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Widad Allawi Saddam
Open Education College

Rasha Hatem Abed
Ministry of Education

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Cycle of Rejection: A Psychoanalytical Reading of Doris Lessing's "The Fifth Child"

Inst. Widad Allawi Saddam, PH.D

Open Education College

wedad.saddam@yahoo.com

Lecturer : Rasha Hatem Abed, M.A

Ministry of Education

rasha11rose@gmail.com

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Abstract :

The children absorb the positive and negative conversation from their parents. Obviously, they response according to their receiving conversations and feeling. Doris Lessing shows the social complex relations between of diverse social character classes and their relationships to social institutions.

Indeed, one of the messages of the novel is that the more individuals and society at large reject the dark side of human nature, the more they relapse into primitive barbarity. The mother in "The fifth child" harbours the feeling of disgust and rejection towards the new born baby which results in more conflict and rejection in the novel.

This paper sheds the light on Doris Lessing's psychological ideas that shape this novel. It contributes new reading of family psychic problems and circumstances. The rejection of family members of the new born child results in many defective characteristics of the fifth child. The child's ego is the same ego of the mother.

Key words: Psychological studies, rejection, ego, Lessing, emotional abuse.

دائرة الرفض: دراسة نفسية لرواية "الطفل الثالث" للكاتبة دوريس ليسنغ

م.د.وداد علاوي صدام

الكلية التربوية المفتوحة

م.م. رشا حاتم عبد محمود

وزارة التربية

المخلص :

يكتسب الاطفال الكلام سواء كان ايجابيا او سلبيا من الوالدين، والواضح انهم يستجيبون لهذا الكلام وفقا لشعورهم بالشخص الملقى لذلك الكلام . وتبين الكاتبة دوريس ليسنغ العلاقات الاجتماعية المعقدة بين مختلف الفئات والشخصيات الاجتماعية ، وعلاقتها بالمؤسسات الاجتماعية.

واقعا أن واحدة من رسائل هذه الرواية هي أنه كلما ازداد رفض المجتمع لحالة ما او لشخص ما يزداد الام تعقيدا بالمقابل مما يؤدي الى نتائج وخيمة لتلك الحالة او تلك الشخصية المرفوضة ، وهذا ما يبين الجانب المظلم للطبيعة البشرية التي تقود الإنسان الى العدائية البدائية. في هذه الرواية "الطفل الخامس" تظهر الأم مع ابنائها الاربعة شعورا بالاشمئزاز والرفض تجاه المولود الجديد مما يؤدي إلى مزيد من الصراع والرفض في الرواية.

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أفكار دوريس ليسينغ النفسية التي شكلت ملامح هذه الرواية، وهذا البحث يسهم في قراءة جديدة للمشاكل النفسية والظروف الأسرية. وإن مسألة الرفض الموجه من أفراد الأسرة للمولود الجديد تؤدي إلى عدد من الصفات السلبية للطفل الخامس. كذلك تعتقد دوريس ليسنغ ان الانا للطفل هي نفس الانا للام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدراسات النفسية ، الرفض ، الأنا ، ليسينغ ، الاعتداء العاطفي.

Introduction

The founder of psychoanalysis was Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939). He considers that whatever happened in the childhood has impact till the adulthood. What elucidates from his belief is that the events shape some of human behaviors. (McLeod n.d.) The emotional talk is discussed in the past studies according to (Dunn et. al., 1987). On the other hand, the use of negative emotion with children is greater than positive emotions. The reason is that the children may have some difficulties in expressing and recognizing emotions (Dunn & Brown, 1994). In "The Fifth child" the family has great influence on the shaping the life of the five children especially the "fifth" one. They feel him weird and troublesome, in fact, they reject him. This paper shows this rejection which has its own impact on "the fifth child." Rejection theory started in 1960; meanwhile it was called "parental acceptance-rejection theory." Then in 2000, it expanded "to include intimate adult relationships and other significant interpersonal relationships throughout the lifespan". (P. Rohner, 2016, p. 3)

Analysis

The harmony of life starts with the meeting of Harriet and David. They work in the same company, she is a graphic designer and he is an architect. They love each other, decide to marry and promise to have many children. They lived in London on a huge building in the suburbs. All things happen as they planned. Harriet gives birth to four children but her mother Dorothy does not agree with her to have more children.

Harriet has some issues with her pregnancies which follow one another quickly. She said, "Do you realize that having six children, in another part of the world, it would be normal, nothing shocking about it - they aren't made to feel criminals" (Lessing, p. 22). On the other hand, Dorothy (Harriet's mother) criticizes her and David about their decision to have many children. According to European people, it is abnormal to have six or more children comparing to Asian people who have many children. She says, "and if you were in another part of the world, like Egypt or India or somewhere of them would die and they wouldn't be educated, either. You want things both ways. The aristocracy -yes, they can have children like rabbits, and expect to, but they have the money for it" (p.22-23). Then, she relates bringing many children to the custom of poor people who cannot offer enough facilities to their children. She says "poor people can have children, and half of them die, and expect to. But people like us, in the

middle, we have to be careful about the children we have so we can look after them. It seems to me you haven't thought it out ... (p.23)

However, Harriet's insistence to have many children leads to her descend. She starts to have illness and uncomfortable pregnancy, she "was eight months pregnant, and it had not been an easy pregnancy. Nothing seriously wrong, but she had been sick a lot, slept badly from indigestion, and was disappointed with herself. They were wondering why was that people always criticized them." (p. 23) .

Harriet brings the first child, Luke, who was an easy baby. For that reason (bringing the newborn baby), her family members have a habit of making celebration for this newborn baby, therefore, the parents, the brothers and the sisters celebrate happily with Harriet and David. Then Harriet has the second child Helen, then the third one, Jane and the fourth is Paul.

The background of the family shows that there are so many circumstances leading to the crisis of the couple. Starting with the surrounding area problem. "The little town they lived in had changed in the five years they had been here. Brutal incidents and crimes, once shocking everyone, were now commonplace..."(p.29). These circumstances influence Harriet, therefore, she becomes sick. Her mood is changed. By having these changes, she was breaking the rules of the contract between her and David since they made agreement to have many children. Meanwhile she felt the rejection of David, moreover, he starts to be selfish and wants to dominate her and he does not comfort her situation specially when she is pregnant with the "fifth child". They become exhausted of taking care of their children.

Her fifth pregnancy is painful since this child is very strong as if he tries to tear his mother to get out to the world. The child feels what his mother feels since she does not want him. This leads him to feel resistance of the womb of his mother so he tries to get out as a reaction to his mother rejection of him. (Scientists believe that when a child is in the womb, they can feel and hear the atmosphere and the feeling of their mother). The family members interpret her exhaustion happens as a result of early bringing of her child. "They all - David, too - judged that she was simply exhausted because this baby was coming too soon. She must be humoured. Alone in her ordeal - and she had to be, she knew that, and did not blame her family for not accepting what she was being slowly forced to accept - she became silent, morose, suspicious of them all and their thoughts about her. The only thing that helped was to keep moving." (p.51)

The baby seems to come soon and she is suffering alone as all mothers who carry their babies and feel painful. The explanation of specific details of her pain shows that how she is rejected and enforced to accept the reality. She feels that her new child is unwanted. In spite of this rejection, she insists to have child.

The birth of Ben, the fifth child, arrived too soon after the last birth; toss the lives of all in a discomfort as powerful as indefinable. Declared normal by doctors, Ben does not look like a classic baby and combines incredible strength with great violence; moreover his mother cannot help but compare him to a troll. Unfortunately the new born child has abnormal appearance “he was not a pretty baby. He did not look like a baby at all. He had a heavy-shouldered hunched look, as if he were crouching there as he lay. His forehead sloped from his eyes to his crown. His hair grew in an unusual pattern from the double crown where started a wedge or triangle that came low on the forehead, the hair lying forward in a thick yellowish stubble,(p.60)

Ben was an unwelcomed child . He gets unusual emotions from parent. He can only express himself through violence. There was none of atmosphere of festival which to welcome the fifth child. Shriver argues that:

When you're the parent, no matter what the accident, no matter how far away you were at the time and how seemingly powerless to avert it, a child's misfortune feels like your fault. You're all your kids have, and their own conviction that you will protect them is contagious. So in case you expect, Franklin, that I'm simply setting about one more time to deny culpability, to the contrary. Broadly, it still feels like my fault, and broadly, it felt like my fault at the time (2003, p.285).

Harriet becomes tired of feeding Ben, since he needs special care and more milk: “her breasts were painful. Making more milk than they ever had had to do, her chest swelled into two bursting white globes long before the next feed was due”...I'm going to put him on the bottle,' she said to Dorothy, who was watching this battle with the look, it seemed to Harriet”(p.64). Ben's need to his mother requires extra energy, therefore, she shows no ordinary feeling of motherhood who is assumed to enjoy feeding her child, she decided to deprave him and feed him milk by a bottle. It seems no one could love him.

Gradually Ben's behavior developed, he "had grabbed the hand and pulled Paul hard against the bars, bending the arm deliberately backward"(p.75). As a result of the aggressive behavior of Ben toward his youngest brother, no one can inform the children to observe Ben after this incident. His energy and reliance make everyone surprise. They avoid him because he enjoys fighting that what isolated him from others. Harriet cannot tolerate her son's aggressive behaviour "The trouble is, you get used to hell,' said Harriet. 'After a day with Ben I feel as if nothing exists but him. As if nothing has ever existed" (p.79).

Ben continued his behaviours with aggressiveness to fight and kill the animals to get the attention of every one to give him love and take care of him but the opposite happens; they keep away from him and the mother starts thinking that Ben could hurt his brothers and sisters. Then she says, "I'm not going to let you destroy us, you won't destroy me ..."(p.80). Harriet becomes nervous around Ben for nothing but because she can't enjoy traveling to France. The discrimination between Ben and his siblings is very obvious, they kiss everyone except Ben. Ben's bad behavior is resulted from the rejection of his family to him as Thurer points out, "There are no bad children, only bad parents." (Thurer , 1994, p.22)

They decided to get rid of Ben just because they can't bear his energetic and disability of understanding his life, family and world so they plan to dump their kid to enjoy their life, ignoring the motherhood ,fatherhood and their responsibility towards their children(egoism). Harriet went to north of London to get back her fifth child (Ben) after throwing him away, she is shocked at his miserable life. they killed his childhood because of their egoism. They treat him badly and enforce him to wear a strain -jacket just to keep him calm and give him pill whenever he is hyperactive.

"She remarked, 'They were killing him,' and saw that David would not forgive her for saying this in front of the children. All showed fear"(p.104). Harriet justified her decision of bringing back Ben and claiming that people want to kill him, forgetting that she and David sent him to that place. Then she starts to treat him as a dangerous one. "That night she locked the door on him, and bolted it, left him undrugged and hoped he would sleep. He did, but woke, screaming in fear."(p108) Ben again "backed himself against the wall, squatted on the bed, and looked at the door where his jailers would enter: he had not really understood he was at home." Harriet left Ben alone and locked the door because she is afraid that Ben may get the intention of hurting his brothers and sisters, she treats him as a prisoner

who is captured in the jail (p.108). Nothing is changed in Ben's life. Home is more uncomfortable. He neither trusts his family nor do they.

Harriet does not treat Ben like her other children while she keeps locking his door; "other children locked their doors quietly from inside. This meant Harriet could not go in to them to see how they were before she went to bed, or if they were sick. She did not like to ask them not to lock their doors, nor make a big thing of it by calling in a locksmith." The children are afraid that their brother (Ben) come to their rooms, they look at him as a monster who make disturbs them and hurt them. On the other hand Ben is always surprised by their behaviour "and several times he did arrive silently in the doorway and stare in at this scene, which he could not understand"(p.115).

The children continue locking their doors, it's like there is monster out of door, the parents do not comment on this situation as they know the cause of all are frightened of Ben. So they excluded him from their life; no interaction between them, even his father (David) he never kisses, carries or plays with him as he did with others. These behavior and neglect of the existent of Ben make climax of the situation towards his family. Dr Gilly said, 'I'm going to come straight to the point, Mrs. Lovatt. The problem is not with Ben, but with you. You don't like him very much' (p.124).

Dr. Gilly discusses the opinion when Harriet took Ben to him to examine him; he said that he is within the range of normality except that their family doesn't accept him as he is. He notes that Harriet looks at the children who surrounding her son and accept him to be their leader as "stupid, awkward, and unable to match up to their contemporaries, liked Ben because he was even clumsier and more inarticulate than they."(p.146) But unlike her thought , the reality shows how Ben "was the most envied in the school and a lot of boys, not only the truants and drop-outs, wanted to be part of it."(p.146) Therefore, her expectation does not come true, as far as "the fifth child" grows up. He has a chance to get good companions who affect his behavior and make him confident. Moreover his shadow changes from being aggressive to be friendly and lovely.

Conclusion

The parents humiliate Ben, as a result, Ben first becomes depressed and aggressive, he hurts the people and animal who come close to him. On the other hand, he challenges this reject by making friendship with other boys in the neighborhood, and then he becomes their boss, because he finds his

match. His mother thought that they were stupid, awkward and unable to match their contemporaries. The more people become dissatisfied of their life, the more they destruct their life. In spite of the absence of the intimacy and love in the family, Ben appears to be a strong character. He turns the rejection in a positive power which makes him a leader of a group of friends, together they make a team full of energy and adventure. Ben is a symbol of challenge, a power which turns the abnormal situation to be a source of getting up again. The ego of others and their rejection cannot stop the positive power inside the individual. He can turn everything to fit his needs and wishes. With good companionship, Ben changes to be a normal and lovely person. The paper concludes that with the end of rejection and the start of acceptance, the positive behavior will appear changing the negatives of the destructive behavior to creativity.

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الباحث الاول

ولدت الدكتورة وداد علاوي صدام في بغداد .العراق. اكلت البكالوريوس في جامعة بغداد سنة ٢٠٠٥ ومن ثم اكلت الماجستير في جامعة بغداد كلية التربية ابن رشد قسم اللغة الانكليزية سنة ٢٠١٠. حصلت على الدكتوراه من جامعة بوترا الماليزية سنة ٢٠١٧.

لدى الدكتورة وداد شعف كبير بتدريس الأدب الإنجليزي. قامت بالتدريس في كليات وجامعات مختلفة كالتدريس في كلية التربية ابن رشد قسم اللغة الانكليزية. . انضمت إلى مهاراتها البحثية ونشرت بعض المقالات في المجالات المتميزة. هدفها هو التميز في إجراء البحوث والتقدم في التدريس فيما يتعلق بالأدب الإنجليزي

The first researcher:

Widad Allawi Saddam was born in Baghdad, Iraq. She completed her bachelor in University of Baghdad. Then she completed her Master degree of English literature in 2011. She earned her phd in English literature/post colonial studies with focus on Native American literature in university of Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2017.

Dr. Widad has a huge passion regarding teaching English literature. She taught literature and English language in different colleges and universities like college of Education. Ibn Rushd. She has joined her research skills and published some papers in distinguished magazines. Her aim is to excel both in conducting research and advancing in teaching regarding English literature .

الباحث الثاني :

ولدت الست رشا حاتم عبد في بغداد. اكلت دراسة البكالوريوس في جامعة بغداد كلية التربية ابن رشد ٢٠٠٠ ثم اكلت دراسة الماجستير في الادب الانكليزي في جامعة بونا. الهند عملت معاون رئيس مترجمين في وزارة التربية. عملت كمحاضر في جامعة بغداد. وهي عضو في المجلس الثقافي البريطاني ولديها كتب وابحاث مترجمه ومنشورات في مواضيع تربية مختلفة.

The second researcher

Rasha Hatem was born in Baghdad, Iraq. She completed her bachelor in University of Baghdad. Then she completed her Master degree of English literature in English literature in India. She worked as lecturer in Baghdad University. She worked as a member in British Council. She has publications and researchers in different education subject.