
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Justice's Absence in Modern World: Galsworthy's Depiction in *Justice*

Dr. Sanaa Mohammed Mahdi

Assistant Professor, College of Arts, Mustansiriyah University, Iraq

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sanaa Mohammed Mahdi, **E-mail:** dr.sanaa_mohammed@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Justice is like a machine that rolls on itself when someone has once given it the starting. In the discussion of justice, the term social problem has been used many times in modern social tragedy, known as problem plays for their concerns with social problems. These plays reveal the awful forces of society against a man that caused his suffering and death. They overemphasize the social dilemma and social consequences. The absence of justice leads to the failure of the legal system that gives severe punishments to the poor without taking into consideration the circumstances behind their crimes. The unfair practices of the judicial system never punish the upper class for their crimes in time and put wretched poor people in prison for committing unimportant or trivial acts. In the modern world, a man, especially the poor, is crushed under the wheel of justice. The hypocrisy, intolerance, ignorance, tyranny, and the false values of the world heap injustice on man and make him find peace only in death. Man is inherently good, but the social institutions have often victimized him and hindered his subsistence and development. The absence of justice is the main reason that causes all man's depression, out of which is born disappointment, disillusionment, and death.

KEYWORDS

Injustice, intolerance, hypocrisy, death, justice, false-values, punishment.

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1. Introduction

Literature in general and drama, in particular, is a reflection of life; a mirror reveals the realities of a society that is full of evils due to the absence of justice. The modern drama concentrates on the complex struggle of life, which exposes that man's expression has its roots in his nature and social environment. Drama becomes a social document focusing particularly on the conditions of the people's lives and the society (Lewissohn, 1931, p.10).

The political oppression affects people, especially the common; hence the modern writers become their spokesmen for that they are put into prison, offended, mobbed, and exiled. In their works, dramatists like Miller, Meunier, Turgenev, Shaw, Dostoyevsky, Emerson, Walt Whitman, Galsworthy, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, and others reflect the spiritual and social revolt against the judicial system that takes the side of upper-class people at the expense of the poor. They represent the social revolutionaries of the current time as they know that society has gone beyond the stage of repairing, and man must get rid of his past for the sake of the future (Dukes, 1911, pp. 31-33).

Through his plays, John Galsworthy (1867 –1933), an English dramatist, has the ability to present real life, "I look upon the stage as the great beacon light of civilization, but the drama should lead the social thought of the time and not direct or dictate it" (Dukes:36). Galsworthy's main concern is the question of crime and punishment. In his book "*Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*," Alexander Berkman (1970, p. 22) discusses this theme from the historical, psychological, and social viewpoint. He proves that judicial institutions are pitiful and wasteful. This new attitude is used by Galsworthy in his play *Justice* (1910), which is considered a campaign to improve conditions in British prisons. By emphasizing the issue of crime and punishment, Galsworthy attacks and criticizes the judicial system of the world where the rich always are free regardless of the crime they have committed, leaving the poor in prison for no reason or the trivial.

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Galsworthy feels that he has many things to say about the problems of contemporary life and his responsibility to inform and awake the people about these things through his dramas effectively. He had an objective outlook toward man's problems of his time, fully aware of social evils that upset the freedom and dignity of the English people; therefore, his plays are known as problem plays. Being a social reformer and a dramatist with a moral vision, he seeks justice in all life's scopes. To show his humanitarian attitude towards life, he gives a truthful picture of social life. In *Justice*, he seeks to reform man's bad condition in prison, especially solitary imprisonment, which is a very hard punishment due to the severe effects on man's psych. For him, man is not bad but is victimized by difficult conditions; therefore, he attacks the law's rigidity and inhumanity system (Phelps, 1921, p. 3). In addition, he discusses the current social issues and tries to find solutions for them. He sheds light upon the cruelty, hypocrisy, ignorance, and prejudice of social differences.

2. Social Realism and Injustice:

Realism rejects idealism, escapism, and romanticism, reflecting only man's problems in life and society (Davies, 1934, p. 2). Galsworthy as a modern realist, most of his plays reflects the problems of modern society. He has no intention of imagination; on the contrary, he deals with social reality. Social justice is a concept of the fair between man and his society. It is a revolutionary notion that provides meaning and importance to life and makes the rule of law forceful. Justice is the virtue we practice in this world; therefore, it is a big problem. Many dramas reflect various shades of social injustice that have remained in the world. John Rawls defines injustice as "inequalities that are not to the benefit of all" (2005, p. 54). This confirms that injustice has existed in any society where people are unfairly treated. As a universal problem, social injustice exists in many most developed societies.

The absence of justice in the social and judicial institutions has harmful effects on the people and makes them live worthless and meaningless life. For them, the world becomes of nothing except loss, damage, poverty, diseases, and death. The world is rotten completely as everything has died out since it is devoid of any meaning (Lorgan, 1924, p. 9). Society is so severe and cruel than man. The institutions in such a society set up the laws and punishment of criminals devoid of any human feelings. They may impose misery and injustice on innocent people. For these reasons, Galsworthy used drama as a vehicle to convey common criticism and to reveal the social problems and illnesses. All his attacks and criticism are based on realism and a general sense of morals. Being a law graduate, he is aware of the severe restriction of a legalistic system on a man that makes him a victim. Due to the rigid law and society, man prefers death as the only means of escaping from injustice, as Andrews Charlton remarks (1913, p. 11).

3. Non Justice in *Justice*:

As a social thinker and critic, Galsworthy sheds new light on the dark aspects of current society to bring an important change to the old-fashioned social structure of his time. He portrays the realistic and psychological conflicts and dilemmas of early 20th century, powerful and forceful people in England. Galsworthy's *Justice* is a problem play with its deep insight into the severe system and solitary imprisonment of his time. Falder, the main protagonist of twenty-three-year-old and junior clerk in the office of John and Walter How, a law firm, is "a pale, anxious and nervous young man of weak will" (Galsworthy, 1929, p. 2). He wants to help Ruth, a married woman whom he loved and whose husband has tried to kill her. She decides to escape with her three children. Having money to save Ruth, Falder forges the check. Though he promises to pay the money back after his wrong act is revealed, no one sympathizes with him, and he is sent to prison, which ruins his fame and health and which the prisoners prefer death to stay in solitary imprisonment.

It is obvious that Galsworthy's play is an indictment of capitalist society and, at the same time, "a heartfelt plea to understand sympathy for the social system's innocent victims as his main concern is justice, but he wanted justice tempered with charity" (Clark, 1925, p. 272). His main concern is the issue of social degradation, trying to show the powers that go into society's making of the outcast. In *Justice*, Falder is interested in Ruth Honey, the long-suffering patient whose husband tried to kill her and who escaped when he was sleeping with her three children. Falder chooses to flee with Ruth to South America as a man and as a wife. In order to get money, Ruth forges a cheque, but the fraud is easily revealed. Vialter Hew, the son of the company's head, pleads that his father will send another cheque to Falder. But, he changed his mind, especially when he discovered that a woman was involved. Therefore, Falder has been charged with a crime for three years and sentenced to criminal servitude. Because of the bad treatment, he nearly goes insane, which leads to his liberation after two and a half years.

His time in prison has ruined both his health and reputation, causing the loss of having an opportunity to find a job. Once he gets a job with Ruth's help, the police accuse him of finding it through forging references and not reporting to the parole at the right time. Hence, in a moment of depression and grief, Falder throws himself down on the stone and breaks his neck (Cazamian & Legouis, 1935, p.18), preferring death to being in prison once again. This exposes that when injustice spreads, one should think of some solutions for the improvements of social evils that were brought forth in Galsworthy's world, and there is nothing to indicate that much support from politics is to be desired. The general feeling seems that the State is unsuccessful in providing the individual with the justice and protection required for a decent life to be ordered. After all, political initiatives should not be in

advance of the popular opinion they convey as instruments of reform; and it is obvious that Galsworthy, who, in any case, is an artist with dreams rather than a politician with realistic suggestions as Miller avers (1924, p.305).

Ruth is abused and ill-treated by the brutal drunkard husband, which makes her life with him unbearable. Unfortunately, Falder's forgery of the cheque is found before he flees. This caused him to solitary imprisonment for six months. After his release, he returns to the same company asking for another chance to work. He knows that this chance cannot be given unless he leaves Ruth which is against his will, saying; "I couldn't give her up. I couldn't! Oh, sir! I'm all she's got to look to. And I'm sure she's all I've got"(Galsworthy, p. 15). He finds himself helpless with no ability to take any decision. Being afraid of returning to the prison and in a moment of despair, Falder committed suicide.

The tragic end of this weak-hearted man makes Galsworthy insist on tolerance, sympathy, and cooperation ideals that are the main solution to all man's sadness, melancholies, and despair. In fact, all these ideals are not found in the judicial system. Galsworthy refers that the criminals, after their release from prison, society will not accept them.

Society! The respectable! The pious! Even those who love you! Will they let you be? Hue and cry! The hunt was joined the moment you broke away! It will never let up! Covert to covert--till they've run you down and you're book in the cart, and God pity you (Nicoll, 1932, p. 30).

Here, he feels that society should not limit man who seeks freedom to express himself; on the contrary, it should conform to his needs.

This play examines the meaning of the word justice, opposing the emotionless and pitiless meaning against the social injustice that comes in time the law restricts its clarification. Falder's intentions are good as he wants to save the tortured woman whom he loved, so he does not deserve such a punishment, meaning solitary imprisonment. It is obvious that Falder's punishment is unequal to the crime. According to the law, his act is "taking the law into his own hands and making the point that marriage is a law, no matter how destructive" (Shanmugakani, 1992, p 10). Galsworthy chooses the title *Justice* in order to satirize the contemporary social and legal systems of the society, which in the name of justice, forced the helpless persons like Falder and Ruth to suffer and die finally in the most inhuman way in a 'civilized' society. Ironically it is injustice expressed in the justice drama. The title *Justice* is paradoxically referring to the injustice and wickedness of a man-made system of law. The people of the law turn the meaning of justice upside down without understanding the right meaning of this word before taking any decision in accordance with the fake system. The satirical title of the play, *justice*, provokes the social issue of injustice that only poor people suffer from inequality and injustice and live miserable lives. The title is an impassioned observation on the law system and the prison administration in a commercial and hypocritical society that is devoid of any moral values, heaps injustice on man, and crushes him under the name of justice. Hence, man finds no peace in life but in death. It is clear that Falder's suffering and tragedy are due to social problems from which he cannot escape but through death. In fact, the ironic name of the play is not about justice but about how injustice is meted out to the weak and the downtrodden (Shanmugakani, pp. 15-19).

Galsworthy, in this play, sets up a struggle between man and society. Idealism and individualism are always at loggerheads with the law. He criticizes the law system that punishes the poor without understanding the difficult circumstances behind their crimes. The poor Falder is punished when he forges a check, but Ruth's rich husband is never punished for harassing his wife. In his book, *The Injustice of Social Justice* (2011, p.16), Ben O'Neill criticizes the judicial system due to its double standard for sympathizing with the rich and not the poor. Hence, the difficult circumstances are the only reason that pushes men to commit illegal acts. So the court should judge man according to humanitarian feelings instead of the worldly law system.

Despite his weakness, Falder has a noble purpose of saving a distressed and miserable woman, Ruth, from her wretched life. His main intention is to rescue her from the oppression of her husband. He promises her a happy life away from all the troubles. But he is accused of being guilty of forgery the cheque and having an illegal relationship with a married woman. He is sentenced to spend six months in solitary imprisonment. Here, Galsworthy sheds light upon the poor people's misery and dilemma in a society that exiles them. Even after his release, he finds no freedom in his life except in death to get rid of his sadness and troubles, showing a deceptive triumph of justice. The terrible lives of Falder and Ruth lead them to indulge in such illicit acts, "The judicial system practices injustice that forgives upper-class people for their crimes and punishes only poor people for insignificant acts" (O'Neill, p. 21).

Falder as an idealist, tries to rescue Ruth, but he fails because the law is a machine that refuses to judge man's emotions. O'Neill confirms that the law focuses on the crime and not on the causes that push a man to commit a crime (p. 26). Because of poverty, Falder and Ruth are exiled from society. Both the inhumane society and the court of justice do not protect them from the humiliating practices and weakness. They suffer from humiliation and desolation that cause their unhappy lives. Falder's dream is

to help Ruth achieve through getting money pushes him to commit forgery, which is, according to society and law immoral act. Falder's plea never helps him to get the tolerance of James How, the boss of the company who insists on sending him to prison; "Falder: Oh! sir, look over it! I'll pay the money back — I will, I promise" (Galsworthy, p. 44). The blind obedience to the moral values of a corrupt and oppressive society makes How to show no sympathy. Society and the law system have no kindness for man's suffering. No one wants to know the reasons that lead Falder to forge the cheque and why Ruth cannot bear her life with her husband. Like Falder, who becomes a victim of the awful system. His lawyer, Hector Frome, pleads with the jury not to turn the weak Falder into a criminal by condemning him to prison. He advocates him by saying:

Men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight which sees them as they are, patients, and not criminals. . . . Justice is a machine that, when someone has given it a starting push, rolls on of itself. . . . Is this young man to be ground to pieces under this machine for an act which, at the worst, was one of weakness? (Galsworthy, p. 60).

Then he adds:

I urge you, gentlemen, do not ruin this young man. For as a result of those four minutes, ruin, utter and irretrievable, stares him in the face . . . The rolling of the chariot wheels of Justice over this boy began when it was decided to prosecute him (Galsworthy, p. 65).

It is obvious that Frome's argument is based on a social consciousness as essential as the roots of the social ills, the background of life which always lies behind the commission of a crime.

All Frome's attempts to save Falder from the prison are futile, according to the Judge's reply:

Judge: Your counsel has made an attempt to trace your offense back to what he seems to suggest is a defect in the marriage law; he has made an attempt also to show that to punish you with further imprisonment would be unjust. I do not follow him on these flights. The Law is what it is — a majestic edifice sheltering all of usI am concerned only with its administration. The crime you have committed is a very serious one. I cannot feel it is in accordance with my duty to Society to exercise the powers I have in your favor. You will go to penal servitude for three years (Galsworthy, p. 71).

In prison, Falder, the young, inexperienced criminal, soon finds himself the victim of the terrible system. Though the authorities admit that Falder is mentally and physically in bad shape, nothing can be done in this matter as there are many other prisoners in a similar position. Falder expresses his new feeling after this horrible experience in prison, stating:

Falder: I seem to be struggling against a thing that's all around me. I can't explain it: it's as if I was in a net; as fast as I cut it here, it grows up there. I didn't act as I ought to have about references, but what are you to do? You must have them. And that made me afraid, and I left. In fact, I'm — I'm afraid all the time now (Galsworthy, p. 77).

Here, Galsworthy's intention is to show the effect of release that Falder feels, which is beyond the reach of law and the earthly suffering, as Rawls remarks.

In the dirty, dark, ill-ventilated cell, Falder is straining his ears to catch some sound from outside. Extremely high-strung in temperament, the solitude and silence madden him. I spent last Friday and Saturday in Lewis prison interviewing convicts undergoing solitary confinement, saw in all and thoroughly convinced my impression that it is a barbarous thing (2005, p. 4)

No doubt, not only is Falder, a victim, but Ruth also is a victim of her husband's oppression. Her living with a cruel husband pushes her to:

make skirts... cheap things. It was the best I could get, but I never made more than ten shillings a week, buying my own cotton and working all day; I hardly ever got to bed till past twelve. I kept at it for nine months.... It was starvation for the children.... And then ... my employer happened — he's happened ever since"(Galsworthy, p. 47).

Hence, Galsworthy named justice a tragedy to show the awful English legal system that punished the victims. No doubt that her bad condition encourages Falder to save Ruth from hell but being in prison, he finds himself in hell. The frustrating experiences make him a desperate man who loses faith in life. When he knows that Ruth will sell herself because of justice, he throws himself down the stairs breaking his neck. The socio-revolutionary meaning of justice contains the deception of the inhuman system and the absolute helplessness of society that destroyed Falder and his dream as Senior Clerk; Cokeson said, "No one will touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!"(Galsworthy, p. 56).

In *Justice*, Galsworthy sharply criticizes the severe British system of law. He not only attacks the unjust of this law but the inhumane treatment of the prisoner, the cruel practice of solitary imprisonment, and the subsequent consequences that are of great effect upon the prisoner even after his release. According to him, man is not bad; on the contrary, he is kind and good, but the corrupted social institutions, mainly the law, have often victimized man and destroyed his aspiration and development to live a peaceful life. Moreover, misunderstanding is the main reason that makes man lives in complete desolation, frustration, and misery, finding death as the only means to get rid of them. Only through death, a man can live a peaceful life. David Daiches regards Galsworthy's plays as "humanitarian fables of social and moral worry; such plays as *Justice*, *Skin Game*, and *Loyalties* command respect and sympathy for their technical competence and humane feeling"(2010, p. 9). This play deals mainly with the root of justice that appeared majestic, but it crushes the poor under its wheel. Galsworthy assaults the law system and the prison administration in modern society in which hypocrisy and fake values cause the death of a man. Finding no justice and peace in this life, man prefers death, like Falder.

Frome, Falder's advocate, is considered a mouthpiece of Galsworthy. His disagreement reveals Galsworthy's humanistic faith that the prisoner must be treated like a patient and not a criminal. In his speech to the court, Frome said, " Gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight which sees them as they are, patients, and not criminals" (Galsworthy, p. 153). Frome's speech shows Galsworthy's insistence on reforming the vicious and disastrous reflection of the double standard and strict system. The fault in the law system is taking the judgment mechanically regardless of the victim's impetus. In the case of Falder, his punishment is more than he deserves because his temporary madness pushes him to forge the check.

Frome: Once this cheque was altered and presented, the work of four minutes—four mad minutes—the rest has been silence. But in those four minutes, the boy before you has slipped through a door, hardly opened, into that great cage which never again quite lets a man go—the cage of the law. (Galsworthy, p. 154).

The system of law must take into consideration Falder's real intention and his weak character. In addition, Falder confesses his wrong act, but the court ignores all these things. Hence, *Justice* is regarded as "the play being conceived in an ecstasy of rage against human oppression, the restraint of the artist controls most of the scenes. He does not give us the noble hero unjustly imprisoned; he does not give us a hero at all" (Phelps, p. 122).

Galsworthy believes that man has no deep wickedness, but circumstances and the absence of morality change him. After his difficult solitary imprisonment, Falder confesses, " I mean, I'm not what I was" (Galsworthy, p. 169). This shows that society is the real villain and not man. Therefore, Galsworthy's aim is to help the weak-irresolute man who, in a moment's absence of mind, commits the forgery because the law is inhumane and rigid. In fact, understanding of man is absent everywhere. Both courts and law are not serious about reforming the criminals; instead, they strengthen their torture and desperate destiny. Thus, the whole incident of judgment and punishment is inhumane.

Galsworthy satirizes both crime and divorce law in England. Ruth's husband, the drunken ruffian, is the only villain in the play for his bad treatment of his wife and children. He used to beat them without reason. Under English law, Ruth cannot escape from him and cannot divorce. If the law is in the place of tortured women and men, oppression would be ended. Here, the tragic conflict is between the social system and the weak victim, as Allardyce Nicoll asserts that:

The Governor and the Warders of the prison in *Justice* are not inhuman brutes; the businessmen are not grasping materialists, callous and hard-hearted; yet these men are the tools of destiny. The pitiful Falder is caught in the toils of a force that transcends all the characters in the drama; they are not the direct cause of his fate; his fate depends upon society. The place that the tyrant took in accident days is assumed by an invisible yet omnipresent force of civilization. (1932, p. 365)

In *Justice*, Galsworthy sheds light on the evils of the society like rigid divorce law, solitary imprisonment, and injustice treatment of the prisoner. He concentrates on exposing the dilemmas of English society that caused man's death in modern society. His aim is

to reform man's condition by exposing social and moral problems. According to him, the law works blindly, and If the divorce law is simple without any complication, Ruth would have dissolved her unsatisfactory marriage and be with Falder, who would not need to forge the check in order to rescue her and run away to South America. Ruth suffers because she cannot divorce her cruel husband and live with Falder, whom she loved as Dorothy Martin avers (1924, pp. 2-3). Martin observes that Galsworthy does not desire;

A temporary hearing, nor did he aim at a popular following. He was concerned with problems of modern society, and their importance has assured his works lasting significance. His role as a social critic found its most varied expression in the drama. He pleads for prison reform in *Justice* (p 6).

Because of the unbearable torture of solitary imprisonment, prisoners live a very difficult life that makes them always think and try to escape, "They are beating doors regularly, seeing an exit for their tired and miserable life" (Shanmugakani, p. 3). For that reason, Galsworthy feels that it is an injustice to restrain mentally patients prisoners in solitary prisons. He believes that the main defect in the law system is that prisoners are treated inhumanly. Prisoners who suffer from mental instability need special care and the support of their friends; in time, prisoner administrations prevent visitors to them " the rigid rules give no hope to their recovery as they become very restless and indulge in rebellious activities such as escaping"(Shanmugakani, p 8). These can be avoided if the law allows them to socialize with each other and visit their relatives and friends. But the actual situation is that none of these suggestions are achieved or taken under consideration.

Through *Justice*, Galsworthy attracts the attention of the world to the evil of solitary imprisonment and its horrible effect upon the prisoners as justice is turned out to be a device of injustice. His play has a great echo on the government to reduce the period of solitary imprisonment from six months to three months. Law works blindly and strictly against people like Falder. Though he is not innocent as he committed a wrong act, the sever law and society neglect his noble intention behind it. The three years in prison and the problem of finding a job after his release make him a nervous wreck man and push him to commit suicide. No sympathy is seen in this sever system as Coats precisely observes, " If Galsworthy's indictment of human justice is severe, his indictment of the general harshness of the world, man's inhumanity to man, is still more bitter" (Coats, 1926, p. 80).

It is evident that throughout history, the concept of justice has attracted the attention of many writers and dramatists to emphasize it because its absence has negative effects on man and society. The widespread corruption and social evils encourage them to seek to reform the society to uproot these horrible social evils that deprived man of gaining his rights and achieving his identity that can be accomplished through justice only.

4. Conclusion

Being a social reformer, critic, and dramatist of the 20th century, Galsworthy's attacks and criticism against the law system and solitary imprisonment are of great results. The government reduces the solitary imprisonment to three months for criminals and one month for intermediates and star class.

As a matter of fact, solitary imprisonment is inhuman punishment given to a man who committed not such a dangerous crime as a forgery. Though the punishment is reduced to three months instead of six still, no sympathy and good treatment are shown to the prisoner. Hence, Galsworthy wants to reform not only the strict law but also the basic nature and treatment of following men towards the criminals both inside and outside the prison, meaning in society. Galsworthy seeks the happiness of humanity that is devoid from this world due to the absence of justice.

Like many other men in society, Falder in *Justice* is a victim of injustice, so Galsworthy carefully portrays human intolerance and nuisance in the name of severe slavery and solitary imprisonment. His main concern is that the official of court and prison change their treatment of the prisoners to be more flexible and humane, considering them as patients like Falder. The victim of injustice struggles helplessly against enormous things in life and society that are too strong for him. The final consequence is social depletion, despair, and death. Man achieves nothing except his end.

It is obvious that through social realization and setting the objective of clarity, we can improve justice and eliminate injustice. Therefore, the need for prison reform wants reform in the severity of society and law. According to Galsworthy, justice is an important factor in building a successful society based on strong relationships and cooperation among its member; otherwise, its absence; means justice causes not only man's destruction physically and spiritually but society's as well. Hence, in order to achieve justice, the writer's duty is to reveal the corruption that happens in society.

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