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THE EFFECT OF LUIGI PIRANDELLO ON PEYAMI SAFA'S A NOVEL OF HESITATION*

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Abstract

Peyami Safa is one of the most respected authors in modern Turkish Literature and *A Novel of Hesitation* (the original title is: *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı*) is one of his autobiographic works. In this novel Safa made some references to Italian author Luigi Pirandello's play *Dressing The Nude* (the original title is: *Vestire Gli Ignudi*). In the present article some information about Peyami Safa's and Pirandello's literary personalities will be given firstly, and then, Pirendello's effect on Safa's work will be revealed by examining *A Novel of Hesitation* in the context of *Dressing The Nude*.

Keywords: Peyami Safa, Luigi Pirandello, *A Novel of Hesitation, Dressing The Nude,* intertextuality.

PEYAMİ SAFA'NIN *BİR TEREDDÜDÜN ROMANI* ADLI ESERİNDE LUİĞİ PİRANDELLO TESİRİ

Özet

Peyami Safa, Türk edebiyatının en önemli isimlerinden biridir ve *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı* onun otobiyografik özellikler gösteren eserlerinden biridir. Safa, bu eserinde İtalyan yazar Luigi Pirandello'nun *Çıplakları Giydirmek* adlı piyesine göndermeler yapmıştır. Biz, bu makalemizde öncelikle Pirandello ve Peyami Safa'nın edebî kişilikleri hakkında bilgi vereceğiz, ardından *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı'*nı metinlerarası ilişkiler bağlamında inceleyerek Pirandello'nun Safa'ya olan tesirini ortaya koymaya calısacağız.

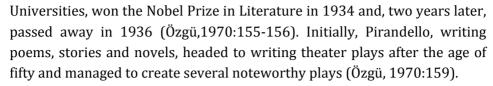
Anahtar Kelimeler: Peyami Safa, Luigi Pirandello, *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı, Çıplakları Giydirmek,* metinlerarası ilişkiler.

1. Luigi Pirandello and Dressing the Nude:

Italian author Luigi Pirandello was born in Agrigenti, Sicily in 1867. Pirandello, having studied Philosophy and Philology at Rome and Bonn

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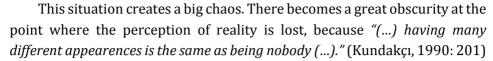


The feature that makes Pirandello famous worldwide is his perspective on events and situations. He gained this perspective, which is called "psychologic relativism" by Pirandello critics, as a result of relationship with his wife. Pirandello's wife Antonietta couldn't recover after she had given birth to her third child in 1889. And then, in 1905, her health and psychology was largely deformed after Pirandello's father's ruin and, also, losing Antonietta's *drahoma* (some money and properties given by the bride's father- a kind of dowry) made her even worse. From this moment on, his wife had the insane delusion that Pirandello had cheated on her (Kundakçı, 1990: 183). This changed the author's worldview and perspective:

"(...) During his wife's disease (Pirandello doesn't want to accept his wife's madness), he shows an increasing care towards her and, to make her pleased, he pretends to do the things that he's been accused of doing. At this moment he realises a distressing truth that would be the basis for many of his short stories, novels and plays. On the one hand, he, himself, is one person to his children and acquaintances; on the other hand, according to his sick wife, he is a completely different person. Thus, there come two truths: One is Pirandello's truth and the other is his wife's truth. This is called relativism. As you see, the basis of Pirandello's art reveals itself from here." (Kundakçı, 1990:183-184)

Pirandello's life experiences hurt his perception of reality. Pirandello, having fallen in doubt about reality, which is stable for the majority, has reached to the conclusion that reality can change according to a person's point of view.

"Everyone has a different reality. The truth is relative. While there's a Pirandello for the people around him, there's another, completely different Pirandello for his wife. Thus, there are two realities: one is Pirandello's own reality and the other is other person's reality. "Reality", as the writer says, "is as how it's seen to you; how you perceive it, this becomes 'your reality'." (Balamir, 2010: 25)



It is the starting point for the tragedy of the characters in Pirandello's works. His characters are always left alone with the crisis of identity and the problem of existing in a society. According to Pirandello, who sees life as a tragedy, the duty of an author is to express this tragedy. As a result he doesn't offer solutions to the problems in his works but only satisfies himsely with stating them (Balamir, 2010: 23-24)

The characters, whose tragedies the author describes in his works, are the ordinary people. He introduces them within the complexity of the daily life (Özgü, 1970: 156). Psychologic relativity which shapes Pirandello's understanding of art and world plays an important role in making up these characters, and for this reason, his characters are always miserable and problematic people in view of the identity crisis they've lived (Özgü, 1970:160).

One of the Pirandello's characters living an identity and existence crisis like this is the protagonist of the play, *Dressing the Nude*, which is analysed in the present article. *Dressing the Nude* is a three staged play of Pirandello's, written in 1922.¹ The play can be summarized as follows (Pirandello, 1965:1-100): Ersilia Drei is a young lady working in the house of the Consul of Izmir, Grotti. In the play it's evident that she's an orphan. While she's working in this house, at a party given by the consul, she's seduced by a naval officer, Franco Laspiga by taking her in that he will marry to her. Ersilia puts her trust in him and thinks that they will get married. However, she can't receive any answer to her letters that she wrote to Laspiga, who returned back to Italy. In the passing time, the old consul Grotti starts to pester Ersilia, who is working in his house as a maid, as well. Ersilia tries to resist, but she's

¹ This work was translated into Turkish by Dr. Feridun Timur in 1965, and the translation was published by the Ministry of Education. There's no other translation of this work except for the mentioned. Dr. Feridun Timur, the translator of this work, was born in Istanbul, in 1915. After graduating from Italian College, Dr. Timur, studying Medicine at Istanbul and Rome Universities, worked as a doctor in different cities of Turkey and had been in Italy, Greece, France, Spain and Northern African countries. In the 50s and 60s, he translated many Italian writers' works such as Dante, Boccaio and Pirandello into Turkish (Nebioğlu,1961-62: 610-611).

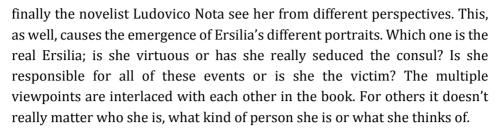
helpless and has to admit his passions. One day, when the consul pesters her again, his little daughter dies because of falling down the terrace. Whereas Ersilia has to take care about her, she can't because of the consul and, as a consequence, the little girl dies falling down the terrace while playing on her own. After realizing the truth as a result of this incident, the consul's wife dismisses the heroine from the house.

Having returned to Italy in despair, Ersilia looks for Franco Laspiga and finds out that he has left the navy and gets engaged to another girl. She realises that Laspiga has deceived and used her. She doesn't have enough money to pay for the hotel she stays at, and tries committing suicide by taking some poison at a park in the thought that everything has come to the end.

Taken to a hospital by the people at the park, Ersilia doesn't die. She lies to the journalist Cantavalle, who comes to the hospital to get some information about the incident, by telling him that she's committed suicide because of Laspiga, who deceived her. She doesn't want to tell the journalist that she's done it because of being helpless. Ersilia, who doesn't have a life of her own, imagines a fascinating end for herself and tell the story to the journalist.

The novelist Ludovico Nota, who read about the incident in the newspaper, brings her to the pension he stays at for he finds the event interesting. Ersilia's life is an interesting and attractive novel topic for him. The newspaper report about Ersilia mixes things up. Laspiga, with a great remorse, finds the place where she stays at and, breaking up his engagement, wants to marry her to make it up. However, the consul wants Cantavalle to publish a denial for the news. He, as well, wants to see Ersilia coming to the Ludovico's pension. Laspiga doesn't know what happened between Ersilia and the consul; he only knows what the novelist Ludovico wrote. Furthermore, the consul tells the events differently. He states that during her stay at his house the maid tried to be close to and seduced him. He also blaims her for his daughter's death. Laspiga, having learned these from the consul, looses his mind. At this point, the lie and the truth mingle into each other. The only reality is that Ersilia is in despair. Having no power to fix anything, she tries committing suicide again by taking poison.

Ersilia loses the sense of reality as a result of facing with the life's brutality. The consul, the naval officer Laspiga, the journalist Cantavalle and



In this situation, there's nothing that Ersilia could do and she finds the solution in committing suicide. This attempt is a reaction to the world in which everyone sees the persons and events from their own point of views and doesn't care about the others' lives and emotions.

2. A Novel of Hesitation and Dressing the Nude in the Context of Intertextuality:

Peyami Safa was born in Istanbul/Turkey on April 2, 1899. He had a problematic childhood and youth life because his father, the poet İsmail Safa, passed away when the boy was only two years old. A bone-deficit (a kind of bone related disease) added another complexity to his life. The traces of this disease can be seen in his autobiographic novel 9th External Ward (the original title is: Dokuzuncu Hariciye Koğuşu). After working as an officer and a teacher for a while, he entirely devotes himself to writing and doesn't take up another job till the end of his life. He makes living by writing the columns in newspapers, detective stories and by taking the copyright charges of his other literary works. Peyami Safa died on July 15, 1961 having made a great contribution into Turkish literature by his novels, stories and columns.

A Novel of Hesitation is one of Peyami Safa's significant novels, containing mostly autobiographic features. In this novel, Safa often makes some attributions to not only his own life but his pre-works as well (Kaygısız, 2011: 35-38). The novel, in general, has great traces from his erstwhile Bohemian life (Ayvazoğlu, 1999: 131-153). For these are beyond our topic we don't mention these attributions in the present work. However, the novel's being in autobiographic context is important because it reflects Safa's connections with Pirandello and *Dressing the Nude*. It will be looked at in the context of the intertextuality.

Prior to examining the novel in the stated perspective we want to investigate Safa's connection to Pirandello. This might help reveal the relation between the two works.

The first play by Pirandello that was put on stage in Turkey is *Six People Looking for Their Writers*. This play was staged in 1927 (Nutku, 1970: 151). *Dressing the Nude* was first staged in Turkey at the 1960-61 theatre sessions (Nutku, 1970:156). The play was published in the form of a book in Turkey in 1965. A *Novel of Hesitation* was published in installments at the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in 1932, and was published as a book in 1933 (Tekin, 1999: 181). Therefore the novel was written both before the staging and publishment of *Dressing the Nude* in Turkey (furtheremore, Safa died in 1961, four years before the translation of the book). Peyami Safa, not knowing Italian, read the *Dressing the Nude* in French. The author (Muharrir) in *A Novel of Hesitation* states that he's read to Vildan the Pirandello's work from the French translation made by Benjamin Cremieux (Safa, 1999: 112-113). Considering the autobiographic nature of the novel, these statements in the novel show us clearly that Safa read Pirandello's French translation. It's also possible that Safa read the translations made from Pirandello into Turkish.

Let us move to the examination of intertextual relations between Safa's *A Novel of Hesitation* and Pirandello's *Dressing the Nude.* Genette defines, in general, the notion of intertextual relations as "(...) the concrete existence of a text in an other text (...)" (Aktulum, 2007:83). When we examine *A Novel of Hesitation* from this perspective, it's possible to say that we can see the concrete existence of the Pirandello's play *Dressing the Nude* in this novel.

A Novel of Hesitation is constructed on the biliteral relations among the Author, representing Peyami Safa, Mualla and Vildan (Tekin, 1999: 190-191). The novel divided in two parts: The relation between the Author and Vildan makes up the first episode of the novel, and the relation between the Author and Vildan makes up the second episode. The second episode is the one that will be examined in the present article. For asmuch as, Vildan is a woman who is translating *Dressing the Nude* (Safa, 1999: 111-114).

Vildan and the Author's relations develop during the play. Their acquaintance starts by her saying in a letter to the Author that she has just come to Turkey from Italy, indicates that translated a play of Pirandello, and wants to publish and stage it in Turkey. Then they arrange a meeting (Safa, 1999: 111). In the relation developing between two of them, the reference to the play and Pirandello is often made since Vildan is a translator of *Dressing the Nude*.

Kubilay Aktulum states that making references of this kind in the text plays an important role in setting off the personal traits of the characters in the novel (Aktulum, 2007: 167). In this respect the relations between *A Novel of Hesitation* and *Dressing the Nude* can be defined as follows: by making attributions to Pirandello, Peyami Safa aimed to convey some characteristics of the Author and Vildan more accurately. In the novel some similarities between the Author and Pirandello, and Vildan and *Dressing the Nude*'s Ersilia are underlined.

First of all, we want to hightlight the parallels between the Author and Pirandello. Vildan tells the Author the evening they first met:

"(...) I haven't read all the books of the writer, only two of them. Anyway, it's rare that I could read a book to the end. But, Pirandello and you aren't like this. (...) I met him before first. Neither your works nor your characters are similar to each other. However, there's such a similarity that I can find myself on this common point. (...)" (Safa, 1999: 112)

Having said that, later Vildan compares the Author to the novelist Ludovico Nota in *Dressing the Nude*:

"(...) That's the book, I mentioned in the letter. It is entitled Dressing the Nude. And will you believe me if I say a strange thing? The novelist always reminds me of Pirandello and you. (...)" (Safa, 1999: 114)

"Lüdovik Nota. You're the same: Pirandello says about him "he's over 50", but you aren't that old, however, there's the attitude of that age in you. 'Effective glances and lustrous glances and almost childish and fresh smile on the lips'. Look, how harply I remember all these!" (Safa, 1999: 115)

These conversations give the Author an opportunity to state his opinions about Pirandello. The Author says he has read all his works translated into French and states that his favourite is *Dressing the Nude* (Safa, 1999: 113). However in some parts of the novel the Author criticizes Pirandello. For instane he says that in *Dressing the Nude* Ersilia's staying in the novelist Ludovico Nota's pension is annoying (Safa, 1999: 106). Further he adds that Pirandello has the opinion of every hero where there are two counter characters and states that this opinion is true but rough (Safa, 1999: 127). The most significant remarks that the Author makes about Pirandello are:

"(...) Like Erzilya all of us are looking for the dresses of lies to become beautiful and trying to conceal the naked reality; besides, even the shroud is a white liet to cover the ugliness of our naked body, isn't it? (...) However, Mrs. Vildan, if you want me to tell the truth, I like neither the event nor the thesis in this work of Pirandello. All of these opinions are the compounds by mixing in hundred thousand ways. (...) The thing I find good in this novel is the catastrophy of the events occuring in the acts of actors: the catastrophe of eternal impossibilities, conflicts, opposites and passion conflicts. (...)" (Safa, 1999: 118-119).

Although in his novel Safa is seen criticizing Pirandello, it's apparent that he's largely affected by him. It is possible that he has made these criticisms in order to conceal this effect in a small portion. It's fair to say that the relations between the Author and Vildan construct the half of *A Novel of Hesitation*, and the presence of Pirandello and his play can be sensed, nearly, in every moment of their interactions. In some sense, *Dressing The Nude* is an important element in developing of the events and conversations in the novel.

Besides, it's possible to say that Peyami Safa has been largely affected by Pirandello's "psychological relativism". This effect can be seen in *A Novel of Hesitation* and continues gradually in his later novel *Matmazel Noraliya's Armchair* (the original title is: *Matmazel Noraliya'nın Koltuğu*). In this novel, a great effect of Pirandello's "psychological relativism" is apparent in the questioning of concrete reality and existence in the process of the spiritual transformation of the pratagonist Ferit.

The similarities between Vildan and *Dressing the Nude*'s Ersilia found in the novel are crucial as well. Peyami Safa exploits Pirandello's play in shaping Vildan as a character.

Vildan compares herself to Ersilia as she compares the Author to Nota (Safa, 1999:115). Additionally, she tries comitting suicide like Ersilia. She explains the reasons as follows:

"'Perhaps' she said 'I did it to resemble her. Perhaps, I did it because I really hate myself. I become insane at the times when I can't give any meaning to my existence. Sometimes I find myself so meaningless that I think I can't bear it." (Safa, 1999: 122)

In *Dressing the Nude*, Ersilia tells a lie to give a meaning to her suicide, because her life was meaningless and she could never shape her life as she wanted. These words of Ersilia clearly demonstrate her state:

"(...) Serving... obeying... not being able to be nothing... Like an old coveralls hung to a nail at the wall every evening. What a disgusting thing hearing that nobody cares about you any more, my God! On the street... with the goods around me, at noon, a few passerbys passing through that park... with sofas... I saw my life, like it's in a dream, feeling that it no more exists... - and, from now on, I want to escape from being nobody..." (Pirandello, 1965: 19)

Ersilia aims to escape from "being nobody" by committing suicide and, at least, wants to show the people the reason for her suicide as she herself dreams of. As can be concluded from the replics above, Vildan couldn't give any meaning to her life also.

However, the reasons that bring Ersilia and Vildan to the tip of suicide are not the same. Ersilia couldn't have an ordinary and happy life because of some circumstances. The reasons for Vildan's suicide aren't clearly expressed in the novel. The things she said and did show us the psychological state of Vildan. Vildan has serious psychological problems. Sometimes she seems to be extremely joyful and happy, but sometimes she is full of grief and thinks of committing suicide. She tries to survive in a psychological imbalance. These lines from one of the letters she wrote to the Author are worth looking at since they show Vildan's psychological problems:

"I want to break one of the king's head into pieces. Last night, this passion made me sleepless. Or, to pass the desert with caravans, to pass through the endless mirages, until drowning in tiredness, to go through the deserts having no differences between... Eh, my little foal! How are you? Alas!... I finished the stars counting by counting and there's nothing to be done; that's, I could do in this world." (Safa, 1999: 145)

As we can see from these lines, Vildan is concerned with dying and killing. In the later parts of the novel, she expresses her intention of killing, firstly, the Author, and then herself:

"She said, 'I bought this dagger from Italy to kill myself, but there I couldn't do it, I wasn't able to do it, as well as I couldn't do it here. Also I thought of killing my lover there, but I couldn't do it, wasn't able to do it

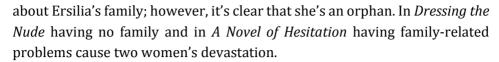
too. I had this script scarved on the dagger in Italy: Entrero in un cuore. It's good, isn't it? It's a claim that most suits on a dagger. However it will stick in a heart, certainly will. May be, not in your heart; no, I won't do it; I won't be able to do it. In the morning of an impetiously mad night, I want to stab you first, then myself. I've been obsessed by this thought since I met you. I've prepared this room either to always live with you here or to die here with you'." (Safa, 1999: 188-189)

The idea of death is always with her. This may be the reason for translating and loving *Dressing the Nude:* Ersilia's actions affect her deeply since she performs what Vildan couldn't do.

Vildan's real name, even her life isn't definite. She always tells lies about herself: At first she tells her name is Vildan, she has an Italian husband and comes to Istanbul leaving him behind (Safa, 1999:122). In the later parts of the play, she tells her name isn't Vildan, in fact she's from Syria and is a Christian, and also, has a lover but not a husband in Italy (Safa, 1999: 176,183). However, at the end of the novel, when her consciousness is not clear enough, we learn that nothing she said was true (Safa, 1999: 199). Who Vildan is, what her real name is and what happened to her is a mystery. Nevertheless, from some her lines, it's possible to see that there are some family-related problems beyond her falling in such a psychological imbalance. In one part of the novel she says that her uncle, uncle's son and her aunt's daughter attempted suicide as well (Safa, 1999:129). In the other part she says that at the age of eighteen, falling in love with a French boy she fled to France with him; at that time she also stole all of her mother's jewellery and father's money. Moreover, she adds that the grief of this offense caused her mother and father's death so she is responsible for that (Safa, 1999: 184). We don't know what part of the things Vildan said is true, but they reveal a confused family background of hers:

"Listen to me', she said 'I'm one of the uprooteds that Barres's described. I'm a person whose roots have broken off from not only my country's but also the world's ground. Thus, sometimes, a dangerous grief depresses me. At that time I can do everything; I can kill myself. (...)" (Safa, 1999: 131)

Vildan's family-related problems relate her to Ersilia once again; furthermore, she's an orphan, too. Pirandello doesn't give any information



In the novel there are some quotations from *Dressing the Nude*. It is necessary to underline that within intertextual relations, quotes have a significant function (Aktulum, 2007: 94). In *A Novel of Hesitation*, the quotations from *Dressing the Nude* are found in descriptions of Vildan's personality. Translating this work Vildan sometimes quotes some sentences and parts from the play in her speeches. For instance, in one part of the novel, she reads the last scene of the play from her own translation to the Author (Safa, 1999: 117-18, compare Pirandello, 1965: 99-100). It's not an ordinary quotation that Peyami Safa has Vildan read the last scene of the play. The part Vildan reads has the words of Ersilia when she is dying after the second suicide attempt. Vildan's obsession for dying and killing has already been mentioned above. In this respect, it's clear that the things Ersilia has said while dying has deeply affected her. Besides, at the end of the novel, Vildan's making attributions to the Ersilia's last words again emphasizes how she's been affected by her (Safa, 1999: 194).

Conclusion

Pirandello, as it's concluded from the present research, is one of the writers who affected Peyami Safa greatly. Peyami Safa, as he states in his novel, reads Pirandello from French translations. Safa, thinking about the notion of existence, is largely affected by Pirandello's "psychological relativism". This effect can be traced in *A Novel of Hesitation* and *Matmazel Noraliya's Armchair*.

Pirandello's *Dressing the Nude* has an important effect on the development of the incidents and categorisation of the characters in *A Novel of Hesitation*. Vildan and the Author's relations, which make up a half of the novel, start and develop by means of this play. In addition to this, Peyami Safa mostly benefits from *Dressing the Nude* in presenting Vildan's personal traits. It's possible to say that Pirandello's play is a major factor for Peyami Safa in writing *The Novel of a Hesitation*. Safa, by benefiting from this play, which he both read and appreciated, shapes his novel within intertextual relations.



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