

## The Matter of Bodies: Ableist Bodies, Disablement and Disembodiment in Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" and Madeline Miller's "Galatea"

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### Abstract

This paper aims to offer a reading of two American female writers', Sylvia Plath and Madeline Miller's, works "Lady Lazarus" and "Galatea" through Judith Butler's body theory on the "matter" of the bodies, what constitutes them, which ones do "matter" and how they are in fact discourse driven within the "male stream" views and power relations. By drawing on to Butlerian views on socially legitimized or stigmatized bodies, linking them to dis/ableist perspectives, the study attempts to analyse common motifs and concepts of medical supervision, hospitalisation of the woman characters, bodily imagery as representations of objectification, embodiment and disembodiment. It is suggested that these views provide the necessary circumstances for one another to prevail. The two texts using already "legit" two characters from religious and ancient contexts present a female perspective for them. The biblical and the mythological characters granted lives by "divine powers" set the bodily context for the control over females who are not regarded as human but objects. Not complying with the norms, the fragmented and objectified bodies of the female personas in the two texts are to be disposed of. The male "diligence" for "saving", "bettering" and "normalizing" the female bodies confronts the female fend.

**Key Words:** Sylvia Plath's Lady Lazarus, Madeline Miller's Galatea, Matter of bodies, Dis/ableist bodies, Disembodiment

### Bedenler Meselesi: Sylvia Plath'ın "Lady Lazarus" ve Madeline Miller'ın "Galatea" Eserlerinde Sağlamcı Bedenler, Maluliyet ve Bedensizleştirme

### Öz

Bu çalışma, iki Amerikalı kadın yazar, Sylvia Plath ve Madeline Miller'ın "Lady Lazarus" ve "Galatea" çalışmalarının bir incelemesini, Judith Butler'ın beden teorisi ile beden meselesi üzerine, nasıl oluşturulduklarını, hangilerinin önem arz ettiğini ve aslında nasıl "ata görüşü" ve güç ilişkileri içinde söylemle güdümlendiğini önerir. Çalışma, sosyal olarak meşrulaştırılmış veya damgalanmış bedenler üzerine Butleryen görüşlerden yararlanılarak ve bunları sağlamcı/engelci bakış açılarına bağlayarak, iki metindeki tıbbi gözetim, kadın karakterlerin hastaneye yatırılmaları, nesneleştirilmenin, bedenlenme ve bedensizleştirilmenin bir sembolü olan bedensel imgelemeler gibi ortak motif ve kavramları incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu görüşlerin birbirlerine etkili olmak ve güçlenmek için gerekli koşulları sağladığı öne sürülmektedir. Dini ve kadim bağlamlarda zaten "meşru" olan iki karakter kullanan bu iki text, bunu kadın perspektifinden yapar. Tanrısal güçlerle hayat bağışlanmış bu İncil'e ait ve mitolojik iki karakter, insandan ziyade nesne sayılan kadınlar üzerindeki kontrole bedensel bir bağlam oluşturmaktadırlar. Bu iki kadın karakterin standartlara uymayan parçalanmış ve nesneleştirilmiş bedenlerinden kurtulunacaktır. Bu kadınların bedenlerini "kurtarma", "iyileştirme" ve "normalleştirme" için eril çaba, dışi direnişle karşılaşır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sylvia Plath Lady Lazarus, Madeline Miller Galatea, Bedenler meselesi, Sağlamcı/malul bedenler, Bedensizleştirme

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## Introduction

The dual nature of human existence has always intrigued the Western philosophy. The mind-body dichotomy, superiority of the intellect and reason, the exemption and disregard of the body have been prevalent throughout the history. The view of humans as bodily beings governed by the powers of the mind led to the belief that mind is superior to the body. Additionally, the dominant forms of Christian theology strengthened these views by representing the body as a major source of sin, and overcoming the body as essential in moral perfection (Wendell, 1996, p. 165). Consequently, the body has been overlooked, ignored and degraded. As Virginia Woolf (2002) puts it "(t)he doings of the mind, the thoughts that come to it; its noble plans; how the mind has civilised universe" allured and (t)hey show it 'ignoring the body' (p. 5). Therefore, body has always been a matter, the matter of body shall then be discussed.

It has primarily caught the attention of Feminist theorists in search for egalitarian rights which women lacked due to the bodily differences of females and males. Subsequently, the search has become an ontological one; the hussle for existence within their bodies as the representative of their identity and being. The deprivation and the "disembodiment" from all aspects of social, institutional or intellectual life has become a female reality. The struggle for existential assurance necessitated compliances with societal norms, resulting in yielding any bodily control rather than being othered or stigmatized. As for Helen Cixous (1976) "she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine" (p. 880).

As a means for self-actualization and embodiment, Cixous (1976) suggests writing; writing by women about women. A place where women can come to life and exist. She states: "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal" (p. 875). By 'fatal goal' she refers to the societal, patriarchal, institutional and medical control which becomes inherently deadly. She then warns: "(b)eware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnoses that would reduce your generative powers" (p. 892). The view of the body as a place both for life and death, this dichotomous co-existence is the source of both embodiment and disembodiment. On the matter she further argues:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display-the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard (p. 880).

On the matter of bodies and this negative view of body as foreign to oneself, foul and a cause of a hindrance, a restraint, Susan Wendell (1996) puts forward her own proposition; “*negative body*” or even more negatively “*rejected body*”. She argues the patriarchal hegemony in the societal discourse, which fortifies the ableist views, necessitated abled bodies. For her, what makes some bodies “*rejected*” or “*negative*” in the eyes of the society are in fact the bodies that are idealized and objectified to a high degree. The cultural practices cultivate demands to attempt to perfect the bodies and to control them, which for sure creates rejection, shame, and fear even in the case of failures to control the body and deviations from body ideals. In any idealization of the body, the rejection of some kinds of bodies or some aspects of bodily life is implied (p. 85). In a similar fashion, about the core source of this phenomenon, Thomas (1999) states:

The 'malestream' view of the world which dominated social life and sciences was based on a male subjectivity (the male subject as the 'norm '), and presented women, aspects of women's lives, and the feminine as the 'other' (men as subject, women as object) (p. 69).

### **Bodies That Matter**

When Judith Butler (1993) wrote about the matter of bodies, she claimed that within the classical contexts bodies that matter is not a pun for no reason, as matter is material and it denotes to materialize. According to Butler, materialization of the body is precisely what "matters" about the body, its very intelligibility. In a sense, the significance of something is knowing how and why it matters. As "to matter" also signifies “materialize”, the meaning of something lies within its material ere (p. 4). To provide further epistemological explanation Butler turns to ancient Greek, first to Aristotle for whom "matter is potentiality and form is actuality". The Greek matter is “*hyle*”, wood cut from trees, that is ready to be instrumentalized and put to use. Likewise, “*materia*” in Latin is what things are made from, not only for building purposes but also for nourishment such as nutrients as extensions of the mother's body for infants. Therefore, matter appears to have this capacity to generate and to constitute. This is what supplies the principle of its intelligibility (p. 4).

In Aristotelian view the soul actualizes the matter. Matter alone is potential and it is unactualized. He argues “(t)hat is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one. It is as meaningless to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter” (Butler, 1993, p.31-2). Plato, on the other hand, puts forward a different kind of “*matter*” which rejects a potential resemblance between the masculine and the feminine. He introduces a feminized receptacle that is prohibited from resembling any form, and the receptacle can have no ontological status, since ontological status is constituted by forms. Plato deprives the feminine of a shape. The feminine is, hence, non-living, shapeless non-thing which can only be put into a set of functions as a nurse, a mother (mater), and simply womb. In this

sense, Plato's discourse on materiality does not permit the notion of the female body as a human form (Butler, 1993, pp. 43-53).

It is exactly through these discursive means and bodily norms that are assumed, appropriated and taken on, the subject is foreclosing and/or disavowing other identifications. This terrain by which subjects are formed requires a domain of abject beings to form the constitutive outside and define the borders. The abject designates the "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life. Those living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to restrain the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain. In this sense, then, the subject is shaped through exclusion and abjection; an abjected outside, which is "inside" the subject after all (Butler, 1993, p. 3).

For Butler, along with how and to what end bodies are constructed, it is equally important to understand how bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary "outside" for the bodies which qualify as bodies that matter. If the matter of bodies and their actual materialization is governed by the norms of prevailing hegemony, what qualifies as a viable body inevitably produces a domain of abjected bodies. The deformation of these bodies that fail to qualify as fully human only fortifies the very regulatory norms. She, then, suggests the excluded and abjected realm must challenge the prevailing hegemony for rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life," lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving (p.16). Butler's body theory paved the way to shed light on the othered bodies that did not comply with the norms and viewed "*abnorm al*" through the lens of ableist views.

### **Ablesim, disablement and disembodiment of the bodies**

Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009) defines ableism as: "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human" (p.139). Ableism imposes a corporeal standard. This marking of bodies contributed to the distinction within Western philosophy between "*essential*" and "*inessential*" corporeality; abled and disabled beings labelled based on bodily differences. These differences set not only real but also intrinsic restrictions as they have an immediate impairment effect. Furthermore, a restriction can be administered and multiplied by people occupying positions of power such as parents and medical doctors who deny access to employment on the basis of bodily difference. Then, the materiality of the body is in a dynamic interrelationship with the social and cultural context in which it lives. In other words, bodily engendered restriction of activity can be enhanced by dis/ableism (Mladenov, 2015, p. 49).

Abled-ness is kin to its twin 'disability'. French rendering of disability – as 'handicap de situation' – is a conceptualisation that disability is produced relationally to the environment. The subject who defies ableist normativity is figured as monstrous in cultural terms. Through ableist views, the civilized

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person is refined in thought and action. He or she is deemed to live in reasonable harmony with others, like minded human beings. Refusing or being unable to cooperate, or to adapt to prevailing norms meant rejecting the society and was deemed unacceptable throughout the centuries. In an attempt to adapt and conform to the ableist norms, being unable to do so brings about being stigmatized as hysterical, mentally ill or mad (Campbell, 2009, p. 163).

Elaine Showalter (1985) claims the theme of hysteria and madness was conjoined with women. An equation between femininity and insanity goes beyond statistical evidence. An attention to the existence of a fundamental alliance between "woman" and "madness" has been called upon showing how women are typically situated on the side of silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind. It has been analysed and illuminated a cultural tradition that represents "woman" as madness, and that uses images of the female body to stand for irrationality in general. Thus madness, even when experienced by men, is metaphorically and symbolically represented as feminine: "*a female malady*". However, there have always been those who argued that women's high rate of mental disorder is a product of their social situation, both their confining roles as daughters, wives, and mothers and their mistreatment by a male-dominated psychiatric profession. When compared to their male peers, women of all social classes complained more of stress and unhappiness in marriage, expressed more anxiety and suffered more from depression in their daily lives (p. 3).

According to Showalter (1985) madness has been the historical label applied to female protest and revolution. It is certainly possible to see hysteria within the specific historical framework of the nineteenth century as an unconscious form of feminist protest, the counterpart of the attack on patriarchal values carried out by the women's movement of the time. In this perspective, it is a resistance to the social definitions that confine women to 'the doll's houses'. Such claims, however, come dangerously close to romanticizing madness (p. 5). In literature, it was a symbolic representation of the female author's anger against the patriarchal tradition. The madwoman as the author's double grants the female author the power to enact her own raging desires to escape male houses and male texts. However, works of gifted women, writers and poets, who suffered from the patriarchal tradition have been othered and labelled as the creation of a mad mind. In most cases, the female artist had to go through hospitalisation and medical 'bettering' just like her characters in her work. In the best case scenario, the doctor kills off the "*bad*" crazy self, and resurrects the "*good*" self (p. 217).

On the medical supervision of diseases in "*Docile Bodies*" Michel Foucault (1995) exposes the inseparable nature of institutionalisation from a series of other controls such as the patients' identity, the units they belonged to, regulating their comings and goings. The name of the occupant is attached to each bed. Each individual treated is entered in a register that the doctor has to check during the visit. The occupants are forced to remain in wards, they cannot leave at will. He suggests these methods have made it possible for a thorough control of the body which assured the power of the supervision and

imposed upon the supervised docility. That is, the therapeutic space is in fact an administrative space (pp. 135-44).

Wendell (1996) on Foucault's account of the disciplinary practices that produce the "*docile bodies*" required by modern social institutions provides a detailed examination of 'the disciplinary practices that aim to produce a body of a certain size and general configuration' (p. 87). She claims from this body they bring forward a certain collection of gestures, postures, and movements. Unlike the Foucauldian practices of body remake, which are specifically linked to social institutions, such as armies, hospitals, and prisons, Wendell's disciplines of normality and femininity are not only institutionally bound but internalized by most women and socially pervasive. She argues that "(t)his is a system that aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers" (p. 90). A system where women are turned into body-less and lifeless beings with no control over it whatsoever.

### ***'Herr Doctor Herr Enemy'***

By reclining upon ableist views, institutional control over the bodies has held many women alleged to be 'abnormal' and 'disabled' captive. In the discussions of disability, many critical disability theorists and scholars adopt a broader definition including conditions such as chronic and mental illnesses. One problem Herr & Kirkus (2022) argue about is the similarities in experiences of mental illness and experiences of physical impairment complicate the distinction between the two. Also, another possible explanation for the exclusion of these illnesses could be due to the stigmatization and being cast as 'other' just like people with physical impairments as they face similar difficulties in accepting the exaggerated contingency of their lives. In addition, feelings of alienation from others, as well as dissociation from one's body, are common in literature of both physical impairment and mental illness.

Hysteria, mental illness, madness or disability, in any case the subject is stigmatized, labelled, or othered while complying to the norms of the societal medical gaze. For Campbell (2009), ableist views enlist in society as neurotypical and able-bodied individuals accepted to be the default and anything which deviates from this norm is stigmatised against or patronised. The internalized ableism and the medical gaze play a crucial role in invalidating bodies that do not conform to the norm. 'Disabled' bodies are regarded as abnormal, deviant, inferior and even sub/non-human. Some bodies 'matter more than others and some are 'disposable'.

Sylvia Plath, who was labelled as 'mentally ill', 'mad', 'disabled' was hospitalized many times for the 'bettering' methods of the patriarchy. Known as the confessionalist poet writing about her life and herself, she has been studied for her language of body that is fragmented, disintegrated and objectified. For Edit Galla (2017) in her works, the dismembered or disabled body signifies the disintegration of the identity, death or deathlike state due to a paralytic experience or a disabled state. Her physical disability is often a metaphor for an emotionally crippled state. The disembodiment due to

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an incapacitated body and objectification of bodily parts can also be observed in “*Lady Lazarus*”, one of her latest poems starting with another suicide attempt of the persona’s and her determination to end her life:

I have done it again

One year in every ten

I manage it-----

The allusion to the biblical character Lazarus who died of illness and entombed for some days before Jesus raised him from his grave and the speaker’s identification with Lazarus create the expectation of references to death, decomposition, resurrection, but also miracles, divine powers, higher beings and godlikeness:

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

The speaker is ‘a walking miracle’ now after her ‘resurrection’ from death. However, she does not feel complete. She may have been brought back to life, but not in one piece. She is in parts. Her skin is an object now; a part of a lampshade. A Nazi style lampshade made up of Jew skin. Her allusion is to Holocaust and her roots to the Germans from her father. However, she identifies with the Jew, who were terrorized, hunt down, labelled, tortured and killed. Her foot is not for walking or movement anymore. It is heavy and drags her down to ground. It cannot move. It does not function, just like herself. Her face, on the other hand, does not show anything. It is blank as white and ‘fine’ as linen. The allusion to the Jews implies both the torturous feelings and the feeling of death inside even if she is alive and brought back to life by the doctors.

Later in the poem the speaker describes her ‘rescue’ after her third attempt of suicide, opening her eyes at the hospital, seeing the doctors around her, celebrating the ‘miracle’. She likens the whole act of her rescue to the resurrection of Lazarus brought back to life by the saviour Jesus Christ. This ‘brute’ who ‘resurrects’ her from death is associated with Jesus, the son of God, with divine powers. However, in her case, he is the doctor playing God with his acts as a medical representative:

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

'A miracle!'

At the end of the poem she warns the doctor '*herr God*', '*herr Lucifer*' to '*beware*'. The doctor may be playing God creating 'miracles' as the ultimate source of life; giving and taking it, but he is also the devil. The doctor as the representative of both the institutionalized society and masculinity is evil. His associations with the German as the enemy and the devil again is Plath's critique of "godlike powers", masculinity and as well as to her father.

Her warning is also bodily. She claims she 'eats men'. This suggests a monstrous side in her. She is not passive and even if she is dying she is taking men with her. The 'ash' and 'red hair' can be associated with the myth of Phoenix, the mythical bird that dies but is born again from its ashes. It never dies, but it has to die first to be reborn. This metaphor of Phoenix may also suggest her attempts to commit suicide will continue and not end:

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

### **The '*Galatea Effect*'**

"Galatea", a more contemporary text about a very old myth than Plath's poem, shares similar motifs, similes and metaphors. Madeline Miller's (2022) rewrite of the myth brings Galatea, the statue-wife of the king Pygmalion, to life and then kills her. In the original myth, disgusted by the women he sees, the sculptor Pygmalion seeks to create, through his art, the perfect, ideally beautiful woman that is possible. He succeeds in creating such a lifelike beautiful statue that he falls in love with it. Aphrodite takes pity on him and when Pygmalion kisses the lips of his marble statue, he finds them warm. The statue of his ideal, now a living woman he calls Galatea, is married by Pygmalion and later bears him a daughter. The myth depicts the two basic urges in man: creation and possession (Montgomery, 1971). Through his creation, the objectified female body to which life is granted is possessed, doubly objectifying the body of Galatea. It is he who forms her, and it is at his kiss that she awakens. The ideal beauty comes to life by the divine power with the help of a male in this myth.

It is the creation of a woman representing aesthetic production of a masculine deity and becoming the maker of his own match (Maxwell, 1993). Ironically, in psychology Galatea Effect is defined as one's opinion about their ability and self-worth, which influences their performance positively. Not much of a positive self-worth, Galatea functions as the 'device' that completes man's lack, reflecting him back to himself in a reassuring fullness rather than being a subject in her own right.

Madeline Miller's "Galatea" takes up the story at the point where she has been granted life allowing us to see the story through her eyes. Her eyes open at a mental hospital where her narration



starts with first of her many attempts to persuade the nurses the reason why she is 'so pale' is 'because she is made of stone' and 'she has always been this colour' rather than being 'ill'. Along with her 'colour', her 'coldness' and her 'slow pulse' are other reasons that are deemed to keep her there. The fact that she has to 'settle into solid lines' before her husband comes to visit her is another link to her statue-like nature, the inability to move and stillness. It is appreciated by the husband, which suggests the male gaze enjoying the stillness of the female. Her husband and 'a thousand more doctors who all tell her to lie down' like to keep her that way. However, it symbolizes lifelessness and death as well.

From his perspective, she is 'a fool, a terrible fool, an ungrateful fool' who should not have run. It should have been enough for her to have been granted life, looking beautiful, marrying and giving birth for which she has had 'faint silver tracks'. The husband finds them 'ugly' and wishes she 'were stone, so that 'he would chisel them off'. Her body is not perfect anymore after the birth of their daughter. It needs to be 'fixed' like an object that is 'broken', 'damaged', 'not able to function', 'cannot be instrumentalized'. The husband-father, the creator must beautify it. She is like a beautiful object that is not supposed to move or talk as Galatea says:

The thing is I don't think my husband expected me to be able to talk. (p. 23)

With constant lies and pretending, she tries to protect herself from the brute who is 'bruising' her physically and psychologically. She tries to survive until one day she understands the only way out of that hospital is running away. They would easily keep her there for the rest of her life with the purpose of 'bettering and normalizing'. Trying to be 'freed' from him, however, she 'sinks' in the ocean. Galatea using her statue body drowns her husband. She does not die alone. She drags him with her to the depth of the ocean. She says:

Water was not my element. It dragged at my clothes as I swam.

The ocean floor was sandy and soft as pillows. I settled into it and slept. (pp. 47-9)

She refers to what she is made of originally with the word element. She is not flesh and bone, but stone. It is her true nature that does not have the capability to float. Her body was destined to 'sink'. She had never been alive, she had never been a human. She did not live at all. She wasn't supposed to. She was an object to be looked at, a body to be used as long as it complied with the societal norms. And if it doesn't, it should be disposed of. When dying she was stripped off her clothes. She was back to being a statue; naked, dead. However, the ocean embraced her, like a soft bed she lied and slept on.

## Conclusion

This reading of "Lazy Lazarus" and "Galatea" through Judith Butler's body theory on the "matter" of the bodies discourse driven by the "male stream" views and power relations draws on to Butlerian views on socially legitimized or stigmatized bodies as well as the dis/ableist perspectives to analyse common motifs and concepts of medical supervision, hospitalisation of the woman characters,

bodily imagery as representations of objectification, embodiment and disembodiment within the given texts arguing that these views provide the necessary circumstances for one another to prevail.

Butler's pun on the matter of bodies encapsulates both the materialization, precisely what "matters" about the body, its very intelligibility, as well as its significance as a "subject". Knowing the significance of something is to know how and why it matters. Materialization of the body and its instrumentalisation eventually leads to the use value of it reinforcing the significance it holds, and yet the possibility of its very own disposal when not significant or utilized. It is in fact the idealized and objectified to a high degree- bodies that make some bodies "*rejected*" or "*negative*" in the eyes of the society. In the societal view and discourse, when the patriarchal hegemony fortifies the ableist views, it also necessitates not abled bodies.

The matter of bodies governed by the norms of prevailing hegemony determines what qualifies as a viable body and inevitably produces a domain of abjected bodies. Through ableist views, a refinement of the body occurs. Being unable to adapt and conform with the ableist norms brings about being stigmatized. In order to avoid any stigmatization, for refinement purposes, normalizing and bettering processes of the therapeutic space are undergone, where in fact the power of the supervision imposed upon the supervised docility becomes administrative rather than therapeutic. However, this is a system that aims at docility and compliance; a system where body-less and lifeless beings with no control arise.

Plath's *Lady Lazarus* and Miller's *Galatea* endure a similar process of being stripped down to bones, to the very core material and left with no body. The fragmented body of *Lady Lazarus* neither complies with the societal norms and ableist views nor can elude objectification. The miracle to the medical gaze is the death itself for her dismembered body. *Galatea*, being a statue, a stone as a material, is an object before anything else, lifeless. Her bodily perfection is not sufficient for habitability and liveability. Granted life by male authority very passively, they both decide not to die the same way. They make the only decision in their lives about their lives, though, it is to end it. Their death is a female act even though their birth and rebirth is not. When they die, they eat up men too.

Through '*ashes*' and '*sand*' the two characters meet. Plath's *Lady Lazarus* and Miller's *Galatea* are victimized by the ableist views of the society, stigmatized as ill and sent to hospital to be bettered and normalized. At the hands of the doctors they feel more ill than better. To the ears of deaf male their words are unheard. They are not heard, but only watched as if they were objects, but nothing more. Their objectification and disembodiment that have started within the hegemony of patriarchal discourse when they are '*alive*' is completed through their spiritual / bodily death; the disposal.

### **Ethical Declaration**

During the writing process of the study titled "The Matter of Bodies: Ableist Bodies, Disablement and Disembodiment in Sylvia Plath's "*Lady Lazarus*" and Madeline Miller's "*Galatea*", scientific rules,

ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

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## Geniş Özet

Bu çalışma "Lady Lazarus" ve "Galatea" metinlerinin, Judith Butler'ın beden teorisini kullanarak "ata görüş" ve güç ilişkileri içinde söylemle güdümlenen beden meselesi üzerine bir okumasını önerir. Çalışma, sosyal olarak meşrulaştırılmış veya damgalanmış bedenler üzerine Butleryen görüşleri, iki metindeki tıbbi gözetim, kadın karakterlerin hastaneye yatırımları, nesneleştirilmenin, bedenlenme ve bedensizleştirilmenin bir sembolü olan bedensel imgelemeler gibi ortak motif ve kavramları incelemeyi sağlamcı/engeli bakış açılarına bağlayarak yapar. Bu görüşlerin birbirlerine etkili olmak ve güçlenmek için gerekli koşulları sağladığını öne sürmektedir.

Dini ve kadim bağlamlarda zaten "meşru" olan iki karakter kullanan bu iki text, bunu kadın perspektifinden yapar. Tanrısal güçlerle hayat bağışlanmış bu İncil'e ait ve mitolojik iki karakter, insandan ziyade nesne sayılan kadınlar üzerindeki kontrole bedensel bir bağlam oluşturmaktadırlar. Bu iki kadın karakterin standartlara uymayan parçalanmış ve nesneleştirilmiş bedenlerinden kurtulunacaktır. Bu kadınların bedenlerini "kurtarma", "iyileştirme" ve "normalleştirme" için eril çaba, dışi direnişiyile karşılaşır.

Butler'in bedenler meselesiyle ilgili yaptığı kelime oyunu "matter" kelimesinin İngilizce hem "materyal", "madde", "maddeleşme", "gerçekleşme" anlamlarını hem de "zarurilik", "gereklik" anlamlarını bedensellik ile ilişkilendirerek, bedenlerin maddeselliği ve önemini açıklamak için tüm bu anlamlarının hepsini kapsayan bir kullanım olmuştur. Butler için "madde" gerçeklik ve anlam ile ilişkilidir. Bu demektir ki, bir şeyin anlamını bilmek onun neden önemli olduğunu, maddesini, gerçekliğini bilmektir. Bedenin materyali maddeleşme, gerçekleşme ve araçlaştırılması neticede kullanım değerine sahip olmasına sebep olur. Ki bu da, sahip olması gereken önemi daha da vurgularken önemi olmadığı ve ya kullanıma uygun olmadığı düşünülüyor durumlarda elden çıkarılma olasılığını kuvvetlendirir.

Bedenlerin bozuk, istenmeyen, reddedilen olması görüşü olumsuzluk içerir ve bedeninin sahibine bir engel ve kısıtlama yaratır. Ancak aslında bu idealleştirilen ve büyük ölçüde nesneleştirilen bedenler, diğer başka bedenleri toplumun gözünde reddedilen, negatif bedenler durumuna düşürür. Toplumsal görüş ve söylemde, ataerki hegemonya sağlamcı/engeli görüşleri güçlendirir ve malul bedenler gerektirir. Tam da bu söylemler vesilesiyle varsayılan ve benimsenen bedensel normlar şahsı diğer özdeşleşmelerden men ve tekzip eder. Reddedilen beden sosyal hayatta içinde yaşanmaz, elverişsiz bölgenin sınırlarını belirler ve dışlanma ve ihraç yoluyla bedeninin bölgesinin sınırlarını netleştirirken yaşanabilir alanın da sınırlarını çizmiş olur.

Egemen hegemonyanın normlarıyla yönlendirilen bedenler meselesi, varlığını sürdürebilen, yaşayabilir olan bedenlerin niteliklerini belirler ve kaçınılmaz olarak da reddedilen bedenler alanını yaratır. Sağlamcı görüşler, bedenlerin bir düzenlenme ve rötuşlanma gereksinimlerini ortaya çıkarır. Bu sağlamcı normlara uyamamak ve ya adapte olamamak etiketlenme ve damgalanma durumuna sebep olur. Herhangi bir etiketlenme ve damgalanma durumundan kaçınmak için, rötuşlanma amacıyla tedavisel alanların normalleştirme ve iyileştirme işlemlerine maruz kalınır. Ki buralarda aslında olan gözetim, denetim ve nezaret adı altında tedaviden çok idaresel ve kontrol altında tutma amaçlı bir uysallık sağlamaktır. Fakat bu sistem, uysallık ve uyumlanmadan çok kendi hayatları üzerinde hiçbir kontrolü olmayan bedensiz, ruhsuz hatta adeta ölü varlıklar yaratmaktadır.

Sylvia Plath'ın kadın Lazarus'u ve Madeline Miller'ın Galatea'sı bu sağlamcı görüşlerin normlarına bağlı iyileştirme, uyumlama ve uysallaştırma işlemlerine maruz kalırlar. İçlerindeki ana maddelerine ve kemiklerine kadar yüzülmüş ve bedensiz kaldırılmışlardır. Lady Lazarus'un parçalanmış bedeni ne toplumun normlarına uymaktadır ne de sağlamcı görüşlere. Bu sebeptendir ki, bedensizleşmekten ve nesneleşmekten kaçınamamıştır. Tıbbi bakış açısından mucize gibi görünen hayata geri döndürme ve kahramanca kurtuluş onun parçalara ayrılmış bedeni için bir ölümdür. Diğer bir taraftan, Miller'ın Galatea'sı zaten bir heykel olarak yaratılmış, maddesel olarak özü taşıtır. Her şeyden evvel zaten bir nesnedir, bedensizdir ve yaşamsızdır. Heykel olarak bir mükemmellik figürü ve güzelliği hayatta kalması için ve yaşaması için yeterli olamamıştır. Eril bakış açısında kusursuzluğunu yitirmiş ve bir iyileştirmeye, rötuşa ihtiyaç duymuştur. Pasif bir şekilde eril otorite tarafından kendilerine

yaşam bağışlanan bu kadın karakterler ölümlerini kendi seçmeye karar vermişlerdir. Bu, yaşadıkları sürece kendi yaşamları hakkında kendi kararlarını verdikleri kendi kontrollerinde olan tek şeydir. Ancak, yaşamlarıyla ilgili alabildikleri bu tek karar onu sonlandırmaktır. Ölümleri doğumları ya da yeniden doğumları gibi eril değil dişil bir eylemdir. Ölürken de erkekleri yutar beraberlerinde götürürler.

Bu iki kadın karakter, toplumun sağlamcı görüşleri sebebiyle mağdur edilmiş, hasta olarak damgalanmış ve iyileştirilmek, normalleştirilmek amacıyla tedaviye alınmışlardır. Doktorların ellerinde, daha iyi hissetmektense daha da hastalanmışlardır. Ancak, sağır eril kulaklarda kelimeleri, sözleri duyulmaz. Zaten duyulmaktan, dinlenmekten ziyade izlenmek için varlardır ve nesneden başka bir şey değillerdir. İki karakterin yaşarken ataerkil söylemin hegemonyası altında başlayan nesneleştirilme ve bedensizleştirilmeleri ruhani ve bedensel ölümleri gerçekleştiğinde tamamlanmış olur.

Bedenlerin toplumsal normlardan bağımsız var olamama, hangi bedenlerin önemli addedildiği hangi bedenlerin gözden çıkarılabilir olduğu, toplumsal normlara uyumlanıp uyumlanamadığı, uyumlanamadığı takdirde de ötekileştirildiği argümanı, sağlamcı bakış açılarıyla da perçinlenmiş ve reddedilen, normlara uymayan bedenleri iyileştirme, normalleştirme, rötuş edilme gereksinimleri doğurmuştur. Plath ve Miller'ın "Lady Lazarus" ve "Galatea" yazınlarında ötekileştirilmemek, dışlanmamak, kabul görmek ve hatta var olabilmek için bu uygulamalara tabi tutulan bu iki kadın karakter egemen görüşlerin dayattığı iyileşme ve normalleşme süreçlerini tamamlayamadığı gibi var olmayı da başaramamışlardır. Bedensizleşmiş, nesneleşmiş ve sonunda da yok olmuşlardır.