



## Home, Physical Disability and Sense of Belonging in Nina Raine's *Tribes*<sup>1</sup>

Nurten Çelik\*

\* Dr. | Dr.

İnönü University, Faculty of  
Science and Literature,  
Department of Western  
Languages and Literatures |  
İnönü Üniversitesi, Fen  
Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı  
Dilleri ve Edebiyatları  
Bölümü

nurten.celik@inonu.edu.tr  
Malatya / TÜRKİYE

### Abstract

Home has traditionally been perceived as a location that provides control, freedom of self-expression, and psychological, social, and physical security. However, the presence and development of physical impairment subvert the positive aspects and conventional conceptions of home. Any corporeal attributes that challenge the culturally assumed views of the disabled body are rarely or never recognized as a part of domestic life. Home transforms into a site of oppression and discrimination as the denial of impairment in the sphere of the home leads to psychological and emotional disturbance and the distortion of a sense of belonging. One contemporary play that explores the complicated relationship between impairment, home, and culture is Nina Raine's *Tribes*. *Tribes* dramatizes the ways in which the cultural understanding and treatment of disability shape and regulate the embodied experiences of the disabled character within the confines of home. Billy's deafness is ignored by his family members, who do not acknowledge the existence of the deaf community, sign language, and deaf culture. Additionally, Billy experiences alienation and isolation in a family that wallows in miscommunication, disagreement, misunderstanding, and lovelessness. Therefore, this essay explores how the social norms concerning the disabled body operate to determine and govern the perception and validation of hearing impairment in a home setting by focusing on the emotional aspects of an embodied life. Furthermore, it explores how the pre-established notions of the body, hierarchy, and value create feelings of alienation and a lack of belonging.

**Keywords:** Hearing impairment, home, sense of belonging, Nina Raine, *Tribes*.

Received / Gönderim:

09.03.2023

Accepted / Kabul:

03.08.2023

Field Editor / Alan

Editörü:

Hüseyin Altındış

## Nina Raine'in *Kabileler Oyununda* Ev, Engellilik ve Aitlik Hissi<sup>2</sup>

Öz

Geleneksel olarak, ev kontrol, kendini ifade etme özgürlüğü ve psikolojik, sosyal ve fiziksel güvenlik sağlayan bir yer olarak algılanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, fiziksel engelliliğin varlığı ve gelişimi, evin olumlu yönlerini ve geleneksel kavramlarını alt üst eder. Engelli beden in kültürel olarak algılanışına tezatlık oluşturan herhangi bir bedensel özellik, ev yaşamının bir parçası olarak ya nadiren kabul edilir ya da asla kabul edilmez. Evde engelliliğin tanınmaması psikolojik ve duygusal rahatsızlıklara ve

<sup>1</sup> A different version of this study was already produced by the author in her "doctoral" dissertation entitled as *The Representations of Disabled Bodies in Contemporary British Drama*, which was written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Nazan TUTAŞ.

<sup>2</sup> Bu çalışmanın farklı bir sürümü yazarın *Engelli Bedenlerin Çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosunda Temsilleri* başlıklı ve Prof. Dr. Nazan TUTAŞ'ın danışmanlığında yazılmış "doktora" tezinde yer almaktadır.

aidiyet duygusunun bozulmasına yol açtığından, ev bir baskı ve ayrımcılık alanına dönüşmektedir. Engellilik, kültür ve ev arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi irdeleyen oyunlardan birisi Nina Raine'in *Kabileler* oyunudur. *Kabileler*, engelliliğin kültürel algılanışı ve engelliliğe yaklaşımın engelli karakterin deneyimlerini şekillendirme ve düzenleme yollarını dramatize eder. Billy'nin sağırlığı, sağır topluluğunun, işaret dilinin ve sağır kültürünün varlığını tanımayan ailesi tarafından göz ardı edilir. Ayrıca Billy, iletişimsizlik, anlaşmazlık, yanlış anlaşılma ve sevgisizlik içinde debelenen bir ailede yabancılaşma ve yalnızlık yaşar. Bu nedenle, bu makale, duygusal boyutlara değinerek, ev ortamında işitme engelliliğinin algılanması ve yaklaşımını belirlemek ve yönetmek için engelli bedenle ilgili sosyal normların nasıl işlediğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu makale, benimsenen beden, hiyerarşi ve değer kavramlarının nasıl yabancılaşma ve aitlik duygusu eksikliği yarattığını incelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İşitme engeli, ev, aitlik hissi, Nina Raine, *Kabileler*.

## INTRODUCTION

Home has conventionally been regarded as a place that organizes and shapes family life and family relationships (Lewin, 2001, p. 355; Fox, 2002, p. 593; Bratt, 2002, p. 14). Home is not merely a physical shelter; it possesses distinctive social, personal, political, and cultural features that are interwoven in the human experience (Moore, 2007, p. 145). Home is a center of strong emotional commitment (Lewin, 2001, p. 360; Després, 1991, p. 98; Sixsmith, 1986, p. 282) and a nexus that engenders physical, social, and psychological security and safety (Lewin, 2001, p. 355-6; Després, 1991, p. 97-8). Rob Imrie underlines the social character of home for "*the development of personal values, and patterns of socialization and social reproduction*" (2004, p. 747). Activities in the residential environment play a major role in "*the construction of a sense of personal identity anchored to the surrounding environment*" (Cicognani, 2014, p. 86). Home is also a locus for self-expression and freedom of action (Somerville, 1997, p. 227; Fox, 2002, p. 593; Després, 1991, p. 98) and a setting that generates and strengthens a sense of belonging (Fox, 2002, p. 593). In his seminal book *The Home: Its Work and Influence*, Gilman suggests that home should provide individuals rest, comfort, peace, quiet, health, and an atmosphere for personal expression (2002, p. 3). Though home embraces multi-faceted characteristics that are indispensable for the well-being of individuals, the development of their personal and social identity, and their physical, psychological, and cultural integrity, its positive aspects are not equally and justly experienced by all its occupants. For instance, when examined from a feminist perspective, the home becomes a space where women's experiences are shaped by societal expectations of femininity, frequently leading to heavy workloads, domestic violence, exploitation, and abuse. Their captivity and confinement are enhanced within the limited borders of home, thus leading to increased stress, anxiety, and isolation. Iris Marion Young states that many cultures equate women with home, expecting them to serve and nurture men, and the confinement of women for the sake of nourishing males deprives women of opportunities to develop their own identity (2005, p. 115). Similarly, the presence and progression of bodily impairment call into question the conventional and idealized understandings of home. Home may become a site of oppression and discrimination because of degrading practices and exclusionary attitudes towards disabled occupants, thus creating circumstances that undermine their sense of security, control, belonging, continuity of identity, and psychological equilibrium. For instance, disabled women are exposed to a range of domestic abuse, including physical violence, sexual exploitation, verbal attack, emotional neglect, and a lack of care from partners, family members, or paid caregivers (Thiara et al., 2011, p. 762). Abuse can cause severe injuries, violation of the rights to privacy, and isolation from other people (Ellis et al., 2012, p. 36), and generate various reactions such as feeling pathetic (2012, p. 47), shame, guilt, self-blame, and denial (2012, p. 48), severe depression, feeling undeserving of a relationship, feeling unworthy and lack of self-worth (2012, p. 51), lack of trust and fear (2012, p. 52).

The interaction between disability and domestic space has received little attention, and how disabled individuals construct and perceive the concept of home has not been sufficiently explored. Research, however, has demonstrated that how disabled individuals experience home is closely tied to conceptualizations of corporeality. In his study "*Disability, embodiment and the meaning of the home*", Rob Imrie contends that disabled individuals' experiences of domestic habitation utterly contradict the conceptions of the home as an ideal place for privacy, security, independence, and control (2004, p. 746). He highlights that the architectural layout of buildings or houses has a negative impact on the experiences of disabled people in domestic environments, and the impaired body is not incorporated into the domestic design since the idealized domestic life tends to deny and exclude impairment, illness, and disease (2004, p. 746). According to a study by Christine Oldman and Bryony Beresford, poor housing conditions deteriorate the physical and mental well-being of disabled children and the entire family (2000, p. 429). Harrison and Davis state that poor housing conditions often "*inhibit effective self-*

*management of illnesses or impairments, and may exacerbate a condition"* (2001, p. 115). These studies destabilize standard representations of home by explaining how bodily traits interact with physical structures to create subjective interpretations of home. Considering the associations between home and disability, this study argues that the perception and treatment of impairment determine the meaning and functionality of home by shifting the focus from the physical structures of home to issues such as restrictions of family space and the emotional and psychological drawbacks arising from the conflict between domestic values and individual aspirations. To explain the relationship between disability and home, this paper examines Nina Raine's *Tribes* as a text that subverts the conventional perception of home as a part of a person's social and psychological security and argues that the contradictions between individual needs and the societal pressures placed upon disabled individuals by body politics adversely influence their social and psychological states as well as the process of identity formation. In developing this argument, this paper explains that in *Tribes*, home is not treated only as a physical structure but as a socio-cultural setting that reflects the intricate links between domestic space, individuality, and society. In this respect, this paper highlights that the ideology surrounding the disabled body is embodied in the realms of domestic life, largely conditioning the dynamics of family interactions. Additionally, it examines how socially prescribed aspects of domestic life determine disabled individuals' experiences of impairment. Thus, this study reconsiders and reconceptualizes the dynamic relationships between home, impairment, and culture.

#### **Hearing Impairment, Home and Culture in Nina Raine's *Tribes***

As Lewin suggests, the home is "*constructed from a pattern of cultural processes*" (2001, p. 355). The home functions both as a means of asserting individual identity and belonging to a culture (Moore, 2007, p. 145); therefore, though it is experienced and felt at a personal level, our relationships with home are governed and shaped by cultural, social, and political factors (Manzo, 2003, p. 55). This indicates that individuals attempt to be independent, free, and responsible for their lives in a home environment, yet they are linked with the social factors that operate to make them a part of the larger community and facilitate their identification, bonds, and ties with their community. Though certain and private boundaries demarcate home to bolster privacy, self-autonomy, independence, and control, home has a social character defined by its operation in accordance with commonly held norms and values in order to acculturate individuals to become members of society. The multiplied homes and families, which constitute the foundation of society, implement and uphold social norms for the continuation of society and gain acceptance into the family and society necessitates conformity and adherence to the expectations of these structures, which include the heteronormative assumptions of the body. For instance, young adults develop their sense of identity in the domestic space, but they are constrained by the rules of the house they share with their parents (Moore, 2007, p. 145). The compatibility between individual characteristics and social norms for individual agency in terms of the cultural prioritization of body image forms the backdrop for *Tribes*, as Nina Raine states in an interview for the Royal Court Theatre:

*I first had the idea of writing Tribes when I watched a documentary about a deaf couple. The woman was pregnant. They wanted their baby to be deaf. I was struck by the thought that this was actually what many people feel, deaf or otherwise. Parents take great pleasure in witnessing the qualities they have managed to pass on to their children. Not only a set of genes. A set of values, beliefs. Even a particular language. The family is a tribe: an infighting tribe but intensely loyal. Once I started looking around, tribes were everywhere. I went to New York and was fascinated by the orthodox Jews in Williamsburg, who all wear a sort of uniform. They were like an enormous extended family. And just like some religions can seem completely mad to non-believers, so the rituals and hierarchies of a family can seem nonsensical to an outsider...Finally, I thought about my own family. Full of its own*

*eccentricities, rules, in-jokes and punishments. What if someone in my (hearing, garrulous) family had been born deaf? All these things went into the play, which took a very long time to write.* (2010)

Drawing upon Raine's views, it is important to state that although the body provides spaces for individuals to develop and assert their self-identity, it is an entity whose existence and meaning are constructed through the cultural discourse that promotes an idealized body as physically healthy, fit, muscular, and beautiful. In this respect, having an acceptable body image indicates compliance with a set of social ideals; thus, the body acts as a conduit to connect individuals to their family, and society. When personal experiences completely diverge from the behavioral patterns positioned in social, physical, and cultural paradigms, the bond between the individual, family, and society is distorted. Homes "reflect the degree to which cultures and their members deal with the oppositions of individual needs, desires, and motives versus the demands and requirements of society at large" (Gauvain & Altman, 1982, p. 28). The experience and meaning of home are shaped by the interaction between individual actions, thoughts, and social norms and conditions. The conflict between individual requirements and social forces intensifies with the presence and growth of impairment, illness, and disease within the confined borders of home. Any corporeal characteristics that challenge the socially accepted views of the body are rendered undesirable and unacceptable and receive little or no recognition as a component of domestic life. In this respect, the home functions as a form of exclusion for disabled individuals and older people as well (Moore, 2007, p. 149). The displaced position of disabled individuals demonstrates that the personal life in the domestic space does not exist outside the social and cultural construction of the body that regulates and manages the functions of the disabled body. The power and social structures are evidenced in the practices of domination and discrimination. Thus, home mirrors a social space where the body becomes a surface upon which restrictions and limitations are inscribed, hence, becomes an object of manipulation and oppression. The exclusion or denial of impairment in a domestic environment negatively affects the treatment, perception, and validation of impairment, the living standards of disabled individuals, exacerbates impairment or causes new impairments, creates emotional and psychological disturbances, distorts the individual's sense of disability identity and belonging, and destroys the individual's relationship with the outer world. Disabled individuals who experience various forms of domestic oppression in different ways and levels feel alienated, a situation that distorts their emotional attachment to home and their prior conception of domestic life, which was largely associated with rest, peace, happiness, and security. One literary example to reveal how domestic oppression affects the psychological state of disabled individuals is Martin McDonagh's depiction of the psychological disturbance of a young crippled boy Billy in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1996). Billy, who lives with his aunts, is exposed to verbal and physical mistreatment, and eventually his sense of belonging is distorted. He shows his tenacity to escape from his home to go to America in order to liberate his disabled body from the stigmatic attitude and honourous treatment.

Nina Raine's play *Tribes*, an award-winning drama, was first staged at the Royal Court Theatre in 2010. *Tribes* dramatizes Billy's psychological difficulties in the domestic space, where family members embrace the socially reductive views of the body. In the play, family life is characterized by loud talking, shouting, a lack of communication, love, compassion, and mutual understanding. In such a chaotic environment, the unyielding and self-righteous family members do not feel emotional empathy for Billy. Billy experiences overwhelming feelings of isolation and loneliness in the home setting, where language becomes a means to express rage and humiliation. After Billy meets Sylvia, a young woman on the verge of being deaf, he becomes familiar with the deaf community and sign language and works as a lip-reader for the Crown Prosecution Service. As a result of his love for Sylvia, Billy develops a heightened awareness of the intrinsic attributes of his hearing impairment and better comprehends how sign language and the deaf community provide enabling conditions for his embodied life. With his new perspective on his impairment, Billy challenges the stereotypical attitude of his family, stating that he

will not communicate with them unless they learn sign language. Billy is unable to fulfil his ambitions of love and success when Sylvia, who is in the stage of going from hearing to deafness, wants to take a break in their relationship because Billy does not fully understand what she is going through and the creeds of the deaf community no longer help her to cope with her loss of hearing. Billy is under investigation since the story he makes up, even though he cannot see the accused's faces, causes their erroneous conviction. The final scene of the play shows that Billy, who is having trouble interacting with the outside world, is welcomed by his family, particularly his tender brother Daniel, who uses sign language to express his intimate feelings of love and compassion for Billy.

Nina Raine's richly textured play transgresses the traditional associations of home as a place for family life, personal expression, rest, quiet, peace, and comfort by situating the deaf character in a seemingly loving but incompatible family that marginalizes him. Billy's estrangement is largely triggered by the emotional and psychological mistreatment of the family members whose world is surrounded with miscommunication, misunderstanding, disputes, and the domination of values, and hierarchies. The setting of the play is the kitchen, a meeting place for a family, which functions to reveal the myriad facets of family problems arising out of inconsistent views, judgmental attitudes, and misunderstanding. Daniel makes fun of his mother when she insists that the nuts are not rotten: "*Ambassador, you spoil us with your rotten nuts*" (Raine, 2010, p. 5). He also criticizes Christopher because of the noise he made during his Chinese course on the laptop. Christopher raises his criticism against Ruth's lover who is "*a potato-nosed cunt*" (Raine, 2010, p. 5) and "*teetotal, and impotent*" (Raine, 2010, p. 6). Daniel does not want to move his stuff out of Billy's room though Billy needs space (Raine, 2010, p. 11). The argumentative character of conversation permeates all phases of their daily lives, ranging from their love affairs to the kind of beverage they consume. As Brantley keenly observes, though the family members are highly intellectual, they are "*a bunch of dueling narcissists, this lot, with words as their weapons of choice*" (2012).

Christopher, Billy's father, lacks empathy for the emotional and psychological conditions of his wife and his children; he never respects others' opinions and reaches a common agreement with them. Daniel, who wants to be an academic, writes a thesis about how "*[l]anguage doesn't determine meaning*" (Raine, 2010, p. 12). But Christopher disaffirms his view since he believes that only language can adequately convey emotions: "*Bollocks, we don't know what feelings are until we put them into words! ... That's the whole point of art. Putting feelings into words so that we know how to feel them*" (Raine, 2010, p. 16). Beth writes a detective novel that explains the real nature and meaning of empathy and becomes the target of Christopher's criticism because of her writing style. Her act of writing signifies a way of expressing her intimate feelings and ideas that have been repressed under Christopher's verbal mistreatment and her desire to liberate herself from the oppressive atmosphere of family life. Ruth, an opera singer, is overwhelmed by both her wearisome family life and her feelings of loneliness. Her love affair with an old man is an object of ridicule and the ongoing war of words characterizes her relationship with Daniel, her brother, who thinks her position as an opera singer is overstated. In the same way, Daniel's life is troubled by both his unrequited love and the psychological drawbacks which prevent him from fulfilling his objectives. Under the influence of stigmatic attitudes in the domestic environment, Daniel is frequently haunted by some hallucinatory voices; he starts to take drugs in order to get rid of them. Christopher humiliates Ruth and Daniel for their flaws and weaknesses by calling them "*the parasites*" because they are unable to find employment and start living with their parents (Raine, 2010, p. 8). In the domestic environment, language becomes a powerful tool of anger, rage, and manipulation and does not serve to foster feelings of love and empathy as Daniel states: "*Well, abusive love's all that's on offer here*" (Raine, 2010, p. 30). In such a disordered atmosphere, Beth feels powerless to eliminate Christopher's dismissive behaviour towards her children. In a moment of anger, Beth asks, "*Christ. Why can't you move a step without an argument starting in this house?*" and Christopher states,

"Because we love each other!" (Raine, 2010, p. 19). As Ernest Nolan puts it, Christopher's caustic, outspoken, and abusive rhetoric upholds and sustains the tenacity and constancy of his love for his family (2014, p. 83).

Christopher's prejudice extends to such a paradoxical point that despite being a northerner, he disapproves of Daniel's relationship with Hayley since she, who comes from the North of England, has a different accent. He is critical of her since she is "*a northern twat, she had all the charisma of a bus shelter, she was as thick as two tits*" (Raine, 2010, p. 20). Further, he states: "*Daniel, as regards Hayley, you're well off out of it. Even if it does mean you have to live here again. After spending time with her, your IQ visibly halved*" (Raine, 2010, p. 20). Christopher raises his criticism against his cousin Zach and his pious wife Rebecca; he ridicules Zach because of his religious belief and Rebecca is humiliated since she is a "*religious bird*" (Raine, 2010, p. 45) and "*a supremely-unattractive-lady*" (Raine, 2010, p. 46). Christopher states: "*Why you would want to stick your cock into that cement mixer*" (Raine, 2010, p. 46). Any differences, whether they are cultural, religious, or physical, are not accepted within the confines of the house, and individuals who possess them are marginalized. In the play, the negative attributes attached to biological characteristics are transferred to the disabled body, thereby, serving as a catalyst to shape Billy's domestic and social relationships.

The youngest child, Billy, who has just returned home after college, is affected by the psychological fatigue that plagues family members. Billy, who has been deaf since birth, cannot fully participate in the conversations of the family members. The family members appear to be solicitous about Billy and his impairment; yet, deeply involved in heated debates and disagreements, what they can do is only ask about his well-being and whether his hearing aids are functioning. Throughout the first scene, Billy repeatedly asks "*What are you talking about?*" (Raine, 2010, p. 8) and "*What happened?*" (Raine, 2010, p. 10). Yet the family members utterly ignore Billy, refusing to tell him what is happening or giving a simple answer to his question solely with "*[n]othing*" (Raine, 2010, p. 10). A very compelling scene that shows how much Billy is struggling with loneliness and isolation occurs at the conclusion of the first scene, where Billy sits by himself on the stage with the lights only on him, and the family members' arguing voices can still be heard off the stage even though they have left the table.

In *Tribes*, home is constructed as a social setting where the cultural views of deafness are implemented, perpetuated, and reinforced. How disabled individuals take a position in domestic settings per the hierarchical regulation of the body and power necessitates assessing of the interaction between home and disability within the social and cultural paradigms. The socially fabricated discourse surrounding hearing impairment is entirely at odds with how the deaf community defines itself and asserts its identity. As Carol Padden states, the deaf community regards deafness as "*not only a sensory condition, but also a way of life characterized by membership in a signing community, participation in educational programs for the deaf... and a network of social organizations, clubs, and affiliations where sign language is used*" (1999, p. 57). The ideology that views deafness as a disability solely centers on deaf individuals' "*audiological position, which is measured in relation to the hearing majority*" (Obasi, 2008, p. 458). The social construction of hearing impairment clashes with the perception of deaf people who do not view deafness as a weakness or difference but rather as a characteristic that comes with sign language, deaf culture, and a shared identity that they acquire and develop as a result of their deafness. The conceptualization of deafness as a disability causes stereotypical treatments of deafness, such as the denial of deafness by hearing families and society, the dismissal of sign language and deaf culture, and the exclusion of deaf individuals from society. Additionally, deafness is treated surgically or improved with prosthetics such as hearing aids or sound-enhancing amplifiers, or, at its utmost level, obliterated by aborting the fetus through genetic counseling.

The intricacies and complexities surrounding the social construction of hearing impairment provide the backdrop for Nina Raine's *Tribes*, where the treatment and perception of deafness in the domestic realm reveal the social attitude towards deafness. In the play, the central conflict takes place when Billy's family denies his hearing impairment and dismisses sign language and the deaf community under the influence of the socially ingrained views of the body, value, and hierarchy. Raine's satirical representation of home as a signification of physical and psychological security is provided through the appropriation and implementation of the socially established views of deafness by the family members to accommodate and validate Billy's hearing impairment in the domestic environment. The practice of social norms in the domestic sphere creates a space where social and individual aspirations mutually influence and clash with each other. To put it another way, the social is interlaced with the domestic and the personal, and the binary opposition of the social versus the domestic and the social versus the personal is constructed upon the bodily difference in the play.

Embracing the socially constructed notions of hearing impairment, the family members have had a significant influence on how Billy perceives and experiences his deafness since his birth by teaching him oral speech and disallowing him to identify with the deaf community to construct and assert his deaf identity. The family environment in which the hearing family members impel Billy to communicate by using hearing aids and lip-reading substantially determines the meaning of his deafness and the process of experiencing an embodied life. The hearing parents adopt the idea that the use of sign language inhibits the development of oral communication skills, which prevents deaf people from fully integrating into society and developing their social identity. Daniel and Christopher strongly disaffirm Billy's relationship with Sylvia, who is "*Billy's Virgil, guiding him into the expansiveness of sign language, as well as the comfort and politics of the deaf community*" (Morris, 2013). Daniel's uneasiness stems from the fact that when Billy interacts with the deaf community, he will be forced to utilize sign language out of necessity due to his impairment and will be exposed to stigmatizing treatment. Christopher denies Billy's hearing impairment: "*Billy's not deaf - ...He is not, he's been brought up in a hearing family, he's been protected from all that shit! I'm talking about the hardliners, capital-D deaf, not racists but Audists-*" (Raine, 2010, p. 36). Though Beth insists that Billy's use of sign language is a little sacrifice for his lover, Christopher sternly disagrees, contending that learning sign language is equivalent to accepting disability and creating an identity by making the defect "*part of your personality*" (Raine, 2010, p. 36) and hence, what constitutes the essence of identity becomes "*ideological*" (Raine, 2010, p. 35). In terms of the construction of identity, Christopher makes an association between physical impairment and being a Northerner: "*Making deafness the centre of your identity is the beginning of the end. Like being a northerner*" (Raine, 2010, p. 36). Expanding upon Christopher's views, it is worth stating that just like cultural differences determine identity, disability is a pervasive ideology that defines the social identity of disabled individuals. Any bodily configurations, rather than the other characteristics of individuals, become the determining measure against which one's identity is established and one's social position is determined in both domestic and cultural settings where the value of individuals changes in relation to the hierarchical position of the body.

Christopher renounces the deaf community, which he perceives as a "*sect*" and "*cult*" where deaf identities are prioritized to build "*the feeling of persecution*" to promote solidarity within the community and exclude others (Raine, 2010, p. 35-6). He states: "*The deaf! The fucking Muslims of the handicapped world. You feel like saying, take your hearing aids and shove them up your arse. The feeling of persecution is necessary because it bonds-*" (Raine, 2010, p. 36). Christopher's rejection of the deaf community aligns with the perspectives of the oralists, who advocate for medicalized views of deafness and emphasize the use of lip-reading and speech in education. Oralists define the deaf community as "*one of a host of insular and alien-appearing communities*" which diminishes the quality of the deaf individuals' lives (Baynton, 2006, p. 41). The deaf community is not accepted because it, like any other

ethnic groups, "narrowed the minds and outlooks of its members" and also put limitations on deaf individuals' integration into social life (Baynton, 2006, p. 42). In an attempt to bring deaf people back from their state of exclusion and reintegrate them into mainstream life, oralists state that the deaf should not establish a social group. Motivated by misconceptions about the deaf identity and community, the family members did not acknowledge Billy as disabled; instead, they raised him as if he were hearing. In an attempt to integrate Billy into the larger community, the family members did not allow Billy to become a member of the deaf community and learn sign language. Billy does not move beyond the restrictive borders of the domestic environment to explore the subtleties and nuances of the world of deaf individuals and the refinement and richness of sign language; thus, his life with embodiment is sterilized by the restrictions and limitations placed on him by the family members. In this respect, what Robert Spirko states concerning paternalism, which deteriorates the condition of the deaf female character in Mark Medoff's *Children of a Lesser God*, could well explain Billy's condition since just like Sarah, Billy is totally "subject to a specific audist "paternalism" that infantilizes the deaf and takes from them power over their own lives" (2002, p. 19). In his seminal book *The Mask of Benevolence*, Harlan Lane reads the interaction between hearing and deaf people within the dichotomy of colonizer versus colonized and emphasizes that the colonization of deaf individuals is implemented through hearing paternalism. Lane states:

*Like the paternalism of the colonizers, hearing paternalism begins with defective perception, because it superimposes its image of the familiar world of hearing people on the unfamiliar world of deaf people. Hearing paternalism likewise sees its task as "civilizing" its charges: restoring deaf people to society. And hearing paternalism fails to understand the structure and values of deaf society. The hearing people who control the affairs of deaf children and adults commonly do not know deaf people and do not want to. Since they cannot see deaf people as they really are, they make up imaginary deaf people of their own, in accord with their own experiences and needs. (1992, p. 37)*

Just like the paternalism of the colonizers, which disregards the cultural, social, and political values of the colonized, hearing paternalism ignores the importance of sign language for deaf people to establish and claim their place in society as well as the deaf community's values. Hearing paternalism produces discourse based on the deficiencies of deaf individuals and imposes its own standards and rules in the name of integrating them into society. Yet, the objectification of the disabled body through regulative discourse operates to marginalize and discriminate against deaf people in both domestic and social life. In this respect, it is important to state that hearing paternalism operates to 'colonize' Billy since the imposition of the language and culture of the hearing disempowers Billy in both social and domestic life.

At the dinner, Christopher is consistently dismissive of the features of sign language and asks Sylvia a series of questions regarding its structure to ascertain whether it is Broken English and identify which one is more functional, sign language or speech. Sylvia, who is skilled in using sign language but not proficient in lip-reading, enunciates that sign is a kind of language that has a set of grammatical and syntax rules. In an attempt to prove its rhetorical power and eloquence, Sylvia uses sign language to translate different words that convey divergent and complex emotions such as jealousy, anger, insecurity, and sadness. Though Christopher witnesses the feasibility of sign language for articulacy, expression, and effective communication, he is unsatisfied and examines what the limitations of sign language are: "We don't want to hear what sign can do. We want to hear what it can't" (Raine, 2010, p. 53). When Daniel asks Sylvia how she expresses whether she wants to make a hypothesis or convey sarcasm, one limitation of sign language is revealed since "[y]ou can't say 'would' in sign. Or 'if'" (Raine, 2010, p. 55). Believing that words are the only effective means of relaying emotions, Christopher considers sign language to be insufficient and deaf people to be tactless and coarse:

CHRISTOPHER: *And I would say that if your language is a bit black and white then it makes you a bit black and white. Because how can you feel a feeling unless you have the word for it?*

SYLVIA: *Deaf people can be more honest.*

CHRISTOPHER: *More honest? Or more tactless?*

SYLVIA: *(raising her voice). Are you asking me whether signing makes you a coarser person because signing is a coarse language? Whether deaf people are emotionally deaf as well, lack empathy? (Raine, 2010, p. 55)*

Sylvia, who is outraged by the family's insensitive treatment of her deaf family, states that emotions cannot merely be verbalized since sign language is effective in expressing emotions. After the heated debate, Sylvia plays Debussy's 'Claire de Lune' on the piano, which mesmerizes the family. At this moment, Billy stays apart, looking "out and away" (Raine, 2010, p. 57). This scene indicates that unable to find a secure place where he can recognize the distinguishing features of his disabled body and organize his life in line with the requirements of his impairment, Billy experiences psychological distress in the suffocating atmosphere of home.

Showing his willingness to become a member of the deaf community and learn sign language, Billy fulfils his desire to create a safe home in which he is not ignored, oppressed, and silenced. The experience that Billy acquires in the safe atmosphere of the deaf community enables him to develop a strong sense of belonging, attain a better understanding of the nature of his deafness, build self-esteem and self-assurance, and reach self-actualization in social life by working as a lip-reader for the Crown Prosecution Service. After Billy's effective experiences in the deaf community, the family house loses its meaning as a place where one maintains physical and psychological integrity; hence, the house with its norms and restrictions becomes alien and unfamiliar to him. As Judith Sixsmith observes, when a person takes a step outside his home both physically and psychologically, home does not carry the value of being home (1986, p. 285). It demonstrates that home becomes home to the extent that it fulfils one's requirements, needs, and objectives (1986, p. 285). Having attained bodily consciousness outside of the strict family values, Billy confronts his family, questioning why they deny his impairment and overlook his presence in family conversations. As Sylvia translates what Billy has signed, Billy shows his reaction by refusing to use the spoken language unless his parents learn sign language:

SYLVIA: *The bland level of conversation. 'How's work?' 'How are you?' You never explain your arguments. You're all laughing about something and I have to say 'What?' 'What?' 'What?' 'Oh nothing. It was about a book.' I'm tired of saying 'what what what' all the time. (Raine, 2010, p. 74)*

Christopher, who does not comprehend the discrepancy between having an impairment and feeling disabled, states that Billy is fed up with his deafness. Billy opposes him by claiming that he is tired of feeling deaf in the family environment: "...I've had to fit in with you. I've waited. I've waited and waited. I keep thinking, 'I'll wait and you'll come to me' but you never do. You can't be bothered" (Raine, 2010, p. 75). Billy states further: "Am I not important to you?... Then why can't you be bothered?" (Raine, 2010, p. 77). While Beth apologizes to Billy for her failure to keep her promise to learn sign language, Ruth intimately expresses that "none of us can be bothered with any of us! That's this family. We're all egotists" (Raine, 2010, p. 77). Even though Christopher is willing to learn Chinese, he never attempts to learn sign language. In order to disprove what has been stated, he states that no one takes special treatment within the boundaries of the house: "Look, the reason we didn't learn sign wasn't because we couldn't be bothered, it was out of principle. Out of principle, we didn't want to make you a part of a minority world" (Raine, 2010, p. 78). Torn apart psychologically, Billy challenges his family by saying, "I'm not hearing so stop pretending I am" (Raine, 2010, p. 79) and leaves his family home - a tribe with its own internal rules and norms that exclude him:

SYLVIA: *If anywhere's a closed bloody ghetto it's this bloody house. Conventionally... unconventional... Kimonos. You think we're not part of any community, that's because we're our own... totally bonkers...hermetically sealed... community. 'No hawkers, no traders, and no one who doesn't know who (Hesitantly, as she watches the name be finger-spelled.) Dv... o... rak is.'* And no one's allowed to leave. I'm fed up with it. (Raine, 2010, p.79)

Billy takes a firm stand against the ghettoization of his hearing family, completely denying the expectations of his family, which are determined by the culturally constructed ideology related to the disabled body. Internalizing and appropriating the idea that disability resides in the individual body and not in the manner in which impairment is perceived and treated, Billy's family, particularly Christopher, regulate and arrange the domestic life where Billy has to use the hearing aids and the spoken language to foster his bonds with family members and the social world. The family's impositions to obliterate Billy's impairment create circumstances that pose serious barriers to his domestic and social life. Billy's hearing device impedes him from having healthy communication, as evidenced in the scenes where Billy's hearing aids buzz because Daniel turns on the radio to dispel haunting voices (Raine, 2010, p. 24), and Billy cannot understand what he has heard because of the battery that has run out (Raine, 2010, p. 18). Furthermore, Billy's understanding of deafness is limited by his family's normative views of the body, preventing him from fully embracing a deaf identity and forming connections with other deaf individuals. Billy views their attitude as normal and develops feelings of hatred for deaf individuals. Billy's reaction is not strange since, as Yael Bat-Chava states, when deaf children grow up in a hearing family where communication is provided through spoken language, they show a tendency to view deafness as a disability and attain "a culturally hearing identity" (2000, p. 421). Daniel's statement shows that Billy experiences the same situation: "You hated that other deaf boy at school. You went to one deaf do and you hated it. You said you had nothing in common" (Raine, 2010, p. 80). Daniel states further: "You said that no one listened to anyone else. You said that they didn't seem to realise conversation is about taking turns" (Raine, 2010, p. 80). However, Billy, who is familiar with the deaf community and sign language, realizes that his family's insistence on dismissing his deafness is the reason underlying his failure to have good communication and his psychological alienation. In this regard, Billy's act of tearing out his hearing aids may be arguably read as a manifestation of his strong reaction to the stereotypical attitude of family members, which disempowers disabled individuals in both the domestic and social sphere.

Billy is not the only character who suffers from an unfulfilling life due to familial and social expectations; Daniel is also negatively affected. The tension-ridden life within the confines of home causes mental problems. Daniel's situation aggravates when Billy leaves home, and eventually his mental health deteriorates. The incompatibility between his evolving personality and his family's established views of value is the fundamental reason behind his psychological disorder, as the voices he has heard indicate: "You're f-f-f-ucking useless" (Raine, 2010, p. 90). Andy Kempe points out that "there is the suggestion of schizophrenia here [in Daniel's case] while, metaphorically, his condition could be interpreted as a manifestation of the destructive tension that arises when one's own sense of personality seems at odds with the expectations of those closest to one" (2013, p. 36). Daniel's mental condition demonstrates that the contradictory relationship between individual desires and familial and social requirements adversely affects the physical, emotional, and psychological health of individuals. In this respect, it is significant to state that the occupants are bound by familial and cultural forces in the home setting though they struggle to be free and independent. This situation demonstrates that the home environment cannot be separated from social and cultural factors.

While Billy withdraws from his family, Sylvia's experience of losing her hearing generates a feeling of becoming 'different' and a sense of alienation from the deaf community. Sylvia, who is

troubled by her decreasing capacity to hear, seems to accept her disability with ease and dignity, yet she experiences psychological problems since she cannot come to terms with the reality of her increasing deafness:

*SYLVIA starts to simultaneously sign and speak.*  
*I just keep thinking, 'Am I different? Am I different? Am I different? Am I turning into somebody different?' I'm becoming a miserable person. I feel like I'm losing my personality...can't even be ironic any more... I love being ironic... I feel stupid... when I lose something in the house I have to put my hearing aids in to look for it...*  
*I have these dreams... when I'm talking on the phone again. And I can hear perfectly. It's all so clear...*  
*I don't know who I am any more... I'm going deaf. (Raine, 2010, p. 88)*

Sylvia experiences self-alienation since the deaf community, governed by the stratified order and classification, no longer alleviates her pain. Sylvia's sense of alienation stems from the fact that the deaf community she calls home fails her since its members do not foster any sense of empathy or understanding as to what it is like to lose hearing. In this way, her connection with the deaf community is distorted, which leads to her escape and brings out a sense of unbelonging:

*SYLVIA: There's no empathy. 'You're going deaf - so what? We're all deaf.' You're not allowed to be depressed about it. 'You're depressed? I'll tell you a joke.' You've got to act like you've won a competition. (She simultaneously signs and speaks.) 'Oh, congratulations! You're deaf!' (Raine, 2010, p. 85)*

Though the play offers a dark portrayal of the family atmosphere by focusing on the exclusionary attitudes of the family or the community that the characters are exposed to, its ending promisingly takes a positive turn. In other words, the plot "*holds surprises on the way to a satisfying ending in a truly transporting play - that's psychologically minded but not overly intellectual*" (Ostrow, 2015). Sylvia convinces Billy to speak to Daniel. When Billy returns home, he is welcomed by Daniel, Sylvia, and the rest of the family. Daniel, afflicted with stuttering under the influence of the hallucinatory voices he cannot discard, uses sign language to express his intense feelings of love for Billy. Following Billy, Daniel "*makes the sign back, crossing his arms in front of his chest*" (Raine, 2010, p. 97), and despite the absence of words or sounds, his message is clearly conveyed. Daniel's employment of sign language deconstructs the view that emotions are only transmitted through words or sounds. Through this scene, the play underlines the significance of emotions such as love, empathy, and mutual understanding, which play crucial roles in establishing and strengthening the ties that unite family members. Furthermore, the reunion of family members signifies that one needs a home that fosters protective, supportive, and loving bonds among family members. In this way, the ending of the play highlights that though Raine's dramatic construction of home undermines the concept of an ideal home, it does not trivialize or disregard family values, family ties, or family communication.

## CONCLUSION

Focusing on the psychological alienation and disturbances of Billy, *Tribes* demonstrates that the disabled character's experience of home determines his perception and construction of the meaning of home. The embodied experiences of home have demonstrated that home, with its rituals and norms, aggravates impairment, generates new health problems, creates emotional barrenness, and increases psychological deprivation. In Nina Raine's *Tribes*, the home turns into a space of oppression and passivization; thus, the play undermines the conceptualization of home as a sanctuary of one's bodily, cultural, and psychological integrity. The conceptualization and treatment of physical impairment in the home environment perpetuates the stigma attached to the disabled body, thereby reinforcing the

culturally imposed norms that render 'nonconforming bodies' invisible. The experience of home as an embodied space has shown that there is a complex interplay between the corporeal characteristics and the cultural norms that give shape to domestic experiences of impairment. This underscores the inseparable connection between the experience of home and corporeal existence. The interplay between physical attributes and social-cultural dynamics within domestic spaces demonstrates the elusive, unstable, and subjective nature of the meaning of home. The subjective experience of the home provides fresh perspectives to explore how domestic life, impairment, and culture interact.

#### Article Information

<b>Ethics Committee Approval:</b>	It is exempt from the Ethics Committee Approval.
<b>Informed Consent:</b>	There is no participant in the study to explain the purpose or to ask for consent.
<b>Financial Support:</b>	The study received no financial support from any institution or project.
<b>Conflict of Interest:</b>	The author declares no conflict of interest.
<b>Copyrights:</b>	No material subject to copyright is included.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baynton, D. (2006). "A silent exile on this earth": the metaphorical construction of deafness in the nineteenth century. L. J. Davis (Ed), in *the disability studies reader* (pp. 33-48). New York and London: Routledge.
- Bat-Chava, Y. (2000). Diversity of deaf identities. *American annals of the deaf*, 145 (5), 420-428. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44393234>.
- Brantley, B. (2012, 4 March). World of silence and not listening. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/theater/reviews/tribes-by-nina-raines-at-the-barrow-street-theater.html>.
- Bratt, R. G. (2002). Housing and family well-being. *Housing Studies*, 17(1), 13-26. doi: 10.1080/02673030120105857.
- Cicognani, E. (2014). Psychological home and well-being. *Rassegna di Psicologia*, 2, 85-96. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269930525>.
- Çelik, N. (2021). *The Representations of disabled bodies in contemporary British drama*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ankara University, Ankara.
- Després, C. (1991). The meaning of home: literature review and directions for future research and theoretical development. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 8(2), 96-115. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43029026>.
- Ellis, B., Mullender, A., Bashall, R., Hague, G., & Thiara, R. (2012). *Disabled women and domestic violence: responding to the experiences of survivors*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Fox, L. (2002). The meaning of home: a chimerical concept or a legal challenge? *Journal of Law and Society*, 29(4), 580-610. doi:10.1111/1467-6478.00234.
- Gauvain, M. & Altman, I. (1982). A cross-cultural analysis of homes. *Architecture & Comportement*, 2, 27-46. <https://www.epfl.ch/labs/lasur/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GAUVAINandALTMAN.pdf>.
- Gilman, C. P. (2002). *The home: its work and influence*. UK: AltaMira Press.
- Harrison, M. & Davis, C. (2001). *Housing, social policy and difference: disability, ethnicity, gender and housing*. UK: Policy Press.

- Imrie, R. (2004). Disability, embodiment and the meaning of the home. *Housing Studies*, 19(5), 745-763. doi: 10.1080/0267303042000249189.
- Kempe, A. (2013). *Drama, disability and education*. New York: Routledge.
- Lane, H. (1992). *The mask of benevolence: disabling the deaf community*. New York: Knopf.
- Lewin, F. A. (2001). The meaning of home among elderly immigrants: directions for future research and theoretical development. *Housing Studies*, 16(3), 353-370. doi: 10.1080/02673030120049715.
- Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23(1), 47-61. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(02\)00074-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(02)00074-9).
- Moore, J. (2007). Polarity or integration? towards a fuller understanding of home and homelessness. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 24(2), 143-159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43030797>.
- Morris, S. L. (2013, 14 March). Nina Raine's play *Tribes* depicts a family that talks a lot but doesn't Listen. *LA Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://www.laweekly.com/nina-raines-play-tribes-depicts-a-family-that-talks-a-lot-but-doesnt-listen/>.
- Nolan, E. I. (2014). Bicultural/bilingual/bimodal: deaf identity in Nina Raine's *Tribes*. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, 2(4), 82-87.
- Obasi, C. (2008). Seeing the deaf in "deafness." *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 13(4), 455-465. doi:10.1093/deafed/enn008.
- Oldman, C. & Beresford, B. (2000). Home, sick home: using the housing experiences of disabled children to suggest a new theoretical framework. *Housing Studies*, 15(3), 429-442. doi: 10.1080/02673030050009267.
- Ostrow, J. (2015, 20 October). "Tribes" Review: Nina Raine's Moving Play Resonates in Denver. *Denver Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.denverpost.com/2015/10/20/tribes-review-nina-raines-moving-play-resonates-in-denver/>.
- Padden, C. (1999). Deaf. *Journal of Linguistic of Anthropology*, 9(1-2), 57-60. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43102426>
- Raine, N. (2010, 22 September). Why I wrote *Tribes*. *The Royal Court Theatre*. Retrieved from <https://royalcourttheatre.com/nina-raine-why-i-wrote-tribes/>
- Raine, N. (2010). *Tribes*. London: Nick Hern Books.
- Sixsmith, J. (1986). The meaning of home: an exploratory study of environmental experience. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 6, 281-298. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222074147>
- Somerville, P. (1997). The social construction of home. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 14(3), 226-245. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43030210>
- Spirko, R. C. (2002). "Better me than you": *children of a lesser God*, deaf education, and paternalism. T. Fahy and K. King (Eds), in *Peering Behind the Curtain: Disability, Illness, and the Extraordinary Body in Contemporary Theater* (pp. 16-23). New York and London: Routledge.
- Thiara, R. K., Hague, G. & Mullender, A. (2011). Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence. *Disability & Society*, 26(6), 757-771.
- Young, I. M. (2005). House and home: feminist variations on a theme. S. Hardy and C. Wiedmer (Eds), in *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home and the body* (115-147). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.