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The social construction of disappointment in the monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī*: Analysis of the phenomenon of the defeated generation through the perspective of Peter L. Berger

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* by Bassam Hassan using the framework of the Social Construction of Reality Theory by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. This research dissects how the social, political, and economic crises in post-Arab Spring Egypt have gone through three dialectical moments of social construction—Externalization, Objectivation, and Internalization—which ultimately shape Saber's identity as a member of the defeated generation. The results of the analysis indicate that Saber's narrative concerning bureaucratic corruption and the betrayal of the revolution is a reality that has been objectivized, mentally and physically imprisoning the individual. Saber internalizes this reality, which manifests as existential *stasis*, illness, and ultimately, death. Thus, *Fi Intizār Rādī* dramatically represents society's failure to legitimate a just *universe of meaning*, compelling Saber to search for meaning in nothingness.

Keywords: Social Construction; Peter L. Berger; *Fi Intizār Rādī*; Externalization; Objectivation; Internalization; Egypt.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

Drama, as one of the main genres in literature, has a crucial function as a mediating agent between individual consciousness and broader socio-political realities (Azmy, 2013). In the Middle East region, especially after the wave of revolutions known as the Arab Spring, theatre has become the main platform for channeling dissonance, disappointment, and criticism against the failure of political and economic reforms (Hennessey, 2015). The monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* by Bassam Hassan stands out as a critical text laden with meaning, centering on the single character, Saber, a 45-year-old man trapped in chronic unemployment, the failure to start a household, and an endless wait. Saber is a tragic representation of the stalled generation (*stasī*); a scholar who should have enjoyed meritocracy, yet he faces a brutal counter-reality: bureaucratic corruption, privatization that destroys the working class, and post-revolution political disappointment, all of which underscore the wide gap between personal hopes and systemic failure (Amine, 2020). The urgency of this research lies in the effort to fill the analytical gap by dissecting the sociological dimension of Saber's disappointment, which is often limited to existential interpretation. This study examines how Saber's personal crisis manifests as a broader collective trauma (Taufiq & Linur, 2021).

To understand how these damaging social facts become 'real' and are accepted as truth, this research utilizes the Social Construction of Reality Theory conceived by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Dharma, 2018). This theory offers an ideal framework for analyzing how Egypt's systemic failures, ranging from the failure of the revolution to daily corruption, not only occur but also become real and are accepted as objective truths by individuals (Hadiwijaya, 2023). According to Berger and Luckmann, social reality is formed through a dialectical process of three interconnected moments: externalization (the institutionalization of human action), objectivation (institutionalization into an entity that is real, independent, and coercive outside the individual, such as when 'this country is not a country of diplomas' becomes an objective fact), and internalization (the individual's recognition, absorption, and acceptance of that objectivated reality, which Saber experiences as an identity of failure). This research argues that *Fi Intizār Rādī* is a powerful dramatic narrative about how the corrupt social reality has been objectivated in Egypt, and Saber's tragedy stems from the process of internalizing that toxic objective reality, indicating society's failure to legitimate a just Symbolic Universe (universe of meaning) (Ngangi, 2011).

Based on this background, the Research Questions for this study cover three crucial points. First, how is Egypt's systemic failure, particularly the practices of corruption and post-revolution political disappointment, represented in the monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* as an objectivated reality? Second, how does Saber as an individual experience the internalization of that toxic objective reality, and what is the dramatic manifestation of his subjective collapse? Third, how can the monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* be interpreted as a critique of society's failure to legitimate a just and meaningful Symbolic Universe for the younger generation?

Overall, the role of this research is to enrich the study of Sociology of Literature by broadening the application of Berger and Luckmann's theory into the textual analysis of non-Western contemporary drama, providing an academic understanding of how macro-political impacts in the Middle East manifest as an existential crisis at the micro-level, and serving as a basis for structured social critique against the syndrome of the stalled generation due to corruption and nepotism.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive research design to achieve an in-depth understanding of the social meanings embedded in the monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* by Bassam Hassan. Qualitative inquiry prioritizes close engagement with the phenomenon and iterative interpretation of meaning rather than measurement, enabling rich description and context-sensitive explanation (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Tracy, 2010). Consistent with Sahir's view that qualitative research examines phenomena in detail on a case-by-case basis, this study used a descriptive-analytical approach to interpret the drama text as a representation of social reality (Sandelowski, 2000).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is the main information collected directly by the researcher during the study. Secondary data are research data obtained

indirectly through an intermediary or other sources. The primary data source is the text of the monodrama *Fi Intiẓār Rādī*, which has been translated from Arabic (Egyptian Dialect). Secondary data is obtained from various journal articles, theoretical books, and relevant previous research, particularly those related to the Social Construction Theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the sociology of theater, and the social-political context of post-Arab Spring Egypt. Data collection was carried out through library research (studi kepastakaan) by reading and analyzing the monodrama text and various references related to Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory.

The data analysis technique used is content analysis where the monodrama text is examined based on the processes of Externalization, Objectivation, and Internalization of the social reality experienced by Saber. The analysis process focused on three socially constructed domains: economic reality (the failure of the diploma), political reality (post-revolution disappointment), and existential reality (waiting for Radi). The text is interpreted critically to understand how the corrupt social reality has been objectivated in Egypt, as depicted in the drama, as well as the final impact of the internalization of that toxic reality on the subjective collapse of the character Saber.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Externalization and Objectivation: The Formation of an Imprisoning Social Reality

The oppressive reality experienced by Saber is not merely a natural condition or a metaphysical fate, but a direct result of the dialectical processes of Externalization and Objectivation that are repeatedly institutionalized within Egyptian society. According to Berger, Externalization is the outpouring of the individual self into the world, while objectivation is the process by which the product of externalization (such as institutions or norms) acquires the character of an objective reality that objectivation and often coercive by which the individual externalization realities that fundamentally imprison Saber are the failure of the economic system and the failure of the political system, both of which have been institutionalized.

3.1.1. Objectivation of Corruption, *Wāsiṭah*, and the Erosion of Meritocracy

The oppressive reality experienced by Saber is not merely a natural condition or a metaphysical fate, but a direct result of the dialectical processes of Externalization and Objectivation that are repeatedly institutionalized within Egyptian society. According to Berger, Externalization is the individual's pouring out of self into the world, while Objectivation is the process where the product of Externalization (such as institutions or norms) acquires the character of an objective reality that is separate and often coercive to the individual. The two objective realities that fundamentally imprison Saber are the failure of the economic system and the failure of the political system, both of which have been institutionalized.

Saber, who has externally invested in himself and met social demands (a university graduate, patient), objectively finds that his qualifications are no longer relevant. This reality arises due to the presence of an institutionalized counter-system, namely bureaucratic corruption and *Wāsiṭah* (connections).

This process begins with the externalization of collective actions by individuals who repeatedly choose shortcuts, give bribes, or use connections to obtain positions. These actions gradually create an objectivated social fact: that the system works not based on formal rules, but on informal relationships.

This objective reality is widely recognized and realized by Saber: *و عرفت ان البلد مش بلد شهادات .. بلد حاجات .. تانيه مكنتش عارفها .. زي معاك واسطه .. تعرف عضو مجلس شعب او سكرتير في مجلس محلي .. معاك فلوس تدفعها .. يعني شاي بالياسمين .. علشان تشتغل*

"And I knew that this country is not a country of diplomas... This is a country of other things I didn't know... Like having a connection (wāsiṭah)... knowing a member of parliament... having money to pay... meaning, 'jasmine tea' (Shāy Yā Māh)... so you can work..."

The phrase "this country is not a country of diplomas" is a powerful sociological statement that signifies total Objectivation. The reality of meritocracy has been replaced by the objective reality of *Wāsiṭah* as the objective and absolute institutional truth. This reality is coercive; it stands above and outside Saber,

isolating him from the rational job market. Saber's failure in the job market, therefore, must be understood as alienation *à la* Berger, where the human product now operates independently and acts oppressively against its creator. In addition, Saber's narrative about privatization leading to the loss of his colleague's money:

والفلوس طارت في الهوا .. (في يأس) وقعدنا ع القهوة انا و هو نتفرج علي صفر المونديال ونحلم مع بعض بالوصول لكأس العالم

"And the money vanished into thin air... (in despair) And we sat at the coffee shop, he and I, watching Zero at the World Cup and dreaming together of reaching the World Cup"

The sentence above shows that even the objectivated reality of the free market does not provide a guarantee of security, but merely promises empty dreams

3.1.2. The Objectivation of Political Disillusionment and the Failure of Legitimacy

The process of Externalization of massive collective hope during the January 25th Revolution ended with the Objectivation of Disappointment, which has now become a bitter historical narrative. The hope for transformative change has been institutionalized as a repeated failure of the political system. Saber's monologue about Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya sinking confirms the reality of this failure as an objective fact:

بس ناس تانيه ركبت علي الموجه ديه.. ركبت علي أحلام وثوررة ودماء وتضحية الشباب العربي وغرقت مصر وتونس وليبيا

"other people rode on this wave... They rode on the dreams, revolution, blood, and sacrifice of the Arab youth... And Egypt, Tunisia, Libya... sank..."

This failure is crucial in Berger's context because it touches upon the final stage of Objectivation, which is Legitimation. Society (in this context, the political elite) failed to legitimate the Symbolic Universe (the universe of meaning) that promised a fair future after the people's sacrifices. Saber's waiting for Radi, who never arrives, becomes an objectivated ritual. Radi is no longer just a name; he is the personification of the failed Legitimation or the Satisfaction (*Ridha*) that was never granted by the social structure to the patient individual (*Sabr*). The objectivation of this disappointment creates a condition of sociological anomie, where the collective norms regarding justice and hope have collapsed.

3.2. Internalization and Subjective Destruction

The stage of Internalization is the tragic climax where Saber takes the corrupt, failed, and uncertain objective reality and makes it an inseparable part of his own consciousness structure. In sociological terminology, Saber becomes the end product of a society that he failed to fight and ultimately absorbed completely.

3.2.1. Internalization of "Failure" Identity and Reification

Saber internalizes his failure to find work, marry, and achieve prosperity not as a systemic fault, but as a personal failure and self-identity. This internalization transforms a social fact into a settled subjective fact. This process is clearly seen when he confronts the mirror:

انا .. أنا صابر .. انا زهقان .. قرفان .. مدايق ينظر إلى المرأة النهاردة عيد ميلادي .. عمري خامسة وأربعين سنة.. عدي من عمري كل السنين ديه كلها

"... I'm Saber... I'm bored... fed up... annoyed. (He looks at the mirror) Today is my birthday... I am forty-five years old..."

This monologue is a moment of reflection where objective reality (age 45, jobless, without family) meets and is absorbed by subjective consciousness. The feelings of boredom, being fed up, and annoyance are emotional manifestations of the internalization of his diminished social status. This is a form of reification, the feeling that the failure is a natural and unchangeable fate (rather than the result of social

construction). This internal alienation explains the stasis he experiences: because reality has been objectivated as an inevitability, there is no longer room for effective subjective action.

3.2.2. Internalization of Death and the Final Subjective Protest

The peak of the internalization of the toxic social reality is Saber's physical death. His ambiguous illness ("the common flu, or Bird Flu, or Swine Flu, or Corona symptoms") indicates that his body has surrendered to the socially created reality that he could not change. This illness becomes a symbol of the endemic, undiagnosed, and unmanaged social condition that paralyzes society.

Saber, who has internalized that his patience (*Sabr*) will not yield satisfaction (*Radi*), finally chooses total escape, confirming that he is no longer able to bear the burden of the objectivated reality:

انا صابر بس مكنتش ابدا راضي بصوت عال... انا اموت.. اموت يوم عيد ميلادي

"I am Saber (*Sabr*, which means patient), but I was never Radi (*Ridhā*, which means satisfied) (With a loud voice)... I will die on my birthday..."

His death is the last and most absolute subjective protest against the objective reality that rejected him and stole the meaning of his life. This closes the dialectical circle of Social Construction: when the structure of social legitimation collapses, the individual collapses as well, ending the Externalization-Objectivation-Internalization process with total destruction, leaving behind only the echo of socially constructed futility.

4. CONCLUSION

The monodrama *Fi Intizār Rādī* is a dramatic case study on how a damaged social reality (corruption, political failure) is constructed, objectivated, and ultimately destroys the individual. Through Berger's framework, we see Saber as a victim of a dialectical process where corrupt actions have become an impenetrable objective entity. The system's failure to legitimate a just *universe of meaning* has caused Saber to internalize an identity of failure, culminating in his destruction and death. This script is a call for Arab society, and Egypt in particular, to review the reality they have externalized and objectivated to the succeeding generation.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

J contributed to the research conceptualization, theoretical framework development, primary data analysis, and manuscript drafting. AMC contributed to the literature review, contextual analysis of social and political issues, and data interpretation. ARF contributed to the application of the Social Construction of Reality theory and critical analysis of the monodrama text.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no relevant conflicts of interest related to this research.

Data Availability Statement

The data used and analyzed in this research (the translated drama text) is available upon request from the authors.

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