal. Furthermore, the religious anxieties and familial pressures that prompt Elizabeth to challenge her own identity, sexuality, and sense of justice enable her to assume two distinct roles, that of a criminal and a victim. It can be comprehended that Ackroyd presents a balanced view of Elizabeth, neither portraying her as a victim nor a perpetrator nor idealizing or demonizing her. Instead, he depicts her as a complex and nuanced individual, without any personal bias or sentiment. Hence, the reader is free to understand and interpret Elizabeth rather than being subjected to the author's intrusive manner. As a consequence of her upbringing, Elizabeth becomes a young woman who is egocentric and devoid of empathy. Nevertheless, this is not explicitly acknowledged within the novel. It is anticipated that the reader will solve the enigma presented throughout the narrative by gathering clues and maintaining a high level of suspicion. By the conclusion of the novel, it is evident that Elizabeth is a reckless and unscrupulous murderer.

Notably, Elizabeth's multifaceted life story is not presented linearly and straightforwardly. Instead, it is depicted as a complex and intriguing detective story, which is further complicated by the fact that Elizabeth is the narrator. Although the novel switches between first and third-person narrators often, the readers realize at the end that Elizabeth dominates the text because, apart from the parts where she describes her inner world, the diaries that are read are actually her writings. At this juncture, the fact that Elizabeth is an unreliable narrator is a substantial factor that activates the reader. Elizabeth tends to present events in a certain way to suit her own interests. She tends to hide or distort her own crimes and inner conflicts from the reader. Elizabeth's narrative is shaped by her personal interests and psychological conflicts. Additionally, her occasional deliberate lying or manipulation of events reveals to the reader the

uncertainty and multilayered nature of reality. It is emphasized many times in the novel that Elizabeth constantly creates a new narrative and takes on different roles. To illustrate, Elizabeth, who presents herself with a different identity when she starts living with some of the theatre crew, thinks: "I had to be careful not to contradict the orphan story I had sold her when I first arrived in lodgings, but that was the easy part: I had invented a whole history which made me much more interesting to myself, and I really had no difficulty in sustaining it" (107). The reader is given the clue that she is actually in a constant state of spectacle, not only on stage but also in her personal life, and that she creates and enacts her own story. Moreover, Elizabeth goes out in the world wearing the costumes of the characters she created. For example, in a passage where she speaks in the third person about a character she created, she describes her walking around in a different character.

It must have been two or three months after the Older Brother was born that I had a sudden fancy of my own: it might be a piece of fun to take him out into the streets of London and see the other world. [...] But then I would quietly dress myself as the Older Brother, wait until the lights were dimmed and the house was quiet, and then creep out of the back window by the staircase. Of course, he never wore his stage clothes, which were a trifle too short and too shabby, and he had bought for himself a whole new set of duds. [...] The females of the street would whistle to him, but he passed them by and, if the worst of them tried to touch him, he would grip their wrists with his big hands and thrust them away. [...] No one ever saw Lambeth Marsh Lizzie or Little Victor's Daughter — she had gone away, and I liked to think of her sleeping peacefully somewhere. (153-154)

Elizabeth frequently sheds one persona and assumes another. This becomes a habit for her and reflects her tendency to assert dominance over society because she manipulates people by embracing different personas that people want to see constantly. She doesn't confine herself to a single identity, but this also makes her an unreliable figure. Furthermore, Elizabeth, in a section where she talks about her experiences in the theatre, says the following about the character she played: "How they roared, even when I was at my most genteel. Little Victor's Daughter was the young virgin who said quite innocent things — how could she help it if she was open to

misconstruction?" (149). Elizabeth's remark highlights the notion that people are bound to be perceived as much as others can understand them. The ease of manipulating others may stem from the fact that what we say is shaped by the perception of the listener, and if we can grasp this perception, we can manage it. This idea not only helps us understand Elizabeth's performance on stage but also her strategic behaviour in everyday life, reinforcing her manipulative nature. Indeed, throughout the novel, Ackroyd repeatedly emphasizes how other characters, and the reader, are constantly being attempted to be manipulated by Elizabeth, highlighting the limited understanding of human nature. In brief, Elizabeth's constant manipulation of her colleagues, husband, and even the court by playing with their perceptions and emotions, along with her lifelong habit of assuming different identities, heightens the reader's sense of intrigue. The reader's involvement in the process of meaning-making transforms the novel from being solely Ackroyd's work into a collaborative piece. Ackroyd, Elizabeth, and the reader work together in this shared effort. However, it should be noted that Ackroyd's focus on having an unreliable narrator at the center of the novel is not the only aspect of creating a kenotic work. The novel employs various other techniques, explainable through Bakhtinian concepts, that contribute to its kenotic quality.

When everything is taken into consideration, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* stands as a remarkable example of Peter Ackroyd's kenotic authorship, where the novel becomes a shared space of interpretation between the author, the characters, and the reader. Elizabeth Cree, as the focal point of this narrative structure, exemplifies how a protagonist can maintain autonomy and engage in an intricate dialogue with both the text and its audience. Through her multifaceted and unreliable narration, Ackroyd relinquishes authorial dominance, allowing Elizabeth's voice to shape the story's direction while also compelling the reader to actively participate in deciphering her true nature. Ackroyd's kenotic approach is deeply intertwined with Bakhtinian concepts, particularly heteroglossia and polyphony. The novel is not structured as a singular, authoritative voice but instead functions as a cacophony of perspectives, where various voices interact, clash, and coalesce into a rich, multi-layered narrative. Elizabeth's fragmented and performative identity, coupled with the alternating narrative styles, underscores the novel's resistance to a fixed or singular interpretation. The presence of multiple discourses, ranging from courtroom testimonies to theatrical

performances and personal diary entries, further complicates the notion of a stable reality, reinforcing the idea that meaning is not dictated by the author but rather co-constructed by the characters and the reader.

Furthermore, Elizabeth's performativity and ability to manipulate her own identity highlight the novel's interrogation of truth and deception. Her life, much like a theatrical act, is an assemblage of roles she consciously adopts, forcing both the characters within the narrative and the reader to question the reliability of perception. Ackroyd masterfully blurs the line between performance and reality, demonstrating that identity itself is fluid and subject to interpretation. This is particularly evident in Elizabeth's ability to reinvent herself repeatedly, shifting between personas as she navigates through the different societal constraints imposed upon her. The reader is not given a singular truth about Elizabeth; rather, they are invited to piece together her fragmented narrative, which ultimately leads to a plurality of meanings rather than a definitive resolution. Additionally, the novel's dialogic nature allows for an interplay between historical context and fiction, as Ackroyd weaves together Victorian London's social, theatrical, and criminal elements to create a deeply immersive and multi-voiced world. By incorporating real historical figures alongside fictional characters, the novel not only challenges the boundaries between fact and fiction but also invites the reader to engage with the text in a way that mirrors historical inquiry, questioning sources, discerning bias, and constructing meaning from multiple, sometimes contradictory, narratives. Ultimately, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* exemplifies the principles of kenotic authorship through its structural and thematic complexities. Ackroyd's deliberate withdrawal from narrative control, his emphasis on an unreliable and multifaceted protagonist, and his integration of Bakhtinian heteroglossia and polyphony collectively create a work that resists definitive interpretation. The novel does not present a single, authoritative version of events but instead offers a layered and dynamic narrative that demands the reader's active engagement. In this way, Ackroyd does not impose meaning upon the text but rather creates a literary space where meaning emerges through interaction. Elizabeth's narrative, shaped by trauma, performance, and self-reinvention, becomes emblematic of this process, serving as a conduit through which the novel's kenotic essence is fully realized. Thus, the novel is not merely a story told by an author but an evolving discourse that continues to unfold within the mind of each reader who engages with it.

b. Dialogy in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

Literary works are not isolated entities; they exist within a network of voices and perspectives. A foundational concept in literary theory is dialogism, which underscores the dynamic interaction and interplay among diverse voices within a text. Another key aspect of dialogism is that it highlights the ongoing interaction among characters within a text, revealing the presence of multiple perspectives. This interaction creates a dynamic tension between these perspectives, which contributes to the process of meaning-making. Moreover, a text is always in dialogue with other texts, and these intertextual exchanges generate continuity and depth. Consequently, the reader is not confined to being influenced solely by the author, a single character, or one work, but instead is invited to engage with a broader web of ideas. That's why intertextuality is another technique Ackroyd employs to engage the reader more actively. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* comprises a series of intertwined texts, presenting a multi-layered dialogue. This structure engages the reader's curiosity, encouraging them to unravel the connections between the texts. From a Bakhtinian standpoint, dialogism is defined as examining the interrelationships between texts as a polyphonic structure. As mentioned, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory posits that texts are never entirely autonomous entities; rather, they exist in constant dialogue with languages, voices, and discourses in other texts. This process of dialogue results in the text being continually reinterpreted and re-signified, with the participation of both the author and the reader. When considered within the context of dialogism, it becomes evident that this novel contributes to the main narrative by uniting disparate texts and genres.

First of all, Ackroyd establishes a tangible historical context. The author establishes a link between the past and present by utilizing authentic historical events and figures. That's why, despite being published in 1994, the novel provides insights into the historical context, particularly 19th-century Victorian London. In order to create a more vibrant atmosphere, he draws upon a variety of historical documents and chronicles. The novel provides a meticulous depiction of the working-class life of the period, social groups involved in crime, and the dark streets of London. These elements are not far from the reality of that period. Nevertheless, in his presentation of these realities, Ackroyd does not merely factually reflect them, as would be typical of a

historical report. Instead, he offers a unique perspective and aims to interpret the reality in question differently from the conventional historical account. Ackroyd's approach aligns with postmodern historiography, where the boundaries between fact and fiction blur, allowing him to challenge traditional historical narratives. As Rahime Çokay states about Ackroyd's understanding of history "Highly conscious of ontological questions of postmodernism, Ackroyd displays a deep awareness of the postmodern understanding of history and explores the answers of such questions as whether it is possible to seize the past, how history is interpreted and constructed and to what extent historians can represent the past" (Çokay, 61). Hence, he creates a space where fiction intertwines with history, highlighting the subjective nature of truth. Çokay continues, "In most of his novels, Ackroyd reflects his sceptical attitude towards history, plays with the conventions of traditional history, breaks its boundaries and creates a fragmented and unreliable account of the past which is in direct contrast with the linearity and wholeness of traditional history" (Çokay, 62). For instance, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Ackroyd doesn't just document 19th-century London; he delves into the dark, theatrical, and often grotesque underbelly of the city, exploring the psychological and cultural forces at play.

Furthermore, the inclusion of real figures of the period, such as Karl Marx and George Gissing, establishes a dialogue between historical reality and fictional narrative. This creates a space where fiction is in constant interaction with historical reality. This is created not only by the mention of real historical figures in the novel but also by the fictionalization of these figures, as Ackroyd does not represent them as they are kept in the historical record. It also makes them question history by offering them an alternative life. This form of narrative, which emphasizes that history is not an absolute truth but is open to interpretation, encourages the reader to question how historical facts are told and by whom. Therefore, while the reader tries to solve the dialogue between the past and present, he/she also reconstructs the past. Besides, Ackroyd also establishes a constant connection between the past and the present, utilizing the historical memory of locations such as London as a particular case in point. London is imbued with a kind of characterization in his novels, serving as a conduit for the interweaving of historical change with the present. Ackroyd posits that spaces serve to preserve the past and that this past is in a state of ongoing dialogue with the present. According to Ackroyd, the way of understanding today requires

knowing what came before it (Lewis, 158). Indeed, the past and the present engage in a continuous dialogue, mutually influencing and recreating each other. In brief, in Ackroyd's fiction, time is not a single linear line, but a multi-layered structure. The past and the present are inextricably linked. Past events have an impact on the present, while the occurrence of events in the present day imbues the past with new meanings. It should be noted that Ackroyd not only uses London as a bridge between the past and the present but also finds similarities between the city of London and the Golem and incorporates London into the multi-layered dialog that constitutes the meaning. As Mahinur Akşehir emphasizes while examining different standpoints that reflect the structure and the role of London in the novel:

Chalupsky emphasizes that London is represented as a wild and ominous urban space that oppresses its inhabitants physically, socially, and emotionally. For this reason, the descriptions of the city and the depiction of the golem bear striking parallels. First and foremost, the Limehouse Golem, described as a "formless entity," is characterized as grotesque and discordant. Like the Golem, London is shapeless, mismatched, and grotesque, and is defined as a place that abuses and brutalizes its inhabitants in various ways, such as poverty and corruption. Just like the golem, which is believed to be made of red clay, London's color, as Ackroyd states, is red, which is also the color of violence (Chalupsky, 2011, as cited in Akşehir, 2022, p. 24).

Thus, the city of London, which contributes to the dialogical structure of the novel as a historical place, also takes on a character just like the Golem, leaving clues to the reader about itself, the characters, and the flow of events.

Furthermore, Ackroyd, who encouraged the re-examination of historical accounts and asserted the potential for their recreation, also challenged the veracity of conventional historical records, which serve as a primary source of historical documentation. The portrayal of discrepancies and unreliability in official records across the novel serves to enhance the complexity of the detective narrative, illustrating that inconsistencies and shortcomings may also exist within the case itself. For instance, in a section where a previous murder of a woman is described, an example is given from reports shaped by the superstitions of that period. "But on this

occasion, the police report was wrong. Alice Stanton had not been gazing at the church but at a building beyond it: she had been gazing at the workshop where the Analytical Engine waited to begin its life” (124). Thus, it is emphasized that the past, which is actually in a dialogue with the present, is shaped under the influence of the dominant ideology, which shapes people’s thoughts and beliefs in the era. So, records and reports are deliberately presented from a certain perspective, as they are shaped around existing ideology or other forces. The fact that not only the present but also the past can be reshaped indicates that history has an ambivalent structure, and that life is dominated by flexibility, not certainty.

Apart from the dialogue between the past and present, Ackroyd presents a dialogue among different literary genres. For instance, there are certain gothic elements in this novel, and Ackroyd establishes a discourse between his novel and other Gothic works. Ackroyd’s use of Gothic fiction establishes a direct dialogue with classic Gothic literature from the 18th and 19th centuries, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These works explored themes like the monstrous, the split self, and the unnatural, and Ackroyd incorporates these elements while questioning, subverting, and reinterpreting them within a contemporary and postmodern context. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the creation of the Golem mysterious, monstrous figure, the concept of man-made horrors, and the fear of the unknown, are central to early Gothic novels. Ackroyd takes these classical and almost stereotypical features of Gothic literature in a contemporary context and establishes a dialogic structure with them. For example, classical Gothic literature often uses old castles, ruined monasteries, underground passages, and deserted places. The locations are often linked to the past and carry a mysterious history. Instead of the ruined castles of classic gothic works, Ackroyd uses the dark and crime-ridden areas of 19th-century London, such as Limehouse. He creates a direct gothic, dark atmosphere in the reader's mind. Moreover, the source of fear in Ackroyd’s works is not supernatural but human. The murders committed by Elizabeth Cree show the dark side of human nature. While classical gothic literature uses the destructiveness of nature as a horror element, Ackroyd emphasizes the chaos and decay of modern society. These and similar features create a certain expectation in the reader by making him/her feel that he/she is reading a gothic novel. However, Ackroyd reverses this expectation and works in a

parodic way. By theatrically using the gothic atmosphere, Ackroyd alleviates the fear and shapes the text with an ironic distance. For instance, a poor area like Limehouse, instead of a dilapidated castle or a monastery, offers a realistic but dark Gothic atmosphere. The frightening nature of the place is a mirror of social decay. The murders of Elizabeth Cree show that the source of fear is human rather than ghostly. This can be read as a parody of the traditional supernatural elements of the gothic genre. For example, Ackroyd's characters allude to the flat and stereotypical hero and villain figures in classical Gothic. Elizabeth Cree plays a dual role as victim and perpetrator, a contrast that both subverts gothic clichés and lends an ironic distance to the situation. Moreover, by presenting the narrative from multiple perspectives, Ackroyd questions the authoritarian and nomological narrative of classic Gothic works. This irony makes not only the events but also the narrator questionable. Humour supports this postmodern approach because the events that the reader is expected to take seriously are presented in an absurd way. In short, Ackroyd subverts gothic literature in his novel by first creating an expectation in the reader and then ironizing and parodying it. Therefore, in the process of meaning formation, numerous Gothic works that were addressed prior to the novel contribute, as they engage in conflict and dialogue with it.

Along with historical context and gothic literature, the way Ackroyd deals with art shows the relationship between these two fields and how he positions his novel within this relationship. Ackroyd captures the essence of the period's art world by centering his novel around vaudeville and performance arts. The fact that Dan Leno is at the center of the novel as a real vaudeville performer examines the effects of art and entertainment on social life. It demonstrates how art interacts with social norms and class structures. In this context, it emphasizes that art functions not only as entertainment but also as a means of social commentary. For instance, after the audience laughs at the humiliation of the women in the show, Elizabeth thinks "It would not be going too far to suggest, in fact, that there was some link between the murder of the prostitutes in Limehouse and the ritual humiliation of women in pantomime" (170). One of the most significant examples is the staging of the murder of Elizabeth Cree. This scene functions as an instrument of social criticism. The staged death of Elizabeth Cree criticizes how women and gender norms were perceived at the time. Through staging and performance, one sees how violence is dramatized and how

society perceives it. However, it would be more accurate to approach this from both sides because the theatre not only reshapes Elizabeth's tragic end but also reveals her potential for acting and violence on the way to this end. In this context, Ackroyd creates a dialogue between the stage and Elizabeth's private life throughout the novel. The reader feels the tension in the background and gathers clues to get an idea about Elizabeth's real personality. For example, during the play in which she portrays a murderer on the stage, the sadistic side of Elizabeth is reflected in the part where she loses control and harms her co-star.

A child screamed somewhere in the gallery as I closed on him: the noise must have disturbed me because I had my hands around his throat for far too long. He was too much of a professional to stop the scene but when I dragged him to the barn, he really had gone limp on me. I could see that his face had turned grey beneath the makeup, and he hardly seemed to be breathing. (182)

Acting in such scenes and constantly taking on different roles makes Elizabeth more professional. In her private life, she constantly takes on different roles and shows herself differently to people. At this juncture, a connection is established between acting and madness, and the uncertainty of identity and reality is questioned. In particular, Lizzie's constant presence as someone else off stage leads to questioning her true identity and mental state. The uncertainty of the characters' true identities and intentions causes the reader to constantly question the veracity of the story and the trustworthiness of the characters.

While these scenes reveal information about Elizabeth's or Lizzie's character, the reader may realize that acting is an escape for her. Therefore, the reader gets an idea of how she turns into a manipulative person. Apart from the contribution of art in this context, it is stated that other works of art are also influenced by each other and historical events, just as different texts inspire this novel and can be the source of different works. For instance, a part in which the murder of the entire Gerard family is described exemplifies how such events inspire literature and art.

The murders in Limehouse led indirectly to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde some eight years later, in which the opium dens and cheap theatres of that area play a large part in a

somewhat melodramatic narrative. They also inspired the famous sequence of paintings by James McNeill Whistler, 'Limehouse Nocturnes', in which the brooding presence of the riverine streets is conveyed by viridian green, ultramarine, ivory, and black. Thus, it is emphasized once again that they are all in interaction. (164)

Therefore, just as *The Golem* inspired Ackroyd for this novel, it is emphasized that all these events are connected to different texts and dealt with in many diverse ways.

Another important source that provides an idea of who Elizabeth Cree was and who she might become is the Bible. It is a source that deals specifically with themes of moral, spiritual, and social transformation, and this source is used as a tool of complete repression by Elizabeth's mother. Elizabeth's mother restricted her daughter's personal freedom by using the Bible as a tool of control. This situation impeded Elizabeth's ability to establish her individual identity and autonomy, ultimately leading her to be a murderer. The use of the Bible as an oppressive tool causes Elizabeth to experience spiritual and moral conflicts. These religious doctrines, which caused great conflict and psychological destruction in Elizabeth's inner world, caused her to exhibit more manipulative and destructive behaviour in the future. Such an upbringing deprives Elizabeth of the ability to empathize with others and experience deep relationships. While the Bible is used as a precursor to the main text, some clues are given to the reader to notice this. To illustrate, if one examines the verses that her mother hung around the room and that have taken root in Elizabeth's subconscious, one finds that they always contain teachings about destruction and punishment. Elizabeth's speech, in which she quotes from the Bible while waiting at the bedside of her sick mother, is also quite evident in this context.

I glanced up and saw a passage she had pasted onto the ceiling. 'Look here, Mother, I said. 'Here is another sign for you. Can you not read it now, you naughty girl? "Father Abraham have mercy on me and send Lazarus" — you know Lazarus, Mother? — "that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue. For I am tormented in this flame." Is that your torment, Mother? Or will it become so?' (14)

Hence, the readers realize Elizabeth's cold and relentless side. Furthermore, at the very beginning of the book, a reference is made to one of the verses that Elizabeth had to memorize since her childhood.

There was hardly an inch of paper to be made out between them, and from my earliest childhood, I could see nothing but words. I even taught myself to read from them, and I still have by heart the passages which I learned in those days: 'And he took all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and Moses burned it upon the altar.' There was another I recall: "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.' I recited them in the morning and in the night; I saw them as soon as I rose from my bed and gazed at them before I closed my eyes in sleep. (12-13)

This verse literally foreshadows the murders that will be committed because, just as seen here, Elizabeth dismembers her victims and especially tears their private parts from their bodies. Therefore, while Ackroyd presents Elizabeth as a highly complex person in the parts he interweaves, he places many of the factors that make up her personality as clues throughout the novel.

In addition to her connection with her past, which completes her characterization, Elizabeth also engages in a dialogue with her younger self and her murders within the realm of the academy. The field of academia and academics are other figures that complete the multi-layered nature of the novel. Academic references help us understand the art and social structure of the period by establishing the historical and cultural context of the novel. This context makes the developments surrounding Elizabeth Cree's murders more meaningful. Academic discussions illuminate the intellectual background of the novel and the social positions of the characters. In the novel, it is seen that Elizabeth follows academics and reads academic works in the same library as them. Moreover, one of the most powerful tools she uses when leaving a message behind after her murders is academic work. For instance, a passage from John Cree's diary, later recognized as written by Elizabeth, refers to the works of Thomas De Quincey.

May I quote Thomas De Quincey? [...] Who could fail to be moved by his description of the murderer, John Williams, who committed his acts out of 'pure voluptuousness, entirely disinterested' and who provoked an exterminating tragedy worthy of Middleton or Tourneur? The destroyer of the Marr family was 'a solitary artist, who rested in the centre of London, self-supported by his own conscious grandeur', an artist who used London as the 'studio' to display his works. (30)

The admiration for Thomas De Quincey on this page explains one of the sources of inspiration for the murders. De Quincey, one of the 19th-century essayists, writes about death and murder as someone who witnessed the atmosphere of the period. His works are also referenced multiple times in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. That's why looking at De Quincey's ideas on murder also contributes greatly to the understanding of the main text. De Quincey's ideas reflect the aesthetic understanding of the Romantic period, in which dark themes such as death and murder are treated aesthetically and as part of themes of individual and social degradation. He states that death can be considered an aesthetic experience and art form (De Quincey, 12). In this context, De Quincey questions the aesthetic representations of death and murder and examines the effects of these representations on human experience. When evaluated in this context, it can be stated that De Quincey's perspective reflects Elizabeth's aesthetization of her murders. When Elizabeth commits murder, she doesn't just kill people and leave them alone; she takes deep, sadistic pleasure in carefully dismembering them and leaving messages behind. Tragically, Elizabeth's death is then aestheticized and dramatized on the theatrical stage.

One of the secondary texts that provides the most substantial contribution to the main text is the diary kept by Elizabeth, which is believed to have been written by John Cree. There is an intertwined dialogue between Elizabeth's diary and Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. Elizabeth, writing through her husband's voice, dramatically conveys the background of the murders she committed and her own inner conflicts. While this diary reveals the dark nature and psychological depth of the character, it also becomes an impressive tool of manipulation for the reader. Elizabeth, who kept this diary in order to blame her husband for the crime, aims to manipulate the reader and the police. For example, to avoid any suspicion, she frequently mentions in her diaries her loving and loyal nature as a wife. Attending like John, she describes

herself as “she is such a loving, devoted object that I cannot resist spoiling her” (128). This contradiction increases the sense of mystery and curiosity for the reader, who realizes that Elizabeth is not as innocent and in love as she appears in these diaries, thanks to the novel’s constantly changing narrator and changing sources. While this dynamic creates tension in the novel, it also shows that Elizabeth is a strong character and is in rebellion against social norms. Her diary deepens the connection with the character by making the reader feel both fear and curiosity. In conclusion, Elizabeth’s sadistic narration enriches the theme of the novel and offers the reader a constant sense of uncertainty and tension. Moreover, from her writings, it is evident that Elizabeth is not lacking in cultural sophistication or naïveté. Indeed, she displays a depth of character, as illustrated by her ability to present thought-provoking material on matters pertaining to academia and literature. Thus, Elizabeth’s diary develops in dialogue with both the reader and the novel.

Last but not least, one of the most important factors contributing to the dialogic structure of the novel is the interaction of the characters with each other. These interactions not only reveal the characters’ personal histories, psychological states, and social positions but also shed light on the Victorian socio-cultural structure of the period. The polyphonic narration style and polyphonic dialogues used by Ackroyd emphasize the interdependence of the characters and their power dynamics. Indeed, it is acknowledged that others have an impact on each individual’s thoughts, feelings, and life. Therefore, the stories of each character in the novel are in dialogue with each other and they complement each other and provide a better understanding. First of all, the interaction between Elizabeth Cree and Dan Leno reveals roles and power relations on both the individual and societal levels. On the one hand, Leno offers Elizabeth a way out against social norms; he brings her to the stage as a performer because Dan Leno challenges the social norms of the time and puts a woman like Elizabeth on stage. This creates an opportunity for women to break out of their socially restricted roles. For Elizabeth, this provides a space where she can express herself and gain an identity. Moreover, Leno’s humour and social criticism lead Elizabeth to question her own society and life. Leno’s humour and social critiques provide a basis for making Elizabeth’s repressed anger and inner complexity visible. Their interaction reinforces the theme of the transformation of social roles and identities into a play, beyond the performance on stage. That’s why Elizabeth, by internalizing Leno’s humour and

criticism, holds up a mirror to her own personal problems. This is not only an external interaction, but also a process of self-discovery for Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Leno's dialogue becomes not just a simple interaction between two characters, but also a mirror for Elizabeth to confront her own self. While Leno makes her laugh, he is actually expressing Elizabeth's inner traumas and suppressed anger. During these performances, Elizabeth begins to grasp her inner reality more clearly, and this process leads her to commit murders. It can be observed that a multiplicity of precipitating factors ultimately results in Elizabeth's unfortunate demise. Firstly, there is a strong interaction between Elizabeth and her mother, and then there is a similarly intense interaction between Elizabeth and Leno. While her mother restricts her to a narrow sphere of influence, Leno provides her with the chance to expand her horizons, thereby enabling Elizabeth to undergo two contrasting processes. Furthermore, at first, Leno is the figure who brings Elizabeth to the stage and offers her an identity, but over time, Elizabeth overcomes Leno's authority by crossing the boundaries between the stage and real life. Here, Ackroyd reduces Leno's power over the narrative, allowing Elizabeth to gain control. Although Leno appears as a guide for Elizabeth at first, this dynamic is reversed over time, and Elizabeth becomes a strong character who tells her own story from her own perspective. This reverse power relationship occurs as a result of the kenotic narrative, with the characters developing naturally without the intervention of the author.

A further relationship dynamic that requires examination is between John Cree and Elizabeth. Marriage plays an important role in how Elizabeth copes with both social expectations and personal desires. Through this relationship, Ackroyd shows Elizabeth's manipulative nature along with the inner transformation she experiences throughout the marriage. At the beginning of the marriage, Elizabeth tries to play the role of a submissive and quiet wife, following Victorian norms. Although her marriage to John Cree seems like a normal marriage from the outside, Elizabeth begins to use this relationship to shape it in line with her own interests. The submissive wife role that Elizabeth plays at this point is seen as part of her manipulative nature. Elizabeth does not see her husband as a partner but also as a tool. She uses both passive and active manipulation tactics to gain power over him and benefit from the marriage. For example, the love and care Elizabeth shows towards her husband is actually a tactic she uses to gain control over him and put him in a weak position. John Cree remains

oblivious to the dark and calculating nature hidden beneath Elizabeth's seemingly quiet and submissive demeanour. That's why, the dialogues and interactions between Elizabeth and John Cree have a profound and devastating impact on John. Although John Cree initially presents himself as a powerful intellectual figure, his interactions with Elizabeth ultimately reveal him to be emotionally and mentally vulnerable. While Elizabeth provides John with a sense of ease and comfort, she simultaneously exerts control over him. Afterward, Elizabeth's cold and distant attitude causes John to feel lonely in the marriage, and this feeling of loneliness pushes him to become increasingly withdrawn. Ackroyd shows that at this point John came under Elizabeth's control and gradually lost his independence. Elizabeth's passive-aggressive behaviour and emotional games turn John into someone who has difficulty making his own decisions. John Cree's death is the ultimate result of Elizabeth's manipulative influence. Ackroyd portrays John's death as the culmination of Elizabeth's power. John becomes a victim, unable to escape Elizabeth's control and manipulations. John's death is not only a murder but also an indication of Elizabeth's ultimate victory over him as a result of her manipulation strategies. In conclusion, an examination of Elizabeth's interactions with various characters, viewed through the lens of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, reveals the coexistence, confrontation, and constant evolution of disparate voices and power relations. Elizabeth's relationships with both Dan Leno and John Cree create a space where different ideological positions and power dynamics collide and transform each other, as in Bakhtin's dialogism. The differences between Leno and John show how Elizabeth exists in these two different worlds and builds her own power.

c. Polyphony in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

As one of the substantial features of a dialogic text, Peter Ackroyd's novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* employs a polyphonic structure, resulting in a multifaceted narrative encompassing diverse voices from disparate social classes and viewpoints. While the novel intertwines a series of murders in Victorian London, the theatre world, and intellectual circles, it tells a story specific to each voice's social position, experiences, and class. In this context, understanding the polyphonic

structure of the novel requires not only an examination of the personal stories of the characters but also an exploration of how these narratives interact within the larger societal frameworks. Polyphony, examined under three main headings, reveals how Ackroyd skilfully brings together voices from different classes, genders, and intellectual circles. As a kenotic writer, Ackroyd creates a more egalitarian environment in his novel, allowing his characters to be found and make their own voices heard, thus creating a multi-layered work (Laurie, 174). First, as a lower-class and doubly-marginalized woman, Elizabeth Cree stands out as a character struggling to be heard and tell her own story. The pressures of both social class hierarchy and patriarchy shape Elizabeth's voice. Secondly, while Dan Leno and other actors/actresses in the theatre world are representative of the lower section of the population, they also reflect the complex dynamics of the entertainment industry. These characters reveal the social realities hidden behind the scenes and the exclusion experienced by the lower class. Finally, academics and literary figures represent the male-dominated and hierarchical structure of the Victorian intellectual world and discourse. These three layers present the polyphony of the novel both as a critique that questions social norms and as a narrative device that reveals the complexity of the social structures of the period. Ackroyd's polyphonic narrative not only includes independent character voices but also allows these voices to be in constant dialogue, thus weaving the narrative with a rich texture that cannot be reduced to a single authoritarian point of view. The main reason for the formation of such a rich structure is that the characters in the novel are individuals with their own stories and troubles, rather than stereotypes. Furthermore, by presenting each character's standpoints, the novel forces the reader to choose between unreliable narrators constantly. Thanks to the polyphonic structure, the information provided by each character about the incident combines with the narrative of other characters and adds new dimensions to the detective story. While trying to unravel the events from Inspector Kildare's perspective, Dan Leno and Elizabeth's stories present different layers of the social and individual reasons for the murders. This makes the plot deeper and more versatile. Thus, while social criticism is strengthened, the reader is given a more active role in getting to know the characters and solving the events. What is more, the reader can even be rendered or evaluated as the real detective.

The most important element that makes the novel polyphonic is the presence of a female character's voice, background, and actions. Elizabeth Cree is a strong woman who stands out to the reader as a single individual with her traumas and decisions, unlike the women in classical literature who are kept off-center and presented only from the male perspective. She can be seen as a symbol of women who challenge the traditional narrative structures that have historically confined them to passive and devoted roles within patriarchal literary systems. As Jana Valová states, "*Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* by Peter Ackroyd depicts a woman who also refuses to follow the limiting rules of the era. Instead, the main heroine Elizabeth Cree breaks as many rules and laws as possible in her quest for self-exploration and self-expression" (Valová, 42). The exclusion of women's stories, emotions, and perspectives in classical literature has led to a disconnect between readers and female characters, making it difficult for readers to relate to, understand, or feel compelled to engage with them. However, the function of polyphony in Ackroyd's kenotic work is substantial, and the essential element is that this work liberates women and femininity from being presented from a limited and biased point of view.

In this sense, in Peter Ackroyd's novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Elizabeth Cree makes an important contribution to the polyphonic structure of the work with both her individual story and her social criticisms. Elizabeth's past, social status, and traumas reveal her character in a multidimensional way, allowing the reader to empathize with her. This detailed characterization allows Elizabeth to appear not only as an individual figure but also as a representative who questions the patriarchal literary tradition. In accordance with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony, Elizabeth's voice not only tells an individual story but also establishes a dialogue with the social structures of the time. In the patriarchal system of Victorian England, women's stories were often silenced or marginalized, and their stories and their real experiences were not represented. Instead, they had just limited roles like a housemaid, wife, or mother. As Amrita Chattopadhyay mentions, "Victorian women were rarely offered fresh active fictions bearing imaginative possibilities of challenge. The tales of discovery, of travel, of work, of exploration, were men's stories (Chattopadhyay, 23). However, in Ackroyd's narrative, Elizabeth stands against this silencing and tells her own story from her own perspective. This allows the reader to connect with the character through Elizabeth's own voice and experiences, rather than being guided by

a narrator. Elizabeth's narrative is as much a social revolt as it is an individual struggle. This novel, which has a polyphonic structure, ensures that different voices are equally represented and critiques gender inequalities through Elizabeth's experiences. By placing this character's story at the centre, Ackroyd gives place to the voices of women who have been excluded throughout history. Thus, Elizabeth becomes not only a character in the novel but also a figure who challenges patriarchal narrative structures.

It is also vital that Elizabeth Cree's voice is audible within the polyphonic structure, not only as a woman but also as an individual belonging to the lower social class. As a figure emerging from the lowest social strata, Elizabeth Cree is a marginalized character in both class and social terms. The fact that her voice is heard in this way is significant in Ackroyd's multi-layered narrative structure because it allows for the inclusion of the voice of the lower class, which is not traditionally represented in literature. Elizabeth's background of poverty and adversity enables her to be perceived as a representative of the lower class, as it instils in her a desire for transformation, elevation, and recognition. To illustrate, this desire is vividly reflected in her decision to spend extra money on the luxury seats, despite their cost being double that of the first-class seats (Ackroyd, 17). This act signifies more than a preference for comfort; it embodies her yearning to transcend the limitations imposed by her social standing. Similarly, the music halls, with their distinct seating divisions, "the pit" for the lower class and "the gods" for the upper class, serve as a microcosm of Victorian societal structure. These spaces not only represent leisure but also encapsulate the tensions between class divisions and the potential for social mobility (Laurie, 103). Ackroyd intertwines these elements to illustrate how the architecture of social spaces like the music halls reflects and reinforces the class distinctions of the era, mirroring Elizabeth's own struggle for elevation within a rigid social hierarchy. Therefore, through this character, Ackroyd elucidates the era's class distinctions and social inequities. Elizabeth's capacity to articulate her perspective is indicative of her resilience in the face of challenges. The most important feature that makes Elizabeth a strong character is her ability to carve out an effective role for herself despite being doubly marginalized, both as a woman and as a lower-class character. As a representative of the lower class, Elizabeth manages to stand against the rigid class barriers of the social structure. In this context, Elizabeth's voice as a lower-class woman is of great literary significance because she is one of the most invisible

members of this society, yet Ackroyd gives her a powerful voice and narrative, and the readers witness her lifelong story. As Henri de Guise Laurie states;

The initial chapters depicting Lizzie's World recall a Bildungsroman. Her description of her early years her desire to leave the home of her childhood, the unexpected luck she has on starting on her way into the world her attraction to the music hall, the description of her route to central London, with barely a thought of home. (Laurie, 167)

Hence, instead of being a marginalized, invisible character, she is the main heroine of the novel where her adventure in life is the focal point of the plot. Furthermore, throughout the novel, Elizabeth's belonging to the lower-class shapes both her manipulative nature and her struggle to stand on her own feet. Her suffering and poverty lead her to become a woman who tries to forge a path for herself, rather than merely submitting to her fate.

In Peter Ackroyd's narrative style, which reflects the inner worlds, experiences, and motivations of numerous characters without relying on a single narrator or point of view, the presence of Dan Leno and other actors/actresses contributes significantly to the polyphonic structure of the novel. This is particularly evident in the use of theatre as a social medium, whereby the convergence of diverse voices becomes more pronounced. The character of Dan Leno plays a pivotal role in the polyphonic structure of the novel, functioning as a figure who challenges the conventional boundaries of theatrical expression. Leno is a celebrated comedian whose performances are characterized by a keen wit and a discerning critique of societal norms. The novel portrays theatre as a venue for entertainment and a domain where critical discourse can flourish. As Reyyan Bal states, "The sensationalization and aestheticization of crime is also evident in the theatrical world portrayed in the novel, where real murders and executions are used as material in the music halls" (Bal, 222). In this context, the theatre serves as a microcosmic presentation of unsteady and chaotic real life and offers a space for criticism by strikingly revealing the facts. In this context, in many parts of the novel, Leno's sketches and the other players' humorous performances deeply question the social structure of the time and the inner worlds of individuals. In this way, the theatre becomes a space for laughter on stage and a platform for the characters to express both themselves and society. Leno's performances, in particular,

address the difficulties faced by the lower classes and the social hierarchy of the time. So, Leno's characters and humorous storytelling style on stage give a voice to the lower class of society. Thus, Dan Leno is a figure who represents the lower class of society with his humour and intelligence. As Ashleigh Prosser highlights;

It was through Leno's spectacular, effortless ability to manipulate his whole persona into that of another, rapidly transforming from familiar pantomime characters into his own inimitable caricatures of everyday Londoners in Victorian street scenes that Ackroyd explains the great pantomime dame, comic, and music hall star [...] came to symbolize all the life and energy and variety of the city itself. (Prosser, 96)

As a symbol of the Londoners, Leno expresses the difficulties, exclusion, and invisibility of this class with the power of humour, and his plays are some kind of reflections of real life in London. Prosser continues by claiming a parallelism between Dan Leno and Peter Ackroyd, and she asserts that, like Leno, Ackroyd, as the author and storyteller, creates characters out of nothing using his distinctive style. He brings the story to life through the varied voices of the characters. Ackroyd mixes quotes from real historical figures with imagined perspectives, combining genuine sources and fictional texts (97).

Other groups that Ackroyd sheds light on by giving the stage to different characters are the academics and intellectuals. The academics, writers, and poets who appear in opposition to the perspectives of Dan Leno and other lower-class characters also contribute to the polyphonic structure of the novel because their perspectives are deeper and theoretical but distanced from society. Ackroyd juxtaposes Dan Leno to academics and literary figures because knowledge and production are confined to the closed spaces of libraries and academic circles, reinforcing social class differences. Academics and intellectuals represent the historical and highbrow dimensions of the novel. These figures are individuals belonging to the upper class and intellectual circles of society who evaluate the social and political developments of the period from a certain distance. Their voices, unlike Dan Leno's, reflect a more dignified, serious, and sometimes upward-looking perspective. Through these characters, Ackroyd criticizes the cultural and intellectual world of the period. While their voices represent

authority and knowledge throughout the novel, they also represent an intellectual class that is often alienated from the experiences of the people.

In particular, the fictionalized historical figures such as George Gissing and Karl Marx in the novel show how intellectual figures contribute to the polyphonic structure. While Gissing and Marx make deep analyses of the functioning of society, they present their criticisms of public life on a theoretical and abstract level. The perspective that these figures represent throughout the novel provides a deep awareness of the structure of society, but this perspective can be disconnected from the everyday life of the people and the experiences of the lower class. In this context, their voices are in stark contrast to Dan Leno's humorous style, which touches directly on people's lives. Nevertheless, social problems are not only presented from the point of view of the lower stratum, but the readers also see how intellectuals from the upper stratum of society address these murders and social decay. For instance, while the death of Solomon Weil was seen by society as just another murder that created a chaotic atmosphere of fear and rumours of 'golems', Karl Marx's commentary continues as follows:

So now they call this murderer a golem, do they? [...] So, they absolve themselves of their responsibilities and declare that the Jew is killed by a Jewish monster! Make no mistake about it, gentlemen. It is the Jew who has been killed and mutilated, not Solomon Weil. It is the Jew who has been violated, and now they wash their own hands clean! (92)

Moreover, he characterizes this murder as "a part of history" (93). Moreover, Marx focuses not on Weil's death but on the importance of his work and asks the detective, "And I suppose that Solomon Weil was the last of his line. What will happen to his books? They cannot be dispersed. They must be secured" (94). In brief, Ackroyd deals with the difference in the way of thinking between the philosophers, academics, and the people, presenting both opposing points of view and leaving the interpretation to the reader.

Thus, Ackroyd's other contribution through academics and literary figures is the observation of how social realities can be told in different ways. While these figures represent the approach of history and literature to events, they reflect a more theoretical

and abstract view of the lives of the people. This creates an additional tension in the polyphonic structure, as the voices of academics and literary voices are very different from the direct experiences of the public. While Dan Leno's onstage humour directly expresses the difficulties of the public, academic and literary voices address these difficulties more indirectly. As a result, academics and literati contribute to the polyphony of the novel by representing intellectual and theoretical perspectives in its polyphonic structure. Their voices are in stark contrast to those of Dan Leno and other public figures because they interpret society on different planes.

To conclude, the juxtaposition of these two opposing perspectives gives depth and diversity to Ackroyd's multi-layered narrative, offering the reader a multidimensional perspective on the world of both the common people and the intellectual elite. This is one of the most important elements that nourish the polyphonic structure of the novel, as different classes, perspectives, and voices coexist and establish dialogues that contradict, complement, or criticize each other. In brief, thanks to the polyphonic structure that allows even seemingly opposing lives and ideas to coexist, to have equal voices, and to express themselves, the reader has the opportunity to evaluate the narrative from many different perspectives. Furthermore, in the novel, a lower-class person does not have less influence than an upper-class person, nor do women have less influence than men. Each environment is given equal rights and allowed to be represented by different characters. This is why seemingly unrelated characters such as Elizabeth Cree, Dan Leno, and Karl Marx can come together and act as different participants of the same action. Moreover, the fact that they are not only representatives of certain social groups but also as unique individuals, enhances diversity.

d. Heteroglossia and the Language of Class and Crime

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem is a novel demonstrating that the polyphonic and egalitarian structure allows for the perception that people from different circles of society, genders, and ages have various forms of linguistic expression. Each character experiences and expresses the world through their own linguistic framework. Since people speak differently depending on certain factors such

as social class, gender, age, and occupation, the heteroglot structure of a novel makes it more realistic and the characters more vivid. Furthermore, it effectively highlights social and cultural differences and conflicts, as each class carries a distinct voice. The contrast between them becomes evident through their varied modes of expression, divergent beliefs, and the palpable tension that arises from these disparities (Grau, 78). In addition, the heteroglot structure intertwined with the polyphonic structure allows for a critical perspective on social norms and values through the coexistence of different voices and perspectives. Instead of imposing a single truth or an authoritative discourse, the author encourages the reader to strike a balance between these voices and make their own interpretation. Thus, it is also comprehended that language is an essential tool to emphasize different social functions of language because the diversity of language used in a text represents different social classes, professions, genders, and cultural groups in society. This demonstrates that language serves a social function, reflecting individuals' status, power dynamics, social roles, and identities. Moreover, variations in language usage are shaped by the influences of many determinants. The words a character uses, the way they speak, and their language can reflect their social status or economic class. Heteroglossia shows how language creates a hierarchy and balance of power between individuals. As Benjamin Bailey states, "What is distinctive about heteroglossia is not its reference to different kinds of linguistic signs and forms, however, but rather its focus on social tensions inherent in language" (Bailey, 499). The way a boss speaks to his/her employees, a teacher to his/her students, or a government official to citizens is an expression of authority and power relations. Those at the top may use more formal and commanding language, while those at the bottom may use more polite, reserved, or submissive language. Thus, how individuals relate to each other is also comprehended through language.

Another feature of the heteroglot structure is that other types of text, such as poems, letters, newspapers, police reports, etc., also have their own writing style and tone. For example, while the language used in a diary is more intimate, in a police report a more serious and formal tone is used. A poem is emotional and enthusiastic, whereas a newspaper report has a dull and neutral outlook. This aspect of heteroglossia not merely reflects the socio-cultural diversity of the characters but concurrently serves to enhance the linguistic and stylistic diversity of the work. That's why the employment of multiple genres within the novel enables an event or situation to be

perceived from diverse perspectives. For instance, the difference in language between the intimate inner thoughts in a character's personal diary and an official public statement by the same character reveals different aspects and perspectives of the character. Thus, it provides a layering of both the novel and the character. For instance, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Ackroyd's novel is not only a murder narrative but also a work enriched with different textual genres such as diaries, newspaper articles, and historical documents. These genres narrate the events while simultaneously revealing each one's unique linguistic style. In brief, heteroglossia combines the different tones and styles of both individuals and different genres within a text, enabling different dynamics to be understood and the text to be perceived from many different perspectives.

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem is also rich in this respect. Peter Ackroyd's work presents a structure where the concept of heteroglossia is fully realized by presenting both the linguistic and social diversity of different characters and different kinds of texts together. In this novel, Ackroyd creates a polyphonic narrative by using distinct voices, styles of expression, and text types together. Dan Leno, Elizabeth Cree, police detectives, academics, and other characters in the theatre world represent different socio-economic classes and cultural groups, and they all have a speaking style that is unique and specific to the social group to which they belong. To illustrate, Dan Leno, an artist, employs a comedic and stage-specific speaking style in contrast to academics who use a more specific and elaborative kind of expression. Furthermore, the language used by Elizabeth Cree, the protagonist of the novel, varies considerably due to the changes in her life and the different social roles she assumes. For instance, at the beginning of the plot, she is a member of the lower class and Elizabeth speaks to the theatre team in a formal and respectful tone, as they are superior to her. In the following dialog with 'uncle', Elizabeth is understood to be at the bottom of the power dynamic between them; "'Tell me, my dear,' said 'Uncle', coming over to me and patting me on the arm. 'What's your moniker?' 'I don't understand.' 'Your name, dear.' 'Lizzie, sir'" (55). Additionally, there are notable differences between her internal vigorous monologues and the formal and phlegmatic language used during the trial, as well as his expressions in everyday life.

To elaborate further, Elizabeth's multifaceted character is reinforced by the linguistic devices she employs, thereby intensifying the enigmatic quality of the

character. In public, particularly during her trial, Elizabeth employs a tone that is self-defensive, calm, and careful. The language used in the courtroom is formal, legalistic, and prescriptive, reflecting the terminology of legal procedures and authorities. Additionally, Elizabeth's use of detached and formal language serves as a protective mechanism, shielding her identity from societal pressures in the courtroom. Throughout the trial, she maintains a highly controlled and strategic approach to her language. Conversely, her internal monologues exhibit a markedly more personal, sombre, and profound linguistic style. She consistently addresses them as "sir" and keeps her distance by using emotionless language. (40-41). In her diaries and monologues, she transcends social roles, disclosing her inner vulnerabilities, traumas, and proclivity for violence. To illustrate, looking at her attitudes and way of expression toward her mother can be explanatory for her changing way of articulation. She talks to her mother with whom she feels strongly angry;

Here is another sign for you. Can you not read it now, you naughty girl? "Father Abraham have mercy on me and send Lazarus" — you know Lazarus, Mother? — "that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue. For I am tormented in this flame. (14)

It can be understood that through this kind of expression, she speaks in a more relaxed and genuine style. Moreover, she does not watch her choice of words and does not hide her emotions. Hence, the reader can realize the main heroine's different ways of expression throughout the novel, which reflects the power of language to expose the dynamics among the characters. In that, the way Elizabeth speaks in court is both an attempt to conceal her guilt and an indication of her position in that formal setting. In court, the judge is the decision-maker and Elizabeth should speak more calmly, respectfully, and distantly there. However, when we look at her last speeches when her mother is about to die, it becomes clear that Elizabeth expresses herself completely with her own personality and emotions. She uses colloquial language, and now that her mother has lost her former power, she is at the top of the shifting power dynamic between them, so she can speak much more freely. In other words, these parts serve to establish a stark contrast between her public persona and her authentic self. This inner voice reveals the two-layered marginalization she experiences both as a woman and as a criminal.

Another illustration explains the different modes of expression through characters in the sense of class. Elizabeth Cree is a character who bridges different classes. Although she comes from the working class, she tries to interact with the upper class by using a more sophisticated language. However, this transition creates a conflict in her social identity. In this context, it can be argued that Elizabeth, who changes her language from time to time, uses language as a tool in her effort to move up in class. Ackroyd provides subtle clues about Elizabeth's pretence, as the reader observes her ease and ruthlessness in language in some chapters, contrasting with her seemingly polite and refined demeanour in others. For instance, when she hears the witty and frank speeches of the theatre crew about the play, she thinks she should hide her real personality.

Dan turned to Charlie, who was silently performing his favourite trick of walking backward in perfect tempo. [...] 'What do you think, Charlie? Was I motherly?' 'Don't ask me, dear.' He had become motherly himself, in sympathy. 'I've had so many kids that I think Noah must have got to me. Something very old and hard, anyway.' Of course, there were often jokes and remarks that I pretended not to hear: it's natural for hall folk to bring out the blue bag, as they say, but I wanted to convince Dan that I was as innocent as any Columbine in the panto. I wanted to save myself for the stage. (97)

In order to appear innocent, she uses language as a tool and employs a more polite form of expression. She also does not make jokes that could be considered dirty, furthermore, she does not laugh at them.

Nonetheless, in this novel, Ackroyd not only makes the characters more complex through language and stylistic techniques but also makes the detective story more intricate by employing a variety of text types. This diversity enriches the novel's linguistic texture and increases the depth of heteroglossia. In this novel, which combines various written genres such as novels, fiction, monologues, letters, diaries, and theatre plays, the style and language of each genre are integrated into the general structure of the novel. Each text or genre represents a specific linguistic and ideological stance, contributing to a broader commentary on Victorian culture and its complexities. Ackroyd's use of intertextuality is central to the novel's heteroglot structure. Each text or genre represents a specific linguistic and ideological stance, contributing to a

broader commentary on Victorian culture and its complexities. These varied forms offer insights into the characters' identities and capture the multiplicity of linguistic dynamics within the era. For instance, the courtroom transcripts exemplify Victorian legal discourse's authoritative and rigid language. The following preliminary information before the transcript of the court in the novel proceedings emphasizes the formality and seriousness of the proceedings. Then, throughout the court scenes, it is clear that the conversations between Elizabeth Cree and the officials are very formal and serious. "All extracts from the trial of Elizabeth Cree, for the murder of her husband, are taken from the full reports in *the Illustrated Police News Law Courts and Weekly Record* from the 4th to the 12th of February, 1881" (9). Written in a formal and procedural tone, these texts highlight the impersonality of the justice system. The repetitive and formulaic phrases emphasize the institutional nature of the courtroom, contrasting sharply with the more personal and emotive tones found in other texts. Contrary to the Court records where Elizabeth suppresses her feelings and even tries to cover up the facts, the language used in John Cree's diary, which actually belongs to Elizabeth Cree, is quite vivid and directly conveys the mental state and feelings of the person. For instance, in one of the parts of Elizabeth's diary, where she describes a day when she wanted to commit a murder, one can notice how exuberant language is used.

It was a fine bright morning, and I could feel a murder coming on. I had to put out that fire, so I took a cab to Aldgate and then walked down Whitechapel Way. I may say that I was eager to begin because I had in mind a novelty for the first time: to suck out the breath of a dying child and see if all its youthful spirit mingled with mine. Oh, in that case, I might go on forever! But why do I say child, when I mean any life? Look, I am trembling again. (24)

This juxtaposition underscores the dissonance between institutional narratives and individual experiences, creating a linguistic tension that permeates the novel. The informal and subjective nature of her writing draws readers into her inner world, allowing them to grapple with her ambiguous motivations and complex psyche. This direct and unmediated voice stands in contrast to the detached and authoritative language of the trial transcripts, offering a counterpoint that complicates the reader's understanding of truth and culpability.

Another differing usage of language and discourse can be seen in the theatrical scripts and Dan Leno's performances. These texts are imbued with humour, satire, and vernacular speech, capturing the lively and performative essence of music halls. The colloquial and exaggerated language used in these scripts contrasts with the formal tones of the courtroom and the introspective style of Elizabeth's diary. The language used in theatre texts is colloquial, intimate, critical, and often even contains slang. For example, look at the sentences and choice of words used by 'The Older Brother', one of the characters created by Elizabeth.

But I was a good gagger, too, and after a while, I developed my own masculine language. Arf a mo', cocky' and 'will you just a wait a tic?' — uttered like they had never beers uttered before — were two popular favorites: I sang them out just before I was about to run off the stage, and then I froze in the act of running with one leg stretched in the air behind me. (152)

Hence, it can be comprehended that theatre texts also have their own style, tone, and language. This difference also contributes to the text because it provides a critical approach.

To sum up briefly, Ackroyd makes use of different textual genres to make his main character Elizabeth Cree more complex and mysterious, because the reader better understands and suspects Elizabeth's contradictory statements and ambivalent state of mind through the differences in tone and expression she uses in her personal life and diary as she interacts with different audiences through language and style, especially in the parts where she meets the detective and testifies in court. Concurrently, Ackroyd depicts the multifaceted and morally ambiguous nature of the period through the employment of diverse textual genres and narrative styles. The discrepancy between the style and emotion conveyed in newspaper reports and historical texts, as compared to the plays performed on stage, enables the reader to gain a deeper comprehension of the prevailing atmosphere of the period and the distinction between the state and society. This multifaceted understanding renders the novel a more intricate and nuanced work, particularly in the context of the detective genre. In other words, the interplay of these diverse linguistic styles, tones, and registers underscores Ackroyd's commitment to portraying the multiplicity of Victorian voices. Each text type, whether it be the formal and impersonal language of the courtroom, the personal and

introspective tone of Elizabeth's diary, the humorous and vernacular speech of theatrical scripts, or the sensational and accessible style of newspaper articles, contributes to a rich polyphonic narrative. This diversity of voices challenges the dominance of any single perspective, reflecting the fragmented and pluralistic nature of storytelling.

e. Carnavalesque in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*: Disorder and Rebirth

In this innovative novel, where Peter Ackroyd creates an egalitarian and polyphonic structure, social hierarchy is temporarily suspended. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* presents a narrative in which the stories of individuals of many different statuses and standpoints are intertwined. In this context, the novel can be seen as having a carnivalesque structure. However, what creates this carnival-like atmosphere is not just the way different characters contribute to the same narrative and influence each other's stories but also the use of irony and grotesque elements. In order to understand these elements, which together constitute the carnivalesque atmosphere, it is necessary to recall Bakhtin's approach to this concept. As mentioned before, Bakhtin's understanding of carnivalesque is that a carnival is a space where social hierarchies are temporarily inverted, where high and low, noble and common people gather. In literature, this is achieved through the ironic subversion of dominant narratives and authoritarian discourses. In Ackroyd's novel, this dynamic is provided by the theatre setting, particularly in the Limehouse area of London. The music hall where Dan Leno performs creates a microcosm that challenges the rigid social classes of Victorian England (Fiorato and Massocco, 14). Stage performers, working-class audiences, the bourgeois, and aristocrats come together, and everyone can abandon their roles and assume a different identity at some point. For example, a character like Elizabeth Cree can gain status and power on stage, even though she is a woman from the lower class. The theatre is also a medium where gender roles are turned upside down entertainingly and critically; Dan Leno's assumption of female roles is an example in this context. Furthermore, this metaphorical use of masks occurs not only on the stage. The reader witnesses that some characters, especially the protagonist, wear different masks and assume various identities many times throughout the novel.

In the carnivalesque atmosphere, people wear masks and assume different identities, thus questioning established identities and authority. Similarly, in literature, characters often metaphorically wear masks by changing their social roles or disguising their true selves, prompting readers to reconsider societal norms and question conventional perspectives. In this context, Elizabeth Cree is quite complex and colourful. She changes her character many times throughout the narrative or metaphorically wears masks to show the reader that she is very different from herself. For this reason, at first, she is a poor girl and then she turns into a famous actress. Moreover, it is not always clear whether she is an innocent woman or a demonic figure. For this reason, the answer to the question of whether she is a victim, or a perpetrator remains ambiguous throughout the novel. Thus, both in the theatre works intertwined with the novel and in the novel itself, there is a constant change of identity.

In addition to identity and status changes, as well as the blurring of class distinctions, the novel also incorporates grotesque elements, which are central to the carnivalesque structure. Peter Ackroyd recreates Victorian London with both historical realism and fictional elements, skilfully blending irony and the grotesque. One of the main ironic elements of the novel is that tragic and violent events are intertwined with the world of entertainment. Dan Leno and other stage performers exist in the shadow of violence and murder in the dark streets of Limehouse. This reveals the ironic contrast between Victorian society's fondness for entertainment and the brutality of the real world. Entertainment and art, although seemingly an escape, actually serve to cover up the rottenness and hypocrisy of society. Irony is an essential factor at this juncture, as the transfer of grotesque elements ironically and ridiculously supports the carnival atmosphere. As Bakhtin argues, the principle of laughter and the carnival spirit, which underpin the grotesque, dismantle the illusion of absolute seriousness and fixed meaning, instead opening up new possibilities for human consciousness, thought, and imagination (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 49). This is evident in the world of Dan Leno and the stage performers, who exist in the shadow of violence and murder in the dark streets of Limehouse. This ironic structure is supported by grotesque elements that create chaos because, according to Bakhtin, the grotesque includes elements such as exaggerated representations of the body, fragmentation, deformation, and transformation.

The grotesque body is not yet complete. It is in constant change and transformation. As Bakhtin argues, “The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.24). Furthermore, contrasting concepts such as death and birth coexist. “We find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 24). If the murders committed by Elizabeth Cree are examined in the context of the grotesque body, it can be concluded that Elizabeth transforms and reshapes the bodies of her victims by dismembering them. In this process, Elizabeth’s reshaping of the bodies she kills can be considered a kind of metamorphosis. These actions transform the existence and identity of the dead, both physically and symbolically. Elizabeth’s murders can also be read as acts that deviate from social norms, disrupt the social order in a carnivalesque and grotesque way, and blur the boundaries between life and death. Thus, not only are social roles transcended, but also the limits of the body are overcome the whole order is turned upside down, and a chaotic environment is created. Like social classes, the human body is stripped of the serious and important meanings attributed to it. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, grotesque elements serve exactly this purpose. Victorian order and values are displaced through grotesque violence, parody, and identity plays. At this juncture, the murders committed by the Golem are not only horrific crimes but also grotesque performances. In brief, the reader is confronted with a narrative in which all the values that are taken seriously in society are subverted and temporarily suspended.

Initially, the egalitarian structure created by the inversion of the social hierarchy adds a carnivalesque characteristic to the novel. Two basic elements can be mentioned in the creation of this egalitarian environment: the blurring of the boundary between the upper class and the lower class and the elimination of the unjust distinction between men and women. Throughout the novel, many different characters from the lower and upper classes coexist and contribute equally to the narrative. This polyphonic structure also indicates a carnival atmosphere. In the context of this novel, the carnivalesque structure is presented especially through theatre. It functions as a space that eliminates class differences. Music hall stages in poor areas like Limehouse are places where the working class and aristocrats coexist and where the norms of society are loosened. For instance, Elizabeth, a very poor young girl who has run away

from the place where she grew up, sits in the theatre hall next to people of a higher class, watching a play (20). At that moment, everyone in the theatre is focused only on the play and entertainment. Everyone laughs at the same things together, and no one's social status has any influence.

Furthermore, Dan Leno's address to upper-class people on the theatre stage temporarily blurs the class distinctions established in Victorian society. Additionally, this temporariness reinforces the carnivalesque nature of the theatre. Here, both working-class individuals and curious audiences from the upper class come together. However, this egalitarian environment is not permanent; it only lasts for the duration of the performance. When the lights go out and the show is over, everyone returns to their old social roles. This reflects one of the most substantial features of Bakhtin's carnivalesque concept. When carnival time arrives, everyone forgets their social roles and becomes equal, but when the carnival is over, the social order returns (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 9). When Elizabeth leaves the theatre, she returns to her identity as a penniless and homeless lower-class person. This temporary space of freedom in the theatre also reveals the oppressive structure of Victorian society. The public can laugh and have fun here, and the aristocrats can laugh at the humour of the working class, but in real life, the distance between these two groups is maintained. This situation shows that the theatre functions as both an escape and a means of domination in the Victorian era. During the course of the play, the rigid boundaries of society are loosened, but in reality, these boundaries are never fully transgressed.

Another relationship pattern where boundaries are blurred and norms are loosened is the hierarchical structure between men and women. Especially with the carnival atmosphere in the theatre, the traditional hierarchical structure between men and women is halted. The most striking element at this point is Dan Leno himself because by appearing on stage in women's clothes, he challenges the strict gender norms and social expectations of the Victorian era. Dan Leno's portrayal of female roles is not only an element of comedy; it also shows how Victorian society constructed gender roles as a performance. The fact that he wears women's clothes and behaves like a 'woman' reveals how artificial the difference between male and female identities on stage is. Moreover, the story of Elizabeth Cree also contributes to the questioning of these gender roles. In the Victorian Era, as Vandana Whig states, "Women were subordinate to males regardless of class" (Whig, 106). Conversely, Ackroyd rejects the

passive and submissive role that society assigns to women, he allows Elizabeth to try to make a place for herself in a male-dominated world in order to gain power and strength. Elizabeth, who is marginalized twice, both as a lower-class individual and as a woman, finds a place for herself on the stage and becomes an acclaimed actress. Thus, she goes beyond her limits. However, in doing so, she crosses the moral boundaries of the Victorian era and adopts the instruments of violence and power that men possess. This situation reveals how fragile the distinction between men and women is in the real world as well as on the theatre stage.

One of the most striking parts of Elizabeth's story of subverting the norms by going beyond the role assigned to her is that she constantly wears a mask in a metaphorical sense and hides her true identity. One of the most fundamental features of the carnivalesque structure is the temporary blurring of identities and social roles. Masks offer individuals a carnivalesque freedom. Each individual can assume a different identity independent of social norms. Similarly, Elizabeth's masks allow her to escape from social norms and assume different identities. By rejecting the passive and submissive role that society assigns to women, she tries to rebuild her own power and identity. However, apart from the fact that the characters wear masks in a metaphorical sense, costumes and masks in the literal sense also contribute greatly to the creation of a carnival atmosphere and a temporary atmosphere of freedom. One of the main carnivalesque features of the theatre is the temporary change of identities. Masks and costumes show that an individual does not have a fixed identity; on the contrary, every identity is a performance. Bakhtin mentions a mask "rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 40). In fact, Elizabeth does not only use this on the stage, but she also wears different costumes and assumes different identities outside, breaking the restrictions created by the perception of women in society and creating space for herself (133).

Within the carnivalesque atmosphere, masks and costumes allow not only the reversal of identities but also of power relations. The music hall scenes in Limehouse offer an environment where lower-class people can satirize the upper class, aristocrats can laugh at the humour of the working class, and social hierarchy is temporarily suspended. An actor who appears on stage can, thanks to the costume he or she wears, assume a status that would normally never be attainable. Nevertheless, just like a

carnavalesque festival, the theatre questions subsidiary relations, social roles, and identities, but this situation is not permanent. When the mask is removed and the costume is changed, the old rules of society begin to operate again. The masking of their identities on stage also functions as a Grotesque element at some points. For example, in one scene, Elizabeth's co-star, who almost dies as a result of Elizabeth's uncontrolled use of force, cannot be recognized by the mask and paint on her face (157). In fact, while a very disturbing situation is taking place and almost turns into violence, the paint on her face hides this ugly reality, and the audience laughs and has fun without understanding anything.

Throughout the novel, the effect of grotesque elements is most visible in the murders committed because Peter Ackroyd subverts the distinction between beauty and ugliness with the way these murders are committed. He questions the norms about body integrity and beauty. Moreover, since he presents the murders as a parody, he reduces their seriousness. In this way, while the boundaries of the human body and social structure are transgressed, these grotesque elements are not assigned serious meaning; instead, they are kept from carrying profound significance by the use of parody and irony. While murders are acts that would normally cause a great uproar in society, in the novel, these grotesque acts take place within a carnivalesque framework. That is, the murders are represented not only as a horrible reality but also as a rebellion against the norms of society, a kind of temporary anarchy. Murders aim to create a shock effect, especially against the norms of society, by reflecting society itself and its values through the choice of victims. That is to say, the selection of victims from certain classes or social statuses subverts the social structure of that period or the expectations of individuals. Moreover, there is no particular order even in the selection of victims. People from all backgrounds are slaughtered in a completely chaotic manner. Thus, just like the other carnivalesque features, death equalizes individuals and segments of society. It demonstrates how fragile the roles of society, individuals, and classes are and prompts us to question the social structure.

It should be noted that not only the choice of victims but also how the murders are committed, and the dismemberment of the bodies support the grotesque and carnivalesque structure. Most of the murders are extremely violent. The victims are physically deformed, and this deformation emphasises ugliness and disgustingness. To illustrate, the extreme disfigurement of their bodies has a grotesque meaning, as a

subversion of the social order and the natural structure of the body. This symbolizes the theme of horrible reality and the breakdown of social order. Additionally, in murders, the bodies of the victims become objects. Each of the victims becomes a visual tool for the aesthetic presentation of the murders. This objectification strips the body of its human value, presenting it only as an instrument of violence and a symbol of ugliness. This is a grotesque element because the human body is treated in a way that is outside its natural structure and limits. The execution of the murders is often embellished with strange and abnormal details. Sometimes the victims are killed in unexpected and bizarre ways, which takes the reader out of the ordinary. Such exaggerated, extreme, or unexpected elements are the basic elements of the grotesque elements. For instance, she describes her murder of a girl named Jane as:

I opened the bag and then, with a quick movement, took my knife and cut her across the throat from left to right. It was a powerful start, although I say so myself, and she leaned back against the wall with an astonished look upon her face; she sighed and seemed eager for more, so I obliged her with a few deep cuts. Then, lost in the fog, I created such a spectacle that no eye seeing it could fail to be moved. The head came off first, and the intestinal tract made a very pretty decoration beside the womb. Along this part of the river, two centuries ago, malefactors were left in chains to rot with the movement of the tides — how rare an opportunity for a London historian such as myself to revive the old pastimes. What a work is man, how subtle in faculties and how infinite in entrails! Her head lay upon the upper step, just as if it were the prompter's head seen from the pit of the theatre, and I must admit that I applauded my own work. (62)

This kind of narration shows how enthusiastically she committed the murders. Moreover, she not only has the instinct to kill but also carefully dismembers people's bodies. While talking about another murder, she again trivializes the human body and removes it from its aesthetic form.

She only began to stir after I had taken out a piece of intestine and blown softly upon it; a moan or sigh was coming from her although, on looking back and surveying the scene in my mind's eye, I believe

that it might have been her spirit leaving the earth. Her eyes had opened, and I had to take them out with my knife for fear that my image had been seared upon them. I dipped my hands into the chamber pot and washed off her blood with her gin; then, out of sheer delight, I shat into it. It was over. She had been evacuated from the world, and I had evacuated. (29-30)

According to Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of the grotesque body in *Rabelais and His World*, grotesque aesthetics is associated with a form of expression that disrupts the integrity of the body and shows it in a constant transformation (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 26). In the murder scene, the removal of the corpse's intestines and Elizabeth Cree's playing with them emphasize the transgression and incompleteness of the grotesque body because the body of the victim is disintegrated both physically and metaphorically. One of the basic elements of grotesque aesthetics is not only Elizabeth's killing of the corpse but also her manipulation of its internal organs in the process of 'reshaping' it. Especially the scene in which the intestine is blown out reinforces the grotesque atmosphere by creating both an absurd and disturbing image. Moreover, usually in society, there are strict boundaries: good-bad, beauty-ugly, order-chaos. But murder temporarily ignores these boundaries.

As has been mentioned above, Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* moulds the dark atmosphere of Victorian London with grotesque, parodic, and carnivalesque elements. Masks, stage costumes, gender performances, and grotesque body images at the centre of the carnivalesque structure create a multi-layered narrative that questions both social norms and literary authority. One of the main functions of the carnivalesque structure in Ackroyd's narrative is to invert social hierarchies and power relations. Throughout the novel, both in the stage world and in the courtrooms, the characters' identities are not fixed; masks, costumes, and mimicry allow them to display a constantly changing and transforming identity. For instance, the parodies and gender-bending on Dan Leno's stage offer not only an entertaining performance space but also a critique of the Victorian perception of gender. Male and female identities cease to be fixed concepts shaped according to certain norms but rather become flexible structures that can be put on and taken off as part of a stage show. In this context, Elizabeth Cree's oscillation between masculine and feminine identities is not only a personal escape but also a criticism of the system. In other

words, the squalor of the back streets of Limehouse, the deceptive glamour of the stage world, the showy judicial proceedings in courtrooms - all these are part of a grotesque carnival. Additionally, the grotesque elements of the novel also play an important role in this transformation process. Especially murders, dismembered bodies, and death scenes are the areas where the grotesque appears most prominently. The murderer not only kills her victims but also transforms them into a grotesque stage, turning death into a spectacle and revealing the repressed dark desires of Victorian society. The bodies of the victims, just like the violation of boundaries in a carnivalesque festival, lose their integrity and disintegrate, and the deformation of the body, one of the basic principles of the grotesque, comes to the fore.

f. Performativity in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

Within the framework of the concept of performativity theorized by Judith Butler, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* has essential elements because, according to Judith Butler, it is not possible to talk about gender strictly; gender emerges through repeated behaviour and thought. In this polyphonic and dialogic novel, the reader can more easily recognize how various selves are appropriated and performed. It is evident that Peter Ackroyd questions the rigid division between men and women imposed by societal norms and pushes these boundaries, especially through the stage (Petterson, 171). Ackroyd does not limit the transformation of repetitive behavioural patterns to stage performances alone; he also creates Elizabeth as a character who is particularly aware of social expectations and uses them to her advantage. Furthermore, as Lin Elinor Petterson states, “At Elizabeth’s stage debut she has a moment of epiphany at the discovery of how identity can be performed” (Petterson, 171). Then, she starts to assume different characters constantly. Through her adventure both in theatre and real life, Ackroyd demonstrates that an individual can navigate between the two genders and even perform alternative identities by utilizing pre-established behavioural patterns dictated by society in real life. The reader observes that Elizabeth often plays with the concept of gender throughout the novel because she does not experience the kind of womanhood idealized by society. Furthermore, she constantly reconstructs herself.

Moreover, the novel's structural and thematic focus on the world of staging and spectacle creates a space that questions the naturalness of gender roles. Dan Leno and other characters constantly reconstruct themselves on stage, and it is often emphasized in the novel that it is unclear whether the person on stage is a man or a woman. This situation is actually an important emphasis that the role of femininity or masculinity put forward by society can be performed. In other words, gender roles are presented as performances, and it is emphasized that they can be constructed independently of their biological basis. According to Goffman, since time immemorial, human beings have been divided into two distinct categories: male and female. These categories have profound implications for how they are raised, exposed to different expectations, and have distinct experiences. Furthermore, Goffman advocates that this process goes beyond biological sex and creates social gender (Goffman, 324). The understanding of gender shaped by society is also seen in Peter Ackroyd's characters, especially Elizabeth, who constantly asserts new identities through performance. In short, the novel also shows that gender is constructed through behaviours, clothing, and speech styles that are similarly repeated both on stage and in real life.

In his novel, Peter Ackroyd considers the theatre stage as a space where gender roles are stretched and transformed. Theatre and stage performances emphasize that gender is not an innate essence, but a construct built through repeated actions. The most obvious example of this is cross-dressing on stage. In the Victorian era, the theatre became increasingly significant for women who were able to find employment on stage. As Petterson claims, "In the Victorian period, cross-dressing became a two-edged tool of subversion for female music-hall performers as it both questioned gender roles and claimed her presence in the public sphere. In the 19th century, the music hall became a site of gender transgression and interchange" (Petterson, 171). The novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* sheds light on the theatre culture of that period and presents from a postmodern perspective how gender roles were subverted on stage. Moreover, in describing these scenes, Ackroyd shows how slippery and fluid gender is, implying that it is not subject to rigid rules and can change through performance. As mentioned before, according to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, gender is not an innate essence but an identity produced through repetitive movements and gestures. Actors portraying the opposite sex on stage imitate bodily movements coded as feminine or masculine. For instance, when Dan Leno plays a woman on stage, he

moves his arms more smoothly and makes his steps smaller and gentler, or when a female character is to be portrayed, she is performed as more maternal (98). Since femininity or masculinity is associated with certain actions, the repetition of these gestures on stage shows that gender is not something innate, but something learned and imitated. They also reinforce the state of being of a different gender through clothes and costumes. In Ackroyd's novel, the fact that women perform by dressing up as men shows that gender is not only a biological trait but can be changed by external elements such as clothing.

At this juncture, it should be noted that Elizabeth did not only use these methods on stage. She also wears male costumes in her personal life and performs in a different gender. She buys a new costume for the character of the 'older brother' she portrays, imitates all his masculine features such as his gait, and takes on that character (153). In other words, it is shown that Elizabeth was born as a girl and that she can go beyond the obligation to exhibit feminine behaviours determined by society and that gender is not subject to strict rules as it is thought, that it can constantly change, and that the expectation can be reversed through alternative ways developed. Nevertheless, Elizabeth does not fight against the existing gender stereotypes only by dressing up in different costumes and assuming a male character. She is very much outside the female figure she is traditionally expected to perform. First of all, it is emphasized many times in the novel that Elizabeth's appearance is not as delicate and graceful as expected of a woman. Especially the emphasis on how rough, big, and strong her hands are shows even at first glance that she is outside the norm of the ideal woman. For instance, in a part about Elizabeth's hands is defined as "so worn and so raw. When I put them against my face, I can feel the ridges upon them like cart tracks. Big hands, my mother used to say. No female should have big hands" (12). Hence, appearance is one of the important elements limited by gender roles, and appearance reinforces the gender role, but Elizabeth is not suitable for reflecting the ideal woman. Furthermore, in literature, men's hands are often associated with acts of violence such as war, fighting, and murder, while women's hands are associated with compassion and protection. In this context, the hand can represent power and violence, which is why women's hands are gentle and powerless. Since power is associated with men, a woman is not expected to have strong hands. However, Elizabeth shows that she is completely out of the norm and enters the male sphere of power. In Ackroyd's novel, Elizabeth Cree's hands

symbolize her position in the field of male violence and the murders she commits. In Ackroyd's novel, while Elizabeth Cree's hands may evoke innocence as a woman, her committing murders subverts these norms. Therefore, it shows how gender can be violated.

The most significant element in this novel that facilitates the conceptualization of performativity is that Elizabeth's repeated behavioural patterns are subject to change in every environment, and she can adopt different personalities in different relationships. By displaying different identities in different environments, Elizabeth proves that she does not have a single true identity and that individuals construct and change their identities themselves. Gender and identity are not innately determined, but are shaped and changed according to social expectations, and Elizabeth is someone who can be shaped according to these expectations and therefore can manipulate others in the way she wants. So, her adaptability is key to understanding how gender is not a stable or inherent trait but rather a constructed identity that can be strategically employed. Victorian society often perceived women as passive, fragile, and in need of protection; moreover, women were subordinated in society (Walkowitz, 20). Nevertheless, in this novel, the Victorian perspective on women is employed as a means to effect a transformation in gender roles because Elizabeth is aware of these unjust expectations and uses them against society. Especially in her relationship with John Cree, she allows him to believe that he is protecting a naive and fragile woman, to feel like a hero who saves her. To illustrate, one of the ways Elizabeth exploits societal expectations is by performing innocence and vulnerability when necessary. For example, at a moment when little Victor wants to get close to her and Elizabeth kicks him to get rid of him, John Cree comes and asks Elizabeth if she needs help, and the following dialogue takes place between them:

‘Please help me, sir, I said. ‘I should never have been led into this dreadful place.’ He escorted me up the stairs and took me out into the little alley by the side of the theatre. ‘Are you perfectly well?’ He waited while I composed myself. ‘You look pale.’ ‘I have been very ill-used,’ I replied. ‘But I think I must have some guardian angel who saves me from evil.’ (101-102)

Indeed, the readers know that Elizabeth is too strong, and she can protect herself, but she makes him think she needs his protection. Thus, she transforms the understanding

of the relationship between men and women in society into a manipulation tool. Elizabeth capitalizes on this perception, particularly in legal and domestic settings, where she presents herself as a victim of circumstance rather than an agent of action. Her portrayal of the docile and subservient wife makes it difficult for those around her to suspect her of any wrongdoing. This calculated performance aligns with Butler's assertion that gender is a scripted act reinforced through societal repetition.

While Elizabeth frequently employs the guise of innocence, she also rejects the expectation that women should be passive. She utilizes her intelligence and charm to exert control over men, particularly those who underestimate her due to her gender. Elizabeth's approach to the passive role expected of her by society is to subvert expectations by utilizing her intelligence and awareness of her surroundings. She is acutely aware that men often underestimate her because of her gender and the roles assigned to women during that period, which provides her with the opportunity to subvert those expectations. By embracing her intelligence and strategic thinking, Elizabeth creates a space for herself in a male-dominated world, showing that her innocence is not a sign of weakness but rather a weapon in a larger, more complex strategy of survival and manipulation. It is erroneous to perceive Elizabeth as a mere victim of the patriarchal system; rather, she exhibits proactive resistance and intellectual superiority over those who seek to restrict her. Through this duality, Elizabeth challenges the conventional expectations placed upon women and uses them to her advantage, demonstrating that she is far more than the passive and fragile figure society assumes her to be.

Taking everything into account, in Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, themes of gender performativity are intricately woven together, subverting the rigid gender norms imposed by Victorian society. Through the character of Elizabeth Cree, Ackroyd demonstrates that gender is not a fixed or innate essence, but rather a fluid construct shaped by repeated performances and societal expectations. Elizabeth's capacity to navigate and manipulate gender roles, whether through her strategic employment of innocence, her deft manipulation of masculine and feminine identities, or her defiance of conventional expectations, challenges the binary and restrictive nature of gender. The novel's exploration of the theatrical world further highlights this fluidity, as characters are shown to constantly reinvent themselves on stage, thereby blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity. The costumes,

gestures, and behaviours that Elizabeth adopts in both her professional and personal life demonstrate that identity, particularly gender, can be performed and reconstructed for personal gain. This fluidity underscores the performative nature of gender as outlined by Judith Butler, where actions, clothing, and speech are not expressions of a pre-existing identity but the means through which identity is constituted and redefined. Elizabeth's defiance of traditional femininity, illustrated by her coarse hands and her involvement in acts of violence, further underlines the undermining of societal gender expectations. Her adaptability in shifting between identities and her ability to exploit the expectations of others are key to understanding how gender and identity can be continually reshaped. Ultimately, Elizabeth's character reveals that gender is not a stable or biologically determined trait, but a performative construct that can be strategically employed to both navigate and challenge societal constraints. Through this, Ackroyd's novel invites the reader to reconsider the nature of gender and identity, highlighting their fluidity and the potential for subversion in the face of rigid societal norms.

VIII. A CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVE: EMPTY SELVES AND ECHOING VOICES

Building upon the discussions and analyses presented throughout this study, it becomes evident that kenotic postmodern writers use various notions such as dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque to create equality between the author, characters, and readers. This study is particularly interested in how kenotic works contribute to the subversion of norms and hierarchy in the context of gender roles and how postmodern male writers present liberated women who become independent of themselves. However, it should be noted that all these concepts are intertwined and supportive of each other in the polyphonic, polysemantic structure formed in a kenotic work. Therefore, in *The Magus*, *Atonement*, and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the postmodern works on which this study focuses, not only women but also other characters, such as lower-class people and blacks, who are subordinated in the traditional understanding, have the chance to express themselves. Furthermore, there is an equal dialogue not only between characters but also between texts, and various meanings are created through interaction between characters from different segments of society and texts with different styles and modes of expression. Such an egalitarian ground is supported and enriched by carnivalesque elements. Most importantly, all these elements also support Judith Butler's idea that gender cannot be a rigidly defined and clear reality but instead is created through repetitive performative elements and can be reshaped through alternative performance.

In order to comprehend how all these postmodern elements intertwine and support each other, and how they liberate both the character and the reader, the underlying concept of kenosis must first be examined. In Christianity, the concept of kenosis, which involves Christ abandoning his divine power and authority and taking on human form, thereby emptying himself and renouncing his superior position, is used in postmodern literature to address the author's renunciation of his own authorial authority and his equalization of himself/herself with both his/her characters and

his/her readers. In this context, when the three postmodern writers who are the focal figures of the study, namely John Fowles, Ian McEwan, and Peter Ackroyd, are examined, it is seen that they do not directly influence their novels in any way, they do not try to direct the reader for a certain purpose and they make the reader very active in the process of creating meaning. One of the most significant techniques employed to engage the reader more actively is the sustained cultivation of doubt throughout the novel. This strategy compels readers to question not only the reliability of the author and the characters but also broader social norms, thereby fostering a more critical and participatory reading experience. One of the most important elements in these kenotic novels is that they are in no way confined to a single meaning and a single interpretation, and the reader is not allowed to be manipulated by either the author or the characters.

Thus, throughout the novel, the reader, like a character in the novel, is constantly trying to solve the events with a sense of mystery and curiosity, but is left free in terms of what to think, and the meaning may vary from reader to reader. For example, in *The Magus*, the reader is equated with the character Nicholas, and they are constantly trying to create meaning, like a test subject in Conchis' Godgame. Nicholas does not know more than the reader. In this way, John Fowles, who does not privilege himself as a writer, does not position his character above the reader. He does not create any dramatic irony, but the reader who identifies with Nicholas cannot be manipulated by him either, because Fowles shows Nicholas' shortcomings and flaws as they are and does not make any character a reliable authority. Even Conchis, who is the director of the Godgame and who is in the position of determining and observing throughout the novel, is not a reliable narrator and since this is clearly emphasized by both himself and Fowles many times, the reader does not trust him either and does not immerse himself/herself in his narrative. Another important example is McEwan's obscuring himself in his own novel and leaving the flow to the character of Briony, but the important point here is that by constructing Briony as an unreliable narrator, he makes the reader question her story as well. Lastly, when *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is analysed in this context, it is understood that Ackroyd is not dominantly heard in the novel. Instead, he grants Elizabeth Cree, a character of his own creation, the agency to construct her own narrative while simultaneously undermining the reader's sense of trust by exposing her deceit and manipulation techniques. In short, the concept

of kenosis in postmodern literature is the withdrawal of the authors, the foregrounding of the characters, and the activation of the reader. More importantly, the reader, who has an active role in the process of creating meaning, cannot be influenced by the character directing the flow because the most dominant element is suspicion, for which the unreliable narrator technique is used in all three novels.

Concurrently, kenotic works that equalize the author, characters, and readers from the outset also incorporate polyphonic narratives that challenge authoritarian structures by employing a polyphonic framework and highlighting the conflict between opposing voices within this multiplicity. Polyphonic novels frequently incorporate voices that are absent from traditional literature. Notably, these narratives often centre on marginalized figures such as Black individuals and women, who are frequently excluded by societal structures and represent a deviation from the conventional subject matter found in traditional literary works. In this context, a reader of *Atonement* can understand the thoughts and feelings of Robbie Turner, who is from the lower class and can see what lower-class people go through and how events are reflected in their world, rather than only perceiving events from the perspective of upper-class characters. In another illustration, the reader of *The Magus* breaks prejudices against black people and sees that a black character who is silenced and trivialized in traditional narrative can transcend the norms and take an active role. Finally, as in the other two novels, female characters play very important roles in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, especially Elizabeth Cree, who rejects the secondary position imposed on her by social norms and becomes an independent and dominant character. Similarly, Cecilia Tallis goes beyond the boundaries set for her, but at the same time, she shows how the oppression of women has negative effects on their mentality so that readers can empathize with women as well. In short, in polyphonic works, all the characters narrated from other perspectives can express their own experiences from their own perspectives in their own unique voices.

One of the most significant points is that in kenotic postmodern works that allow original voices to rise, these voices conflict and interact with each other to provide a better understanding of each other, or in such a narrative where every segment expresses itself freely, it is one of the most important points if it does not limit the reader to a single point of view and does not allow him to produce more than one meaning among these conflicting voices. One of the focal points of this study is the

fact that both characters and different texts can reshape each other. In all three works at the centre of the study, different texts are intertwined and reinterpreted. For example, *The Magus* is in deep dialogue with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this intertextual structure, the reader can better understand Fowles' *The Magus* and Conchis' Godgame through the work of a well-known playwright because there is an analogy between the plot and the characters, but also a reappropriation. Therefore, both Shakespeare's plays provide a better understanding of the novel, and this novel provides a new perspective on *The Tempest*. How different works support and make sense of each other is also dominant in the other two novels. For example, *Atonement* is composed of many different types of works, such as letters, diaries, and newspaper reports. Similarly, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* becomes better understood and interpreted thanks to Elizabeth's letters and Thomas de Quincey's *On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts*.

Furthermore, characters from diverse backgrounds who possess the capacity to articulate themselves may employ a variety of forms of expression and styles in doing so. The speech genres in polyphonic narratives are shaped by the gender, age, social group, and nationality of the characters. In the novels that this study focuses on, characters exhibit a variety of accents and speech patterns, with power relations between characters being a significant factor in shaping these characteristics. The way characters relate also changes the way they address each other. For example, in *The Magus*, Nicolas cannot use the same attitude and style when communicating with Conchis as he does when talking to Alison, because Conchis is the one who holds the knowledge and power in his relationship with Nicholas. For this reason, when their dialogues are analysed, it is comprehended that Conchis is the more dominant and decisive party. However, Nicholas uses more manipulative and directive language when talking to Alison. Similarly, when we look at the mansion in *Atonement*, the patronizing and snobbish attitude of Emily Tallis when she talks to Robbie is not seen between Cecilia and Robbie. They use more sincere and open language to each other. To give another example, Elizabeth Cree is one of the most important figures in understanding the concept of heteroglossia as she is a character who uses changing speech genres as a manipulation tool. Indeed, Elizabeth, who tries to move up in class and commits murders by deceiving people, speaks differently with her co-stars in the theatre, differently with her upper-class husband John Cree, and differently with the

people she kills, even her word choices change. She adopts certain ways of speaking in order to make people believe in the roles she plays in front of them.

Various methods are used in each novel to convey heteroglossia in the textual dimension. For example, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the theatre plays a crucial role in this context, as the roles assumed by the characters on stage and the language they employ often come into conflict with their superiors in different settings. This tension contributes to a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations within the novel. In *Atonement*, the sincere language and word choices Robbie uses in his letter to Cecilia in the most important event that affects the entire flow of the novel, namely Robbie's letter to Cecilia, shed light on his inner world and love, while also showing how different the language used in writing forms such as diaries and letters can be. Similarly, in *The Magus*, the different forms of writing in different text types become one of the important factors that deepen the novel and increase the element of suspense. One of the reasons for this is the novel's interplay between different narrative modes, including first-person narration, letters, diary entries, and theatrical dialogues. Each of these forms carries distinct conventions and expectations, which often conflict with one another, making it difficult for both the protagonist and the reader to determine what is real and what is part of the elaborate psychological game orchestrated by Conchis.

Another important postmodern concept, kenosis, provides a ground for a novel that is carnivalesque. In the Bakhtinian sense, carnivalesque is to bring to literature an egalitarian carnival atmosphere in which the king and the jester laugh at the same joke at the same table, and a jester can make hand jokes to the king. Especially in such atmospheres, the masks worn during the celebrations and the fact that the social role of the people in social life is no longer important, and that everyone can act free from their social identity, is very important in terms of suspending hierarchical structures. Bakhtin transfers this celebratory atmosphere to literature as a form of narration in which characters with different social identities can freely coexist and influence the narrative equally and effectively. In postmodern literature, the carnivalesque especially combines irony and sarcastic elements to undermine and trivialize all the features that are presented as serious norms in society and classical literature. For this reason, in carnivalesque works, no institution, character, or event is presented as serious and important as it is in classical narrative. To illustrate, it is realized that the

murders committed by Elizabeth Cree are not presented as truly horrible and powerful social events, but rather, they are supported with grotesque elements and made exaggerated and ironic. The execution scene in *The Magus* is also an example of a carnivalesque narrative that disrupts seriousness by being supported with grotesque elements. The strange costumes, masks, and behavioural patterns used in the execution scene prepared for Nicholas in the seemingly horrible Gothic atmosphere prevent the reader from being immersed in the plot and becoming serious and frightened. Especially in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *The Magus*, grotesque scenes, one of the most important elements of the Carnavalesque concept, are frequently used. In the grotesque structure, which includes the display of disturbing scenes with particular emphasis on details that would not normally be desired to be read or watched, there is a Bakhtinian disruption of aestheticization and mockery of imposed standardizations. For example, the perception of beauty and the whole body, which is very important in traditional understanding, is disrupted by grotesque elements. At this juncture, the murders committed by Elizabeth Cree can be a very substantial example because she not only kills all her victims but also enjoys it immensely and gives their bodies strange new shapes. This foregrounds the Bakhtinian emphasis on incompleteness. According to Bakhtin, the body is an element that transcends its own limits and is constantly reshaped. The human being is in a state of 'becoming'. This perspective is presented both in the murders committed in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and the disturbing reshaping of the human body in the persecution of the resistance in *The Magus*. The most remarkable aspect at this point is that there is no seriousness even in the parts where such disturbing atrocities are described because Elizabeth's murders are ironically described quite aesthetically and enthusiastically. In *The Magus*, on the other hand, the reader is constantly suspicious of Conchis, the unreliable narrator, and the important thing is whether what he tells is true or not. To summarize briefly, the incorporation of grotesque elements is a significant component of carnivalesque works, particularly those that portray individuals from various societal backgrounds. These works often place individuals from lower social classes in predominant roles. The utilization of costumes, masks, and the trivialization of elements that would typically be regarded as disgusting or horrible play a crucial role in postmodern literature. These elements are instrumental in the process of deconstructing authority and dismantling various forms of hierarchy.

As one of the conclusions of the study, the fact that a kenotic work reveals the performative nature of gender can be explained by Judith Butler's concept of performativity. Postmodern works emerge in which the hierarchical order of social roles is undermined, and alternative stories are presented in a kenotic narrative that initially equates the author, the reader, and the character. According to Butler, gender is an acquired and fluid phenomenon that emerges in the form of certain attitudes, thoughts, styles of dress, and beliefs determined by society. Gender is not an innate characteristic, but a social construct shaped by gendered elements in a manner that reinforces the hierarchical structure of the patriarchal order. However, Butler argues that this situation can be subverted by creating alternative performances. In order to transcend the conventional boundaries of femininity and masculinity, it is necessary to formulate alternative performances, encompassing unconventional modes of dress, thought processes, and verbal expressions. A kenotic postmodern work demonstrates that gender, akin to other hierarchical components of conventional narratives that have evolved into stereotypical authorities, cannot be a solitary, unambiguous reality. Instead, it possesses a malleable and mutable nature. In all three novels that this study focuses on, gender is shown to be manifested through specific performances.

The fluid nature of gender is repeatedly emphasized, especially in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. Elizabeth uses the ideal female role defined by society to manipulate it. By performing as a shy, weak, moral, and respectful woman, she makes her opponents believe that she is innocent and ideal. However, in this novel, especially through theatrical cross-dressing, it is demonstrated how much gender can be performed. When the personalities that Dan Leno adopts for the female characters, which he portrays on stage, are examined, it is seen that he tries to create a more maternal, compassionate character because the sum of these attitudes is the femininity that is determined by society. Similarly, when Elizabeth portrays a man, she takes on a character who is more vulgar, who speaks openly, and can make sexual jokes. Furthermore, her portrayal of gender is not limited to the theatre stage. She wears men's costumes and walks on the street like a man, and even makes people think that the Golem is a man. She uses society's association of power and brutality with men.

Similarly, in *The Magus*, Julie/Lily and June/Rose draw Nicholas into the play by performing the stereotypical roles of femininity and mock Nicholas by using the social prejudices he adopts. Since there is no theatrical setting in *Atonement*, the events

unfold more in life. McEwan emphasizes many times throughout the novel the role that women must perform in society, and in particular the pressure this role puts on women and its psychological consequences. For instance, Briony experiences a sense of inadequacy due to her perceived lack of elegance and style, but she is unable to manifest the way she is expected to dress and speak. Similarly, Cecilia is constantly judged for smoking, and her mother, Emily, as a representative of society, tries to decide where and when she will smoke and how she will behave. However, McEwan's female characters can move their lives beyond these expectations. To illustrate, Cecilia can pursue a love that society does not approve of, she can stand on her own feet by leaving her family's rich and advantageous position. Briony, likewise, instead of being a passive character, becomes an important character who can influence the whole flow and narrate the events from her perspective. Thus, *Atonement* first shows the lives that the female characters are forced to lead and the psychological consequences of it, and then explains how women can overcome it through alternative ways of performance.

Given these points, female characters who become independent from societal and authorial expectations by introducing alternative expressions of femininity can achieve distinct voices within kenotic postmodern male writings. This is due in large part to the concept of kenosis, which underlies this egalitarian atmosphere. The initial rejection of authoritative figures by a writer is a significant starting point for postmodern literature, characterized by the ability to overthrow metanarratives and hierarchical structures. For instance, in *The Magus*, Fowles' self-effacing authorial stance allows female characters to emerge as agents of fluid and complex identities, while McEwan's *Atonement* emphasizes the ethical and psychological dimensions of self-emptying, shaping female subjectivities through contested narratives. Similarly, Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* foregrounds the socio-historical constraints and linguistic diversity that frame performative identity. The fact that an author does not intervene in the text and does not allow characters to establish power over each other—that is, does not create them according to any authority—prepares a solid ground for characters to find their own identities freely. In *The Magus*, this withdrawal facilitates a polyphonic interplay where diverse voices coexist without imposed hierarchy, inviting multiplicity and contradiction. In a different vein, *Atonement* presents a more fractured but dialogic narrative structure, where moral ambiguity and the conflicted perspectives of characters highlight the instability of

fixed identities. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, meanwhile, exploits heteroglot layers to articulate class and gender dynamics, demonstrating how performativity is shaped by social discourse and power relations.

On this ground, all characters who have been relegated to the background or marginalized in classical narrative and traditional social understanding gain power by challenging their trivialization and producing new performances. In a narrative where the author withdraws and leaves the flow to characters and readers, polyphony is especially vital; if a single narrative or perspective remains, the reader is guided by a fixed viewpoint. Yet in kenotic postmodern works, across these three novels, characters from various segments of society, with differing thoughts and beliefs, collaboratively serve the narrative. The conflicting ideas foreground the absence of a singular, authoritative meaning, emphasizing instead the plurality of interpretations that vary from reader to reader. This is most evident in *Atonement*, where the tension between truth and fabrication destabilizes any ultimate meaning, and in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, where competing social voices disrupt dominant narratives. Just like ideas and lifestyles, speech and style also differentiate how characters uniquely express themselves. Different speech genres arise from a character's background—age, nationality, gender, occupation—and from power dynamics with interlocutors.

For example, Ackroyd's layered depictions of class and crime speech in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* vividly embody heteroglossia, while *The Magus*' philosophical and elusive dialogues create a textual space for ambiguity and multiplicity. Intertextuality further enriches these works; various textual forms interact, reshaping each other while preserving genre-specific qualities, as seen in McEwan's interweaving of historical and fictional discourses in *Atonement*. In such egalitarian narratives, overthrowing hierarchy and authority is strongly supported by carnivalesque elements. Bakhtin's carnival, with its capacity to ridicule and invert established institutions and serious social constructs, features prominently. In *The Magus*, carnivalesque subversions disrupt patriarchal expectations through humor and chaos, whereas *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* uses carnivalesque disorder to unsettle Victorian moral strictures and class boundaries. *Atonement*'s carnivalesque moments are more subtle, emerging in wartime upheaval where norms briefly unravel, questioning gendered roles and social conventions.

Finally, through these intertwined and mutually reinforcing concepts, female characters gain the power to reveal themselves authentically, present their experiences from their own perspectives, and even manipulate other characters by wielding social prejudices as tools within the narrative. This kenotic withdrawal by the author empowers female figures to become strong and autonomous, independent from authorial control. Importantly, these female characters refuse confinement within conventional archetypes characteristic of traditional narratives. They elude the binary oppositions of angelic versus evil, prevalent in classical storytelling. Instead, they emerge as complex, multidimensional beings, bearing flaws and contradictions that underscore their human individuality. Consequently, these alternative performances of femininity introduce a spectrum of diverse characters that diverge significantly from established archetypes. Whether it is the elusive, protean women of Fowles' narrative, the morally and psychologically complex figures of McEwan's work, or the socially embedded and linguistically varied females in Ackroyd's novel, the narratives collectively dramatize the ongoing negotiation of identity through kenosis and performativity, mediated by Bakhtinian dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque disruption. This synthesis not only enriches our understanding of female subjectivity in postmodern literature but also illustrates how narrative form and theory intertwine to destabilize hegemonic representations of gender and power.

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