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An Eriksonian Reading of The Body by Hanif Kureishi: Integrity Versus Despair

Hanif Kureishi'nin Vücut Romanının Eriksonyan Okuması: Benlik Bütünlüğüne Karşı Umutsuzluk

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Abstract:The ageing body and old age issues are among the prominent concerns of Western civilization throughout the 21st century. The body, as a new raw material of consumer society, is perceived as something that can be changed as a result of medical developments, and even bought and sold like other commodities. Furthering the cause of these transformations, Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory, which evokes the quintessence of social pressure on elderly people, may help to address the complexity of the issue. In his theory, Erikson posits eight stages of development with specific tasks and crises peculiar to each stage throughout the lifespan. This paper represents an attempt to examine Hanif Kureishi's *The Body* novella within the framework of Eriksonian psychosocial theory of human development. Admittedly, Kureishi's short fiction appears to deal mainly with ethnicity and identity matters that render the postcolonial approach. However, this study is significant in that it concerns the pressures of society, becoming increasingly severe against old people, on ageing, which points out the last stage of Erikson's integrity versus despair. It also reveals that past experiences and personal desires affect a person's psyche. Through *The Body*, the ties between society and individuals, desires and realities, appearance and internal existence have been affirmed. It may be concluded that when Kureishi's *The Body* is evaluated within the framework of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, the accuracy of the effects of sociocultural factors on personality development has been determined.

Key Words: Erikson, Integrity, Despair, Hanif Kureishi, The Body

Öz: Yaşlanan beden ve yaşlılık meseleleri, 21. yüzyıl boyunca Batı medeniyetinin öne çıkan endişeleri arasında yer almaktadır. Tüketim toplumunun yeni hammadde olan beden, tıbbi gelişmeler sonucunda değişebilen, hatta diğer metalar gibi alınıp satılabilen bir nesne olarak algılanmaktadır. Bu değişimlerin nedenini belirlemek açısından, Erik Erikson'un yaşlı insanlar üzerindeki sosyal baskının özünü çağrıştıran psikososyal gelişim teorisi, konunun karmaşıklığını anlamada yardımcı olabilir. Erikson, psikososyal gelişim teorisinde, yaşam süreci boyunca her aşamaya özgü belirli görevler ve krizlerle sekiz gelişim aşaması olduğunu varsayar. Bu çalışma, Hanif Kureishi'nin *Vücut* romanını Eriksoncu psikososyal gelişim kuramı çerçevesinde inceleme amacı taşımaktadır. Kuşkusuz, Kureishi'nin kısa kurgusu, post kolonyal yaklaşımı ortaya çıkaran etnik köken ve kimlik meseleleriyle uğraşiyor gibi görünmektedir. Ancak bu çalışma, Erikson gelişim kuramının son aşaması olan benlik bütünlüğüne karşı umutsuzluğa işaret eden, yaşlılara karşı giderek acımasızlaşan toplumun yaşlanma üzerindeki baskılarını ele alması açısından önemlidir. Bu çalışma ayrıca geçmiş deneyimlerin ve kişisel arzuların bireyin ruhsal durumunu etkilediğini ortaya koymaktadır. *Vücut* romanı aracılığıyla, toplum ve birey, arzular ve gerçeklikler, görünüm ve

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içsel varoluş arasındaki bağ teyit edilmiştir. Hanif Kureishi'nin *Vücut* adlı eseri Erikson'un psikososyal gelişim kuramı çerçevesinde değerlendirildiğinde, sosyo-kültürel faktörlerin kişilik gelişimi üzerindeki etkisinin doğruluğu görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erikson, Bütünlük, Umutsuzluk, Hanif Kureishi, Vücut

Introduction

The influential writings of Erik Erikson (1902-1994) are grounded in psychoanalytical theory and have stimulated social science literature. His theories of human development that investigate identity issues make him a relevant figure in the field. In contrast to Freudian theory, which connects personality with just early childhood experiences, Erikson posits eight stages of life that extend throughout life. Each stage of his theory is concerned with different life cycles and integrates separate psychosocial conflicts. It appears that each conflict in these stages has an effect on the later ones, assuming that structure and process, given together in this theory, will have more affective emphasis. Apparently, the resolution of each conflict, at the same time as crises, prepossesses later cycles. The defining characteristics of his framework are based on sociocultural factors that illustrate how social parameters act on each individual's psychological makeup (Sokol, 2009). Erikson points to the following relationship:

I shall present human growth from the point of view of the conflicts, inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity 'to do well' according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him (1968: 91-92).

This connection between sociocultural factors and subjective well-being refers to the function of external sources in Eriksonian theory. Slater states that "he recognizes the influences of culture and history and refuses to be confined by reductionistic analyses and rigid rules of interpretation" (2003: 53). This approach, which is remote from any pessimistic psychoanalytic tendency, confirms Erikson's optimistic beliefs that motivate him to make human potential appear. In a more general sense, he treats life span as a whole structure, which is mostly shaped by outer influences and allows individuals to become more aware of their places in social life. According to him, the relationship between an individual and society is reciprocal and dynamically subject to continual change. In a thoroughly researched and highly acceptable study, then, it is necessary to include the stages of Erikson to understand the main dynamics of this paper. As expected, his life cycle chart, that is, the eight stages of development, is not rigid; on the contrary, since he ascribes a more noteworthy aim, his theoretical contentions describe a holistic attitude that intends to clarify the inner psyche via outer social circumstances. The life cycle chart of Erikson includes trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity diffusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair. In this stage theory, he views identity development as an ongoing process that starts in early childhood and continues throughout adulthood. It would be wise to note that Erikson sees these phases of life as tools, rather than rigid rules, which enable researchers to investigate a major psychosocial task and an intriguing topic.

This study utilizes Erikson's last stage of identity development, integrity versus despair, to observe the protagonist of *The Body* written by Hanif Kureishi in terms of the social construction of the body in a globalized setting. In an effort to convey a clear message, it will be useful to explain this phase of life in detail. Integrity versus despair is the last stage of Erikson's identity development cycle, which focuses on the individual's post-retirement life, generally after the age of 65. Yet, as stated before, there is no strict restriction between the stages of Erikson since he considers that all these phases can change in accordance with sociocultural variables as well as personal issues. Consciously or not, each individual in this stage questions the true meaning of life with an assurance that his/her whole life can be reconciled to achieve ego-integrity. The defining characteristics of these questions entail matters of grief, pride,

compensation, and comprehension. Admittedly, education, age, gender, and sociocultural environment are the dominant variables that will affect the questions, and the answers will be reached. If an individual arrives at reconciliation after a questioning period or accepts his/her whole life with great sincerity, it means that he/she affirms life worth. These integrated individuals mostly have insightful self-awareness; they are aware of both grieves and regrets, but are not overwhelmed by them; they are ego-resilient persons and mostly content with their past experiences (Hearn et al. 2011:2). Despairing persons, on the contrary, require outer satisfaction because they are not accordant with their inner life due to failures, regrets, and missed chances in life. For those, the final result is unsatisfactory, and they do not have enough time to try again and compensate for disappointments (Hearn et al. 2011:3). As hypothesized, integrated individuals are socially competent and optimistic about their lives while despairing individuals are self-denigrated and pessimistic about their past and future.

With this theoretical information in mind, it will be easier to conceive of the internal inferiority of the cutting-edge protagonist Adam in *The Body* via his psychosocial crises, mostly caused by deterioration of physical dexterity and his social portfolio. Thereby, it suggests a strong link between his inner psyche and globalized social settings, which forces him to evaluate his whole life and be aware of his missed chances. Although differences in opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that this novel is a reference to the fragmented identities of the postmodern world. Previous studies have traditionally based their approaches on identity matter, yet adopting Erikson's integrity vs. despair stage as the main approach of this study will allow obtaining further in-depth information on life cycle theory, and the possible results of the conflicts will occur in these stages. In the follow-up phase of the study, after brief information about Hanif Kureishi, the relationship between the mind and the body surrounded by the bodily ego of the protagonist Adam is illustrated to unfold the conflict of integrity vs. despair in detail.

Identity Issues in Hanif Kureishi's Fiction

Hanif Kureishi, a half-English and half-Pakistani author, is one of the important representatives of ethnicity and identity matters. Hybridity, gender, sociocultural factors, and multicultural prose are among the characteristics of his fiction, which plays a leading role in "new English literature". Shevchenko and Nesmelova identify Kureishi as follows:

Kureishi has assuredly experienced duality and ambiguity of double-oriented personality's position who on the one hand has become a part of modern European civilization and its values and on the other, simultaneously, feels his own clanship and propensity to the culture of the ancestors (2015:422).

Undoubtedly, his creativity is an inseparable part of his multicultural identity, which is strengthened by the dualities and conflicts he encounters. As Shevchenko and Nesmelova indicate, he is somewhere between Europe and Pakistan and simultaneously feels the motives of two cultures. Therefore, it should be noted that this duality enables him to search for different kinds of identity issues by trusting his own experiences and ambiguities. Despite the fact that Kureishi's works fall under the headings of well-known and searched, this study has been broadened to include different aspects of dualities. Although extensive research has been carried out on identity matter of *The Body*, no single study exists which focuses on the identity crisis in this novella via human development cycle that is Eriksonian well-known life chart. His double-edged messages on identity delineate both individualistic desires and sociocultural trends constructed by the consumerist view of society. For this reason, the novella is owed with another reading that at least examines behavioral valuables due to ageing and the accompanying emotional problems that cause the climax point of the story.

From ancient Greeks to the postmodern world, all societies have given importance to youth and beauty as symbols of power, fortune, and immortality. For the sake of gaining all these qualities, science and technology have always developed with the aim of maintaining the body young. Evidently, the fears of ageing are not only related to physical change but also to new lifestyles of old people that should be categorized as "biological and social ageing" (Featherstone, 1982:3). Demir explains that the effort to stay young and fit through consumer needs and strategies of those who manipulate the economy and

society turns out to be almost compulsory within the ideology imposed by marketing (2019). This expression is an indication of the modern era's efforts to maintain the human body as a result of developing technology and scientific developments that enable different types of medical surgeries. In this sense, the main reason for preserving the body is not only to protect the physical appearance, but also to get rid of the socioculturally accepted old age phenomena and not to be included in that class. Hashmi argues, "what is actually denied in Kureishi is not the body-even when it does not connect with much else- but rather the speculation that any interest or happiness might lie beyond it" (1993:31). As this case very clearly demonstrates, the ageing body in Kureishi's novel exhibits not only a physical decline, but also new roles socially ascribed to this old body. Decline of mental, sexual, and physical capacities in that phase of life may cause some negative values and stereotypes that are attributed to old age in Western societies. Adam, who spent his youth writing and producing, is a famous playwright who started to show signs of ageing at the time of the story. Although Adam has an orderly life, a wife he loves, and influential works that bear witness to his years, he is not satisfied with his new realities, wrinkles, and white hair on the surface, yet more than these sociocultural labels for ageing such as being unproductive, unable to change, and decline in any kind. The story begins with a suggestion to Adam, about his ageing body; although this offer came from a friend of Adam, it is possible to say that it actually reflects the point of view of society:

"Listen," he said, "you say you can't hear well and you have a backache. Your body will never cease to remind you of its sickly existence. Do you want to do something about it?"

"Is this for a pile of decrepit debris?" said. "Sure. What shall I do?"

"How would you like to give it away and get a new one instead?" (Kureishi, 2005:3)

Kureishi's beginning exclamation pushes some cultural contradictions to an extreme level that keeps biological and social ageing together; that is, the prejudice of society, which sees physical deterioration as the cause of social decline, affects the conception of Adam and makes him feel really old and useless. A notable example of this bodily deterioration in the novel is as follows:

I don't feel particularly ill, but I am in my mid-sixties, my bed is my boat across these final years. My knees and back give me a lot of pain. I have haemorrhoids, an ulcer and cataracts. When I eat, it's unusual for me to spit out bits of tooth as I go. My ears seem to lose focus as the day goes on and people have to yell into me. I don't go to parties because I don't like to stand up (Kureishi, 2005:4).

When Adam mentions the deterioration in his health, he is actually expressing the fact that he has difficulty in daily routines and that disturbs him in social environments. Overall, his external appearance and deteriorating health made him feel that his education and experiences were no longer useful. "The final stage is integrity versus despair, where in old age the person must look back on their lives and have a sense of satisfaction or regret" (Dunkel and Sefcek, 2009:14). This is certainly true in the case of Adam, who critically evaluates his life history and reaches conclusions far from integrity, intimacy, and wisdom.

His psychosocial strength is not wisdom or integrity, but it defines a deep regret towards the social life that he could not be involved in because he worked hard in his youth. Adam verbalizes his ambiguity with a question: "I imagine that to participate in the world with curiosity and pleasure, to see the point of what is going on, you have to be young and uninformed. Do I want to participate?" (Kureishi, 2005:6). Connecting his ability to be involved in social life to being young and healthy, Adam uses the term "imagine" and emphasizes that he is actually unaware of what is going on around him. He has assuredly experienced duality and ambiguity in old age despite his intellectual background, and as a matter of fact, suffers from some emotional crisis and seeks personal redemption. Although readers may suppose that Adam has a well-lived life and is valued for his wisdom, he feels isolated and sent out of this world due to his old age. Admittedly, it is a cultural phenomenon rather than a biological alternant that broadens and emphasizes the psychosocial challenges in that phase of life. In *The Life Cycle Completed*, Erikson explains the dramatic connection between culture and identity and the effects of this connection on

elders; how they feel ostracized, neglected, and marginalized as being shame of the community (1997). This cultural relativity, which highlights the importance of sociocultural factors, illustrates the close connection between the social world and the psychological well-being of each individual. Featherstone reflects consumer culture's view on ageing, "like cars and other consumer goods, bodies require servicing, regular care and attention to preserve maximum efficiency" (1991:182), as an indicator of present-day societies' discourse. Unfortunately, to gain acceptance, society's view of ageing forces elderly people to do things they do not want to. Adam is one of those people who consider "education and experience seem to be of no advantage" (Kureishi, 2005:5), in consumer society, at his age. All positive qualities are associated with young people, ignoring their precious life experiences and education of older people. Piqueras argues that,

the ageing body has inherited some of the negative values that have been attributed to it from Antiquity, but is now considered a 'machine' that can be repaired at any time, with the result that those whose bodies show signs of ageing are seen as untidy and careless, characteristics that apparently match their personality. On the other hand, those aged people who look young and healthy are those more highly praised, thus widening the dichotomy between young and old (2007:91).

This popularized sense of thought about ageing and the negative qualities attached to it represent the heaviness of ageing body and despair for further hope. Although wisdom and integrity should have been the core strengths of this phase of life, in Adam's case, despair as the pathology of this stage surrounds him. He signifies his desire to be young,

I knew women, and not only actresses, who had squads of personal trainers, dieticians, nutritionists, yoga teachers, masseurs and beauticians laboring over their bodies daily, as if the mind's longing and anxiety could be cured via the body. Who doesn't want to be more desired and, therefore, loved? (Kureishi, 2005:36)

Associating the body with being desired and loved, Adam inherits this thought from the society's changing judgments. The efforts of everyone around him to rejuvenate and become more attractive caused Adam to panic about his body and prepare for change in accordance with society's values. As Piqueras points out, "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, technological and medical advances have not only made it possible to delay the onset of an ageing appearance, but have actually proved constant physical rejuvenation to be a reality" (2007:94). This changing reality implies the social value of appearance in contrast to bodily deterioration, which makes Adam undergo a transplant operation to balance body and mind. His discontent with his ageing body, to some extent, referring to alienation from the new concepts of society, makes him accept the suggestion of one of his friends, Ralph, for body transformation. As Ralph mentions about these "Newbodies," Adam begins to imagine a new phase of life with a loved, attractive and sexually desired body. "I was beginning to resemble my father just before his death. Did that matter? What did I think a younger body would bring me? More love?" (Kureishi, 2005:20) Throughout the novel, it is seen that Adam often uses the terms youth and love side by side; the opposite of this pairing can be considered of as old age and abandonment. One could argue that this insight is the result of old age psychology and individual ontogeny, and increasing that focus could be valuable. However, this paper represents an attempt to examine this psychology in terms of the social parameters that have proven effective in the nature of human development. The coevolution of individuals and cultures in Erikson's theory is largely reciprocal, and posits that predetermined stages are the outcomes of this underlying relationship. As specified before, the integrity versus despair stage, the final stage of his psychosocial development theory has a sense of satisfaction or regret (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009). In Adam's case, the hidden connection between love and youth or old age and abandonment points to the failure of the optimal ratio between the polar opposites. Being loved and appreciated by another, for Adam, is only possible by being young. This incentive for elderly people leads them to go on to live. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson defines elderly people by saying "I am what survives me" (1950:141), which assumes that whatever makes them exist may be accepted as plausible. In a more general sense, Erikson accepts and states the physiological response of an elderly person to cultural expectations in order to become congruent with them. What is further shared not only becomes congruent with these social expectations, but this social reality also reduces Adam to certain

roles that will be appreciated by the community. Often enough, the cultural significance of the body forces Adam, like everybody else, to modify and transplant in order to eliminate any symbol of ageing. For this reason, Adam decides to have his brain transplanted into a young body that symbolizes power, health, and love.

At a party, Ralph recommends Adam a new and fresh start that he longs for and makes him aware of newly developed surgical methods for body transplants. Although Adam is not very courageous in making such radical changes in his life, he cannot help dreaming of a young body and what he can do with that young and attractive body. Like any trading goods, Adam selects a young body in twenties that offers him to be a “Newbody” and a second chance to live a different life for six months. With this extraordinary experience, he hopes that his old experiences, as old Adam, will guide him while he desires to do things that he could not do because he worked hard in his youth. Yet, while imagining this, he misses an important point: this new body also had a life before and its biological existence could be a danger to Adam. After the surgery, he is pleased with this new appearance and says, “I had intelligence, money, some maturity, and physical energy. Wasn’t this human perfection? Why hadn’t anyone thought of putting them together before?” (Kureishi, 2005:56). This supposition makes him active in each part of life, especially in sexual aspect he is tempted much and for a while he could not control his own wishes. Admittedly, he gains self-esteem and is appreciated by society due to this new vessel that prioritizes masculinity, sexual power, health, productivity, and many other attributes for youth. Yet, as Çelikel signifies “the uncontrollability of his new self indicates that the body also occupies a cultural space by shaping one’s attitude towards private and public space” (2009:56). This “cultural space” of the new body implies Erikson’s psychosocial development theory that suggests ethnic and cultural backgrounds affect individual perception about the self and the world. Since he describes integrated people as those who affirm whole experiences, right or wrong, have insightful self-awareness, and are ego-resilient, it is possible to say that Adam is among the despairing ones because of his unsatisfying attitude towards life’s worth. In this respect, his case may be explained by the following sentences:

Despairing persons have not accommodated their ways of interpreting the world, or their circumstances, sufficiently to attain reasonable life satisfaction. They frequently express sadness, regret, or failure, sometimes in the form of self-denigrations or sarcasm, or in remarks implying a sense of futility or triviality. Sometimes they appear bewildered. Despairing persons can be quite reflective, but feel that, despite some partial areas of life satisfaction, the final result is unsatisfying (Hearn et al, 2011: 2-3).

As explained by Hearn et al., on the contrary of integrated people, despairing ones are full of disappointments on behalf of life and their own experiences, which may be regarded as the remarks of their regrets, failures, and dissatisfaction. As in Adam’s case, predominantly, his commitments to life make him feel vulnerable and disconnected since he considers that all these commitments take him back from real-life conditions and restrict him into an anti-social world that includes any kind of intellectual work and professional issues rather than ordinary man matters like sex, profligacy, and true camaraderie. All of these missed opportunities make Adam think he is indebted to life. As a second chance, similar to the second chance given to the first human, Adam, he wishes to complete the lack of sexual satisfaction he was deprived of during his youth, and to be complete with an experienced mind in a young body.

Although most studies frame work in terms of identity issues, the rarity of the cultural aspects of human development appears to put special emphasis on Eriksonian psychosocial theory. In this regard, it might be considered a representative case of culturally conducted novels that might broaden and diversify the common sense of how social and cultural habits steer human development, largely overlooked by the current canon of critical theories. Taken all together, the overarching concepts of the novel may alter the predominant perception of the individual issues of Adam and arguably with the content of the novel. In fact, Kureishi explicitly depicts masculinities in crisis; more precisely, the social reasons for a male character’s mid-life crisis since all mentioned “Newbodies” in the story are males. On the one hand, Adam represents how personal and collective identities are inextricably connected

with each other, that is, the relation between these two is reciprocal. On the other hand, it signifies a different, unfixable, exclusionary notion of community that implicitly abuses ageing and old people, which may be regarded as one of the reasons for the mid-life crisis. The social position of the external body is seen as the main way of evaluating individual properties, and in accordance with these, the productivity, health, sexuality, attitude, and behavior patterns are perceived as the indicators of the deviation of elderly people from the norm. Decline of mental, sexual, and physiological abilities are perceived as negative values that have been attached to older people who become victims of the prejudices of that community. According to common sense, there should be a gap, a disjunction between the body and mind in older people; after the surgery, while doctor visiting Adam to evaluate his condition implies that his mind and the body are in coordination owing to transplant, and his new time starts (Kureishi, 2005:45). This supposition that implies the effort to make people young and healthy appears to Adam that they are trying to create a society in which each individual will be of the same age (Kureishi, 2005:46).

Running through this idea, the extent to which the novel's messages and "Newbodies"'s attitudes suggest that although transplant makes it possible to rejuvenate elderly people in contemporary societies, there will be always a mismatch between the self and this new body since human body and mind is a blend of experience and training. Adam illuminates this mismatch or feeling like a different self to Ralph as:

This is different. It's as if I have a ghost or shadow-soul inside me. I can feel things, perhaps memories, of the man who was here first. Perhaps the physical body has a soul. There's a phrase of Freud's that might apply here: the bodily ego, he calls it, I think (Kureishi, 2005:55).

This discrepancy between the body and mind precisely echoes asymmetries in discussions of parallelism that exist in mind-body synergy. Adam, a "Newbody" with an old mind, feels the difference, literally, first impressions of this new body confirm the presuppositions of community that one hand match youth and all kinds of capacities, on the other, isolate and condemn old people as being disabled to do things actively and cannot produce for the wellness of society. This mindset redefines Adam's considerations of his new capabilities that he has forgotten for a long time and re-enjoys his life to the full. During this time, he expressed his new condition as follows:

After the purifications and substitutions of culture, I believed I was returning to something neglected: fundamental physical pleasure, the ecstasy of the body, of my skin, of movement, and of accelerated, spontaneous affection for others in the same state. I had been of puny build, not someone aware of his strength, and had always found it easier to speak of the most intimate things than to dance. As a Newbody, however, I began to like the pornographic circus of rough sex; the stuff that resembled some of the modern dance I had seen, animalistic, without talk (Kureishi, 2005:72).

As seen in this excerpt, Adam describes his new condition with powerful words, and metaphors as the community accepts and appreciates this so-called reality. More precisely, Adam internalizes this perception unconsciously, either as a product of collective memory that shapes the whole mindset of any society. The breadth of thinking in this part supports Erikson's psychosocial development theory since Adam's account ascribes meaning to a well-accepted and established sense of ageing in that community. As Slater claims, "human beings want to see a coherence between the past and the future, or as some would express it, a communion with the saints, and life hereafter" (2003:61). This expectation, as in Adam's case, was not met. Seeking to find peace, recognition, and appreciation after many years of study and many good works, Adam confronts the prejudices of society that condemn and humiliate him just because of his old age. If the dilemma about ageing is pursued openly as a matter of fact by the community, then elderly people can feel worthwhile and can continue living by producing in their comfort zones. Yet, society's denial of ageing and seeing elderly people as a burden makes them fragmented, unproductive, inactive, and disappointed about all their hard work and lifelong experiences.

According to Erikson, the last stage's, integrity vs. despair, motto is "I am what survives me" (1950:141), suggesting varied ways of elderly people to feel comfortable about their past and find more

possible returns in their lives that may help them to become integrated. It might, however, fall within the boundaries of consumer society and their relentless cultural presuppositions, something more than not recognizing the value of experience of old people, but not accepting them as individuals who are nearly skeptical about their identity due to the offensive discourse and behavior patterns of that community. After a lifetime of production and experience, the position of old people needs to be changed in a positive way in order to benefit from their wisdom rather than restricting them to deep despair. In doing so, culturally accepted ideal age phenomena should be abolished to make older people free of any prejudices that may harm their self-esteem. As understood from the novel, cultural values and individual considerations are dynamically related. Although Adam's prolific life as a playwright and his happy family life, cultural restrictions force him to change his physical body to be accepted as a new person with all kinds of acclaimed capabilities. Yet, this end is not enough to make him happy again, since his real self is lost with the body he gets rid of. After returning to the hospital to get his old body back, he disappoints finding that there is no chance to return to the past, and he realizes that he does not have the ability to change anything from now on. In the last part of the novel, Adam explains his regret with these words: "I was a stranger on the earth, a nobody with nothing, belonging nowhere, a body alone, condemned to begin again, in the nightmare of eternal life" (Kureishi, 2005:157). Adam ignored both his own body and the existence of this new body in order not to be outside of social norms. However, this new self in a new body is not enough to integrate him, and it makes him search for a new meaning in a despairing mood.

Conclusion

With reference to the postmodern world and consumer culture, Kureishi introduces a male character who is not satisfied with the accomplishments as a successful playwright due to globalized perceptions of body and identity. In doing so, he implicitly reflects the new world's fragmented identities that may be evaluated in terms of the Eriksonian psychosocial development theory, which posits eight stages of the human life span. Kureishi creates, with the protagonist Adam, a consumer society in which all values are materialized, and each individual is valued as a commodity. It is not wrong to say that he criticizes the contemporary world that appreciates superficial qualities of humans like beauty, youth, and sex, and disregards productivity and intelligence on behalf of the traditions of the so-called postmodern world. Furthermore, the novel deals with the issues of change and commodification that generally exist in society through individual issues. Kureishi states that this change in society is not for the better and that people come to the fore with their physical conditions, not their spiritual or humanitarian values. The novel, which begins when the prolific playwright Adam realizes that he is not satisfied with his ageing body, reveals how consumer society will go to extremes for bodily pleasure and cause identity conflicts. Ageing, as the main crisis of Adam, is the symbol of discrimination, condemnation, and isolation of elderly people by contemporary society, which seeks to create a society at the same age. This prejudice against the elderly coincides with the last stage in Erikson's life cycle chart, and explains how social parameters exist in social life that affect personal perceptions.

It may be stated that at the beginning of the story, the measures taken by Adam's social environment against ageing and discourse on ageing support Erikson's criticism of the importance of social phenomena. According to this opinion, Adam avoids the negative judgments that ageing will bring, rather than physical ageing. Within these tensions, Adam presents human growth via inner and outer conflicts that illustrate how the social world, especially consumer society, impacts the psychological well-being of an individual who tries to catch the sense of the era in order not to be isolated or shamed. This dynamic, but at the same time, coercive relations between individuals and society have confirmed the reality that 'to do well' purpose on behalf of life may change from person to person, and this effort may not be acclaimed by society if there are other criteria that are more essential than being intelligent and productive. In the narrative, Adam's confrontation with this reality occurs when he realizes, albeit late, that even his own body is dominated by society.

It may be concluded that when Hanif Kureishi's *The Body* is evaluated within the framework of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, the accuracy of the effects of sociocultural factors on

personality development has been determined. Although the process of identity formation includes a synthesis of old experiences such as satisfaction and regret, ideology, maturation, and intelligence, social parameters have the ability to change the direction of this process in the opposite direction.

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