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Turning the Screws on a Life: A Literary Experiment with Fitzgerald, Wilson, and James

Vidaları Bir Hayat Üzerinde Çevirmek:
Fitzgerald, Wilson ve James'le Edebî Bir Deney

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Abstract

French philosopher Gilles Deleuze often expresses his belief in the power of experimentation in writing and praises Anglo-American literature for its venture into experimenting with lives. According to him, reading a long list of Anglo-American writers, including Henry James and F. Scott Fitzgerald, shows us that the sense of a life cannot be grasped, as it is full of unknown materials and their obscure, immaterial effects. Deleuze argues that healthy writers, having faced the impossibility of encompassing the entirety of a life, create lines of flight, move along with them, and discover worlds that enable themselves to transform. Then writing, as a process of becoming, turns out to be impersonal, while cracks and ruptures, often considered failures in life, appear as opportunities for literary creativity. This article will first explain why Deleuze views Fitzgerald's *The Crack-Up* as a literary experiment with a life by focusing on his views on the impersonality of writing. Then drawing attention to Fitzgerald's reference to American critic Edmund Wilson as his intellectual conscience, the article will attempt a speculative experiment with Wilson's comments on James's "The Turn of the Screw." It will argue that Wilson's sense of the text's ambiguity, which is discussed by Shoshana Felman in depth, might have evolved critical interpretation into experimentation in a Deleuzian manner. Thus, the main protagonist of James's novella, i.e., the governess, might have been considered as experimenting with a life as Fitzgerald does in *The Crack-Up*.

Keywords: Edmund Wilson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gilles Deleuze, Henry James, literary experiment

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Öz

Fransız filozof Gilles Deleuze yazıda deney yapmanın gücüne duyduğu inancı sıklıkla dile getirir ve bu deneyi hayatlarla yapmaya cesaret ettiği için Anglo-Amerikan edebiyatından övgüyle söz eder. Ona göre aralarında Henry James ve F. Scott Fitzgerald'ın da olduğu çok sayıda İngiliz ve Amerikalı yazarı okumak, bilinmez bir malzemeyle ve bu malzemenin karmaşık etkileriyle dolu bir hayatın bütünüyle kavranamayacağını gösterir. Sağlıklı yazarlar bu imkânsızlıkla yüzleşmişlerdir; bu nedenle kaçış çizgileri yaratıp bu çizgiler boyunca hareket ederler ve benliklerinin dönüşmesine olanak tanıyan dünyalar keşfederler. Bu durumda bir oluş süreci olarak yazı gayrişahsi bir şeye dönüşürken çoğunlukla yaşamdaki başarısızlıklar olarak düşünülen çatlaklar ve kopmalar edebî yaratıcılığın olanakları hâline gelirler. Bu makale, yazının gayrişahsiliği üzerine Deleuze'ün söylediklerine odaklanarak Fitzgerald'ın Çatlak adlı metninin filozof için neden bir hayatla girilen edebî bir deney olduğunu açıklayacak. Ardından, Fitzgerald'ın Amerikalı eleştirmen Edmund Wilson'dan entelektüel vicdanı olarak söz etmesine dikkat çekerek James'in "Yürek Burgusu" adlı uzun öyküsü üzerine Wilson'ın yaptığı yorumlarla spekülâtif bir deneye kalkışacak. Buna göre, Shoshana Felman'ın da ayrıntılı şekilde tartıştığı üzere "Yürek Burgusu"ndaki muğlaklıkların farkında olan Wilson'ın yorumlamayı bırakıp Deleuzecü bir deney yapmaya evrilmesi pekâlâ mümkündür. Wilson'ın bu dönüşümü yaşamaması durumunda James'in novellasının temel karakteri olan mürebbiyenin de muhtemelen Çatlak'taki Fitzgerald'a benzer şekilde bir hayatla deney yaptığını düşünmek mümkün olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edmund Wilson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gilles Deleuze, Henry James, Edebî deney

INTRODUCTION

Henry James (1843-1916) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) share some thematic similarities in their literary works, such as the cultural encounters between Americans and Europeans through love affairs and marriages, as well as certain stylistic features, including their reliance on punchy conversations among characters to construct a story. There is yet another common characteristic of these two outstanding figures of American literature: they are both among the long list of Anglo-American writers engaged by Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), one of the most influential French philosophers of the twentieth century, to elaborate his recurrent subjects like life, literature, creativity, becoming, and psychoanalysis. One may come across provocative comments on an episode of James's *Daisy Miller*, *In the Cage*, or *Wings of the Dove* in his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, in his dialogues with Claire Parnet, or in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which he co-authored with Félix Guattari. Likewise, Fitzgerald, especially *The Crack-Up*, occupies a significant place in books like *The Logic of Sense* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Deleuze's favor for Anglo-American literature manifests an intellectual taste he shares with the Argentine storyteller Jorge Luis Borges (Borges, 1971, p. 252). In a similar vein, when it comes to philosophy, Deleuze holds Baruch Spinoza and his logico-mathematical reconstruction of ethical life in high esteem, as does Borges (Borges, 1972, p. 213). When Deleuze foregrounds the Anglo-American writers' interest in creating and tracking lines of flight, which he views as a path to becoming, he contrasts this with the French writers' interest in roots, points, positions, and psychological analyses. Thus, the French fail to reach the status of impersonality, which, for Deleuze, should be the ultimate aim of writing. He suggests that writers are healthy in the Spinozist sense when they create a flux that combines many other fluxes and oscillates between creation and destruction (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 50). James and Fitzgerald appear to be healthy writers in Deleuze's thought, for their writings show that "[s]ignificance and interpretosis are the two diseases of the earth" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 47). Taking a cue from this observation and adhering to

Deleuze's belief in the power of experimentation, this article will position Edmund Wilson (1895-1972) alongside James and Fitzgerald on the literary stage and examine how his critical attitude relates to Deleuze's questions regarding interpretation. A prominent American critic, Wilson had taken on the task of editing some of Fitzgerald's works, including *The Crack-Up*. He came to be the writer of one of the most discussed essays on Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," entitled "The Ambiguity of Henry James."

Tracing the intriguing relationships among these names, the article will explore the moments in which interpretation could have evolved into experimentation in Wilson's essay. This speculative question aims to reflect on the relationship between life and writing and better understand why writing is a process of becoming in Deleuze's thought. The philosopher, in the opening essay of his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, defines writing first as "a question of becoming," only to emphasize that it is "inseparable" from "anything" which is not complete, and in the process of being formed (1997, pp. 1-2). For Deleuze, writing implicates creating the required means to enter "a zone of proximity" where "to reveal the life in things" can be rendered possible (1997, p. 2). Only by partaking in the "passages of life" can one achieve the ultimate purpose of literature, that is, "inventing a possibility of life" (1997, p. 4). Therefore, unlike interpretation, experimentation should extract its power from "the indefinite article" through which the whole life in its plurality can come into play: a woman, an animal, a molecule, or, as Deleuze himself calls it in the last essay he wrote, "a life" (2007).

Endeavoring to step into the zone of proximity of several lives, the article relies on a tripartite projection. First, it will explicate Deleuze's approach to Fitzgerald's autobiographical piece, *The Crack-Up*. After relating Fitzgerald's reference to Edmund Wilson in *The Crack-Up* to the writer's becoming impersonal, the article will move to Wilson's reading of James's "The Turn of the Screw." It will then draw on Shoshana Felman's ideas regarding the dramatizing effects of James's novella to illustrate how James, Fitzgerald, and Wilson can take part in a joint literary experiment with a life that is incomplete, undecidable, and thoughtful.

1. Deleuze on *The Crack-Up*

According to Deleuze, French writers' concern with the continuity of expression and style prevented them from being independent and daring in their endeavors. On the other hand, Anglo-American literati, from Herman Melville to Thomas Hardy, and from Henry James to Virginia Woolf, aimed to get at one specific aim, which was none other than the aim of literature in general: Experimenting with life to become one with it by accompanying its passage through the hallways of thinking embodied in language. This might be why he entitled the essay based on a conversation with his student Parnet, "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature." Deleuze explains in this essay what the French writers missed by conceiving of flight as unrelated to action. He maintains that, unlike the French, Anglo-American writers present fleeing as an active way of discovering worlds (2002, pp. 36-37). This comparison helps Deleuze highlight his views on literature and life, at the center of which lies the idea that the latter is rendered impersonal by the former.

Deleuze suggests that Anglo-American writers did not care much about systematic interpretations, character classifications, and absolute hierarchies that commend human values, mainly because they preferred to gain access to a writing experience encompassing a life. Since a life is not something personal, to be able to write at a pace which suits the passage of life one should take a flight from the specific conditions of the individual's personal life and "become imperceptible" in due course: "Writing," he says, "has no other end than to lose one's face, to jump over or pierce through the wall, to plane down the wall very patiently" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 45). For Deleuze, following such a line of flight is the only requirement for a real literary experiment, which was accomplished by Anglo-American literature (2002, pp. 36-37). Whereas the French think historically, spend much time in elaborate analysis, English and American authors create a universe of ruptures, thrusts, and cracks, which, for Deleuze, are linked to becoming (2002, p. 37). Among American writers, Fitzgerald appears to be a crucial inspiration for Deleuze to develop his thoughts on life and literature.

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Explaining how writing can carry itself to an impersonal status, Deleuze refers to Fitzgerald's phrase "clean break" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 38). It is a break without a return and a past, entering another life, or creating a new earth. In the tripartite essay published in *Esquire* magazine in 1936 and included three confessional pieces titled "The Crack-Up," "Handle with Care," and "Pasting It Together," Fitzgerald says, "[S]ince I could no longer fulfill the obligations that life had set for me or that I had set for myself, why not slay the empty shell who had been posturing at it for four years" (1956, p. 81). He yields to the fact that he cannot be "a person" anymore, but he must continue to be "a writer" (1956, p. 81). This autobiographical confession impressed Deleuze as an outline of the logical consequences of a real literary experiment.

Throughout his career, Deleuze had never stopped emphasizing the importance of constructing an experimental logic, studying life as it is. In *The Logic of Sense*, for instance, he revitalized the long-forgotten tradition of early Stoic philosophers and their distinction between material causes and immaterial effects, to create a new set of concepts that fit that logic. And in each step, he took the time to focus on a literary work to cross-check if his results were sound and valid. Not surprisingly, most of his references were from the works of Anglo-American authors, and *The Crack-Up* had a recurrent presence in his texts. From the certainty of expression at the beginning, where Fitzgerald declares, "Of course all life is a process of breaking down" (1956, p. 69), to the despairing tone at the end, *The Crack-Up* worked like a philosophical report on the material and immaterial construction of a life.

Like the protagonists of his great novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, who are portrayed as all-encompassing personalities gathering great amount of material wealth in their social appearance and who find themselves almost completely stripped from these qualities at the last instant, Fitzgerald loses the sense of who he is by listing and rejecting the qualities of five different people that define him as a person. According to Matthew J. Bruccoli, both Dick Diver of *Tender is the Night* and the writer of *The Crack-Up* experience an intense psychological crisis caused by excessive drinking, narrow-mindedness, and bitterness (2007, p. 9). Indeed, Bruccoli maintains that *The Crack-Up* was published in 1936, after *Tender is the Night*, which had been serialized in the first months of 1934, and reflected Fitzgerald's struggles with alcoholism and debts that reached a peak between 1935 and 1937 (2007, p. 9). It was when, as Andrew Hook formulates, "[c]reative vitality was giving way to creative exhaustion" (2002, p. 118). Although it is hard not to be affected by the sense of melancholia evoked in the last passages of the text, as observed by Bruccoli and Hook, there is still a formally consistent account of a paradox, which begs for separate consideration.

Fitzgerald states in a very famous quote, "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function" (1956, p. 69). The paradox lies at the heart of life as a whole: on the one hand, it seems naturally obvious that we desire to keep living and try to preserve our livelihood. On the other hand, we strive to know what it is, independently of its significance for us. Searching for the sense of life, however, causes a great deal of confusion, as it is quite risky to experiment with an unknown material (and its unprecedented immaterial effects, of course). Like the physical injuries caused by numerous possible encounters that cannot be anticipated through any finite calculation, some "cracks" get formed on the surface of one's life.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze refers to this kind of crack as a "unique surface Event" with its invisibility, silence, and being at the border of inside and outside (1990, p. 155). The silent journey of the crack occurs alongside some noisy and shattering events that have caused it. The meeting of the two, silence and noise, in a final burst, implies that the crack has been inscribed in the depth of the body (1990, p. 155). Deleuze suggests that one needs to learn from the Stoics how to survive at the surface by saving the surface itself, including language and life organized on the surface (1990, p. 158). He maintains, "It is true that the crack is nothing if it does not compromise the body, but it does not cease being and having a value when it intertwines its line with the other line, inside the body. We cannot

foresee, we must take risks and endure the longest possible time, we must not lose sight of grand health" (1990, p. 161). One of the things Deleuze finds in *The Crack-Up* is a body still looking for grand health despite its exhaustion. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate through Fitzgerald's story how the line of flight relates to grand health, i.e., how the crack creates another life, transforming the exhausted self into something else. The line formed by some imperceptible, little changes, or "micro-cracks," is rhizomatic and far from being personal; there is yet a third line, "clean break," which leads to absolute deterritorialization, and enables one to become like the whole world (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003, pp. 198-200).

Unlike the physical, material effects, the existence of these cracks is realized only after they result in a complete breakdown. This can surely be expected due to our ignorance of what life is made of. Furthermore, the line of flight that makes the crack productive does not have a predetermined destination. If we are not supposed to know something before we know it, before we put it to the test first, experimentation seems inevitable. But there is a great chance that we harm the material while we do such experiments on it. Then, what good is there to preserve something about which we are not curious, in which we don't have the slightest interest? And what happens after the cracking? Are we going to preserve the "cracked plate" as well? Or are we going to toss it aside?

2. Wilson on "The Turn of the Screw"

When Fitzgerald "handles" the cracked plate with care, he finds himself in a dire situation where he is impelled to think. Since it turns out to be quite an exhausting task, he chooses to determine and eliminate the building blocks of his personality one by one. When it appears that nothing will improve by itself, persistent withdrawal is inevitable. In this case, "one is not waiting for the fade-out of a single sorrow, but rather being an unwilling witness of an execution, the disintegration of one's personality" (1956, p. 76). According to Scott Donaldson, this kind of dissolution cannot be explained simply by alcoholism or psychological exhaustion. Instead, he notes Fitzgerald's "misanthropy, and the self-hatred behind it" as significant causes of his isolation, which he tried to overcome by writing these pieces (2006, pp. 92-95). Referring to Fitzgerald's account, Donaldson says he decided to stop giving something of himself to people he had given too much to in the past. Having acted contrary to his wishes, he feels remorseful for his emotional insincerity (2006, p. 92). Furthermore, his discovery that he had adopted some people's ideas instead of producing his own led him to question his self-esteem (2006, p. 93).

Here, Donaldson refers to the end of "Handle with Care," in which Fitzgerald acknowledges that his intellectual conscience, his sense of the good life, his writing style, his manner of forming relationships with other people, and finally, his political conscience had been indebted to five different men. He had noticed this fact after starting to "think" involuntarily, following a period of silence. Although there are beliefs that his artistic conscience was Hemingway (Donaldson, 2006, p. 93), he utters only the name of Wilson among these five men, then expresses his strange feeling of being selfless and losing all ground for self-respect (Fitzgerald, 1956, p. 79).

Wilson was Fitzgerald's friend from Princeton. He edited Fitzgerald's incomplete manuscript, *The Last Tycoon*, in 1941, and collected the author's unpublished essays and letters under the title *The Crack-Up* in 1945. Wilson had to defend his decision to publish Fitzgerald's autobiographical pieces against those who considered them personal grumbling that harmed his reputation (Donaldson, 2006, p. 85). Acknowledging that he, like others, disliked the pieces when they first appeared, Wilson adds, "There was more truth and sincerity in it, I suppose, than we realized at the time" (cited in Donaldson, 2006, pp. 85-86). Indeed, Wilson's role in Fitzgerald's posthumous career, in crystallizing his name, personality, and sincerity, is evident. At this point, we might, as readers, try to join the experiment, so as to better understand the true nature of the tension between literature and life, by turning the screw on our behalf: Let us suppose Wilson takes on Fitzgerald's impersonal attitude instead of the other way around, thereby selecting him as his intellectual conscience. And let us choose a particular example to see what would happen if Wilson did not act as he did and instead acted as Fitzgerald

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could. Reconsidering Wilson's seminal reading of James's "The Turn of the Screw" is a suitable candidate to do this experiment.

Wilson's contradictory interpretations of the novella are well known in the history of the critical appreciation of modern American literature. As the plot goes, a young governess, who is responsible for taking care of two children who lost both their parents and the two of their previous caretakers, namely Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, thinks the ghosts of these two servants haunt her. She becomes gradually more certain that the kids are seeing the lost souls too, but they keep that experience to themselves as they are in a secret pact with them. In the long history of the reception of this suspense story, critics have taken sides either for the governess as a sane narrator trying to keep everything from falling apart or for an intense feeling, insinuating that she is on the verge of a mental breakdown. Although a third group emerged in time and argued that both are possible, the question regarding the governess's mental health, basically neurosis and hysteria, has long dominated the debates. Wilson was first among the second group, then changed his position, reevaluating some interpretative observations, suggesting that the supernatural might have played a rather secondary role and that the governess is not insane. Yet in either position, he was not backward in expressing his strong impression of the textual ambiguity.

Surveying the critical history of "The Turn of the Screw" Peter G. Beidler asks how a novella could produce two completely different readings, both of which agree on its literary success. He underlines that the question of how a woman can be considered sane by some and insane by others, and how ghosts can be interpreted as real by some and as a product of the imagination by others, marks the critical appreciation of "The Turn of the Screw." When Beidler draws attention to the third group of critics who argue that both sides might be right and that the novella can be both a ghost story and a psychological thriller, he highlights that this view finds the success of the story in James's ability to tell it with "*such skillful ambiguity that readers can hold both views simultaneously*" (1995a, pp. 127-128, emphasis in original).

Although Wilson's position has changed over the years, the "undecidability" of the text, as the deconstructionists would call it, seems to have preoccupied his mind from the very outset. Indeed, he entitled his essay "The Ambiguity of Henry James," which first appeared in 1934 and was then revised and republished in 1948. In the former version, Wilson supports the idea that the governess's repression of sexual desires makes her neurotic, and that the ghosts in the story are her hallucinations (1952, p. 89). Going over Freudian symbols of sexuality like the tower, the mast, and the lake, Wilson suggests that the ghosts signify the governess's insanity (1952, p. 91). According to him, the text does not provide us with any clue for believing that the characters other than the governess see the ghosts (1952, p. 91). Yet Wilson underlines the ambiguous effect of James's works and their potential to leave the reader in doubt, independent of James's anticipation of how they would influence the reader (1952, p. 97). According to him, James created characters that leave the reader in doubt from his early novels, such as *Confidence* (1879), to his later ones, such as *The Sacred Fount* (1901). "The Turn of the Screw," published two years before *The Sacred Fount*, had already "*carried [James's] ambiguous procedure to a point where we almost feel that the author does not want the reader to get through to the hidden meaning*" (1952, p. 99). Wilson's impression is that James avoids answering questions about the governess clearly, leaving the reader to oscillate among interpretations (1952, p. 99).

Wilson's 1948 revision is based on the publication of James's notebooks, which demonstrated to him that the writer intended to create a ghost story (1952, p. 121). What is striking here is that Wilson's restatement of his argument brings to attention a crack-up in James's life:

"At the time that James wrote these stories ["The Turn of the Screw" and The Sacred Fount], his faith in himself had been somewhat shaken. Though he had summoned the whole force of his will and brought his whole mind to bear on writing plays, he had not made connections with the theatre. The disastrous opening night of Guy Domville, had occurred on January 5, 1895. On the evening of January 10, we learn from an entry into note-books, James had heard from Archbishop Benson the

story that suggested The Turn of the Screw. On January 23, he writes: 'I take up my own old pen again—the pen of all my old unforgettable efforts and sacred struggles. To myself—today—I need say no more. Large and full and high the future still opens. It is now indeed that I may do the work of my life. And I will...I have only to face my problems.' (1952, p. 121)

James's disappointment with his playwriting performance seems to have led him to return to the literary stage and write such a performative text as "The Turn of the Screw." Peter G. Beidler, in his "Introduction: Biographical and Historical Contexts," highlights James's extreme frustration with the audience's reactions to his plays and considers "The Turn of the Screw" one of James's most theatrical works: "it has a single setting in a mysterious mansion, pale faces at windows, strange figures appearing and disappearing, dramatic scenes and dialogue, a melodramatic interplay of innocence with the haunting forces of darkness." He then maintains, "James mined his past five years of death, sickness, and failure to produce one of his most popular and successful works" (1995b, p. 12). James's experience of being shaken by failure partially resonates with Fitzgerald's acceptance of remaining merely a writer after being deprived of his overdetermined personal self.

As shown above, many people regarded *The Crack-Up* as an expression of the exhausted creativity of a wasted life. Yet it is possible to consider Fitzgerald's cracks and ruptures, in a Deleuzian way, as transformers of exhaustion to something else, to a kind of creativity bursting out of internal ruptures of an impersonal creator. Looking at *The Crack-Up* through Deleuze's lens requires acknowledging that the autobiographical text shows or performs a story different from what its author tells. Wilson's endeavor to collect the shattered self of the author by collecting and publishing his works does not change this fact. Likewise, the performative nature of "The Turn of the Screw" is often acknowledged in literary criticism for its ability to enact the contradictions of both its characters and critics. Its theatrical characteristic is not limited to the dramatic dialogues or melodramatic themes Beidler points to. It also stages readers' struggles to find meaning and critics' ambiguities when asserting an idea about the text. Therefore, dwelling in Wilson's fundamental concern, i.e., the governess's mental health, in his analysis of the novella, one can ask how cracks can relate to "grand health" both in the sense of a life and artistic creativity.

3. Reversing Wilson's Logic of Reading

It is not a coincidence that Shoshana Felman's well-known contemplation on the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis in "Turning the Screw of Interpretation" departs from Wilson's reading of the novella and the criticisms against his Freudian approach. Outlining Wilson's interpretation and its enormous impact on the critical appreciation of the novella, Felman draws attention to his emphasis on ambiguity and his consideration of narrative, thematic, and rhetorical devices when posing the question of textual meaning (1982, p. 104). According to Felman, those who criticize Wilson and his followers for being "prepossessed" by "the ghost of Freud" are obviously under "the ghost effect" of psychoanalysis as they overlook Wilson's acknowledgment of the ambiguous nature of the text and his style of questioning (1982, pp. 101-105). As she summarizes, Wilson's belief that the governess cannot admit to herself her love and desire for the Master projects these feelings to the outside world in the form of ghosts, thereby rejecting their internal source, lies not in the sexuality represented in the text but in the unclear allusions calling for an analysis (1982, pp. 103-104). Thus, Wilson's recognition of sexual symbols, analysis of supernatural events, and reception of the text as an unresolved enigma illustrate his attention to rhetoric, thematic content, and narrative structure, respectively (1982, p. 104). While Freudian criticisms have often been regarded as answers to questions or as revelations of what is concealed, those like Wilson's cannot be considered that way because of their awareness of the text's undecidability (1982, p. 107). Although Felman points out that Wilson misses the complex relationship between sexuality and sense, and thus Freud's understanding of sexuality as a complex phenomenon (1982, p. 111), she does not shy away from drawing attention to his impression that everything in the novella can be read equivocally (1982, p. 113). On the other hand, she maintains that those who criticize Wilson for being uncertain about his

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position arrive at a true point by overlooking an opponent's comments. They expose a more contradictory attitude than Wilson's, since a coherent meaning reached by the exclusion of other ideas is ironic in itself (1982, p. 114).

All these critical debates, Felman argues, partake in the textual enactment. "The Turn of the Screw," which "shows" rather than "tells" a story, also dramatizes its critics' ironic contradictions (1982, p. 115). Not only is Wilson's ignorance of the complexity of sexuality a crucial element of this dramatization, but Wilson's treatment of the governess as insane also repeats the governess's treatment of the children as mad. Felman maintains that "It is the governess's madness, that is, the exclusion of her point of view, which enables Wilson's reading to function as a *whole*, as a system at once *integral* and *coherent*—just as it is the children's madness, the exclusion of *their* point of view, which permits the governess's reading, and its functioning as a *totalitarian* system" (1982, p. 195) (emphases in original). Wilson's "logic of reading" (emphasis in original) excludes the governess from the construction of meaning by describing her as unhealthy yet performs thereby the text's trapping himself as a critic and deconstructing the truth he posited (1982, p. 196).

Felman's deconstructionist approach uncovers Wilson's "almost worshipful respect for truth," a phrase borrowed from Ross C. Murfin, despite Wilson's awareness of the text's ambiguity. Murfin uses the phrase to describe the attitude of the scholars who resist the alternatives offered by deconstruction to traditional scholarship. Murfin maintains that this alternative "deserves to be approached in the spirit that animates it" (1995, p. 180). When Felman highlights Wilson's "mastery," which includes a kind of "repressive control" (Murfin, 1995, p. 188), she also draws attention to the scholars' desire to "grasp" meaning and the readers' desire to "understand" literary texts. The two different meanings of "grasp"—comprehension and hold—used in the last section of "The Turn of the Screw" demonstrate to Felman that reading relates to both knowledge and power (Felman, 1982, p. 162). Then, Felman suggests, the governess's strong urge to obtain knowledge holds the purpose of controlling and mastering the strange events in the house (p. 196). Yet when Miles, who is the source of the knowledge, dies, "Meaning's possession is itself ironically transformed into the radical *dispossession* of its possessor" (Felman, p. 174) (emphases in original). Felman's view, which envisages the governess as a reader, exposes the ironic spirals of the reading process.

James's manner of introducing the governess to the reader offers an example of how possession of knowledge is dispossessed through a textual enactment of the undecidability of meaning. The narrator states that "the fact to be in possession of" is the governess's entry into a world which is very different from her former life. As one of the several daughters of a poor country parson, she comes to London at the age of twenty. She is anxious about her lack of experience and is quite impressed by the handsome gentleman she has contacted about the job (James, 1999, p. 345). He is an unprecedented figure who, she thinks, cannot be found even in dreams and novels (p. 345). Furthermore, he informs her that she will be "the supreme authority" in the house, taking care of his nephew and his niece (346). Through the narrator's lens, possessing the meaning of this picture might serve to make sense of the governess's illusory, or, as Wilson would call it in the first version of his reading, "hysterical" fantasies. Accordingly, both her attraction to her master and her anxieties would be important to grasp the meaning of the story. Yet James's presentation of the governess's story as embedded in her haunted perspective complicates interpretation.

Just as the governess never earns authority and goes on searching for meanings, so does the reader. Thus, Felman's analogy between interpretation and power may well provoke an experimental reading encouraged by Deleuzian thought. Although Felman's undecidability and Deleuze's experimentation differ in many ways, they concur in presenting an alternative to traditional scholarship, which, to quote Murfin again, "deserves to be approached in the spirit that animates it" (1995, p. 180). The spirit of Deleuze's writings that incites creative reading is itself an open call for disrupting signification as truth. As Daniel Haines puts it, Deleuze writes in a "playful" style that prevents the reader from "treating language as transparently referential" (2015, p. 542). Thus,

Deleuze's inspiring thoughts on Fitzgerald and James, and Felman's inspiring thoughts on Wilson and "The Turn of the Screw," may come together in a critical realm that poses questions about the relationship between literature and life.

In the revised version, when Wilson changes his position based on James's notebooks, he departs from a belief that the writer's failure in theater might have made him doubtful of his grasp of reality. Consequently, the reader's doubts regarding the credibility of the governess's story reflect James's doubts, as Wilson traces in James's notes that illustrate his preoccupation with self-deception (1952, p. 121). Wilson concludes that in "The Turn of the Screw", it is not only the governess who is self-deceived, but James is also self-deceived about her (1952, p. 122). Then one cannot help but think that the cracks in both James's life and his grasp of reality that Wilson brought up might have turned the screw of interpretation and changed his logic of reading. Remembering that Deleuze, referring to James's "In the Cage," clearly states that "*English or American literature is a process of experimentation. They have killed interpretation*" (2002, p. 49), Wilson's possible experimentation with James might have been quite mind-opening. According to Deleuze, in James's story, the post-office girl's excessive interpretation of the telegrams by using the tiniest clues comes to an end when she knows so much, when she constructs a life story, and there remains nothing to interpret anymore (2002, p. 48). Wilson's obvious understanding of James's "ambiguity" in his 1934 reading of "The Turn of the Screw" and his realization of James's "doubt" and "self-deception" in the 1948 addendum show his sense that James might be experimenting with a life through literary means. If Wilson had read the novella by sticking to this sense, how would the governess possibly appear in the eyes of the reader?

The moment when the governess accepts the job offer of the children's uncle, who retains their custody, she feels as if she has just entered a new world, if not a new life. The "greatness" of the scene before her means she would enjoy something beyond the proprietor's promise (James, 1999, p. 348). First of all, the person who lures her into all this puts a tremendous distance between himself and his employee, which, as it is made clear at the outset, cannot be breached by any means. It is only natural that she feels more like a newborn, just given birth. She is first introduced to Flora, the little girl, by an older servant at the mansion, Mrs Grose, whose "radiant image" becomes a romantic reflection of nature for the governess (1999, p. 349). And after some time, Flora's older brother, Miles, shows up, returning from school following the end of the semester. However, as the governess learns from a letter, he was expelled from the school without any specific reason (1999, p. 353). Upon consulting with Mrs Grose, she decides not to find another school for the boy, who is too innocent to be a horrid child, and who plays the role of a cunning, rational mind, so she takes on the burden of teaching him at home (1999, p. 363). Now that her position as an absolute guardian and preserver is strengthened, her desire to keep the children safe paves the way for a strange curiosity about what they are really "made of," since she has no understanding of the kids whatsoever.

After the ghosts start appearing to her, she finds out that they belong to two previous caretakers who were in her position before. They were the ones who not only had the responsibility but also the desire to keep the children safe before her. For the governess, their desire (which also seems to have led to a romantic relationship between them) was so intense that they turned back from the dead to reconnect with the kids. This, of course, caused the thickening of the mist covering all lives. The fact that there is death at the end forced her to make a dangerous scrutiny to be able to learn what it was all about. "I should see again what I had already seen," she says, "but something within me said by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquility of my companions" (1999, p. 371). She had to experiment, and with every turn of the screw, she imagined she would get another clue. By rationally collecting and linking them, she would finally learn all about the lives of the children. The meticulous researcher that she was, regardless of how much she winds, unwinds, and rewinds her memory, couldn't get to the bottom of it, even though she did not ever give up: another turn of the screw, yet another turn of the screw, until the curious material of a life finally cracked up, giving

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away to the pressure caused by the screwdriver. To hear the sound of the crack, it is enough that one should pay close attention to the scream that came out of Miles' mouth at the end of the story.

CONCLUSION

Deleuze's work, with all its effort-demanding features, opens unique paths to understanding that what are deemed failures in life may well be cracks, thrusts, or ruptures that hold the potential for creativity. He observes that the superiority of Anglo-American literature lies in the characters' lines of flight through which they discover worlds. These discoveries are far from ascribing certain meanings to signs, words, or stories. They are achieved by moving, acting, or writing until all signs are exhausted, and interpretation presses in upon its limits. Thus, an autobiographical text like *The Crack-Up*, which is often regarded as a manifestation of Fitzgerald's failures in life, with its melancholic tone, starts to earn a new identity in Deleuze's reading. Nonetheless, Deleuze would not consider it a formed identity. It is rather a process of becoming similar to Fitzgerald's being stripped of his identity or becoming impersonal as a writer. Then Wilson's attempts to empower Fitzgerald's self as a writer by collecting his works and arguing for his sincerity in *The Crack-Up*, as well as Fitzgerald's description of him as his intellectual conscience, place the critic in the opposite direction to Deleuze. However, one may try to see the combination of fluxes in Wilson's writing, too.

Wilson's indecision regarding the meaning of James's "The Turn of the Screw" and the discussions surrounding his approach to the text relate to the problem of reading, on which deconstructionist thinkers have reflected in great detail. One such thinker, Felman, highlights Wilson's search for truth in his psychoanalytic reading, while drawing attention to his awareness of the text's ambiguity. Felman suggests that many subsequent critics who think Wilson lacks critical authority over his material are, in fact, trapped by a text that acts out what it tells. The governess's experiences as a supreme authority, or as a reader of what is happening around her, are repeated by the readers of "The Turn of the Screw" themselves. It is here, in the text's capacity of enactment, that the act of reading proceeds through experiments which, Deleuze would add, do not exclude a contemplation on the writer's process of creativity. The life experiences of Fitzgerald and James, which led them to write the texts engaged here, are part of the critical discussion, as Deleuze and Wilson, the subjects of this paper, give them a significant place. Therefore, reversing Wilson's role as Fitzgerald's intellectual conscience and experimenting with his logic of reading in "The Ambiguity of Henry James" might enable one to see that the governess turns the screws until a life is cracked, while the readers feel the pressure of the screwdriver on their own lives. This reversal showcases the depth of the experiment that both creative literary minds and their readers must undertake to discover what a life is really made of.

Geniřletilmiř zet

Fransız filozof Gilles Deleuze, bir hayatla deney yapabilen ve yazıyı bir oluř s¼reci olarak deneyimleyen yazarlarından t¼r¼ Anglo-Amerikan edebiyatına zel bir anlam atfeder. Ona g¼re, Henry James ve Scott Fitzgerald'ın da dahil olduėu bu edebiyatta kaıř izgileri, bir benlik d¼n¼ř¼m¼ne yol aan yeni d¼nyaların keřfiyle sonulanır. Deleuze, Fitzgerald'ın oėunlukla alkolinin yarattıėı yıkımla ve yaratıcılıėın t¼keniřiyle iliřkilendirilen atlak adlı otobiyografik metnini Stoacı anlamda bir saėlıklı olma h¼linin yansımaları olarak deėerlendirir. *Anlamın Mantıėı*'nda tartıřtıėı ¼zere, bazı atlaklar yařamın y¼zeyinde oluřur; g¼r¼nmez ve sessizdirler. İeriyle dıřarı arasındaki bir sınırdaki oluřları da etkilerini hemen g¼stermelerinin n¼ne geer. Fakat bu atlaklara yol aan g¼r¼lt¼l¼ ve sarsıcı olaylar g¼n¼n birinde s¼z konusu atlaklarla bir patlamaya yol aacak řekilde buluřur. Deleuze'e g¼re bu noktada Stoacı felsefeden ğrenilmesi gereken řey, y¼zeyde rg¼tlenen dil ve yařamı da kurtaracak biimde y¼zeyde var kalmayı s¼rd¼rme becerisidir. İřte Deleuze'¼n atlak'ta bulduėu, b¼t¼n t¼keniřine raėmen saėlıklı olmayı s¼rd¼ren bir bedendir. Deleuze, F¼lix Guattari'yle birlikte kaleme aldıėı *Bin Yayla*'da da Fitzgerald'ın atlak'ını mutlak bir yersiz yurtsuzlařmayı, d¼n¼řs¼z bir kaıř izgisini anlatan bir metin olarak

düşünür. Bütün bir dünya hâline gelen birey ve tek bir hayat hâline gelen bireysel yaşam, çatlakların bir patlama noktasına gelmeden öngörülemez üretilme kabiliyetinin sonucudur.

Fitzgerald, 1936'da *Esquire* dergisinde "Çatlak", "Özenle Bakmak" ve "Yapıştırmak" başlıkları altında üç bölüm hâlinde yayımladığı *Çatlak*'ta yaşadığı yıkım sürecinde kişiliğinin samimiyetini de sorgular. Benliğinin farklı unsurlarını beş farklı kişiye borçlu olduğunu anlatırken Amerikalı eleştirmen Edmund Wilson'ı entelektüel vicdanı olarak tanımlar. Fitzgerald'ın Princeton Üniversitesi'nden arkadaşı olan Wilson, kimilerinin çocuksu bir mızızlanma olarak gördüğü *Çatlak*'ı ilk bakışta düşündüğünden daha samimi bir metin olarak yeniden gün yüzüne çıkaran ve Fitzgerald'ın başka bazı metinlerini de derleyen kişidir. Bu makale, Deleuze'ün *Çatlak*'ta gördüğü kaçış çizgisinin uzağında bir tavırla Fitzgerald'ın bireysel yaşamını ve bir yazar olarak adını kurtarmaya yönelik hamleleriyle Wilson'ın, ilginç bir deneyin ve spekülatif bir düşünüşün parçası kılınabileceği fikrinden yola çıkıyor. İçerdiği çelişkili yorumlar nedeniyle Wilson'ın çokça tartışılmış "The Ambiguity of Henry James" (Henry James'in Muğlaklığı) başlıklı yazısının böyle bir deney için uygun bir aday olduğunu öne sürüyor. Bazı tematik ve biçimsel yönleriyle birbirlerine yaklaşan James ve Fitzgerald, Deleuze'ün edebiyat ve hayat konusundaki fikirlerine kaynaklık etme özellikleriyle de ortak bir noktada buluşuyor. Öyleyse, yukarıda anılan yazısında James'in "Yürek Burgusu" adlı novellasını yorumlayan Wilson'ı Fitzgerald'ın entelektüel vicdanı gibi görmek yerine Fitzgerald'ı Wilson'ın entelektüel vicdanı hâline getirmeyi denersek neyle karşılaşırız? Makale, "Yürek Burgusu" nun muğlaklığının farkında olan Wilson'ın metni okurken yaşadığı kararsızlıkların izi sürüldüğünde yorumlamayı bırakıp deney yapmaya evrilme potansiyeli olan bir eleştirmenle karşı karşıya kalınacağını öne sürüyor. Makale, bu fikri desteklemek amacıyla Shoshana Felman'ın "Turning the Screw of Interpretation" (Yorumlamanın Vidasını Çevirmek) başlıklı yazısından yararlanıyor.

Felman, edebiyat ve psikanaliz ilişkisi üzerine düşünürken Wilson'ın "Yürek Burgusu" hakkındaki Freudcu yorumlarını ve bu yorumlara gelen tepkileri değerlendirir. Wilson, öykünün baş karakteri mürebbiyenin hayaletlerle karşılaşmasını bastırılmış cinsel arzularıyla ilişkilendirdiği için eleştirilmiş, yazının tamamında takındığı eleştirel tutum, bu yorumun gölgesinde kalmıştır. Felman da Wilson'ı Freudcu cinselliğin karmaşıklığını yeterince görmemekle eleştirir; fakat Wilson'ı psikanalitik bir yoruma ulaştırmanın anlatsal, tematik ve retorik araçlar olduğuna da değinir. Wilson bu araçlardan bağımsız düşünmediği için James'in metninin muğlaklığının farkına varmış, bunu tekrar tekrar dile getirmiştir. Felman'a göre eleştirmenin metinsel muğlaklığa yaptığı vurguyu görmeyenler Freud'un hayaleti tarafından ele geçirilmiş gibidir; psikanalitik yorumun ancak indirgemelerle yapılacağı varsayımına kendilerini kaptırmışlardır. Felman'ın tartışması makale için iki nedenle önemlidir: Birincisi, Felman'ın nihayetinde bir anlam arayışı içinde olduğunu düşündüğü Wilson'daki kararsızlıkları görmesi ve böylece Deleuze'ün eleştirdiği türden bir yorumlama biçiminden daha spekülatif, deneysel bir okuma düzlemine geçme potansiyeline işaret etmesidir. İkincisi ise "Yürek Burgusu" nun hayaletler gören ya da gördüğünü düşünen karakterlerini konu edinen hikâyesinin okura da sirayet eden performatif niteliğini vurgulamasıdır.

Wilson, James'in öyküsündeki mürebbiyenin akıl sağlığının yerinde olmadığını öne sürdüğü 1934 tarihli yazısına 1948'de eklediği notta bu fikrini değiştirdiğini söyler. Yazısına gelen tepkilerle birlikte James'in hayatına ve "Yürek Burgusu"na dair söyledikleri de bu değişiklikte etkili olmuştur. Böylece yazısının ilk hâlinde muğlak bir metinle uğraştığını ifade eden Wilson, aradan geçen zamanda da kararsızlığının sürdüğünü göstermiş olur. Metnin bir delilik değil hayalet hikâyesi olduğu kanısını aktardığı 1948 tarihli bu notta ayrıca James'in yaşamındaki bir kırılma noktasını onu "Yürek Burgusu"nu yazmaya iten önemli sebeplerden biri olarak ortaya koyar. Böylece James'le Fitzgerald'ı bir kez daha yaklaştırır. Tiyatro alanındaki başarısızlığı, James'in yaşamında bir çatlak oluşturmuş, böylece edebiyat tarihinin en güçlü performatif hikâyelerinden biri olan "Yürek Burgusu" ortaya çıkmıştır. Felman'ın anlatan değil sahneye koyan bir metin olduğu için performatif sıfatıyla andığı "Yürek Burgusu", karakterlerle birlikte okuru ve eleştirmenleri de

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gösterenlerle gösterilenlerin birebir örtüşmediği bir edebî dünyanın içine çeker. Böylece Deleuzecü anlamda deney yapmak, metin üzerine düşünmenin güçlü yollarından biri hâline gelir.

Bu makale, James, Fitzgerald ve Wilson arasındaki ilginç bağlantıların izini sürerek sorduğu spekülâtif soruyu şöyle yanıtlıyor: Wilson, “Yürek Burgusu”nu Deleuze’ün *Çatlak* okumasına benzer bir biçimde okusaydı, çocuk bakımı işine kabul edilmesiyle birlikte mürebbiyenin önünde açılan yeni dünyanın onu bir hayatla deney yapmaya ittiğini düşünebilirdi. Bu durumda, üstlendiği sorumluluğun uyandırdığı keşif duygusunun ve çocukları tanıma arzusunun, mürebbiyenin içinde bulunduğu yaşamı küçük küçük kurcalamasına yol açtığını, anlamlı bir sonuca ulaşmasa da ısrarla tornavidasını hayat üzerinde çevirmeye devam ettiğini de görecekti. Böylece “Yürek Burgusu”, hayaletlerin gerçekliğinin ya da mürebbiyenin akıl sağlığının sorgulandığı bir okumaya tabi tutulmak yerine kurcalanan malzemenin çatladığını duyuran bir metin olarak tartışılacak ve hikâyenin sonundaki çılglık, hayatla girişilen edebî bir deneyin her türlü yorumu aşan niteliğine delil olarak gösterilebilecekti.

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