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Disability and Marginalization in Lenin Al-Ramly's *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)* and Noha Sobhi's *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)*

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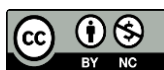
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ABSTRACT

This study examines two influential works: *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)* by Lenin Al-Ramly and *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)* by Noha Sobhi. These texts critically redefine perceptions of blindness and address deeply rooted socio-cultural issues as a means of expressing the playwrights' beliefs and perspectives, as well as of overcoming personal barriers. The failure to take proactive measures and to uphold the fundamental rights of blind people has led to widespread suffering. Accordingly, the two pieces provide keen social commentary through their portrayal of the struggles experienced by marginalized blind people. A fundamental concern of this investigation is to create independence in blind people through representation, advocacy, resilience, and collective action. Notably, the study highlights that blind individuals perform on par with their sighted peers in auditory examinations, thereby demonstrating their inherent capabilities. The well-meaning volunteers provide essential support across the globe. They guide individuals affected by blindness or low vision to receive the advice and information they need to continue with their day, which ultimately helps facilitate their ability to self-advocate and self-navigate. Furthermore, these programs and policies aim to raise awareness in society about the problems faced by the visually impaired people. Blind individuals chase their goals and ambitions; no stereotyped perceptions of a culture can hijack them. They challenge conventional narratives and re-found their own histories. The paper originates from a community of feeling shared by the blind and visually impaired people and focuses on their active participation in everyday activities and struggles. Through the meticulous collection and analysis of comparative data, the study aims to bridge the gap between the experiences of blind and sighted individuals, promoting full societal integration and recognizing blind individuals as valuable members of the community.



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1. Introduction

Many academics have developed a critical analysis of the social construction of disability in the field of disability studies. They hypothesize that disability is a form of oppression that is tightly interwoven with the question of imagery and how it is treated in numerous discursive contexts, ranging from the medical to the educational, political, legal, and social spheres. Since theater has the power to transcend physical limitations and connect people through shared performances, the two works of art are well-suited for their strong representation of the presence and absence dimensions in the lives of blind individuals, reflecting the harsh circumstances faced by people who are blind. They also help illustrate the actual social and political connotations of the ideology of “change[ing] blindness” (Simons 2000, 1143). One advantage of having two Arab dramatists write about the same experience, with slight differences in attitude or presentation between Egyptian and American cultures, is that they are more likely to depict it realistically. Generally, there are two types of blindness: complete and partial. Most people who are blind can see with limitations, except for some who can see unseen worlds because they perceive without needing to use their eyes. Some blind individuals live in a world that is sufficient for them, while others inhabit a world that is overwhelming. There is no single standard for the sufficiency or insufficiency of the world from the perspective of a blind person who visualizes the world and determines their life choices. The life of blind persons is not hypostatized by literature along the boundaries of their blindness. Critics suggest that those who are trapped in these unfortunate conditions and attempt to construct a practice of enlightenment, together with other different cultures and life experiences, can turn on the light switch for every blind person.

Being blind in the world of theater, however, has distinct challenges and advantages. The concept of “the theatre of blindness” aims to foster inclusive and authentic theatrical experiences for both performers and audiences (Healey 2021, 6). This paper seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of two texts: one featuring a blind Arab character, titled *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)* by Lenin Al-Ramly, and the other focusing on an American blind character, Helen Keller, titled *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)* by Noha Sobhi. Both works are written in Arabic, with one reflecting the Arab experience and the other illustrating an American experience. These works explore the heartaches and hardships of being blind, often through autobiographical accounts and dialogues of how blind people live. The comparison aims to overcome sociopolitical barriers by emphasizing the differences and similarities between visually impaired individuals from regions of different cultures in the Arab world, emphasizing the need for interaction on an equal footing.

In this study, the researcher aims to develop a framework that accounts for the major life challenges and the social and political contexts of being a blind person in a community. A deeper understanding could help identify and possibly address many current problems and alleviate numerous modern challenges. The study aims to model the fluctuations and hardships faced by blind individuals who encounter discrimination within their societies. After examining the themes of ascent and descent, as well as the cultural divides present in Arab culture and in Lenin Al-Ramly's *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)*, the focus extends to Noha Sobhi's *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)* as a theatrical foundation aimed at dissolving the dilemma. Similar to curtains that filter and distort light, this framework critically examines themes of perception, reality, and the symbolic barriers that hide the realities of blind people's lives. The main idea is that visually impaired people can conceptualize a variety of models for comprehending their experiences by using the contrast between ascent and descent as a conceptual starting point for understanding their experiences. It also helps prove that "Several individuals with disability excelled millions of able-bodied persons and did great contributions to human arts and scientific research" (Abdel-Hay 2018, 382).

2. Thematic Function of *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)*

Al-Ramly employs dramatic theory in weaving his work, *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)*, within an institution designed to care for people who are blind, aiming to help them overcome their visual impairments and lead a normal life. He decides to speak up for blind people who have been "marginalized throughout the history of modern Egypt ... to express their plights and feelings of estrangement with the Egyptian society" (Osman 2016, 27). This confined community gives rise to a broader social dynamic in which the blind individuals struggle not only among themselves but also in opposition to the institution's administrators. Within this discourse, one of the blind characters raises specific issues or, more precisely, presents a dossier of unresolved problems, seeking solutions. The institution's owners, along with other blind residents, suspect that this individual is a visionary blind person—someone who perceives possibilities that others tend to overlook. He appears to be an intellectual who claims never to have received formal education or read a letter in his life, yet manages to inspire his fellow blind individuals to pursue solutions. "Shawwaf tries to open his colleagues' eyes to the corruption rampant in the establishment" (Ramli 1989, 141). By the end of the play, the central question shifts from 'Is he sighted or blind?' to a more profound inquiry: 'Is every blind person incapable of consideration? Moreover, is every sighted person truly able to see or envision?'

The title of the play, *Wijhat Nazar (A Point of View)*, is highly expressive both linguistically and in relation to the overall narrative. The playwright points out that "the title of this play suggests a black irony, as it handles the subject of the inner vision of the blind" (Ramli 1989,

143). The play highlights that blind people, in fact, have their own opinions on a variety of topics, and features blind individuals as its protagonists. One of the practical and meaningful objectives of the work is to emphasize that the insight of blind people can be more profound than mere sight. The act of seeing, therefore, transcends physical perception and becomes a metaphor for perspective and understanding. Since many people with or without disabilities suffer from deliberate social exclusion in different aspects of life, the play is an attempt to reduce marginalization and the intense experience of feeling alienated. In this respect, Sayyid (2022, 1), in his essay titled *The complexities of alienation, otherness, and marginalization in Miral Al-Tahawy's Novel Brooklyn Heights*, states that: "In recent years, the concepts of ... alienation and marginalization have become even more salient, as boundaries become increasingly tested, identities challenged, and difference ever more powerfully promoted." This quotation examines themes of perception, reality, and the metaphorical barriers that obscure the truth in the lives of blind individuals, much like curtains that filter and distort light. The main idea is to utilize the concept of going up and down as a means to help blind people think of various ways to understand their experiences and ultimately get tangible and satisfactory results. In their book titled *The Intersectionality of Critical Animal, Disability, and Environmental Studies: Toward Eco-Ability, Justice, and Liberation*, Anthony Nocella et al. (2017, 109) rise against unjust institutions which marginalize blind people and deny their role in life:

One might argue that people with disabilities are marginalized in a capitalist system that values people for their productivity. However, I think framing the problem that way would be an enormous mistake. This overlooks the ways in which having what is categorized as a disability is not inherently an obstacle to working or to productivity. Rather, US society systematically excludes people with disabilities who are quite capable of working from the workforce, which therefore creates the perception that such people cannot work as productively as the majority of people can.

Moreover, as a consequence, the play powerfully critiques the marginalization of citizens and the corruption of authority figures who usurp their rights. Citizens are likened to a group of blind individuals living in a foster care system that relies on external aid, which is distributed to officials rather than to the residents themselves—until the arrival of the protagonist, Arafa Al-Shawwaf. Al-Shawwaf is portrayed as a simple citizen with his own perspective, who manages to bring about slight but meaningful changes in the lives of the other residents.

Critics interpreted the artwork as a tragedy in which the dramatic narrative begins to develop with the emergence of the protagonist, Al-Shawwaf, whose name carries significant connotations and reflects a profound awareness of his environment. Although he is blind, like

the other characters, he assumes a leadership role in confronting corruption within government associations that purport to serve individuals with special needs. This attitude emphasizes that true insight is not merely about physical sight, but about the capacity to comprehend realities, stand against injustice, and prevent oneself from being blind to truth and morality. This piece delivers a powerful message to the audience—that individuals should possess their own viewpoints and express them freely, as exemplified by Al-Shawwaf. His participation is a step towards disengaging himself from the reality of the visually impaired individuals, and, finally, he finds injustice and oppression even within the institution that is supposed to guarantee their rights. The revelation of such a fact and the “examination of marginalizing the ‘abnormal’ is also useful in understanding speciesism and ecocide to advance the field of eco-ability” (Nocella et al. 2017, 110).

Al-Ramly is renowned for his sharp sense of humor; he presents a narrative that employs wit to evoke a smile while conveying the tragic effects of self-criticism and satire of harsh realities. His writing exposes the characters’ underlying contradictions, often marked by conceit and confidence. His work shows that comedy and humor can coexist with dramatic development, allowing dramatic tension to build even in moments of laughter. In theatrical comedies, the scene often stops so that the actors can tell jokes and make the audience laugh. In spoof plays, the laughter is so loud that the theater shakes with it. The actor skillfully blends humorous and poignant moments in the same scene, and even within the same line. Tiran Manucharyan (2024), in his book titled *Of Kings and Clowns: Leadership in Contemporary Egyptian Theatre Since 1967*, claims that Al-Ramly “envisages comedy as ‘a great tool’ for what he calls ‘the art of cunning’” (107). This method highlights a crucial aspect of dramaturgy and the audience’s experience. It illustrates the close relationship between comedy and tragedy in theater.

The institution represents the government which uses its power to intimidate people by presenting itself as a giant. In contrast, the marginalized portray the administration as a dwarf who must climb a chair to appear as a giant to the blind. Because they are unaware of the institution’s true nature, they still perceive it as an unbeatable giant. However, Al-Shawwaf illustrates how this corruption manifests in society, highlighting the disparity between the institution’s phantasmal presence and its actual existence. He depicts the institution as a criminal organization that exploits the disabilities of its residents. The supervisors of the institution are solely concerned with personal gain. Only minimal sustenance reaches the impoverished residents who live under the worst conditions. This moment reveals a striking reality to the audience, marking an extraordinary and dramatic escalation that coincides with the music, design, lighting, performance, and dialogue. The playwright emphasizes the

importance of freedom, knowledge, and understanding one's rights and responsibilities. These are the most critical themes in the work:

Arafa: And how do we know? Maybe the administration really doesn't have the money.

Masou: Okay, let them show us the budget and discuss it with them.

Insaf: Are you planning a revolution?

Abdul Bari: So why don't we just keep quiet about the injustice? (Ramli 1989, 44)

The author adeptly reveals the struggles within the institution, drawing attention to the violence, administrative malpractice, and the exploitation of inmates with disabilities. Yet, thanks to his keen understanding and logical mindset, Al-Shawwaf sees the hidden truths in his surroundings and kicks off a campaign for awareness with his teammates. The goal of this initiative is to broaden their horizons and help them express their ideas, even with their visual challenges. This effort aims to foster a broader perspective and enable them to articulate their vision despite their visual impairments. Consequently, they become fully conscious of their interests, ultimately enlightening the UN representative, Mrs. Corinne Box, about the true nature of the institution: it fails to merit the fund's support, as its beneficiaries are primarily the corrupt administration rather than the inmates (Ramli 1989, 131).

Al-Ramly skillfully stresses the crisis facing Arab society in general, with particular emphasis on Egyptian society. His work reveals the citizens' actual inability to recognize the key to change, and emphasizes a lack of fundamental awareness regarding human perception. The text resonates deeply with audiences due to its captivating simplicity and all-encompassing humor, which successfully opens the metaphorical doors to their hearts. Al-Ramly tackles his subject by focusing on society's pervasive exploitation and scandals.

Many critics interpret the play as a contemporary epic that addresses the issue of blindness. They initially denounced it for allegedly mocking and insulting people with visual impairments. However, it soon became clear that the play, which uses a humorous and caricatured style, actually advocates for their rights in society. It is interesting to note that the audience laughs at the clever satire, not at blind people themselves. The piece serves as a call for the visually impaired to engage with the work, thereby reinforcing their presence and emphasizing the significant role they play in society:

Al-Moualem: Believe me, this institution is the home where you will find comfort.

Arafa: Comfort House! [bathroom]: that's why I find that kind of rotten smell.

Al-Moualem: How? We live in an area that is considered an oasis in the middle of the desert.

Arafa: right and the oasis is filled with fragrant blooms. (Ramli 1989, 19)

At the moment when darkness envelops society, the mission of enlightenment and the restoration of consciousness becomes a daunting task that should be undertaken by the most

perceptive and intellectually capable individuals. These people have a deeper understanding that lets them see things that many cannot. So, steering society towards a brighter future really depends on intellectuals who are most prepared to show us the path.

3. The Social Challenges Addressed in Wihat Nazar (A Point of View)

The play emphasizes the neglect and marginalization of visually impaired individuals in society. It also criticizes the corruption and mismanagement within organizations intended to support people with special needs. This piece investigates the larger problem of how we often neglect and undervalue vulnerable communities, stressing how important it is to have strong leaders who can stand up for their rights, much like Arafa Al-Shawwaf does. These social issues serve as a critique of the Egyptian reality at the time, a recurring theme in Lenin Al-Ramly's theatrical works. He is deeply concerned about the current condition of the visually impaired, their social isolation, and the suffering and loss of time they endure. "The trauma of otherness, alienation, and marginalization and the complexities prevalent in the life of exiled/diasporic persons are universal phenomena that have emerged as major themes in many literary works crossing the barriers of caste, creed and nationality" (Sayyid 2022, 1). Al-Ramly genuinely believes in his artistic goals and aims to do good, yet his depictions of visually impaired individuals frequently showcase their strength as they grapple with the challenges and difficulties surrounding them.

Manucharyan (2024) acknowledged that "El-Ramly has eventually managed to develop his own successful techniques in theater which enable his plays, as he aimed, to 'express social and intellectual concerns, while endeavoring to transcend these local issues towards a more humanistic vision'" (107). Hence, the private theater takes advantage of free expression currently available in Egypt, asserting itself in the field of incisive social commentary that absorbs public outrage. The audience shows a grudging cheer, accepting it with understanding and awareness. Al-Ramly articulates his perspective on individuals with disabilities through a comedic lens. "Arafa: Dear Madam of the United Nations, we don't need help or pity, nor do you want us to be given a cane to walk with. It's enough that you show us the way and let us choose" (Ramli 1989, 98). The playwright confirms that the work of art "does not detect any expressions or gestures that may offend the feelings of the blind or disabled. Rather, it decides that the show is intended to benefit the blind," represented by Al-Shawwaf who inspires them to resist weakness and submission (Ramli 1989, 151). Al-Shawwaf reacts as a dynamic, independent person who voices opinions and actively contributes to the household. According to Anne K. Phillips and Miranda A. Green-Barteet, in their book *Reconsidering Laura Ingalls Wilder: Little House and Beyond*, the hero's feeling of alienation and his emphasis on independence are interpreted as "an experience that involves the whole family, rewriting

disability in terms of relationships of interaction and interdependence” (Green-Barteet and Phillips, 2019).

4. Theoretical Framework of *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)*

Noha Sobhi's *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)* refers, both literally and scientifically, to a deadly disease affecting bees known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). This disorder results in the bees' inability to produce honey, ultimately leading to their demise. Through this metaphor, the play explores the damaging effects of emotional repression, suggesting that the inability to communicate and express one's emotions can be fatal. Inspired by the life of American author Helen Keller—who has often been denied due recognition as a writer since the 1960s—Sobhi proficiently crafts *Ihtebas Alasal* in the form of a monodrama. She makes a significant impression on the audience by reinterpreting Helen Keller's life in a way that draws attention to the outside forces affecting her growth and forming her intelligence. Keller had the inner fortitude to speak with pride and use her disability as a characteristic that made her stand out from many sighted people. Disability is translated in terms of resistance and acceptance:

Disability studies recognizes that disability is a key aspect of human experience, and that disability has important political, social, and economic implications for society as a whole, including both disabled and nondisabled people. Through research, artistic production, teaching and activism, disability studies seeks to augment understanding of disability in all cultures and historical periods, to promote greater awareness of the experiences of disabled people. (qtd. in Ferguson and Nusbaum 2012, 71)

for social change. In addressing this critical issue, Brian Lamb and Dorothy Herrmann (1998, xvi) authored *Helen Keller: A Life*, and asserted that “Keller may offer new insights into the nature of society's relationship to disability, and will perhaps prompt us to examine our fears about our own normalcy.” They, furthermore, reckon Keller's spiritual role in advocating for civil liberties and for people with disabilities, and highlight the fact that “In a society fearful of limitation and mortality, she is an enduring icon, a woman who, by her inspiring example, made disability seem less threatening” (1998, xiii). She also participates in political and social issues beyond disability, which demonstrates her dedication to social inclusion, justice, and perseverance.

Noha Sobhi's *Ihtebas Alasal* was initially presented as a monodrama, a type of theater that naturally poses the challenge of conveying a complex story with just one actor. The supporters of change emphasized the challenge of conveying an inner voice and experience without relying on traditional communication techniques, particularly when the protagonist is deaf, blind, and mute. Throughout her body of work, Sobhi examines how her perception of social relationships has evolved in response to her personal experiences and mental imagery. According to Sayyid

(2022, 4), Keller's "feelings of estrangement and foreignness, which pervade the narrative, bear witness to the protagonist's loss and disorientation. Her withdrawal and unease reveal the existence of impenetrable boundaries that keep her disconnected from the society in which she lives." Therefore, it serves to give a voice to individuals who are typically voiceless or marginalized.

When the curtain came down, the director's extended sequence of darkness eloquently captured the depth of isolation Keller experienced, while also highlighting her extraordinary ability to rise above it—representing defiance and resilience. Throughout the half-hour performance, the actress was frequently applauded for her sensitive and compelling portrayal of Keller. Noha Sobhi depicted Keller's epic journey in vivid detail, emphasizing the difficulties she faced as a child after losing her sight and hearing at 19 months of age. Keller's illness profoundly affected her speech, as she states, "Sometimes it becomes harmful so I'm partly sick. We're all blind" (Sobhi 2022, 5). This condition contributed to her feelings of loneliness and her perception of the world as monochromatic. She lost hope in the face of the pervasive darkness surrounding her, which made it nearly impossible to perceive—or even imagine—anything beyond her limited sensory experience. Despite her efforts to overcome this oppressive isolation, the color black represents disconnection and the erasure of self-awareness from others, except through bodily means as her only method of contact. In her book, *Women Who Changed the World: Their Lives, Challenges, and Accomplishments through History*, Candice Goucher (2022, 598) affirms this fact as follows:

Helen Keller contemplated the socioeconomic and political causes of disability, which she believed left an even more indelible cultural impact in the lives of individuals. Blindness was considered one of the major adversities of Keller's life, but she also used the term as a metaphor. When she contemplated the failures of the human world, more often, she used the term to describe its spiritual blindness, recognizing that many viewed disabilities and afflictions as punishment for immoral behavior. Throughout her life, she had advocated the necessity to eradicate the prejudices associated with blindness due to ignorance, stupidity, or sin, and advocated the need to analyze every aspect of life through right knowledge and proper discretion.

Although Keller is well-known throughout the world, Anne Sullivan, Helen's teacher, is not as well-known, despite having gone through similar struggles. Sullivan was more than just Helen's teacher; she was a confidante and a big part of her life. Helen learned the deep meanings of life, ambition, hope, and dreams from Sullivan. She served as a powerful and influential source of psychological support, guiding Helen to shift from a brutal, inhumane, and barbaric approach toward a more conscious and humane perspective. In their work entitled *New*

Narratives of Disability: Constructions, Clashes, and Controversies, Sara Green and Donileen R. Loseke (2020, 14) note that “Anne Sullivan Macy teaches Helen Keller how to overcome her disability and function as a ‘normal’ in the greater American society.” Not only did Helen become a symbol of resilience and challenge, but she also exemplified qualities of a working woman, embodying willpower and self-esteem. Keller created opportunities to forge her own path—opportunities that many sighted people, with their numerous privileges, have often failed to seize. Reinforcing this significant theme, Sobhi, on Keller’s behalf, asks: “Are you completely or partially blind? Don’t rush the answer. Even if you see those words now... That doesn’t mean you’re looking?” (2022, 11). As a result, the play perfectly captures Helen’s difficult journey and her belief that life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all. She believes that every human being possesses some degree of blindness, emphasizing the universality of human limitations and the importance of perseverance.

The audience manifested these images clearly throughout the production, and the director effectively interconnected them by employing the elements of his presentation to their fullest potential. He successfully utilized stage directions to express Keller’s feelings, dreams, and suffering, despite the limited use of visual media. Although part of the show veered visually from the intended theme, the collective cohesiveness and strength of the performance overshadowed the thematic content of the show to impress audiences with a very profound sense of Helen’s sensibilities. When it came to the set design, the author emphasized how effectively it captured the essence of the time period in Keller’s life, from 1880 to 1968, emphasizing how important it is to stay true to the historical context. Using screens and backgrounds played a big role here—they accurately reflected Keller’s emotional state and made the whole experience even more moving. The visual imagery enhanced the portrayal’s vividness more than focusing solely on the temporal context of the presentation, which was shaped by the historical figure’s incarnation. It went a long way towards crafting a superb comprehension of the scene through verbal imagery; the monologue and facial expressions were appropriate for the scene, and the implementation of silence was especially effective. In fact, silence is often the sound that ends up being the loudest thing, capturing the very essence of deafness in such a way that it becomes the sound for their world.

The playwright echoes the perspectives of Green and Loseke (2020, 14) by advocating for “a redefining of the term ‘independence’ and states that instead, scholars should use the term ‘interdependence’ to more fully capture the human condition and experience of those with disabilities in relation to those that are defined as able-bodied.” In doing so, Sobhi introduced a monodrama theatrical performance in which Keller articulated her profound and triumphant life experience with disability. Sobhi expressed admiration for Keller’s extraordinary journey

from impairment to achievement and excellence. She was motivated to depict this inspiring narrative and to see her cherished text brought to life on the stage. Consequently, Sobhi emphasized the idea that, at times, individuals who are blind can become more visually and expressively perceptive than sighted individuals. She urges the audience to engage empathetically and to support Keller's humanity, reinforcing that personal development is possible through overcoming challenges; she states, "Don't watch the show with glass eyes. Open your chest wide and feel, with that fighter woman, her world with your cold fingers for blood to run and life to come back...?" (Sobhi 2022, 13). At this moment, Sobhi revives the meaningful essence of Keller's own words, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" (McGinley and Trolley 2016, 201). Keller's sentiment acknowledges the inherent limitations of individual capacities, but says that the synergy and collaboration with others can lead to impressive outcomes. In academic language, these concepts embrace core concepts in social theory and community development, and acknowledge that the breadth of individual skills and capacities is often limited. Cooperative efforts, however, utilize a variety of resources and strengths to promote social cohesion and enhance productivity. In line with theories of interdependence and the redefinition of disability, Keller's insight shows how important partnerships and relationships are in overcoming challenges and bringing about significant change. In contrast to other writers who have written about Keller, Sobhi employed the monodrama technique to portray Keller in a way that appeals to the audience on a deeper level, thereby arousing empathy and understanding of the suffering endured by individuals with visual impairments. Sobhi critiques society's tendency to marginalize such individuals, asserting that "society ... accepted a handicapped person only if he or she was physically unrepulsive, intellectually and morally superior, and heroic about their affliction" (Lamb and Herrmann 1998, 85). As a result, she places these people in the framework of society, highlighting the part society plays in guaranteeing the state's protection of their rights. Through the technique of monodrama, the performer and the audience can form a close and intimate connection. However, audiences can concentrate solely on the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of a single character when he/she is performing. The playwright often explores the character's inner psyche to explore complicated motivations and conflicts. "The actor- characters ... have to overcome various challenges to communicate their agenda" (Manucharyan 2024, 13). This approach further fosters a character's journey and memorable performances which accentuate the actor's versatility. It is evident that Keller herself recognized her condition and "accepted her blindness and deafness as natural conditions. It was her inability to speak at all intelligibly that first gave her an awareness of the universal struggle against limitation" (Manucharyan 2024, 100).

Sobhi cleverly examines complex themes and issues that pertain to people with visual impairments through the experience of a single character, leaving the audience open to contemplating and thinking about these topics. The involvement of blind people in our culture worries Sobhi; she chooses a cutting-edge theatrical style that employs imaginative storytelling devices, such as direct address, to enhance the overall impact of the narrative and to prove that Keller, as a “miracle child” who needed to “overcome” her disabilities (Green and Loseke 2020, 12). This approach draws the audience into Keller’s world and experiences, often resulting in a more compelling and memorable theatrical encounter. Overall, Sobhi employs the powerful form of monodrama, which emphasizes character development, emotional depth, and inventive storytelling.

5. The Social Challenges Addressed in *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)*

The playwright recommends that the audience engage actively after the performance: “All you have to do is stand loyal to this great scene in front of the line of sight as you meditate on creatures, plants and water drops on foliage and deficit lines on humans’ faces. Then you either feel there. You either admit you’re blind” (Sobhi 2022, 19). Sobhi illuminates issues around the involvement of blind people in our culture. Using Keller as a model, she stresses the importance of understanding a blind person’s individual strengths and abilities, and maintains that blind people are responsible for their achievements in areas that they see fit and for exercising their freedom of choice. In doing so, Keller encourages blind individuals to build confidence and develop their specialized skills to serve society better and address diverse needs; she states, “O sighted you’re blind. Blindness mises sensation” (Sobhi 2022, 24). By encouraging the growth of a new generation of blind individuals on and off stage, this strategy helps them function well in their communities and access the professional assistance they need to advance. This kind of cooperation spreads easily; blind people are more inclined to seek out additional cooperation when they observe the benefits of cooperation. Sobhi stresses “the pressing need for public advocacy,” noting that Keller sought to redefine the narrative of disability from one of limitation to one of potential. Keller pushed for society to acknowledge people’s intellectual abilities regardless of perceived obstacles to independence and stressed the value of equality. Her powerful words have done much to change the perceptions of people with disabilities, proving that many of them are believed to be unable; in fact, they can also engage with their world as citizens and build new relationships in their community.

In his work entitled *Sound-Blind: American Literature and the Politics of Transcription*, Alex Benson (2023) comments on Keller’s disability, stating that Keller’s disability . . . often appears as a figure for impairment. . . . blindness represents the ethical failing of the prejudiced, as in the common template of tributes to Keller. Sobhi (2022, 89) points out the image and

“calls on deafness and blindness as conditions to be overcome.” This attitude contributes to society by promoting understanding and moments of social unity. This is how *Ihtebas Alasal* (*The Caged Honey*) draws the audience to its themes, making you revisit your own prejudices and recognize how, as a society, we fashion and shape each other’s realities. Candice Goucher (2022, 596) affirms this notion, stating, “she was able to examine the causes of other hardships based on disability/blindness ... In her battle for humanity, Keller ... became aware of the universality of blind-deaf issues and the multiple sources of adversity and poverty.” At this point, Sobhi plays a crucial role in exploring how individuals who have lost senses, such as hearing and sight, perceive their relationship with society and how their imagination and reactions within society shape these perceptions. According to Brian Lamb and Dorothy Herrmann (1998, 344), “. . . there would be no ‘Helen Kellers,’ no perfect symbols of a handicapped person to make us less afraid of our own human fragility. In the disabled, we would discover ourselves.” Consequently, Sobhi claimed that when the forces of evil surround a person from all sides, closing off the windows of light and freedom, the sighted and the blind become equal and instantly the person has no choice but to use his insight and reason to find his way through the darkness of his shackles. The writer, with a deeper meaning and significance for the internal structure, relies on a dramatic re-enactment style. Resisting the harsh circumstances of blindness is a point of view or an awareness of the dilemma. It necessitates courage that transforms individuality into a general and effective status. Sobhi seeks to reflect this issue in the play; she suggests that only one blind person can change all the blind people into sighted people. Keller takes on this challenge by broadening her colleagues’ insight and helping us recognize things more clearly, too.

6. The Technical Approach of the Two Authors

The two authors are members of the Arab ethnic group, having established a presence across two different continents. Al-Ramly’s focus on the East and Sobhi’s perspective on the West seem to create an interesting dynamic in how blind people perceive themselves in relation to sighted individuals, particularly in a global context. This convergence of two distinct cultural contexts facilitates an exchange of shared perspectives. Al-Ramly asserts that an individual’s viewpoint is inevitably reflected in their reactions and interactions. Conversely, Sobhi seeks to distance herself from dominant attitudes, writing with an awareness of the social functions—both positive and negative—related to community traditions. The self-conscious nature of their writing suggests that these authors are aware of how the act of writing and the themes they explore shape perceptions. Each author uses cultural differences to approach the topic of blindness from their point of view to let people who are blind coexist alongside sighted individuals. Candice Goucher (2022, 598) declares that:

Keller emphasized the need for an existence for all governed by the pillars of love and social justice such a congenial existence in society, Keller believed, would ensure the goodness of possibilities in the world, where human beings were friends to one another, bereft of any kind of discrimination or hatred, and rather might invoke the spirit of well-being.

Thus, the two authors use their respective cultural frameworks to deeply examine the intersection of blindness, self-awareness, and social dynamics. Al-Ramly, focusing on Eastern culture, may use traditional social structures, values, and collective experiences to show how self-consciousness and blindness interact within that context. This could highlight how people with disabilities are viewed, treated, or expected to behave according to Eastern cultural norms, where community and family are often central. However, Keller's legacy may also shed light on how the general public in the West views disabilities, perhaps emphasizing how people with disabilities defy social norms or carve out a niche for themselves in a world dominated by sighted people.

Both of them advocate for self-discovery, encouraging readers to reflect meticulously on the experiences of individuals with visual impairments. The perspective presented in this paper envisions a society where individuals who are blind or partially sighted are empowered to participate fully and effectively in all facets of life they choose to pursue. Al-Ramly critiques the social issues faced by blind people in Middle Eastern societies, with an emphasis on cultural and social rights that have received little attention. Keller's own story could also reveal how even those who are seen as icons of overcoming adversity still navigate a world that is not entirely equitable. The playwrights have positioned themselves within their respective contexts and demonstrated how conventionalism and sociability operate together to transform the relationship between blind individuals and the society that surrounds them. They have redefined people with disabilities as active and contributing members of society.

Al-Ramly and Sobhi tackle the issue of cultural identity in blind individuals. Al-Ramly acknowledges that the challenges of cultural identity arise from the external social pressures and, importantly, from the fragmentation of society itself. Similarly, Sobhi further investigates identity by examining it at the level of larger power structures, both social and political, that structure identity into a recognizable form. Together, they reveal blindness not merely as a state of being blind, but as a cultural identity that is identifiable by many and as a place where cultural identity is formed, challenged, and reshaped by blind individuals. Sobhi's unique authoring style in writing about blind people sets her defence of them apart from other writers in the genre. As Sayyid (2022, 3) states, "the author's sense of displacement and alienation contributes to building up her identity as an Egyptian writer in [the genre]." Both writers highlight the fluid nature of identity and its critical role in shaping, as well as being reshaped by, social and cultural

realities. The authors conclude that this study has the potential to transform blind people's disability into an experience that no longer separates them from society or limits their involvement within it.

In her play *Ihtebas Alasal (The Caged Honey)*, Noha Sobhi (2022, 26) borrows Keller's well-known statement that "Life is either a bold adventure or nothing." According to Sobhi, Keller's disability and blindness have an inherent relationship with existentialism. In line with this philosophy, one's being involves creating possibilities and pursuing purpose, which further develops the playwright's responses to issues of blindness and disability. Sobhi redefines traditional understandings of these conditions, focusing on the idea that life has no meaning without adventure. The concept of adventure extends one's existence beyond individuality to encompass multiple possibilities, thereby emphasizing the development of personality and the potential for success. If we extend this idea to the societal level, this perspective promotes the value of cultivating opportunities for people with disabilities to meaningfully journey through their experiences of life that foster a sense of purpose and joy. Furthermore, taking risks encourages a strong society that is resilient to the impact of a person's disabilities or negative traits.

This process fits with the theories of self-actualization in the case of individuals who are already oppressed and marginalized due to their diverse disabilities. The issue goes beyond just marginalization; Sobhi, in addition, clarifies that it reaches the blind spot we have about alienation within society, which is often considered a field that brings together healthy individuals and incapacitated persons. As Zayed et al. (2021, 6) claim in the essay "*Intergenerational Discrepancies and Alienation in Selected Plays by Horton Foote*," the characters "attain a sense of belonging to a home when they achieve a degree of compromise between their desire for self-assertion and their social obligations, one that mitigates the individual's sense of alienation." Thus, Sobhi encourages individuals to seek out opportunities that contribute to a fulfilling and purposeful life. In the same vein, Keller recommends that individuals seize long-awaited opportunities and refuse to wait passively for their ride to arrive. She reiterates her belief that there is always a possibility of opening another door to happiness when one door is closed. A person must create his own happiness and be independent from others in overcoming difficulties, feelings of helplessness, failure, and despair. For this reason, Keller has popular phrases that, so far, still have much to say to many in the community, even when they stumble. She inspired those living with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments, who are trying to recover from setbacks and bounce back stronger than ever. Consequently, Sobhi succeeded in changing the traditional image of blind people and redefining the definition of people with disabilities as individuals who can contribute to society. This new

definition reinforces existing stereotypes regarding individuals with disabilities, suggesting that they are remarkable only when they successfully overcome their challenges.

7. Conclusion

Since traditional theater often overlooked the experiences of visually impaired individuals, the theater of blindness aimed to change the way that traditional theater frequently ignored the experiences of people with visual impairments. As a result, the study yielded several findings, among which are the matters presented in the theatrical discourse within the subject area. The paper highlighted the issues of administrative, political, and social corruption related to institutionalized class prejudices. Al-Ramly looked at unconscious bias and corroborated how people can be prejudiced against individuals with low vision without realizing it, thereby affecting their decisions and actions. His play created a beautiful tableau in which blind individuals resist mindlessly accepting everything that is thrust upon them. He enthusiastically managed to develop an autonomous viewpoint that frees our minds and allows us to critically assess and decide whether to accept or reject external influences. The study conveys a profound message, as it views theater as having a harmonious relationship with humanity, emphasizing the human being's relationship with the surrounding forces.

Noha Sobhi sparked a discussion to challenge those who marginalize people with visual impairments, emphasizing their effective and valuable role in society and calling for equal treatment. Her work catalyzes difficult societal conversations about how others should learn what things a blind person needs help with. The theatrical production presents critical situations, employing narration and initiating communication channels between the writer and the character. It also gathers between the performer and the recipient in a way that creates a state of awareness in the recipient, in an attempt to prove how blind people sometimes become more visual and expressive than sighted people.

The studied plays succeeded in helping the audience peer into their souls and feel more empowered about their negative personal traits. As viewers get involved with the events and characters staged in the plays, a tangible connection is gradually created through theatrical coexistence. This participation inspires the public to intimately create a deeper understanding of the human and social aspects of the characters. Moreover, the drama provided a platform for visually impaired actors to communicate their own stories, challenging the dominant stereotypes and misconceptions about blindness. It created performances that engage all senses, thus making theater accessible to blind and sighted audiences alike. The playwrights raise awareness about blindness, dispelling myths and promoting empathy. They succeed in paying attention to the unique and specific needs of blind persons to ensure their equitable participation within the community.

This study emphasizes justice for marginalized blind groups and creates a broader understanding of their perspectives and experiences. Moreover, the researcher upholds actions to bring about positive change and combat the exploitation of social human rights for political or personal ends. This work accentuates common human bonds that transcend cultural differences. Thus, the paper presents multiple perspectives, encourages critical thinking, and invites the audience to reflect on their own biases and judgments regarding blind individuals who suffer ups and downs and stand away to overcome the distance that could resemble an obstacle between them and the community. These factors support this paper as an effective instrument for influencing public opinion, raising awareness, and fostering discussion of equality and justice concerns in modern American and Arabic societies.

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