

ULUSLARARASI SOSYAL ARAŐTIRMALAR DERGİSİ THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

Cilt: 13 Sayı: 70 Nisan 2020 & Volume: 13 Issue: 70 April 2020
www.sosyalarastirmalar.com Issn: 1307-9581
Doi Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17719/jisr.2020.4080>

THE SATISFACTORY EFFECTS OF THE POEMS ENDING UP MISERABLY FROM FREUDIAN AND LACANIST PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

When it is about love, "Eros", one of the Greek mythology's gods comes to the minds. In this study, it is intended to analyse the satisfactory effects of literary works on readers even if they include the pessimistic themes such as passionate love relations ending up with depression or death. As it is intended to state this contradictory subject matter, certain poems including love and tragedy together are analysed from the Victorian Period in English Literature in this study. However, what kind of feeling is love and the symbols of love from Greek Mythology are analysed. A bridge is instructed between Eros and another Greek Mythology god, Thanatos with the examples of English literature. The contradictory relation between these two points is illustrated in this study. As the theoretical basis, "Jouissance" principle of Jacques Lacan and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" of Sigmund Freud are studied in this context. Both of these philosophies indicate how passionate loves end up unhappily, especially with death may give satisfaction. To prove the satisfactory relation between love and death, certain 19th century poems such as "In Memoriam" by Alfred Tennyson, "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning, "After Death" by Christina Rossetti are analysed in this concern. Indeed, supporting the literature research and examples from English literature, the results of a questionnaire with 100 students prove that poems ending up miserably may have satisfactorily positive effects on their readers. The results are evaluated based on the descriptive analysis method.

Keywords: Poetry, Jouissance, Pleasure Principle, Lacan, Freud, Discourse Analysis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research intends to indicate that the poems about love ending up miserably may have satisfactory pleasures on their readers. Certain important poems, which gather love and death, in English literature are analysed in this research. The satisfactory pleasure of the miserably ending examples is strengthened by the theories of Jacques Lacan, "Jouissance"¹ and Sigmund Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (Alioğlu, 2005, 53). This research argues that the literary works have optimistic effects on readers even if they include the pessimistic themes that end up with depression or death just after a passionate love. As it is known that love is something that cannot be touched or taken in hands, but it can be felt deep inside of the ones if they fall in it. That is, love is spiritual. When people fall in love, they become more excited than every day of their lives. They are becoming different people since they love and feel that this feeling is the mirror for their other half on the earth.

As it is known that love is a feeling which comes even from different kind of mythologies also. For centuries, love becomes a subject matter for novels, poems, dramas, mythologies and its ancestor god is known as "Eros" from the Greek Mythology. When love comes to the mind, Eros is remembered with an arrow on his hand. As it is known Eros is the god, who works for love, creativity, harmony, sexual connection and desires, reproduction, self-preservation. The primary duty of this god is to gather people to have happiness on the earth. Love is a feeling which has connections with the desires of people to the one that they fall in love. Because of the differences or similarities that people have pulled as magnets and they begin to run to their lovers without self-control. When people meet with their lovers, they forget about the rest of the world and only see this attraction. It is supposed that there is something inside lovers that they do not know and they try to find out this mystery by time.

It is terrifying but true that sometimes people show how they love their partners or lovers with the words of "I can die for him/her". This is the point. The two polar words about human life; love and death are used in a sentence. They do not seem as if they had a relation, at first. Because, when a person falls in love he or she only can see the good sides of the world and he or she becomes more optimistic than before since they have some kind of hopes and dreams about their lovers. But, sometimes love takes people from this heaven like feelings and drive them into depression or even causes their death. When they fall in unrequited love with a person passionately, they fall in deep depression also and this depression is the first step which goes to their death. This kind of deaths is not only committing suicides but also can be ignoring them. The second step of this period is becoming ill. The person wants to cut all his connections or relations with the people around him and begins to die slowly. All such things are the results of miserable love relations.

During the literature research of this study, poems related to love and death themes together from the Victorian period in English Literature have been chosen. For theoretical research, Greek mythological characters Eros and Thanatos², "Jouissance" principle of Jacques Lacan and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" of Sigmund Freud have been used. Four different poems about love but include death and miserable endings are chosen. These poems are given to 100 students who have translation education within the scope of Discourse Analysis. Students read and analysed the poems. Afterwards, 3 questions are asked to the students. These questions have been prepared by consulting 2 Assistant Professor from the Department of English Language and Literature. 2 of the questions are yes-no question and the other one is an open-ended question. Thus, this questionnaire is in an interview format. At the end of this questionnaire, the results are

¹ jouissance: As Jacques Lacan describes it is an experience of pleasure ordinarily associated with sexual climax. "Pain and pleasure are mixed with the thrill of fear and that is jouissance. That is, the purity of the desire changes direction and becomes a kind of obscene jouissance (Alioğlu, 2005: 53).

² Thanatos: Thanatos is a god from Greek Mythologies, who works for destruction, repetition, aggression, compulsion and self-destruction on the universe.



received and analysed according to the descriptive analysis method. The evaluations of the questions are given under the Conclusions.

2. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE JOUISSANCE AND BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Thanatos is directed towards the itself, and produces self- destructive behaviour, such as addictions. This results in an aggressive behaviour. Besides the Thanatos, Eros, the life instinct, occurs. Eros symbolizes the survival of the species and it is responsible for sexual and reproductive behaviour. This argument can be summarized as follows: All behaviour is aimed at decreasing tension and getting a previously existing state of stability. Humans are really trying constantly to return to this state. Thus, all life aims death, which means a situation in which no tensions exist because no stimuli can impinge from within or without to disturb the everlasting peace (Ejupi and the others, 2014, 308).

A connection may be found between such unhappy loves and death desires in people by thinking of one of the most important mythological Greek mythological gods, Thanatos. Because, he works for destruction and repetition, and serves for aggression, compulsion and self-destruction on the universe while Eros works for completely the opposite things such as creativity, harmony, reproduction and self-preservation. Both of these gods, Eros and Thanatos, have a powerful relation on the universe since they are both related directly to the human beings' inner sides (Zegers, 2009, 189). Love and death desires live together inside the people. When the passions and desires of human beings are on the top, they are close to death since it is thought that there is a thin border between passion and death (<https://www.theoi.com/articles/eros-and-thanatos/>, Retrieved from 30.01.2020).

The French word jouissance term of Jack Lacan appears in 1953, and means enjoyment in a sexual connotation (Evans, 1996, 95). About 1960s Lacan puts forward and improves his classical contradiction between jouissance and pleasure (Kojève, 1947, 46). The pleasure principle capacities breaking point to the pleasure principle; it orders the subject to enjoy as little as possible'. Moreover, the subject endeavors to violate the disallowances on his satisfaction, to go 'beyond the pleasure principle. Along these lines, the consequence of violating the delight standard isn't more pleasure, yet torment, since there is just a specific measure of pleasure that the subject can hold up under. That is, pleasure becomes agony, and this 'painful pleasure' Lacan called by Lacan as jouissance; 'jouissance implies suffering' (Lacan, 1992, 184). Based on Jacques Lacan's "Jouissance" philosophy it can be seen that how people's desires, pleasures and pains are mixed and tinged in a different kind of combination. Lacan depicts jouissance as an encounter of pleasure usually connected with sexual climax, and according to this term, there is always something lack³ in the relations. Notwithstanding, the desires and relations between the genders are constantly joined with some absent or third component that makes the connection "incomprehensible". In other words, jouissance is a term which consists of not satisfying desires, impossibilities of relations, desire for love and pain together. The term jouissance states the paradoxical satisfaction that the subject gets from his manifestation, or, to put it another way, the experiencing that he determines his own satisfaction.

The denial of jouissance is innate in the emblematic structure of language (Lacan, 1977, 319). Thus, Death Drive is given to express the steady desire in the subject to get through the pleasure standard towards the thing and a specific overabundance jouissance. Subsequently, jouissance is 'the way towards death'. The drives are endeavors to get through the pleasure rule looking for jouissance, each drive is a death drive (Lacan, 1991, 17). So, it can be seen that love relations include passion, desire and pain together. Because the impossibility of love makes people desperate since they hopelessly devoted themselves to this case. In the end, if this love ends up

³ lack: It is the state of not having something or not having enough something, that is, to have none or not enough of something. Jacques Lacan uses this term to illustrate the people gaps in the relations of human beings'.



miserably, they fall in a depressive mood. Such relations in the books, poems or dramas that we read are met in our daily life. And this unhappiness generally focuses on depression or death of one of the characters in such romances. The characters who fall in love passionately, feel some pain inside even if they know that they are loved by their lovers. Because they do not want to be separated from their lovers anymore or they suffer a lot about their relations.

On the other hand, parallel with *jouissance*, Beyond the Pleasure Principles of Sigmund Freud is in the same category. It is one of the "Instinctual Drives" theories of him. In the Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud develops his death drive. For this text, humans are all too humanly ruled by a principle of pleasure. Rather than contesting the importance of the pleasure principle, Freud admits its centrality in psychical life and by means of the death drive, to account for this centrality, to state the principle by which the principle of pleasure is installed (Copjec, 1994, 12-13). This indicates that the same philosophy with Jacques Lacan's "Jouissance" term. Freud wrote about the human beings' instincts and he developed a theory of drives, by adding the death instinct⁴, often referred to as "Thanatos"³ from the Greek Mythology, although he never used Thanatos' name directly. That is, he created a relation between the desires for an object or relation and the death instinct (Freud, 2005). When it is carefully examined, both of these philosophers' terms, if we find something passionately and want more than we have now, in the end, it drives us to death slowly. Thus, human beings should be the controller of their desires and passions and they should not be the slave of their instincts and passions. One of the most important desires of people is "love" and it is a part of our "passionate instincts". Just after reading Lacan's and Freud's theories, it firstly gives a sudden fright since they mention love and death and pain together. But this term is frequently used in lots of romances such as dramas, novels and the poems. Death and love have an interesting and effective relationship. And the authors and the writers and poets adequately illustrate this term in their literary works.

3. EXAMPLES FROM THE ENGLISH POETRY

In this study, certain examples from The English Literature especially from the poetry are chosen to be analysed. The topics of these poems cover the love and death together. With the purpose of analysing the poems, Jack Lacan's *jouissance* and the Sigmund Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principles are accepted as theoretical basis. These aforementioned principles are connected to the Greek mythological sibling gods Eros and Thanatos. Under this concern, poems from 19th century, In Memoriam by Alfred Tennyson, My Last Duchess by Robert Browning, Porphyria's Lover by Robert Browning, and After Death by Christina Rossetti are analysed.

3.1. In Memoriam by Alfred Tennyson

Alfred Tennyson is a national poet who began his career in 1830 during the Victorian period in English Literature. He is usually considered to be a poet of sadness and loss since his poems indicate unhappiness and miserable feelings (Carter and McRae, 2007, 136-137). One of the most influential examples of miserable love relations on poetry is "In Memoriam" by "Alfred Tennyson" (The Norton Anthology, 2006, 1138-1187) Actually, this poem is written for Tennyson's closest friend Arthur Hallam, who is not only the closest friend for Tennyson but also his sister's fiancé. These two men's friendship is supposed to be a homosexual relationship. By Hallam's death, Tennyson loses his love and support, and then he begins to write a series of lyrics for Hallam. It is intended to illustrate some of the lines from "In Memoriam" to prove the idea that love and death gather under the same title. Lacan's theory "Jouissance" is also seen in this poem again. Tennyson falls in depression just after the death of Hallam and he is unhappy. But it is seen that his creativity of poetry is the unique advantage of his lack. Hallam is not on earth but his

⁴instinct: the natural force that causes a person or animal to behave in a particular way without thinking or learning about it.



death makes Tennyson create an influential poem. The impossible love for Tennyson and the absence of Hallam, have positive effects on Tennyson's creativity. The relation with "Jouissance" and this poem is seen below with these lines:

"For now strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears," (Part 13- lines 15-16)

As it is seen, Tennyson is miserable because of Hallam's absence. This love is impossible anymore since he is not alive. On the other hand, this lack and impossibility give Tennyson pleasure. It is understood from the second line: "Mine eyes have leisure for their tears". According to this line, Lacan's theory is becoming true since there is a pleasure even if there is an unhappy event just like the death of Hallam. Tennyson wants and likes the impossible love and he desires for this love a lot. He loves him still just after his death.

On the other hand, another example of his effective poetry about love and death under the same title is given with these lines:

"Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all". (Part 27- lines 15-16)

It is seen that the relation with Hallam is only the closest friendship but also a passionate love. He is so passionate that he says losing the lover is not important if the person loves his lover, and in this regard, Lacan's "jouissance" becomes true again. For Lacan, lack of something or the missing elements in a relationship makes the relation attractive. He can take pleasure from this hopeless love since love is important for him rather than have a mutual relation. And here again, these lines are connected to the Freud's "Pleasure Principle". For Freud, pleasures seem to serve the death instincts. That is, when people have something passionately inside, they come closer to death since people lose their inner control when they have passions. They only think about having a relationship with their lovers and the rest of the world become unimportant for them. That is, the abstract existence of love becomes more important than the concrete existence in the body of lovers. Another example is the line below from Tennyson:

"Be near me when I fade away" (Part 50- line 1)

In this line, the image of fading away indicates the death of the person, and Tennyson wants his lover that be close to each other while he is going to die. As it is understood from this line, he loves Hallam so much, and he does not want to be separated from him even during the trip to another world. However, it is seen again the Freud's theory here as he says "The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts." (Freud, 1972, 268; Freud, 2005). That is, Freud emphasizes that our desires and instincts drive us to death slowly if they are passionate. Because people may think death and loves to exist together. In this regard, Tennyson's poetry illustrates that love and death are together in an influential way.

3.2. My Last Duchess by Robert Browning

Another Victorian poet, Robert Browning, wrote My Last Duchess in 1842. Many of his poems contain moments of violence of hidden emotions under the surface (Carter and McRae, 2007, 138). As it is seen from My Last Duchess of Browning (The Norton Anthology, 2006, 1255), he uses the death theme with love and lovers together. His characters in this poem are dead, and the narrators of the poems talk with these dead characters. The lovers may kill their passionate lovers to have the unique love of them for only themselves. This is not named as cruelty or wildness or madness, it is named only by love and passion. This poem is actually about a passionate lover duke and his wife whom he passionately falls in love and jealous about. The poem consists of the



speeches of the duke with his dead wife. He speaks alone about past and present, so something about these two characters' personalities is seen from the lines.

"...I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive". (Line 45- My Last Duchess)

As it is seen from these lines, Browning indicates that the duke gives the commands to kill his wife, the duchess. And the soldiers of the duke become startled, but they should kill the duchess because this is the command of the duke. However, as it is understood from the last phrase, the duchess is not alive now. The duke loves his wife and he finds his wife beautiful but he does not want to share this beauty with other people so he kills his duchess. He has no right to do this actually since this is madness. Lacan and Freud are seen together right again. According to Lacan, if something is missing or lack in a relation, this makes the relation more attractive. And the absence of the lover here makes people believe Lacan. Because the duke has pleasure from this situation even if this sounds just like madness for the readers. Thus, it is possible to have a connection with Freud again by this poem. Freud also thinks that when the passion and pleasures that we take are not satisfactory for us, this situation drives the lovers to death.

3.3. Porphyria's Lover by Robert Browning

As in My Last Duchess, Browning uses love and death together in certain lines in Porphyria's Lover (The Norton Anthology, 2006, 1252). This poem is also about the madness of the lover (Carter and McRae, 2007: 138). But the male character does not give any command to kill his lover; he kills her by his own hands now. Porphyria is a beautiful girl; she is an attractive girl but the end of her is also the death maybe because of his beauty or the desires and passions of her lover.

"In one long yellow string, I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain." (Line 39-42/ Porphyria's Lover)

It is seen that the scene in which he kills Porphyria by using her hair by winding around her throat. It is understood that passion is becoming something dangerous for lovers sometimes. He loves Porphyria passionately; he mentions her beauty and purity during the poem. And he knows that Porphyria loves him as well, but he wants this beauty to be immortal. He goes crazy by viewing this beauty, and he kills the girl to have this beauty and love eternally. Now her absence gives pleasure to the man and this poem is also shows that Lacan and Freud are right about their theories. At the last line of the poem, it is seen that he says, "I am quite sure she felt no pain." By these words he wants to show how right thing killing his lover is. It indicates that taking the pleasure from absence and how people drive themselves to death when something is missing in the relations.

3.4. After Death by Christina Rossetti

The other successful and popular poet of Victorian Period is Christina Rossetti. Her mood of sadness rather than enjoying senses is seen from her poems (Carter and McRae, 2007, 143). Christina Rossetti is a poet who generally wrote about religion, love and death. The lines may be related to Lacanist and Freudian principles are given below:



"He did not love me living, but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm tho' I am cold." (Lines 12-14/ After Death)

"After Death" by Rossetti (The Norton Anthology, 2006, 1461), describes a speech of a lover who was not loved while she is alive. There may be a platonic love here. But after her death, she feels and sees that her lover is alive and is not cold just like her. So, the woman is happy because her lover is alive. Even if she is dead, she takes pleasure from her lover's being alive. A lack and something is missing between these two people but she is happy. And this reminds again Lacan's "Jouissance". In this poem, something is missing. Because the woman character believes that she has not been loved when she is alive but she is happy even if she cannot touch her lover anymore because of her being dead. Her lover is alive still and this is enough for her love.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To prove the connections between the principles of the theorists and the poems for their satisfactory effects on the readers, a questionnaire of 3 questions has been prepared. The questions have been asked to 100 students. This questionnaire is just like an interview. The answers are analysed descriptively.

- Does any kind of poem ending up miserably, have any positive effect on you? How?
- At the end of most of the poems (romances), at least one character dies because of his love or for his love. Does this have a positive effect on your criticism?
- According to Sigmund Freud, The Pleasure Principle seems actually to serve the death instincts. Do you think it is true or not?

Question 1: *At the end of poems you read, at least one character dies because of his love or for his love. Does this have a positive effect on your criticism?*

This question is asked to 100 people and 77 of them answered it "Yes", and 23 of them answered "No". As it is seen from the first question, they do not generally consider the endings of romances. Although such kind of poems ends unhappily, they state that these works influence on them. Because the language and the fluency of the poems take people from where they stand really. Thus, it is supposed that they are just like the character of the poem that they read.

Question 2: *According to Sigmund Freud, "The Pleasure Principle seems actually to serve the death instincts". Do you agree or not?*

The percentage of the "Yes" answers are supposed to be enough to prove the idea. 87 of 100 people answered "Yes". This may support that they believe that the more pleased that we get from anything serve the death instincts. 13 of 100 people said "No" for this question. This may support that they do not believe such a kind of principle or they do not know anything about this philosophy. Before these questions are asked to the students, they are informed about the Pleasure Principle of Freud.

Question 3: *Does any kind of romance, ending up miserably, have any positive effect on you? How?*

According to the answers of the students, this may be true. The people who answered this question "Yes" state that they find the poems effective no matter how these works end up.



According to their answers, the important thing is not only the endings but also the fluency, the language that authors use, and the authenticity of the characters. Some of them think that they should feel just like a character of the book or the poem or the drama while they are reading them. So, this indicates how the characters of the works close to the real peoples' characters. Others think that the language of the book should be clear and can be understood easily, and the fluency and the rhythm of the poems are also important. Because they do not want to stop even for a moment while they are reading such works. Indeed, the ending is not so important for them since they are hungry for another kind of values while they are reading. And even if the romances end up unhappily/miserably, readers can be influenced positively.

CONCLUSIONS

The idea that literary works have satisfactory effects on readers even if they include the pessimistic/miserable themes that end up depression or death just after a passionate love has been supported and strengthened with the results of the questions asked to 100 students. As it is seen from the results, readers have optimistic views on the poems even if their endings are pessimistic. However, the first thing which comes into prominence for this study is the fluency of the works. That is while reading such kinds of works, people do not know how the time passes. And the poems take people inside of them and people feel like one of the characters of such works.

At any time, how would be the ending is not known, but the readers are still curious about what will be just after a second. For the readers, the most important point is not the ending but the fluency and the real feeling of the works. On the other hand, some of the readers think that love gains value if it is impossible. Because people desire sometimes for impossible or forbidden things. However, such kind of views makes the Lacan's "lack" and "jouissance" theories true. As it is indicated throughout this research that people desire for something missing in their relations, and if there is pain or destruction, this raises people's feelings to a higher pitch. It is intended to write and prove from the beginning of the research, such kind of works have certain optimistic effects on the readers. Another reason for this positive influence is being understandable for many people all around the world since they are translated into different languages. Although English is a universal language all around the world, when some of the literary works are translated into people's native languages, they are becoming more effective since they can be clearly understood.

On the other hand, the impossibilities in "In Memoriam" for Hallam and Tennyson make this poem impressive. The subject of love is very different from any other kind of romances. There are a homosexual relation and an impossible love in this poem. Since homosexuality cannot be accepted in lots of societies as a part of life, this kind of subjects are becoming attractive for the readers since they do not know so much about such themes and they are curious about them. However, there is something make the literary works attractive for readers. Some of them are autobiographical poems or novels, that is they have some clues from the author's own life or experiences. If it is not known so much about the author of books or poems, which readers are reading, they become curious about their life and suppose to find something related to the writers' own life. If it is not directly related to the authors' life, they write these works by using their views of love and their sentences which reflect their feelings.

Indeed, the readers read the literary works as if they were a part of a song of which language they cannot understand. That is, these leave themselves to the rhythm of the works. However, the most important points for this study which makes the literary works effective in an optimistic view are the fluency, the language that the writer uses, being closer to reality. Thus, it is possible to indicate that the readers believe that some of the literary works which have pessimistic endings just like suicide or death may have optimistic effects on them. For further readings and future researches, different kind of literary works such as novels, plays, sonnets and poems may be studied in a comparative form.



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