



# **Cruelty and Psychological Distress**

**Asst. Prof. Sanaa Mohammed Mahdi (PhD.)**

**College of Arts**

**Al- Mustansiriyah University**

**Email: [dr.sanaa\\_mohammed@yahoo.com](mailto:dr.sanaa_mohammed@yahoo.com)**

First World War affects dramatists and urges them to revolt against the old traditions. They start to suspect the existing social structures that increased the universal conflict. Through Theatre of Cruelty, they can release human unconscious, his mental suffering and exposed man to himself.

Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) is the first one who puts a theory for the theatre of cruelty that based on customary and imaginary things. This form of theatre attacks the audience's subconscious in an effort to permit the deep-rooted fears and worries that are normally repressed. This theatre focuses on brief text, screams, cries and symbolic gestures in order to shock the audience and stimulate their response. The use of the body and the voice with the violent, frightening and shocking images is to improve truth.

In *Equus* (1973) Peter Shaffer (1926) presents violence and fears in a way that affects the audience greatly through creating a violent atmosphere in the mind with some aspects of Artaud's vision of cruelty. He asserts that the abnormal repression of wishes and instincts in a person can cause mental illness which is not biological but psychological abnormal that society and family values are responsible for it. Hence, the repressed feelings and instincts not only cause man's mental illness and his destruction but push him to commit an irrational and very violent act in turn he it will turn him to be a killer.

**Key words: theatre of cruelty, mental-illness, repression, instincts, Equus, crime, violence, plague.**

## 1. The Theatre of Cruelty

The surrealist movement (1920) affects many modern writers who damaged the traditional means of artistic organization to have free connotation (Abrams, 1989: 167). Antonin Artaud (1896–1948), is a Surrealist, a French dramatist, actor, essayist, and theorist. During the early 1930s, Artaud, puts a theory for a Surrealist theatre called the 'theatre of cruelty' that based on ritual and imagination. He discards the style of Western theatre as a distortion of its intent that he prefers to be a spiritual and philosophical experience. However, the theatre of cruelty has often been called an "impossible theatre"—vital for the purity of inspiration which it generated, but hopelessly vague and metaphorical in its concrete detail" (Tharu, 1984: 2), [Artaud contends](#) that rational discourse comprises lie and delusion.

Through using ritualistic act of theatre, Artaud wants the audience to be participant and not spectator only as Albert Bermel states (1977:12). According to Artaud, the theatre has the ability to provoke change within man and to transmute a culture. He wants his audience to be moved with experience that based in ritual as he considers that the transformative authority of the theatre will be continued (Artaud, 1970: 99). Therefore, many dramatists are influenced and followed his belief and method of thinking. The theatre of cruelty attacks the audience's subconscious in an endeavor to free their deep-rooted fears and worries that are normally suppressed. It forces people to see themselves and their natures without the protection of civilization.

As a theoretician of the Surrealist movement, Artaud tries to replace the conventional classical theatre with the theatre of cruelty in order to release human subconscious and expose man to himself. For him, the dramatic demonstration should be an act of initiation through which the audience will be scared as he loses the ability to control his reason, "All true feeling is in reality untranslatable. To express it is to betray it. But to translate it is to dissimulate it" (Sellin, 1975: 36). He connects the theatre with threat and cruelty.

This kind of theatre concentrates on brief text, screams, cries and symbolic gestures in order to shock the audience and provoke their response. Hence, it represents the extremes of human nature like madness and distortion on the stage. In 1933, Artaud presented his concept about the theatre of cruelty through connecting the purpose of this theatre with the cruelty that man can impose on other people. He wants to change the world by attacking man's emotions to shock the audience directly. Martin Esslin said that cruelty does not mean the physical one; Artaud creates a theatre of magic, beauty and power (1976: 31) and he establishes this theatre for feeling that the world needs motives and reasons. He attempts to replace the classical theatre with his theatre of cruelty to liberate man's subconscious. He decides to break down the conceptions of mass theatrical elements and uses a certain concept of horrible and comprehensive theatre.

Artaud's viewpoint is that "a true theatrical work disturbs the senses in response, liberates the repressed unconscious, foments a virtual revolt.....and imposes both a heroic and difficult attitude on the assembled collectivity" (Knapp, 2009: 26-30). He views the theatre and the people as a ritual to stimulate the religious experience within the audience and to increase his authenticity through rousing the creative forces inside the consciousness. Through determining man's actions based on myth, gestures and symbols, Artaud's plays

become weapons to beat up man's irrational forces. Therefore, the dramatic actions turn into personal experiences. For him, the theatre is not for enjoyment but for extension of reality that touches and affects the spectator's entire being. He portrays the world as being purposeless, full of lies, duplicity and hypocrisy. So, to take any decision, man must face the absurdity of his life that mirrors the awful and horrible reality of his own existence. Despite his pessimistic view, he believes that through his theatre he can change the world (Arrandale, 2007: 58).

This theatre attacks the senses of the people and makes them feel the silent emotions of the unconscious. Taking from his surrealist origins and his imitations from the Balinese Theatre, Artaud makes the stage firm in creation and determination, "The stage is measured and circumscribed and has a density in space – movements, shapes, colors, vibrations, attitudes, screams" as he states (Arrandale, 2007: 61). Therefore, he creates the theatre of cruelty in which feelings and the metaphysical are voiced through physical, mythical, symbolic and typical image connected to the world of dreams and not through language.

*Nathan Gorelick (2011:263)* sees that Artaud's theatre of cruelty varies in meaning as it is a practice that stimulates the nerves and the hearts of the audience. One can experience the violent acts, "it inspires us with the fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten". Then, he adds that cruelty for Artaud is:

more profoundly the unrelenting agitation of a life that has become unnecessary, lazy, or removed from a compelling force The Theatre of Cruelty gives expression to everything that is 'crime, love, war, or madness' in order to 'unforgettably root within us the ideas of perpetual conflict, a spasm in which life is continually lacerated, in which everything in creation rises

up and asserts itself against our appointed rank (*Gorelick, 2011: 264*).

*Robert Vork points out that* Artaud does not seek to concentrate only on the psychological sufferings of man or the social struggle among people since his aim is to concentrate on the aspects of subconscious as he believes that they are the main causes of people's ill-treatment with each other (*2013:306*). Vork reveals that Artaud does not prefer language because it is not enough to express the pain. Therefore, he chooses bare words of phonic elements, "Speech on the theatre of cruelty's stage is reduced to inarticulate sounds, cries, and gibbering screams, no longer inviting a subject into being but seeking to preclude its very existence" (326). In addition, Vorks observes that Artaud is different from other dramatists since his characters can express important things and "his play reveals emotions and experiences that we all attempt to proscribe and are unwilling to acknowledge, but which nevertheless occur" as Vork observes (327). *Oscar Brockett states* that for Artaud the theatrical experience is considered as a means that help people to remove any cruel feelings and live happily "the theatre has been created to drain abscesses collectively" (*2007:420–421*).

Both Symbolism and Surrealism have impact upon Artaud's work. He believes that civilization represses man and the role of the theatre is to liberate him from these subjugations. In his *Manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty* (1932) and *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), Artaud calls for intimacy and connection between the actor and the audience "in a charmed exorcism; sounds, gestures, unusual scenery, and lighting combine to form a language, superior to words, that can be used to subvert logical thought and to shock the audience into seeing the baseness of his world" (Artaud, 1958: 12). Consequently, the dances and gesture have powerful effect like the spoken words so this theatre does not communicate through the use of spoken language. Instead, Artaud prefers to use sharp sounds and bright stage to strengthen the relation between the audience and the actors.

His theatre reflects the reality that not polluted by philosophies of morality and culture. Through using the word life, Artaud refers to the changeable midpoint that forms never reach. It is clear that this theatre makes the metaphysics out of spoken language by expressing uncommon things in new and strange way. The main purpose of the theatre is to present physical tremor and to create myths for expressing life in which man can find pleasure in finding out himself (Costich, 1978: 3).

The word cruelty is used:

in the sense of an appetite for life, a cosmic accuracy, an implacable necessity, in the gnostic sense of a living whirlwind

that devours the darkness; it is the consequence of an act.

Everything that acts is a cruelty (Greene, 1967:22).

Cruelty does not mean aggression, sadism or causing hurt. It is a violent and physical determination to shatter the deceitful and wrong reality. He makes the text a ruler over meaning, using special language and middle way between thoughts and gestures. Then, he describes all spiritual expressions in physical terms. Charles Marowitz views cruelty as "the exposure of mind, heart and nerve ends to the grueling truths behind a social reality that deals in psychological crises; however, the concept of truth provides ample room for interpretation" (1966:147). So Artaud's focus on cruelty is to treat the pain of everyday life, its difficulties for reestablishing advantage of actual life that presents as art.

To express his point of views, Artaud creates a dream world through using ritual, masks, tradition and unusual dresses; using symbolic objects instead of any scenery. So, his use of the body and the voice with the violent, frightening and shocking images is to enhance truth. This new technique is to provoke creativity by developing the character's physical and emotional skills and to make the situation real on the stage.

The joining between image, violence and thinking is very significant. As the body is the central reason to provoke the thinking, the physical aspect becomes very important than the psychological one as Artaud states that "We have reached such a degeneracy, that metaphysics can penetrate into our souls only through the skin (1976: 87) and the theatre includes both explicit and implicit aspects of visual violence. Hence, his aim is to develop a new theatrical language that is distinguished as a material, meaning the language of gestures and facemask expression and focused on its essential and magical basics to achieve the physical effect. Any alteration between image and text is to create a language of the body. Artaud sees body as "passive, suffering organisms can turn into absolutely non-representative, non-productive, formless, un-made, body without organs" (1976: 40). Body can be seen as the most shocking study of man's image and Artaud has the ability to make the image active.

Artaud believes that drama must emphasize the mysterious expression of sound, gesture, light and not text only. This technique is shown very clearly in his short play, *Jet of Blood, known as Spurt of Blood* (1925) has light and begins with no description or stage directions (Artaud,1966: 74). It presents Young man and Young woman, a young couple are the main characters, sadly revealing their love,. They repeat the same words in different and wasteful tones of voice that "I love you and everything is beautiful. You love me and everything is beautiful" (Artaud, 1966: 2).

After the Young man said that the world is beautiful and ordered, an unpredicted violent and chaotic scene happened "a storm bursts, two stars strike, and a series of legs of living flesh fall down, together with feet, hands, heads of hair, masks, colonnades, portals, temples, arcades, three scorpions, a frog, a beetle and distilling flasks" (Artaud, 1976: 71). Artaud presents a scene where human limbs rain comprising a storm that separates them. The various things that fall from the sky start to flow slowly near the ground. This horrible scene makes the Young man and Young woman terrified and run away. Other characters enter the stage. They are the Knight wearing suit of armor, and the Nurse with vast bloated breasts. In reality, they are the parents of the Young girl and they are related to Young man.

Another tragedy of five acts, *The Cenci or Les Cenci*, that Artaud himself adapted from Shelley and Stendhal (1935) represents the story of slaughter, rape, violence, and vengeance. The story of Count Cenci, the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman nobleman, Francesco Cenci, and the torment of his daughter Beatrice, which leads to her vengeance and killing of her father, different from the original of both Stendhal's novel and Shelley's play. He compares the difference between it and the theatre of cruelty to the difference between "the unleashing by nature of a hurricane on the one hand and, on the other hand... whatever degree of [its] violence may remain in their image once it has become established" (Artaud, 1970: 7). In fact, this play presents a complete experience of mind, soul, and body of the audiences in order to arouse in them a personal revolution that enthused many dramatists after him. He intends to "return the theatre to its true path and to enable it to recapture that almost human dignity without which it can only waste the audience's time completely" (Artaud, 1970: 9).

Artaud presents the myth of Count Cenci, the ill-famed, incestuous and godless noble who raped his daughter Beatrice. She is punished terribly for committing parricide against a man whose authoritarianism forced a doomed action. For him the myth of Count Cenci is a suitable account to simplify his aims of innate effect. *The Cenci* is the first play to comprise sound in which the characters have the ability to create chaos and disorder "This appeal to cruelty and terror, though on a vast scale, whose probes our entire vitality,

confronts us with all our possibilities" (Artaud, 1958: 86). With the idea of transcendence from the proscenium to the audience then to the world, Artaud magnificently breaks down the difficulty between the theatre and social conscious. His aim is to "give speech...not just to men but to beings, beings each of whom is the 45 incarnation of great forces, while still retaining just enough human quality to make them plausible from the psychological point of view" ( Artaud, 1970: 8) since his interest is in forces more than men. He tries to create balance between life and mental realism. At the end of the play, the worse image is when the leftovers of the Cenci family are taken away to be executed (Artaud, 1970: 17).

According to him:

the theatre must make itself the equal of life..... not an individual life that individual aspect of life in which characters triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection (Artaud, 1958: 20).

So his aim is to convert life into the widespread huge form. This is the meaning of double in 'The Theatre and its Double'. The theatre is not a copy of reality. It is another kind of dangerous reality where the morals of life are disappearing from man's vision. If the theatre can take the audience backs "into the world of dreams and the primitive instincts, he will find himself in a world that is bloodthirsty and inhuman"(Artaud, 1958: 29).

For him every gesture, sound, mimicry and staging choice must be skillfully planned to convert the dramatic space into a location of disaster and disorder. His metaphorical comparison to the terrors is associated with Marseille plague of 1720 in which extensive massacre and destruction caused all forms of social disorder and replaced by a "shared delirium" (Artaud, 1958:15). His theatre is considered like the plague in the image of killing as it "releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities, and if these possibilities and these powers are dark, it is the fault not of the plague nor of the theatre, but of life" (Artaud, 1958: 88). The plague, as an art, looks like the theatre which encompasses some of mankind's great acts of affirmation:

The plague ... cleanses. Like a boil, it brings whatever would have noxious, hidden, and festering to the surface--and expels it. Theatre can do likewise. It simulates the dark, un indulged passions, the abnormal feelings, of mankind (the actor is a murderer) and by expelling them at one remove, in performance, cleanses the performer and spectator alike in its collective experience (Bermel, 1977: 18-19).

In his essay *The Theatre and the Plague*, Artaud refers to the plague as an inactive and disorder image that suddenly spreads into dangerous gestures and pushes them to go (Artaud, 1958, 27). This allusion has an revelation, meaning a call to vicious power; a theatre that "causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world, and above all a theatre that is a formidable call to the forces that impel the mind by example to the source of its conflicts and which is resolved only by death or cure" (Artaud, 1958: 124). Artaud believes that the only redemption for mankind and society is theatre so he suggests that man should think without restrictions and disregard the aggression on the underneath. The complement between the plague and the image of the theatre is seen plainly. This develops his philosophy about the power of images, sounds and not language. He states that the theatre of cruelty has been created: to restore to the theatre a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigor and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty on which it is based must be understood. This cruelty, which will be bloody when necessary but not systematically so, can thus be identified with a kind of severe moral purity which is not afraid to pay life the price it must be paid (Artaud, 1958: 66).

All his intends is to bring back a theatre full of life, a theatre of primitive and epic power.

Violence is an effective artistic device that can be used to optimistic ends. It is part of life and of art. According to Aristotle, the father of Western dramatic theory, "good art needs to imitate life and that this imitation must purify and heighten the life being mimicked" (Bellinger, 1927: 61). On the other side, Artaud regards theatre as a spiritual weapon against the mobs that make straight ideas of violence. The true theatre is a plague for having the duty to clean the broken structure of man; saying that "In the theater as in the plague there is something both victorious and vengeful: we are aware that the spontaneous conflagration which the plague lights wherever it passes is nothing else than an immense liquidation (Artaud, 1958: 121).

Chingd Mei Chu observes that Artaud used gesture, rational language and ideas as "development to echo a definite image reflecting the metaphysical cruelty of human existence" (1996: 15) and to develop modern field of drama:

Artaud was motivated by a desire for a direct and violent attack upon the senses of his audience in order to achieve a collective purgation of the audience .....consider[ing] the involvement of the audience in a single space the most important step in achieving his ideal of the theatre of cruelty (Chu,1996: 94).

By using cruelty, he wants the people to see the truth they dislike. Therefore, the use of unique language between thought and gesture is to describe the spiritual term into physical one. He believes that the theatre should employ "expressive breathing, animal sounds, uninhibited gestures, huge masks and puppets"(Artaud, 1958: 32) to end the barrier between actors and audience and make the latter to be participants, and bring them to a level of experience. He seeks to release suppression and to purge the prevalent violence, hypocrisy, and illness of society, trying to find a way that change theatre which based on both text and society.

The theatre of cruelty reveals the unethical and social forces within man for refining his psyche. To get rid of the hidden and dark forces, Artaud is much concerned about the audience rather than the actors, therefore, he decides to remove all the barriers between actors and the audience, theatre and life as well, "Theatre of Cruelty becomes more violent, less rational, more extreme, less verbal, more dangerous"(Brook, 1968: 49).

By using cruelty, Artaud wants to free the people from the suffering through direct contact with the actors and through the elements of 'putting on stage'. He contends that cruelty is "not sadistic or bloody, at least not exclusively so I do not systematically cultivate horror. The word cruelty must be taken in its broadest sense, not in the physical predatory sense usually ascribed to it" (Artaud, 1958: 12).

Artaud abolishes the structures and conventions governing the Western theatre for believing that this had restricted itself to a narrow path of man's knowledge, his psychological and social problems of the classes. He hates the text for making the actor steady. The theatre also "re- forges the chain between what is and what is not, between the visible and the invisible" (Artaud, 1958: 80). Then he adds that true theatre bothers the sense' reaction, frees the repressed unconscious, incite essential revolution and imposes heroic attitude (Artaud, 1958: 87). For him:

the theater invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies; and we can see, to conclude, that from. the human point of view, the action of theatre, like that of the plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world.....(Artaud, 1958: 90).

Being influenced by Balese theatre, Artaud regards gesture an vital element as it works like dialogue. Moreover, the design of the lights on the stage is very important for creating an atmosphere capable of moving the audience to anxiety, terror and fright. The well-designed lighting is considered as a vigor that play on the mind of the audience because of its vibratory, used on the stage like waves, sheets or burning arrows. Therefore, the walls should be painted with olive to absorb the light. The action should take place on all dimensions, in depth and height in order to attack the audience. His language is to focus on psychological and social conflicts. His actors are able to free themselves of the irrelevant actions and emotional simultaneity. Concerning costume, he prefers artificial dresses and enormous dolls as he dislikes modern and historical dresses.

According to Artaud, the role of the director is greater to the writer for having the ability to bring life to the written text and creates a language better than words. Stage objects are also important as each object has precise purpose and meaning. Space also plays a central role in Artaud's plays as he turns the theatre into a ritual place shared by both the actors and the audiences who see their lives played on the stage, convincing the audience to meet themselves and their insights of reality.

Artaud is fascinated in creating a special and effective language that would assimilate the actors' gestures with the spoken onomatopoeic sounds and lighting, "the spectacle can spread to the entire theatre and taking off the ground will surrounded the spectator in the most physical way leaving him in a constant pool of lights, images, movements and sounds" (Artaud, 1976: 150).

Artaud has capable of developing a theatre through breaking down the theatre into naïve relationship of mimesis, dearth of stage and establishing harmony between spectator and vision in order to create " a stage space utilized in all its dimensions and, one might say, all possible planes...no point of space and at the same time no possible suggestion has been lost and there is a philosophical sense, of the power which nature has of suddenly hurling everything into chaos" (Artaud, 1958: 61). Through this he emphasizes on the social concerns like, crime, love, war and insanity as he wants the audiences to be shocked by what they see.

In his drama and through the actors' cruelty, the truth is revealed that the audiences do not wish to see. Hence, the word 'cruelty' becomes like a sense of a desire for life, a brutal necessity that consumes the darkness. Everything that is enacted is a cruelty; actions of terror and distress that happen previously to intellectual view create difficult reactive effects beyond ethical education and can be reasonably. The theatre of cruelty can be seen as using brutal means aimed at valuable effects.

### 2. Modern Drama and Mental Distress

Many modern dramatists concentrate on the mental drama, Peter Shaffer (1926) a British dramatist is one of them who concentrates on mental and historical dramas, "fascinated by the endless ambiguity of the human situation, and his work is marked by the psychological intricacy of his characterizations" (Taylor, 1974: 3).

Shaffer is interested in the theatre of cruelty that is based on ritual and imagination in order to attack the audience' subconscious and to allow the suppressed fears and worries to be appeared. In turn, the audience will be obliged to see himself and his nature without any limitations. Vandembroucke remarks that this kind of theatre does not depend greatly on text but on screams, cries and gestures to shock the audience and provoke indispensable reaction (1975: 12). Moreover, it focuses on terrors and frights of man's mind with the bodily scenes of violence having special effect that make it a mythical place. Violence and fears are presented in a way that affects the audience by creating a violent atmosphere in his mind with specific facets of Artaud's vision of cruelty. Consequently, through this cruel atmosphere, the audience becomes part of the crime and the harsh action that are performed on the stage and he will be into the gloomy and black world of his mind. In addition, the audience can recognize the monster hidden deep inside his mind and heart as well; "theatre not confined to any fixed language or form, destroys false shadows because of this, and prepares the way for another shadowed birth, uniting the true spectacle of life around it" (Artaud, 1971: 7).

Simon Trussler (1973: 6) believes that Shaffer has great power in visual and audio dimension in controlling his dramas. In *Equus* (1973) Shaffer increases the visual and the audio world for *Equus*. In the beginning the masks striated the horseheads in light silver wire through which the respiring and glaring faces of the actors can be seen. This technique creates two images in one form. First, it attains the significant idea of the play logically. Secondly, when the spirit of the horse escapes, "the hooves-metal comes to scrap and stamp on the wooden floor", the dangerous sounds that the presence of Alan's sticky and minatory god creates will scare the audience (Shaffer, 1980: xv). It is obvious that Shaffer's characters have the ability to know their internal feelings and "discover what in them also belongs to their neighbors" (Shaffer, 1980: ix) to expose a fixed wish of the society and to stimulate the self-realization of the audience (Shaffer, 1980: xiv).

Through his play, *Equus* which in Latin means horse, Shaffer has gained popular praise for searching the themes of worship and the conflict between loving and rational desires. This mental drama for which Shaffer received the Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1975, explores the mentally based motivations of a steady young man who blinded six horses for believing they are gods (Taylor, 1974: 7).

Shaffer's belief that using words only is not enough to convey his thoughts encourage him to represent theatre of ritual, magic, masks and cries. Most of his plays are based on myth and the psychological impetuses of his characters who have the ability to develop any conflicts. The use of masks, music, and dance irradiates thematic distresses and his characters (Adam, 1976: 160).

*Equus* is a play of two acts and sets in Rokesby Psychiatric Hospital in southern England. The characters in Dysart's office talk about past events in the life of Alan Strang, the main protagonist. All the events fluctuate between the past and the present. The basic form of the play is of Greek drama and the

characters have no individual roles. They onstage include a chorus to tell the actions in unsolidified way. The acts in Dysart's office changed into events that been taken from the characters' memories (Vandenbroucke, 1975: 129).

The story of this play focuses on the movements of Alan Strang 17 years old who is in a psychiatric hospital after one night blinding six horses with a metal hoof pick. The secret thing is that no one knows why he blinded the horses but Dysart, psychiatrist at the hospital feels that finding the truth is his duty.

In reality, *Equus* is based on a story which Shaffer heard from his friend James Mossman, who had heard it from a judge. The story is about a boy, who is the son of religious and eccentric parents, is seduced by a girl in a stable. He blinded twenty-six horses in order to remove their memories as witnesses of the seduction to his parents (Shaffer, 1980: xiv). After hearing the story, Shaffer decides to create "a mental world in which the deed could be made comprehensible" (Shaffer, 1977: 4). The crime of blinding the horses in a small town attracts the attention of Shaffer and encourages him to write this play which is about a psychiatrist Dysart who seeks to treat the young man who suffers from a pathological religious attraction with horses that leads him to blind the six horses. Shaffer tries to know the reasons that caused this incident regardless the details of the crime. Not only Dysart is in gesture but Alan as well because he wants to come back to the clarity of awareness leaving all the false thoughts and the social traditions (Shaffer, 1977: 15).

The emptiness of life affects Dysart's feelings and thoughts. He has difficulty with Alan who never concentrates on his questions and his replies are in a way of singing the rings to television declarations. Through his meeting with Alan's parents, Dora and Frank, Dysart finds that the father is an atheist whereas the mother is a sincere Christian (Shaffer, 1977: 30). From asking the parents, he understands that they have broken each other's authority accordingly they complicate their son for not giving him complete awareness of the world.

Throughout the play, Dysart realizes that reality is an illusion and with the help of Alan, he prefers to make the journey back from modern society to the clarity of awareness. To accomplish his purpose, Shaffer prefers to use of brave visual symbols with other elements such as, music, dance, mimic and ritual to be the main characteristics of his play. These theatrical devices are united with realism. So he mixes naturalistic speech and description with intellectual performance of the horses. Besides, he uses intense rhetoric and difficult characterizations (Shaffer, 1975: 129).

Shaffer's characters are inscribed "with deeper lines of professional self-doubt" (Shaffer, 1980: xv) in order to give the play new dimension. Therefore, this play is both an erotic and tragic as there is no conflict between right and wrong; instead it is based on the collision between two different types of right. The conflict is between Dysart's professional duties to treat a petrified young man who has committed a awful crime and Alan's enthusiastic ability for love (Dean, 1978: xxi).

The horses are portrayed by the actors who are used as a chorus to make a buzzing sound of *Equus* and the set is a wooden ground. To reflect the interactions with Alan and to expose his inner ideas, the actors, Dysart jumps back and forth saying:

Passion, how one gains passion, if one can experience passion without pain. I think it's about sexuality and what that means and what that is for someone when they're growing up. It's about what happens to you when you lack something in your life, like Dysart says he feels like he hasn't experienced real passion because he hasn't opened himself up to the worship that Alan has seen (Shaffer, 1977: 60).

In *Equus*, Shaffer concentrates on lighting, a design procedure that comprises communicating, learning, resolving problems, creating art, self-examining and technical acts "in theatrical design and production, this process consists of seven steps commitment; analysis; research; incubation; selection; implementation; and evaluation. These steps compose a problem-solving model for theatrical design and productions" (Shaffer, 1977: 77).

Alan's belief that the horses are gods is the main reason for blinding them.

Seeing the horses as representative of God, Alan confuses his love of God with [sexual attraction](#). This boosts his suffering from delusions as Dysart confirms "Hopefully, he'll feel nothing at his fork but Approved Flesh. I doubt, however, with much passion!... Passion, you see, can be destroyed by a doctor. It cannot be created" (Shaffer, 1977: 49). He adds that mental illness affects one in four people in England that causes his suffering and his use of violence against anyone even animals. The most important thing is that the



causes of mental illness are difficult to be recognized that increased the difficulty to control the violent behaviors of mentally sick people.

The combination between Alan and the horse is spiritual and the passion is exemplified by the sexual implications in Alan's riding the horse through which Shaffer makes Alan unit with his own god and become one. Now Alan feels that not his own god controls his life but he himself for having complete power. The understanding with *Equus* helps Alan to escape from what others think of him and can live with complete power and passion (Carlson, 1985: 33).

The horses are considered as the animal forces of man's unconscious: Could suggest the cozy familiarity of a domestic animal Or worse, a pantomime horse- should be avoided..... as if the body of the horse extended invisibly behind them. Animal effect must be created entirely mimetically through the use of legs, knees, neck, face and the turn of the head which can move the mask above it through all the gestures of equine wariness and pride. ....the masks are put on before the audience with very precise timing the actors watching each other so that the mask has an exact and ceremonial effect ( Shaffer, 1980: 400).

The horses represent authority, liberty and animal desire. Alan's love of horses and riding them bare show his sense of emotional and sexual freedom. Throughout the play, the horse suggests opposite meaning particularly when Alan calls *Equus* God slave, he means that the horse have no ability to control itself despite of being powerful. Here, Shaffer makes comparison between horse and man. Though man has the ability to be free, his situation confines his aptitude. Many factors in society like religion or economy hinder man's way in life (Shaffer, 1975: 51). In fact, Shaffer seeks to present the suppressed gloomy forces within man and not the real horse.

Dysart has no the ability to study into the horse's head. This makes him suspect his professional capability to deal with man's mental illness living in complete darkness to fight seriously for life meaning. So, he is considered a passive man having no control of his own life whereas; Alan is regarded as a man of violent activity which dominates Dysart's passivity (Carlson, 1985: 41).

Through focusing on Dysart character, Shaffer shows his vision of modern man, exploring the agony, pain and hurt of his protagonist by having function. Moreover, the narrator will be disclosed through the words that extended into monologues which with the rebuilding scenes both in and out of the Dysart's office change the audience from being observer into participant. It is important to notice that through Dysart's self – awareness and Alan's ritualistic performance, Shaffer conveys his message (Plunka, 1980: xii). The new techniques he used awake his audience about the social morals' faults. He used both dramatic techniques and dramatic ideas as well (Shaffer, 1975: 136).

John Talyor avers that *Equus* is of great influence since the audience can live through Alan's experience, "as he has experienced vicariously some of his ecstasy in naked, pulsing contact with his god, he has made his own oblation to the dark gods of his dreams" (1974: 31). Therefore, the audience is like Dysart who "envies the boy for his passion; in the end it becomes his own" (Taylor, 1974: 33).

Shaffer uses the dynamics of the victim-victimizer. At the beginning of the play, after blinding the six horses, Alan is presented as a vicious and distressed young man that makes him act in a vehement and unreasonable way. Later, he is presented as a victimizer as Dysart has a vision that changes the view saying: That night I had a very explicit dream. In it I am a chief priest in Homeric Greece. I'm wearing a wide gold mask ..... I'm officiating at some immensely important ritual sacrifice..... The sacrifice is a herd of children..... As each child steps forward, they grab it from behind and throw it over the stone ..... and with each victim, it's getting worse..... the implied doubt that this repetitive and smelly work is doing any social good at all..... and then, of course the damn mask begins to slip (Shaffer, 1977: 216-217).

This speech makes Hesther, Alan's friend, realize that from the situation of the victimizer, Alan becomes a victim and Dysart looks the slaughterer who sacrifices the distressed young man.

Alan desires Jill, a girl who works with him at the stable. She also is interested in him and at the night of the crime, they were together. Alan feels he cannot keep her as *Equus* stands between them:

Alan: I couldn't... see her.

Dysart: What do you mean?

ALAN: Only Him. Every time I kissed her – He was in the way. When I shut my eyes, I saw Him at once! The streaks on his belly... ..I couldn't feel her flesh at all! I wanted the foam off his neck. His sweaty hide. Not flesh. Hide! Horse-hide!... Then I couldn't even kiss her (Shaffer, 1977: 294-295).

Here, Alan feels trapped between two worlds; his private with mechanisms hired from the ancient society, and the civilized world that has just become fascinating to him as an ambassador. Alan's act is justified according to the ancient ritualistic sacrifice (Girard, 1972: 15). In fact, this ritualistic sacrifice is regarded insanity for having no sense and modern society regards Alan as a mad young man.

Shaffer portrays characters with great ability to expose their own ideas and concerns; using of mimesis to represent the conversation between them. It is evident that through Hesther's efforts, Alan's reality is exposed gradually and Dysart creates his own reality by depending on Alan's (Shaffer, 1975: 61).

It is apparent that the abnormal repression of desires and instincts in man can cause mental illness. Concerning Alan's case, the repression of his sexuality with the apprehension made by society and his parents, cause his self-destructive and dangerous act. Through depending on repressed memories and feelings into Alan's consciousness, Dysart begins to release his repression. In fact, Alan throughout his life has repressed his opinions, feelings and experiences. For Shaffer, the mental illness is not biological but psychological abnormal that is determined by society and family values "Insane individuals may not actually have psychological issues; rather, they may simply be reacting to the world in a way that society deemed wrong man reacts to the world in which society believed incorrect" as R. D. Laing observes (1967: 10). Also, Laing considers madness as a hypothetically transformative experience whereas; society sees madness as dreadful illness.

At the end of the play, Dysart sees himself "standing in the dark with a pick in his hand, striking at heads" (Shaffer, 1977: 130). Here, he demonstrates the strong association to Alan who blinded the horses by using a hoof-pick which symbolizes the cruelty and illogicality act. The hoof-pick in Dysart's hand symbolizes the deep irrationality of modern society. Dysart as the psychiatrist treats the children that society has believed sick in a way sacrificing their individuality. In addition, striking at heads in the dark emphasizes the belief that Dysart's practice has no reason for having no solution. He feels like a doll in this evil game that makes him pay a high price. In this moment, his social mask slips and decides to leave this world.

### Conclusion

Western theatre is influenced by Antonin Artaud, the founder of theatre of cruelty, His use of new dramatic techniques and thoughts are an effort to give power to the theatre that has been lost. This power that forces the audience to breakdown the structures of civilization can be found in the ancient rituals. His theatre motivates the unrest primeval intuitive humanity and his philosophies have the ability to incite the audience, pulling the sluggish power of their souls; making them involve in the show through design and performance.

According to his philosophy, Artaud sees that not only the theatre needs to change but the world as well. Consequently, his theatre is considered as a means to awaken the slothful dream images of the mind; expressing the cruelty of life. In fact, through his theatre the audience can see the subconscious in which crimes, cruelty, fear, sensual obsessions and ideal sense of life can give truthful feelings.

In his play *Equus*, Shaffer seeks to expose the repressed miserable and gloomy power inside man. Through using new techniques such as long monologues, shouts, cries, lighting and gestures, Shaffer arouses the audience's main reaction to make them see the faults and defects of social morals. In order to attack the audience' subconscious and release his repressed horror and doubts, he used both dramatic techniques and dramatic thoughts. Here, the audience is obliged to see his nature without any restrictions and will be a participant in the action and not an observer only.

As a matter of fact, the repressed instincts and desires not only cause man's mental distress but can turn him to be a killer just like Alan, the play's protagonist. His suppressed sexual desires and his awkwardness with his family push him to commit a terrible act by blinding the horses, innocent animals of no reason just because of his mental distress.

More often than not, repression whether of memories, feelings or emotions affects man's mind remarkably and leads to his demolition. Henceforth, Shaffer considers mental distress and illness as a psychological anomaly that both society and family determine it.

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