

**DISEMPOWERED ‘OTHERS’ AND THE FEMALE SOLIDARITY IN SUE TOWNSEND’S
BAZAAR AND RUMMAGE (1982)**

Tuğba ŞİMŞEK

Artvin Çoruh Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi

Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı Bölümü

tugbasimsek@artvin.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

The patriarchal order of the society pushes the woman behind the surface mostly by regarding them as the secondary sex. As a result of this, they are ‘othered’ through gender and sexuality or economic and social issues, and thus feel repressed because their femininity, sexuality and even individuality are denied in order to maintain only the continuance of the patriarchal order within society. Yet not only men but also women discriminate against the female as ‘the other’ by inheriting this patriarchal ideology in their consciousness due to the normalisation of the constructed process of othering. Sue Townsend in her play *Bazaar and Rummage* (1982) describes this construction and internalisation of otherness imposed by both men and women. In the play, a group of agoraphobic women try to confront their fears by organizing a rummage sale through which the origins of their illness are explored. Agoraphobia is a symbolic symptom to represent what these women have gone through as a result of the repressive patriarchal order and how the fear of ‘outside’ – which is regarded as a man’s place, not woman’s – makes them psychologically crippled since this whole system restricting and oppressing them in so many ways do not allow women to have their own identities and makes them subjected to this system. However in the end, Townsend promotes a female solidarity to heal these women’s psychological wounds by going against their fear and anxiety.

Keywords: Othering, imposition and internalisation of the otherness, repressive and inherited patriarchal order, agoraphobia, female solidarity

**SUE TOWNSEND’İN *BAZAAR AND RUMMAGE* (1982) ADLI OYUNUNDA KÖLELEŞTİRİLMİŞ
‘ÖTEKİLER’ VE KADIN DAYANIŞMASI**

ÖZET

Ataerkil toplum, çoğunlukla kadını ikincil cinsiyet görerek, onları her daim perde arkasında bırakır. Bunun sonucunda kadınlar, cinsiyet ve cinsellik veya ekonomik ve toplumsal konularda ötekileştirilirler ve sadece ataerkil toplum düzeninin devamını sağlamak için kadınlıkları, cinsellikleri ve bireysellikleri reddedildiğinden kendilerini baskı altında hissederler. Fakat bu sadece erkekler için

geçerli değildir, kadınlar da ötekileştirme sürecinin normalleştirilmesinden dolayı bilinç altında ataerkil ideolojiyi benimseyerek hemcinslerini ötekileştirirler. *Bazaar and Rummage* (1982) adlı oyunda Sue Townsend, kadınların hem erkekler hem de kadınlar tarafından dayatılan ‘ötekileştirmenin’ oluşturulmasını ve içselleştirilmesini konu edinir. Oyunda, bir grup agorafobik kadın ikinci el eşya satışı – ki bu satış boyunca hastalıklarının sebepleri ortaya çıkacaktır – düzenleyerek korkularıyla yüzleşmeye çalışırlar. Agorafobi, baskıcı ataerkil düzen sonucu bu kadınların neler çektiklerini ve kadının değil de erkeğin alanı olarak görülen ‘açık alan veya kamusal alan’ korkusunun kadınları nasıl psikolojik olarak sekteye uğrattığının sembolik bir belirtisidir; çünkü birçok yönden kadınları sınırlandıran ve baskı kuran tüm bu sistem kendi kimliklerine sahip olmalarına izin vermez ve kadınlar, bu sisteme maruz bırakılırlar. Fakat oyunun sonunda, Townsend, korku ve kaygılara meydan okuyarak kadınların psikolojik yaralarının iyileşmesi için bir kadın dayanışmasını teşvik eder.

Anahtar kelimeler: ötekileştirme, ötekileştirmenin dayatılması ve içselleştirilmesi, baskıcı ve benimsenen ataerkil düzen, agorafobi, kadın dayanışması

DISEMPOWERED ‘OTHERS’ AND THE FEMALE SOLIDARITY IN SUE TOWNSEND’S *BAZAAR AND RUMMAGE* (1982)

Sue Townsend (1946-2014) was one of the most popular British writers. She is very well known as the creator of the fictional character Adrian Mole who is “Britain’s durably popular fictional, pimple-faced diarist” (Stade & Karen, 2009, p. 488). She began her writing career when she joined writers’ group at Phoenix Theatre in 1975. Until she became a popular writer, she went through many hardships. She left school at 15 and worked various jobs as a factory worker and a shop assistant, but at last she achieved a successful career as a writer. Yet her health failed her. In 2001 she became blind after many years struggle with diabetes and she died of a heart attack in 2014. Her first novels are *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole 13 ¾* (1982) and its sequel *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* (1984), and these novels are followed by other sequels of Adrian Mole. These books made her a very popular writer and are very remarkable in that they mark many important issues in Britain by reflecting the social context through the maturation of Adrian Mole beginning from Margaret Thatcher period – to Tony Blair period (“Sue Townsend,” 2014).

Before analysing the play, it is necessary to point out the general atmosphere of the 1980s briefly. As mentioned above, she began to write during Thatcher period. She reflected social conditions resulting from Thatcher’s policies of privatization and monetarism, especially in Adrian Mole series. Like Townsend’s plays, many plays of the 1980s reflected “political issue of the day in a recognisably explicit way – as personal satire of parliamentary and leading establishment figures in all kinds of dramaturgical form” (Milling, 2012, p. 70). In addition to these plays, theatre also had a great impact of Thatcherism because there is “a shift away from public subsidy to corporate sponsorship, a transformation of the Arts Council from an independent agency to an instrument of government” (Billington, 2013) because it is seen as an investment to satisfy the capitalist means of Thatcherite policies. Yet in the 1980s, despite “hard economic times and the reduction in the performance of new

writing" (Peacock, 1996, p. 148), many women writers succeeded to take part in mainstream especially with the support of Royal Court Theatre such as Sarah Daniels, Sharman MacDonald, Winsome Pinnock, Sue Townsend, and Timberlake Wertenbaker. Also there was an increase in women's theatre groups such as Black Mime Theatre Women's Troupe, Clean Break, Imani-Faith, Monstrous Regiment, Siren, Red Ladder, and Women Theatre Group. As it is seen, with increase of women writers and woman's theatre groups, they pointed out social conditions more from women point of view, especially working class women like Carly Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982). It was both the result of the feminisms which emerged in the 1970s as liberal, radical and socialist feminisms and the result of an election of a woman Prime Minister. As Michelene Wandor (2005) states, although these feminisms emerged during the 1970s have different approaches, they aim to "bring about some sort of change in the position of women ..., challenge both the idea and the fact of male dominance ..., assert the importance of self-determination for women" (p. 133). In this period, as it is seen, they attack the patriarchal structure of society degrading women as a secondary sex.

Sue Townsend's *Bazaar and Rummage* which was performed in the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1982, deals with a group of agoraphobic women and two social workers caring for them. It explores their relationships with each other and their subjected positions in male-dominated social and cultural system. Before beginning the analysis of the play in terms of construction and internalization of otherness, what the title of the play means in terms of these women's lives and also the significance of agoraphobia are necessary to be pointed out. Oxford Dictionary defines bazaar as "a fundraising sale of goods" or "a large shop selling miscellaneous goods" and rummage sale as "a jumble sale" which is "a sale of miscellaneous second-hand articles, typically held in order to raise money for a charity or a special event". These agoraphobic women in the play go through some tough experiences in life and as a result of their traumas, they become psychologically damaged. This title manifests that their memories, hidden desires and fears are put up for sale at this bazaar. They put on sale what they have gone through to be saved from claws of these fears and memories in order to move on their lives standing on their own feet. So bazaar and rummage sale will become turning points for their lives.

Agoraphobia is a psychological syndrome and it "means 'fear of open spaces,' but is more appropriately described as a fear of being anyplace where one might feel alone and vulnerable to fear and panic" (Capps & Ochs, 1995, p. 3) hence they feel much safer indoors rather than outdoors such as home. As Vladan Starcevic (2005) states, "just being able to escape is for many agoraphobic patients of crucial importance and is also the main criterion that distinguishes between 'safe' and 'unsafe' situations" (p. 25). They feel secure only in their 'safe' zones and mostly avoid other places, even other activities except their daily routines. Besides, Isaac M. Marks (1987) affirms that "At least two thirds of agoraphobics are women, and most develop symptoms after puberty, usually between age 15 and 35" (p. 291). So it seems that most of the agoraphobics' being women results from social and cultural norms of male-established-social system. This association of women with agoraphobia is because of "the similarity between symptoms of agoraphobia and stereotypical female sex role. From this perspective, the socialization of stereotypic feminine behaviour – helplessness, dependence, unassertiveness, accommodation – contributes to the development and maintenance of the characteristics of

agoraphobia” (Capps & Ochs, 1995, p. 2). It reflects social and cultural oppression over women leading to such a psychological syndrome.

As it is seen, the agoraphobia and the title is functional in this sense and they help to reveal patriarchal oppression over women, the ‘othered’ position of women within “the order of (man’s) discourse” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 88) by both man and women and their struggle to cope up with this repression through putting their ‘hidden’ or ‘fearful’ stuffs on sale to be saved from them. And this paper aims to analyse the construction and internalization of otherness imposed by both women and men, and Townsend’s attempt to establish a female solidarity in order to create awareness within society.

Judith Butler (1988) asserts in her article “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” that “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede (sic); rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (p. 519, italics in orig.). She emphasises the ‘performative’ aspect of gender, which is not inherent but constructed by being acted over time. It is shaped through the experiences and become ingrained within the society, and internalised as ‘normal.’ From a social constructivist perspective, “Girls are not ‘naturally’ feminine, nor boys ‘naturally’ masculine. These are learned behaviours” (Giles & Middleton, 1999, p. 39). Over time, these roles are ‘performed’ and are assumed as normal behaviours, as Butler (1988) says, “gender is an ‘act’” (p. 528). In the play *Bazaar and Rummage*, it is seen that Gwenda, who is an ex-agoraphobic and works as a social worker to help people with the same illness, is attributed to a ‘feminine’ role representing a traditional type of woman who is expected to be obedient to her father and husband, which is understood through her remarks, “always do your master’s will, even though you may be very tired or hungry. ... It’s kept me in good stead, service first self second” (p. 43). Womanhood, according to her, is all about a relationship between master and servant. Yet she is not aware of her situation as a servant in this relationship and normalises this as if it is something to be proud of, which is a manifestation of internalised otherness. Besides, her resemblance of the femininity to master-servant relationship displays that women are colonized in a way, which manifests a parallel to post-colonial racial issues, because “both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998, p. 101). Like gender, “‘race’ is not biologically given but a linguistic construct that functions to mark symbolically difference and ‘otherness’” (Giles et al., 1999, p. 35). Gwenda is othered through gender and she others the black, as she says:

I’m sure that’s why I’m quite without racial prejudice you know. *Golly, Wog and Nigger* were always my favourites ... What lesson did Squire Gordon teach Black Beauty? You must never start at what you see, nor bite nor kick, nor have any will of your own ... That was more or less what my father taught me. (p. 43, emphasis mine)

These words in italics (*Golly, Wog and Nigger*) are racially discriminatory. Even if she does not think herself racially prejudiced, in fact she is. However, the important thing here is that she resembles herself to the black person in terms of their shared duty. It reflects that even the ‘othered’ one as a woman marginalises ‘the other,’ a black person. This othering process for both women and blacks is

always repeated and taught in Butler's sense, and thus forms dichotomous gender and racial identities. So gender is "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (Butler, 1988, p. 520) like Gwenda who normalises this othering process for herself as a woman and for the black people.

It is also important that Gwenda is an ex-agoraphobic. After the death of her father whom she looks after for many years because of his illness, she heals. Bell-Bell, who is "an obsessionally clean agoraphobic" (Townsend 40), remarks that "you felt free because your father died" (p. 57), which shows that Gwenda heals because she frees herself from the patriarchal oppression keeping her at home. As Townsend states in the Introduction, "*Bazaar and Rummage* is also about the nature of 'caring' and the sometimes parasitic stranglehold that carers have on those they are supposed to be caring for. Who needs whom?" (p. xii). Gwenda heals from her agoraphobia but she as a social worker prevents these people from healing that she has gone through because she needs the company of these people to spend her time and to satisfy her ego, since she is alone herself. As a woman, she is othered by the patriarchal society and now she others these women to keep them in her own control. So it is not only men but also women who construct these gender dichotomies by othering. Thus, Townsend attempts to express how women subjectivity is repressed by men and women alike and she indicates this condition through her disempowered others.

Becoming 'the other' is not only restrained to gender or race but also women are othered sexually. As Luce Irigaray (1985) asserts, femininity "is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine. . . . The 'feminine' is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds monopoly on value: the male sex" (p. 69). It is as if women sexuality has no existence. This male-dominated system ignores femininity to maintain its sexual superiority by having the Phallus. Yet it needs a binary opposition to define itself against, in order to sustain its domination. To be able to achieve their aim, they make femininity silent and absent because within the patriarchal discourse, it is there only to represent the masculine. The female subjectivity is constructed through being the sexual "other" to the male. Jacqueline Rose (1985) states that "woman is not inferior, she is subjected" (p. 44) both to and by male-dominated system, therefore "The absolute 'Otherness' of the woman . . . serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth" (p. 50).

Susan Carlson (1991) states that "a character's affirmation of her personal or political self grows out of a rediscovery or confirmation of her sexual nature" (p. 246). Sexual nature, the body is associated with discovery of the self, the subjectivity. It can be construed that subjectivity and sexuality are intertwined in that the body embodies certain cultural meanings, as Butler (1988) puts it very well, "bodies get crafted into genders" (p. 525). Subjectivity is reconstructed over the body. In *Bazaar and Rummage*, it is observed that there are sexually repressed bodies so that they cannot discover their own selves. Katrine, who is an agoraphobic old songstress, says in the play that "I don't like sex. . . . I'm repressed" (p. 48). Indeed, her identity is repressed within established norms of society which puts women into already-shaped-forms as an obedient, passive, subservient housewife, mother, or daughter. Irigaray (1985) also affirms that "the man, by virtue of his effective participation in public exchanges,

has never been reduced to a simple reproductive function. The woman, for her part, owing to her seclusion in the 'home,' the place of private property, has long been nothing but a mother" (p. 83). These stereotypical roles relegate women into 'home' and restrict her participation into every level of society by silencing her femininity and her subjectivity. Katrine's inability to discover her sexuality shows her inability to explore her female subjectivity. She is so passive that she cannot do anything without her husband Maurice, who enhances her agoraphobia by making her afraid of outside:

Maurice tells me all the news; all about the riots and the muggings and the rapes and the old people being murdered and the blacks kidnapping white women and all the little kiddies that's molested by the perverts and the animals that's tortured by teenagers and the multiple crashes on the motorways and how people have been trapped inside their cars and been burnt alive. (p. 78)

Maurice locks Katrina into the house to protect her from the darkness of outside yet this situation forms a perception that women are not safe outside and they need the protection of a man. That means "the 'female' is enclosed within the male narratives of realism, is most commonly defined in relation the male 'subject' (as wife, daughter, etc.), is unable to take up a subject position" (Aston, 1995, p. 37). The feminine role and position within society are defined by the male discourse and the female struggle to achieve its own subjectivity is restrained by this discourse. Women are not allowed to establish their own identities through "exclusion from male cultural, social, sexual, political, and intellectual discourse" (Dolan, 2012, p. 3). All of these discourses reduce women into submissive and inferior positions by ignoring their existence. Elaine Aston (1999) states that "subjectivity is recognized as problematic for women, who are required to participate linguistically, socially, culturally, etc., in a system that constructs them as marginal and alien" (p. 9). However, as mentioned above, the otherness of women is not only constructed by men but also by women who has inserted male discourse and acted according to this discourse. In the play, Gwenda has internalised male discourse and her performative role as the 'feminine.' She says that "what this country needs is more men like Daddy. Capital punishment in schools. Teenagers in the army, fathers working and mummies at home" (p. 80). Townsend not only criticises the patriarchal system through her characters but she also critiques women's own discourses about themselves to create an awareness of their exclusion from social, cultural, economic and intellectual domains and of their silence or preferred silence within the male discourse.

In the last part of the play, Townsend introduces a woman police constable who is also afraid of the public like the other characters. She is a functional character in that she reflects how women are afraid of society itself which others them in various aspects. It points out that women are excluded from society because of a perception of their being a second and inferior sex, and it supports this patriarchal idea that women must remain at home because "The streets aren't safe for women" (Townsend, 1996, p. 79) but the streets are for men. This dichotomy between female and male participation in social life is an agent for men to define their masculinity and male identity because in Lacanian sense, "For women to 'be' the Phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to 'embody' the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through 'being' its other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity" (Butler, 1990, p. 44). Male needs female

opposition to construct his identity through "the denial of the subjectivity of women" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 235). They treat women as "waste, or excess, what is left of a mirror invested by the (masculine) 'subject' to reflect himself, to copy himself" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 30). By excluding women from social life, men forms "a male sex as the sole possessor of subjectivity" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 236) in all social domains. In *Bazaar and Rummage*, this woman police constable is presented to define the patriarchal society which frightens women because as Gwenda says "no decent God-fearing woman can walk the streets without being molested" (p. 81). Even the police constable who is expected to control the public and protect the people cannot do her job because she is a woman and is always under the threat of men in the streets as a sexual and inferior object, since women are "commodified, objectified, and positioned as objects of consumption" (Hoeveler & Schuster, 2007, p. xi). There is always a male gaze following the women. As a result of this, women never feel safe and they try to find 'safer' domains to get away from public which they characterise as a male domain. This actually leads them to hold on to their agoraphobia more tightly.

As Townsend (1996) states, "agoraphobia is only an outward symptom of other deeper problems. And, something more sinister perhaps, it often suits husbands and children to have their wives and mothers at home all day every day and if the sufferer talks about seeking a cure this will be seen almost as an act of betrayal" (p. xiii). As it is seen in the play, there are some reasons for keeping these women at home. These can be their husbands or friends or some past memories having locked them into the house. Through their stories, it is understood that besides their being othered, women are silenced or prefer to be silent. In the play, Margaret becomes agoraphobic as a result of what she has gone through. She is raped by a family member and cannot tell even her mother but just cries for "a sign that would tell everybody what had happened" (p. 91), and she cannot tell because "our mum thought the sun shone out of his scrawny ass" (p. 91). She prefers to be silent because no one probably believes her. Her rapist throws half a crown to her as if she is a prostitute. She is objectified and is just used to satisfy men's desires. Irigaray (1985) describes women's condition very well by saying "women is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among man; in other words, a commodity. . . . Women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers" (p. 31). Silent and passive femininity, and motherhood are thrust upon her and she is marked as a commodity, a 'use-value' for man. Since it is also incestuous, it has traumatic impacts on Margaret causing her to confine herself to the house for 15 years. Rosi Braidotti (1994) argues that women are represented "as body, sex, and sin" (p. 235). They are pushed into these roles by the patriarchal figure who thinks he can invade the 'body' as a manifestation of his power, so it is not only the fulfilment of male desires but also the symbol of patriarchal hegemony and power over the female body.

The othering process of women is not only constrained with gender and sexuality, but also economy. Women are economically othered as well. As Simone de Beauvoir (1956) states in her *The Second Sex*, "Man-the-sovereign will provide woman-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral justification of her existence; thus she can evade at once both economic risk and the metaphysical risk of a liberty in which ends and aims must be contrived without assistance" (p. 20). Material protection is understood as a male domain. Man is a breadwinner outside whereas woman is a housewife inside taking care of the needs of both husband and children. This discourse of man

“perpetuates the subjection of woman” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 104). In the play, Katrina totally relies on her husband economically as she says: “I’m not used to money, Maurice does all that for me. I don’t even use a purse any more” (p. 77). She has no individual autonomy to decide for herself but she depends on her husband for everything. She does not have her own independent individual identity. And she accepts it as something normal. She wants everything to be given to her readily rather than struggling to achieve them. As a representative of patriarchy, Maurice does everything for her by using her as a mirror to reflect himself as the superior one who is capable of doing everything. Thus her femininity as well as his masculinity are “constructed with a reference to a male sign” (Rose, 1985, p. 43). Katrine represents women who conform to the norms of the system by assuming passive and submissive female role. In Lacanian sense “women reflect that masculine power and everywhere reassure that power of the reality of its illusionary autonomy” (Butler, 1990, p. 45) and Maurice needs this to construct his masculine identity, because it is a way to manifest their power over women.

As Irigaray (1985) states “Women’s social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to ‘masculine’ systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women” (p. 85). Man’s discourse shapes norms and roles within society. Because the system is male-dominated, women are objectified and commodified through the male discourse within language, which has maintained the subjection of women throughout history. Due to this, women always find it very hard to express themselves or they are made silent and repressed not to speak openly; thus they are relegated into subservient roles and positions. As Butler (1988) describes, “to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body conform to an historical idea of ‘woman’, to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project” (522 “Performative Acts”).

In the play, these agoraphobic women come together to be saved from their hidden desires and fears at the bazaar by putting their stuffs on sale. In a way they come to break away with this oppressive system locking them into home by means of creating awareness about formation of feminine and masculine roles and about how women internalise and normalise this othering process through male discourse. Townsend demonstrates not only the othering process of these women within society but also makes an attempt to bring them together in order to make them as a part of society which excludes them as a second and inferior sex. At the end of the day when Gwenda leaves them all alone, they panic and cannot go outside, because they are afraid of the public yet as Fliss states, “we’re the public, aren’t we? . . . Why should be forced to stay at bloody home? . . . We’ll be alright if we keep together” (p. 97-98). She, as a voice of the writer, promotes the solidarity of women to overcome their problems or any obstacles in front of them. Even if they are not cured of their agoraphobia, they all go out together like a team, which is a kind of hope for them to take over their own life rather than depend on their husbands, children or social workers to run their lives.

In conclusion, *Bazaar and Rummage* deals with repressed bodies and selves. These agoraphobic women try to handle their inadvertent bodily reactions to affirm their selves yet they are trapped within “the order of (man’s) discourse” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 86) so they cannot step out of it easily.

Sue Townsend promotes “the recovery of the self through the body” (Butler, 1988, p. 521) because the body “is a materiality that bears meaning” (p. 521). When they are able to control their bodies, then they are capable of constructing their own selves out of male discourse, which is adopted by both men and women. In the end, they come together “to reclaim their bodies and their selves” (Carlson, 1991, p. 247). Despite their troubles and painful experiences making them crippled, they try to be a part of a community by preparing this rummage sale and thus they form a female solidarity in the end of the play, which promotes hope for the future of women. Like her female contemporaries such as Sarah Daniels, Sharman MacDonald, and Timberlake Wertenbaker, Townsend deals with gender, sexual and economic othering of women and reclaims their denied subjectivity and sexuality through her disempowered others.

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