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The Unruly Body and the Regulatory Mechanisms in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child and Ben*, *in the World*

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THE UNRULY BODY AND THE REGULATORY MECHANISMS IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE FIFTH CHILD* AND *BEN, IN THE WORLD*

Abstract

Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) and *Ben, in the World* (2000) narrate the tragic story of Ben Lovatt who is identified as the anomalous fifth child in the Lovatt family. Set in London in the 1960s, with its focalisation on Ben's early childhood, from his mother's pregnancy to his confinement into his cot after his birth, *The Fifth Child* navigates through the ideological construction of Ben's self through power and isolation. *Ben, in the World*, on the other hand, maintains Ben's story from his eighteenth year and presents his strife for survival in a social world in which he is forced to be a member of society with his social self and social body. While both works can be regarded as the adventures of Ben, who is isolated and alienated from his family and society, they also draw social environs in which Ben's body is constructed via the discursive mechanisms of otherness and wildness. Ben's othered self and body are foregrounded by abnormal corporeal relations and unhuman depictions throughout Lessing's fiction. In this sense, this study focuses on the trajectories of Ben's body in these narratives to discuss Ben's unruly body which is forced to be regulated by the familial, social and institutional mechanisms of power.

Keywords: Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child*, *Ben, in the World*, Body, Regulation, Regulatory Mechanisms, Family, Society

DORIS LESSING'İN *THE FIFTH CHILD* VE *BEN, IN THE WORLD* ADLI ESERLERİNDE İTAATSİZ BEDEN VE DÜZEN MEKANİZMALARI

Öz

Doris Lessing tarafından kaleme alınan *The Fifth Child* (1988) ve *Ben, in the World* (2000), Lovatt ailesi içerisinde aykırı beşinci evlat olarak tanımlanan Ben Lovatt'ın trajik hikâyesini anlatır. Ben'in annesi olan Harriet'in gebeliğinden başlayarak doğumundan sonra Ben'in kendi odasına kapatılmasına odaklanan ve 1960lar Londra'sında geçen *The Fifth Child*, Ben'in benliğinin güç ve tecrit aracılığıyla ideolojik olarak inşası etrafında seyreder. Nitekim *Ben, in the World*, öyküyü ana karakterin on sekizinci yaşından devam ettirir ve yaşadığı toplumun bir üyesi olmaya zorlanan sosyal bir dünyada, Ben'in sosyal bir ben ve sosyal bir beden olarak hayatta kalma mücadelesini yansıtır. Bu iki eser, kendi ailesinden ve yaşadığı toplumdan dışlanan ve ailesine ve topluma karşı yabancılaştırılan Ben'in maceraları olarak telakki edilse de bu anlatılar aynı zamanda Ben'in bedeninin ötekilik ve yabanıllığa dair söylemsel mekanizmalar vasıtasıyla inşa edildiği sosyal çevreleri de gösterir. Ben'in ötekileştirilen kimliği ve bedeni, Lessing'in bu eserleri içerisinde norm dışı bedensel ilişkiler ve insan dışı betimlemeler tarafından öne çıkarılır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, ailesel, sosyal ve kurumsal güç mekanizmalarıyla düzenlenmeye zorlanan Ben'in itaatsiz bedenini tartışmak amacıyla iki anlatıdaki Ben'in bedensel gezingelerine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child*, *Ben, in the World*, Beden, Regülasyon, Düzen Mekanizmaları, Aile, Toplum

Introduction

Awarded the 2001 David Cohen Prize and the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature,[1] Doris Lessing is acknowledged as one of the leading figures in the contemporary British literature. Born to British parents in Iran in 1919 and having moved to England in 1949, Lessing's concern in fiction writing is described as resisting boundaries in the modern world. Virginia Tiger, in her "The Nobel Prize: The 'Fixing' of Doris Lessing", writes that "[d]efying classification, yet always as imaginatively sensitive as a barometer to the twentieth and now twenty-first century's complex climates, Doris Lessing has – for the past fifty-eight years – spoken directly to more than one generation's experience, teaching them about private pain, public chauvinism, the divisiveness inherent in even the least radical of causes" (2009: 93). In a world entrold with political, cultural, and economic tensions, Lessing's writings range from feminist attitudes to apocalyptic concerns, and her fictional problematisation of contemporary issues points out that she "is the most intensely committed to active persuasion to reform society" (Gindin, 1962: 9). Her forty-year of writing career demonstrates that her style and tone cannot be categorised under several tendencies in literature. As Whittaker notes, labels such as Feminism, Marxism or Mysticism are shifting boundaries to define the evocation of her ideas (3).[2]

In her critical acclaim, *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World* are regarded as closer to the fable genre as Lessing is thought to convey a moral via her characterisation of Ben. Nevertheless, in both novels, Lessing goes beyond only conveying a social message that forms a moral for the readers. By constructing an ideal family, Lessing directly presents how its happiness can be disrupted by a monstrous child, and she also delves into questioning the ways of survival in a family and in a society that intricately form the self and the body. *The Fifth Child*, with its characterisation of Ben Lovatt as the bestial and anomalous fifth child in the Lovatt family, narrates the tragic story of Ben and the complex incidents in the family caused by his presence after his birth. In an interview with Claire Tomalin, Lessing states that she is inspired by three sources in formulating such a different character and writing Ben's story: her fascination with little and malformed people; her reading of a Neanderthal girl described by the essayist and archaeologist, Loren Eiseley; and a letter of a mother in the newspaper that narrates her feelings and thoughts about her little daughter. Particularly, the mother's letter in the newspaper influenced Lessing as the mother wrote, "this little devil, this horrible little imp, which had ruined the family; she was born evil; she was born wicked and malicious and horrible; and the whole family had suffered" (Tomalin, 1994: 176). These sources inspired Lessing's two novels, especially, the characterisation of Ben who is identified as an eccentric child in the family.

In *The Fifth Child*, the story revolves around the Lovatts – Harriet and David – who meet at a party, fall in love, and marry. While their marriage is blessed by four children; respectively, Luke, Helen, Jane and Paul, this idyllic familial union is disturbed by the birth of their fifth child, Ben. Set in 1960s England, Lessing's work primarily focuses on Harriet's pregnancy, Ben's infancy and early childhood, and the family's desire to control Ben due to his disproportionate body and abnormal behaviours that are wild and bestial towards family members and their guests. *Ben, in the World* maintains Lessing's fictional world of Ben, who is eighteen years old at the beginning of the novel with a focus on his intrapersonal relations in different settings ranging from England to Brazil. Situating Ben as a lonely, isolated, and deviant character in the social world, Lessing shifts the focalisation from his early childhood and presents the possibilities of Ben's survival in the world of order, rule, and civilisation. Interestingly, both of Lessing's novels present a portrayal of Ben's pathological body in different developmental stages. Although his physical body changes both in size and appearance over time, his body's pathological signs remain incorporated in his relations with other characters around him and in the world with which he tries to connect. The body, thus, is a social site that not only represents Ben's otherness and alienation but also stands as a marker of social regulation, discipline and control. In this sense, this study focuses on Ben's unruly body and its contextual trajectories, and discusses that Ben's body is regulated by familial, social and institutional controlling mechanisms.

1. The Politics of the Body

[1]The Swedish Academy, for the award, explains that Lessing represents the "epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny" ("The Nobel Prize in Literature" 2007). For further details, please see The Nobel Prize in Literature 2007. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2019. Fri. 28 Jun 2019. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2007/summary/>. Accessed 26 July 2019.

[2] Ruth Whittaker, in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*, writes, "Doris Lessing's literary career spans nearly forty years, and during that time her focus has shifted. Critical attempts to pin her down and label her as 'Marxist', 'feminist' or, more recently, a 'mystic', have been superseded by the evolution of her ideas" (3). For further details, please see Whittaker, Ruth. *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001.

Body as an organic unity and as a visible image is susceptible to changing definitions, cultural formations and social construction. Body is a site which is defined and redefined in relation to social environments. When a body is located in a social world, it continuously becomes a site that not only conveys messages but also a material that is discursively and politically shaped. Both as a subject and an object, the body is indispensably located in the web of social discourses which dictate norms, rules, ideologies and standards onto it. In this sense, the body becomes a tool for the discourses of power that regulate and control it, or in other words, it is operated by the mechanisms of power, which, as a result, constitutes the politics of the body. In its widest sense, the politics of the body refers to the idea that "the body itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control" (Brown and Gershon, 2017: 1). Regarding the politics of the body, studies extensively draw upon Michel Foucault's ideas which reiteratively revolve around the concepts of power, control and regulation. Foucault's concern over power broadly indicates that body is central to understand the ways of knowledge and regulation, which are politically dictated to the body. For Foucault, the body is a product of institutions and power that continuously remind themselves. Approaching the body as a material or an object that can be manipulated or controlled, Foucault, in "The Body of the Condemned," writes that "the body itself is invested by power relations" (1984: 171). The implementation of power through discourses and practices control and regulate bodies. Namely, the body stands as an instrument on which power is executed. Foucault also adds that "it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" even at times when anyone needs to be punished violently or leniently (1984: 172). Thus, the Foucauldian approach to the concept of the body is highly linked to the mechanisms of power that are used on the body to produce submissive bodies and individuals.

The execution of the mechanisms of power, which politically produces submissive bodies, rests upon the Foucauldian idea of the "docile" bodies:

> discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a "capacity," which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (Foucault, "Docile Bodies," 1984: 182).

Discipline, as a form of control and regulation, is a method of power that imposes rules and sanctions on the body. The social function of discipline, therefore, reposes on obedience and docility which become normative elements in the mainstream. Thus, disciplining and controlling the body imply the reduction of the body into a state where it is politically useful for the mechanisms of power. In this manner, the social body, as Foucault puts it in "Right of Death and Power over Life," is shaped by the "techniques of power" and is "utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them" (1984: 263).

In literary studies, the representation of the body has an interesting status due to the visibility and materiality that characterise the actual body. While the body is defined and characterised by its material and tangible qualities, the body in literature is not embodied tangibly. David Hillman and Ulrika Maude, in their "Introduction" to *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, suggests

> [t]he fact is that there are no bodies in literature. Not only there is no obvious way for the concrete materiality of the body to be fully present in or on the written page; even more profoundly, there would seem on the face of it to be an apparent mutual exclusivity of the body and language – the one all brute facticity, the other presupposing precisely the absence of matter. And yet, over the last three or four decades, critics and theorists have found myriad ways of addressing the representation of the body and embodied experience in literature. (2015: 3)

In light of Hillman and Maude's ideas above, it can be said that literary representations of the body can address questions and issues that are closely linked to the politics of the body even though there are not visible concrete bodies inscribed in the literary texts. In this sense, while it seems almost impossible to conceptualise an actual body in fictional narratives, it is critical that the body is still at stake, which complicates the existence of body or its right to be embodied. This is why this study aims to re-evaluate the corporeal representation of

Ben in *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*, and to discuss how Ben's body is controlled by his family, society and institutions, acting as the mechanisms of regulation.

2. The Familial Regulatory Forces in *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in The World*

In *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*, Ben's body is employed as a leitmotif that is reiteratively delineated as the other, the monstrous, and the animalistic. In *The Fifth Child*, Ben's difference and otherness are, first of all, emphasised by his family, particularly by his siblings. The first child, Luke, was born in 1966, and is described as "an easy baby. He slept most peaceably in the little room off the big bedroom, and was contentedly breastfed. Happiness!" (Lessing, 2001: 24). Then, respectively, Helen was born in 1968 and Jane in 1970. After the birth of these children, the text repeatedly emphasises the happiness in the Lovatt family: "Happiness. A happy family. The Lovatts were a happy family. It was that they had chosen and what they deserved" (2001: 28). In 1973, their fourth child, Paul, was born. The narrative points to minor problems in Harriet's previous pregnancies by narrating "nothing serious, but she was tired" (2001: 30). Yet, the fifth child's anomaly is signalled during Harriet's pregnancy since "unlike anything she had known before" this baby is moving as if beating a drum (2001: 45). The pain Ben causes in his mother's body is likened to a scientific experiment that is "welding two kinds of animal together, of different sizes" (2001: 52). By likening Ben's restlessness in the womb to the movements of animals such as a spaniel, lion, dog, horse, donkey, tiger, and a goat in the narrative depiction, the mother feels Ben's "claws" in her belly (2001: 52). These bestial imageries in the text foreshadow Ben's unruly nature and refer to his monstrosity. In this sense, Ben's body is introduced as different from his siblings' bodies, which, illustrates the power of the accepted norms set by the family and their discriminatory discourse separating Ben from the family even before his birth. Emile Benveniste, in "Subjectivity in Language," argues that language is both a tool for communication and a discursive mechanism that formulates the subjectivity of "I" in relation to "you." He writes that "[i]t is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of *person*, for it implies that reciprocally *I* becomes *you* in the address of the one who in his turn designates himself as *I*" (Benveniste, 2007: 41; emphasis in original). In Ben's case, the textual referents to Ben's othered position confirm the fact that family members' normativity of being *I* not only defines Ben's extraordinary body but also defines their own selves and bodies positioned into the accepted norms of being *I*. This is why the norms of the family do not approve of Ben's non-normative body and subjectivity.

Ben's body starts to be regulated while he is in his mother's womb which includes a paradoxical dynamism; in other words, the womb acts both as a protective shield that isolates Ben from the risks of the external world and as a vessel that incorporates Ben's body and transmits regulatory discourse via the mother's corporeal signs. Kristeva's notion of *chora*, in "Revolution in Poetic Language," helps to delve into the interaction between Ben and the mother, which also provides an understanding of how Ben's body is located in the discourse of regulatory and disciplining power supervised by the mother's practices. Defined as the earliest and the pre-lingual stage until six months, Kristeva defines *chora* as "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is full of movement as it is regulated" (2007: 71). The concept of *chora* is linked to the formation of the subject; however, it is not a subject yet because "the instinctual drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks articulate what we call a *chora*" (2007: 71). Ben's location in the mother's womb and its bodily and discursive capacity that shape his self and body complicate his status that is deprived of linguistic order. Kristevan concept of *chora* is regulated through "vocal and gestural organization" that is also called "objective ordering," and it is dictated by the "family structure" (2007: 71). Ben's family, particularly his mother during her pregnancy and the postnatal stage are the objective orders that organise Ben's subject position; that is, he is situated into the web of a regulatory process. In Kristeva's terms, the infant is placed in a "semiotic process – by family and social structures" and this process enforces several restrictions and rules on its body (2007: 71). In this respect, the Lovatts other and alienate Ben before his birth, and this alienating effect continues after his birth. The familial expectations of David, the father, and Harriet in their marriage function as regulative rules on Ben as they displace him due to his corporeal anomaly. Since David believes that Ben is an "extraordinary" baby, "the good father, hardly touched him" after the delivery (Lessing, 2001: 63, 69). As for Harriet, the mother's body acts as the mediator between Ben's and her own body. For instance, Harriet is extremely tired of feeding Ben: "Her breasts were painful. Making more milk than they ever had had to do, her chest welled into two bursting white globes long before the next feed was due. But Ben was already roaring for it, and she fed him, and he drained every drop in two or three minutes" (Lessing, 2001: 64). These repetitive instances of feeding Ben cause Harriet to name him as a "Neanderthal baby" (2001: 65). Positing Ben in a state of otherness, Harriet remains in an ambiguous maternal field in which Ben is fed but at the same time rejected. Kristeva renders the idea that "the semiotic *chora* is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where

his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him. [It is] the act of a judging subject" (2007: 72). As a result, the family is the precursor of Ben's bodily formation, and they also possess feelings that primarily distinguish Ben from the other children in the family, "[f]or they both [Harriet and David] felt—secretly, they were ashamed of the thoughts they had about Ben—that he had willed himself to be born, had invaded their ordinariness, which had no defences against him or anything like him" (Lessing, 2001: 70-71). Ben's pathological body, therefore, becomes a body in process, the process where the familial discourse identifies Ben as the other by modulating his body.

In the postnatal stage, Harriet's face stands for the maternal discourse that controls Ben and transfers her feelings onto the infant's body. Harriet's sharing looks with Ben crystallises Ben's bodily misrecognition and his controlled body. Donald Woods Winnicott, in "Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development", argues that "[i]n individual emotional development *the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face*" (2004: 144; emphasis original). Focusing on the role of the mother's face, and emphasising the bodily attachment between the infant and the mother, Winnicott explains that when it looks at the mother's face, "what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words, the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there"* (2004: 145; emphasis in original). Significantly, the first moment when Harriet and Ben interact via their faces and make eye contact consolidates Ben's physical otherness. The mother-infant bond in *The Fifth Child* is almost absent since Harriet's pregnancy. Winnicott draws attention to the mother-infant bond where the contact and interaction include also the bodily attachment and the looks. In the light of this view, "[s]he [Harriet] had been waiting to exchange looks with the creature who, she had been sure, had been trying to hurt her, but there was no recognition there," as a result, the mother-infant relationship is based on negation and rejection (Lessing, 2001: 60). Harriet's feelings and thoughts of Ben at this moment unearths her own feelings about the baby since "her heart contracted with pity for him; poor little beast, his mother disliking him so much . . . But she heard herself say nervously, though she tried to laugh, 'He's like a troll, or a goblin or something.' And she cuddled him, to make up. But he was stiff and heavy" (2001: 60-61). As what the infant sees is linked to what the mother sees, there is hate, horror, disappointment, and menace on the mother's face, and these feelings are transferred to Ben's body. The language and emotions of the mother, therefore, represent him as a pathological threat to the unity of the Lovatts.

Ben is a threat to the happiness of the Lovatts, and thus, he is always neglected and physically confined in the house where the horror and his loathed body are hidden. Ben's grotesque body stands for the uncanny in the house. Uncanny, which means eerie and mysterious, is clarified by Sigmund Freud in his study entitled "The 'Uncanny'", as follows: "[t]he German word *unheimlich*: is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, meaning 'familiar'; 'native,' 'belonging to the home'; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar" (1955: 220). Freud adds that *heimlich* and *unheimlic*h are intrinsically bound; they exist within each other and thus, something *heimlich* is at the same time *unheimlich*. Ben's uncanny position is repressed like the undesired repressed thoughts in Freudian psychoanalysis. In the text, Ben's detention and imprisonment in his caged cot in a locked room exemplifies how the family controls and represses the undesired child and his loathed body: "Now Ben was almost always in his room, like a prisoner" (Lessing, 2001: 72). It means that Ben, as the anomalous child of the family, both disturbs the family and is disturbed by the family. Due to Ben's grotesque body and wild behaviours, Sullivan and Greenberg assert that "[i]n Kristevan terms, Ben is a perfect example of the abject as he blurs the line between existing natural categories and brings disorder into the highly ordered system of the Lovatt's household" (2011: 120). In this sense, Ben's ambiguous position produces a controversy in which he is not able to identify with his own body as the family sees his bestial body as an unfamiliar object in the house. Therefore, the concealment of Ben's body refers to the maintenance of a familial set of rules in which each body is familiar, and thus, acts on biological and physical similarity. Ben's difference from his siblings and his unusual size are seen as the reasons for menace for the family. This is why, Ben's confinement is the family's method of self-protection, a defense mechanism for keeping the familial unity, and a way of domesticating Ben, and taming his unusual body to familiarise with the world of order.

Unlike *The Fifth Child*, *Ben, in the World* narrates Ben's interaction with other people instead of contacting his family. As he leaves his family with his gang at the end of *The Fifth Child*, Lessing draws a solitary traveller image of Ben in her sequel. The issue of the family in *Ben, in the World* emerges in the very beginning of the novel when he needs to prove that he is eighteen, and thus, requires a birth certificate that needs to be given to the Records Office. In fact, he tries to find his mother when he is fifteen, but he does not stay with his family due to his brother, Paul's hate. Thus, Mrs Ellen Biggs, with whom Ben Lives after he leaves his own family, asks him to go to his mother to take his birth certificate (Lessing, 2000: 10). Even though Ben tries to find his mother and goes to her house, he cannot find them at first, and therefore, looks for her at the parks where her mother might

be. He sees her mother and Paul at the park and feels that he does not belong to their family. This instance leads him to feel hate, rage, and violence towards his mother, and he sees Paul as a threat to the unity between him and his mother (2000: 24). Although he follows them to their house and tries to ask for the certificate, he retracts: "He walked away from his family, left it for ever, and the pain he felt cooled his anger" (2000: 26). Hence, the novel, in the very beginning, foregrounds the absence of the family, and presents the idea that Ben cannot connect with his family who does not want him in their house. In this sense, Ben's family pushes him into a social world at the end of *The Fifth Child*, and, Ben, with his alien body and bestial behaviours, has to survive in *Ben, in the World*. The absence of family in Ben's life is fulfilled only by Mrs Ellen Biggs who takes care of him like a mother as she feeds and cleans him, and strives to protect him from the dangers of the outer world. That is why when Ben is away from Mrs Biggs, he longs for her and home. As a mother image for Ben, Mrs Biggs provides him with the peace and maternal love that Ben is deprived of in *Ben, in the World*.

3. The Social Regulation and Ben's Body in *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*

In *The Fifth Child*, Ben is not socially integrated into the familial gatherings and activities since he is seen as a threat to the unity and the happiness of the family. The familial discourse, which others and isolates him from the rest of the family, also situates Ben into a state of loneliness and social alienation. This is why Ben looks for connection outside of the house and starts a gang, "Ben Lovatt's gang", which is fond of watching bloody films, shooting and killings on the television (Lessing, 2001: 146-147). It is ironic that Ben is isolated from the family due to his unusual body and animalistic behaviours, yet, his gang appreciates his body even though he is younger than them but is "squat, powerful, heavy-shouldered" (2001: 145). In this sense, his body becomes a useful tool to be a member of a gang. He can socialise with his friends for whom his body is acceptable unlike his family's rejection. When Harriet becomes aware of the fact that Ben drifts apart from his family and the house due to his gang, she questions the ways in which Ben's social body and self can be seen in the future in the final page of *The Fifth Child*:

> And why should they stay in this country? They could easily take off and disappear into any number of the world's great cities, join the underworld there, live off their wits. Perhaps quite soon, in the new house she would be living in (alone) with David, she would be looking at the box, and there, in a shot on the News of Berlin, Madrid, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, she would see Ben, standing rather apart from the crowd, staring at the camera with his goblin eyes, or searching the faces in the crowd for another of his own kind. (2001: 159)

The quote implies that Harriet and David do not want Ben in their life; that is why Ben leaves home with a group of people from the neighbourhood gang in the end. This is a way of defecating Ben, detoxifying the family from its germs and harms, and imagining Ben's tragic end, who is not fit for the society that has its normative rules and doctrines. In the end, Harriet's questioning of authority and fantasising about Ben's future highlights Ben's pathology: "in the last pages of *The Fifth Child* we are presented only with Harriet's fragmented, partial and limited perception of the story, and the reader whether s/he can trust completely the centre of consciousness that has been chosen as the main focalizer of the narration" (Anievas Gamallo, 2000: 122). The narrative, from the perspective of Harriet, leaves us a moment of doubt regarding the future of Ben. Still, the prudential and apprehensive ending of the novel foreshadows Ben's social body that is seen in *Ben, in the World*. Thus, the significance of the ending also rests upon the idea that family is the precursor of Ben's social body and self. Lessing, in an interview with Claire Tomalin states that "that child isn't evil at all. He's just out of the right place. If he is in fact the result of a gene which has come down through many centuries, all he is, is a different race of being that's landed up in our somewhat complicated society. But what I got fascinated by in writing that book was, how would we cope with it if it happened?" (1994: 177). Harriet and David's coping mechanism is imprisoning him in a cage or shutting their eyes to Ben's leaving home. The social side of Lessing's question is highly evoked in *Ben, in the World* in which Ben's social body and self are intricately woven into the social regulatory mechanisms.

Unlike *The Fifth Child*, *Ben, in the World* draws a solitary characterisation of Ben, shifts the setting into the streets and other houses, and narrates Ben's social relationships with other characters on different occasions and places. While the narrative depicts an aged and physically different Ben, his othered body is still foregrounded as is in *The Fifth Child*. In *Ben, in the World*, even though his body is still seen as abnormal and pathological, it becomes a social body as Ben interacts with people and he is defined and identified through his body from the characters' points of view. While the previous work mostly narrates Ben's unnatural behaviours

and monstrous body from the perspective of the characters in the family and the consequences that he endures, *Ben, in the World* includes Ben's own narrative voice through which he communicates and exists in relation to other characters. After his breakup with his family and a trial for survival on the streets of London, Ben starts to live with Mrs Ellen Biggs, an elderly woman. Later on, he meets Rita, a prostitute, and her pimp, Johnston; travels to France and meets Alex, a filmmaker; goes to Brazil with Teresa, Alex's girlfriend, and Alfredo, Teresa's later lover; climbs a mountain with them and commits suicide. In a relatively short narrative, his journey is once again marked by his body due to his unusual size, bestial behaviours, and savage communicational skills, which all signify his othered self and unruly nature.

The first scene in *Ben, in the World* is a Public Office which is symbolic in terms of grasping Ben's regulated body. He tries to prove that he is eighteen to apply for a pension as he lives with old Mrs Biggs who is not able to support herself and Ben anymore. Whereas Ben is eighteen, he seems thirty-five, and the clerk does not believe what he says about his age due to Ben's size: "You can't be eighteen" (Lessing, 2000: 1). As he does not have any birth certificate, he is not able to apply, and the clerk directs him to the Records Office where he can receive his certificate. The symbolical meanings of governmental documentation refer to the fact that Ben can claim his rights of citizenship; nevertheless, he cannot benefit due to the disadvantage of his body that does not conform to the societal system that requires a document. The social construction of Ben's body requires Ben to prove his identity. As Bryan S. Turner, in "The Turn of the Body", suggests, the "notions of the body in the public domain, thereby demonstrating the problematic nature of gender, sexuality, disability and age" not only define the borders of the material body but also specify its social position and potentials (2012: 9). The governmental system of the citizenship necessitates Ben's existence as a citizen on the grounds of a governmental record paper on which his age is transcribed. Thus, Ben exists as his body allows; or in other words, his body precipitates his presence as a citizen. Due to his body as a defect or disadvantage, he becomes a victim of his physical appearance, different size, and shape. To claim his identity, he is required to document his age, and Johnston, a pimp and friend of Rita, illegally provides Ben with a passport which states that he is thirty-five and a film actor. As he is documented by the passport, he becomes a citizen, either legally or illegally and thus, he is socially constructed as a member of the society. Therefore, Ben's body becomes a ploy of illegal intervention in which his age and profession are defined according to the acceptable but illegal ways of participating in the regulatory social order.

The social regulatory mechanism is influential in determining the ways of Ben's eating. Throughout the novel, Ben's animalistic body is conveyed by dietary depictions. Like a carnivore, Ben mainly feeds on meat: "meat, he could not get enough" (Lessing, 2000: 12). In this sense, the animalistic imagery solidifies Ben's corporeal otherness. For instance, when Mrs Biggs was at the hospital and he was alone with the cat at home, he waited for a pigeon to land on the balcony, caught it and he and the cat ate it alive, even "[t]he blood was dripping from their mouths" (2000: 31). The sanguineous scene emphasises the cultural disapproval of what bodies can consume and eat. In *Regulating Bodies*, Turner states that "the dividing line between nature and nurture can be explored in terms of what and how people eat food. Not all food is regarded as 'naturally' appropriate for human consumption" (2002: 8). The human pattern in eating differs from the eating patterns of animals. While Ben is seen eating stew cooked by Mrs Biggs in earlier pages, which is socially appropriate, his consumption of a live pigeon demonstrates his wild nature and animalistic body. In this sense, Mrs Biggs tries to civilise Ben according to the norms of the social order whereas Ben's nature habitually disrupts these civilised ways. Likewise, his bodily fluids are portrayed to strengthen the idea that Ben's body is like an animal body. Ben's body as a conduit of fluids illustrates his difference or threat to other bodies. According to Turner, "[b]ody processes and the production of various excreta and fluids have also been regarded as essential features of human classificatory systems. Contact with human sperm, menstrual blood or faeces often has paradoxical consequences of transmitting health-giving charisma or disease and death" (2002: 108). Mrs Biggs washes Ben as he does not smell good, and teaches him how to bathe, which explains that she both cleans Ben and protects her own body from the potential diseases that Ben can cause. In the bathing scene, Mrs Biggs's use of the soap handed to Ben, which slips through his fingers, is a symbol of personal hygiene as well as commanding his body to be clean, and thus, acceptable for social integration. Anne McClintock suggests that the soap is the metaphor of the domestic body that is racially and imperially clean, civilised, and intact (2005: 272-273). The metaphor of the soap, thus, is related to the politics of the body. While Ben is defined as a "yeti" throughout *Ben, in the World*, his body is continually directed and controlled to fit into the civilised ways of living and survival (Lessing, 2000: 11, 17, 28, 35, 121, 140). Therefore, regulating his body for social and domestic spheres, civilised manners of bathing and eating are presented as necessary practices imposed on his body that should fit into the ways of the social world. In this manner, it is revealed that while he is disciplined as a baby and child in the house of the Lovatts, his body is also manipulated by social forces which direct corporeal fitness and rules for a clean and civilised society. Thus,

Lessing intricately underlines that Ben's body remains an enigma which is socially directed and regulated to be acceptable for the society to which he has to adapt.

4. Institutionalisation and the Examination of the Body in *The Fifth Child* and *Ben in the World*

In *The Fifth Child*, Ben's bodily domestication is based on his medical institutionalisation where he is forced to be fit for his family and the society. The process presents that he is disposed from the family, which isolates and alienates him. Since Harriet and David are not happy with Ben's situation when he is still a child, they take him to the doctor who states that "[t]here's obviously nothing much wrong with him", yet, several tragic incidences urge the Lovatts to institutionalise Ben in a clinic (Lessing, 2001: 67). Besides being a threat to the family, he also causes fright, anxiety, and discomfort for the guests: "Harriet came into the kitchen one day and heard her sister Sarah say to a cousin, 'That Ben gives me the creeps. He's like a goblin or a dwarf or something. I'd rather have poor Amy any day'" (2001: 68). Harriet, who is fond of family reputation and of organising parties in Easter and Christmas, which can be considered as showing off their ideal family and social status, tries to efface the tension caused by Ben. Still, her maternal emotion for taking care of Ben implies her empathy as follows: "This afflicted Harriet with remorse: poor Ben, whom no one could love. She certainly could not! And David, the good father, hardly touched him. She lifted Ben from his cot, so much like a cage, and put him on the big bed, and sat with him" (2001: 69). The father does not empathise with Ben's situation. Winnicott, in "What about Father?" states that "father is needed to give mother moral support, to be the backing for her authority, to be the human being who stands for the law and order which mother plants in the life of the child" (1964: 115). Even though David seems to accept the unusual fifth child before he is born, he organises Ben's institutionalisation. In this sense, he ignores Ben as a child and disrupts the mother-child bond. Another reason for Ben's institutionalisation is his unmanageable physical strength. When they find that Ben pulls Paul against the cot bars and hurts him, Harriett and David feel that Ben is dangerous (Lessing, 2001: 71). The little terrier incident also demonstrates Ben's threat for the family since it is implied that Ben killed the dog: "Wherever the dog was, Ben followed" and later it "was lying dead on the kitchen floor" (2001: 75). Furthermore, his parents' anxiety increases when "[t]hree months later, Mr. McGregor, the old grey cat, was killed in the same way" (2001: 76). At this point, Harriet once again visits the doctor, but the doctor states, "[h]e's physically normal for eighteen months. He's very strong and active of course, but he's always been that. You say he's not talking? But that's not unusual" (2001: 77-78). Stilll, Lovatts decide to imprison him to control his unruly body. In one of the visits to Dr Gilly, Harriet's insistence on Ben's deviance urges the doctor to react to her: "Can't you see that it is simply outside my competence? If it is true, that is? Do you want me to give you a letter to the zoo, 'Put this child in a cage'? Or hand him over to science?" (2001: 127). Thus, Harriet confines Ben at home, yet, her captivation of Ben does not solve their problem as the children are afraid of Ben, and the family loses its edenic unity, which defame their social status in the neighbourhood. That is why, even though Harriet seems reluctant to send Ben into a clinic at first, David insists on the idea. Ben's institutionalisation results in the recuperation of happiness and harmony in the Lovatt family: "The days went by, and normality filled the house. Harriet heard the children talking about the Easter holidays. 'It will be all right now that Ben isn't here,' said Helen" and "The family became a family again. Well, almost" (2001: 93, 111). The regulation of Ben's body confined in the cage and in the medical institution rests on the idea of the disciplining function of the family as it privileges the bodily norms that socially and physically function in same or similar ways. The family, as the particle of society, highlights the significance of the classical body, which is "a finished body, that is 'self-sufficient and speaks in its name alone'" (Fraser and Greco, "Bodies as Social Disorder", 2005: 70). Nevertheless, Ben's body seems deviant and does not fit into the standards and expectations approved by the society as it is grotesque, which stands for the idea that it is unreliable, dangerous and continuously changing.

Likewise, *Ben, in the World* maintains the issue of Ben's medical institutionalisation due to his eccentric body and size. In the novel, Ben's body is tried to be domesticated through medical practices that impose control after he travels to France and Brazil. When he first travels to France with his passport to carry Johnston's baggage of narcotics without knowing, he meets Alex, an American filmmaker, at the hotel and travels to Brazil for a film production. Both in France and Brazil, he does not feel at home as people stare at him due to his unusual appearance and uncivilised manners. Particularly, the scenes in Brazil problematise Ben's survival since his body is seen as a medical object which requires to be investigated as the researchers believe that the clinical investigation of Ben's body can lead a new direction in the history of humanity (Lessing, 2000: 153). Ben's primate body or "yeti" appearance is expected to provide scientific material to observe his genetic difference or, in other words, to prove that "[h]e was a throwback of some kind" (2000: 82). To experiment on his body, he is taken to the medical institution by Professor Gaumlach and Luiz Machado, and he is caged along with animals in the

centre. The possibility of discovering the pathology and deviance in Ben's body and his primal ancestors via these investigations underestimates the emotional and physical pain that Ben's body experiences. Thus, Lessing reveals the conflict between the physical body and the emotional body by situating Ben's body in biomedical practice, which produces a bioethical dilemma. In this sense, while Machado, Gaumlach and Inez, their assistant, believe that Ben's body is a repository of scientific knowledge, Teresa, who helps Ben to escape the cage, feels responsible for looking after Ben, and empathises with his longing for home in England (Lessing, 2000: 134-136). In this manner, Ben's body is presented ambiguously in the narrative which is either seen as a scientific material or a vessel of emotion. Michel Foucault, in "The Political Investment of the Body," argues that the body is a site of knowledge that is constructed by political practices. He writes that "there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body" (2005: 100). The political body is mastered by discourses that shape and ideologically construct and dissect the body for discovering knowledge. Thus, the scientific study of Ben's body not only presents knowledge about his genetic background but also provides material that differs him as a "yeti," and locates him into the domain of the other race which differs him from the human race. In "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies," Donna J. Haraway suggests that "[t]he biomedical-biotechnical body is a semiotic system, a complex meaning-producing field" that directly addresses the political and discursive formation of the self ideologically (2005: 242). She adds that "for race, ideologies of human diversity have to be developed in terms of frequencies of parameters and fields of power-charged differences, not essences and natural origins or homes. Race and sex, like individuals, are artefacts sustained or undermined by the discursive nexus of knowledge and power" (2005: 243). Ben's body as a field of knowledge lends support to the scientific implementation of body politics which define the self through the negation of the other. Thus, his body is an instrument of power, which is also a tool to define what his body 'is' and what it 'ought to be.' In this sense, while the knowledge of Ben's body is believed to change the human story from an anthropological perspective, it is significant to note that the political meaning of the body derives from the use of his body as the other, which foregrounds the privileging of the body and genetics of homo sapiens.

The bioethical dilemma in *Ben, in the World* emerges from the medical investigation of Ben's body, and it complicates the ethical dimensions of such an act. Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco, in their "Introduction" to *The Body: A Reader*, point out that "[t]he field of bioethics in general, and of biomedical ethics in particular, considers the moral or ethical dimension of research and practice in medicine and the life sciences – most often with the purpose of providing frameworks or guidelines for decision making in relation to various medical or research situations" (2005: 30). In Lessing's narration of Ben's caging and his rescue, Ben is treated as an animal, which already pose ethical questions. The scenes in the mountains, where he supposes to find people like him, also highlight the bioethical dimensions of Ben's body. In these scenes, his body is foregrounded by his suicide with the possibility of its usage in medical studies. After Teresa and Alfredo save Ben from the cages in the medical centre, they promise Ben to take him to the mountains where people like Ben reside (Lessing, 2000: 128-129). They trek onto the mountains, and it is understood that "his people" are only engravings on a rock, described as a "rock face" or a "picture gallery" and these drawings date back to ancient times (2000: 171). Lessing's employment of ekphrasis, defined as "*the verbal representation of visual representation*," in the narration of Ben's quest for meaning, carries Ben among his ancient people imaginatively, and it also reveals Ben's metaphorical belonging as he identifies with these ancient people engraved on the rock (Heffernan, 2004: 3; emphasis in original). The rock only shines at a particular angle of daylight. It is "crammed with pictures, at least forty of them" and these ancient people on the rock wore colourful clothes and belts, had long hairs, were "big-chested" like Ben and they had "some kind of musical instrument" (Lessing, 2000: 175). Ben's tunnelling into the past, and thus, into the fantasy world where these ancient people live reveals that he empathises with these people on the rock and their way of living. He is in such a great ecstasy that he starts "a rough tuneless singing": "He danced on, bending and bowing and stretching up his arms to the stars, stamping and kicking up his feet, and whirling about and around, on and on" (2000: 173). By singing, and particularly dancing, his body is involved in a ritual of artistic expression through which he feels the joy of meeting his people even though they are just pictorial representations on the rock. Ben is lost in the mesmerising scene of the picture gallery, and falls into a trance. However, after the change of daylight, the pictures disappear, and Ben's identification is disrupted. In this sense, Ben's body is seen as a signifier of social engagement, not with the present social order but with an ancient one via his singing, dancing, and bodily ritual. Lessing's liberating scene, where Ben's lyrical joy is represented, presents an ethical dilemma in that his body is regarded as material for medical investigation while his unruly nature resists and takes part in identifying with these ancient people.

The end of the novel crystallises Ben's corporeal enigma in that his identification and disappointment produce a clash between his authentic body and the implementation of discursive practices. Upon seeing that the engravings on the rock disappear, Ben remains calm and frozen, yet, after several minutes, Ben's cry is heard, and he commits suicide by jumping off the cliff. His suicide is a subsidiary symbol which reinforces the idea that his bodily pain ends, and he is freed from the regulatory forces and biomedical experiments. On the other hand, Lessing insists on ravelling the ethical questions, as Teresa declares that "he is dead and we don't have to think about him" anymore (Lessing, 2000: 178). Still, his body remains as a site for medical investigation and they think that they need to inform Professor Gaumlach as he wants to carry out experiments on Ben's body. They see a condor flying over the corpse of Ben, and they think that it feeds on him and nothing will be left for the experiment. Yet, the narrative informs us that "[t]hey can know about a whole person from just a little bit of finger bone" (Lessing, 2000: 178). While Ben's living body resists being used as a scientific material, his dead body cannot resist it, and it will probably become a site of scientific knowledge. As Michel Foucault suggests, corpses or dead bodies are situated in the field of medical investigation for discovering diseases through autopsy in contrast to active bodies that are mobile, and thus difficult to experiment on (2003: 133-134). Ben's corpse, the anatomy of his body or his genetic remnants, therefore, are subject to medical investigation in the medical strategy of power implemented on his body. His death is interpreted in various ways in that Ben "claim[s] a home forever" by committing suicide (De Vinne, 2012: 23); or "he is born with hatred, lives with it and dies by it" (Raefipour, 2012: 79); or "All the hardships, betrayals, and feelings of loneliness lead to his suicide at the end of the story" (Rahimnouri, 2022: 15). Nevertheless, the bioethical dimension of Ben's death overtly leads to the question whether his body can be subject to this kind of experiment or not, or whether his death is a way of liberation. In terms of resisting the corporeal confinement, his death is like the end of bodily pain, and it also suggests the end of his personal resistance that defies the forms of pain caused by medical investigation. Thus, while his body remains as an instrument for the medical experiments, it loses its subjective characteristics of sensual feelings of the pain. As a result, his death seems a liberation of the sensual body that does not socialise or fall into the hands of regulatory force thereafter. However, Ben's body is also prey for the medical gaze that scrutinises, others, locates and disintegrates. Therefore, Ben's body is regulated even after his death since it will be studied and classified as the body of the other.

4. Conclusion

The Fifth Child and *Ben, in the World* narrate Ben's survival as the fifth anomalous child in the world of order. This study, focusing on Ben's body, evaluates it as a site of knowledge enforced by the power of regulation and control. Regulated even in his mother's womb by Harriet's marginalising discourse and controlled via the physical isolation and alienation by the Lovatts, Ben's self and body are othered in *The Fifth Child*. Until his come of age, he is only able to resist the confinement with his bestial behaviours, yet, in *Ben, in the World*, he is located into a society where he is required to act with his social body that is also constructed by other people. In this study, Ben's body has been tracked in relation to regulatory mechanisms of family, society and institutionalisation, and the analysis of Ben's body in these three domains presents the idea that Ben cannot connect with his family and society due to his unusual body. Through the trajectories of his body, the body is seen as a site of knowledge, subjected to disciplinary and regulatory practice and as a medical instrument, all of which, point out the sensitive boundaries between "body as object" and "body as subject". In Lessing's narratives of Ben, Ben is always represented as a body as an object since he falls prey to the expectations of the family and society. The only instance that characterises him as a body as subject may be his suicide which can be regarded as a metaphorical liberation from the boundaries of the power that tortures the sensual body. In both novels, Lessing manages to reflect the tensions of a somatic society, a society that is regulated and operated by the body via the characterisation of Ben. Defined "as a social system in which the body, as simultaneously constraint and resistance, is the principal field of political and cultural activity," the somatic society centralises the body in miscellaneous social fields (Turner, 2002: 12). In this sense, Lessing's Ben, as a victim of a somatic society, is not able to survive among what the majority of society constitutes as normal bodies. His unusual body does not allow him to survive in a society that privileges sameness both in appearance and in behaviour. As a result, Ben and his body are not tolerated in his family and society, and his body is effaced by "normal" bodies that dictate and run on similar and fixed notions of corporeality.

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