



DIVIDED REALMS : EXPLORING THE CONTRASTING FORCES IN EQUUS

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ABSTRACT

Peter Shaffer is an internationally- recognized writer who occupies an extraordinary position in contemporary British theatre. Shaffer's plays reflected the psychological depths of the conflicts in the human mind. Therefore, he is a master of telling tales. Shaffer claims to tell tales, to conjure up the specters of horror and to make gasp in order to please and make laugh to surprise his audience. The research has handled and analyzed Peter Shaffer's play, *Equus* presenting a variety of ways in which they can be interpreted and how postmodernism has a great impact on it. The main concern all over the research is to assure the point that Shaffer discusses many problems of individual from modern and post-modern view producing ideas which rely on the theatrical environment for the achievement of their full psychological and emotional effect. Actually, two central problems lie at Shaffer's drama: conflict and religion. Shaffer assures in *Equus* that conflict is between virtuous mediocrity and feckless genius affecting his own imagination. He challenges his society bringing topics like religion and family values to his plays to find answers for his own questions about life. He as a postmodern dramatist reflects the thinking of society and centralizes the communal responses of his protagonists to depict a typical British Family that suffers from many conflicts to help to make more real feelings. He proves to the individuals how wrong family values become lead to a complicated conflict within the family. The main objective of this research is that conflict here is between two rights not between what is right or wrong; guidance and understanding on the right choices and their effects starting a current problem in the modern and postmodern society. In this regard, the research investigates and analyzes Shaffer's *Equus*. To accomplish this objective, the research adopts an analytical/theoretical method of Shaffer's critical approaches creating different insights and ideas.

Key words: modernism, postmodernism, horse, conflict, religion.



INTRODUCTION

This research has analyzed Peter Shaffer works from several points of views presenting a variety of ideas. Peter Levin Shaffer was born, together with his twin brother Anthony, into an Orthodox Jewish middle-class family in Liverpool, England on 15 May 1926. Psychiatrist Jules Glenn declares that the intense rivalry between Peter and his brother carries over into his writings. Peter's family was middle class and the two brothers were educated in Liverpool and later in London where the all family moved when Peter was ten years old. Peter spent three years working at a coal mine. Some critics have indicated that marital tensions in most of Shaffer's plays probably come from problems within his own family life. The Shaffers moved to London in 1936 and they still there until the outbreak of World War II. Then they moved from one refuge to the other. Shaffer is a writer of both Modern and Postmodern theatre. Postmodernism emerged as a reaction against modernism. Therefore, they are different in their attitudes. That is to say, Postmodern theory is not considered an organized movement. It rejects the ideas, concepts and values of modern theory; Postmodern writers raise questions in their writing rather than supply answers in their search for the definite truth. They do not believe in the absolute truth and the ability for everyone to have his own truth. They believe that truth is created through life-experience. Shaffer produces many ideas and words which rely on the theatrical environment for the achievement of emotional, psychological and intellectual effect.

The primary goal of the entire study is to confirm that Shaffer addresses a wide range of personal issues from a contemporary and postmodern perspective, generating concepts that depend on the theatrical setting to fully elicit their psychological and emotional impact. Shaffer is interested in the concept of conflict, as mentioned. He focusses on the psychological struggle that exists within people. He demonstrates the depths of psychological conflict between various mental states. Shaffer



highlights the tension between Apollonian and Dionysian institutions and values in human life in a number of his plays. Apollonian is founded on reason and logical thought, but Dionysian is a force of chaos and destruction symbolized in the overwhelming and seductive chaotic state of wild nature. In order to provide a solution to the metaphysical query concerning the link between man and the divine, Shaffer's Apollonian characters kill the Dionysian characters. At the same time, Shaffer senses the conflict between Apollonian and Dionysian powers as he describes the tension. The secret to Shaffer's theatrical success is his ability to truly astound his audiences. The drama by Peter Shaffer is based on a number of actual British social issues and cultural circumstances. *Equus* is a classic drama with a message that seems to be relevant today. In 1973, the National Theatre of England debuted the play. It won three major honors in 1975: the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, the Tony Award, and the Drama Desk Award for best play.



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Peter Shaffer introduces a wide range of critical approaches in his drama creating different insights. The main concern all over the research is to assure the point that Shaffer discusses many problems of individual from modern and post-modern view, producing ideas which rely on the theatrical environment for the achievement of their full psychological and emotional effect. Indeed, Shaffer has the ability to astonishing his audiences, and this is the point of his dramatic success. Peter Shaffer's drama is based on many real social problems and cultural situation in Britain. *Equus* is the timeless play with a message still seems to be current. The play was first presented by the National Theater of England in 1973. In 1975, it garnered three major awards: a Tony Award, a Drama Desk award and a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, all for the best play. "Shaffer's *Equus* transmutes an appalling case of animal mutilation into a universal paradigm concerning the eternal struggle between individual rights and communal demands" (Gianakaris 90). Shaffer begins to write *Equus* after hearing a story from his friend about a boy who had savagely blinded a group of horses in a small town outside of London. Without knowing any details about the crime, Shaffer spends the next two years imagining the circumstances that could have moved a boy to commit such an atrocity. The result is a splendid theatrical performance that considered as the most evocative master works of modern theatre. For critics *Equus* is a responsive to psychological interpretations" (Woodward 232). It is a fact that, the dramatic work; no matter if it is considered tragedy or comedy, should contains three unities: the unit of time, place and action. Although, the play *Equus* breaks all of them. The time of the play is present. It includes flash backs and backward actions that reflect what happened in the past, and the plot doesn't follow only one special character. It is noticed that there is more focus on every individual character rather than a single hero. The story is viewed as a net of several plots shading into each other. It is therefore viewed as a postmodern play. *Equus* is an open-ended play



with two acts and a total of thirty-five scenes. Two distinct poles are represented by each act of the play. The passion is established in the first act, and its dissolution is described in the second. Alan Strang, a seventeen-year-old, blinds six horses in the stable where he works in *Equus*. He hails from a middle-class English household where religion is highly important, particularly to his mother, Dora Strang. Every night, she reads the Bible and the genealogy of Christ to Alan in order to teach him. But Frank, his father, is a theist. He begins to be utterly enthralled with horses as a child. Along with watching western films that his father flatly rejects and despises the presence of television in his life; his mother also tells him stories about horses. Alan meets Jill Mason at his job selling electrical supplies, and she helps him get a position at the stable. Dr. Dysart, his psychiatrist, is married to Judge Hesther Salmon, who believes Dysart has the shrills to help Alan make sense of his terrible behavior. He makes an effort to comprehend Alan's reasons for committing this senseless crime. He opens by outlining Alan's argument in a monologue. He speaks with Alan's parents and learns that they have been giving Alan differing religious opinions. His mother's comments, particularly these ones, became unclear to him during his adolescence: "rider and a horse was one body" (*Equus* 36).

Alan changes the picture of Jesus Christ on the wall at his bed with a picture of a horse. He begins to be excessively fascinated by this portrait leading to an ecstatic worship that dictates his life. Also, he changes Jesus with a spirit called *Equus* as his God. This act separates Alan completely from normal life. Alan starts to work in a local stable to be close to his beloved horses. He calls the stable "the temple". Alan comes to the stables at the night. He is naked. Then he rides a special horse called Nugget. Alan begins to touch the horse all over his body and feed him a sugar cube calling the act *Equus*, last supper. Alan stabs out six horses, eyes with a half pike. He is sent to has a treatment in Rokely Psychiatric Hospital in southern England. Martin Dysart tries to clarify his cruel be heavier.



He discovers that what Alan has done is more interesting rather than bad. He begins to be gradually deeply interested in his case.

Dysart discovers what the source of his mental disorder is. *Equus*, the horse, embodies the boy's sexual frustration. For Alan, *Equus* is his spiritual pleasure. After trying to have a sexual relation with a girl from the stable named Jill, he cannot stand the horses' eyes because they are his God's eyes, and the rattling of horses' bridles reminds him of Jesus Christ in chains from the picture he had on wall. But Alan is not only the hero of the play. Dysart's own life is revealed during his treatment to Alan. He is a complete contrast of Alan's personality.

Equus is fundamentally a play of contracts. It introduces a concatenation of dialectics and opposing forces in dramatic tension. The multi-leveled subjects and the tentative synthesis that Shaffer applies in the play represents him as a postmodern dramatist obviously Shaffer represents his audience with many dialectics that modern man faces. The conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian, between art and science, and between the confrontation of Christianity and paganism. However, resolution of these conflicts is not easy. There is no simple resolution to the questions these conflicts raise.

Two central problems lie at Shaffer's drama: conflict and religion. This research centralizes the communal responses of his protagonists. Shaffer assures in his works that conflict is between virtuous mediocrity and feckless genius affecting his own imagination. He challenges his society bringing topics like religion and family values to his plays to find answers for his own questions about life. He as a postmodern dramatist reflects the thinking of society. Shaffer in *Equus* depicts a typical British Family that suffers from many conflicts to help to make more real his feelings. He proves to the individuals how wrong family values become lead to a complicated conflict within the family. In



addition, there is another source of conflict in the play depending on the ability of Allan, the hero, to worship passionately and primitively leading Dysart, his psychiatrist, to a profound envy. The conflict here is between two rights not between what is right or wrong. The center of the tragic conflict in *Equus* is the professional obligation of Dysart to treat Allan and the primitive and passionate ability to worship of the boy. The boy is connecting to the horse as the solution to the modern alienation of British families. The satire of Allan's atheist father to his religious wife is the main domesticated cold war in the play. Allan begins to replace the image of Christ with a horse, and to worship it instead of watching television. Since families do not have guidance and understanding on the right choices and their effects this conflict starts to be a current problem in the modern and postmodern society. Also, the psychiatrist, Dysart, shows in the play lack of passion and losing desire at work that many individuals suffer in society. *Equus* forces audience to ask and search for the ultimate meaning of life. In short, there are three kinds of human conflict that interplay throughout the plays: firstly, the parental conflict depicting in Frank Strang, the father, who believes that religion is the enemy of health and the doctor who considers it the enemy of culture and civilization. He tells his doctor:

A boy spends night after night having this stuff read into him: an innocent man tortured to death ... thorns driven into head... nails into his hands ... a spear jammed through his ribs...

Bloody religion... it's our only real problem in this house. (Shaffer, *Equus* 44)

It is obvious that religion is a source of conflict for him. This conflict is within himself, between him and Alan's mother, and between the father and his son. His mother's obsessive of God is false. She is very harsh in her judgment. She fails to make harmony in her family. It is a fact that Alan is divided by "Dora the religious and franks the atheist polarization" (Bal 615). Secondly, the adolescent conflict that is reflected in Alan's deep-seated neurosis. Alan suffers from self-hood, emasculated selfhood, and alienated selfhood. He is always bored. He never reads books. He enjoys being alone. All these



because his father abruptly mutilates Alan's bedroom wall a lurid chromo demonstrates Jesus. Eventually, this empty spot is filled with a horse's picture. All these images help to feed Alan's dissatisfaction with the despotic behavior of his father and the pietism of his mother. The contradiction of the youth towards Jesus reflects when he identifies Equus with Christ, and the stable with temple. Thus, he all the time blurts out a series of non-understanding words. The most dramatic scene in the play is Alan's riding Equus at midnight. He tries to lose himself like a medieval mystic with Christ. Alan rides the horse and exclaims loudly:

The king rides out on Equus, mightiest of horses...His neck comes out of my body. It lifts in the dark. Equus, my God slave!... Now the King commands you. Tonight, we ride against them all. (Shaffer, *Equus* 72)

Hostilities, self-punishment, and religious needs are presented in Alan's mind with the midnight ride as a sacramental means of identification with a Christ. Alan wants to surpass both himself and time by using the phrase "on you" and by repeating "one person" the boy puts stress on the search for human security that Shaffer depicts as a quest for being in *Equus*. Alan tries to rediscover his alienated self through his affair with Jill but he believes that Equus, the horses, is watching him with their all-seeing Eye of a moralistic Deity. He needs to relieve his guilt; therefore, he uses a metal spike to blind the horses as a crucifying to the Christ. Thirdly, the professional conflict is indicated in Martin Dysart's suffering. Like a postmodern man, he suffers from divided selfhood and an alienated selfhood. He searches unconsciously for a mystical union with infinity in order to cure himself from his empty life. He envies Alan's ability to

worship through his pain. But Dysart is lacking this ability because he mistakenly assures that psychological normality kills the faculty to worship. He justifies the starvation for transcendence and



the need for a dynamic trust in God to avoid the perversity of human existence. The Apollonian and Dionysian principles of existence, which establish equilibrium, maintain harmony, and tolerate opposites, are symbolized by the theatrical divinity. Ecstasy is produced by the divine and governed by logical emotions, which are in charge of social existence. According to Nietzsche, the state and society are the first to be affected by the Dionysiac tragedy; "in fact, all distinctions between people give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity which leads men back to the heart of nature" (39). Thus, "in an age of enlightenment and consciousness is driven by the Apollonian force of reason and rationality; - - - the obstacle to tragedy is the abandonment of irrationality," Dionysiac tragedy starts to fade" (Roche 58). Furthermore, according to Nietzsche, the Dionysian principle symbolizes "contrasting unconscious forces of instinct and passion," whereas the Apollonian principle represents "conscious forces of logic and rationality, order and control" (Macmurrough-Kavanagh 103). The messages of Shaffer in *Equus* are the need for passion in modern society, the necessity of worship, and the importance to create some sense of meaning in modern and post-modern sterile lives. The research indicates one main theme that dominates this play. Shaffer is interested in the dangers of role playing. He explains the reasons why people refuse to be honest to themselves and allow their passions to be controlled by other individuals or any institutions. In *Equus*, role playing is equivalent with hypocrisy, lies, and delusion resulting in a socially vapid existence. Thus, the role-playing starts to retreat behind the secure world of established values for not determining his or her sense of identity. From the role-playing safety can be found in positive sanctions for normative behavior. He feels that his existence is a facade one and the world is full of lies and misconceptions that serve to perpetrate mediocrity. Thus, the protagonists in play are classified into four distinguish groups of individuals to determine the total appreciation of the multifarious microcosm of Shaffer. The first group contains role player who has an artificial world of illusion and hypocrisy. Its members want to impose their



values on each other. They assume that what is normative behavior for them should be universally accepted. Therefore, another individual may think that they are sober, formal, sketchy, and shallow. In fact, this group of individuals are often afraid of being themselves. They only try to impress others resulting in hopelessly mired individuals at the bottom. The second group is the role player who wants to replace his delusion and mediocre existences but is too connected to his controlled environments to be free. This group include character who is aware of his shortcomings but could not surpass them. His dependent nature leads him to resort to sterile falsehood. He is frustrated character. He separates himself from another role player. The third group contains role player who tries hard to transcend his mediocre existences. Martin Dysart reflects the main characteristic of this group. They are wiser and a little bit pessimistic about life than the other members of groups. The members of this group are not only frustrated with their vapid lives, but also understand the ways to fulfillment in life. Dysart is institutionalized behavior's product that is accustomed to adhering more to the passions, feelings and whim of other individuals than to his own distinctive impulses and instincts. He often consciously searches for fame and immortality by being closer to God rather than to the mediocrities that surround him. They aware that being close to God's favor help them to achieve their own sense of values. Therefore, they recognize not only their illusory and meaningless lives they have, but also the need to free themselves from roles to be able to retake 'Paradise lost'. The last group includes members such as Alan Strang, who has promoted his own sense of identity free from other individual's influences or any institutions. This group's members are willfully self-made men who are honest to their own values, thoughts, and beliefs. They do not give the chance to any member to judge them, especially the mediocrities with whom they must interact. These characters do not envy anyone. They are at ease with themselves and others. Subsequently they extremely possess a youthful eccentric spirit that others admire and want to imitate. Some characters consider them primitive. But



they do not accept others orders to think and act. They have their own way to worship God , and create their own brand of worship. Virtually, they could be considered omnipotent individuals who assume a godlike aura. These members group are distinguished at Shaffer's drama. They could be existentialists who has the ability to create their own sense of identity. Shaffer rest them at the top of his hierarchy. Finally, the conflict between these groups is expressed in *Equus*. Most of these conflicts are sociological wars of identity dealing with metaphysical issues. All members of the groups wage warfare to decide God's favor. They reflect a modern and postmodern man in his search of a soul.

Shaffer gives God in *Equus* the right to make a choice between Normality and horse worship. In this play , the audience practices the role of God to make judgments with regard to the dialectic theme. Obviously , Shaffer assumes the spectators to play a much more intrinsic and essential role in *Equus* because a narrator is assumed to draw the spectator intimately into the Apollonian -Dionysian struggle. In this dissertation reflects why Shaffer's *Equus* has achieved worldwide success. It is clear that this play works on the metaphysical as well as the sociological and psychological levels. Albayrak believes that "the future will be reconstructed following the Dionysian dissolution if the Apollonian subject summons up his courage to look into the primordial Dionysian abyss that is both deathly and emancipatory, and thus destroy the present" (728).

Shaffer applies a precisely controlled rhythmic structure and other ritualistic aspects of Theatre Cruelty to erect the spectator to a godlike role of omnipotence and to differentiate mediocrity from genius. He uses rites, rituals, and rhythms that are incorporated with the primitive on the stage. Shaffer in *Equus* uses this rhythmic structure sparingly and moderately. And he personifies his most elaborate and exhaustive thematic and stylistic approaches to the theater.



This research demonstrates Shaffer's skill and excellence as a modern and postmodern dramatist. In *Equus*, he interweaves a number of themes and motifs, such as the necessity of worship, the significance of forging one's own identity, the passage of time and its impact on "paradise lost," and the struggle between reality and a life of illusion, fantasy, spectrum, or masquerade. In both plays, Shaffer presents a wealth of ideas that transcend metaphysics, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology and resist superficial interpretation. With intricate set designs, period pieces that offer amazing costume choices, epic theatre, and radiant musical interludes, he dazzles his audience. Shaffer's mix of formal and lower-class rhetoric demonstrates his mastery of accents and dialogue, much like Eugen O'Neill. His use of language in the play that conveys certain meanings draws in the audience. Like Brecht, Shaffer successfully plays with form. His versatility and ability to adapt many play forms to fit their subject are demonstrated by his ability to compose realistic plays, social dramas, one-act dramas, farces, epic theatre, ceremonial plays, and philosophical plays. Shaffer is undoubtedly among the most inventive dramatists of the postmodern and contemporary stages. He plays a significant part in creating the history of theatre. Finally, this search can take us to a full understanding of Shaffer at a certain point. *Equus* allows entry into an imaginative realm in which Shaffer's dramatic craft and theatrical skill unite to elevate the person from the daily and into the transcendent enlightenment for dying spirits. By achieves all these crafts Shaffer gives gift to his audience in a plastic postmodern world of stock numbed response. Shaffer is really unique because his theatrical intelligence resides on both dramatic and theatrical levels. He leads his plays to cause tension to express his drama. His stagecraft helps him to make the drama conditioning the effect and the effect contributing to the meaning of the drama. He declares that theatre should startle and absorb his audience and involve him in the theatrical experience of its expression. For Shaffer the theatre is



a place of worship where the audience expresses the spiritual and irrational feelings and release a type of primeval memory that is buried in the unconscious.

In this research, I recommend that There is a great match between the Mimetic Theory of René Girard and the plays of Peter Shaffer. Shaffer's *Equus* should be studied from Girard's theory of mimetic desire and envy. Mimetic Theory is related to the Greek word 'mimesis' that means imitation and representation. It confirms that people are influenced by each other. And the world around the individuals has an influence on them in different ways. According to René Girard, the Mimetic Theory is just an explanation of human behavior. Mimetic Theory expresses human desire "man is the creature who does not know what to desire , and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires (*Violent Origins*).” Shaffer's *Equus* identifies the general theme of rivalry. It is clear that Girard's focus on the mechanism of desire and violence introduce useful tools for calibrating the particular literary manifestations of envy , rivalry and metaphysical quest that can be found in Shaffer's plays, especially *Equus*. This play represents the unconscious way in which the mechanism of envy, rivalry, and violence surrounds the characters and pervades their personal and social life. Shaffer in this play is really interested to indicate the search of the individual for God and the self, exhibiting the violence in this quest.

Girard's theory introduces one perspective from which it is obvious to understand the characters' individual motives in *Equus*. Also, Girard investigate the sacred in his theory. He writes: "All forces whose power over man grows or appears to grow in direct proportion to man's attempts to control them are considered sacred. A few examples of phenomena that could be considered sacred are plagues, forest fires, and tempers. However, human violence—which is perceived as something outside of man and is now a component of all the other external forces that endanger mankind—far



outranks these, albeit in a much less evident way. The sacred's hidden spirit and heart is violence. (The Sacred and Violence 31).

Girard assures that this exteriorization of violence is not a part of the nature of human being to start the process of obfuscation that transforms violence and the sacred. Shaffer in *Equus* uses the same mimetic desire and rivalry that assume the double structure. Alan Strang is the first subject of mimetic desire. The subject 'scandalized' by a model depicts the case of Alan. There are three forms for the model. Firstly, Alan's fear of seeing a young man on horseback on the beach; however, he is fascinated by horses after the reading of his mother to the Bible stories of horses. Secondly, the picture of Jesus before the crucifixion. This model picture is replaced by his father with a hieratic face-front picture of a horse. The third model is offered by his parent's conflicting values. According to the Mimetic Theory of René Girard, Alan in order to satisfy his desire, he faces conflicted, envious, and fearful feelings. He assists an esoteric Sado-masochistic ritual of worship compounded of the different models that have scandalized him. But Girard claims that the desire of Alan exceeds his ability to satisfy it. He writes

Once he has entered upon this vicious circle, the subject rapidly begins to credit himself with a radical inadequacy that the model has brought to light, which justifies the model's attitude toward him. The model, begin closely identified with the object he jealously keeps for himself, possesses-so it would seem- a self- sufficiency and omniscience that the subject can only dream of acquiring. (*Theatre of Envy* 296)

The model image of *Equus* prevents Alan and makes it hard for him to achieve satisfaction. The blinding of the six horses from mimetic concept is the most violence act that depicts his primitive mind. The psychologist, Martin Dysart, is the second subject of mimetic desire in *Equus*. Dysart



considers Alan's illness as a form of religious passion and worship. Because of his lacking his own form of worship, Dysart starts to envy Alan and his worship of Equus. Dysart suffers from skepticism and self-doubt in his work. He searches for passionate worship because of his desire to reach the fullness of life. He mimics Alan's way of introducing scapegoat in his dream of masks in ancient Greece in order to reconcile with himself. Thus, in my opinion, *Equus* manifests features of the Mimetic Theory of René Girard. Unlike Shaffer, Girard unmasks the sacred to revoke the power of religion. Shaffer uses the religious themes, ritual gestures, and masks in his plays in different way to abolish the power of the sacred. It is clear that the religious origin of drama has a great deal in the plays of Shaffer and Girard. For both the sacred occupies a prominent place in their drama. The gender conflicts in Shaffer plays use the sacred reflecting in the quest of the God. Obviously, the Mimetic Theory of Girard gives an integrative perspective that help the readers of Shaffer to understand his perennial drama of desire and violence that pervades his dramatic work. This perspective help to explore the mimetic desire and violence in modern society and explains some of the complex relationships of twentieth-century family. Shaffer has the ability to investigate the nature of individual desire, the psychology of violence and the relationship between a man and his God. All these help Shaffer in his writing of the plays to achieve the metaphysical quest for meaning and transcendence.

From a productive direction in which future studies of Shaffer's plays could proceed is his interest to draw the theatrical potential of ritual as a response to the early insights of performance theory and the influence of Artaud. This can profitably explore the obvious postmodern dimensions of Shaffer's drama. Critics may view Shaffer as a modern dramatist rather than a postmodern one. Mark Taylor claims that:



On one level, a significant number of scholars of religion are still heavily invested in aspects of the great modernist debate, namely, demonstrating the superiority of the application of scientific methods and frameworks. In response to what they see as troubling trends, these scholars champion the validity of what is understood as the enlightenment paradigm for the study of religion, explicitly criticizing the ways its application has been curtailed or undermined. They call for; indeed, they plead for, a real liberation from the lingering theological premises, perspectives, and even liberal tolerances that have kept the professional study of religion muddled and uninfluential. While they diagnose the problems and define the prescriptions differently, these advocates appear to share a consensus on the importance of “explanation”. (28-29)

On another level, however, a rather different group of scholars is debating so-called postmodernist issues. They assume that the modernist debate has been long settled- in favor of the Enlightenment paradigm in theory, with various modifications toward interpretation in practice. Hence, they focus on the model’s problems-the political, cultural, and epistemological dynamics involved in the generation of universal categories like “religion” and their application in explanations and interpretations of the other cultural practices. Their provocative deconstructions of categories have raised both ethical and pragmatic questions for the field.

In fact, Shaffer might be a modern playwright but his insights and methodologies are postmodernism. From this search , it becomes clear that “postmodernity is the transcendence, or overcoming of all archaic or legendary orders of significance that have underwritten cultural discourse. Understood superficially, the postmodern represents a transition from the highly formalized, or modern, understanding of things to the carnival of popular culture - - - [but] it is the



power of performance that appears to have emerged as the common denominator among the variegated postmodernisms of art , philosophy, theology, textual criticism, and the like (Dupre 37). Shaffer's postmodern-thinking is assured as he texts the recondite writings of deconstructionists. Shaffer uses the body language to embrace psychological , philosophical, theological and aesthetic ideas in his plays as a postmodernist writer. He is promoting in his use of the metanarrative, willing to accept its historicity and fragility as a post-modern dramatist. Shaffer as a postmodern dramatist raises questions about the relationship between text , discourse and performance . He assures in *Equus* the main concern of postmodern trends when he discusses the processes of existence. for postmodernism the literary history is essential in a dramatic work. Shaffer uses the literary history in terms of a postmodern palimpsest of past ,present, and future traces to reflect the interior quality of postmodern life. He follows the Absurd or Epic theater in this play. And dramatists who are associated with Theater of the Absurd are commonly addressed as postmodern playwrights. Theater of the Absurd is an essential need for postmodernism. It helps to understand the concept of self that is based on how historical agent fully in charge of its action and thoughts.

In my opinion, it seems that Shaffer selects certain ideas from postmodern trends to create his own version of theatrical drama . Thus, classification by theory , trend , school is really a self -defeating exercise since it inhibits analysis leading to reductiveness. The point is that no dramatic work can be completely effective and successful solely as theoretical demonstration and that a range of dramatist and theatrical demonstration and that a range of dramatist and theatrical elements are more fundamentally participated in causing the play to work perfect on stage than theory can ever account for. Shaffer himself realizes that dangers of labels in their application to theatre and drama. He early claims that:



I do not want to classify, or be classified by others, especially since the classifications are not only irrelevant but often quite perverse. - - As a playwright, I'm scared of the too well-defined identity -of being either publicly or (even worse) privately its prisoner- - - if I knew how to formulate it, I would like to propound an Artistic Theory of Indeterminacy. - - - I am beginning to be uneasy about a climate of belief that makes me feel a slight guilt because I want to do many different kinds of things in the theatre. ("Labels aren't for Playwright" 20)

For Shaffer labels trap the playwright because they inhibit him leading to preconditioned response. Finally, neither words nor logic can explain every level of response.

Finally, it is clear that Shaffer's *Equus* is a portrayal of the social situation in Britain during the transition from Victorianism to the modern age that began in the 1960s. There is a clash of ideas between his parents Frank and Dora because of the difference in the Victorian moral code and modern thinking. There are a lot of difficulties that society faces because of the sudden transition from Victorianism to the newly integrating social model calling for equality and liberalism. Dora and Frank depict the traditional Victorian values that are interested in the importance of family and religion. Alan, their son, who was born to a modern society, symbolizes the birth of a new age. In fact, the main aim of Shaffer in *Equus* is to point to the dilemma that many British families had to struggle with. These older generations of Victorian parents are traditions. And the new social concepts were something absolutely unknown for them. Alan was then brought up in that kind of mixture of Victorian and modern values. This leads to a constant fight of power between the two contrasting priorities. Alan's religious mother wants to raise her child to be piety, however his atheist father is an indomitable problem. Alan begins to feel some personal inner chaos. Therefore, Alan runs away to his blissful world of horses that developed into obsession.



Shaffer's writings have a strong impact on British society. They are considered complementary pieces, shedding and reflecting light upon the changes in the British culture. Firstly, the increasing popularity of television and advertisements that has been shown in the boy's singing of tunes from TV commercials, and the desire for the greatest prestige of working position as shown in Frank's longing for some self-improvement in his work. It is clear that the environment and events affect human life and his personality leading to a certain mentality. Therefore, the story of Alan in Shaffer's play *Equus* is a result of complicated family background. Thus, *Equus* is viewed as a play of contrasts. The opposites in the play are paradoxes. They are not mutually exclusive Art and Science, Apollonian and Dionysian, Christianity and Paganism and abnormality are really all parts of modern human life. It is really impossible to find an appropriate answer to the questions these conflicts raise. Finally, the answer depends on each individual's point of view and on his moral code. Therefore, *Equus* is viewed as a postmodern drama.



CONCLUSION

This dissertation indicates how Shaffer is a proficient and consummate modern and postmodern dramatist. His play *Equus* is a quite intricate and complex work. He weaves many themes and motifs in *Equus* : the need for worship, the importance of establishing the individual's own identity, the nature of Time and how it affects 'paradise lost', in addition to the conflict between reality and a life of illusion ,fantasy, spectrum, or masquerade. Shaffer in both plays is rich in his ideas defying any type of casual , and spanning metaphysics, philosophy, sociology , and anthropology. He dazzles his audience with tricky scenic designs, period pieces that introduce tremendous costuming possibilities, epic theatre, as well as radiance musical interludes. Shaffer is a master of dialogue and dialects as Eugen O'Neill, in his use of lower-class and formal rhetoric. He attracts the audience through his language in the play that delivers certain messages. Shaffer like Brecht effectively experiment with form. He has the ability to write realistic play, social drama, one-act dramas, farce, epic theater , ritualistic play, and philosophical theater that indicates his flexibility and his need to match different form of the play to match its content. Certainly, Shaffer is one of the most creative dramatists of the modern and postmodern stage .He has an important role in establishing theatrical history. Finally, this dissertation can take us to a full understanding of Shaffer at a certain point . *Equus* entries into an imaginative realm in which Shaffer's dramatic craft and theatrical skill unite to elevate the person from the daily and into the transcendent enlightenment for dying spirits. By achieves all these crafts Shaffer gives gift to his audience in a plastic postmodern world of stock numbed response. Shaffer is really unique because his theatrical intelligence resides on both dramatic and theatrical levels. He leads his plays to cause tension to express his drama. His stagecraft helps him to make the drama conditioning the effect and the effect contributing to the meaning of the drama. He declares that theatre should startle and absorb his audience and involve him in the theatrical



experience of its expression. For Shaffer the theatre is a place of worship where the audience expresses the spiritual and irrational feelings and release a type of primeval memory that is buried in the unconscious. In this conclusion I recommend that There is a great match between the Mimetic Theory of René Girard and the plays of Peter Shaffer. Shaffer's should be studied from Girard's theory of mimetic desire and envy.



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