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University of Kurdistan
Faculty of Language and Literature
Department of English Literature and Linguistics

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
M.A. in English Literature

Title:
Love, Madness, and Alienation: A Feminist Reading of David Hare's
Knuckle, Plenty, and Skylight

By:
Elaheh Jadidi

Supervisor:
Dr. Erfan Rajabi

July, 2023



In the Name of God



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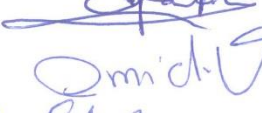
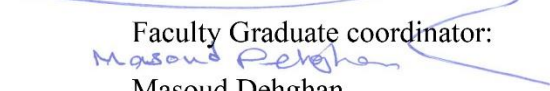
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By:

Elaheh Jadidi

The above thesis was evaluated and approved by the following members of the thesis committee with very good quality on July 22, 2023

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Abstract

The present research seeks to critically study David Hare's *Knuckle* (1974), *Plenty* (1978), and *Skylight* (1995) in light of Kate Millett's feminist concepts in her book, *Sexual Politics* and Christine Delphy's theories about family and patriarchy in her book, *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* believes that, there is a power-structured relationship whereby females are controlled by males in the context of sexual politics in society. Moreover, Christine Delphy believes that men and women as husband and wife perform the role of employer and employee at home which leads to oppressive measures. David Hare's female characters in the plays above are explored through ideology, biology, sociological matters, force, class, and economy as sexual matters and the effect of these factors on them. More specifically, love, madness, and alienation are the consequences of these sexual matters related to Delphy's theory which make a connection between sexual politics and the identity of female characters in selected plays. The thesis found out that sexual politics psychologically shape the lives of these characters as oppressed subjects in a capitalist patriarchal society.

Key Words: Patriarchy, Millett, Delphy, Sexual Politics, Alienation, David Hare, Women.



Table of Contents

Title	Page
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1. General Overview	2
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3. The Significance of the Study.....	3
1.4. Research Objectives.....	3
1.5. Research Questions.....	3
1.6. Literature Review	3
1.7. Materials and Methodology	6
1.8. Definition of Key Terms.....	6
1.9. Limitations and Delimitations	6
1.10. Organization of the Study	6
Chapter Two: Feminist Approaches: Kate Millett and Christine Delphy's Feminist Theories.....	8
2.1. Introduction.....	9
2.2. Kate Millett's "Sexual Politics".....	11
2.2.1. Kate Millett's Feminist Approach	12
2.2.2. Ideological, Biological, and Sociological Matters.....	14
2.2.3. Class, Economy, Education, and Force	17
2.2.5. Love and Madness in Kate Millett's Sexual Politics.....	21
2.2.6. The Literary Reflections	21
2.3. Christine Delphy's Feminist Theory and Alienation.....	23
2.4. Conclusion	25
Chapter Three: David Hare's Female Characters and "Sexual Politics"	26
3.1. Introduction.....	27
3.2. Knuckle (1974)	27
3.2.1. Ideology and Sociological Issues	28
A. Daughter-Father Relationship in the Family	29
B. 'Bound to Leave' the House: Sara with Internal Decay	30
3.2.2. Force	31
A. Random Thumbprints on Barnmaid	31
3.2.3. Class.....	33
A. Bourgeoisie Housewife	33
3.3. Plenty	34
3.3.1. Economic Oppression (Imposed Occupation).....	35
A. Special Operations Executive (SOE) as Labor Force.....	36
3.4. Skylight.....	36
3.4.1. Ideology (Social Role).....	37
A. Domestic Docility and Submissiveness.....	37
3.4.2. Class.....	38
A. Financial Affiliates	38
3.5. Conclusion	39
Chapter Four: Love, Madness, and Alienation in David Hare's Selected Plays ..	41
4.1. Introduction.....	42

4.2. Love, Madness, and Alienation in Knuckle.....	42
4.2.1. Mrs. Dunning as Patrick’s Punchbag	42
4.2.2. Sara’s Paranoia	43
A. Woman as a Full-Time Domestic Waitress	44
B. “The Unhappy” Dependent Sara.....	45
4.3. Love and Madness in Plenty.....	46
4.3.1. Love as an Imposed Consent	46
4.3.2. Suzan as Psychotic Intelligent	47
4.4. Love, Madness, and Alienation in Skylight.....	48
4.4.1. Escape from Trap.....	48
4.4.2. Kyra’s Seclusion and Alice’s Leukemia	49
4.4.3. Victims or Survivors of House	50
4.5. Conclusion	51
Chapter Five: Conclusion	53
5.1. Summing Up	54
5.2. Findings	55
5.3. Suggestions for Further Research	56
References	58





Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. General Overview

David Hare's *Knuckle* (1974), *Plenty* (1978), and *Skylight* (1995) could be scrutinized from different points of view. These selected plays have a clear capability of research from a feminist point of view. David Hare's *Knuckle* (1974) is a mystery play, it combines surrealism and satire and is a parody of a thriller with financiers and entrepreneur villain characters. *Plenty* (1978), the other play is a searching study of the erosion of a woman's personality, metaphorically evoking Britain's contemporaneous postwar decline, directed by the playwright. Susan Traherne, who returns from working as a secret agent in occupied France believing in a bright future, presents a striking portrait of a woman destroyed by nostalgia. Also, *Skylight* (1995), is about a businessman's attempt to regenerate a love affair with a much younger schoolteacher.

Katherine Murray Millett (1934 –2017) was an American feminist writer, scholar, artist, and activist. She attended Oxford University and was the first American woman to be awarded a degree with first-class honors after studying at St. Hilda's College, Oxford. She has been described as "a seminal influence on second-wave feminism" and is best known for her book *Sexual Politics* (1970). Millett was one of the first writers to describe the modern concept of patriarchy as the society-wide subjugation of women. In *Sexual Politics* (1970), she mentions that patriarchy, superior sex, and family lifestyle have consequences for modern society. One of the important reasons for selecting David Hare's *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight* for this research is the ability of female characters in transferring Millett's key feminist concepts such as ideology, sociology, force, class, and economy to the reader practically. These sexual matters have significant consequences such as madness and alienation related to love in a power relationship in capitalist society.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This research attempts to investigate David Hare's *Knuckle* (1974), *Plenty* (1978), and *Skylight* (1995) in terms of Kate Millett's theory of sexual politics representing patriarchal elements such as ideology, biology, sociology, class, economy, education, force, anthropological, myth, religion, and psychological matters. More specifically, it tries to show how the consequences of patriarchal matters above such as madness and alienation happen more in capitalist societies among the main female characters of the plays. In a patriarchal society, women as marginal citizens psychologically come across psychotic issues through sexual politics. Furthermore, female characters as housewives are alienated sex at home based on Delphy's feminist theory based on Marx's theory of alienation. Delphy believes that the relationship between husband and wife at home is like an employer and employee. Moreover, Millett illustrates the role of romantic love and class in female characters as exploitation. Based on Kate Millett's theory, love relationship plays a significant role in patriarchal mechanisms and it is a key concept in the life and faith of female characters and their interactions with the males. So, according to Kate Millett and Christine Delphy's feminist theories, love, madness and alienation have great effects on female character's social and individual lives.

1.3. The Significance of the Study

Reading these plays and connecting women's alienation, love matters, and feminist theories based on Kate Millett and Christine Delphy is well worth considering. It includes focusing on how patriarchal society affects a woman's psyche. It also concentrates on the relationship between love matters, madness, and alienation among female characters living in a patriarchal society. Moreover, it seeks to demonstrate the role of patriarchal culture in women's characters, which leads to some main social and psychological issues. In this thesis, the researcher's approach to Hare's selected plays has not been done before. The exploration of the relationship between these issues is a new stand on Hare's chosen plays which has not been considered in previous research. So, this study will shed spick and span light on these three plays. In addition, this research will aid to read and understand these three plays in a new way. Therefore, the research could be a contribution to Hare's studies.

1.4. Research Objectives

Major objective: to explore the impacts of patriarchy in Hare's *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight*.

Minor objectives: one of the minor objectives is to investigate *sexual politics*, based on Kate Millett's feminist theory in Hare's selected plays. The other minor objective of the thesis is to examine the concepts of love, madness, and alienation as the consequences of sexual politics, based on Kate Millett's theory and the way they have been displayed in Hare's chosen plays. The last minor objective of this research is to survey the concept of alienation based on Christine Delphy's theory and to address the way they have been depicted in Hare's *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight*.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How does sexual politics affect David Hare's female characters 'subjectivity in the selected plays?
2. How are love, madness, and alienation shown in female characters' gender?
3. How does alienation affect female characters' lives?

1.6. Literature Review

David Hare's plays are more political, and they portray British society after the Second World War and the recent wars during the twentieth century. He believes that we live in a dystopia where political parties conflict and our society is surrounded by social problems and absurdity. The books and articles have mostly taken political perspectives on David Hare's *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight*.

In the following article, "International Politics in David Hare's *Plenty*," Azza Gadallah (1992) points out that in the background of *Plenty*, there are three international political events: The Second World War, India's independence, and the Suez crisis. These three political events mark the end of an era in the world. The age of colonialism was an attitude that characterized the relationship between the East and the West for an extended period. This paper clarifies the theme of corruption in the Second World War in Hare's *Plenty* to be understood in a historical context.

In the paper, "The Trouble of Identity and Language in David Hare's *Skylight* and *Pravda*," Shabnam Mahdizadeh Khodayari and Jalal Sokhanvar (2019) claim that there

is a new outlook on gender transfiguration in these two plays in light of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. The characters in *Surveying Skylight* and *Pravda* elucidate that gender identity is an imitation that leads the characters to signify and recontextualize the parodic gender reproductions. This research paper was helpful to find female character's identities and their language, especially in Hare's *Skylight*. Also, this way of research was helpful to find sexual languages clearly in this thesis.

In another research, "Guilt and Repression in Hare's *Skylight*," Kim Hwa-Soon (2013) claims that David Hare's theater, *Skylight* (1995), *The Judas Kiss* (1998), and *The Breath of Life* (2002) deal with complicated human relationships of a love triangle in the mundane banality of life. These plays, such as *Skylight*, are investigated in this article in terms of the psychological movement of the characters. This article is relevant for this thesis to understand the meaning of love relationships, especially in Hare's *Skylight*.

Carol Homdan in his book, *The Plays of David Hare* (1995), explains that Hare is a political dramatist, and his plays are related to the 1960s era in Europe. Hare's self-conscious quotation strategy makes the text aware of its part in the literature game. Still, the quotation, isolated from its original context, can be given a new meaning. The irony, parody, juxtaposition, and metaphor can rupture. In this book, the trace of history in Hare's plays is clear, and class struggles are mentioned socially. This book is a useful resource in analyzing Hare's selected plays in the structure of the language.

Nicole Boireau, in "Re-routing Radicalism with David Hare" (2003), claims that Hare is the playwright of the left. He explains that Hare, in his plays, has grown bold enough to break through the mold of the radical left and to question its ready-made ideology openly. Moving from the straightforward condemnation of capitalism in *Knuckle* (1974) to essentially humanist views filtered through individual destinies in *Skylight* (1995) and *Amy's View* (1998) has often been interpreted as a shameless compromise with the "system."

In another book, *New British Political Dramatists*, Bull first compares Hare's plays with Breton's and claims that Hare's plays are scaled-down in format, the action confined to rooms populated by small groups of people with tangled emotional relationships. Hare is interested in the particular individuality of the individual, and most of his central characters are misfits, living out their disillusionment in British history. In *Knuckle* (1974), Hare uses the detective quest motif gradually to strip away the comfortable exterior (John Bull, 1984, pp. 60-70). Moreover, Hare's *Plenty* is in the Shavian tradition of theatre of ideas, but this is not the whole truth. Indeed, a sustained debate dominates the play (p. 81).

In the article "Playing with Place: Some Filmic Techniques in the Plays of David Hare" (2019), John Russell Brown asserts that Hare knows as much as almost anyone about the power of electronic switchboards; he has directed numerous plays at the National Theatre in London and New York. He uses light and color on his stage as a new factor for his plays. Hare does not play according to a single set of rules but mixes techniques from cinema and stage to focus attention where he decides it should be and, on occasion, to break illusionistic reality and challenge an audience's understanding (pp. 133-151). This article helped the researcher to find the female character's behaviors through the techniques of the performance on the stage.

Skylight from a psychological point of view, this repression is found and investigated here from Kate Millett's feminist point of view as a new insight.

The concept of alienation is based on Marx's theory of estrangement in feminism and can be found in Christine Delphy's theory of oppressed housewives who do domestic services, childbearing, and other unpaid activities at home. This kind of new point of view has not been done in any academic research on David Hare's *Knuckle* and *Skylight*.

Hare's selected plays, *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight* have been investigated from Kate Millett's feminist approach but Hare's *Plenty* did not respond to the theory as it was expected. For example, the concept of alienation from Christine Delphy's point of view could not be found in Hare's *Plenty*, while this concept applied to *Knuckle* and *Skylight*. Given the evidence, female characters like Mrs. Dunning, Sara, Kyra, and Alice are under male oppression based on Delphy's theories about the exploitation and oppression of women at home and the family core.

Another important factor in analyzing Hare's selected plays is that not only rhetorical devices convey the concept of sexual politics in his plays but also feminist theories of Kate Millett and Christine Delphy support to transfer this concept based on their theories about sexual factors and the role of women at home symbolically. One of the most significant differences in the way of analyzing Hare's selected plays with the texts analyzed by Millett is that Millett's reading of her texts is based on the use of sexual language and she has analyzed male characters' lives through figurative language.

Hare's selected plays with the texts analyzed by Millett is that Millett's reading of her texts is based on the use of sexual language and she has analyzed male characters' lives through figurative language. Moreover, in this study figurative language such as metaphor, simile, symbol, setting, and aside play an important part in transferring the concepts of sexual politics to the reader as a key tool.

The last significant element in analyzing Hare's selected plays especially *Knuckle* is the setting and places in the play. Eastbourne as a seaside town is a kind of metaphorical place in the play in which Sara's disappearance happens there as an event. In addition, the café, Victorian house, and Patrick's house have considerable effect on the female characters' lives as oppressed agents in the play.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

David Hare's plays are political plays reflecting postwar British society and the issues of capitalist England and criticize the government's actions and corruption in Europe. Although Hare's plays are critical in the history of English drama, his *Knuckle*, *Plenty*, and *Skylight* are plays investigated from a feminist point of view, a new approach not done during the years academically.

Hare's selected plays might be Brechtian reading of them. these selected plays can be inquired from a Brechtian theatre point of view. The Brechtian theatre has a Marxian perspective and he intended to appeal to his audience's intellect by illustrating moral problems and contemporary social realities (Brustein, 1991, pp. 58-59). Psychoanalytical criticism based on Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is another kind of new subject for further research in Hare's *Skylight* and *Knuckle*. One of the other subjects for researching Hare's selected plays is cultural studies. A generation gap or generational gap is a difference of opinions between one generation and another

regarding beliefs, politics, or values which can be investigated in Hare's *Knuckle* and *Skylight*.

One of the most important issues in this MA essay is that Hare's *Plenty* has less flexibility to be researched from a variety of theories and literary approaches. Because it is more political than the other perspectives while Hare's *Knuckle* and *Skylight* can be studied and researched from more different literary and social views.





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چکیده

این تحقیق به طور مشخص نمایشنامه‌های بند انگشت، فراوانی و نورگیر را در سایه نظریه‌های فمینیستی کیت میلر براساس کتاب سیاست‌های جنسیتی وی مورد بررسی قرار می‌دهد. آثار ذکر شده هم چنین براساس نظریه فمینیستی کریستین دلفی در حوزه خانواده و مردسالاری و بر مبنای کتاب وی تحت عنوان نزدیک به خانه: تحلیلی ماتریالیستی از سرکوب زنان مورد بررسی و تحلیل قرار می‌گیرند. کیت میلر در کتاب سیاست‌های جنسیتی معتقد است 'رابطه قدرت ساختاریافته‌ای وجود دارد که در آن زنان توسط مردان در بستر بعضی از این سیاست‌ها در جامعه مهار می‌شوند. همچنین، کریستین دلفی معتقد است که مردان و زنان 'شوهر و زن در خانه نقش کارفرما و کارگر را ایفا می‌کنند که این نقش منجر به پیامدهای آزاردهنده می‌شود. شخصیت‌های مونث در نمایشنامه‌های مذکور از دیوید هر براساس ایدئولوژی، زیست، موارد اجتماعی، زور، طبقه اجتماعی و اقتصاد به عنوان سیاست‌های جنسیتی و تاثیر این سیاست‌ها بر روی شخصیت‌ها مورد بررسی قرار می‌گیرند. همچنین، مفاهیم عشق، دیوانگی و از خود بیگانگی پیامدهای سیاست‌های جنسیتی هستند که مربوط به نظریه فمینیستی کریستین دلفی می‌شوند. این نظریه سیاست‌های جنسیتی و هویت شخصیت‌های مونث در آثار انتخاب شده را تبیین می‌کند. در این تحقیق معلوم گردید که در آن سیاست‌های جنسیتی از نظر روانشناسی شیوه زندگی شخصیت‌های مونث را به عنوان افراد مورد ستم قرار گرفته در جامعه مردسالارانه سرمایه‌داری شکل می‌دهد.

کلید واژه‌ها: مردسالاری، میلر، دلفی، سیاست‌های جنسیتی، از خودبیگانگی، دیوید هر، زنان.





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فراوانی و نورگیر از دیوید هر

پژوهشگر:
الیه جدیدی

در تاریخ ۳۱ / ۰۴ / ۱۴۰۲ توسط کمیته تخصصی و هیأت داوران زیر مورد بررسی قرار گرفت و با درجه‌ی خیلی خوب به تصویب رسید.

امضاء	مرتبه‌ی علمی	نام و نام خانوادگی	هیأت داوران
	استادیار	دکتر عرقان رجبی	استاد راهنما
	استادیار	دکتر امید ورزنده	استاد داور خارجی
	استادیار	دکتر ولی غلامی	استاد داور داخلی

مهر و امضاء معاون آموزشی و تحصیلات تکمیلی دانشکده



دکتر مسعود دهقان



مهر و امضاء مدیر گروه

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پژوهشگر:

الهه جدیدی

استاد راهنما:

دکتر عرفان رجبی

تیر ۱۴۰۲

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عنوان:

عشق، دیوانگی و از خود بیگانگی: خوانشی فمینیستی از نمایشنامه های بند/نگشت،
فراوانی و نورگیر از دیوید هر

پژوهشگر:
الهه جدیدی

استاد راهنما:
دکتر عرفان رجبی

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(این رساله از حمایت مالی معاونت پژوهشی دانشگاه کردستان بهره‌مند شده است)