

## No-Way Out: Being Entrapped in Wedlock Plays of Alan Ayckbourn: *How the Other Half Loves* and *The Garden*

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### ABSTRACT

Alan Ayckbourn using traditional devices of farcical comedy can be depicted as a farceur, yet via breaking the conventions, *How the Other Half Loves* and *The Garden* turn into a tragedy of the married who became victims within their dissatisfactory marriage. The characters initially drawn as stereotypes develop into characters entrapped in marriage through their monologues including emotions. Ayckbourn has a mastery in employing displacement of time and place to illustrate the desperation in middle-class marriage via modelling entrapped married couples on stage. Although marital dissatisfaction, infidelity, lack of communication between couples are serious problems in modern world, Ayckbourn's presenting this problem humorously makes him outstanding among his contemporaries. Ayckbourn visualizes hypocritical faces of the married from different perspectives changing in accordance with the sphere. House is the sphere where prisoners of marriage bond are trapped while garden depicted as the outside of marriage both literally and metaphorically is the sphere where married prisoners can escape from the burdens and the hardships of marriage. The purpose of this paper is to show central themes of marital dissatisfaction, infidelity and escapist manners of Ayckbourn's characters illustrated vividly by Ayckbourn through his skillful observation and employing traditional devices to break the conventions.

**Keywords:** Alan Ayckbourn, *How the Other Half Loves*, *The Garden*, Marital Dissatisfaction, Infidelity, Escapism.

## Çıkış Yok: Alan Ayckbourn'un Oyunlarında Evliliğe Mahkum Edilmişler: *Diğer Yarım Nasıl Sever ve Bahçe*

### ÖZ

Geleneksel komedi unsurlarını kullanan Alan Ayckbourn, her ne kadar bir fars yazarı olarak tasvir edilebilse de, *How the Other Half Loves* ve *Garden*, gelenekleri yıkarak evlilik bağı içinde mağdur olan evli çiftlerin trajedisine dönüşür. İlk bakışta, stereotip olarak çizilen karakterler, bireysellik ve derinlik duygularını içeren monologları aracılığıyla evliliğe hapsolmuş karakterlere dönüşür. Alan Ayckbourn, orta sınıf evliliğindeki çaresizliği sahnede birden fazla kapana kısılmış evli çift modeliyle göstermek amacıyla zaman ve mekanın yer değiştirmesini kullanmakta ustadır. Evlilik doyumsuzluğu, ihanet, yalnızlık, iletişimsizlik, çiftler arasındaki yabancılaşma modern dünyada son derece ciddi sorunlar olsa da Alan Ayckbourn'u çağdaşları arasında öne çıkaran becerisi bu sorunu yalın ve komik bir dille ortaya koymasındır. Ayckbourn, evli çiftlerin maskelerini ve ikiyüzlülüklerini buldukları alana göre değişen farklı perspektiflerden gösterir. Ev, evlilik bağının mahkumlarının kapana kısıldığı alan olarak çizilirken, bahçe hem kelimenin tam anlamıyla hem de mecazi olarak evlilik mahkumlarının evlilik hapisanesinin yüklerinden ve zorluklarından kaçabilecekleri alan olarak resmedilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Alan Ayckbourn'un gözlem yeteneği ile gelenekleri yıkmak için geleneksel yöntemler kullanma becerisini birleştirerek, gerçek evliliklerde görülen evlilikte doyumsuzluk, aldatma ve gerçeklerden kaçma tavırlarını eserlerinde konu ederek, Ayckbourn karakterleri ile bunları canlı bir şekilde eserlerinde sunduğunu göstermektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Alan Ayckbourn, *How the Other Half Loves*, *The Garden*, Evlilikte Doymuzsuzluk, Aldatma, Kaçış.

### 1. Introduction

Alan Ayckbourn employs the function of drama as a reflection of life on his plays in an unconventionally conventional manner. Through his mastery in observing and mirroring real-life situations and problems on the stage by clever staging strategies and playing time and space, Ayckbourn has become one of the most outstanding figures of Contemporary British Drama. Comedy becomes a tool for Ayckbourn to illustrate the painful, corrupted and pathetic situation and picture of marriage institution of modern times. Marriage is reflected as a sort of cage or imprisonment in which the sufferers directly become entrapped and start to be ruled over by the new codes and rules of marriage institution (Dukore, 1991). Although they are not pleased with their actual situation and dissatisfactory marital relationships,

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the sufferers of marriage choose to stay under the reign of wedlock. Instead of confronting with their unhappiness and entrapment within the marriage and freeing themselves from cage, Ayckbourn's married individuals try to create illusionary happiness, alternative extramarital escapes, some sort of obsessive behaviors. Lack of communication, affection, trust and love in the modern marriages, which are accepted as the indicators of marital dissatisfaction, are the central themes in Ayckbourn's most of the plays. Ayckbourn uses the power of comedy in order to present the truly serious theme of the marriages being doomed to fail, which makes his plays by not disturbing the reader. Ayckbourn's characters as an echo of blood and flesh individuals within a dissatisfactory relationship do not have the ability to maintain a healthy intimate relationship. As a good observer of human behaviors, Ayckbourn presents the key features and outcomes of marital dissatisfaction and individuals' coping strategies with an unhappy marriage in his plays both structurally and thematically through his married couples. *How the Other Half Loves* and *Garden* can be accepted as the perfect examples of Ayckbourn's theatre which deals with the issue of marital dissatisfaction and its consequences such as infidelity and escaping from the reality.

In *How the Other Half Loves*, Ayckbourn introduces us three different middle-class couple whose marriages are in different phase of marital life: one middle-aged couple without children, one couple with children and one newlywed young couple. As having a mastery in employing the stage functionally, Ayckbourn presents these three couples on the same stage by dividing the stage into three (Allen, 2002). Through these three couples connected to each other with extramarital partnership, Ayckbourn shows the real face of the marriages with its dissatisfaction, corruption and infidelities. Instead of getting divorced or ending their dissatisfactory relationships, these three couples create alternative happiness within the other couples' marriages. Characters try to find their half or complete their dissatisfied needs in the house of other halves. Within the marriages drawn by the playwright, none of the halves try to unit with their partner as they are mismatches entrapped in the same cage.

*House and Garden* are Ayckbourn's experimental plays that are staged at the same time on different stages. Ayckbourn plays with the style to put an emphasis on the double face of the marriage within and outside the house or within the marriage bond and escapist, alternative relationships in the garden. House mirrors the gloomy, dull and prisonlike atmosphere of the marriage in which the people are entrapped while the garden is the secret place where individuals can escape from the burdens of their dissatisfactory marriages so as to have a short break from the imprisonment (Allen, 2004). In the garden, characters form an alternative, illusionary world where they can be free from the demands of their marriages through extramarital relationships. Similar to *How the Other Half Loves*, Ayckbourn employs two different stages in order to show the audience the double nature of the marriages: social façade in which the partners act their roles as seemingly loyal husband and wife with their dysfunctional marriage and the real image of the marriages with infidelity, dissatisfaction and corruption.

This study aims at structural and thematic analysis of Alan Ayckbourn's *How the Other Half Loves* issuing the corrupted and dissatisfactory marital relationships of three middle class couples on one stage and *Garden*, one of the twin plays staged simultaneously on two separate stages, showing the escapist attitude and extramarital relationships of the married individuals with respect to key terms and negative outcomes related to marital dissatisfaction. Marital dissatisfaction, infidelity and escapist attitude will be defined and two plays by Ayckbourn will be analyzed in terms of theme and structure.

## 2. Marital Dissatisfaction, Infidelity and Escape Theory

Marriage as an agreement starts with a vow that covers monogamy, trust, sharing and fidelity. Not both the vow makers can be pleased with the vow they have made later since their demands and expectations are not fulfilled and satisfied by their partner. In some agreements, one or in some both partners feel themselves entrapped within the dissatisfactory wedlock. Marital satisfaction can be depicted as an indicator of happiness in marriage which gives both of the partners a genuine pleasure, fulfillment, and joyfulness when their marriage is put into question with its all aspects. Marital satisfaction may lead to better communication skills within the marriage, psychological and physical wellbeing, life satisfaction and less negative life events and more committed to their relationship (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997); (Christensen et al., 2006); (Falconier et al., 2015); (Canary et al., 2002). Married people with high level of marital

satisfaction generally express their feelings and love, trust each other, communicate effectively, show interest and sympathy of couples toward each other, have a satisfactory sexual relationship with their partner, show affection and caring, describe their partners as their friend (Bradbury et al., 2000). Meeting your partner's needs of belonging and love, caring about their demands and having good communication skills, building trust are the indicators of marital satisfaction leading a lifelong satisfaction. On the other hand, dissatisfactory, unhealthy and dysfunctional marriages in which the individuals and their needs are ignored may lead to a decrease in overall happiness and life satisfaction, physical well-being, and self-esteem of each partner and an increase in stress which may affect the partners' physical and mental well-being (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Lack or inefficiency of communication between husband and wife, not sharing, loss of intimacy, infidelity, ignorance of physical and psychological needs and alienation within the marriage relationship give way to marital dissatisfaction that will affect not only the physical and mental wellbeing of the partners but also those of their children, their family of origin and social environment.

Individuals try to find a way to save themselves from the burdens of marital dissatisfaction such as divorce, separation, ignorance or escaping from the confrontation, marital therapy and so on. Divorce and separation can be seen as a complete solution to marital dissatisfaction, conflicts and problems. Some of the individuals prefer divorcement as a way to end marital dissatisfaction and conflicts they have confronted within the marriage. On the other hand, the others prefer to continue their marital relationship in spite of marital problems and dissatisfaction they suffer from as divorce is depicted as one of the most stressful life processes that an individual can experience (Greene et al., 2017). Divorce or separation is not a process taking place just between husband and wife. The process includes not only individual outcomes such as economic difficulties, becoming a single parent, but also some disturbing social outcomes such as separation from your partner's social environment, and change in social status. Individuals who do not feel themselves ready to confront these new challenging difficulties in their new single lives prefer to stay under the protection of marriage institution with familiar conflicts and difficulties even though their marriage is not satisfactory. Unhealthy and dysfunctional marriages can persist as a result of some reasons including "inertia, lack of money, a preference for the familiar, each partner's commitment to the spouse and children", not being an outcast and being approved in a monogamous society (Renne, 1970). When it is not easy to end the marriage and overcome its negative consequences, Individuals choose to stay in the marriage relationships by escaping from the confrontation and being ignorant to the problems and conflicts of their marriage. Becoming aliens with no demands and no intimacy can be seen as a safer, no risk solutions for the partners.

In order to realize how the partners with low marital satisfaction prefer to stay in the wedlock, it will be beneficial to look at the escapism and Escape Theory. Escape Theory can be defined as "an escape from the self" (Baumeister, 1990); escape from the real-life problems which individuals find difficult to confront (Woody, 2018); escape from freedom (Fromm, 1994) which relatively leads to a decrease in self-awareness, loss in coping strategies and submission to power symbols in society. Through the escapism, individuals can move away from the negative feelings such as self-evaluation, pain, anxiety resulting from everyday problems, the burden of making their own choices, being exposed to stressors.

Infidelity is another way for the marital partners to escape from the demands and the problems of marriage institution. Partners create an alternative relationship in order to satisfy their emotional, physical or/and psychological intimacy needs while they stay in the safe zone of marriage. Lack of marital, emotional and sexual satisfaction within marriage, seeking for emotional intimacy, desire to punish the partner, having an infidelity history in family of origin can be counted among the reasons that lead to infidelity within the marriage (Glass & Wright, 2010). By employing infidelity in their relationships, individuals try to satisfy their sexual and emotional needs, increase their self-esteem and find a substitute for their unhappy, dysfunctional marriage and are able to keep themselves away from the negative outcomes of divorce and separation.

### 3. Marital Dissatisfaction and Escapism in *How the Other Half Loves*

*How the Other Half Loves* is Alan Ayckbourn's second success after *Relatively Speaking*, which carried the young playwright's name to the peak. It was first seen in Scarborough in July 1969 and later, at the Lyric Theatre, London in August 1970. The play was performed in Broadway in 1971, which introduced the name "Ayckbourn" to America and opened the gates of the West End Theatre to the plays of Ayckbourn. The play set the "criteria" of an "Ayckbourn play" by the innovations in theme and technique such as playing with the conventions in an unconventional way, breaking the three unities of Aristotelian traditional theatre –one event happening at one place in a day- by playing skillfully upon the space and time, and employing the technique, devices and the décor as a contribution to the theme (Allen, 2002). Ayckbourn has a mastery in constructing a sort of parallelism between the technical devices and theme. *How the Other Half Loves* uses the conventions of "the well-made play" which is a "term applied to comedy of manners and farces in the nineteenth century" in France, England and the USA (Mansour, 1988). Ayckbourn influenced by Noel Coward -who has got a mastery in making departures technically and thematically from the conventions of well-made play- formulates his own comedy of manners which metamorphoses into "a darker comedy" (White, 1984).

The play is like a satiric mirror of the middle-class values and manners including stories about infidelities in marriage, pursuit of sex and money in a fast and complex woven plot structure which is full of misunderstandings, mistaken identities, deceptions and intrigues. The play takes the three examples of middle-class couple: One is from the upper-middle class with their promoting name, the Fosters, one is from the middle-middle class named as the Phillippses with their philippic speaking style towards each other and the last couple is from the lower-middle class with their paradoxical name and nature, the Featherstones, all of which are suffering from the burdens and the deadlock of marriage. Although Ayckbourn shows the panorama of the middle class, he does not only try to show the class differences in a political manner but his play "reflects the class differences between the marriages and explains the contrasting styles of loving" (Holt, 1999). Ayckbourn is "not a political didacticist" but by entertaining the audience he simply shows how the other half loves and lives as the name of the play suggests. The other half can be both the other class or the other sex. He formulates a space which is inhabited by three couples who are bound each other by marriage, sex, materialistic benefits and unlimited infidelities. As Stuart E. Baker said;

The play is not only about class differences but about the way people's lives are inextricably tied to each other, not in smooth, sane, orderly way, but in broken, disorderly bits. These people are like birds crowded together in an incommensurable cage, perpetually in each other's way, fighting for space, but somehow always maintaining the established pecking order (Dukore, 1991).

The play illustrates the individuals of different classes being trapped, passivized within the marriage. Although marriage is depicted as a bird cage, the inhabitants or in another word the prisoners of this cage develop an escapist attitude as confronting their being trapped and dissatisfied with their actual situation is demanding to overcome. Characters in the play find a way to escape from the burdens of marriage by creating alternative solutions instead of confronting and coping with their real-life problems with an escapist attitude.

Ayckbourn draws this picture of dissatisfaction in marriages and partners employing escapism in a perfect manner. Alan Ayckbourn takes a part of life, mostly a part of his own life as his plays have got some autobiographical references and he shows the life which he sees as a tragedy in a humorous manner by playing upon place and time, and "the caged birds" bound marriage (Dukore, 1991). Marriage and its traumas are the common themes of an "Ayckbourn play" as in his own life, Ayckbourn has suffered a lot from the failure in marriages: The failure of his mother's and his father's relationships, his own marriage and marriages of the people around him. He reflects the manners of wives and husbands entrapped in marriage who see adultery as an escape from the deadlock of marriage. Ayckbourn describes how he sees marriages in *Conversations* by Ian Watson as;

The marriages I do see are either fraught or dull. There are one or two happy ones, but that's because they're new. In general, I don't think people were meant to live with each other for too

long- although, having said that, there are millions of exceptions. As soon as people feel that they are married, there's a sense of entrapment (Mansour, 1988).

*How the Other Half Loves* presents three marriages doomed to break into pieces. Fiona and Frank are the first couple bound by marriage. They are childless upper-middle class people who are like the old lecherous couple of comedy of manners. Their extreme gentle manners towards each other cover their infidelities and the hypocrisy like a mask and show their being strangers towards each other as Fiona forgets their "bloody" anniversary of marriage while Frank forgets the name of the perfume which Fiona uses. They are the strangers imprisoned in the same dining room. Decreased marital satisfaction or, in other words, one's evaluation of his/her own marriage as an unhappy one was associated with an increased desire for extramarital involvement and possibility of infidelity in the marriage (Prins et al., 1993); (Waite & Joyner, 2001)) Within their relationship, Fiona and Frank do not care about each other's well-being and priorities. They only have the desire to fulfil their individual goals and needs. Although they act the role of a couple, they are the individuals trying to satisfy their hedonic needs. "Infidelity may provide over-benefited individuals with the opportunity to escape and prove their desirability" and they do not need to show caring, affection to their extramarital partner (Munsch & Willer, 2012). Within this kind of relationship, partners have an untold, secret and mutual agreement. They stay within the marriage institution as a social façade and it is not a necessity for each partner to develop any kind of intimacy one another. Neither of them is demanding, caring, restrictive within this mutual agreement. Infidelity is the by-product of this sort of relationship since the partners escape from the burden of marriage institution by creating several kinds of alternative relationships with minimum requirements and communication strategies such as ignoring avoiding conflict can sometimes bring couples a kind of satisfaction in their relationships (Rands et al., 1981). Although they are not satisfied with their actual relationship, they prefer to stay in their wedlock by ignoring their problems and avoiding conflict. Fiona and Frank can be defined as the individual strangers of the same marriage with many extramarital possibilities to escape the demands of marriage.

The second couple is Teresa and Bob from the middle-middle class. Teresa is a negligent wife with an off-stage life-consuming baby, Benjamin, as she complains; "here I am, stuck in this house day after day with that kid" (Ayckbourn, 1978). Bob has not got a place in Teresa's life as a husband. He is not Teresa's husband but Fiona's lover as only thing Bob is interested in his house is the telephone which is a mediator- a device- to connect with the other half of the room. Bob does not belong to this half of the room as Teresa says, "You're never here" (Ayckbourn, 1978). Upon exploring the literature related to marital dissatisfaction, it is mostly presented that unhappy couples seem to have no effective and sufficient communication skills to develop the intimacy in their relationship, which leads to marital dissatisfaction. "Results demonstrate that couples lacking the necessary skills to regulate their emotional expressiveness and successfully communicate tend to become defensive or to withdraw from a conflict situation, and these behaviors in turn, predict later marital dissatisfaction and dissolution" (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). As it is clearly understood, the relationship between Teresa and Bob lacks the intimacy and satisfaction due to their not having required communication skills even in conflicting situations. Teresa complains about not having Bob at home emotionally though he is actually and physically at home. Since Bob does not feel belonging to the house, to his wife and to his relationship, he creates an alternative life within the outer world via the telephone in order to escape from the dissatisfaction and the burden of the marriage and marriage institution.

The last couple is William and Mary who are at the very beginning of marriage entrapment. They are the victimized innocent couple who receives the first blow of marriage due to the intrigues between the first two couples. Mary the innocent is a chronic cleaner who is suppressed under the control of his upwardly mobile husband, William. Mary has an escapist attitude as she shows "submission to power symbol" in order not to confront with her marital dissatisfaction and problems. William tries to create authority on his puppet-like wife as he says to Fiona; "Do you realize, Mrs. Foster, the hours I've put into that woman?" (Ayckbourn, 1978). Through this newlywed couple, Ayckbourn illustrates the first phase of marriage relationship with its corrupted and hopeless nature from the very beginning and also presents the inevitability of marital dissatisfaction via the couples in different phase of their marriages. William and

Mary's marriage foreshadows a marital dissatisfaction from the beginning as they present the key signals of marital dissatisfaction on the stage such as "avoiding conflict, withdrawal from interaction, stubbornness and defensiveness (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

The dinner-party scene which includes two dinner parties simultaneously staged as one party draws the picture of hypocrisy and the duplicity of manners through the changing nature of the Featherstones at two halves of the table, which illustrates the social facades of the corrupted marriages. At the elegantly laid table of the Fosters, William, upwardly mobile middle-class man, tries to affect his boss by speaking in a gentle manner and offering to tie up his boss' shoe laces. At the other half of the table belonging to the Phillipseys, which is in a mess, the Featherstone couple behaves more naturally (Demastes, 1996). Their manners change like the swivel chairs they are sitting, according to the halves of the table. Ayckbourn creates very masterly a comedy of manners belonging to his own class, the middle class unlike the traditional comedy of manners belonging to the upper class. The outside appearance of the relationships is perfectly designed like perfectly laid dinner tables when the families have an outsider as a visitor, yet in the absence of outsiders and social interactions, the dinner tables with their mess present the real nature of the marriages with mess and corruption.

In terms of structure, Ayckbourn uses the time and space concepts in a very sophisticated and different way, which breaks the traditional rules of theatre- the Aristotelian traditional theatre (Berney, 1994). There two events taking place in two places with time difference. In the first scene, there are two different couples sharing one space but there is a little time difference between the two households.

FIONA: That's grotesque, darling. Do you have to do that first thing in the morning? I'm sure you will damage yourself one of these days. It's twenty past. Did you know?

.....

TERESA: (crossing to the bedroom door and calling) Bob! Bob! It's twenty-five past. Bob! Get up! (Ayckbourn, 1978).

In a while, William's rushing out of one room to take a monkey wrench from the cupboard and arriving to the other house with it during the dinner-party scene "throws all notions of time and place into surreal confusion" (Billington, 1990). The two dinner parties intermingled to each other lead the dimension in time and place to the extreme but still in a logical manner. William's being covered in soup in the Phillipseys' house at the dinner party is explained at the other half of the dinner party by his sitting under a leaking faucet in the upstairs bath. The two dinner parties are presented as intermingled with each other since Ayckbourn tries to show us the intermingled extramarital relationship within the dissatisfactory marriages of his characters. Couples are illustrated as dining from each other's dining table stands for the extramarital love affairs of the characters to escape from their own dinner table in a mess.

The play does not have got a resolution but an open-ended structure, which shows the unconventional style of Ayckbourn in a conventional plot structure. The play is lack of closure as the play ends with the dialogue between Teresa and Frank which suggests a potential sexual relationship in the future. As there is no hope and a sign of healing in their actual situation and dissatisfactory marriages.

TERESA: Look, I can't talk any more now, but if you want to- ring me up again and we can even meet somewhere and have session.

FRANK: Thank you very much. I'll do that. Goodbye (Ayckbourn, 1978).

The explanation of Ayckbourn to the lack of closure in the play is seen in his interview with Bernard F. Dukore:

AYCKBOURN: .....I find it artificial to try to close a play off in that way, to say life stops here. I've always had a feeling that life was going on before the play was written and will continue afterwards, and there is only a convenient point to interrupt it, which is always going to suggest another way that's going to be along a minute. I once said comedy is tragedy interrupted....." (Dukore, 1991).

With regard to structure, Ayckbourn blended old conventions of farce techniques with new and unconventional plotting techniques via extending the limits of traditional farce in *How the Other Half Loves*. Though his style seems to be experimental and is based on "commercial formula" at first sight, he achieves uniqueness by converting the linear structure of farce into a sort of indefiniteness and circularity

by dividing the stage into three with three different households and married couples. This definiteness and circularity on the structure is parallel to the theme of the corrupted nature of the marriages. Within the society, there is an indefinite number of corrupted marriages and the married couples are caged and entrapped within this circular structure. Through employing the structure to emphasize the theme, Ayckbourn presents his mastery on the stage.

In *How the Other Half Loves*, these three marriages show the corruption steps of marriage on one stage. Alan Ayckbourn portrays the bitterness, in fact the reality of middle-class marriage life by caging six people and a lively portrayed off-stage baby on the stage of marriage in a mirror showing illusions about time and space. By this mirror, the play revives the spirit of the comedy of manners reshaped in middle-class values.

#### 4. Marital Dissatisfaction and Escapism in *Garden*

*House and Garden* (1999) are two plays or by John Simon's words in New York; "twin plays" which were written to be performed by the same cast in two different theatres at the same time, which makes these two plays very interesting as the plays are performed simultaneously, the single cast should commute from one theatre to another, which makes the plays hard work on the part of both the stage director and especially actors. Ayckbourn declared the plays as his "sixtieth birthday present" (Allen, 2002). These double plays were performed simultaneously in two auditoria by a single company at the Theatre in Scarborough in 1999 and at the National Theatre in 2000. *House* was appreciated more in the reviews such as Kate Bassett's review in *The Independent*: "House is frequently hilariously funny..."; Richard Zoglin's review in *Times*: "Each plays works on its own (although *House* is better than *Garden*), but each enhances the other"; Michael Billington's review in *The Guardian*: "House, in particular, is one Ayckbourn's best plays..." (Billington, 1990). Yet, *House and Garden* is not ...so much two plays as one long play which happens in two places and in which- as in life- the characters cannot all see or know what is going on all the time. Nor can we as the audience. One of Ayckbourn's avowed intentions was to reflect on the way, at any given moment, we may be only tangential figures in other people's dramas even though our own stories all-consuming to us.

The two plays follow the same story and like in real life, one cannot be everywhere at once. What is off-stage here will be on-stage there, which is very similar to real life situations. Ayckbourn tells the same story from two different perspectives: one happening in the Garden –outside- and the other happening in the House –inside-. These outside and inside places are inhabited by the people who are in general entrapped in the marriage and family institutions. *House* is the cage in which they are in imprisonment and *Garden* is the only available place where they can have a breath, a rehearsal by escaping their cage. In this paper, the outside where the characters can take breath will be on-stage. *Garden* is the place in which secret relationships are practised and the secrets are revealed, yet the house is a mystery for the audience of the on-stage *Garden*.

Ayckbourn as a farceur uses firstly the traditional devices of farcical comedy but as he generally breaks the conventions, the play turns into a kind of tragedy in which the married couples became the victim of the marriage bound (Wandor, 1993). The characters seem to be stereotypes at the first at the first sight, yet as the play develops the audience sees through their monologues the individuality and depth emotions of the characters entrapped in the marriage. *Garden* is full of game-playing – "frolicking"- which is very similar to the features of farce. Teddy dumps his mistress, Joanna and opens his way for a new flirtation with France actress Lucille Cadeau, an alcoholic actress opens the *Garden Fête*, Pearl, the maid flirts with everyone including his step-father, Warn, Joanna goes mad and all around these events the local children dance in the opening of the annual garden party. Chaos overwhelms the garden as the inhabitants try to have breath at the same time (Smith, 1989).

As the play develops, self-revealing of the characters is seen in different versions. Joanna who cannot find satisfaction both in her marriage and her extra-marital relationship goes mad as a reaction towards the sterility of her doctor husband and loss of her womanizer lover, Teddy (Rusinko, 1989). Joanna isolates herself from the gloomy and sterile atmosphere of her life by alienating herself from the other characters. She creates an alternative reality in which she can escape from the confrontation with her two

dissatisfactory relationships: one in the house-marriage- and one in the garden- out of the marriage. Joanna find a way out to escape “from the self” (Baumeister, 1990) and the real life problems which she finds difficult to confront (Woody, 2018). She prefers to lose to control with the harsh reality of her unhappy marriage. As seen in her dialogues in her lunatic mode, Joanna recognizes no more her husband and her lover and calls them with different names;

Joanna: That was Harold. They replaced Giles. They replaced your father with Harold.

.....

Jake: Mum, What makes you think that man isn't Giles?

Joanna: Because if you'd known the real Giles, you'd have seen through this man Jake. ...The real, Giles was the gentlest man in the world, Jake. He loved me so much. ... He gave me so much love. I would never have had to go anybody else for love if Giles had still been here, Jake... (Ayckbourn, 2000)

Through these words told after her going mad, it is understood that Joanna and her husband, Giles are alienated from each other long ago because of their sterile marriage and especially Joanna is very lonely and disappointed as she is entrapped in the garden and the house-marriage. Giles, on the other hand, fills the dullness and emptiness of his marriage with his job as his job covers every part of his life. His job becomes a tool for an escape from his dysfunctional and unhappy marriage. And also, infidelity becomes another compromise for the satisfaction of their emotional needs. Infidelity within the marriage also brings several social and emotional consequences such as anger, jealousy, humiliation, disappointment, self-doubt and depression and may traumatized the betrayed partners (Hall & Fincham, 2006). Within these couples and their corrupted and dissatisfactory marital relationships, the social and emotional consequences of infidelity is clearly presented on the stage.

Ayckbourn shows the lack of communication in the marriage life through Teddy and his wife, Trish. There are no dialogues between Teddy and Trish as Trish chooses not to speak Teddy because of his extra-marital relationship with Joanna. Although they speak the same language, they cannot understand each other. The conversation takes place between Teddy and French actress is much more like a communication as they understand each other although they do not speak the same language. From the tone of their speech, both of them understand the sorrow and the loneliness of the other. The gradual disappearance of the dialogue between husband and wife may lead to conviction that individuals become strangers to each other. Lack of dialogue even in solving the conflicts can be followed by a decline in satisfaction with the relationship and the risk of lack of involvement on the part of the partners in the relationship durability and stability (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). In these monologues as only, they can know what they say, Teddy and Lucille reveal their weaknesses, loneliness, miseries and their longings.

Teddy: You know, just this short time I've known you... it's extraordinary. I'd forgotten what it's like to have a good laugh, you know. Everyone around me's so bloody serious. I've got a serious wife, I've seriously serious daughter and I've just got shot of a mistress who was serious for Britain.....It's so depressing, it really is. And you feel yourself getting more and more crushed by it all. Guilty. And then someone like you passes through my life. I don't understand a bloody word you're saying...

Lucille: Me? What's my life been like? ...God, what a mess I've made of my life. Two husbands, one of whom drove me to drink, the other one introduced me to drugs... (Ayckbourn, 2000)

At first side, Teddy seems to be stereotypical womaniser who is in pursuit of only sex yet after a while it is understood that he is also a victim of marriage entrapped in the dullness in the marriage who is looking for an escape in his garden. Moreover, Lucille tries to fill the gap in her life with alcohol and drugs after two disturbing marriages. Marital dissatisfaction can give way to the occurrence of an alcohol disorder (Whisman, 1999) while a satisfying marriage helps partners with alcohol problems have a successful treatment (Moos et al., 1990). Using alcohol or drugs or having eating disorders is a sort of substitute for marital dissatisfaction as their emotional needs are not met and fulfilled within the marriage. Unhappy people who do not feel ready to confront their problems find an escapist solution to satisfy their needs with temporary pleasure giving things such as alcohol, drug, food or extramarital relationships.



Ayckbourn also draws the different pictures of relationships. The lower-middle class married couple Barry and Lindy Love, unlike their ironic surname, hate each other and only the material need links these two each other. There is a master-servant relationship instead of husband- wife relationship between them. In unhappy and dissatisfactory marriages, individuals start to see their partners as “a source of emotional support, companionship, sexual gratification and economic support or assistance.” Instead of being husband and wife, they have the roles such as parent, colleague or friend to each other (Renne, 1970). Barry needs Lindy as a worker who helps him in his business and Lindy needs Barry in order to gain her life. All the time, Lindy is oppressed by Barry. At the end of the play, Lindy finds a better opportunity to gain her life as she is rather like the worker of Barry than his wife, and leaves her ex-boss to go with her new Patron who has got a Porsche, Gavin. Lindy and Barry cannot be a husband and wife to each other. Since they cannot interiorize their real roles in their dissatisfactory wedlock, they try to stay in the relationship by choosing different roles for themselves and for their partners such as master-servant, housekeeper-landowner, boss-worker.

The triangular relationship between the gardener Warn, housekeeper Izzie and Izzie’s daughter Pearl shows the extreme corruption within the society. Warn has a sexual greed symbolically shown through his eating too much sandwiches prepared by both Izzie and Pearl during the whole play. The daughter and the mother relationship is also corrupted as Izzie and Pearl share the same man as a sex partner even these three people share the same bed.

The last couple is an example of would-be- lovers: Jake and Sally. Jake and Sally suffer from not revealing their love towards each other and lack of communication. Sally shares her secret love with her poem while share it with his father, Giles. In fact, the corrupted marriages and the unhappy people around them discouraged them. The marriages around them are like imprisonment leading its sufferers to decay. Through this couple, Ayckbourn foreshadows the truth that there is no hope for the future of the upcoming marriages as the marriages are apt to end in catastrophes. As potential lovers, they stop struggling and revealing their love towards each other since marriage institution is corrupted.

In terms of structure, Ayckbourn having a mastery in shattering the conventions and the golden rules of the well-made plays presented the blended structures of the conventional theatre and modern theatre in his play *Garden* and its twin play *House*. Through writing twin plays performed in different theatres simultaneously with the same characters and themes, Ayckbourn breaks and carries the Aristotelian three unity rules out of the stage to another stage. By staging these two plays simultaneously at two different plays with the same cast, Ayckbourn creates the real-life effect as no one cannot be everywhere at once. While the audience at one theatre is watching what is happening in the house- within the marriage and its claustrophobic nature, the audience at the other theatre is witnessing what is happening in the garden- outside the marriage or its escapist nature.

*House and Garden* is not so much two plays as one long play which happens in two places and in which - as in life - the characters cannot all see or know what is going on all the time. Nor can we, as the audience (Allen, 2002).

Ayckbourn’s structuring his plays in an unconventional manner has a particular purpose as his form serves to emphasize and enrich the content of his plays. Ayckbourn’s employing these two plays enable audiences to see the same events happening around the same characters from different perspectives of house and garden or in other words, within and outside the marriage. In his multiple plays such as *House and Garden*, plot and characters unfold layer by layer as it is presented in two separate settings of these two plays contrasting with each other. Though the characters are the same, they change their manners, behaviors and styles with regard to the setting they are in. Ayckbourn exposes the whole picture of his characters and themes in a circular structure of the play occurring in a vicious circle from the house to the garden and the audience can come to a conclusion about the whole play after watching both of the plays from all perspectives.

To sum up, Alan Ayckbourn demonstrates the funny observations of a serious subject. The matter of the play is very serious, yet Ayckbourn’s handling the matter is rather humorous, which leads the audience to greater laughs and also to heavier thoughts. Ayckbourn draws the picture of the outside and the inside pictures of the marriages and relationships which give satisfaction and happiness no more but sorrows and

disappointments to the insiders and outsiders of them. The technique Ayckbourn used in this play make the play- twin plays- more interesting and about life. Ayckbourn's giving the both perspectives of the story of love and marriage simultaneously adds the play the touch of reality. It is more accurate to finish this paper with the words of Ayckbourn,

"Comedy ends with a marriage and tragedy begins a year later" (Dukore, 1991).

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, Alan Ayckbourn's being a talented observer of human behaviors with respect to marriages makes his plays a kind of casebook and a reference book to understand the key features of marital dissatisfaction and its negative outcomes. Not only his genius in observing the human behaviors within the problematic marriages but also his employing the structure, stage as a contributor to the theme by dividing the stage into three separate drawing rooms of three different married couples and staging two plays issuing one married couple's problems on two stages enable Ayckbourn's comedies to present the life as it is. Ayckbourn (Ayckbourn, 2023) on his official website explains his issuing the marriage especially the unhappy marriages through his own words: "Writing about a man and a woman who are not married is so limiting. Within marriage there's the stuff of limitless drama." Even though Ayckbourn describes the marriage as a source of drama and serious problems, he presents the sufferers of marriage in a humorous manner. Ayckbourn presents the comedy with social behaviors and serious themes depending on believable- blood and flesh- characters (Buckroyd, 1986) in *How the Other Half Loves* and *Garden* with their couples suffering within a corrupted and dissatisfactory marriages and trying to find a gate opening to a garden or an extramarital relationship with a neighbor to escape illustrates the realities of several marriages simultaneously to the audience since Ayckbourn told on his website that;

when two people get married, they make a hell of a lot of promises, to each other, to God... and they've no right to make them. I mean, how do they know how what they'll feel like in twenty years or even five years. Nobody can be that certain. The chances are they'll both either get bored to tears with each other, stick it grimly to the end and both die miserably or else get a divorce and break a promise they shouldn't have made in the first place (Ayckbourn, 2023)

Ayckbourn describes the marriage as a sort of cage in which the spouses are entrapped with the marriage vows. When individuals' physical, psychological and emotional needs and wills are not fulfilled and satisfied within the marriage, individuals cannot imagine to break their vows at first and they find themselves in a limbo where there is no way out. Divorce is not seen as way out by the inhabitants of these cages since the process includes unfamiliar troubles and outcomes. In order to survive within this wedlock, cage or hell of promises, individuals try to find substitutes to satisfy their needs and escape from the burdens of marriage that they do not desire to confront. This substitute for their dissatisfactory marriage can be an affectionate or sexual partner within an extramarital relationship, or alcohol and drugs to create an illusionary but temporary happiness, or eating a lot to feed one's unfulfilled emotional hunger or losing the touch with the reality via going mad. Ayckbourn with his playing with the conventional structures in an unconventional and innovative manner illustrates the circularity and indefiniteness of this wedlock-until death do us a part- from all perspectives. Employing the structure functionally to draw the vivid picture of dysfunctional marriages, Ayckbourn presents us a catalogue of sufferers or prisoners of dissatisfactory and unhappy marriages with their escapist attitudes, ups and downs through *How the Other Half Loves* and *Garden*. These two plays entrapped several unhappily married couples in the wedlock without a way out.

## 6. Extended Abstract

Marital dissatisfaction that affects the married individuals physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing due to the fact that individuals' needs and expectations are not fulfilled within the marriage relationship entraps the spouses in the wedlock. The spouses who do not perceive their marriages as satisfactory and happy cannot find a way to release themselves from this imprisonment. Divorce seems to be a more distant and challenging solution since the individuals have to struggle against its negative outcomes directly. The familiarity of the problem in their ongoing marriages feels like a tiring but safe

option for the married individuals. However, they still need to have a substitute for their unsatisfied physical, emotional and psychological needs that are not met within their marriages. By choosing to stay within their corrupted marriages, the cage dwellers build up an escapist attitude in order not to confront with the burdens and troubles of their marriages. Infidelity seems to be a substitute for their physical, emotional and psychological needs. Under the social protection of their marriages, unhappy spouses prefer to be in extramarital relationships. Besides the extramarital relationships, alcohol, drugs, eating disorders, being a workaholic, showing obsessive behaviors or losing the touch with the real world and going mad can be other optional substitutes for their dissatisfactory marital relationship with their spouses. As a result, marriage becomes a partnership with several substitutes entrapped in the same unbreakable vow. There is no way out for the inhabitants of the cage.

British playwright Alan Ayckbourn observing the corruption, decay and hypocrisy in the modern marriages masterfully presents the reader a vivid picture of the dissatisfactory and unhappy marriages of modern times via employing the structural devices parallel to the theme. Ayckbourn's plays issuing the marital dissatisfaction can be also regarded as autobiographical works since once he described himself as a sufferer of a dysfunctional marriages of his own and his family of origin. In the plays, readers are introduced with several sample couples as the caged birds of marriages. Their lives and marriages are presented to the reader with their escapist attitudes, obsessive behaviors, extramarital relationships, ignorance and unhappiness. Although Ayckbourn has several plays issuing the dissatisfactory marriages of modern times, in this paper, *How the Other Half Loves* and *Garden* will be the subject matter as these two plays are the perfect examples in which Ayckbourn's playing with the structural devices and stages enables him to present several couples at one stage- three couples on one stage divided into three separate drawing rooms in *How the Other Half Loves*- and one couple's marital relationship with its double faces performed on two separate stages- House as the dull and corrupted marriage and *Garden* as the free zone where extramarital relationships are employed as an escape from the reality. Ayckbourn's mastery in combining the structure and the theme of the plays and playing with the stage for his own benefits provide the reader to see numerous couples and their stories related to their corrupted marriages at once and also to realize the intermingled extramarital relationships.

The purpose of this paper is to show central themes of marital dissatisfaction, infidelity and escapist manners of the Ayckbourn's characters that are illustrated vividly on the stage by Alan Ayckbourn through his skillful observation and employing traditional devices to break the conventions. Thus, Marital dissatisfaction and its key terms and negative escapist consequences such as infidelity will be defined and Alan Ayckbourn's two plays *How the Other Half Loves* and *Garden* will be analyzed in terms of theme and structure through the key elements of marital dissatisfaction and its negative consequences on the spouses.

**Keywords:** Alan Ayckbourn, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Garden*, Marital Dissatisfaction, Infidelity, Escapism.

#### **Araştırmacıların Katkı Oran Beyanı/ Contribution of Authors**

Yazarların çalışmadaki katkı oranları Eda BAYRAKCI %100 şeklindedir.  
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#### **Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı / Conflict of Interest**

Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.  
There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person in the study.

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In this study, the rules specified within the scope of the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed.

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