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## DOGTOOTH: ENTRAPMENT IN A PERCEPTUAL PRISON

DOGTOOTH: ALGISAL BİR HAPİSHANEDE KAPANA KISILMIŞLIK

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### Abstract

Yorgos Lanthimos' 2009 film *Dogtooth/Kynodontas* centers on the life of a rather unusual family and raises questions regarding human nature, consciousness, and perception of reality. A psychoanalytic approach to the film makes it possible to have a different understanding of human nature as the film emphasizes that even the basic human instincts can be manipulated through constructed rules and restrictions within an alternative Symbolic Order. In the film, it is demonstrated how the unconscious and perception of reality of three siblings are constructed and manipulated through unconventional behavior and language patterns within the family environment. The main objective of this study is to present a psychoanalytic approach to *Dogtooth* to reveal that the Symbolic Order one is exposed to not only structures his/her unconscious but also sets limits to his/her thinking and consciousness, creating a perceptual prison from which it is impossible to escape.

### Öz

Yorgos Lanthimos'un 2009 tarihli *Dogtooth/Kynodontas* filmi oldukça sıradışı bir ailenin hayatını merkeze alır ve insan doğası, bilinç ve gerçeklik algısı ile ilgili sorular sorar. *Dogtooth* filmi, en temel insani içgüdülerin bile alternatif bir Sembolik Düzen içinde uydurulmuş kural ve kısıtlamalarla manipüle edilebileceğini gösterdiği için filmin psikanalitik analizi insan doğası ile ilgili farklı bir kavrayışa ulaşmayı mümkün hale getirmektedir. Filmde üç kardeşin bilinçaltının ve gerçeklik algısının aile yapısı içinde uygulanan alışılmışın dışındaki davranış ve dil kalıplarıyla nasıl yapılandırıldığı ve manipüle edildiği gösterilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, *Dogtooth* filmi psikanalitik bir yaklaşımla ele alarak kişinin maruz kaldığı Sembolik Düzenin onun hem bilinçaltının yapılandırılmasında etkili olduğunu hem de o kişinin düşünce ve bilincine sınırlar koyarak içinden kaçması mümkün olmayan algısal bir hapisane yarattığını ortaya koymaktır.

## Theoretical Background & Discussion

Yorgos Lanthimos' *Kynodontas/Dogtooth* (2009) invites its viewers to reconsider the nature of reality and human consciousness with its disruptive portrayal of an unconventional family. In *Dogtooth*, the enclosed family structure within which three teenage children are raised and educated according to the behavior and language patterns determined by an oppressive father enables us to see that humans' thinking and perception of reality are limited to what they are taught and conditioned. The film focuses on how the father's fabricated rules, myths, and language system shape the identities of the children. Therefore, a psychoanalytic analysis of *Dogtooth* can provide an insight into human psychology and offer a different perspective on human nature since the film underscores that even a person's basic instincts can be manipulated through enforced rules and prohibitions. This study aims to present a psychoanalytic analysis of *Dogtooth* to show how human unconscious and perception can be structured by manipulation through certain behavior and language patterns within a constructed Symbolic Order and to reveal that as the limits of a person's perception and consciousness are determined by the Symbolic Order, it is impossible for her/him to go beyond its boundaries.

In *Dogtooth*, three siblings with no names, who have not been able to develop individual autonomy or subjectivity, demonstrate the profound influence of their parents' radical and manipulative methods of child rearing. The father and submissive mother, who goes along with everything the father does, have isolated their children from the outside world in their secluded family estate. The house encircled by high fences perfectly epitomizes the children's physical imprisonment, which inevitably brings about their perceptual imprisonment. The children, who have been raised and educated at home by their parents, have never stepped outside of their house; therefore, they have no connection to the external world whatsoever. The father, who works at a factory, is the only person in the family who can leave the house. Moreover, it is guaranteed that the children will never be able to gain access to the outside world with the myth of the dogtooth, according to which the children will only be able to leave the house in safety when their right or left dogtooth falls off. In an effort to prevent the children from even thinking about leaving their house, the parents have also created the myth of the lost brother, whom supposedly left the house "ill-prepared" and thus disappeared in the dangerous outside world. Although it is never made clear whether there is really a missing brother in the film, the children whose perception of reality is shaped solely by their parents' teachings are certain that their brother is somewhere outside the house. The desperate attempts of both the son and the elder daughter to contact with the imaginary brother are observed in the film. For instance, in the scene where the son washes his father's car, he starts to talk with his imaginary brother behind the fences and boasts about how well he washes the car compared to him. Likewise, in a different scene we see the elder daughter secretly take a few slices of the cake from the kitchen and throw them outside the fences, hoping that her missing brother would find and eat them. The extent of the parents' manipulation of their children's perception and thinking can also be noticed in the aeroplane game they play.

Having no idea about what an aeroplane is, the children have difficulty in making sense of the small, white, far away objects that fly over their house. Thus, the parents place toy aeroplanes in random spots in the garden for the children to find and whoever gets the toy aeroplane has the chance to keep it. Astonishing as it may seem, the children are actually convinced that the toy aeroplanes they find in the garden are the very aeroplanes that they see fly over their house. In a similar vein, the children who have never seen a cat before are quite terrified when the son comes across a cat in their garden and savagely kills it, since he apparently sees the cat not as a harmless, domestic animal but as a wild and dangerous intruder. Moreover, the father takes advantage of the cat incident to reinforce the myth of the lost brother. Having been informed by the mother about the cat the children saw for the first time, the father rips his clothes up and covers himself with fake blood before coming home, and explains the children that he was attacked by a cat, which is also responsible for the sudden death of their lost brother. The father's description of the cat presents a good example of how he twists reality in the way that serves his own interests:

The animal that threatens us is a "cat". The most dangerous animal there is. He eats meat. Children's flesh in particular. After lacerating its victims with its claws, it devours them with sharp teeth. The face and whole body of the victim. If you stay inside, you are protected. (Lanthimos, 2009)

By describing the cat as a ferocious animal that might attack the children outside the house, the father depicts the outside world as a very dangerous and frightening place in order to corroborate the idea that it is not safe to leave the house.

Isolated from the external reality and surrounded by their parents' constructed rules, values and myths, the children's unconscious and perception of reality are shaped and manipulated within this restricted familial space. The language system created by the parents is one of the fundamental tools to manipulate the unconscious and perception of the children, as the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan puts forward in his theory of psychoanalysis, the unconscious is structured through language. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the three stages of development of the human psyche, which he names Real, Imaginary and Symbolic, are important to understand the function of language for the construction of the unconscious. According to Lacan's theory, in its early months, the child does not have an understanding of itself as a separate being and it experiences a complete unity with its mother, whom Lacan calls "*a primary universal container*" (1988a, p.82). In other words, for the child, the body of the mother functions as the "*primal large whole that is the fantasised image of the mother's body, the entire empire of the primal infantile reality*" (Lacan, 1988a, p.82). During this early stage called Real, there is no need to use language for the child since h/she does not have any sense of lack or dissatisfaction because of its illusionary wholeness with its mother's body, as Lacan asserts, language is "*by nature symbol of only of an absence*" (1988b, p.39). Between six and eighteen months, the Imaginary stage starts with the Mirror Stage, which Lacan offers to understand "*as an identification*",

since the child recognizes itself in the mirror for the first time and identifies itself with its image in the mirror (1949/1977, p.2). During the Imaginary stage, the child experiences itself as a separate entity from its mother and comprehends the world through images, just as it assumes its image in the mirror as its real self. Lacan describes Imaginary stage as the period “*before language restores to [the child] its function as subject*”, emphasizing the role of language for the formation of the self and identity of the child (1949/1977, p.2). During the Symbolic stage, which is characterized by the acquisition of language, the child is not only introduced language but also is subjected to a set of rules and prohibitions and as a result, s/he becomes a part of society and culture as a speaking subject. For Lacan, as language and its structure exist prior to the subject, by acquiring language the speaking subject also enters into a pre-determined symbolic system of signification on which s/he will base her/his experience of the external world (1957/1977, p.112). Moreover, the child’s entrance into the Symbolic Order signifies “the law of the father”, as Lacan maintains, “*it is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law*” (1953/1977, p.50). In other words, the world of Symbolic Order for the child is a world of rules and restrictions determined by the authority figures, the child’s father being the first of these figures as the paternal authority.

Furthermore, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Symbolic Order is based on the Other as one’s subjectivity is determined by his/her immersion in the established societal structures like education, government and law within the Symbolic Order (Tyson, 2006, p.31). Lacan describes the Symbolic Order as a “*moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other and constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others*” (1949/1977, p.4). Thus, a person’s knowledge of the world as experienced within the certain structure of the Symbolic Order is limited to the existing signifiers, meaning that we can only experience reality through the “*abstract equivalences*” of objects, as created by language (Krupka, 2018, p. 10). Moreover, according to the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguistic sign consists of the signifier, a psychological imprint of the sound and the signified, the concept to which the signifier refers; therefore, for a word to gain meaning, the sound image has to be associated with a concept (1959, p.66). Saussure also asserts that the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary; that is, there is no meaningful relation between a certain sound image and the concept to which it refers, as proved by the differences of the same word among languages (1959, p.66-67). For Saussure, “*meaning is always attributed to the object or idea by the human mind and constructed by and expressed through language*”, emphasizing that language constitutes our world but not vice versa (Barry, 1995, p.43). In accordance with Saussure’s theory of language, Lacan asserts that “*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*” and highlights that an individual learns to perceive the world the way s/he does through language, whose rules and meaning system is determined by the Symbolic Order s/he is raised in (1953/1977, p.41).

Lacan’s idea that an individual’s unconscious is formed by his/her acquisition of language, which is both constructed by and used for the meaning-making process of the Symbolic Order, is exemplified in *Dogtooth*. The Symbolic Order in the film is a completely constructed one, as the father has created an alternative Symbolic Order with his own fabricated rules, restrictions and language system that he imposes on his children. Therefore, the language system the father has invented plays a decisive role in structuring the unconscious and perception of reality of the children because they conceive the world within the restricted vocabulary of this fabricated language. In the opening scene, the voice heard on a cassette player teaches the children new words and gives examples of how to use them in a sentence. Although the words explained on the cassette player are known, the meanings given to these words are entirely different from those the viewers are familiar with:

The new words of today are ‘sea’, ‘highway’, ‘road trip’ and ‘shotgun’. ‘Sea’ is the leather chair with wooden armrests like the one in the living room. Example: Don’t remain standing, sit down in the ‘sea’ to have a chat. ‘Highway’ is a very strong wind. ‘Roadtrip’ is highly durable material used to make floors [...] ‘Shotgun’ is a beautiful white bird. (Lanthimos, 2009)

In order to make sure that the language the children use to give meaning to the world conforms to the everyday reality they experience, the father formulates signifieds, which do not refer to any concepts related to the outside world. Hence, the vocabulary of this fabricated language is limited with the materials they can see around them. As the paternal authority and creator of his alternative Symbolic Order, the father holds the power to invent a language system, revealing that language is both constructed and imposed on individuals by the Symbolic Order as proposed by Lacan. As Ben Tyrer explains, in the film, the formation of the familial subject takes place through a linguistic project that depends on re-signification and dictation of signifieds (2017, p.2). It is through this process of re-signification, the father molds the unconscious and thinking of the children within the limits of his alternative Symbolic Order. By assigning radically different signifieds to already recognized signifiers, any threat that can come from outside against the perpetuation of the alternative Symbolic Order is eliminated (Psaras, 2016, p.87-88). For instance, in one of the dinner scenes, the younger daughter asks her mother to pass the saltshaker by calling it “*telephone*”. The telephone, which holds the danger to enable the children to connect to the outside world, is rendered harmless by the parents who assign the meaning of an innocent object, a saltshaker, to it. The real telephone that the parents hide in the cupboard in their bedroom remains as an unfamiliar signifier to the children as the “*telephone*” is displaced from its original meaning and function by the parents who use the word to define a completely different object. Therefore, the elder daughter secretly listening to her mother talk very quietly with the father on the telephone behind the door of the parents’ bedroom tries to give meaning to her mother’s action and says, “*[the mother] talks to herself again*” (Lanthimos, 2009). In a later scene, the elder daughter sneaks into the parents’ bedroom, takes the telephone out of the

cupboard and turns the rotary dialer. Upon hearing the dial tone when she holds the receiver to her ear, she gets panicked and immediately puts the telephone down. This is a crucial example to demonstrate that even a very ordinary everyday object like the telephone can appear alien and scary to the children in the constructed Symbolic Order of their father. Furthermore, whenever the children come across an alien word, which is outside the limits of their knowledge and understanding, the parents place these words into the concepts with which the children are acquainted. After hearing the word “zombie” from Christina, the son asks his mother what a “zombie” is and the mother defines it “a small yellow flower” (Lanthimos, 2009). Similarly, the elder daughter asks what a “pussy” means, a word that she heard from one of the pornographic videos her parents watch secretly, the mother tells her that a “pussy” is a “large lamp” and uses it in an exemplary sentence: “The pussy switched off, and the room got all dark” (Lanthimos, 2009). Another striking example can be seen in the scene where the father plays an LP record of Frank Sinatra’s “Fly Me To The Moon” to the children. Although the viewers recognize it as Sinatra’s song, the children are told by their father that they are listening to a song sung by their grandfather. As the song plays, the father simultaneously translates the English lyrics into Greek and provides an entirely fabricated translation:

Dad loves us. Mum loves us. Do we love them? Yes, we love them! I love my brothers and sisters, because they love me too. Spring fills my house. Spring floods my little heart. My parents are proud of me, because I do my best. But I’m always trying to do better. My house, you’re beautiful and I love you. And never, I will never leave you. (Lanthimos, 2009)

In order to perpetuate and strengthen his power and authority over his family, the father transforms a very well-known song about the joy of love into a kind of an ideological tool that urges the children to love the family members, to appreciate what they have and to strictly obey the familial rules. All these examples indicate how language functions as an influential tool in the formation of the children’s self and unconscious as the world they perceive is constructed within the limits of the father’s alternative Symbolic Order.

The father’s role in the formation of the children’s self and unconscious is not only limited to his fabricated language system; he also manipulates and sets limits to the ways the children’s two basic instincts, aggressiveness and sexuality, are performed. According to Sigmund Freud’s well-known theory of the human psyche, human personality is identified through the relationships among the components of the psyche, known as the id, the ego and the superego. The id, which is the only part of the psyche present at birth, is the source of a human’s instinctual drives, bodily needs, desires and impulses, particularly sexual and aggressive drives (Freud, 1940/2000, p.4957). Freud asserts that the instincts are the forces existing behind the tensions caused by the needs of the id and that the sexual instinct and the aggressive or death instinct, whose aim is to destruct, are two main instincts (1940/2000, p.4959). The ego, which operates according to the reality principle,

“acts as an intermediary between the id and the external world”, ensures that the impulses of the id are expressed in a way that is acceptable to the real world (Freud, 1940/2000, p.4957). The superego, whose main function is “the limitation of satisfactions”, represents one’s internalization of the social and cultural values and taboos as it prohibits the demands and the desires of the id and forces the person to behave in socially acceptable ways (Freud, 1940/2000, p.4959). In this regard, it can be argued that, in *Dogtooth*, the ways the children’s aggressive and sexual instincts are satisfied are regulated by the father within the rules and prohibitions of his Symbolic Order. By controlling how the children satisfy their basic instincts, the father guarantees that these instincts are expressed without posing any threat to his authority and power in the family structure. To illustrate, in an attempt to control the children’s aggressive drives, the father guides them to play games, which are mainly based on violence and rivalry. The games they play are diverse, such as trying to reach at a certain point in the shortest time while they are blindfolded, diving into the swimming pool while the father is counting how long they are able to stay under the water or engaging in a kind of a sword fight in which one aims to defeat the other with a small stick. All these different games involve competition and the three children are highly motivated to be the best in each game, as the aim of these games is to win either stickers, which they paste on their headboards, or the chance to choose among the limited options of how they will spend the night like watching themselves in homemade videos recorded by the father. By creating a competitive environment via these games among his children, the father tries to get their aggressive and destructive instincts under control, which can be thought as a form of sublimation in Freudian terms. In his *Introductory Lectures*, Freud defines sublimation as an unconscious mental process by which the instinctual, socially unacceptable drives are transferred to non-instinctual, socially acceptable activities (1916-17/2000, p.3135). In the film, however, sublimation does not serve as a mechanism for social acceptance; instead, by diverting their destructive impulses into the desire to dominate and win in competitions, the father aims to keep his children’s aggressive instincts under control and to prevent possible challenges against his authority. The aggressiveness of the children is easily recognized throughout the film. For instance, while the elder daughter violently attacks her brother with a knife and injures his arm, the younger daughter is seen mutilating her dolls with scissors. The son, on the other hand, brutally kills a cat that accidentally enters their garden. Additionally, at the beginning of the film, the younger daughter proposes her siblings to play “a game of endurance” by putting their fingers under hot water and “the one who keeps it there the longest, wins” (Lanthimos, 2009). This game involving physical pain illustrates how the children’s aggressive instincts unconsciously direct them to engage in a self-destructive activity but with the guidance of the games they have learned from their father, they divert their destructive instincts into a competitive game in which enduring pain is awarded.

Similar to the children’s aggressive instincts, their sexual instincts are also controlled and satisfied in the manner their father approves. As an oppressive patriarchal authority, the father supports the necessity of satisfaction of male sexual desire but denies female desire

and sexuality. Whereas he provides an environment in which the son is able to satisfy his sexual needs, he ignores the sexuality of his two daughters and does not present an outlet for their sexual urges. The daughters are raised in an environment in which they are consciously kept ignorant of sexuality and they are taught that the female genitalia is “*the keyboard*”; hence, for the daughters “*human anatomy has no sexual signification*” (Lanthimos, 2009; Tyrer, 2017, p.7). Therefore, when Christina wants the elder daughter to lick her between the legs in exchange for a headband, the elder daughter is not able to realize that she is engaging in a sexual act. This affirms the role of language in structuring the unconscious by highlighting that as there are no words related to sexuality in their restricted vocabulary, the daughters are not able to grasp sexuality as a concept. Mark Fisher argues that “*since genitals possess no particular erotic or pathological charge for them, no associations of guilt or dirt, the act of licking is easily transferred to another part of the body*”; thus, the elder daughter who attempts to copy Christina’s sexual advances wants her sister to lick her shoulder in exchange for the headband she took from Christina (2011, p. 24-25). However, although the daughters are not aware of sexuality as a concept, their unconscious sexual drives can be observed. In the scene where the elder daughter is lying on her bed, the younger daughter comes near her and starts licking her legs and belly. This act of licking between the sisters seems to have a sexual implication and without realizing, they try to get sexual gratification through the act of licking. This scene emphasizes their repressed sexuality as a result of the manipulation of their unconscious by the father.

Unlike the daughters, the son is seen entitled to experience his sexuality; thus, the father brings Christina, a security guard from his workplace, to the house to satisfy the son’s sexual urges. Christina, who will later cause disruption in the enclosed family structure, is the only person allowed to enter the family estate. In an effort to ensure that the son’s sexual urges are satisfied, the father, who works very hard to keep away any possible outside influence from his family, takes a great risk by bringing a stranger to his house. The father’s efforts to ensure that his son is sexually satisfied can be explained by Freud’s claim that the mental health of a person depends on the satisfaction of his/her sexual desires as “*[psychoneuroses] originate in the sexual needs of unsatisfied people*” (1963, p.15). Freud also argues that when instinctual drives are repressed, its libidinal elements can turn into aggressive components (1962, p.86). As proposed by Freud, sexual frustration and unsatisfied sexual urges can lead to violent behaviour. Aware of the possible destructive behaviour the son might adopt due to his unsatisfied sexual desires, which can be threatening for his authority and power over the family structure, the father guarantees that his son’s sexual needs are satisfied in one way or another. When the father discovers that Christina poses a serious threat to his rigidly constructed family structure by introducing outside world to his children like the rental Hollywood movies she gave to the elder daughter, he expels Christina from his house. Upon realizing the danger of the presence of a stranger in his house, the father decides to “hand the task” of having sexual intercourse with the son to one of the daughters. He even lets the son “decide for himself” which sister he prefers for the sexual

intercourse in the bathtub scene where the son touches the breasts and buttocks of both sisters. In a later scene, the elder daughter and the son engage in an incestuous intercourse. The father’s defiance of the incest taboo not only reveals his effort to guarantee that his son is sexually satisfied but also underlines that within his alternative Symbolic Order, he is the authority that decides what is normal or acceptable, as Ben Tyrer observes, the father’s alternative formation of the Symbolic Order accommodates incest (2017, p.3). The psychoanalytic theory supports the idea that the prohibition of incest is a rule, which the child learns through the process of his/her socialization and adjustment into the cultural and social rules and prohibitions. According to Freud, the child, who has sexual desires for the opposite-sex parent during the Oedipal stage, learns to repress his/her sexual desire for the parent and finds the substitute satisfactions of being like the same-sex parent and then having opposite sex partners like the prohibited parent (Freud, 1905/2000, p.1545). Lacan, on the other hand, claims that the incest taboo is the first rule that the child encounters when s/he enters into the Symbolic Order (1953/1977, p.49). Through the Law of the father, the child learns the father’s prohibition on the mother and it constitutes an incest taboo for the child (Lacan, 1953/1977, p.49). Thus, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the prohibition of incest is learned by the child as a result of his/her entrance into the culture and society, since s/he has to adopt the rules and prohibitions in order to become a part of the society s/he lives in. However, in *Dogtooth*, since the children have been raised isolated from the outside world, they have not internalized the incest taboo accepted and practiced in society; thus, when their parents want them to have an incestuous intercourse, they do not even question their parents’ wish. This reveals that a person’s perception of normalcy is determined by social standards and norms; that’s why, the incest taboo as a learned prohibition loses its applicability in the constructed Symbolic Order in the film.

Lastly, the film underlines that having been subjected to the rules and restrictions of their father’s alternative Symbolic Order throughout their lives, the children are not capable of going beyond its boundaries. The limitations of this Symbolic Order are observed in the elder daughter’s futile attempt to leave the house. When Christina gives her two Hollywood movies in exchange for sexual favors, the elder daughter enters a new universe and “*from the recitation of lines from [these] Hollywood films to even more physical re-enactments in the form of shark attacks or boxing matches, the elder daughter’s entrance into Hollywood world provides her with new signifiers*” (Psaras, 2016, p.88). The elder daughter’s exposure to the new signifiers via these Hollywood films starts to change her, as it can be seen in the awkward dance scene where two daughters are dancing to the song their brother plays on the guitar on one of their family entertainment occasions. Both girls dance in a rather crude and mechanical manner and after a while, the younger daughter stops dancing; however, the elder daughter continues to dance and her dance moves start to become so wild and frantic that her mother feels the need to stop her. The elder daughter, who seems to imitate the fight and action scenes from the Hollywood movies she has watched in her dance moves, exhibits how she is tremendously affected by the vigorous and exciting

world of the cinema, which is in sharp contrast to the limited and tedious family environment. These new signifiers also become influential in the process of her gaining a sense of subjectivity, which is revealed in her desire to be called “Bruce”. As the father does not want his children to develop subjectivity or a sense of identity, no one in the house has a proper name and they are referred as “Brother” or “Sister”, based on the familial relationships. However, after hearing the name “Bruce” in one of these Hollywood movies, the elder daughter wants her sister to call her “Bruce” and every time her sister calls her “Bruce”, she turns her head and reacts to her sister’s call. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, having a proper name is significant for a person to gain subjectivity because with the declaration of the proper name, the subject identifies him/herself with this name (Lacan, 1964-65/2011, p.77). As the proper name is one of the first signifiers that represent the subject’s particularity, the subject comes into being by being spoken and called in language (Chaitin, 1996, p.199). Thus, by naming herself, the elder daughter claims her subjectivity and starts to depart from the enclosed family structure. Her increased sense of subjectivity also leads her to leave the house by breaking her own dogtooth. Impatient to get out of the house and see the outside world, she cannot wait for her dogtooth to fall by itself and breaks it herself violently. According to the dogtooth myth, the children must drive the car to leave the house safely and they can only learn to drive when their right or left dogtooth grows back. Accordingly, hoping to take a step into the external world, the elder daughter hides in the trunk of her father’s car as this is the only way out she knows within the limits of her knowledge. At the end of the film, the father drives to work and parks the car outside his office and in the final shot, we see the trunk of the car, in which the elder daughter is probably still inside (Tyrer, 2017, p.10). The film’s open ending does not reveal the fate of the elder daughter; nonetheless, her attempt to escape from the house in the trunk of the car indicates the impossibility of transgressing the Symbolic Order that has structured her unconscious and perception. Having internalized the rules and myths of his father’s constructed Symbolic Order, she cannot think of any other possible way to escape from the house except hiding in the trunk of the car. In this regard, the elder daughter’s perceptual entrapment in her father’s constructed Symbolic Order is emphasized by her physical entrapment in the trunk of the car, possibly waiting for her dogtooth to grow back in order to drive the car to gain access to the outside world.

### Conclusion

All in all, it may be concluded that Lanthimos’ *Dogtooth* can be analyzed in the light of the psychoanalytic theory in the sense that the film reflects that the Symbolic Order one is raised and educated is vital to the construction of his/her identity, self and values. The children in the film, who are trapped in their father’s twisted and restrictive alternative Symbolic Order, reveal how a person’s unconscious and perception are manipulated through the practices and ideologies of the Symbolic Order s/he is immersed in. The central role language plays in the formation of the unconscious in Lacanian psychoanalysis can be clearly observed in *Dogtooth*, as the father not only shapes the way his children perceive the world but also sets limits to their

thinking and consciousness through his fabricated language system. By designating entirely different signifieds to the signifiers that the children come across on a daily basis, the father manages to create a language system that restricts his children’s thought and perception of reality in a way that conforms to his twisted alternative Symbolic Order. Apart from language, the father in *Dogtooth* also manipulates and controls his children’s basic human instincts within the rules and prohibitions of his alternative Symbolic Order. In an attempt to make sure that his children’s death instincts do not threaten his absolute authority over the family, the father guides them to divert their death instinct into the desire to win in competitive games they play. In doing so, the father designs an order in which the aggressive instincts of his children are expressed in predictable and therefore controllable ways. By dictating how the children satisfy their aggressive instincts, the father determines the framework of not only their inner self but also the behaviour they adopt within the family space. Besides, while the father ensures that his son is sexually satisfied, he ignores the sexual needs of his two daughters and keeps them ignorant of sexuality. The father’s perverse understanding of sexuality becomes effective in his different approach to his son’s and daughters’ sexual instincts. In the father’s distorted Symbolic Order, the satisfaction of male sexual instinct is necessary and vital for a man to be mentally healthy, whereas the female sexual instinct is negligible, as women can only function as the means of satisfying the male sexual desire. As the creator and sole authority of his Symbolic Order, the father is able to exploit his children’s sexual instincts and force them to experience their sexuality in the ways that he deems appropriate. Accordingly, convinced that the unsatisfied sexual needs of his son can turn into violence and threat against his power and authority in the family environment, the father wants his son to have sexual intercourse with his own sister. Through establishing an incestuous relationship between his children, the father defies the incest taboo, which proves that the rules and prohibitions in a given Symbolic Order are determined by the authority figures. Lastly, *Dogtooth* underscores that the father’s constructed Symbolic Order forces his children to live in a perceptual prison and that even if one can feel the desire to go beyond the boundaries of the Symbolic Order, it is impossible to overcome its power and influence and to break free from its limitations. The elder daughter who attempts to escape from her house cannot escape from her own perceptual prison because the dogtooth myth imprisons her in the trunk of her father’s car in her struggle to gain freedom.

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