

THE CRITICAL APPROACH OF THE PREPPERS IN MIKE BOZART'S SHORT STORY "THE BUNKER"

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النهج الناقد بشأن المُستعدين استنادًا إلى قصة مايك بوزارت القصيرة "القبو"

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المدرس

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ABSTRACT

The idea of the research depends on Marxist's critical theory of ideology. A "critical theory" has a distinctive aim: to unmask the ideology falsely justifying some form of social or economic oppression to reveal it as ideology, and, in so doing, to contribute to the task of ending that oppression. Marx's critique of capitalist economic relations is arguably just this kind of critical theory. The Marxist concept of ideology is a word to describe a set of ideas and beliefs that are dominant in society and used to justify the power and privilege of the

ruling class. Marx emphasized ideology as rooted in contradictory relations, specifically operating to distort and thus justify the exploitation taking place in the capitalist exchange process. Therefore, the research aims at examining and proving the ideas of Preppers who promote the idea of isolating man from society by placing him in underground shelters under the pretext of future disasters according to Marxist critical theory of ideology.

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Keywords: ideology, Preppers, bunker, evil, loneliness, appearance,

reality, imperialism

المستخلص :-

العلاقات المتناقضة ، وتعمل بشكل خاص على تشويه وبالتالي تبرير الاستغلال الذي يحدث في عملية التبادل الرأسمالي. بهذا يهدف البحث إلى فحص وإثبات أفكار المستعدين الذين يروجون لفكرة عزل الإنسان عن المجتمع بوضعه في ملاجئ تحت الأرض بحجة الكوارث المستقبلية وفق النظرية النقدية الماركسية للأيديولوجيا. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأيديولوجية، المستعدون، المخبأ، الشر، الوحدة، المظهر، الواقع، الإمبريالية

تعتمد فكرة البحث على النظرية النقدية الماركسية للأيديولوجيا. ان "النظرية النقدية" لها هدف مميز: الكشف عن الأيديولوجية التي تبرر خطأ بعض أشكال الاضطهاد الاجتماعي أو الاقتصادي للكشف عنها كأيديولوجيا ، وبذلك تساهم في مهمة إنهاء هذا الاضطهاد. يمكن القول إن نقد ماركس للعلاقات الاقتصادية الرأسمالية هو هذا النوع من النظرية النقدية. ان كلمة المفهوم الماركسي للأيديولوجيا تصف مجموعة من الأفكار والمعتقدات السائدة في المجتمع وتستخدم لتبرير سلطة وامتياز الطبقة الحاكمة. أكد ماركس أن الأيديولوجيا متجذرة في

INTRODECTION

Marxist's "critical theory" has a distinctive aim: to unmask the ideology falsely justifying some form of social or economic oppression to reveal it as ideology and, in so doing, to contribute to the task of ending that oppression. Thus, a critical theory aims to provide a kind of enlightenment about social and economic life that is itself emancipatory: persons come to recognize the oppression they suffer as oppression and are thereby partly freed from it.

The research examines the ideas of "Prepper(s)" in Bozart's short story the "*Bunker*", and proving these ideas belong to ruling class ideas who rule by a material force in society they are at the same time ruling the intellectual force (Marx, 1998). They promote the idea of isolating man from society by placing him in underground bunkers under the pretext of future disasters according to Marxist critical theory of ideology. Max Lerner stated,

ideas are weapons (Lerner, 1943, Vol. 7 No. 23 p. 4.).

Preppers are individuals or groups referred to as “survivalists”. They promoted the “ideology” to be survived under the movement of survivalism. Their activity is to prepare for possible disruptions in the social or political order, on scales from local to international. Their movement also calls for preparation for “a post-apocalyptic world” (Fetterman et al., 2019 p. 1).

The first “*Prepper*” in the world is Noah. The story of Noah and his ark is mentioned in the holy books such as the Bible as well Holy Quran. God informs Noah that the earth is going to be flooded so that he must build a very huge boat to save the Creatures (Genesis 6:21).

Though Noah is the first Prepper who called his people to the Ark to survive, the movement “survivalism” appeared in the United Kingdom and United States, and became so popular in 1960 with the activity of nuclear by countries that anticipated having nuclear wars, as well, the danger of some people who have extreme religious beliefs, for instance ISIS, or because economic collapsing that is warned about by writers of both apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction and non-fiction. In his article, Garrett wrote that the US government built 72 bunkers including the Atlas F missile silo

that was built in the early 1960s with a cost of \$15 million approximately. The bunker is hardened with concrete that is mixed with an epoxy-based resin and is designed to resist nuclear bombs even more powerful than the bombs dropped on Nagasaki (Bourke, 2006). Accordingly, the Preppers become so common in their promotion of their ideology of survivalism. Daniel Bell referred to the ‘trap of ideology’, to ‘apocalyptic fervour’ and ‘dreadful results’ and to ideologists as “terrible simplifiers” (Bell, 1950: 405). J Oliver Conroy is a writer and journalist in New York. In his essay titled “We Mocked Preppers and Survivalists – Until the Pandemic Hit” posted in the Guardian Apr 2020, he refers that the care for prepping, usually, calls for mocking around tin-foil hats and Bunkers in ordinary society (The Guardian, April 2020; Conroy, 2020; Bowles, 2020).

THE BUNKER

Mike Bozart, is the American writer and odd artist; was born in Virginia in 1964. His first novel is “*GOLD*, a summer story (2013); his first novella is “*To Morrow Tomorrow*”, (2014), and the second one is “*Mysterieu of San Francisco*”, (2015). He also wrote many short stories including the “*Bunker*”, 2017. The “*Bunker*” is written in the first

and third person point of view. The protagonist, whose name is Doug, is a retired old man with 61 years old but he had very good health. Because he is a widower and childless, he lives alone in his apartment in Manitoba, Canada.

The story of the "*Bunker*" begins with a promotion by the Canadian-American company that is run by Epic Prepperazzi abbreviated as (EP); the advertisement appeared many times on Doug's laptop. Immediately, Doug welcomes the idea of the advertisement as he thought that through his experience in an underground bunker who would able to write his story before he dies. So, he texted a message to Ep, after two minutes, Doug received a message with more information about the flat where he is going to live. Doug is in a daydream while he is reading the details, but he is not sure to be accepted to the competition because of his age. As a usual day, Doug is sitting in his flat, having a warm soup, he heard a message tune on his mobile, and he opened the message to read that he is chosen by EP for the competition. Doug is very happy, and very excited and he prepared himself to take a flight from Winnipeg to Denver. Doug arrives in Denver without telling anyone even his only younger brother, Steven, who lives in Edmonton.

However, his adventure inside the bunker will reveal the truth about the Prepper (EP); while his adventure is very dangerous to get out of that hole.

Does the 'Bunker' refer to oppression

Bozart refers to the theme of "*Buried alive*" especially when Doug speaks to himself saying that it would be his last night on the ground. This theme is referred to by Sigmund Freud in 1919, in his essay "uncanny" in which he clarifies that the concept of live burial is a model of the relationship between worlds that must remain separate. It's a symbol of encroachment - indicating that it shows up what must be kept secret and hidden, and "to some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the uncanniest thing of all" (Freud, 1955, p. 241), so, Doug had his worries about being alive underground.

On the other hand, the driver of the limousine who gives Doug a ride to asked him whether he is ready to go into a hole, the metaphoric comparison gives the meaning similar to a grave in which he goes to bury himself. In fact, Bozart shows sarcasm to criticize Doug (Gray, 2008, p. 255). Through Doug's journey to the bunker, he asked himself the question is this the end for him? (Bozart, 2017 p.5).

Wojcik points out that the world after doomsday is an imaginative world for people to show what they believe and what they desire (Wojcik, 1997). So Bozart refers to the fact that living in an underground place is something imaginary, but it is a belief and desire of the EP. Beck notes that the bunker is like the womb and the grave promises security and control in the form of a shelter (Beck, 2011, p. 82; Garrett, 2020, p. 10). The cache that is built without doom time is a grave instead of a shelter. The most crucial point made so far is that "Bunker" presents an oppression of mankind.

David Monteyne describes the job of the bunker as "both defensive and offensive" based on a dual logic of protected interior designs and external aggressiveness (Monteyne, 2011, p. 19). Although this bunker is out of sight and far away from ordinary Americans' minds, it has the meaning of extinction. The bunkers are such, and still, as suggested by Ian Klinke, political spaces for extermination (Klinke, 2018, chapter 5). Bozart describes the bunker as a desolate place with deep about Forty-nine feet (15 meters) with few lights, having a curving shape, industrial-looking hallway, and it is cut by door steel on the inner wall (Bozart, 6). There are also fire extinguishers in every room. From this point, it is possible

to guess that the bunker is a place of danger rather than safe, "an out-of-control fire down here would suck ... infernally" (ibid). These words reveal the reality that fire is possible as Bozart uses the metaphor of "charred marshmallows" to refer to a burned person, seemingly, Virilio indicates that the bunker functions as an 'absolute' war and a form of architectural charlatanism, a psychological trick that sought to create in the gaze of the enemy the idea of impenetrability where there was really weakness and fear (Virilio, 1975, pp.47-40). Another possible danger is that the Oxygen inside the bunker must be kept close to 21% with a relative humidity of 42%. As a result, any problem with the Oxygen level leads to suffocation.

Thus, from Bozart's view, the bunker represents a deceptive place to keep you safe, while the temporal nature of the bunker plays a crucial role in its relative importance, acting as a vehicle that takes one's distance from danger by crossing deadly hazards (Virilio, 1994, p. 46).

Does "Bunker" show the class struggle?

Bozart may describe a new way of imperialism by controlling others' lives or maybe another trade to control man's freedom. Imperialism is a policy or ideology governing

other peoples and States. Syed Alatas says that intellectual imperialism is a force in modeling opinions "ideologies" in the direction chosen by imperial power (Alatas, 2000, p. 9). The president of EP who own the Bunker did not let Marvin out of it and he is there for nine weeks. Marvin also reveals that the president is insane and the company is a scam (Bozart, 2017, p. 12). While imperialism runs from the center, which is a state strategy, and is developed for ideological as well as financial causes (Young, 2015, p. 54). According to researchers Lapham, Thacker, and Bourke, these ideas are the result of the policies of certain leaders who approved the use of nuclear weapons and are now busy constructing bunkers to defend themselves. In other words, it is a political game and those politicians are behind the ideology of prepping because they caused mass panic (Lapham, 2017, p. 18; Thacker, 2012, p. 144; Bourke, 2006, p. 191).

The capitalism reflection

To talk about a capitalist labor régime in the twenty-first century as entailing an increase in the incidence of worker non-freedom is opposed by Marxist political economy (Kumbamu, 2010, p. 67). A Marxist would conclude that capitalism exploits and oppresses the proletariat. Assuming that both Doge

and Marvin are proletariats and Epic Prepperazzi (EP) is the capitalist, then indeed that (EP) exploits and oppresses Doge and Marvin. This is in one hand. On the other hand, Bozart refers that the origin of EP's money is unknown, where he has become a wealthy man recently, as evidence, Bozart does not give a background about EP, so the latter is an ambiguous person.

Depending on Marx's argument, Dunayevskaya points out that to try to bring that "principle of authority" into society as a whole could only mean subjecting the society to one single master (Dunayevskaya, 1958, pp. 51–52). In other words, people inside the bunker shall be subjected to one master. Marx metaphorically pictures the capital itself (which, zombie-like, lives only by consuming living labor, the capitalist worker (for the enslaved living labor becomes a zombified living dead), and the everyday consumer (who is trapped in this system, consumes in. (Marx, 1867, Capital, p. 342). Accordingly, the Bunker represents the imperialist's concept in which man can be controlled by "rejection of reason" (Aronowitz, 1988, p.1). It can be said that the Prepper's ideology is but a "myth" that is brought to light in western society only to strengthen those in power (Aronowitz, p. 1).

Preppers believe that the bunker is like a laboratory where better characters are built and a place for self-improvement. In addition, it is a cocoon reborn after a necessary "reset" of a chaotic, fragile, and complex world (Garrett, 2020, pp. 1-2). However, Bozart gives his opinion through Doug that he has doubts about EP. In fact, that the way which EP ends his text message and is sent to Doug with "And, last but not least, the hold -harmless agreement –the waiver of the right to sue" (Bozart, 2017, p. 4) leaves the reader in suspicion. When Doug reads that part of the message on his smartphone, he is in paradox and reveals to himself the truth that the bizarre agreement is a dangerous, publicity stunt. The sign of hesitation is aroused, and Doug's decision to go through this game is not easy. Bozart pictures Doug's inner conflict which was as same as Juliet's conflict around taking the potion in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Though Doug has an inner conflict, he enrolls himself in the application because the enrolment is free, and because he thought that his age is too old for him to win. In comparison with the scene of Juliet, there is a similarity to Doug because Juliet took the risk to have the potion in the vial for the sake of Romeo (Shakespeare, 1993, Act 4, Scene 3).

Lenin defines imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism (Lenin, 1916 Ch. 3 p. 1), imperialism is the subjugation of one people by another for the advantage of the dominant one (Alatas, 2000 p. 23). Alatas mentions the "intellectual imperialism" to dominate others by another in the world of thinking (Alatas, p. 24). In other words, Prepper's idea is a part of intellectual imperialism.

Does Prepper's ideology reflect Socialism?

Bowser who is a self-student of philosophy, sociology, psychology, environmental studies, religion, anthropology, and theology realizes an amazing and disturbing side to the Prepper culture that's become more prominent since he first notices it (Bowser, 2013, p. 1). He called it the "defend what's mine" phenomenon. The "Defense of What's Mine" mentality refers to the idea that at the moment when the world collapses, every human being in the world immediately becomes either a resource to use or a danger to be excluded. So, Preppers are going to use brutal means to defend themselves against other human beings, but they do not have any intention to rebuild the world or to help another human being (Bowser, p. 1).

This ideology is based on individuality but not on socialism

appears in the story, where Bozart indicates that Doug is alone in the bunker and there are no competitors or participants with whom he shares life inside the bunker. Loneliness may have negative effects on deciding matters of losses (Yu Zhu, et al., 2017, p. 13). As Marx mentions that capitalism is unlike socialism created isolated individual. Karl Marx considers the individual, his nature, freedom and development as inseparably connected with society. The starting point of his analysis is not the individual, but society.

An illegal economic profit

Bozart shows evilness in EP's hidden character. Doug does not know any background about EP. EP is an ambiguous person till the middle of the story. He appears when he is advertising about his own bunker and his candidate Doug. Bozart refers to EP's speech as bombastic. According to the dictionary of literary terms, "bombastic speech" is a rhetorical technique wherein the speaker brags excessively, hence the use of "bombastic" is for criticizing to show EP's shallowness or "full of unnecessary padding" (Gray, 2008, p. 46). EP's advertisement was bombastic to attract a candidate. Therefore, through the analysis of

the advertisement, one may guess the EP's speech.

How long could you live alone in a 70° Fahrenheit (21° Celsius) underground bunker in central Colorado with a surfeit of food, drink (including beer/wine) and marijuana, but with NO Internet, NO e-mail, NO

phone, NO texts, NO TV, NO radio, and NO clock/watch? We'll pay a special someone \$100 a day. Do you have what it takes? Text YES to EP999 for more info. (Bozart, 2017, p. 3)

The special thing about this advertisement is "marijuana", this drug affects one's brain by bringing a pleasant euphoria and a sense of relaxation according to research report of the National Institute on Drugs and Abuse (NIDA. 2021, p. 9). Thus, this kind of drug which exists in places like a bunker may have a bad effect on the inhabitant there. Bozart mentions through Marcus, who is the president of EP that Doug is a pothead and Marijuana seeker, and he has come to this isolated place because there is no law to ban marijuana. However, Bozart shows the contrast between what Marcus has thought and what Doug's personality is. Doug is not a normal person because he is a socially isolated person. Cacioppo and Hawkley indicate that the

perceived social isolation (PSI) is a dangerous factor and may denote "poorer overall cognitive performance and poorer executive functioning, faster cognitive decline, more negative and depressive cognition, heightened sensitivity to social threats, and a self-protective confirmatory bias in social cognition" (Cacioppo, et al., 2009 p. 6), thus because of the isolation, Doug has a cognitive decline which leads him to be more and more isolated (Wilson et al., 2007; Hawkley et al., 2007, p. 1), however not because of seeking marijuana. Besides, Doug says that he is not a smoker, but he is going to be one after a week (Bozart, 2017, p. 7), he adds that he is not a drinker kind of a person, but he hopes that he does not become a "full alcoholic" underground person. Accordingly, these features characterize introverted persons.

The other thing that reveals the evil is that the bunker does not have any means of communication with people on the surface, but it is a completely isolated place in which one may be forgotten. There are no cameras inside the bunker, but one which is set above the above a stove, so people on the ground have no idea about what is going on inside the bunker. This may be the other reason for choosing a person like Doug because no one may ask about him.

Staub mentions that evil is always suited to conscious and deliberate wrongdoing (Staub, 1999, p. 179-192). In other words, putting marijuana and alcoholic drinks beside no means of communication leads to evilness. In addition, the bunker has only one gate to enter and to get out, so a bunker is a place designed to harm others. Finally, nobody may sue the company because of the contract that states that the participant has no right to sue the EP company.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of Bozart's "*The Bunker*" using Marx's theory of ideology, the research concludes that the survivalist ideology of Preppers is imaginary. They promote their ideologies through selling products for financial purposes. The bunker reflects the capitalist's ideology to lure people. It is a weapon to oppress people but not to keep them safe.

It has been found that the EP's company is a fraud. The bunker is not a place to keep someone safe but it is like a prison, isolated, and no one has any idea about it except Doug and its keepers and the EP company. It hides the evil of EP by providing the place with prohibitions as marijuana, and alcoholic beers. There are neither means of communication to inform the people

on the ground about the conditions of the inhabitants, nor cameras to convey a person's life inside the bunker directly. It has one entrance to get in and out. The vilest thing about the bunker is that no one has the right to sue the company if anything goes wrong. Whereas EP as a Prepper who promotes to the underground bunker holds a shallow significance of safety, it is a place of danger, for instance, there might be an uncontrolled fire, or if the Oxygen is not within the normal level, where the inhabitant surely dies immediately. So the reality of the bunker contrasts the claim of safety since it is a place of death. It

is worth noting that the struggle ended by Marvin lost his life and Doug barely made his way to the top to obtain his freedom.

Bozart shows the ideology of Preppers which is based on the imperialist's concept that the aim of imperialism is to control others for financial purposes, for instance, politicians are responsible for bringing such prepping ideology because they could cause mass panic. Finally, Bozart refers to the bunker as a place to bury living people. According to him, it is an imaginary place, but it is a belief and the desire for which he promotes.

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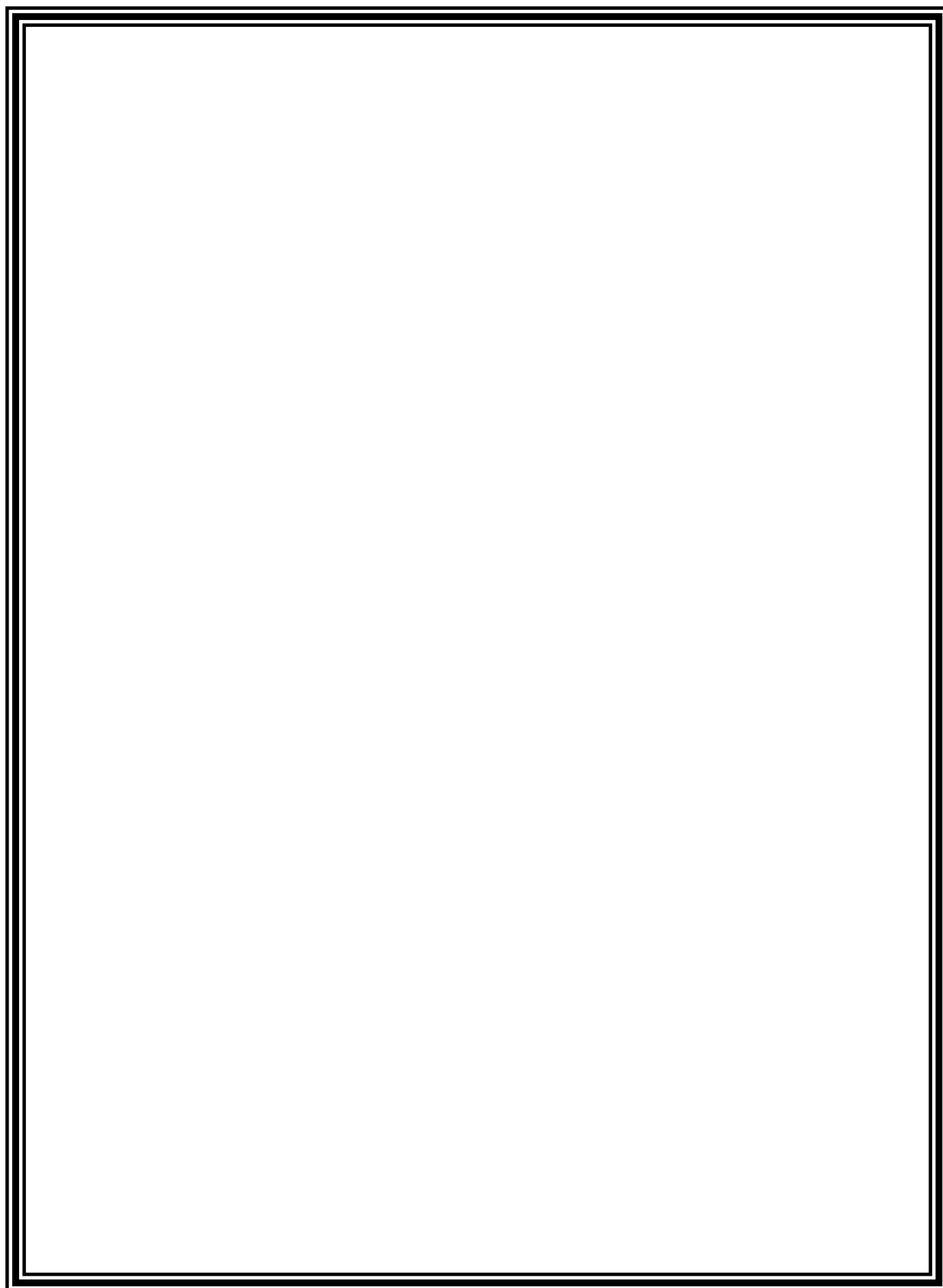
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الدراسات باللغة الإنكليزية