

## THE BORDER-BALLAD REIMAGINED: LIMINALITY IN *THE STRANGE UNDOING* *OF PRUDENCIA HART*

YENİDEN DÜŞLENEN SINIR-BALADI: *PRUDENTIA HART* ve  
*BİR TUHAF DİBE VURMA ÖYKÜSÜ*'NDE\* EŞİKSELLİK



ne balad ne de sınır: bir balad ve bir sınır

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### Abstract

David Greig's play *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* is set in a small Scottish border town on the winter solstice, and centres around the concept of liminality. Based on the traditional border ballad "Tam Lin," the play is a carnivalesque and ironic reinterpretation that builds upon various intersections of boundaries, particularly those between past and present, tradition and modernity, reality and fantasy, and the living and the dead. Prudencia, the protagonist, is an old-fashioned PhD student trapped between the conventions of the old world and the necessities of the modern world. Nick, the play's liminal character, is a devil appearing in human form. This article explores the play's themes of liminality and liminal personae, building on Arnold van Gennep's concept of the liminal space. The article analyzes how the play manipulates spatial, temporal, and societal boundaries and reveals the transformations that these liminal experiences create in the characters. Moreover, this analysis is designed to help understand the play's broader cultural and societal themes. Additionally, the article aims to examine how Greig's work tackles and reinterprets the traditions of the border ballad genre, and how this reinterpretation enriches the unique aesthetic and thematic qualities of the work. This approach demonstrates how Greig's work amalgamates traditional and modern elements to find a new and original way of narrating liminal experiences and transformations.

**Keywords:** David Greig, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*, liminality, "Tam Lin", border-ballad.

### Öz

David Greig'in *Prudencia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü* oyunu, İskoçya'nın bir sınır kasabasında kış gündönümünde geçerken, eşiksellik (liminality) konseptini merkezine alır. Geleneksel bir sınır baladı olan "Tam Lin"e dayanan bu oyun, karnavalesk ve ironik bir bakış açısıyla yeniden yorumlanmıştır ve çeşitli sınırların kesişme noktaları üzerine, özellikle de geçmiş ile günümüz, geleneksel ile modern, gerçeklik ile fantezi, ve yaşayanlar ile ölümler arasındaki sınırlar üzerine kuruludur. Ana karakter Prudencia, eski dünyanın gelenekleri ile modern dünyanın gereklilikleri arasında bocalayan geleneksel bir akademisyendir. Nick ise, insan formunda beliren bir Şeytan'dır. Bu makale, Arnold van Gennep'in eşiksel mekân (liminal space) kavramına dayanarak, oyunun eşiksellik ve eşikte bulunan karakter (liminal personae) konularını incelemektedir. Makale, oyunun mekânsal, zamansal ve toplumsal sınırları nasıl işlediğini analiz eder ve karakterlerin bu eşiksel deneyimlerin nasıl bir dönüşüm yarattığını açığa çıkarır. Ayrıca, bu analiz, oyunun geniş kültürel ve toplumsal temalarını daha iyi anlamaya yardımcı olacak şekilde tasarlanmıştır. Ek olarak, makale, Greig'in eserinin sınır baladı türünün geleneklerini nasıl ele aldığını, nasıl yeniden yorumladığını ve bu yeniden yorumlamanın eserin kendine özgü estetik ve tematik özelliklerini nasıl zenginleştirdiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, Greig'in eserinin geleneksel ve modern öğeleri nasıl bir araya getirerek, eşiksel deneyimlerin ve dönüşümlerin anlatılmasında yeni ve özgün bir yol bulduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** David Greig, *Prudencia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü*, eşiksellik, "Tam Lin", sınır-baladı

## Genişletilmiş Özet

'Eşiksellik' veya 'liminality' terimi, genellikle belirsizlik ve muğlaklıkla karakterize edilen ve kişisel gelişimin mümkün olduğu iki farklı dünya veya gerçeklik arasındaki geçiş sürecini veya durumunu ifade eder. Genellikle eşik arasındaki bu belirsiz zaman dilimleri veya durumlar, son derece önemli ve dönüştürücü süreçler için zemin oluşturur. Bu kavram, antropoloji, psikoloji, sosyoloji ve edebiyat gibi çeşitli disiplinlerde büyük bir ilgi görmüştür.

Arnold van Gennep, 'eşiksellik' terimini ilk kez 1909'daki geçiş ritüelleri üzerine yaptığı çalışmada kullanmış ve bu kavramı, evrensel ritüeller olan doğum, ergenlik, evlilik ve ölüm üzerinden tanımlamıştır. Van Gennep'a göre, bu ritüeller hayatın belirli aşamalarında bireylerin veya toplulukların sosyal durumlarında önemli bir değişikliği işaret eder. Bu ritüeller genellikle bir topluluğun bir üyesinin sosyal statüsünde belirgin bir değişikliği sembolize eder ve bu değişiklik genellikle belirli bir dönüşüm süreci ile birlikte gelir. Eşikteki mekânlar, fiziksel veya psikolojik alanlar şeklinde ortaya çıkabilir ve bu alanlar, kişilerin toplumun kabul ettiği belirli sosyal normlar ve rollerden geçici olarak ayrıldığı yerler olabilir. Bu tür geçiş süreci genellikle üç aşamalı bir yapıya sahiptir: ön ritüeller (önceki dünyadan ayrılma), liminal ritüeller (geçiş süreci), ve sonrasındaki ritüeller (yeni dünyaya entegrasyon). Bu süreç, bir kişinin eski benliğinden yeni bir benliğe geçişini sembolize eder ve genellikle kişisel bir dönüşüm veya yeniden doğuş süreci ile sonuçlanır.

Victor Turner, bu kavramı daha da geliştirerek eşiksellik durumlarını 'iki arada bir derede' durumlar olarak tanımlamıştır. Turner'a göre, eşiksel durumlar belirsiz ve muğlak zamanlar ve mekânlar olup, bu durumlar genellikle bir bireyin veya bir topluluğun sosyal durumunda önemli bir değişikliği işaret eder. Bu tür bir durum, belirsizlik ve muğlaklıkla dolu olabilir, ancak aynı zamanda kişisel veya toplumsal dönüşüm için büyük bir potansiyele sahip olabilir. Bu nedenle, eşiksellik durumları genellikle yeni fırsatlar, deneyimler ve bilgilerle doludur.

Edebiyatta da eşikte mekân örnekleri bulunmaktadır. Edebiyatın büyüdü dünyasında, yazarlar sıklıkla karakterlerini eşiksel mekânlara ve durumlara yerleştirirler, böylece onların içsel dönüşümlerini ve kişisel gelişimlerini teşvik ederler. Örneğin, Lewis Carroll'ın *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* eserindeki düş dünyası ve William Shakespeare'in *Bir Yaz Gecesi Rüyası* eserindeki orman buna örneklerdir.

Bu makale, 'eşikte mekân' kavramını kullanarak, çağdaş İskoç oyun yazarı David Greig'in *Prudentia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü* adlı 2013 oyunundaki

eşiksellik ve eşikte bulunan karakter (liminal personae) kavramlarının nasıl işlendiğini incelemektedir. Bu oyun, kişisel dönüşüm ve öz-keşif temalarını vurgular ve bu temalar, oyunun mekânsal, zamansal ve toplumsal sınırları kullanarak nasıl işlendiğini analiz eder. Bu makale, karakterlerin eşiksellik deneyimlerinin kişisel dönüşümlerini nasıl yansıttığını göstermeyi hedeflerken, Greig'in oyununun, sınır baladı türünün geleneklerini nasıl ele aldığını ve bunun oyunun kendine özgü estetik ve tematik özelliklerini nasıl zenginleştirdiğini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

*Prudencia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü* oyunu, 21 Aralık kış gündönümünde İskoçya'nın küçük bir sınır kasabasında geçer ve geçiş, dönüşüm ve öz-keşif temalarını eşiksellik kavramı üzerinden ele alır. Geleneksel bir sınır baladı olan "Tam Lin" in ironik bir yeniden tasavvuru olarak *Prudencia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü*, çeşitli sınırların kesişme noktalarını -geçmiş ve bugün, gelenek ve modernlik, gerçeklik ve fantezi- merkezine alarak kurgulanmıştır.

Oyunun kahramanı, eski moda bir doktora öğrencisi olan Prudencia, 'Cehennem Topografyası' üzerine uzmanlaşmıştır ve modern dünya ile geçmiş dünya arasında sıkışıp kalmıştır. Karlı bir kış gündönümü olan 21 Aralık'ta, bir konferansa katılmak için İskoçya'nın sınır kasabası Kelso'ya giden Prudencia'nın hikâyesi, bu kasabanın bir eşiksellik alanı olarak nasıl işlev gördüğünü gösterir. Kasaba, Prudencia'nın kendini keşfetme yolculuğunda karşılaştığı bir eşik olarak tasvir edilir ve bu alanda, insanların toplumsal statülerinden ve kimliklerinden sıyrılarak ruhsal hâllerinin sınırlarını aşabilecekleri bir geçici alan yaratılır. Bu eşiksel alan, Prudencia'nın kendi kimliğini sorgulamasına ve içsel bir dönüşüm yaşamasına yardımcı olur.

Oyun, bir akademik konferansta başlar; bu da farklı toplumsal sınırların kesiştiği bir yer olup, dolayısıyla bir eşiksel alan olarak işlev görür. Prudencia, kendi sunumunu sahneden düşerek bitirirken, dinleyiciler meslektaşları Colin'in postmodern konuşmasını büyük bir heyecanla alkışlarlar. Ancak Prudencia, konunun yeterince ciddiye alınmadığını ve saygısızca ele alındığını düşünür. Bu sahne, oyunun ana teması olan geçiş, dönüşüm ve öz-keşif konularının bir örneği olarak işlev görür.

Kar fırtınasında yolunu kaybeden Prudencia, kendini ücra bir pub'ta bulur. Burada, baladlarda anlatılan hikâyeleri somutlaştıran bir grup insanla karşılaşır. Prudencia, gecenin ilerleyen saatlerinde müzik, içki ve hikâye anlatıcılığına dayanan bir dünyaya çekilir. Bu vahşi, gerçeküstü ve gürültülü dünya,

Prudentia'nın kendi kimliğine ve inançlarına meydan okur ve kendi ruhunun karanlık yönleriyle yüzleşmesine neden olur.

Oyun boyunca, Prudentia'nın inançlarını ve değerlerini sorgulaması gereken bir dizi olay yaşanır. Bu deneyimler, Prudentia'nın kendi kimliğini ve dünyaya olan bakışını derinden etkiler ve onu dönüşüme zorlar. Prudentia, modern dünyanın karmaşasını ve sahte gösterişini geride bırakıp, gerçeklikle fantezi arasındaki sınırdaki yaşayan ve geleneksel İskoç hikâyelerinde anlatılan yaratıklarla dolu bir dünyaya dalar.

Oyunun sonunda Prudentia, kendine ve dünyaya bakışını tamamen değiştirecek bir seçim yapmak zorunda kalır. Bu, onun kendi içsel yolculuğunun doruk noktasıdır. Yolculuğun sonunda, Prudentia önceki benliğini geride bırakır ve kim olduğunu, nereden geldiğini ve nereye gitmek istediğini daha iyi anlar. Bu, Prudentia'nın içsel dönüşümünü ve kendini keşfetme yolculuğunu tamamlar.

*Prudentia Hart ve Bir Tuhaf Dibe Vurma Öyküsü*, bu içsel yolculuğu ve öz-keşif sürecini özgün bir şekilde anlatır. Oyun, hem modern hem de geleneksel öğeleri bir arada kullanarak, farklı sınırların ve eşiklerin kesişme noktalarında yaşanan deneyimleri ve dönüşümleri aktarır. Geleneksel bir İskoç baladının yeniden tasarımı olan bu hikâye, sınırların ve eşiklerin keşfedilmesi ve geçilmesi üzerinden dönüşüm ve öz-keşif temalarını inceler. Bu süreçte, Prudentia'nın kendi kimliğine ve inançlarına meydan okuması, oyunun çekici ve düşündürücü bir hikâye sunmasını sağlar.

## I. Introduction

Borders are complex phenomena to define since they imply both physical and non-physical, or visible and invisible boundaries. Aside from its obvious meaning of dividing two areas or territories, borders refer to the liminal space, a transitory, in-between state that is associated with transformation and change in life. Coming from Latin "limen" means "threshold", the gate or the place of entry ("limen"), the term liminality serves as a transitional phase or state between two distinct worlds or realities. It is often portrayed as a place of ambiguity, uncertainty, and liminality that allows characters to question their previous experiences and beliefs, and to experience personal growth and transformation.

Liminal space theory is a concept that has gained increasing attention in recent years, with implications for a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, sociology, and literature. This theory proposes that liminal spaces, defined as in-between spaces where boundaries are blurred and conventions are challenged, play a crucial role in shaping individuals and their experiences. The term was first coined by French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in his seminal work *Les rites de passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) in 1909 to explain the process of rites in small-scale societies (11). In his work, van Gennep defines 'liminality' through universal rituals such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death that facilitate the passage from one stage/phase of life to another. Liminal spaces can take the form of physical spaces, such as forests, deserts, or borderlands, or psychological spaces, such as dreams, hallucinations, or liminal states of consciousness. Van Gennep distinguished two types of 'rites of passage': one that marks the transition of a person from one age to another and from one occupation to another during his or her lifetime, as the rituals that establish liminality (Kertzner xvii-xviii); and another that marks the transition of time, known as "celestial changes, such as the changeover from month to month (ceremonies of the full moon), from season to season (festivals related to solstices and equinoxes), and from year to year (New Year's Day)" (van Gennep 3-4). All rites of passage have a three-part structure: preliminary rites (implying separation from the previous world), liminal rites (refers to the period of transition), post liminal rites (refers to the ceremony of incorporation into the new world) (van Gennep, 11).

The easiest way to comprehend liminal space is through van Gennep's analogy of a house. According to him, "a society is similar to a house divided into rooms

and corridors" (26). The corridor is the metaphor of the liminal space. Corridors, which are built as circulation spaces, "simultaneously connect and disconnect other spaces and the people in them," establishing both boundaries against and openings to the outside and outsiders (Hurdley 46). It is a "locale for transit, for movement and progression. It leads from one place to another and not just in a physical sense but in a symbolic way too" ("corridor"). Constructed as circulation space, corridors "simultaneously connect and disconnect other spaces and the people in them, making both boundaries against and openings to the outside and outsiders". Victor Turner (1920-1983), a British cultural anthropologist, "adopted and adapted" van Gennep's concepts of liminality in his 1969 book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* contributed to the wide recognition of the concept (Wels, et all. 1). According to Turner, liminal personae are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 95). Examples of liminal spaces in literature include the dreamlike world of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll, the forest in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the physical and psychological journey of the protagonist in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Contemporary Scottish playwright David Greig's play *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2013) features a central character, Prudencia Hart, who is on a journey through a liminal space. In the play, Prudencia travels to a border town in Scotland to attend an academic conference on folk songs, where she becomes lost in a series of fantastic and supernatural events. The play's setting, the border town, serves as a liminal space between the real world and a world of folklore, myth, and magic. The play is set on spatial, temporal, and social intertwined borders and border-crossings as a carnivalesque and ironic rewriting of a Border-Ballad. As Prudencia travels deeper into this alternate realm, she is forced to question her own beliefs and values, and to confront the monsters and demons that inhabit this liminal space. Through her journey, Prudencia experiences a loss of control over her own identity and sense of self and must navigate this unfamiliar and transformative landscape in order to find her way back to reality. Ultimately, the play uses the liminal space to explore themes of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

## II. Liminality in David Greig's "The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart"

Prudencia Hart is a twenty-eight-year-old postgraduate student specialising in ballads, specifically the 'Topography of Hell' in folk songs. One snowy Midwinter day, 21st of December, she drives to a Scottish border town, Kelso, to attend the conference she has been invited to. At the first day of the conference which is a place of liminality since all the people gather from different parts of the country for the conference, Prudencia finishes her talk by falling off the stage accompanied by "desultory applause" and feels defeated at the end of the presentation (Greig 13). On the other hand, her colleague Dr. Colin Syme thrills the audience by his postmodern speech with pop culture references such as Lady Gaga, singers of karaoke, or the battle narratives of happy prostitutes as an example of ballad which makes Prudencia wants to "punch him in the throat" since he does not take the issue seriously and does not respect it enough (Greig 11). The academic conference was entitled "The border ballads, neither ballad nor border", but the play is in fact both a ballad and a border. Therefore, that is a nice joke about how much academic debate focused on declaring what something is not as opposed to what it is. It appears that the piece satirises scholarly attitudes to ballads. It "teases us about being too academic" (Fielding). The conference scene, in addition to being a passage, emphasises the binary oppositions between Prudencia and Collin; the former as an old-fashioned and traditional academic whose name connotes to 'caution' or 'discretion', and the latter as a popular, post-modern, academic whose name is derived from the Irish word 'cuilein', meaning 'darling'.

The play sets in a border town in Scotland, an in-between place both literally and figuratively which is nourished from two cultures. It is a liminal space between the physical and supernatural realms. This setting serves as a threshold between the everyday world of Prudencia and the mystical world of folklore and ballads. The border town represents a space of transformation and self-discovery, where Prudencia is forced to confront her perceptions and beliefs. In fact, the play presents the setting as a temporary space in the very beginning:

We're in a pub or a bar, a ceilidh place, a community hall, anywhere that people are gathered and warm and have enough drink. A session is in progress. A small band play a folk tune (Greig 2).

The choice of place provides a transitory zone where people release from their social statues and identities and cross the border of their state of mind. They are also temporal spaces where people should leave at the end of a specific time and return to their own reality. This is genuine for both the audience and the characters which means that the play draws not only the characters but also the audience to a place of cross-bordering, a space of uncertainty which leads to a range of possibilities.

During the conference and her time in Kelso, Prudentia feels uneasy, and her feelings continue to exist especially when she realises that the whole Scotland is under snow including her car. Worse, it seems that she must spend the night there where she feels inferior:

It was as if history had gone into reverse and the past returned like a tide over a beach wiping out our footprints so that all the mess and ugliness of modern life was smoothed away and the world was once more full of old pure things like sledges and rosy cheeks and a genuine need for warming soups (Greig 5).

The description of the snow was that it was the sort of one as in border ballads. The play plays with the idea of how a ballad can take place, how it works in society (Fielding):

This is exactly the sort of snow that if it were in a border ballad would poetically presage some kind of doom for an innocent heroine or an encounter on the moor with a sprite or villain or the losing of the heroine's selfhood in the great white emptiness of the night (Greig 5).

The epic description of a heavy but peaceful snow in midwinter indicates that the play presents both an illusionary ballad and a real-life experience together or somewhere in-between.

Apart from the setting place as a pub or a bar where the audience drinks beer while watching as a part of the play, the time is 21st December, the winter solstice. It is a threshold between the old and the new year:

[...]it's that moment when  
We look back at the past then forward again  
And then leap – jump over time's crack  
Between looking forward and looking back,  
A fractional second of universal still  
When what 'was' is, and what is – is 'will'  
And all time and everything stops  
Even the ticking of the clocks

A midnight moment, when past and future kiss.  
Midwinter (Greig 24).

The choice of time for the play is the time that is crossed in moving from one temporal space to another. The winter solstice serves as a moment of transition, where the world is in a state of in-between, between the end of one year and the beginning of another. This sense of transition and transformation is reflected in the events of the play, where Prudencia undergoes a transformative journey from her mundane academic life to a mystical world of folklore and ballads. According to Sila Şenlen Güvenç, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* is a sequel to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, since it takes place in a carnivalesque atmosphere similar to *Midsummer*, this time on the winter solstice. But using magical reality, Prudencia Hart, creates a gateway between our world and the realm of other supernatural elements (169)<sup>1</sup>. It is a threshold leaving the past behind and greeting the future. It is also the time of unearthly creatures appear such as the Devil:

*Colin:* You can't go out there alone tonight  
Not tonight.

*Prudencia:* Why not?

*Colin:* Tonight's the night of the Devil's Ceilidh.

*Prudencia:* — The Devil's Ceilidh?

*Colin:* That's right.

*Prudencia:* — What's the Devil's Ceilidh?

footnote to the 3rd edition

The Devil's Ceilidh is a dance or party hosted by Satan and reputed to be held at exactly midnight on the winter solstice (Cunningam, 1976, p. 42), when a gap or gate opens up in time. The Devil roams abroad and human souls can be taken down to Hell before their time. The Devil hosts his Ceilidh with the intention of luring souls, usually maidens, into his trap.

The devil often serves as a symbol of evil and chaos in many cultures, and in the context of liminal space theory, the devil can be seen as representing a challenge to conventional beliefs and norms. In some cases, the devil may also serve as a guide or mentor, leading individuals through the liminal space and helping them to navigate the challenges they face. In this way, the devil can serve as a symbol of transformation and change, representing the power of liminal spaces to challenge and shape individuals.

<sup>1</sup> The translation belongs to the writer.

Being trapped in Kelso, Prudentia first joins the others at the Kelso Folk Club then she leaves to find a Bed and Breakfast Hotel (B&B) to stay. Prudentia wanders, gets lost, and when the last midnight bell tolls she eventually finds the hotel with the assistance of Nick on the phone who seems eerie as "his footsteps left no mark" (Greig 48). When they finally reach the hotel, the preliminary phase implying separation from the previous world is completed and her real story starts. Liminal spaces indicate in-between zones that are "situated between two or more boundaries, where something ends, but also where something new may begin" (Viljoen & Van 10). However, these spaces belong to neither one zone nor another since they are situated as the space of ambiguity. Hotels can serve as a threshold between different stages in life, such as work, travel, and leisure. They are places where people can temporarily escape from the routines of everyday life and experience a sense of freedom and liberation. This sense of freedom and liberation reinforces the idea of liminality, as it challenges the conventions and boundaries of daily life. The B&B reinforces the central themes of the play, such as transformation, identity, and the power of folklore and storytelling.

Her first impression of the B&B is like hell because of its decoration with dead animals hung on the wall. Her idea of hell turns into a heaven after she discovers the huge library belongs to Nick with thousands of books about folk, poetry and ballads. A library is a specific local space, it's also infinity that aspires to represent a totality of knowledge (Fielding). Thus, the devil's library is another liminal space where Prudentia has to stay until she completes her transformation. The library serves as a threshold between the physical and intellectual realms, a space of transformation, and breaking down boundaries. It is a place of ambiguity that offers Prudentia jigsaw puzzles, watching the rainfall through the glass door, and an extensive library with a numerous collection of rare and valuable books and phonograph records, as well as the feeling of enslavement, and being doomed to live in infinity. The experience of being trapped in the library with the devil serves to challenge Prudentia's identity and beliefs and forces her to confront the darker aspects of her own psyche. This experience serves to represent a journey of transformation and self-discovery, further reinforcing the idea of liminality as a space where individuals are challenged and transformed. In this space there are two collectors who will be changed completely at the end, one is a collector of songs that is Prudentia,

another a collector of soul that is Nick/the Devil. Prudencia's first reaction when Nick explains that that place is Hell and he is the Devil is that she is in a dream and everything comes from her subconscious because of some inner problems, mainly sexual.

Years and years pass her rejection of her surroundings turns into curiosity about them, then her curiosity turns into a routine of work. Years passes and Prudencia "falls from awkward formality to being totally completely unselfconsciously at home" (Greig 58), and then she falls away from work into boredom, and then from stillness to stillness, and then to despair and at last to desperate energy which brought her closer to Nick, the Devil, and prepares her into a self-discovery situation.

Her intimacy towards Nick starts with their first dance. Now Prudencia is chasing, and Nick is the runner:

*Prudencia:* — I missed you.

*Nick:* I'd better go.

*Prudencia:* — Don't. (Greig 64)

Prudencia's chasing manifests itself clearly when she quotes from proceeding of the conference, she attended in Kelso which is dedicated to the memory of her:

'It's interesting that folk representations of Hell are often accompanied by the idea of the Devil forming a powerful erotic attachment for his human captive. In this sense we might say that the topography of hell is also the topography of unrequited love.' (Greig 65)

Upon this quotation they start to talk about 'love' for the first time. Nick the Devil finds the idea of love impossible since they are in hell, but Prudencia seems disagree:

*Prudencia:* — It happens in ballads.

*Nick:* This is not a ballad.

*Prudencia:* — Not yet.

*She touches him, he moves away* (Greig 65)

Prudencia who was shy and obsessed with academic studies at the beginning shows a transformation towards the end and goes one step further and tries to seduce the Devil who seems in a liminal threshold of transition from a bold and over-controlled to a more shy and agitated position. She tries to break

his determination to love, and of course he yields to her endeavours to come closer:

She moves to him.  
They fall through the years.  
Through years and years.  
They fall into one.  
They are undone.

Nick the Devil who does not show any humanlike features such as sleeping, eating, or feeling something except for living in a human-shape body yields to the temptations of the opposite sex. On the other hand, Prudencia who is hinted to be virgin until this time transforms into a seductive woman after their sexual intercourse. As a fragile and 'pure' maiden, Prudencia transforms into a more decisive and even relentless woman when necessary.

*Prudencia wakes up.*  
*The Devil is asleep in her arms.*  
*She extracts herself carefully, so as not to wake him up.*  
*She looks out of the window.*  
*She looks at him, asleep, peaceful.*  
Prudencia: — I love you,  
But even love's made hell  
By immortality.  
*She takes the key from the Devil's belt.*  
I'll miss you, Devil,  
I wonder if you'll miss me.  
*She leaves.*  
*The Devil opens his eyes.*  
*He is alone.*  
Devil: Prudencia?  
Prudencia?  
*He realises she has gone.*  
NO!  
*The Devil's eyes go red.*  
*Blood falls from his fingertips.*  
*Smoke comes from his mouth.* (Greig 68-69)

She seduces the Devil, makes him believe in love, and then runs away. When the Devil wakes up and realises that she runs away, he feels betrayed and deceived. He shouts as "Devil PRUDENCIA!" which is the peak of their transformations (Greig 69).

In the play, the concept of liminality and thresholds goes beyond physical spaces and is applied to psychological and social boundaries as well. Liminality refers to a state of transition or ambiguity, where individuals are in a space or time between the past and the future and have not yet reached a new identity or status. As Prudencia navigates this liminal space, the devil represents a threshold or boundary that she must cross in order to fully embrace her identity and beliefs. By engaging with the devil, Prudencia is pushed into a state of liminality, where she is forced to question her own beliefs and values. The thresholds set by Prudencia's choices are not only physical but also psychological and social. For example, when the devil offers her a drink that she suspects is drugged, her decision to drink or not to drink becomes a psychological threshold that defines her risk-taking behaviour. Similarly, when the devil tempts her with an invitation to join him in a dance, her decision to accept or decline the invitation becomes a social threshold that defines her willingness to engage in intimate or boundary-crossing behaviour. Through her experiences with the devil, Prudencia is pushed into a state of liminality, where she is forced to confront her own identity and beliefs. This liminal state is necessary for her transformation, and by the end of the play, she has gained a new understanding of herself and the world around her. In short, the concept of liminality and thresholds in "The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart" goes beyond physical spaces and is applied to psychological and social boundaries as well. By exploring these boundaries and pushing Prudencia into a state of liminality, the play emphasizes the importance of questioning one's beliefs and values in order to achieve personal transformation.

Hunting starts when Prudencia finds the crack in time and turns back to the Midwinter night and Colin returns to the stage as Prudencia's saviour. At this point the play makes its presence as a parody of a ballad. In the beginning of the play, Colin Syme, whom she despises and dislikes both academically and as an opposite sex, takes on the role of her saviour and knight:

Atop my proud head – a bonny gay helmet  
 My testicles protected by proud Calvin Kleins  
 My insides are hot with Jack Daniels and Diet Coke  
 In my proud gallant fist a bonny gay sword  
 Well – not a bonny gay sword exactly but a bonny gay  
 cocktail stick  
 In the shape of a sword.

ONE COLIN SYME  
THERE'S ONLY ONE COLIN SYME  
ONE COLIN SY – IME  
THERE'S ONLY ONE COLIN SY – IME. (Greig 74-75)

After resisting the Devil together until the last midnight bell rings, Colin and Prudencia wake up with worn out clothes and half-naked in the time and place just before Prudencia meets Nick in the car park, proving that the time cannot be calibrated using conventional methods.

— What happened?/ What happened?  
I don't remember/ I don't remember.  
I was tremendously drunk.  
— Me too.  
Tremendously – tremendously drunk.  
— I was looking for the B and B.  
I was looking for you.  
— I got lost.  
Me too.  
— I must have just lain down in the snow.  
Same here.  
— Embarrassing / Embarrassing. (Greig 80)

The characters finish their transformations at this moment, both physically and spiritually. They are no longer the same people they were at the start of this process. The liminal process that generates the transitional time is actualized.

Prudencia serves as a symbol of liminality and transformation, much like Tam Lin, a supernatural figure from a traditional Scottish ballad who is trapped between the mortal and the faerie worlds. The ballad of "Tam Lin" relates the story of a young woman named Janet who falls in love with Tam Lin, a man held captive by the Fairy Queen. Janet becomes pregnant with Tam Lin's child and learns that he is to be sacrificed to the fairies on Halloween. Despite being warned that the fairies will attempt to thwart her efforts by transforming Tam Lin into various creatures, Janet valiantly embarks on her mission to rescue him. Janet persists and ultimately succeeds in breaking the Fairy Queen's hold on Tam Lin, and he is transformed back into a mortal man. The ballad is known for its mix of supernatural and romantic themes, and its exploration of the conflict between mortal and fairy realms (Acland). In the play, he is portrayed as a victim of the supernatural forces that control him, and his story serves as

a parallel to Prudencia's own journey of transformation. Prudencia, like Tam Lin, finds herself in a liminal space, both physically and psychologically, as she navigates the mysterious border town. Through her experiences in the town, she too undergoes a transformation that challenges her beliefs and expectations. Thus, the relationship between Tam Lin and Prudencia Hart is one of parallel journeys, with Tam Lin serving as a symbol of the transformative power of liminality. The two characters represent the idea that crossing boundaries and entering liminal spaces can lead to personal growth and a reimagining of one's identity. Aside from "Tam Lin," the play incorporates several ballads. These ballads represent the oral tradition and the power of storytelling in shaping and preserving cultural values. In the play, the ballads function as a musical interlude and a way to comment on the main character's journey. The lyrics and themes of the ballads mirror and reinforce the main themes of the play. They also serve as a form of intertextuality, connecting the play to the rich tradition of Scottish folklore and ballads. By incorporating these ballads, the play draws on Scotland's cultural heritage while reinforcing the themes of transformation, liminality, and identity.

The final scene of *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* marks a powerful and transformative moment for the characters and the audience. Prudencia and Collin decided to go back to the pub. Prudencia, who had previously been trapped by her fixation on the past and her fear of change, undergoes a radical metamorphosis. In the pub she, who refused to sing a song in the karaoke session and ran away to the toilet, now gets up to sing. Just before deciding the song, she sees the Devil looking at her through the pub windows with tears in his eyes. Prudencia starts her song for her companion of two millennia: "can't get you out of my head" (Greig 83) and then "Smoke comes from Prudencia's mouth. Her eyes go red. Blood drips from her fingers". Her decision to sing in the karaoke session represents a significant shift in her character, and her performance of "can't get you out of my head" is a poignant and symbolic tribute to Nick, the Devil, who has been her companion and partner throughout the play. This final moment, with smoke coming from Prudencia's mouth and blood dripping from her fingers, is both unsettling and exhilarating, leaving the audience to contemplate the many thresholds and binaries that the play has explored and transcended.

### III. Conclusion

In conclusion, David Greig's play *The Strange Undoing of Prudentia Hart*, uses liminal space as a metaphor for the threshold between reality and the unknown. By creating a liminal space in the play, Greig allows the characters to explore different parts of themselves and the world around them, ultimately leading to their transformation. *The Strange Undoing of Prudentia Hart* challenges the audience's perceptions and expectations of traditional theatre, creating a dynamic and immersive experience that engages the audience on multiple levels. Ultimately, the play serves as a testament to the power of storytelling and its ability to shape our understanding of the world around us. The use of liminality in the play underscores the power of imagination and the importance of change and uncertainty in the human experience. Liminality is used literally and figuratively that it can be a physical space between two others or a conceptual space between two states of mind. It is a transition in movement, in social status, in situation and in time. Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* aggregate three conditions as 'preliminary' implying separation from the previous world; 'liminal' refers to the period of transition; 'post liminal' refers to the ceremony of incorporation into the new world (van Gennep, 11). Accordingly, the play can be divided into three-part structure in terms of space: conference hall/karaoke bar as the preliminary space; the B&B/library as the liminal space; and car park/karaoke bar as the post-liminal space. At the end of this process, Prudentia, and Nick underwent transformations. While the latter adopts human characteristics, the former becomes wicked. As a non-human being, Nick the Devil is a liminal creature who crosses the frontier and turns into a human-like being with an unrequited love to Prudentia at the end of the play. On the other hand, Prudentia is an old-fashioned PhD student who is trapped between the past world and the modern world since she lives within the boundaries of her life, obsessed with folk songs and ballads of the past and unable to enter the modern world. She also crosses the boundary of human beings at the end of the play. Throughout the play the position of Nick the Devil as a conqueror and Prudentia as a conquered reversed. Through the exploration of binaries such as the conqueror and the conquered, the past and the present, the real and the unreal, the play highlights the importance of crossing boundaries and embracing the unknown as a path to growth and self-discovery. In addition, the play itself as a rewriting of a ballad "Tam Lin" crosses the boundary of traditional ballads and demystifies it with a modern mocking

version. This paper explored the thresholds of binaries such as the conqueror and the conquered, the past and the present, the real and the unreal and the metamorphosis or the collapse of these binaries by crossing the border at the end of the play, and the mission is completed by their transformation.

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