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The Relationship Of Exile And The Other In Fyodor Dostoevsky's Notes From A Dead House

Fyodor Dostoyevski'nin Ölüler Evinden Notlar Romanında Sürgün Ve Öteki İlişkisi

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ABSTRACT

The autobiographical work, Notes from a Dead House, sheds light on the identity crisis by presenting sections from the life of Fyodor Mihayilovic Dostoevsky's, one of the most important names of Russian literature. The exile experienced by Fyodor Dostoevsky is a crisis of cultural identity caused by the problem of not belonging as being 'the other'. This identity crisis of being 'the other', which has deepened the sense of uncertainty and alienation in cultural memory, prompted Dostoevsky to write his semi-autobiographical work, Notes from a Dead House. Dostoevsky, in his work, successfully presented the crisis of identity and the sense of (un)belonging that he aroused because of the effect of the displacement he experienced due to the conditions of the period. Within the context of the study, it is aimed to examine the relationship between exile and migration experienced by the author himself in the novel. It will be possible to determine that Fyodor Dostoevsky, who had an exile experience in his personal life, shaped his literary characters by being inspired by his own life in the novel. In order to support this determination, the method of psychoanalytic literary criticism will be applied in the study. In Notes from a Dead House, which was based on Dostoevsky's real-life experiences, there is a criticism against Tsarist Russia as well as the theme of exile. In the light of such information, by analyzing the theme of freedom, it will be observed how much the trauma of being away from home alienates the person from society and eventually creates "the other".

Key Words: Dostoyevsky, Notes from a Dead House, Exile, Migration, Alienation

ÖZET

Otobiyografik bir yapıt olan Ölüler Evinden Notlar, Rus edebiyatının en önemli isimlerinden Fyodor Mihayilovic Dostoyevski'nin hayatından kesitler sunarak kimlik krizine ışık tutmaktadır. Fyodor Dostoyevski'nin yaşadığı sürgün, 'öteki' olarak ait olmama sorununun yol açtığı bir kültürel kimlik krizidir. Kültürel bellekteki belirsizlik ve yabancılaşma duygusunu derinleştiren bu öteki olma durumu ve devamındaki kimlik krizi, Dostoyevski'yi yarı otobiyografik eseri Ölüler Evinden Notlar 'ı yazmaya sevk etmiştir. Dostoyevski, eserinde, dönemin koşulları nedeniyle yaşadığı yerinden edilmenin etkisiyle uyandırdığı kimlik krizini ve aidiyet/ait olmama duygusunu başarılı bir şekilde sunmuştur. Dostoyevski'nin yaşadığı sürgün hayatının ve kimlik sorununun, yazarın kişilik ve eseri üzerinde bir etkisi olup olmadığını, eğer varsa; ne tür bir etkisi olduğunu tespit etmek bu çalışmanın asıl amacıdır. Yazarın sürgün sonucunda deneyimlediği kimlik problemi ve bu soruna karşı bakış açısı eserden doğrudan alıntılarla incelenecektir. Kişisel hayatında sürgün deneyimi yaşayan Fyodor Dostoyevski'nin romanda kendi hayatından esinlenerek edebi karakterlerini şekillendirdiğini tespit etmek mümkün olacaktır. Bu tespiti desteklemek için çalışmada psikanalitik edebiyat eleştirisi yönteminden yararlanılacaktır. Fyodor Mihayilovic Dostoyevski'nin gerçek hayattaki deneyimlerine dayanarak kaleme aldığı bu romanda, sürgün temasının yanı sıra, Çarlık Rusya'ya yönelik bir eleştiri de yer almaktadır. Bu eleştirinin ışığında, özgürlük teması analiz edilerek evden uzaklaşma travmasının kişiyi ne derece yalnızlaştırarak toplumdaki uzaklaştırdığı ve topluma yabancılaştırdığı ve nihayetinde "öteki"ni yarattığı gözlemlenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dostoyevski, Ölüler Evinden Notlar, Sürgün, Göç, Yabancılaşma

INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the most important timeless communication tools. It can also be argued that literature also has the potential of guiding future generations, based on the fact that every experience that has been written down can be preserved for centuries. Therefore, at some point, literature is an inevitable need for human beings. As a result, the subjects in the literary works and the addressed audience meet on a common denominator. Human being is a living species that both creates a source for literature and feeds on literature. From this point of view, it can be stated that every experience which we have the potential to test in life is valuable enough to be a subject for literature.

Literature can have different meanings in everyone's mind. As being an escape from reality for some, literature is the truth for others. For this reason, human expressions conveyed especially through the novel genre do not always have to have positive meanings. Undoubtedly, the beautiful moments lived embellish a person's life, while the traumas that happen to the person shape their life. Accordingly, writers have had the desire to reflect the tragic events they have experienced from time to time to their literary texts directly or indirectly. Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky is one of the writers who use literature as a mirror by not avoiding to include traumas in his works. Dostoevsky, one of the leading figures of Russian literature, had a very difficult life. The

author has tried to reflect the chaos in the inner world of human beings in his works. When examined from this point of view, it will be possible to encounter semi-autobiographical features in his literary works bearing the signature of Dostoevsky. Moreover, it can be argued that the author, who was transparent about this issue, set an example for his contemporaries. As a result, it is possible to come across sections from the real life of the author in Dostoevsky's works. In his novel, *Notes from a Dead House*, which is the subject of this study, the author conveyed his own exile experiences to his readers with a tragic narrative. As a result of this study, it is aimed to analyze the psychology created by staying away from home by examining the theme of exile in Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House*. While migration is sometimes caused by positive changes, sometimes it emerges as a result of an action taken by a power. In the light of this information, the theme of migration in the work will be evaluated through the punishment of exile, and the pessimistic mood of the person convicted by moving due to compulsory reasons will be analyzed. The work in question is based on real experiences by the author himself, and it allows the research to be shaped on a more concrete basis.

AN EXILE EXPERIENCE THROUGH A LITERARY CHARACTER

Human being has a feeling of calmness amid the ups and downs that life presents to him. Most of the time, this feeling results in emigrating to another place where he thinks the living conditions will be better for him. These types of migrations are based on free will and mostly have positive effects on human psychology. For example, an individual who changes his position in order to have better education or job conditions takes this radical change in his life of his own free will. However, it will not be possible to say that each type of migration is based on free will and always creates positive effects on people.

The act of criticizing human beings using the power of thought is one of the most striking features that distinguish them from other living species. Having a curious and observant nature, a person rejects every phenomenon that contradicts his interests as a result of his observations and resorts to the method of criticism. On the other hand, as a result of the critical nature of human beings, criticisms against the state structure arise from time to time. When such a situation occurs, interventions are usually applied by the administrators and the structure that is the target of criticism is expected to be obeyed. Literary writers are at the forefront of those who are exposed to the aforementioned attitude. For centuries, writers and poets present their criticisms to their readers in a direct or indirect way in their literary products. The severity of criticism or the limited tolerance of the structure, which is the target of criticism, may cause the works of artists to be censored. In addition, according to the understanding of the period, it is possible to see that artists were exiled from their homeland due to criticism in the history of literature. Although not alive today, many of the writers known by the society are those who have experienced exile in their lives. One of these names is Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, one of the leading figures of Russian literature.

Dostoevsky, who lived in the 19th century, is still one of the most read and studied Russian literary figures today. The fact that the author and his works continue to be known even though he is not alive can be examined with the work of Roland Barthes's *Death of the Author*. As Barthes argues, the author has announced his own death on the literary text from the moment he completed his work and presented it to the reader (Barthes, 1977). The literary product he wrote now belongs to the reader, who is his target audience (Barthes, 1977). From this point of view, the fact that the work titled *Notes from a Dead House*, which was first published in 1861, is still preferred despite the real death of the author, can be interpreted through the interest of the reader. It is the interest of the target audience that keeps the work vigorous, and this interest indirectly causes the writer's name to be conveyed to future generations, and the readability of his works increases with each passing year.

Although Dostoevsky is a well-known name today, he could not live a comfortable life during his lifetime. For this reason, it is possible to encounter intense criticism and descriptions of pessimistic mood in his works. By reflecting his experiences on his works, he presented very successful products in terms of author-work relationship. In the novel of *Notes from a Dead House*, he conveyed his own exile experience to the reader through the main character in the work. Some of the known facts about Dostoevsky's exile experience are as follows: After being sentenced to hard labor, Dostoevsky spent two weeks on a journey where he struggled with hunger and misery in order to reach Tobolsk, where the sentence would be rendered (Purevdori, 2017: 30). As a result of this journey, he was found in Tobolsk for four years, where he was exiled (Purevdori, 2017: 30). Dostoevsky, who met people who were exiled from the place where he lived by observing his surroundings during his exile years, tried to present a new perspective to the reader by transferring his observations to his works. It would not be wrong to interpret this move of the author with the sentences of Oruç Aruoba in the excerpt: "Each departure brings responsibility for new paths to be embarked on" (Aruoba, 2020: 84). In the light of this statement, it is possible to interpret Dostoevsky's exile experience as a kind of "departure". Also, based on the same saying, it can be argued that the author may have felt responsible for

conveying the experience and new information he gained to the reader, and for this reason, he wanted to convey his own experiences and the negative effects of the act of exile on people through literature.

According to the quotation in Berna Moran's work titled *Literary Theories and Criticism*, American literary critic Meyer Howard Abrams states that every writer has a unique style in his work, *Mirror and Lamp*, and this style appears before the reader as the key to the character, and that every detail chosen by the author in her work expressed that it can be put forward as a reflection of her personality (Moran, 2002: 133). From this point of view, it can be said that in order to analyze any character, the author must first be understood by the reader. At the same time, it would not be wrong to read *Notes from a Dead House* through Dostoevsky's personal life, especially in terms of criticism towards the writer. At this point, it will be possible to say that the determination of the author through the work has a very important role in examining the themes in the aforementioned novel. It should not be forgotten that the work also has a semi-autobiographical character. In order to assimilate the message conveyed to the reader in the literary text in question, this quality must be taken into account.

In his novel *Notes from a Dead House*, which is the basis of the study, Dostoevsky presented his criticism on prisoner psychology. Since the narrator is an individual convicted of hard labor, all of the events take place in the region of exile. The fact that the story was shaped through a single location gave the reader the opportunity to reflect in detail both the relations of the detainees with each other and the process in which they were tried. Thus, while reading from the beginning to the end of the work, it will be possible to have a partial idea about the development of the main character. In addition, the work often refers to the feeling of worthlessness through character development. The sentence in the excerpt can be exemplified to support the thesis presented:

“It occurred to me once that if you want to crush a person completely, if you want to crush him completely, if you are going to give him such a terrible punishment that will make even the most horrific murderer tremble, then it is absolutely useless and meaningless in every respect. It's enough to give a job” (Dostoevski, 2021: 82).

At this point, the author argued that making a person feel worthless and useless is the greatest punishment to be given. Engin Geçtan interprets the feeling of worthlessness as follows:

“This kind of pride alienates a person from himself and causes the deterioration of personality integrity. A person who tries to adopt a magnificent personality as a result of the hatred he develops against his real self constantly compromises for this cause” (Genctan, 2021: 82).

In the light of the information given, it can be said that anyone who has a feeling of worthlessness will have problems loving himself and accepting himself as he is. Thus, the process of self-alienation results in one's detachment from society.

Undoubtedly, those who cannot love themselves will be insufficient to love those around them or to show their love to them. When such an inadequacy is in question, cracks begin to appear first in the person's own morality and then in his attitudes towards society. Starting to love oneself, just like the process of getting to know oneself, needs a certain period of time. In the work, the same subject is handled in a different way as a result of the development of the character:

“I enjoyed getting stronger and stronger thanks to this work. Previously, I could only carry eight adobe bricks, each adobe weighing six kilos. But then I was able to carry twelve to fifteen adobe bricks, and that made me very happy. In rowing punishment, physical strength was just as necessary as moral strength to endure all the material hardships of this damned life. I also wanted to live after the camp...” (Dostoevski, 2021: 292).

As seen in the excerpt, the main character is very happy with the task of carrying mud bricks. The basis of the feeling of happiness he feels is the fact that he physically observes that it works. He associated the fact that he was carrying more and more mud bricks with his developing physical strength. Observing that his body is developing in the face of this force, despite all the conditions he is in, also caused the main character to get rid of pessimism and look to the future with hope. The character embodied this feeling of hope by expressing that he wanted to "live" after the camp. At this point, the message he wants to give is that he wants to continue his life like a normal person. The development that he can observe physically brings him closer to this desire.

One of the most valuable features that makes a human human is the need for hope. A person fights for survival with hopeful anticipation for the future against every difficult struggle he experiences. Man exists as much as he imagines, and the hope he harbors leads him to dream. Motivating oneself by contemplating thoughts about the future is an example of resistance. It is possible to come across this example frequently in the work. In this

novel, which is written on very pessimistic subjects in terms of theme, the main character's inexhaustible belief of hope is the key to the author's analysis. The sentences in the excerpt can be used to show the hold on the hope in the work:

“From the first day of my life in the camp, I started to dream of freedom. It was my favorite occupation to calculate the day when my years in the camp would come to an end, with all kinds of dreams and intentions” (Dostoevski, 2021: 137).

The value of the quotation presented in the example is indisputable at the stage of examining the prisoner's psychology. The character confesses that he has given his own resistance by imagining the day when he will be freed since the first day he started his exile. Moreover, this is not the only memory of the character describing his wish to see the future:

“How are you going to get out of camp? Where will you go? When will this happen? Will you be able to return to your homeland one day? You think, you think, and hope arouses in your soul... Another time you simply start counting: one, two, three... In the hope of falling asleep while counting” (Dostoevski, 2021: 272).

A person can lose hope for the future when faced with a traumatic event. Therefore, it would not be surprising if any prisoner loses the ability to imagine compared to an individual enjoying his freedom. Dostoyevsky also touched upon this issue in his novel, and argued that the hopes of two different people belonging to two different worlds cannot have the same qualities:

“The hope of a person who is confined, who has lost his freedom, is of a decidedly different kind from that of a person who is truly alive. The free man, of course, hopes (for example, he hopes to change his destiny, to overcome any obstacle), but he lives, he acts; real life has taken it in its constant flow. This is not the case for a closed person” (Dostoevski, 2021: 137).

The quote presented in the example can be used to describe prisoner psychology. At this point, people are divided into two different groups as “closed” and “free”. Based on the expression in the view towards the free person, it is stated that the prisoner, that is, the one who is closed, is alienated from the society. The reason for this alienation is that he has been away from the flow of life because he has been cut off from social life. Dostoyevsky, who presented his criticism through two different individuals who exist in life and who are alienated from life, stated that the person who was imprisoned thus lost his human qualities at some point, alienated from his humanity and isolated himself from others.

There is no doubt that the majority will agree on how dangerous someone can be if they cannot see their own future. Being in suspense pushes him to aggression. For this reason, it has occasionally led to debates how much the punishments given to a person who committed a crime alienate him from society or how educational it is to not repeat the same mistake again. It is remarkable how Dostoyevsky handled this issue in his novel. Dostoyevsky expresses his thoughts on the main character he voiced as follows:

“Of course, the camps and the forced labor system do not fix the criminal; This system only punishes him and protects society from further attacks by the murderer in his presence” (Dostoevski, 2021: 39).

According to Dostoyevsky's definition, the application of forced labor to detainees in exile camps is insufficient to solve an existing problem. Forcibly removing the convicted person from the society will only serve to protect the society. However, there is no guarantee that the detainee will not commit the same act again when he is released. It should not be forgotten that any punishment that does not direct the prisoner to the right can anger him and turn him into a more aggressive person. Dostoyevsky supports this idea with the following sentences in his work: “Camping and forced rowing create only hatred, hunger for forbidden pleasures and terrible thoughtlessness in the criminal” (Dostoevski, 2021: 39). The criticism presented by the author at this point is that any type of punishment that does not support the moral development of the convicted prisoner will only make the prisoner want to rebel against the forbidden pleasures. Engin Geçtan stated that a person who is full of anger towards the world and people will find himself justified against those around him as a result of his hostile tendencies, and will avoid facing the feeling of guilt (Dostoyevski, 2021: 66). An example that fully fits this psychological state expressed by Geçtan is used by Dostoyevsky in his novel *Notes from the House of the Dead*. In the work in question, it has been argued that it is possible to observe differences in conscience among detainees:

“Here, for example, is an educated person with a developed conscience, consciousness and heart. The pain of his own heart condemns him to more severe tortures than any punishment. Because of his crime, he ruthlessly, without hesitation, imposes the most severe law on himself. But there is another

one standing next to him, someone who, during his entire sentence of hard labor, did not even think about the murder he committed. He even finds himself justified” (Dostoevski, 2021: 83).

It would not be wrong to refer to Freud's theory in order to examine the expression in the example. According to Freud, there are three different structures that make up the human personality: Id, Ego, Superego (Berg, 2003). The superego begins to develop in childhood and collects value judgments. At this point, guilt emerges when an action is taken that goes against accepted value judgments. Thus, Freud's superego structure is likened to the concept of conscience.¹ In the light of this information, the superego of the person who finds himself justified even in the face of the crime he has committed, according to the expression in the quote, is either incomplete or does not function as it should. In the presence of the main character, and therefore Dostoevsky, no type of punishment is superior to the punishment that one's own conscience imposes on him.

One of the emphases in the work is alienation from one's own humanity. When this issue is considered in terms of the relationship between exile and migration, it sheds light on a very important issue. The fact that Dostoevsky repeatedly criticizes the issue of how the detainees are alienated from the society lies in the fact that the prisoner mentioned will one day return to the public. The concept of exile is a kind of forced migration, at this point the real danger comes to light when the migration process is completed. Let alone the fact that the punishment process is insufficient on the development of the person at the present time, causing the person's humanity to atrophy during exile poses a new danger for the society. This situation is described in the work as follows: “It dries up the vital essence in man, blunts his soul, weakens him, frightens him, and then he shows this morally dried-up mummy, the half-mad, as an example of healing and regret” (Dostoevski, 2021: 39). As can be seen in the excerpt, Dostoevsky stated that the prisoner whose superego was damaged did not serve his sentence properly during the exile process, that the act of exile further injured the prisoner's psychology and dulled his soul, and that this situation could not go beyond bringing a new mummy to the society by raising doubts about the person's mental health. With this move, the author has criticized the understanding of justice and the systematization of this understanding that existed in his time.

The deepest damage caused by the act of exile is the forced change of position. Migration itself is a movement of change. For this reason, the only way to have a positive result is based on the free will of the person. However, as noted earlier, most types of migration originate from or can have negative consequences. The most crucial examples of the aforementioned situation are encountered in the exile experiences. “Exile” is defined by the TDK as follows: “A person who is settled outside a certain place or in a certain place as a punishment.”² As can be seen, the aforementioned word has a negative effect even when considered with its definition in the dictionary. As a result of moving away from the place where he belongs, the person may begin to feel unfamiliar with his own home. In the work, this situation is evaluated as follows:

“Solid doors were opened in one part of the wall, which were always closed and protected by guards day and night; when necessary, they were opened to send to work. Behind these doors, there was a bright, free world, people lived like everywhere else. But on this side of the wall, we were imagining that world as a fairy tale that would never happen” (Dostoevski, 2021: 29).

If the expression in the quote is to be examined, being forced away from the place where the person lives alienates him from his own home. Moreover, the person who is alienated from his own home begins to reject the community of people living in his own home. That is, two different types of alienation can be observed simultaneously at this point. Free people are now imaginary characters living in fairy tales for the prisoners who see their own house behind the walls as a fairy tale land in their exile location. As a result, it is inevitable that different problems will emerge.

“Dehumanization is simultaneously a sociopolitical and psychological process. In this process, the basic human characteristics of other people are ignored; thus, these people are perceived as less human or as non-human” (Varvin, 2018: 70-71).

When supported by this information, it can be said that Dostoevsky defends the fact that the prisoner, who is alienated from society, continues to lose his human values. For this reason, it has been stated that it is inevitable that bigger problems will arise as a result of the uncertainty that the person displaced by using force will experience between places.

¹ Prof. Dr. Selahiddin Ögülmüş, “Freud ve Psikanaliz (2)”, Ankara Üniversitesi Açık Ders Malzemeleri, Erişim Tarihi: 12 Haziran 2021. <https://acikders.ankara.edu.tr/course/view.php?id=2550>

² Türk Dil Kurumu, “Güncel Türkçe Sözlük” Erişim Tarihi: 12 Haziran 2021. <https://sozluk.gov.tr/>

In essence, the criticism in the work is not only shaped by the theme of exile. From time to time, the author also pinned the people of his period through politics. The sentence given in the excerpt can be used to illustrate this thesis:

“True, our people, perhaps the entire Russian people, are ready to forget all the pain in exchange for a single kind word; I say this as a fact, without saying it's good or bad. It is not difficult to manage and gain popularity among these people” (Dostoevski, 2021: 250).

At this point, Dostoevsky has criticized a society of which he is a citizen, with "easy forgiveness". While he frequently criticized the government of the period through the justice system in the work, he did not hesitate to criticize the society, which easily forgives the wrong method.

Dostoevsky's exile experience undoubtedly deeply influenced his critical view. In the article written by Leylâ Hafizoğlu, it was stated that the years 1861-1864 were very important for the author, and the reason for this importance was explained by the fact that his views underwent a radical change. Dostoyevsky, who returned home after his exile experience, began to be seen as the representative of naturalism, while on the other hand, he became a hero to the revolutionary views of an association called Petrashevsky (Hafizoglu, 2003: 128). As a result of this, it can be predicted how critical Dostoyevsky has on politics.

As a result, Dostoyevsky, who wrote his novel "*Notes from the House of the Dead*" on the theme of exile, presented his criticisms to the target audience by examining many themes through prisoner psychology. The experience of the author's forced removal from home, which he acquired in his real life, caused the events described in the work to be blended with reality, while strengthening the language used in the narration, encouraging the reader to think about the subject. Dostoevsky, through the mentioned work, set an example for both his contemporaries and writers living today. At this point, he has successfully examined exile and literary criticism and has produced a literary product that will make a name for himself even after his life.

CONCLUSION

Literature is among the richest branches of art through its sub-titles. One of the main reasons that increase the diversity of this richness arises from the fact that literature has the potential to cover everything and everyone. One of the varieties in question is exile literature. When we look at the history of literature, it can be said that most of the writers who create the classics today have exile experience. Literature has seen the nature of a bridge between the writer and the reader in order to complete a lack of knowledge, which is sometimes enjoyable and sometimes existing. Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, on the other hand, is one of the artists who uses literature to present his criticisms to the reader and encourage them to think and think.

When it comes to Russian literature, one of the first names that comes to mind will undoubtedly be Dostoevsky. Although the author is a well-known name today, the period in which he lived was filled with many difficulties. Of course, at the beginning of these difficulties is the experience of exile. For Dostoevsky, who is struggling to survive between misery and poverty, literature is the truth itself. Even his exile from his home was not enough to prevent Dostoyevsky's pen. On the contrary, Dostoyevsky put this experience in writing, especially in his novel *Notes in the House of the Dead*, and presented his criticisms on the subject to the reader's presence. It should be noted that Dostoevsky's writing such a criticism does not lie in the need to acquit himself or defend the subject on which he was convicted. By evaluating the negative effects of the subject of exile, the author wanted to explain that a sentence in force puts the prisoner in a more dangerous mood than it is, rather than improving it. Thus, he criticized the act of exile, which constitutes a compulsory type of immigration. Despite all this, the fact that hopes and dreams about the future are frequently mentioned in the work, which has a mostly dramatic and pessimistic effect, depicts the hope that the author maintains. In the light of this information, it can be argued that the work has a semi-autobiographical structure.

Solutions that are put forward to correct a mistake may cause an existing mistake to develop over time and cause bigger mistakes. In the work, this message has been tried to be conveyed by criticizing the penalty of hard work. However, it will not be possible to deal with exile independently of immigration. Although exile is a forceful form of migration, it is the most damaging to human psychology. Dostoyevsky, through his criticisms, tried to eliminate the deficiency in the society by evaluating the relationship between exile and immigration through prisoner psychology. Thus, the work, which is the subject of the study, continues to maintain its importance today and sheds light on the future and the past.

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