



RESEARCH PAPER

The Dialectic of the Individual and Crowd in Canetti's *Auto-da-Fe*

¹Muhammad Usman Khan and ²Muhammad Afzal Khan Janjua

1. M.Phil, Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author** | janjua_ravian@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the dialectic of the individual and crowd in Elias Canetti's novel, *Auto-da-Fé* (1935) in a bid to understand crowd's power to commit violence against the individual self and thinking. Qualitative researches in nature, the authors have employed Theodor W. Adorno's theorizations to analyze the violent nature of modern 'crowd society' pitted against the individual autonomy. Along with utilizing 'Crowd Theory', this study also employs Michel Foucault's ideas regarding madness to understand the constructed nature of sane and insane in relation to power for suppressing the individual identity and freedom. This research, while discussing the tussle between crowd and individual, opines that crowd-led society is essentially paranoid. The paranoia of 'crowd society' creates the binaries of normal/abnormal and sane/insane leading to the loss of individual self and dignity. The study is significant and relevant in understanding the modern capitalist society and the populist movements across the world.

KEYWORDS Crowd, Identity, Capitalism, Power, Madness, Dialectic, Individual

Introduction

The current research explores the irrational nature of modern crowd led society and its violence against the individual identity and thinking within the theoretical concern of crowd theory and its impact on the characters in *Auto-da-Fé* (1935) by Elias Canetti. The present study aims to explore crowd behavior. The Crowd theory refers to the study of crowd behavior and its psychopathology. It deals with the nature and formation of the crowd in modern societies. It shows how crowd is essentially anti-individual and violent in its nature. The study deals with dialectic that is two opposing forces constantly at war with each other, of individual and crowd. Crowd theory investigates how the mindset of thinking individual is altered when he/she becomes a part of the crowd. It shows how group behavior is essentially irrational and violent towards individual's freedom to think and act differently than that of group. The crowd theory explores the political, cultural, social and psychological dimensions of the crowd. Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) was one of the greatest German philosophers whose works ranges from psychology to musicology and sociology. He explored the human suffering that is caused by the modern society. He was also a member of the Frankfurt School. In his various books, essays, articles and interviews he explored the failure of rational thinking and individual freedom in modern mass society. Adorno investigates how the project of Enlightenment failed to save modern man from the barbarism of mass society and fascism. He investigates civilization's dark and chaotic side that is irrational and fascist in its approach towards individuals. Adorno in his famous study co-authored with Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), investigates how the project of enlightenment ended up in the rise of mass society on the

one hand and fascism on the other. The rational individual is threatened either by the crowd society or instrumental reason employed by state to control its individuals.

The present study also relies on Michel Foucault's study of episteme and its relation to power. His insights concerning madness and punishment are employed by the researcher for the investigation of notions of sane and insane and their relation to power in Canetti's *Auto-da-Fé*. Foucault in his various books, essays, interviews, and lectures investigated how the scientific truths are actually not ahistorical facts but a construction of the episteme of a particular time. He investigates how power constructs the definition of sane and insane through use of discourse. In his *Madness and Civilization* (1961), he saw insanity as a flexible social construct rather than an unchanging fact of science. The normal and abnormal behavior is social and political construct intricately linked to power. Like Adorno, Foucault discusses the paranoiac nature of society and its use of power for suppressing individual. The power is used as instrumental reason either by state or society. Foucault discusses how instrumental rationality is used in modern institution of psychiatry. The historical assertions made by Foucault are highly anti-disciplinary but dialectical in style. In a dialectical approach, we understand the relationships between reason, irrationality, and insanity as an area where power gives hegemony to the status of a particular so called 'civilized' society.

Literature Review

This section deals with the state of the art review of the research done on Canetti's *Auto-da-Fé* in a bid to establish the research gap as to make the current study a pivotal increment to the academic field. Various critical studies, from various theoretical angles, have already been coined out on *Auto-da-Fé*, but the present research deals with dialectic of crowd and individual. This chapter will also deal with the previous research done about crowd theory.

According to the study of Roberts and Arnason (2004), *Auto-da-Fé* is Canetti's apocalyptic vision of the demise of Western ontological system based on rationality. The original title *Die Blendung* (*Blindness, or blinding*) refers to the blindness of philosophy to the Heraclitan flux of being. The novel is exploration of clash between the onto-logic of 'head' and mytho-logic of the 'world' (Arnason et al, 2004, p.5). *Auto-da-Fé* draws on a complete tension and dialectic of two opposing forces. One of them is rationalism and conscious or order and stability. However, on the other side is irrationalism and unconscious or flux and chaos (Arnason et al, 2004. p.7).

Donahue (2001) highlights that the charges of misogyny against *Auto-da-Fé* are faulty as the novel's narrator is highly unreliable and the remarks about woman are parody of then then contemporary views. Canetti has shown a parody of men's faulty views on woman and "the feminine". All the women in novel are just representation of the distorted image of woman as constructed by male characters and essentially nothing to do with the reality of woman. . Donahue concludes that such an approach does not indicate authorial or 'narrational' misogyny. This approach is a stern critique on the misogynistic institutions of the author's time. Werlen (1995) while reviewing Foell's *Blind Reflections: Gender in Elias Canetti's 'Die Blending* investigates the image of woman as presented in novel. The novel is full of virulent misogynistic images and remarks.

According to Foell, Canetti's views about women as presented in *Auto-da-Fé* owe to the social and intellectual background he belonged to. Foell emphasizes that the novel depends on deep rooted misogynies for its narrative impact. However, such an approach fails to justify the explicit patterns of misogyny in the novel. The psychological and social

contextualization of the misogyny as done by Foell is not satisfactory for drawing convincing conclusions.

Preece's (2004) study of Canetti's *oeuvre* shows a merging of genre and methodology. Canetti's works range from fiction, autobiography, aphorisms, sociological and political studies to play writing and essays. According to Preece, Canetti's books "overlaps in theme, methodology, style, and fields of metaphor make(ing) the whole into a coherent oeuvre" (Lorenz, 2004, p.90).

Phelan's (2022) review of *Various Hellfires: On Elias Canetti's "I Want to Keep Smashing Myself Until I Am Whole"* by Joshua Cohen, discusses the range of Canetti's works and its relevance to the 21st century. Canetti and his post-Habsburg environment are described by Cohen in his introduction as the last in history of the world who believed, instead of an omnipotent God, in the authenticity and the possibility of the Enlightenment synthesis of rational and irrational in the contemporary modern society. Phelan discusses that Guests at a gathering who were repulsed by Canetti's "aberrant" notions heckled him as he recited from his novel in progress then, afterwards published as *Auto-da-Fé*. He remembered that the reaction of the listeners was nothing less than that of shocked person but that it had only strengthened his confidence in himself and his book.

Sontag's (1982) essay on Canetti discusses his life in relation to his work and times. According to her, the recluse in *Auto-da-Fé* is portrayed as a book-obsessed naïf who must endure an epic of humiliation; the title in German is *Die Blendung (The Blinding)*. Professor Kien, a well-known Sinologist who lives a peacefully celibate life, is ensconced in his top-floor flat with his 25,000 books, which fuels his insatiable appetite for knowledge. Sontag claims that Canetti has a penchant for fantastical combinations of knowledge, odd categorizations, and energetic tonal swings, much like a scholar in a Borges' story who combines real and imagined expertise. According to Sontag "*Crowds and Power*" gives a detailed study of man's desire for submission or authority.

According to Donahue (2001), *Auto-da-Fé* is essentially a different novel than high modernism and its author tries to dismantle the traditional techniques of the art of novel. Canetti's novel is an onslaught on the traditional novel writing and narrative techniques. El Filali's (2020) study highlights that Canetti's *The Voices of Marrakesh* is a not just travelogue with an impartial representation of orient as an end in itself. Rather it is a text in the strain of orientalism where orient is depicted as the 'other'.

Barova's (2015) understanding of Canetti's mythopoetic system reveals a complex combination of myths and legends of various cultures and peoples. Canetti borrowed motifs and myths from various cultures and mythologies for the formation of his own mythologems. His sources range from Oriental to Occidental, Judaic-Christian tradition, the pagan and antique myths, the culture and philosophy of China.

Brighenti (2010) is of the view that after the French Revolution, urban crowds became social actors and, at the same time, a serious issue. Most observers thought crowds were unnecessarily large and hazardous. According to McClelland (1989), they were portrayed as being intrinsically disturbing and maybe revolutionary.

Runkel (2018) adds on to the crowd theory is of the view that crowds are mostly seen as negative in the classical studies of crowds beginning with Gustave Le Bon' "*The Crowd: A Study of The Popular Mind*" published in 1895. According to the crowd studies of Le Bon the liberal and individualist philosophies of the modern world are actually in danger due to the rising influence of the crowd in a society. This is Le Bon's sympathy with

the elitist view of the crowd and its impacts on the society. This was an elitist view on the nature of crowd and its function.

Aizman's (2013) study of Canetti's theory of crowd highlights that crowds are not the source of essential evils of our age. Rather they liberate us from the fear of individuation by losing our identity into crowd. For Canetti, social formations like crowds are what help us heal. We are freed from our fear of being touched by crowds.

The above discussed studies show that Canetti's *Auto-da-Fé* has been discussed from various angles such as feminist, comparative studies, orientalism and stylistics. However, it has not been studied from the theoretical lens employed by the researcher-Theodor W. Adorno and Michel Foucault combined-for the investigation of irrational crowd behaviour and its tussle with individual identity earlier on. The present study intends to fill the above stated gap of research and claims a valuable addition to the research on Canetti in particular and the understanding of crowd behavior in the modern society in particular.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is crowd theory and the researcher intends to relate theories of Theodor Adorno for the analysis of *Auto-da-Fé*. This study also relies on Michel Foucault's study of madness and power in relation to discourse. The research is qualitative in nature. The data consists of textbooks, journals, electronic devices and articles. Adorno in his *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) investigates how the project of enlightenment failed to save modern man from the barbarism and the birth of fascist society. The reason is no longer revered in mass society and irrational mindset governs it. Theodor W. Adorno in his essay, "A Freudian analysis of Fascist Propaganda," discusses how crowd and group affect an individual and his/her ability to think as independent subject. Adorno's theoretical work on the analysis of fascist propaganda is primarily based on Freud's work entitled *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Adorno finds psychoanalysis interesting and uses it as the basis for his application of Freud since it may reveal the psychological processes that underlie social phenomena. Modern mass society is anti-individual in its nature and it strives to use violence for the suppression of individual freedom and thinking. The fascist crowd society strives for a collective identity. According to Adorno, fascism spreads and becomes internalised as a result of ideologies that are based on a sense of constructed collective identity that is local in its nature. According to this identity the presence of 'the other' is a threat to purity and wellbeing of the collective identity. The people who are at the risk of becoming fascists are those who lack a strong sense of individual identity. This drives these people to search for an alternative identity. This desired identity is essentially communal in its essence. This is the identity that gives them the feeling of belonging to a large and strong family. This shows that fascism is a phenomenon that results from a failure of preserving individualism. The very thing that "[gives] meaning to a world which makes them meaningless" (Horkheimer et al, 2002, p.161) for fascists is culture. Every other person is nothing more than a representative of another collective body to the individual who belongs to collective identity. And his thinking is largely shaped by his collective heritage.

Modern society is essentially crowd society in its nature. It thinks in terms of group and adheres to collective identity of the group. The space for individual identity and freedom to think and act differently is strictly restricted. Adorno (1947) describes how the philosophy and rationality failed to save modern man from the barbarism of mass society and fascism. According to Adorno, the repetition, similarity, and pervasiveness of contemporary mass culture-all "tend to produce automatized reactions and to weaken the

forces of individual resistance" (Adorno, 2001, p.160). Crowd society is governed by the unconscious forces of violence and domination. Crowd society is irrational and violent, sticking to the primal impulses of human nature. The crowd adores the strong and powerful and it strives to exterminate the weak. Crowd mindset is shallow, fun-loving and it hates complexity and individuality. This irrational and violent nature makes crowd mindset as suspicious and paranoid. It sticks to the collective identity of the group. According to Adorno, imagined threat from the outside world is what serves as the foundation of the fascist unity in mass culture. Mass culture is supported by this idea that the other and those who are different are the enemies. This reductionist mindset, which lumps all people into a few categories regardless of their races, religions, nationalities, geographic locations, or cultural backgrounds, is sickening. In the fascist worldview, everything would eventually come down to "they" and "us."

Paranoid crowd society is essentially anti-individual and it yearns to exterminate any individual case for the sanctity of the group identity. In a crowd society the intellectual demands of treating each individual person as a separate topic with individual uniqueness are too demanding for the mind of crowd that is essentially paranoid. The ability to think individually becomes "an old-fashioned luxury" and "Everyone is labeled as a friend or a foe. The disregard for the subject makes things easy for the administration." (Adorno, 1998, p.167) In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), Freud insists on a precise definition of a group and how it comes to have such power over an individual, drawing on the work of Gustave Le Bon, who was French polymath, to describe the state of the individual self when it becomes a part of the group that possesses a collective mind (Freud, 1921, p.7). According to Freud, group dynamics can alter a person's psychosocial disposition: he may be an educated person when alone, but in a crowd, he is a barbarian (Freud, 1921, p.13), with the group exhibiting traits of credulity, imperialism, and self-denial.

Michael Foucault theorizes that how the notions of sane and insane are a social construct. He highlights that the discipline of psychiatry cannot be studied without punishment and dominance associated with them. Fascism and culture always imply each other according to Foucault's claims that "power and knowledge directly imply each other" (Foucault, 1984, p.174). A revision of Foucault's PhD dissertation, *Madness and Civilization* (1961), conducts archaeology of the psychiatric system and the methods used by it for the diagnosis and treatment of a psychiatric patient. According to Foucault, mental diseases are relative; our 'medicalized' knowledge of them is a social construct that is specific to our episteme, or conceptual framework. Psychiatric practice in particular and knowledge in general cannot be studied properly if not related to the system of punishment and coercion. Knowledge is used as a tool of social control by the state institutions.

Results and Discussion

The current study investigates the failure of individualism and rationalism in modern crowd-oriented society. Elias Canetti's writings deal with the nature of power and mindset of the crowd of modern times. He also investigates the position and power of an individual who is at conflict with the society around him. Canetti was a novelist and playwright who wrote in the German language. He was awarded the 1981 Nobel Prize in Literature for his significant studies concerning modern man and his horrific times. Canetti's only novel *Auto-da-Fé* was published in German as *Die Blendung* (*The Blinding*) in 1935. C. V. Wedgwood also released it in English under the title *The Tower of Babel*. The initial title decided by Canetti for his novel was "*Kant Catches Fire*", the explicit reference to Immanuel Kant, one of the most famous German philosophers, hints towards the end of philosophical thinking as a governing force in modern crowd society. The novel explores

the risks associated with holding onto the notion that dogmatic, detached study and rigorous, dissociated intellectualism can triumph against evil, chaos, and devastation. It was originally intended as the first of eight novels examining insane visionaries. The English version of title of the novel is *Auto da Fé* that is a Portuguese phrase meaning 'the act of faith'. It was translated into English by C. V. Wedgwood, and published by Jonathan Cape, Ltd in 1946). Its title alludes to the Inquisition's practise of putting heretics to death by burning. The Auto de Fé event was typically held over many hours with great grandeur in a major church or central square, in front of the key officials and large crowd, in contrast to the torture, the trial, and the testimony of the Inquisition, which were all carried out in perfect secrecy. Typically, torture and the stake burning are shown in artistic interpretations of the auto de fe. In the novel *Auto-da-Fé*, Canetti shows how society acts as Inquisition and Peter Kien is treated as a heretic tortured to the point where he burns himself along with his books. Canetti in *Auto-da-Fé* refers to Giordano Bruno, who was a Renaissance Italian philosopher, astronomer, his theories played major role in the making of modern sciences. He was burned at stake by Inquisition for holding different and challenging views that shocked the accepted beliefs of the society and authorities. Peter Kien is the modern Bruno who is burnt by the society as well for being different and sane.

The narrative of Peter Kien, major character of *Auto-da-Fé*, a renowned researcher of Chinese studies with a personal library of 25,000 books, as told in the novel, which is set in Vienna and Paris. Kien marries his housekeeper Therese, after having a dream that the books are destroyed, because he thinks she will protect his cherished library in the event of a catastrophe. However, Therese kicks him out of his book-filled flat, and Kien finds himself up on the streets of the city, where he encounters the macabre underbelly. He is deluded and alternates between gruesome hallucinations and an unimaginable reality. Although his brother George, the head of a mental hospital, tries to help him, Kien's breakdown ultimately causes him to set fire to his priceless books. Canetti highlights the illusionary nature of the prevalence of reason in masses. Peter is abused by crowd throughout the novel. Through the character of Peter Kien, Canetti shows how an individual who is reasonable and different than crowd society is treated inhumanly showing utterly evil side of modern crowd society.

The three parts of *Auto-da-Fé* that Elias Canetti breaks down into are 'A Head Without a World', 'Headless World', and 'The World in the Head', Peter Kien, a famous sinologist is the 'Head' indicated in these sections. He lacks any knowledge of people or human values and is a totally intellectual bachelor. Other than his academic reading, he has little interaction with the outside world. In the character of Peter Kien, Canetti shows an individual dramatically different from the society around him. He lacks his interaction with the society for he believes this will contaminate his individuality and uniqueness. He spends his "...day in and out over manuscripts and books" (Canetti, 2011, p.11). At the very start of the *Auto-da-Fé*, he converses with a boy who wants to borrow a book from him. And later on, he rebukes himself for: "By nature morose and sparing of his words, he was already reproaching himself for a conversation in to which he had entered for no compelling reason" (Canetti, 2011, p.10). His behavior is that of a complete recluse with overconfidence in the power of reason. For him people around are just headless mobs with no concrete and lofty aim in their lives. He has devoted his life to the complexities of human existence and seeking truth. For him the best life is a life devoted to reason and truth. Mind is the road to salvation and truth should be the ultimate aim of one's life. However, people around him are interested in the stupid aims and things: "Boys played football, adults went to work; they wasted their leisure hours in love" (Canetti, 2011, p.13). Peter is an epitome of a life lived and governed by the pure reason. However, Kien's shaky hold on sanity is evident in Part One – he delivers an impassioned speech to his gathered books, for instance,

and engages in lengthy talks with ghostly representations of Chinese philosopher. In the Part Two, "Headless World," Kien's mental state worsens. Kien literally carries his library about in his head because he has memorized every book in it. However, Kien starts to mean it literally and every night he pretends to be pulling books from his delusional brain and stacking them in the room of the hotel he is currently staying in. To prevent his noncorporeal books from being dirty, Kien even covers the hotel room floor with paper. He hires a man called Fischerle who is a Jew and cunning hunchback dwarf – to assist him in his task of recovering books from danger of pawnshop. Kien completely loses his mind in the third chapter of the book, "The World in the Head," and here Canetti introduces Kien's fascinating and devil of a man brother George Kien. He is a psychiatrist currently the head of a mental asylum in Paris. He is a man who is complete opposite of Peter, both in his appearance and thinking. In contrast to Peter, who has given up on people and spent a life devoted to books, George has given up on books and welcomed people.

Peter Kien is a symbol of individualism and rationalism as propagated by Enlightenment philosophy. Canetti through this character shows the fate of rational individual in a society that is more prone towards mass culture and irrational desires. Individualism of Peter Kien is excessive to the point of self-containment. He is the most famous Sinologist yet he abhors fame and any contact with the outside world. Kien doesn't care about money, food, sex, or companionship; he lives for his work and his treasured books. Peter walks around the city every morning to keep his health in good spirits. This shows that exercise is the human activity he is still interested in. To keep himself company, he brings a briefcase full of books. Each day, he chooses carefully which books to bring, and when he goes on his walk, he keeps the briefcase near to him. Peter's individualism is highlighted by the way he refrains contact with anyone from outside his world of mind. For him the world of mind is the only reality respectable for a man of higher intelligence. The interaction with the outer world is just a nuisance for him, a stupid waste of time at the expense of his brilliant time spent with the brilliant minds through books. Canetti describes his routine as: "Punctually at eight his work began, his service for truth. Knowledge and truth were for him identical terms" (Canetti, 2011, p.15). His daily life is as dull and routine ridden as possible and he gets disturbed whenever there is a nuisance in his routine. Peter has contempt for humanity in general and declares to "...illustrate the stupidity of humanity" (Canetti, 2011, p.21) through his studies and publications. He is living a life based on the principles of Enlightenment of pure reason. For him any knowledge of banal daily life or the world outside is useless. Through this, Canetti shows what Adorno calls as self-absorbed nature of enlightenment philosophers who paid the least attention to the outer reality around them that was mostly based on irrational desires of greater lot of human beings. This aversion towards merging with crowd as expressed above highlights how dearer to Peter is his uniqueness and individual identity. He is the only sane person depicted in the novel by Canetti. His self-awareness and fear of crowd is how a person who is governed by reason suffers in a society around him that is governed by what Adorno calls as "Identity Thinking". In a mass society, individual self is constantly threatened by masses to lose itself and become a part of crowd. All the individuals in a mass society think in the same way and lose touch with reason and their individual selves. Canetti depicts this fear of loss of individual identity of Peter Kien because "The greatest danger which threatens a man of learning, is to lose himself in talk." (Canetti, 2011, p.17). Peter rarely talks to anyone in the novel and is mostly self-absorbed and delusional from the start.

Canetti highlights the paranoia of crowd behavior in *Auto-da-Fé* through the treatment Peter Kien receives for being different and holding intact his individual identity. He is considered as mad and a threat to the society. His behavior is taken as abnormal by

the majority: "...his behavior excited curiosity..." (Canetti, 2011, p.19). The second part of the novel, *Headless World*, is the real dark odyssey of Peter and shattering of his idealism as he clashes with the world outside his head. His marriage to Therese Krumbholz is based solely on the pretext of seeking someone who would take care of his library. The sexual desire and yearning for a body are never on his mind while seeking marriage partner. There is a nasty woman with burgeoning thirst for money and lust. This marriage proves to be a disaster and Peter is thrown out of his library and house. Another character from *Auto-da-Fé*, hunchback dwarf Fischerle, is a symbol of the crowd and the havoc it creates for Peter. Unknown chess master Fischerle wants to immigrate to America and construct a palace for himself. In a low-class café, he frequents, he pimps out his wife. The second half of the novel is just like *Don Quixote* by Spanish novelist Cervantes. Here Peter is presented as a modern Don Quixote moving in underworld of Vienna. Like Don Quixote, Peter has no sense of practical world and lives in his head and imagination. Fischerle's is a modern cunning and devious Sancho Panza who extracts from Peter the money which Therese could not get. Fischerle uses that money to learn English, go to America, defeat the recognised chess champions, and marry a millionaire's daughter, are chronicled in a lengthy chapter that acts as the epilogue to Part Two. Fischerle is a symbol of crowd stupidity and its cunning nature against anything sane and rational. Talking of Peter he says: "here is a novelty for you. Ladies and gentlemen, here's a novelty! A dumb salesman!" (Canetti, 2011, p.175).

Canetti through obsession of all the characters, except Peter Kien, with money shows the monstrous business mind of modern man. For everyone in the crowd is obsessed with gaining more and more money through devious and fraudulent ways. Peter, for whom money is just useless except buying books and spending on his papers to publish, is considered as insane and less than man. Crowd hates him for being a bibliomaniac because for them physical ease and social power is the highest virtue attainable by any man. This attitude different from what is set by crowd, leads the crowd, in the *Auto-da-Fé*, to declare Peter as mad and dangerous. Through this Canetti shows the fate of anyone different than crowd around him/her. *Auto-da-Fé* discusses the horrors and terror of the modern bourgeoisie capital society along with crowd society and its glorification of violence. Canetti also shows the violence of modern urban governance through the institution of police and state owned authority. With the exception of Kiens, every character in the book (there are like eight or ten) is driven by a desire for money, and the majority of them attempt to get it by deception. The word "capital" is used frequently by the characters in the novel. Fischerle's whore wife is called by everyone at the café as "The Capitalist" because she has a man called John who comes to her as a customer and gives her money for sex. The dwarf labels his complex scheme to loot Kien of his money his "firm," refers to Kien as his "business partner," and refers to his collaborators as his "employees." Similar to this, Fischerle employed a forger who is fixated on pitching his goods to other underworld figures. A seat cushion that the narcissistic and compulsive police inspector has marked '*Private Property*' and forbids any of his coworkers from using is one of his many obsessions. Business and paying work are equated in *Auto-da-Fé* with criminality and rapacious selfishness.

The "Thief" chapter of the novel is where Canetti depicts crowd as a lump of irrational non-thinking beings. The crowd is essentially violent and prone towards physical destruction. Peter is manhandled and his body is thrashed by the crowd while snatching money from his pockets. The crowd outside the pawnbroker office spread the rumor that Peter is mad and dangerous and Fischerle supports their stance by declaring him as dangerous and insane. The crowd is excited to beat Peter and give vent to their vengeful desires. Through this Canetti shows the irrational and destructive nature of the modern

crowd society. Despite the mask of normalcy and rationality that crowd wear, beneath it lays a very monstrous and destructive real visage. To satisfy its violent nature "... all fell on Kien. He is beaten, battered, trampled on. They unite therefore to wring him out like a wet rag...his eyes are closed, nothing can open them." (Canetti, 2011, p.294). The physical violence of the crowd is enhanced by the powerful sound it creates as it moves as a big violent animal, giving psychological satisfaction to its members. Crowd is so excited for violence that they are in a state of the trance and are united by the violence they are inflicting on their victim. They are acting as a united group and Peter is the 'other' that needs to be beaten for the purity and existence of the collective masses. Canetti in his classic nonfiction work, *Crowds and Power* (1960), describes that one essential characteristic of a crowd is its unity for a cause. The above-mentioned crowd is united by its urge to destroy Peter. This violence towards *Other*, Peter Kien, is uniting force for the crowd. Canetti describes the participants of the crowd as "All living creatures in its huge population draw in one single deep breath together, and together, ecstatic, breathe it out again." (Canetti, 2011, p.295). The crowd considers Peter as somewhat mad and dangerous creature. According to Foucault, madness is never an objective reality but a social and scientific construct for creating *We/Them* binary for gaining power over the opponent group. This is evident in the novel when crowd declares Peter as mad, who is the most rational person among all the characters presented in the novel. This paranoid 'Othering' makes it viable to do violence to Peter. They beat Peter so much that he loses conscious and he does not react to the fists and thrashes of the crowd. After beating Peter, crowd is not satisfied with the scale of violence possible to exhibit. Like a bloodsucking monster it wants to feed on more blood and destruction. People are so violent when part of the crowd that "With great self-control they restrained themselves from turning their free fists on each other" (Canetti, 2011, p.295). When part of the crowd they lose their individual identity and become faceless in the greater face of the crowd as a whole. It is only after the violence of the crowd comes to an end that "Each looked at the others and at the sight of his neighbor's suit, became clothed once more, and recognized in his fellow-combatants, colleagues and friends" (Canetti, 2011, p.295).

Throughout the novel, Peter is the only character who retains his individuality against mass-soul. To him rational individual identity is dearer than the barbarian identity of the crowd. He decides to retain his individuality against collective identity of the group and this leads him to a lonely fate because he is different from the group. Crowd thinks in terms of the binaries. According to Foucault, it divides people into us/them binary. Anyone who is different from group is dangerous to the existence of the crowd. And this binary helps it to commit violence and justify it against this dangerous *other*. When thrown out of his house by Therese, Peter finds himself into a world that is completely different from him. Walking down the street "... then he thinks how lonely he is" (Canetti, 2011, p.123). Peter compares himself to Christ and his loneliness on the Cross. Peter is grieved when thinking about George who no longer write him any letter at all. Loneliness is fate of all the minds devoted to life of mind and rationality in a world that is fascinated by banal desires. According to Adorno, masses are attracted towards base instincts and behavior such as violence and destruction. And this behavior is indicated by the way characters behave in *Auto-da-Fé*.

Conclusion

The present has analyzed the characters of *Auto-da-Fé* under theoretical insights of Adorno in particular and crowd theory in general. The investigation has tried to show how modern society is a crowd steered society. It has also investigated the mindset of crowd and its hatred against individual identity. It shows how crowd is essentially anti-individual in its approach towards individual identity. Moreover, it shows how majority in crowd

society yearns for self-denial and collective identity. It highlights that how notions of normal and abnormal are not ahistorical truths, rather a socio-political construct with its vital link to power dynamics of the time. So, after a thorough study of *Auto-da-Fé* proves, it is concluded that crowd is violent and anti-individual. The present research shows how characters in *Auto-da-Fé* depict the modern crowd society through various traits and actions. It shows how various characters are types of crowd behaviour. The various characters move through a nightmarish underworld environment breathing violence and paranoid obsessions. All characters are obsessive and radical beings holding to their particular ideas and leaving no space for tolerance when their views are challenged. Canetti in *Auto-da-Fé* shows a world that is chaotic and destructive. All the characters in novel, except Peter Kien, are governed by irrational unconscious desires and forces. They are shallow and very cunning. They adhere to collective identity and are violent towards individual identity and thinking. Canetti shows how modern crowd society has a group thinking attitude. Through various scenes in the novel where actual physical crowd is depicted, Canetti highlights how violent crowd could be towards individuals. Under the surface of civility and manners, individual is essentially primal and violent. This violent side of individual comes to surface when he becomes a part of the crowd. In group an individual adheres to the collective identity of the group and undergoes self-denial. This group is paranoid and detests any individual identity as dangerous and a threat to its existence. This leads to an ever-going war against anyone different from group. Canetti, through the character of Peter, shows how it is nearly impossible to retain individual identity in modern crowd society. Peter, the most rational person in the novel, is declared by the crowd as mad and thief. Canetti shows how crowd society is, in its nature, violent and irrational; it can drive an individual to insanity for retaining his/her individual identity. *Auto-da-Fé* is basically a study of fascist society and its violence against the individual presented through the character of Peter Kien.

Canetti's purpose is to depict different aspects of crowd theory. Canetti deals with different issues of crowd society such as collective identity, its irrational and paranoid mindset and violent attitude towards individual identity. The space for individual identity and thinking is restricted by crowd. This study also validates Foucault's notions of constructed nature of normal and abnormal. The present study shows how various characters confirm the collective identity of modern crowd society. This also highlights Adorno's insights about paranoid mindset of masses. The study through analysis of *Auto-da-Fé* shows how individual identity is threatened by the violence of group. Canetti uses his characters to depict crowd mindset and its hatred for the individual. In modern society the crowd survives in a constant state of paranoia and hatred for individual and different. As a result, retaining individual identity and to think individually becomes "an old-fashioned luxury" (Adorno, 1998, p.167).

The research could prove a valuable addition to the existing scholarship on the crowd theory. The contemporary society is bedeviled with the abrasive kind of authoritarianism that robs individual of its identity and free thinking. In the past, most of the times, violence against the individual was wrought out by an autocratic ruler or a fascist party or a particular mindset-race issue, for example. However, there has been rise in populist movements across the world in which public lynching and mob led violence have become a norm. The crowd itself has become authoritarian and fascist. This research, while focusing upon Canetti's *Auto-Da-Fe*, published in 1935, is very much relevant to the paranoid modern society. This study has established the fact that the world envisioned in *Auto-Da-Fe* mirrors the contemporary world orchestrating interplay between crowd's irrational self and individual's free thinking and autonomy.

References

- Adorno, T. W. (1982). *Freudian theory and the pattern of fascist propaganda, The essential Frankfurt school reader*. Continuum. P.118-37.
- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1997). *Dialectic of enlightenment* (Vol. 15). Verso.
- Adorno, T. W. (1998). *Critical models: Interventions and catchwords*. Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T. W. (2001). *The culture industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. Routledge.
- Aizman, A. (Oct 2013). *Crowd theory*. Hypocrite Reader. <https://hypocritereader.com/33/crowds>
- Árnason, J. P., & Roberts, D. (2004). *Elias Canetti's counter-image of society: crowds, power, transformation* (Vol. 1). Camden House.
- Barova, A. G. (2015). The sources of mythological thinking of Elias Canetti. *The Social Sciences (Pakistan)*, 10(6), 1026-1032.
- Canetti, E. (2011). *Auto Da Fé*. Random House.
- Canetti, E. (1999). *The Memoirs of Elias Canetti*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Collins, Donahue W. (2001). *The End of Modernism: Elias Canetti's "Auto-da-Fé"*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Darby, D. (1992). *Structures of Disintegration: Narrative Strategies in Elias Canetti's Die Blendung*. Ariadne Press (CA).
- Davis, L. J. (2014). *Resisting novels (Routledge revivals): Ideology and fiction*. Routledge.
- El Filali, A. (2020). The Representation (s) of Morocco in Elias Canetti's The Voices of Marrakesh. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(6), 205-210.
- Esteve, M. (2003). *The aesthetics and politics of the crowd in American literature* (Vol. 135). Cambridge University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Foell, K. A. (1994). *Blind Reflections: Gender in Elias Canetti's Die Blendung*. Ariadne Press (CA).
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon
- Freud, S. (1975). *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. WW Norton & Company.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2001). *Empire*. Harvard University Press.
- Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T. W., & Noeri, G. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. Stanford University Press.
- Interest in the body: Art, autonomy and natural beauty in Adorno*. (n.d.). DIVA

- Kennedy, L. (1995). *Susan Sontag: Mind as passion*. Palgrave Mcmillan.
- Lakritz, K. (2009). *Michel Foucault's madness and civilization: a history of insanity in the age of reason*. *Psychiatric Times*, 26(6), p. 45-45.
- Lorenz, D. C. (Ed.). (2004). *A Companion to the Works of Elias Canetti*. Camden House.
- Mackay, C. (2012). *Extraordinary popular delusions and the madness of crowds*. Simon and Schuster.
- McClelland, J. S. (1989). [BOOK REVIEW] *The crowd and the mob, from Plato to Canetti*. *New Statesman and Society*, 2, 44-45.
- Plotz, John (2000) *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Preece, J. E. (2004). *Canetti and the Question of Genre* (pp. 89-106). Boydell & Brewer Ltd; Camden House Inc
- Reinhardt, J. U. (2022). *In the Cage of Kafka and Canetti*. *Comparative Studies in Modernism*, (21), Cosmo 119-128.
- Runkel, S. (2018, March 20). *Collective atmospheres. Phenomenological explorations of protesting...* OpenEdition Journals. <https://journals.openedition.org/ambiances/1067>
- Sandberg, G. R. (1997). *The genealogy of the Massenführer: Hermann Broch's 'Die Verzauberung' as a Religious Novel*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Schreber, D. P. (2000). *Memoirs of my nervous illness*. New York Review of Books.
- Simmel, G. (1909). The problem of sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 15(3), 289-320.
- Tarde, G. (1903). Inter-psychology, the inter-play of human minds. *International Quarterly*, 7, 59-84.
- Tarde, G. D., Parsons, E. W., & Giddings, F. H. (1903). *The laws of imitation*.
- Thirst for Obedience: A Freudian Analysis of the Father-Leader in Adorno and Beauvoir (Updated July 17, 2020). (2020, August 7). *Science Letter*, 2813.
- Van Ginneken, J. (1992). *Crowds, psychology, and politics, 1871-1899*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zizek, S. (2012). *Organs without bodies: On Deleuze and consequences*. Routledge