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FROM PLATO'S GUARDIAN TO TUDOR SOVEREIGNTY: GERTRUDE AND CORDELIA AS COMPARATIVE FIGURES	PLATON'UN KORUYUCUSUNDAN TUDOR EGEMENLİĞİNE: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI FİĞÜRLER OLARAK GERTRUDE VE CORDELİA
<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>This study comparatively examines the characters of Gertrude and Cordelia in William Shakespeare's tragedies <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>King Lear</i> within the framework of two different models of sovereignty. The study examines Plato's concept of gender-neutral ideal "guardian" developed in <i>The Republic</i> and takes the doctrine of the "king's two bodies" which plays a central role in Tudor political thought, as the theoretical framework. While Plato's model argues that justice and the ability to govern are based on the rational harmony of the soul, the Tudor doctrine grounds political legitimacy in the distinction between the ruler's mortal natural body and the immortal political body. The study argues that Shakespeare dramatically reconfigures these two abstract concepts on stage through his female characters. In <i>Hamlet</i>, Gertrude represents the collapse of both spiritual harmony and political legitimacy when desires prevail over reason, while in <i>King Lear</i>, Cordelia embodies both the Platonic order of the soul and the continuity of the political body through the principles of temperance, loyalty, and reason. Through this contrast, the article argues that Shakespeare reevaluates sovereignty as an ethical and bodily experience along with an institutional and divine construct. Thus, the female body becomes a central site of representation in <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>King Lear</i>, where different concepts of sovereignty are tested in the early-modern period.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Hamlet</i>, <i>King Lear</i>, Plato ideal guardian, king's two bodies, women's representation</p>	<p>ÖZET</p> <p>Bu çalışma William Shakespeare'in <i>Hamlet</i> ve <i>Kral Lear</i> trajedilerindeki Gertrude ve Cordelia karakterlerini, iki farklı egemenlik modeli çerçevesinde karşılaştırmalı olarak inceler. Çalışma, Platon'un <i>Devlet</i>'te geliştirdiği cinsiyetten bağımsız "ideal koruyucu" anlayışı ile Tudor dönemi siyasal teolojisinde merkezi bir rol oynayan "kralın iki bedeni" doktrinini kuramsal arka plan olarak ele alır. Platon'un modeli, adaletin ve yönetme yetisinin beden değil ruhun akılsal uyumu üzerine kurulu olduğunu savunurken, Tudor doktrini siyasal meşruiyeti hükümdarın ölümlü doğal bedeni ile ölümsüz siyasal bedeni arasındaki ayırım üzerinden temellendirir. Çalışma, Shakespeare'in bu iki soyut egemenlik anlayışını sahne üzerinde kadın karakterler aracılığıyla dramatik olarak yeniden dönüştürüldüğünü ileri sürmektedir. <i>Hamlet</i> oyunundaki Gertrude, arzuların akla üstün gelmesiyle hem ruhsal uyumun hem de siyasal meşruiyetin çözümlüşünü temsil ederken, <i>King Lear</i> oyunundaki Cordelia ölçülülük, sadakat ve akıl ilkeleriyle hem Platoncu ruh düzeninin hem de siyasal bedenin sürekliliğini somutlaştırmaktadır. Bu karşıtlık üzerinden makale, Shakespeare'in egemenliği yalnızca kurumsal ya da ilahi bir yapı olarak değil, etik ve bedensel bir deneyim olarak yeniden değerlendirdiğini savunmaktadır. Böylece kadın bedeni, <i>Hamlet</i> ve <i>King Lear</i> oyunlarında, erken modern dönemde egemenliğin farklı kavramlarının sınıandığı temel bir temsil alanı haline gelmektedir.</p> <p>Anahtar kelimeler: <i>Hamlet</i>, <i>King Lear</i>, Platon'un ideal koruyucusu, kralın iki bedeni, kadın temsili</p>

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Introduction

The common ground between gender, philosophy and literature has become an increasingly important field of research in the modern humanities. How female figures are represented in historical, philosophical and literary texts has become a determining factor for both the analysis of patriarchal order and the understanding of alternative forms of subjectification and power. In this context, the study reinterprets the female authority figures in Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* c. 1599-1601 and *King Lear* c. 1605-1606 using two different models of sovereignty. These are the gender-neutral "ideal guardians" developed by Plato in *The Republic* (2018/380 B.C.E.) and the Tudor doctrine of the "king's two bodies" doctrine which is specific to the Tudor political thought (Kantorowicz, 1957). This suggests that the plays can be read as reworking these models by portraying Gertrude and Cordelia as two opposing forms of female authority. The two conceptual frameworks are considered together at this point because ancient Greek philosophy and the Tudor political thought built their authority figures on an abstract principle of unity which extends beyond physical existence. Plato's guardian model establishes the source of justice in the harmony of the soul with reason rather than biological characteristics (Plato, 2018/380 B.C.E., 434d-441c). On the other hand, the Tudor political theology separates the mortal natural body of the ruler from its immortal political body and carries the continuity of the state to a metaphysical level in the doctrine king's two bodies (Kantorowicz, 1957). Both concepts base legitimacy in the abstract integrity of the soul or the state. This common framework allows an evaluation of the two historical traditions of thought together in order to interpret Shakespeare's female characters.

The representation of female figures in Shakespeare's plays is commonly examined within the framework of father-daughter relationships, the ideological function of the family structure and the rhetorical construction of gender (Boose, 1982; Neely, 1988). In addition, historicist approaches evaluate Shakespeare's dramatic structure in the context of Renaissance political thought that focus on issues like kingship, legitimacy and political representation (Greenblatt, 1985; Dollimore, 1985). Furthermore, theoretical studies on the relationship between gender, representation, and power are also significant. Judith Butler's definition of gender as a performative construct through repetitive discourse and bodily practice allows sovereignty to be read as a practice of representation that is constantly reconstructed on stage through body, speech, and gesture. Since the Tudor political theology relies on the visibility of authority performance, it is possible to consider Gertrude and Cordelia as bodily representations situated at the intersection of moral order, political continuity, and gender ideology. Considering these factors, this study makes a comparative study on the relationship between the Platonic concept of the ideal guardians, the Tudor doctrine of the "king's two bodies" and Shakespeare's dramatic representation strategies, especially in the context of sovereignty. This study aims to bridge the gap between philosophical and political models of sovereignty and their dramatic representation through female characters in Shakespeare, by reinterpreting Gertrude and Cordelia as two opposing figures of authority. The main aim is to examine how these three models are reshaped around common conceptual problems within a comparative analysis of sovereignty, political theology, and philosophical anthropology. Through the application of this methodological approach, this study aims to clarify how female authority is established within historical context and on political, metaphysical and dramatic levels. Within this framework, the plays engage with this philosophical and theological legacy on stage, highlighting the tension between human fragility, gender and legitimacy.

While in *Hamlet*, Gertrude represents the decline of a bodily sovereignty driven by passions, in *King Lear*, Cordelia gives expression to Plato's ideal of the spiritual order and the Tudor concept of the body politic grounded in continuity with the principles of reason, moderation, and loyalty. The plays reconsider sovereignty as a moral and political experience structured through the female body. This model becomes especially apparent in the play *King Lear* through the character Cordelia. The just soul model portrayed by Cordelia is associated with the Platonic order of virtue. In addition, Cordelia is a central figure of the Tudor political theology as she represents the ethical conditions of the body politic. The conflict between Lear's natural body's affective outrage and the order sought by his political body becomes visible through Cordelia. While Cordelia's absence due to her rejection and exile by Lear, shatters the symbolic unity of the state, her return as Queen of France unites both familial loyalty and political representation into a unified body. Thus, Cordelia is a site where Platonic gender-neutral virtue and the Tudor concept of the king's two bodies are reestablished on stage. On the other hand, Gertrude reveals the breaking point between the Platonic order of the soul and the Tudor concept of the political body. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude's early and controversial remarriage causes tension between her individual desires and her responsibility of political representation. This disturbance in the Platonic model based on the harmony of the soul and reason also weakens the balance between the ruler's natural and politic body. Contrary to the ethical and political continuity represented by Cordelia, Gertrude dramatically reflects the limits of sovereignty in the context of bodily and emotional vulnerabilities. These authority figures accommodate both the Platonic model of the ideal guardian and the Tudor doctrine of the king's two bodies which ground sovereignty in an abstract principle of unity. Comparative reading aims to highlight how this framework is embodied in female figures. As a result, the article first turns to Plato's guardian model which is based on the gender-neutral understanding of virtue to lay the foundations of the argument.

Plato's model of the just soul: philosophical foundation

Plato was one of the first thinkers in the history of Western philosophy to systematically put forward the idea of equality between men and women in terms of mental competence. In his *The Republic*, he locates the basis of justice in the harmony of the soul with the mind and argues that virtue is not dependent on gender (Vlastos, 1969). He believes that the soul consists of three parts: the reasoning part (*logistikon*), the spirited part as in anger, courage, pride (*thymos*) and the appetitive or desiring part (*epithymetikon*) (Plato, 2018, 434d-441c). Justice occurs when these three parts of the soul are in balance. The individual who achieves this balance is equally capable of governing, combat, and learning. Hence, admission to the guardian class requires spiritual integrity rather than biological qualifications. Plato defines the characteristics that guardians should have with bodily qualities like physical strength, agility and sharp vision, along with character traits as courage, liveliness and gentleness. However, Plato's main argument is that these qualities are only meaningful when guided by reason. Physical training provides the necessary resistance and self-discipline for war whilst musical and aesthetic training ensures the moderation of the soul. At this point, his statement that those who only receive physical education will develop harshness of character and those who only receive music education will develop softness (Parker, 2006) underlines the essential dual educational approach. The guardian's education is aimed at maintaining balance between the rational, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul which forms the basis of both individual and social order. The concept of the power of the soul which becomes apparent in Plato's famous conversation with Glaucon, is an important element that explains the

source of courage. According to Plato, courage is not blind aggression but rather the determination to defend what is right under the guidance of reason:

So a city is brave too by a part of itself, in which it has the power to preserve under all circumstances the opinion that what must be feared are precisely the things and the sorts of things that the lawgiver handed down in the citizens' education. Isn't that what you call courage? (Plato, 2018, 429a-430c)

This understanding directly challenges the strict gender hierarchy of Ancient Greece by suggesting that a person's social role derives from spiritual competence. In the same context, Plato states that some women, similar to men, may have a natural aptitude for medicine, music, education or warfare (Plato, 2018, 455e-456a). He concludes that tasks should be distributed according to natural competencies, rather than gender:

It follows that women with these abilities should also be selected to live with the men who have these abilities, and be fellow-guardians with them. They are quite capable of it, and their natures are closely related to those of the men. (Plato, 2018, 455c-456e)

On the other hand, this approach contrasts sharply with the social order of ancient Athens, where women were excluded from public life, denied political rights, and largely confined to domestic roles. In fact, inheritance law defined women as "epiklores", that is, as beings "attached to property", with property rights attached not to the woman but to the man through whom the property is transferred (Shehadeh, 1988).

Given this historical context, Plato's claim that women could also be protectors is innovative and greatly transcends the political and social reality of the period. Although Plato's concept of equality is confined by hierarchical assumptions, it focuses on moral competence over biological difference which represents a significant departure from the norms of the era. Plato's model forms the conceptual background of Shakespeare's female characters pertaining to gender and also as an ethical understanding based on the integrity of the soul. Cordelia's virtue in *King Lear*, founded on truth, moderation, and devotion to reason, may be interpreted as a dramatic reflection of Plato's ideal of spiritual harmony. Her declaration marked by an absence of emotional hyperbole, expresses love based on duty and moderation; "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less" (1.1.91-93). This resonates with Plato's ideal guardian figure who balances passions with reason. In Cordelia the play constructs theoretical equality into concrete moral authority. Similarly, the soul-body conflict in *Hamlet* reestablishes Plato's effort to maintain the superiority of reason over the soul's powers of desire and anger on the stage. Hamlet's words, "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew" (1.2.129-130), express the pressure of material limits on spiritual integrity. Nonetheless, Gertrude's devotion to her passions reveals the political consequences of the spiritual imbalance that Plato warns about. As a result, the play rearticulates the Platonic notion of the soul into an ethical and political context for evaluation. Furthermore, Gertrude deviates from Plato's ideal of the just soul due to the prevalence of desire over reason. This is reflected in Hamlet's criticism over his mother's hasty remarriage, "You cannot call it love; for at your age / The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble, / And waits upon judgement" (3.4.68-70). What is uncovered on stage here is how Gertrude's passion weakens her moral and political order. As a result, Plato's notion of the soul becomes a background against which Shakespeare reshapes his female characters according to the ideal of mental integrity which is not only an ethical experiment but also the basis of political legitimacy.

Political theology: the Tudor doctrine of the “king’s two bodies”

According to Plato, the basis of just government is in the harmony of the soul. By contrast, the Tudor political thought grounds sovereignty on a dual-body concept that has a divine origin. Plato’s abstract concept of equality finds a parallel expression in a theological-legal framework that aims to maintain kingship on a metaphysical level that transcends the limits of the mortal ruler. The source of justice shifts from the order of the soul to the continuity of the political institution. The queen figures in Shakespeare’s plays bring the conflict of these two traditions to the stage and demonstrate that legitimacy is connected to internal morality and institutional stability. Ernst H. Kantorowicz’s classic study, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957) indicates that Tudor jurists applied the medieval Christian doctrine of dual nature to political power and argued that the king had two distinct bodies (p.19). Accordingly, the ruler’s natural body is mortal, sickly, aging, and subject to all human frailties whereas his political body is abstract, institutional, and immortal. The legitimacy of the kingdom is carried within this political body and the continuance of the kingdom remains uninterrupted if the ruler passes away. The famous phrase “The king is dead, long live the king!” is a historical reflection of this very dual structure. The examples provided by the Tudor jurist Edward Plowden in his *Commentaries, or reports, of Edward Plowden, of the Middle Temple, Esq.* (1816) illustrate how the doctrine operated in legal practice. According to Plowden, the king has two bodies, one physical and mortal, the other governmental and immortal. The weaknesses of the natural body can never override the political body. The political body is the principle of continuance that carries the memory and stability of the state while the actions of the ruler gain permanence through this abstract body. A case in point is Edward Plowden’s law reports, which demonstrate how this argument was made to support the Crown’s claim on lands by Queen Elizabeth’s lawyers:

... the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic, is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body. (Plowden, 1816, p.212a-213)

In this regard, Hamlet’s conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can be read as engaging with the logic of this doctrine that suggests its dramatic relevance within the play. Hamlet’s words about Polonius’s deceased body, “The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. / The King is a thing -” (4.2.26-27), are an ironic reference to the physical and political meanings of the concept of the king. The play appears to break the unity between the natural body and the political body by questioning the legitimacy of the political body that makes Claudius “king”. Claudius’s lack of moral legitimacy to support the political body reduces him to the status of “nothingness” (Johnson, 1967). In this context, the Tudor political body that is in power, uses the individual body as a tool and a symbol through ceremonies, rituals, and public representations. This strengthens the abstract political body. Shakespeare’s female characters further accentuate this tension. Gertrude’s body, a fragile natural body driven by desire, symbolizes the collapse of political legitimacy. Hamlet’s words to his mother, “Nay, but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew’d in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty!” (3.4.92-95), imply that Gertrude’s behaviour is based on bodily impulses. This

emphasis complements the disturbance of reason's superiority over passion in Plato's model of the just soul and reveals how the natural body becomes an element that destabilizes the political order. In contrast, Cordelia's body is portrayed as a bearer of moral continuity even when the political order fails. Her words to Lear, "Then poor Cordelia, / And yet not so, since I am sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue" (1.1.77-79), define love in accordance with duty and moderation, and removes it from emotional exaggeration. This measured approach aligns with Plato's concept of the just soul and depicts Cordelia as a figure who maintains ethical integrity. The female body, therefore, appears as a dramatic evaluation ground between the two conflicting models of Plato's guardian model and the Tudor political body.

In Tudor England, the monarch's authority was not only inherited but was continually performed through spectacle, language, and ritual. The doctrine of the king's two bodies articulates what Greenblatt calls the "renaissance self-fashioning" which is the state of crafting a unique identity by using literature and rhetoric (Greenblatt, 1980). In this case it is a sovereign figure who acts out immortality although bound to mortality. This gives sovereignty a legal status and a continuously produced performance. This theatrical sovereignty displayed by Tudor monarchs over their own bodies finds its strongest expression in the political embodiment of Elizabeth I. Separating the mortal body from the immortal political body, Tudor theology also reveals the extent to which sovereignty is dependent on a gendered form of corporeality. The monarch's inherent frailty becomes the very space through which divine authority is enacted. The tension between natural frailty and political perfection becomes undoubtedly visible in her famous declaration "And as I am but one bodye naturallye considered, though by his [God's] permission a bodye politique to governe ..." (The National Archives, n.d., para.2). She sees herself as an ordinary person and asserts that she is the representative of an authority extended by God's will. The legitimacy of the monarchy extends beyond the individual connecting to an institutional and transcendent order. In her Tilbury speech, she acknowledges her gendered limitations by describing herself as a "weak and feeble woman" and then immediately reasserts her sovereign authority by declaring that she has "the heart and stomach of a king" ('Speech to the troops at Tilbury – Aug. 19, 1588,' 2017, para. [4]). She transforms the contradiction between the natural body and the political body into a conscious performance. This performative sovereignty is a direct example of the political logic at work behind Shakespeare's queens. In Shakespeare's stage, the fragility of the doctrine becomes particularly apparent in Gertrude's body. Although Elizabeth I strengthens the doctrine by displaying the natural and the political body in harmony, in *Hamlet*, Gertrude's natural body cannot maintain balance and accelerates the destruction of the political legitimacy. Contrarily, Cordelia in *King Lear*, emerges as the bearer of moral continuity with her temperance even as the political order shatters. As such, Shakespeare transforms the king's two bodies doctrine into a dramatic field of criticism through the female body. The Tudor doctrine's understanding of the body politic, when considered together with the Platonic order of the soul, makes it possible to comprehend comparatively how two different models of sovereignty are staged in Shakespeare's female characters.

Sovereignty in theatre: from doctrine to drama

The Tudor doctrine of the king's two bodies is reimagined on the Shakespearean stage as a legal-theological concept and also as a form of dramatic tension. The distinction between the body natural and the body politic which lies at the heart of this doctrine, becomes the central tension that gives rise to one of the most powerful conflicts in tragedy. The plays assess political legitimacy

on ethical, emotional and bodily levels by exposing the disproportion on stage between the political body that represents the abstract continuity of sovereignty and the natural body that embodies the frailty of the individual. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear* dramatize the continuity of authority as a fragile process that requires reproduction at every moment of crisis. In *Hamlet*, the legitimacy crisis that occurs after the king's death and Gertrude's remarriage make the instability of the political order visible. In *King Lear*, the political collapse that begins with the division of the kingdom only regains meaning through the moral order represented by Cordelia.

The female rulers on stage are theatrical and political bodies. This performative vulnerability transforms the female ruler figures into a gendered political body. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude's hasty remarriage to Claudius leads to the perception of the desires of the natural body as a threat to the continuity of the political order. This is revealed in Hamlet's words, "Frailty, thy name is woman -" (1.2.146). In *King Lear*, Cordelia's expression of love without exaggeration, "Love, and be silent" (1.1.62), allows the body to become the moral foundation of political representation through moderation. As such, the bodily fragility of female figures is transformed into a gendered political body that determines how authority is reimagined. Their authority is constantly established performatively in the eyes of the audience. Sovereignty is conceptualized as an abstract institutional principle in the Tudor doctrine and on the Shakespearean stage it becomes an experience that is embodied, exhibited, and dramatized. The representation of sovereignty as a bodily experience on the Shakespearean stage inevitably raises the question of through which bodies this political meaning is constructed. The central role of female figures, especially during the moments of crisis in political order, necessitates a rethinking of the representation of sovereignty within the context of gender.

The forms of political representation and subjectification of women in the early-modern period are one of the fundamental areas of debate in feminist Shakespeare criticism. Female characters in tragedies represent both the fragility of the social order and the possibility of ethical resistance (Neely, 1988). While daughter figures are symbolic central focus that reveal the internal tensions of patriarchal authority (Boose, 1982) within Shakespearean drama, female characters in Shakespeare's historical plays, such as Queen Margaret in *Richard III* or Joan of Arc in *Henry VI*, function as figures who question the gender norms of the early-modern period and expose the instability (Rackin, 2002) by interfering expectations of female silence, obedience and political passivity. Although previous research has commonly examined female figures within the context of gender and representation (Boose, 1982; Neely, 1988), this study re-evaluates the dramatic positions of the characters within the conceptual relationship between ancient philosophy and Tudor political theology. This comparative approach displays that sovereignty is transformed into a bodily, ethical, and representational experience on the Shakespearean stage.

The performance-based understanding of sovereignty means that every movement on stage carries political meaning. When the ruler's body is threatened, weakened or corrupted, the political body is also endangered. Gertrude and Cordelia offer two contrasting examples in this context. Gertrude's natural body which appears to be associated with desire accelerates the failure of the political order. Early in the play, Hamlet's metaphor of the leftovers of the feast between the funeral and the wedding "Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral bak'd meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-181) can be read as demonstrating how the haste and desire associated with Gertrude's natural body, destroy the symbolic continuity of political authority. By shortening the distance between mourning and marriage, the play stages sovereignty as vulnerable

to bodily impulses. In contrast, Cordelia's disciplined, measured, and loyal body demonstrates the continuity and integrity on stage that the political body should possess. Her response of "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87) to Lear's question about whether she could express her love for him more worthily than her siblings did, embody the Platonic form of moderation on stage. Through these two female characters Shakespeare brings to stage the physical and psychological conditions that determine the continuation or breakdown of authority. Gertrude's inner state that seems to lack ethical self-control reveals the fragility of the political order. Conversely, Cordelia's conscious moderation represents the possible condition for moral continuity. The transformation from the concept of sovereignty as an abstract political principle to its representation on stage as a bodily and performative experience is not limited to individual characters. Drama itself becomes an extension of Tudor's political aesthetic. The stage materializes the abstract political doctrine specifically through the characters' physical performances. Cordelia's refusal to participate in the performance of love with her answer, interrupts the representation of sovereignty by making silence itself a political gesture. Similarly, Gertrude's rapid remarriage and Hamlet's critique of it by making an ironic comment on the food being served at the funeral and the wedding, establish the power of bodily actions on stage to produce political meaning. In this way, the audience is invited to experience how every fragility in the ruler's natural body threatens the stability of the political body. These tragedies suggest that political authority is an abstract concept and an object to be observed on stage because power operates primarily through visibility. This makes Shakespeare's queens, particularly Gertrude and Cordelia, especially significant. They reveal how authority becomes visible through bodily performance. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude's remarriage functions as a political performance which becomes a symbol of political instability. The tension between her identity as a widowed queen and her responsibility to represent the political order creates a conflict between the desires of the natural body and the ethical demands of the political body. In *King Lear*, Cordelia's conscious silence and restrained attitude offer a different performative model. Cordelia's ethical conduct and her rejection of rhetorical exaggeration create a force that enables the integrity of the political order. Through these two female figures, Shakespeare brings to the stage how authority is resolved or maintained with the tension of bodily desire and ethical self-control.

Gertrude: the collapse of natural and political bodies

As it is framed in the dramatic structure of the play, Gertrude's behaviour appears to embody Plato's warning about the disturbance of harmony between the three parts of the soul, which are reason (logistikon), pride (thymes), and desire (*epithymetikon*). The dominance of the power of desire over reason and moderation becomes the source of the breakdown of individual and political order. This psychological dissonance, combined with the ruin of the unity between the natural body and the political body, places Gertrude at the centre of the collapse both ethically and institutionally. The shortening of the ceremonial line between mourning and marriage weakens the symbolic integrity of the monarchical order. This transforms the ethical crisis into an institutional one. Gertrude can be read as a conflicted political figure who embodies the tension between the collapse of the Platonic ideal of internal order and the inability to meet the demand for the continuity of the Tudor political body. Hamlet's interpretation of his mother's remarriage, which occurs before her grieving process is complete, demonstrates Gertrude's deviation from moderation and simultaneously weakens the representation of the monarchical continuity. In turn, the tension between these two systems strengthens on stage. The most significant problem with

Gertrude's position of power is that she acts based on personal needs and emotions instead of considering the political consequences of her actions. Her remarriage can be explained by the passion of the natural body. This weakens the rituals of mourning, memory, and legitimacy that ensure the continuity of the political body and eventually damages the symbolic order of monarchical continuity. This marriage, arranged immediately after the king's death, is in Hamlet's eyes not only infidelity of a mother figure, but also a ceremonial corruption that wounds the political body of the state. Although the death of the king's natural body should not end the continuity of the political body, Claudius's rise to power transforms this transfer into a crisis of legitimacy. This crisis lies in Hamlet's belief that his mother's marriage with his uncle is an incestuous act as he states, "She married – O most wicked speed! To post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" (1.2.156-157). Secondly, he expresses his disappointment of the speed of the marriage, "A little month, or ere those shoes were old / With which she follow'd my poor father's body" (1.2.147-148). Both make Claudius's rise to power appear morally and politically illegitimate. Moreover, Hamlet's words, "Frailty, thy name is woman-" (1.2.146), are more than a personal insult. Instead of reflecting a direct inherent weakness of Gertrude, it appears to be a rhetorical framework of the early-modern period, which commonly saw the female body and sexuality as a moral threat. The words stand for a political statement that is connected to the weakness of Gertrude's natural body, which threatens the integrity of the political body. This weakness is evident in Gertrude's hasty remarriage. The conflict between the role she represents and the norms of mourning that the Tudor era expects of a widowed queen creates great unease throughout the play. In the political aesthetics of the Elizabethan period, the monarch's body, which is the queen's body in this case, is positioned as the bearer of stability and institutional memory (Kantorowicz, 1957). In contrast, Gertrude's portrayal offers an example of the reversal of this ideal. Instead of embodying the integrity of the political body, she becomes a figure surrounded by the transient passions of the natural body. This creates a profound conflict between the institutional political body, which represents the abstract continuity of the state authority, and the natural body, which is driven by personal desires. Gertrude's marriage to Claudius makes the rift between the natural and political bodies invisible by portraying the new king's rule as a natural continuation of the monarchical order. This portrayal takes place through the staging of Gertrude's marriage as a public ceremony, which makes the transfer of power appear natural. Her inability to maintain this dual physical structure plays a role in the disruption of order in the play. Her siding with Claudius deepens not only the family conflict but also the destruction of ethical ground within the state. Gertrude's inability to see political truth, that is, the illegitimacy of Claudius's rule founded upon fratricide, is marked on stage as the blindness of the political body. Claudius's ability to conceal the murder of his brother and maintain his legitimacy through his marriage to Gertrude arises, in part, from Gertrude's failure to fulfil the moral responsibility she is supposed to represent. The queen's duty to protect the political body dissolves and gradually fades in the desires of the natural body. Gertrude's death is the ultimate dramatic expression of this collapse. Her death, having drunk from the cup poisoned by Claudius, is the tangible symbol on stage of the rupture between the natural body and the political body. The death of the natural body completely destroys the already compromised legitimacy of the political body. Thus, Gertrude becomes a victim of tragedy and also an allegorical figure that demonstrates the collapse of the theological-political structure between the two bodies.

Consequently, Gertrude is a figure who departs from Plato's conception of governance based on the harmony of the soul and the Tudor ideal of political continuity. The conflict she represents on stage demonstrates that political legitimacy is determined by abstract institutional principles such as succession and the continuity of the political body and also by the bodily and ethical performances of those in power.

Cordelia: the embodiment of moral and political power

Cordelia is one of Shakespeare's most powerful characters in *King Lear*, who represents the harmony that should exist between the natural body and the political body. However, some critics have also interpreted Cordelia as a politically naïve and rhetorically limited figure or have pointed out that she is inexperienced in politics (Olsson, 2013; Brown, 2025). The reading proposed here aims to examine how the play frames her ethical position in terms of political means. It does not claim that Cordelia is an ideal model but acknowledges the fact that she is portrayed to fit an ideal figure in whom these bodies are united. Her presence on stage forms a bridge between Plato's notion of the order of the soul and the Tudor's doctrine of political continuity. Cordelia's actions demonstrate that although her sovereignty is ceremonial and institutional, it is also nourished by ethical integrity, by a balanced relationship between reason and emotion. Her choice to speak with moderation and honesty is a dramatic example of how Plato's model of the soul governed by reason operates in the political sphere. The ethical continuity that Cordelia represents aligns with the Tudor doctrine's notion of the political body as an institutional whole existing beyond the mortal ruler. This is evident in Cordelia's refusal of using hyperbolic words for political gain and her expression of loyalty as an ethical principle that is independent of personal gain. Her character makes visible the idea that political legitimacy rests more on internal stability than on ceremonial performances. Her famous response to Lear's test of love forms the basis of her moral character: "I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more no less" (1.1.92-93). This statement can be read less as disobedience and more as a sign of Platonic integrity of spirit. She speaks guided by reason and refuses to turn her passions into an artificial spectacle. Hence, she preserves both her genuine love for her father and the moderation required by the political order. Like Plato's guardian, Cordelia's courage does not come from emotional outbursts. Instead, it stems from determination to defend the truth. She appears on stage as a daughter and as a governing spirit who carries ethical responsibility into the political sphere. Even her silence is a political act. Cordelia's response to Lear's demand that his daughters publicly declare their love is "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87). It is the initial break in the continuity of the public ceremonial performance of Lear's love test that supports his political body. Here silence becomes a measured act of virtue that exposes the artificiality of the political body. Her refusal to speak which is her choice of moderation over intimacy, obedience, or emotional display, reveals the artificiality of the ceremonial political body Lear is trying to construct. As Lear attempts to establish his political authority through rhetorical performance, he rewards Goneril and Regan for their exaggerated declarations of love. While Goneril claims that she loves him "more than word can wield the matter" (1.1.55) and with "a love that makes breath poor and speech unable" (1.1.60), Regan states that her sister comes "too short" (1.1.72) in her love and argues that she is "an enemy to all other joys" (1.1.73) and values nothing but Lear's love. However, Cordelia reminds him that it is character, not words, that endures by merely stating "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87). Shakespeare portrays Cordelia's silence as a political principle which is that truth is only legitimate when spoken with the measure of reason. This stance is the stage embodiment of Plato's ideal of the just

individual who balances the three parts of the soul; reason (*logistikon*), pride (*thymes*) and desire (*epithymetikon*).

Moreover, Cordelia's exile and marriage to the King of France present a staging that tests the limits of the political body as a structural connection to dynastic and territorial continuity. As Lear surrenders his authority to the fragile emotions of his natural body, Cordelia, by going to a foreign land, embodies the universal principles of the political body which are loyalty, honesty and temperance. Her political identity rests not on the physical power of the throne, but on moral commitment. Cordelia's almost constant representation on stage of restrained gestures, low toned speech, and calm posture at a performative level reveals the integration of her political body with the Platonic order of the soul. This moderation is specifically evident in her brief and controlled speech during the love test scene where she states "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87) and in her calm and forgiving attitude when she encounters Lear again at the French camp where, in response to his expression of guilt "I am a very foolish, fond old man" (4.7.60), she gently replies, "No cause, no cause" (4.7.75). This is a rare harmony that brings together the king's two bodies as Cordelia's natural body neither increases with pride nor comes under the influence of passion. Her political body flourishes within moderation. Cordelia's death at the end of the play reveals a tragic tension in Shakespeare's political thought, that moral righteousness does not always triumph in political life. On the other hand, Cordelia's death is not a downfall like Gertrude's, but a tragic consequence of the collapse that follows the detachment of the political body from its moral foundation. Cordelia's death marks the end of her natural body but the political body she represents which is the continuity of justice and loyalty, continues to live on in the viewer's mind. This continuity is sustained in the audience's awareness, as Cordelia's absence renders visible the moral decay on stage. In this regard, Cordelia is a Shakespearean character who, in the Platonic sense, connects the metaphysical permanence of political authority to the harmony of the soul.

In conclusion, Cordelia is a figure in Shakespeare's political imagination who demonstrates that moral integrity is a precondition for political legitimacy. The harmony she creates on stage brings together Plato's model of the gender-neutral guardian and the Tudor doctrine's concept of political continuity. Cordelia is a female sovereignty whose authority is primarily moral and symbolic rather than institutional. She embodies a harmony between the natural and political bodies and reinforces ethical responsibility. On this basis, when Cordelia and Gertrude are read together, it becomes clear how the Platonic doctrine of the harmony of the soul and the Tudor political doctrine of the body dramatically clash and are reshaped in these two opposing female figures. This conflict becomes visible in the contrast between the ceremonial and body politic representation and the internal order based on ethical moderation.

The dramatic contrast between the Platonic soul and the Tudor politic

Shakespeare's female characters emerge as contrasting figures who test how the Platonic order of the soul and the Tudor concept of the political body operate. While both of these models of sovereignty are based on a principle of unity independent of biological differences, the Shakespearean stage demonstrates that these principles can only be embodied through specific ethical and physical performances. Gertrude and Cordelia offer two extreme examples that dramatically reveal the conditions under which abstract models of sovereignty collapse or endure. Gertrude brings to the stage how the dominance of the power of desire over reason and moderation produces a collapse in Plato's order of the soul. According to Plato, justice is possible through the

balance of the parts of the soul and Gertrude's body which is unable to maintain this balance is represented on both ethical and political levels. The same collapse reappears within the framework of Tudor doctrine where the queen's natural body cannot bear the weight of ceremony, mourning, and legitimacy that the political body must carry. This is exemplified in Gertrude's hasty remarriage where personal desire becomes more important than the political ceremony or the mourning of her husband, the king. Gertrude is introduced as a negative example of how the abstract principle of unity that is envisioned by both models, disintegrates in the face of bodily passions. On the other hand, Cordelia is one of the clearest representations of Platonic rational order and spiritual harmony on the stage. Her measured love, silence, and honesty demonstrate that the parts of the soul function in harmony which is seen in her measured expression of affection in the love test of Lear, her preference for silence as she does not have the need to express her love to her father among public, and her rejection of exaggerated rhetoric. Therefore, Cordelia, like Plato's guardian, can be read as the source of power under the guidance of reason. From the perspective of the Tudor doctrine, Cordelia represents the moral core of institutional continuity by placing her natural body at the service of the political body that carries legitimacy. She embodies the harmony that must be established between the natural and political bodies. She generates political power through the continuity of her character which is evident in her consistent refusal of rhetorical performance that turns love into a political spectacle, her rejection of revenge after exile, and her return with an army to save her father, thereby demonstrating moral continuity.

When Cordelia and Gertrude are considered in parallel, it becomes clear that the play tests abstract models of authority, that is, Plato's ideal guardian model and the Tudor concept of the king's two bodies, through the female body. Gertrude represents the point where the order of the soul and the political body collapse simultaneously. However, Cordelia becomes a representation of wholeness who is capable of embodying both abstract models. The comparison reveals the limits, possibilities, and the contradictions of Platonic and Tudor conceptions of authority through these two female characters. This comparison reinforces this study's central thesis. Female figures in Shakespeare's work are not only representative characters. They are also performative arenas for testing different models of sovereignty. The contrast between Gertrude and Cordelia dramatically demonstrates that the source of dominance lies in the spiritual and ethical integrity it embodies.

Conclusion

From the perspective of Shakespearean tragedies, this study investigates how female authority on the early-modern stage became a philosophical and political arena by considering the Plato's order of the soul and the Tudor doctrine of the king's two bodies. A comparative analysis of Gertrude and Cordelia demonstrates that these two concepts are represented on the Shakespearean stage and are also subjected to dramatic scrutiny. In this context, the study presents a theoretical framework based on the structural similarities between the Platonic order of the soul and the Tudor political concept of the body, and the ways in which these models are represented through female authority figures on the Shakespearean stage.

The study takes into consideration Plato's understanding of sovereignty which is based on the harmony of the soul and the primacy of reason and it focuses on the ethical and political ideal. Furthermore, Shakespeare's texts have been read as dramatic transformations of concepts circulating in the early-modern intellectual world. Therefore, Platonic mind-body tension has been

interpreted on the Shakespearean stage as a conceptual similarity and a process of representational reconstruction. Furthermore, the doctrine of the king's two bodies is a technical concept for legal texts and also was an ideological framework that circulated through forms of cultural representation in the early-modern period. From this perspective, the political bodies staged in Shakespearean tragedy can be read as engaging with this broader pattern of thought. The article positions Shakespeare's stage as a dramatic laboratory that reveals the tensions and possibilities of these two traditions. The stage becomes a performative place where conflicts are demonstrated through the actions of the characters. As such, the study offers an interdisciplinary contribution to Shakespearean studies by examining Platonic political anthropology and Tudor political theology within the framework of feminist literary criticism. It proposes a reading of sovereignty as an experience produced on stage through the body and representation.

Gertrude and Cordelia are considered as representations where legitimacy is tested. The test becomes dramatically visible specifically through the political breakdown represented by Gertrude's hasty marriage and the ethical continuity represented by Cordelia's restrained silence. Gertrude with her soul driven by desire and passion for remarriage and emotional intimacy, symbolizes the collapse of Plato's ideal of the just individual, while simultaneously being unable to bear the burden of moral and institutional continuity of the political body which holds a central place in Tudor doctrine of the king's two bodies. By contrast, Cordelia stands out as an exceptional figure where these two models can be reconciled. Her moderation, loyalty, and commitment to truth can be read as the embodiment on stage of Plato's order of the soul balanced by reason. At the same time, Cordelia represents the moral core that makes the continuity of the political body possible in the Tudor doctrine which is embodied in her prioritization of ethical loyalty over personal desires.

This comparison of the two female figures demonstrates that Shakespeare reworks sovereignty as a process that needs to be reshaped through bodies, emotions, and performances on stage. Reading Gertrude and Cordelia together reveal that the female body occupies a central space in early-modern thought as a place where the meaning of sovereignty is tested. Finally, this analysis considers that female figures play an important role in literary representation and also in the continuity of political and philosophical thought. The contrast between Gertrude's downfall due to the dominance of desire over reason and Cordelia's moral resistance against the ceremonial performance demanded by Lear clearly demonstrates that the source of political power emerges from the ethical integrity grounded in reason and moral loyalty embodied by these bodies.

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