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تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،

تتقدم إليكم جامعة بدر بالقاهرة بالشكر على ما تبذلونه من جهد مادي ومعنوي لإصدار المجلة، فتميزكم المشهود خير قدوة، ممتنين لعملكم الدؤوب وتفوقكم الباهر، ونتمنى لكم المزيد من النجاحات المستقبلية.

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Embracing Diversity and Inclusion in the Age of Digital Humanity

The Third International Conference hosted by the School of Linguistics and Translation at Badr University in Cairo, titled "Diversity and Inclusion in the Age of Digital Humanity", marked a significant milestone in the ongoing dialogue about the intersection of technology, language, and humanistic values. Held on October 26–27, 2024, the conference brought together scholars, researchers, and activists from around the world to explore how digital advancements can foster inclusivity while addressing the challenges posed by rapid technological evolution.

The Digital Transformation of Humanities

One of the central themes of the conference was the imperative for digital transformation in humanities disciplines. Keynote speaker Professor Ruslan Mitkov's presentation, "Language and Translation Technologies in the Artificial Intelligence Era", underscored the transformative potential of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and AI in translation and linguistics. Mitkov highlighted the evolution from rule-based systems to generative AI, emphasizing both the capabilities and limitations of Large Language Models (LLMs). His insights reinforced the idea that while AI can enhance efficiency, human expertise remains indispensable in navigating linguistic nuances, ambiguity, and cultural context.

The conference also addressed the need for integrating computational linguistics into academic curricula. Recommendations included developing undergraduate and postgraduate programs in digital humanities, equipping students with skills for emerging roles like AI translators and prompt engineers, and promoting bias-free AI technologies. These measures are critical to preparing future generations for a labor market increasingly shaped by AI.

Diversity and Inclusion in Digital Spaces

Another focal point was the role of digital platforms in promoting diversity and inclusion. Discussions highlighted the importance of creating safe digital environments for marginalized groups and minorities, as well as the ethical responsibilities of AI developers to mitigate biases in data and algorithms. Professor Sameh El Ansary's presentation on corpus-based language teaching exemplified how empirical approaches, such as using real-life language data, can bridge gaps in traditional pedagogy and foster more inclusive learning experiences.

The participation of researchers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds—with 57 papers presented in multiple languages, most of them published in this issue—further demonstrated the conference's commitment to inclusivity. The inclusion of voices like Italian poet Domenico Pisana (we publish in this issue his valuable lecture), and scholars specializing in underrepresented languages underscored the value of cultural and linguistic diversity in academic discourse.

Charting a Path Forward:

The conference concluded with a call for continuous monitoring of AI developments, ethical AI practices, and interdisciplinary collaboration to ensure technology's role as a tool for empowerment. Professor Zain A. Hady's article, "The Internet from the Age of Innocence to the Age of Decadence: A Study in the Digital Postcolonialism," furthered the discussion on the societal impacts of digital evolution. The imperative to safeguard humanistic values while embracing AI's potential was underscored.

The insights from this conference serve as a crucial reminder that the digital age must be guided by principles of diversity, inclusion, and human oversight. By aligning technological advancements with equity, we can build a future that authentically reflects the richness of our global community. The success of this conference reaffirms academia's vital role in shaping inclusive digital landscapes, urging us to carry forward its lessons and ensure technological progress aligns with understanding, respect, and inclusion.

The Editorial Board

Zeller's "The Father" (2020) & Anne's Father-Daughter Narrative: A Performative Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract: Florian Zeller's *The Father* (2020), originally written as *Le Père*, explores the psychological deterioration of an aging man, Anthony, whose dementia disorients both him and his daughter, Anne. The play, translated into English by Christopher Hampton and adapted for cinema by Zeller, immerses the audience in Anthony's fragmented reality. Zeller uses subtle changes in the apartment's setting—such as shifting furniture, characters, and dialogue—to mirror Anthony's unstable mental state. This psychological approach reflects the complexity of dementia, allowing viewers to experience Anthony's confusion, loss, and illusions firsthand. The Prague School's theory of stage semiotization informs the film's adaptation, where the actor's body and environment acquire a symbolic meaning beyond their physical representation. As Anthony objectifies his daughter, Anne, treating her as an object of daily need, the film explores the depersonalization that often accompanies dementia. Through psychoanalytic film theory, *The Father* also reveals its cathartic and therapeutic effects on its audience, engaging them emotionally with the characters' mental and emotional states. Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage is applied to understand Anthony's regressive state, in which his reality distorts and fragments. At the same time, Stanislavski's shift from Emotional Memory to the Method of Physical Actions emphasizes the actors' emotional expression depth. Ultimately, *The Father* illustrates the emotional and psychological toll of dementia, offering profound insights into caregiving, familial relationships, and identity.

Keywords:
dementia, psychoanalysis, semiotics of theatre, mirror Stage, method of physical actions

"I feel as if I'm losing all my leaves. The branches, and the wind, and the rain. I don't know what's happening anymore" -Anthony, "The Father"

Picture 6: Anne listens to Anthony's mundane day while he still recalls her

1. Introduction:

Le Père "*The Father*," written by the French playwright Florian Zeller, reflects the deterioration of an aging father's demented mind and his unstable mental state in the presence of his beloved ones. The play has been translated into English by Christopher Hampton and adapted for cinema by Florian Zeller in his first cinematic experience. It is quite intriguing how Zeller portrays Anthony's mind from the inside, allowing the audience to experience his failures and illusions firsthand. Florian Zeller comments on the cinematic adaptation of the play in an interview with *Vanity* Magazine:

The first challenge was to make it cinematic. You know, I didn't want just to film a play. We kept the narrative of the play which was to try to tell the story from the inside not to try to tell it from the outside to allow the audience to feel as if they were in Anthony's head. We worked a lot, especially on the set to use what is usable onset to increase this feeling of disorientation (Goose).

Zeller wanted the audience to see through Anthony's demented mind, not just by mere description, but by adapting the apartment setting in the same manner as Anthony's mind functions from the inside. Throughout the movie, the audience notices a change with every scene; whether with the furniture, characters, or even dialogue. The mastery of Zeller lies in his ability to make minor changes to the setting that the audience would hardly notice, yet leaves them to wonder what change took place as if he wanted the audience to feel what Anthony felt, and experience the same sense of loss:

Still, some things have changed but you can't tell exactly which things, you know! So, we played with the furniture, with the proportions, with the colors that fit at the

same time in the same place and somewhere else, and I thought it was very cinematic to create this feeling of disorientation again to make people feel from the inside what it must be to start losing your bearings (Goose).

As a spectator, those episodes were beyond comprehension at the beginning of the movie, till I realized that nothing ever changed; it was all in Anthony's head. His mind manipulates him, relying on old traumas, driving him to see what he wants to see. That is quite manifest in his regular talk of Lucy, his little daughter, who never shows up in any of the early scenes until the spectator discovers that Lucy is just another shade from Anthony's traumatic past. She died in a car accident, but his mind would not admit it, not even after many years of her passing away. He chooses Repression to suppress the memory of Lucy's loss as he never accepted her death after all.

Research Questions:

The paper explores the following research questions:

1. How does Florian Zeller use stage and set alterations in *The Father* to represent the psychological fragmentation caused by dementia?
2. In what ways does the application of the Prague School's theory of stage semiotization enhance the symbolic representation of dementia in the film adaptation of *The Father*?
3. How does Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage contribute to understanding Anthony's distorted perception of reality and identity in *The Father*?
4. What role does Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions play in deepening the emotional portrayal of characters in *The Father*?
5. How does *The Father* evoke cathartic and therapeutic responses in its audience through its psychoanalytic and emotional exploration of dementia?

2. Discussion:

2.1. Father-Daughter Fractured Bond:

Anne, Anthony's elder daughter- played by the magnificent Olivia Colman- happens to struggle with her daughter-father relationship. She refuses to give up on her demented father, who keeps mistreating and stigmatizing her for how imperfect she is compared to Lucy- his deceased younger daughter- yet her life and every single dream she has ever had slowly leave her with no coming back. As both a daughter and wife, her frustration and breakdown urge her to assess the unhealthy daughter-father relationship once and for all *"see picture 6".* Sir Anthony Hopkins has commented on Colman's potential to touch his soul through Anne's character as an actor and a demented father:

I've been working with such brilliant actors. I don't know it's easy! I don't know I don't play tennis. I'm not a sports person but I think it's like playing tennis when you're working with Olivia and working with Florian. It is easy! And my, this

happened when I was watching Olivia's performance. I did come to her performance, her breakdown of frustration and heartbreak, and how it affects everyone. Me, the actor, or the guy who's dying of dementia. He is so out of it now, but there are the people around him who really are split and broken that badly. Her frustration is heartbreaking. The hopelessness: how do you help someone like this? And, of course, it can drive you crazy because you go crazy with the suffering of dementia. I think the highlight of my life, I have done some pretty good ones in the last few years. That's a real highlight. Olivia, thank you! (Goose).

The beauty of *The Father* lies in how Zeller adapts his prize-winning French play of the same name and with the exquisite aid of the legendary Christopher Hampton, into a mind-blowing feat where he traps us into Anthony Hopkins' mind, inviting us to experience his confusion and unearthing the perspective of the caretakers and loved ones who try to relieve his unstable temper and organize his scattered memories that seem to fade away. As characters show up and then disappear, Anthony's memory does not seem to help him when significant moments of his life start to simply leave him with no coming back (Lemire).

And as his daughter, Anne, Olivia Colman, is compatibly his counterpart, she too finds herself compelled to ride his roller coaster and put up with those disruptive mood swings and offenses. She will always manage a smile while holding a tear in her eye. Colman has managed to put on a legendary performance before Hopkins' untold realistic one (Lemire). Both took the audience by storm in their delivery of an array of emotions: love and resentment, empathy and apathy.

2.2. The Use of Space and Operatic Musical Representation in *The Father* (2020):

"In *The Father*'s house are many rooms, all of them beautifully appointed with details so sharp and precise that you might be startled to find them vanishing a few moments later," the *Los Angeles Times* commenced its review of *The Father* and movie theatrics. An exquisite performance is given by the main character, Andre, who has been named Anthony after his interpreter, Anthony Hopkins, who has given the role both an emotional and psychological edge (Chang). Anthony's first appearance takes place when he is spotted in a dim room listening to an operatic piece:

We first encounter Anthony in a darkened London apartment, listening to a recording of Henry Purcell and John Dryden's 1691 dramatic opera "King Arthur, or the British Worthy." Before long, his daughter, Anne (Olivia Colman), comes in, and the music stops, though not before the opening lines of an aria have rung out: "What power art thou, who from below / Hast made me rise unwillingly and slow / From beds of everlasting snow?" (Chang).

Picture 7.1: Anthony listens to Henry Purcell and John Dryden's 1691 dramatic opera "King Arthur, or the British Worthy."

Those operatic lines do ring a bell when the truth about Anthony's demented mind is unearthed. The lines reflect Anthony's mental state; loss of power and control over his surroundings, mood swings, and blurry mind buried deep down under piles of snow *"see picture 7.1".* Zeller succeeds in interpreting Anthony's mind failures through an apt choice of a musical piece which leaves the audience perplexed about Anthony's ability to narrate his side of the story and portrays him as an "unreliable narrator". Anthony is at an advanced stage of dementia, and his mental abilities are fading away rapidly leaving him with "volatile fits of temper" that Anne, Olivia Colman, cannot handle anymore. His in-home nurses always flee the service for the offenses they receive from him day and night, especially since he has "a different understanding of who is intruding on whom", he has been attended to by others he hardly recognizes, which drives him to mutter about unwanted caretakers to intrude in his life and stolen possessions he keeps losing to time (Chang).

2.3. Theatrical Semiosis in *The Father* (2020):

Petr Bogatyrev, a folklorist and former formalist in the Russian formalist movement, took the initiative to map the fundamentals of theatrical semiosis. He develops the theory that the stage, set in cinematic adaptation scenario, fundamentally transforms all objects and bodies defined within it, bestowing upon them an overriding signifying power that they lack—or which is at least less evident—in their normal social function: "on the stage things that play the part of theatrical signs... acquire special features, qualities, and attributes that they do not have in real life" (pp. 35–6) (as cited in Elam 7). This becomes quite apparent in Anthony's (André in *Le Père*) pre-occupation with his wristwatch, which comes to notice when he loses his

temper upon its disappearance, accusing his caretaker of stealing it. Sir Christopher Hampton comments on Anthony's obsession with his wristwatch as a sense of dominance and order, as if Anthony derives his self-esteem and patriarchal dominance from that wristwatch, which he has had on for the past years. Based on the Prague School theatrical theory of stage semiotization, the actor's body obtains its mimetic and representational abilities in a classic theatrical performance by becoming something more or less than who they are. This holds for both his speech, which implies a generally indicated "discourse," and every other component of his performance, to the point that even contingent elements, such as physiologically conditioned reflexes, are taken into account as signifying units. 'The viewer recognizes even these non-purposeful components of the actor's performance as signs' (Veltruský 1940, p. 85) (as cited in Elam 8).

Applying that theory to Anthony in *The Father*, it is crystal clear that he bonds with his possessions until they become one entity, so losing one of his precious possessions is the same as losing part of himself. That is why he panics when he wakes up one day to find his wristwatch lost as if he lost full control and dominance over his life, or maybe he saw it as another crack in his deteriorating state of mind. It is like that wristwatch provides him with a sense of proportion and time in a dismantled world, security in an unsafe realm, or even knowledge at a time of absolute ignorance. Losing it is losing his complete grip on reality and giving away his dominant patriarchal identity; a shattered and damaged identity beyond repair (Schatz). Also, one more sign that shows up early on in the movie is Lucy's painting; that painting is one of his dearest possessions too as it reminds him of Lucy and her artistic aptitude. His unyielding admiration and attachment to "The Pirouette" painting, signifies Anthony's profound affection and unconditional love for Lucy, even after her tragic death, he still recalls her beauty and artistic mastery while he clearly remembers nothing specific about Anne, his much alive daughter. The ballerina performing a pirouette in the painting signifies Lucy's kindled spirit and ardent nature *"see picture 7.2"*.

Picture 7.2: "The Pirouette" painting that holds a peculiar significance for Anthony as it is all that is left of his favorite younger daughter Lucy

Anthony is always under the impression that someone wants to take "His house" away, as he would call it in the movie. He believes that Anne is plotting something against him to kick him out of his deeply cherished apartment and take it over along with her husband Paul (Rufus Sewell). Accordingly, his aggression escalates against his daughter, her husband, and whoever in-home nurses Anne would hire to assist him. Thus, the husband resentfully reacts to Anthony's trials to disrupt his peaceful life and Anne's, pushing her to end this vicious circle by placing her father at an elderly house for better care. Here, Anne retreats and refuses to make such a cruel decision of leaving her father behind to be cared for by strangers, but Anthony gives Anne every reason to reconsider it through his mischievous and humiliating treatment of her. Anthony's blind obsession with his house, which is once again one of his monetary possessions, signifies his materialistic nature, which cherishes no human warmth or compassion. Maybe this is the very reason why he has always prioritized his objects and possessions to Anne's love. He objectifies his love for Anne and treats her as one of his daily possessions, a gadget he daily needs, depersonalizing her needs and dehumanizing her feelings.

Anne's patience has been tested for years and Anthony would not grow but unkinder and more ruthless towards her trials to get closer to him *"see picture 8"*. Something that drives the audience to grow sympathy for Anne, the less advantageous daughter, who will never be accepted nor loved by her demented father as Lucy, the younger daughter, will always be in his way of bonding with Anne. Anthony has created an unhealthy attachment with his younger daughter Lucy since her childhood. He has always pictured her as more intelligent, beautiful, graceful, and talented than Anne. The painting hung in the reception is the best example of how he thinks highly

of Lucy's unmatched talent, unlike Anne, the coarse, dim, and unwitty elder daughter who makes his life harder. Such prejudiced comparison persists over the years till Lucy, as we figure out by the end of the movie, dies in a tragic car accident. Something Anthony denies and cannot deal with which

leaves him with an unresolved trauma of his favorite daughter's loss. In the movie, Anthony keeps reminiscing about Lucy on her deathbed at the hospital, badly injured, calling his name to come save her in his nightmares. When he wakes up, he searches for Lucy, asks Anne about her, and wishes she would come to visit him as he has not seen her in so long. Anne holds back the ugly truth every time she sees her father in a state of blind denial of his daughter's death. *The Father*, "a mystery set within the labyrinthine recesses of a deteriorating mind," compels the audience to see Anthony's reality from his fragmentary perspective with no choice but to break free from those restrictions placed on him by his failing mind, no chance to break that vicious circle or end that chain of daily events pushing him into a state of estrangement and isolation (Chang).

Picture 8: Anthony stares at Anne in doubt and defiance while she grows more empathetic for him

2.4. *The Father*'s Cinematography and Setting:

Speaking of *The Father*'s theatrics and setting, *The Father* avails a setting of a psychological nature, where the apartment dimensions and furniture mutate based on Anthony's perception of his surroundings, a thing that differs from day to the other:

The original play (whose English translator, Christopher Hampton, is credited alongside Zeller for the screenplay) availed itself of the natural abstractions of theatrical space, turning the stage into a psychological hall of mirrors. But Zeller, making an elegant and incisive feature debut, finds an ideal equivalent within the more realistic parameters of the movie screen. The airlessness that stifles so many stage-to-screen adaptations only serves to reinforce this film's mood of entrapment, barely diminished by the opera selections and the recurring strains of Ludovico Einaudi's original score. The imposing physicality of the apartment makes it that much more startling when the movie begins to undermine its own premises (Chang).

Many cinematic adaptations fail to transfer the same dramatic vibes to the screen, which results in an impairment of the theatrical features of the adaptation. But Zeller escaped that entrapment through his genuine portrayal of Anthony's apartment inside Anthony's delirious mind. Merging Ludovico Einaudi's background music with Anthony's retreat into himself completes the sense of loss and shattered identity he has been experiencing. The apartment's design reflects Anthony's mind from the inside with its intricate jumbled details. Those details alter unnoticeably before our own eyes which drives us to question the motifs behind such theatrical trick:

The flat features a long hallway that seems to stretch toward infinity, with doors that lead into interconnected, sometimes interchangeable-looking rooms. Ben Smithard's deep-focus widescreen compositions with restrained lighting and slightly muted colors confound your sense of direction, even as they invite you to rummage through the details of Peter Francis' intricate production design. And as those details — the tiles and that painting, the pottery, and the furniture — begin to shift imperceptibly from scene to scene, our understanding of time, space and reality begin to rupture in concert with Anthony's (Chang).

Picture 9: The changing corridors of *The Father*. Top left: Anthony's apartment. Top right: Anne's apartment. Bottom left: The doctor's surgery featuring the Series 7 chair by Arne Jacobsen. Bottom right: The care home. Changing corridors reflect the world inside Anthony's demented mind

The cinematographic features along with the lighting and mutating decoration have served their purpose best to place the audience into Anthony's all-over-the-place mind conveying a sense of struggle with age, memory, loss of control, and confusion. Altogether, this depicts a serious cognitive decay on Anthony's side and an emotional decay on Anne's part as well, where her affection towards the resentful father starts to grow colder (Chang).

The production designer Peter Francis declared to *Film and Furniture* that arranging the set was an 'integral' part of the whole story. It was not just creating a mere interior background but rather adding specific characters to the film set (Benson). Paula Benson elaborates in her article on *The Father*'s interior design, *The deliberately disorienting décor of The Father*:

The Father uses subtly changing interior design to disorientate us as we descend into Anthony's world of dementia. It's a perfect example of how the choice of interior décor and furniture in film can convey a hidden narrative and ground us (or not) in the

story. We talked with production designer Peter Francis about this clever film set design (Benson).

Picture 10: Anthony listens to the American tenor Lawrence Brownlee singing "Je crois entendre encore" ("I still believe I hear"), Nadir's aria from Georges Bizet's French Opera Les pêcheurs de perles (The Pearls Fishermen)

The interior design of "The Father's" film set is meant to confuse the audience and give them a chance to see Anthony's, 'mischievous and highly independent 81-year-old dismantled world from inside his head. So, one scene gives us the impression it is Anthony's apartment then the next takes us to Anne's and we do not realize that till the end of the movie when it is quite remarkable that the décor and furniture are not the same:

"That ceiling light and that wall color look too contemporary for an older man, maybe I've misread the setting," then "I'm sure that kitchen design has changed," and "Wait a minute, who really is his daughter?" At times the setting is cozy and comforting, at times, unfamiliar and unsettling. The apartment's furniture and décor subtly change from scene to scene, whether a table lamp or a painting on the wall, leading us to question our own interpretation. Gradually, we realize we are seeing the world through Anthony's increasingly disorientated point of view. We are caught up in the confusion and placed very much in the center of this journey with him as we try to piece together the fabric of the reality we are being presented (Benson).

2.5. Psychoanalytic Film Theory:

By applying psychoanalytic film theory to *The Father*, it is obvious how cathartic the movie is and the therapeutic effect it has on its spectators. Cinematographic

factors played a drastic role in the process of engaging the spectator with the mental and emotional state both Anthony and Anne experience throughout the narrative. Thus, apparatus theory has been quite introduced to *The Father*'s set:

The so-called "apparatus theory" was inaugurated with a suggestion from Marcelin Pleynet, at the time managing editor of the influential journal *Tel Quel*, that cinematic technology had been treated as a neutral ground instead of as a profoundly ideological instrument. "The cinematographic apparatus is strictly ideological; it disseminates bourgeois ideology before anything else. Before a film is produced, the technical construction of the camera already produces bourgeois ideology" (Pleynet, Thibaudeau 155) (as cited in Neumeyer 385).

It is quite self-explanatory that, based on Marcelin Pleynet's definition of "apparatus theory", cinematic technology is not just a set of equipment utilized on location to shoot a scene but rather a "profoundly ideological instrument" that influences the spectators and reshapes their mindset. For that matter, such "cinematographic apparatus" propagates middle-class principles and tenets from the moment the camera is put together. Therefore, the camera lens does not just capture moments, but it re-interprets those moments from a certain ideological perspective:

Jean-Louis Baudry developed this idea in a pair of influential articles on the cinematic apparatus (1974-1975 and 1976). The titles of the English translations of Baudry's articles both contain "apparatus", but the word actually serves to translate two different French terms, *appareil,* and *dispositif,* and so an operative distinction is being missed. Both terms in fact derive from Althusser (1995), where *appareil* designates the institutional structure, its support and techniques, and *dispositif*, much less thoroughly worked out, designates in contrast "the absolutely ideological 'conceptual' device" that hails and interpellates the subject, that is, produces or prepares in advance a place for "a subject endowed with consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes (Althusser 126) (as cited in Neumeyer 385).

As mentioned above, Baudry drew on the significance of both French terms: *appareil* and *dispositif* in the world of cinematography. As far as *The Father* is concerned, the term *dispositif* applies best to the cinematographic framework, as the camera here is not just a mere structural device but rather a "conceptual" one that gives identity to its spectators and bestows an unfeigned character on the protagonists' deeds, allowing the audience to consciously and unreservedly interpret those actions based on their ideals (Neumeyer 385).

Psychoanalytic film theory has an immense impact on the spectator as it encourages his alienation from reality and disconnects his own life experiences from those tackled in cinema, Toby Miller states the significance of cinematic experiences in a spectator's life in his book, *A Companion to Film Theory*. He introduces how empathic cinematic impact is in Tyler's words who writes: "A thousand small wishes are symbolically satisfied by the humblest and worst Hollywood movie, and the excellence or triteness of a movie has little to do with satisfying the average customer" (1944: 238) (as cited in Miller & Stam 132). Accordingly, that theory has

been thoroughly discredited from different intellectual perspectives. One of the most significant reasons is what cognitive film theorists designate as psychoanalytic theory "overlooks the pre-conscious and conscious aspects of the spectator's cognitive and emotional engagement with narrative film" (Bordwell) (as cited in. Miller & Stam 131).

This means that psychoanalytic film theory fails to notice the power of a film in engaging its spectators on both cognitive and emotional levels. But as a spectator, it is quite feasible to relate between psychoanalytic film theory and the end scenes in multiple ways. While Anne seems to forget both the abuse and traumatic experiences inflicted on her for years by Anthony upon admitting him to the nursing home, her heart goes out to Anthony when he caresses her face in a fatherly manner, and a deep gesture of understanding why she is leaving him behind. Next scene, Anthony Hopkins, regresses to his early childhood stage, bursting into tears as an infant and begging for his Mummy's presence. Both scenes are charged with cathartic emotions of love, regret, pain, and healing. Anne finally finds her female voice and reconciles with her childhood trauma by forgiving Anthony, the authoritative cruel father, and then forgiving herself.

Picture 10.1: Anne tears up while Anthony gently caresses her face to console her so she does not feel guilty for leaving him behind

Picture 10.2: Anthony glances at Anne with a sense of compassion and consolation for leaving him behind

ANNE opens the curtains. You can see out onto a park.

ANNE (CONT'D)

It's very nice. It's like being in a hotel? Don't you think?

WOMAN

That's what all the residents say.

ANNE turns to her father and takes her courage in both hands.

ANNE

I think you might be better off here.

ANTHONY looks completely lost.

ANTHONY

Where?

She sits next to him.

ANNE

Here. I was wondering if it wouldn’t be more reassuring...

nicer for you if we came to a joint decision that you should move in here.

ANNE (CONT' D)

What do you think?

ANTHONY

What about you? What are you going to do?

Where are you going to sleep? Which room?

ANNE

If you remember, I'm going to go and live in Paris.

ANTHONY

No, you're not.

ANNE

I am. Remember? I told you about it... Remember?

ANTHONY

But you said. .. Are you sure?

ANNE

Yes.

ANTHONY has tears in his eyes.

ANTHONY

You told me you were staying here... with me.

ANNE

No, I have to go. It's important. I already explained it to you.

But I'11 come and see you. Occasional weekends.

ANTHONY

What about me?

ANNE

Youl’l stay here. In London.

ANTHONY is like a lost child.

ANTHONY

All on my own?

Pause. ANNE's choked up, unable to speak.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What about your sister? Where's she?

ANNE

Dad...

He's having difficulty holding back a sob.

ANTHONY

What?

Pause.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

If you knew how much I missed her.

ANNE

I do too, Dad, I miss her too. We all miss her.

ANTHONY realizes that ANNE is moved. Immediately, he

rediscovers his role as a father: he strokes her cheek as if

he wants to console her. ANNE Smiles. She closes her eyes

and presses her father's hand against her cheek.

From The Father screenplay written by Florian Zeller, translated by Sir Christopher Hampton-Final Scene (PP. 77, 78, 79)

2.6. Lacan's "Mirror Stage" & Anthony's Fragmented Image:

As the film comes to closure, Anthony retreats to his infantry stage, where he sounds harmless, obedient, and compassionate upon listening to The Nurse Lullaby. That moment of regression leaves the spectator in confusion about whether Anne did the right thing by giving up on her demented father or if it was heartless of her. Such a cathartic scene arouses a combination of bleak emotions in the audience, ridding them of any sense of pain they held before by going through the same traumatizing experience as Anne's. Anne finally unearths her lost identity and embraces her wasted parts.

In Nasurllah Mambrol's paper "Lacan's Concept of Mirror Stage", he sheds light on Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud's Mirror Stage and how an infant recognizes himself in a mirror till he reaches the final stage of recognition; that his one image is merely a pure reflection of himself and his reality:

The mirror phase occurs roughly between the ages of six and 18 months and corresponds to Freud's stage of primary narcissism. That is the stage of human development when the subject is in love with the image of themselves and their own bodies, which precedes the love of others. Between the ages of six and 18 months, the infant begins to recognize his/her image in the mirror (this does not mean a literal mirror but rather any reflective surface, for example, the mother's face), and this is usually accompanied by pleasure. The child is fascinated with its image and tries to control and play with it. Although the child initially confuses his image with reality, he/she soon recognizes that the image has its own properties, finally accepting that the image is their image – a reflection of themselves (Mambrol).

As far as *The Father* is concerned, that reinterpretation could be applied to Anthony's state of mind where Anne's eyes act as the mirror where he sees his reflection. As if his mind keeps deluding, steering him away from reality then Anne with her motherly compassion, care, and thoughtfulness- acting as a "reflective surface" where he can see his true reality- brings him down to that one reality he keeps losing grip on. Lacan's Mirror Stage is applied here in symbolic terms rather than literal ones. As long as Anne is Anthony's sole means to see his reflection, he always tries to control and manipulate her as the way she sees him is his lone connection to reality:

This sense of completeness and mastery, however, is in contrast to the child's experience of its own body, over which it does not yet have full motor control. While the infant still feels his/her body to be in parts, as fragmented and not yet unified, it is the image that provides him/her with a sense of unification and wholeness. The mirror image, therefore, anticipates the mastery of the infant's own body and stands in contrast to the feelings of fragmentation the infant experiences. What is important at this point is that the infant *identifies* with this mirror image (Mambrol).

As Anne provides Anthony with his intact "Mirror Image", he ceases to see himself as incomplete nor fragmented through her loving eyes, he rather sees a whole unified version of himself. He tends to see his failures as a "fragmented image" through others' eyes. "Narcissistic love" of oneself utterly applies to Anthony's behavior at that stage of dementia as he acts like an infant whose love for himself precedes any form of love he might develop for others. That is highlighted in his reaction to Anne's decision to move to Paris, Anne's hiring a new caretaker to attend to his needs, and finally, his being admitted to a nursing home. Little by little, the spectator notices that Anthony prioritizes his comfort over everyone else's with all sorts of disregard for Anne's endless trials to make him happy:

For Lacan, the ego emerges at this moment of alienation and fascination with one's own image. The ego is both formed by and takes its form from the organizing and constituting properties of the image. The ego is the effect of images; it is, in short, an imaginary function. Lacan is arguing here against Ego psychology and its tendency to prioritize the ego over unconscious processes as well as to equate the ego with the self. Lacan insists that the ego is based on an illusory image of wholeness and mastery and it is the function of the ego to maintain this illusion of coherence and mastery.

The function of the ego is, in other words, one of *mis-recognition*; of refusing to accept the truth of fragmentation and alienation (Mambrol).

An ego-driven old man like Anthony, who has lived his entire life favoring himself and his own little Lucy to everyone else, does not seem to get convinced that his fragile ego is what drove everyone away ending up all alienated and estranged *"see picture 10".* We are all fragmented and shattered in many ways but a moment of realization compels us to recognize we are on the borderline between admitting our imperfections or losing our loved ones for good. Anthony realized how frail his mind was long ago, and still would not admit how hard Anne tries to save the day.

2.7. Sir Hopkins Manifesting Stanislavski's "Method of Physical Actions" in *The Father:*

Picture 11: Sir Anthony Hopkins displays Stanislavski's "Method of Physical Actions"

The Father displayed rigorous emotional interaction on set among actors, in other words, the actors relied on the "Method of Physical Actions" as per Stanislavski's system. Stanislavski, a prominent Russian theatre practitioner, found out that relying only on emotional expression in performance, "Emotional Memory", does not give it the needed edge to be credible enough. That is why he shifted his theatrical practices to "Method of Physical Actions" instead (Sawoski 3). Stanislavski realized after the average success of his production of Chekhov's "Seagull" in 1989, that he had to alter his ways and shift from the 'self-obsessed' or 'audience obsessed' to "inner technique" where the actors "brought out psychological depth and searched for the 'inner truth'" (Gary 138) (as cited in Sawoski 3). Stanislavski was influenced by French psychologist Theodule Ribot's 'Affective Memory' which was renamed later 'Emotional Memory' as per Stanislavskian terms (Sawoski 3).

Stanislavski's main concern was how emotions were stimulated and then expressed on stage, as lack of emotional expression earlier at the times resulted in mediocre and 'lifeless' performances that never influenced the audience nor moved it:

Stanislavski's dissatisfaction with his earlier experiments in Emotional Memory led him to develop a methodology that would change the way emotions were triggered. This methodology purported that emotions could be stimulated through simple physical actions. This was the basis of his new system. The suggestion by Stanislavski that there is a connection between internal experiences and their physical expression, has since been verified and substantiated by scientists such as Ivan Pavlov and I.M. Sechenov (Moore 17) (as cited in Sawoski 4).

The actors, back at the time, failed to connect with their inner selves which resulted in inauthentic performances where the actor was completely detached from his inner feelings and reactions. Stanislavski's new technique inspired a huge change in modes of expression:

While searching for the ultimate training system for actors, Stanislavski noticed a gap between the physical and mental behavior of the actor on stage, as well as between the physical and mental preparation in the actor's work on the character. In other words, the actor spent long days working internally and emotionally and then tried to create a physicality in the character. By that time, however, it was too late for organic physical work. This was due to the fact that the internal emotional choices of the actor had already found a physicality that was most likely to be small, unoriginal, and lacking in theatrical form. Stanislavski realized that the physical life and psychological processes that the actor underwent needed to be explored simultaneously because they were interdependent. This led him to the simple yet radical discovery that emotions could be stimulated through physical actions. This move from 'Emotional Memory' to his 'Method of Physical Actions' was an important shift in actor training at that time (Sawoski 5).

The main issue was that actors never managed to bond properly with their deep-buried emotions nor bridge their 'psychological processes' with the 'physicality' of their actions which led to a remarkable gap between each on stage. Stanislavski figured out that the only way to eliminate such a gap is to conquer both realms; the psychological and physical, simultaneously and act on any triggered emotions once originated.

Such technique applies best to *The Father*, especially Anthony's dialogues that dramatize his sense of loss, agony, and helplessness *"see picture 11"*:

Anthony: I feel as if I'm losing all my leaves.

The Woman: Your leaves?

Anthony: Yeah.

The Woman: What do you mean?

Anthony: The branches, and the wind, and the rain. I don't know what's happening anymore. Do you know what's happening? All this business about the flat? I have nowhere to put my head down anymore. But I know my watch is on my wrist, that I do know. For the journey.

Picture 12: Anthony regresses to the infantry stage in the end scene displaying Stanislavski's 'Method of Physical Actions'

The end scene dramatizes Anthony's agonizing pain upon the realization of his state of dementia. That moment when he, for the first time, admits that his state of mind is not sound nor intact, that he is withering like a tree losing its leaves to time and waste. The mastery of the scene and depth of performance spring out from Anthony's utilization of his physical actions before unleashing any emotional reaction *"see picture 12"*. This is exactly what Stanislavski called 'The Method of Physical Actions'; when the actor chooses to deploy his physicality as a means to unearth the suppressed emotions kept deep down in the 'unconscious' and transform them into loud emotional expressions (Sawoski 5).

"I have always adored Olivia as an actress and I was so excited about this idea that it could be her, so we met just after I met Anthony, and I was so happy that she was open to joining us. I think the film is what it is thanks to her, and I know that.", Zeller talks to *Digital Spy* about his choice of Olivia Colman to play Anne in *The Father*. Olivia Colman did not hesitate to take on the role of Anne once she knew of Sir Anthony Hopkins' contribution to the film. Anne's role includes compassion, care, stifled love, and past childhood trauma. Anne is not just the caring elder daughter that looks after her demented father, she is rather the second narrator of the story, a part of the storytelling and an unheard voice in the narrative as well. Anne is portrayed as a fragile, vulnerable character who has always struggled with her father's mistreatment and lack of compassion, both as sound and demented, leaving her with an unhealed childhood trauma for being the less favored daughter. The death of Lucy does not seem to coax that trauma or even resolve the dilemma, as Anthony clings more to his deceased Lucy's memory than to his living Anne. Despite Anne's traumatic experience and stifled voice since childhood, she still sees her father as a most needed patriarchal figure in her life whom she cannot do without. The conversation Anthony

engages in with Laura, his new caretaker proves how attached he is to the memory of Lucy, especially when Laura reminds him of his deceased daughter and the resemblance, they both share *"see picture 13":*

Laura: Oh, you have two daughters?

Anthony: Yes. Even though I hardly ever hear from the other one. All the same, she was always my favorite. She was a painter. Look, there you are. The Pirouette. Beautiful, isn't it?

Laura: Yes, it is.

Anthony: Yes. A dazzling girl. I don't understand why she never gets in touch. Never.

Picture 13: As Antony loses his grip on reality, the apartment, furnishings and people around him change shape

It is quite obvious from the dialogue that Anthony goes nostalgic about Lucy's unjustified absence, something his demented mind keeps forgetting. He thinks highly of Lucy's artistic aptitude and refined taste when he refers to her masterpiece "The Pirouette," a painting that works as a signifier -as aforementioned- of Lucy's delicate, soft, and jolly nature, something Anthony favored her for-unlike her dull elder sister- whom he cannot let go of no matter how many years would pass.

It is pretty difficult to interpret or even understand the real reason why Anne chose to put up with her father's humiliating treatment and imperfect love for so long, but maybe it is her sense of unworthiness that made her cope with being half-loved and ranked as the less favorite child for her entire life. Or perhaps she had high hopes that one day her father would eventually see her for who she is and love her as a father

loves his own. Anthony has showcased acute mistrust of Anne and her intentions. He went too far to the extent that he accused her of robbing him of his beloved apartment and kicking him out to take it for herself:

Anthony: Sorry, dear. I may as well tell you now. I'm not leaving this flat any time soon. I'm going to outlive you. Both of you. I don't know about you. But my daughter, yes. In fact, is going to make a point about it. I'm going to inherit from her. Not the other way around. And on the day of her funeral, I shall give a little speech. To remind everyone how heartless and manipulative she was.

Anne: [to Laura] I'm so sorry about this.

Anthony: Why? She understands perfectly. You're the one who doesn't.

Anne acts as a mirror to her demented father's prejudice, ruthlessness, and lack of compassion. Re-telling the whole story from her perspective shows the spectators the other side of the narrative and triggers sympathy for Anne's decision to leave her father behind by the end. However, Anne's persistent trials not to give up on Anthony were lucid enough since the beginning of the movie; she lingers by his side no matter how tough he treats her. Furthermore, her love and sympathy for him never faded away. Anne's affection is heightened upon watching her father leave; physically lingers around, mentally long gone. Amber Wilkinson of *The Times* adds, "Colman mirrors his emotional fragility, jollying him along while trying to wrestle down her grief at watching part of him leave. The sense of loss is acute and as things get worse, you feel your heart break in 10 directions at once." It is never easy for a daughter to watch her father go, the father-daughter bond, no matter how fragile and fallen apart it could be, cannot be just forgotten.

Steven McIntosh writes on Olivia Colman's attachment to Anne's role in his article *The Father: Why Olivia Colman's new film will leave you disoriented*:

Colman's involvement in the film was thanks in part to the connection she felt to the story. "My mum was a district nurse for the NHS for 40 years, and her passion was always geriatric care," she explains. "And I would go in the car with her when it was school holidays or when I was ill. And I'd see lonely people in their homes who didn't have families. My mum is an ambassador for dementia care, so it's always been a big part of my family's life." The actress adds she wanted to reflect on the agonizing decision of what to do with a family member affected by dementia. "It's an awful decision to make," she says. "To look into your father's eyes and see fear or confusion. It's a terrible thing to still want to live your own life, but you *have* to have your own life. And that was a reason I wanted to play it, I wanted to play all those feelings." (McIntosh 2021).

2.8. Anne's Rebellion Against Anthony's Patriarchal World:

Picture 14: Anthony projects his state of mind failures on his daughter Anne

Anne's voice has been forever muffled since childhood, maybe because she is the less favorite child whose desires were not prioritized, unlike Lucy who had all her father's love and affection. She has been brought up to get along with her father's wishes, tolerate his trespassing, and deny herself in his presence. Thus, part of that subservience is her barely heard voice or I would rather say *unheard,* which never comes out properly nor loud around Anthony. Throughout the narrative, Anne's voice is too cowardly to be heard; in other words, she cannot voice out her objection to Anthony's poor treatment, selfishness, and lack of empathy *"see picture 14".* That inability to oppose her father's tyrannical, yet elderly, disposition arises from an upbringing deficiency that dictates being more 'feminine' to be included in a patriarchal world:

Until quite recently, well-reared girls were not encouraged to sound 'coarse' or to 'shriek'. They might be allowed to titer, perhaps behind the barrier of hands against their mouths, but never to emit a full belly laugh. That was unfeminine. Nor were they allowed to express themselves openly through shouting, rage, or even passion. All that was left to the operatic Carmens of the world but not to proper girls. Young women were taught to sound 'nice' and not to interrupt. Boys were too but they were almost expected to rebel. Because these well-bred girls were to be models of femininity, any girl from any class (or even from any country who wanted to learn English) aimed at acquiring the 'nice' sound (Rodenburg 76).

Rebellion was never one of the features of a 'well-bred' girl nor was the loud voice. A good girl has to act feminine-like and to be so, she has to keep her voice low, never shout, nor object. Even showing rage and passion is not allowed. Accordingly, Anne never managed to find her lost voice as saying 'no' is disgraceful, and rejecting a despicable situation is not vouched for. Under such circumstances, Anne found herself compelled to put up with a life she never chose to have and her only salvation became to find her voice.

Anne fails to voice out her concerns and insecurities throughout the movie, even to her husband, who does not seem to comprehend what she has to assimilate. The spectator fails to notice such a predicament till we get to the scene where Anne receives Laura, Anthony's new caretaker:

Laura: [referring to Anthony] I must say, he's charming

Anne: Yeah. Not always.

Upon introducing Laura to the set, Anthony causes Anne huge embarrassment with the accusations he makes in Laura's presence about Anne deceitfully robbing him of his apartment. Such a gesture urges Anne to resort to Laura's side for both solace and solidarity to the extent that she tears up upon hearing Anthony's accusations and apologizes to Laura about her father's demeaning behavior. Opening up emotionally and showing her vulnerable side to Laura brings to the table how authentic and sincere women become around their peer women, especially with finding their real voice:

There are some benefits to be derived from this history. Women do speak more frankly to each other about their feelings and fears. When they do so their voices are more open and natural. In that way, they help to educate themselves and are more in touch with themselves. They are also better at keeping oral traditions and histories alive as a favorite family aunt might be (Rodenburg 77).

Perhaps Laura's presence is what triggered Anne to finally see how spiteful and toxic Anthony's treatment is. Anne's only mechanism to discharge such an emotional burden was through maintaining eye contact with Laura, which made her see how drained Anne's soul and mind were. Is it forbidden for Anne to show her true sadness, and dissatisfaction, or even grieve openly for the loss of her younger sister? Is it Anthony's presence that restricts her from displaying her emotions openly? Or is it because she has been raised up to the idea of suppressing her feminine voice out of propriety and silencing her own rage? This is demonstrated in Anne and Anthony's conversation with Dr. Sarai during their visit to the nursing home:

Dr. Sarai: You're living with your daughter at the moment, is that right?

Anthony: Yes. Until she goes to live in Paris.

Anne: No, dad. Why do you keep going on about Paris?

Anthony: What?

Anne: I'm staying in London.

Anthony: You keep changing your mind. How do you expect people to keep up?

Anne: There's never been any question of me living in Paris.

Anthony: Yes, there was. You told me.

Anne: No, I didn't.

Anthony: I'm sorry, Anne. You told me the other day. Have you forgotten? She's forgotten. You're starting to suffer from memory loss. I'd have a word with the doctor if I were you.

Anne: In any event, I'm not going to Paris.

Anthony: Well, that's good. Paris. They don't even speak English there.

Picture 15: Anthony and Anne at the clinic while Anne is stunned at Anthony's allegations against her of moving to Paris and leaving him behind

Such dialogue reflects Anne's rage at Anthony's fabricated assumptions of her moving out to Paris. It is also quite noticeable that Anne cannot vent out her rage as she is completely aware of why those allegations were made *"see picture 15".* Her full awareness of Anthony's demented poor state of mind compels her to tolerate and even put up with his alleged claims and fantasies. It is quite manifest in this scene that Anne's posture indicates strain and suppressed anger:

Clamped thighs and tightened stomachs mean that the breath we need to fully vocalize is severely held in check and will neither flow nor issue in the right manner. It is quite apparent that females are not encouraged to be loud or to show rage (Rodenburg 77).

3. Conclusion

Anne's silence in *The Father* stems from a complex interplay of fear, grief, and guilt. Having already endured the loss of her younger sister, Anne is paralyzed by the looming reality of losing her father—not to death, but to the slow erosion of his mind. This unrelenting fear renders her voice inert, as though speaking the truth might shatter the fragile illusion of normalcy she clings to. Her silence is not passive; it is a

deliberate retreat from the overwhelming burden of responsibility and the moral dilemma she faces. Trapped between her duty to her father and her unspoken yearning for freedom, Anne's muted voice reflects the profound weight of her emotional struggle. The narrative poignantly portrays Anne as a woman burdened by guilt at the thought of leaving her father behind in a nursing home. For Anne, this guilt is twofold: she fears being judged as selfish and disloyal, yet she also battles the internal accusation that she is abandoning the very person to whom she owes her existence. Her inability to voice this struggle reflects the weight of an unbreakable father-daughter bond that has now become a source of both love and torment.

By the film's conclusion, Zeller intentionally leaves Anne's final decision morally ambiguous, immersing the audience in her turmoil. Should she sever the ties that bind her to her father's crumbling world to save herself, or should she sacrifice her own life to remain by his side as he succumbs to dementia? In either scenario, Anne is caught in an emotional paradox, where her guilt muffles her voice and complicates her pursuit of autonomy.

Florian Zeller's *The Father* transcends a mere family drama; it is a raw and tragic exploration of the human condition, the decay of the mind, and the fragility of familial bonds. At its core, the film illuminates the emotional cost of caregiving and the silenced voices of those who must grapple with impossible choices. Anne's stifled voice becomes emblematic of her suppressed identity, her unspoken guilt, and her desperate yet inevitable quest to reclaim herself amid the ruins of a relationship that both defines and confines her.

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