

Psychosomatic Impediments: A Study of Lucy Christopher's Novel *Stolen*

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Abstract

This paper entitled Psychosomatic Impediments: A Study of Lucy Christopher's novel *Stolen* tries to venture the psychological problems of an individual result from the emotional problems of early childhood. It also traces how the fragmented childhood of an individual becomes a root cause for the psychological problems in adulthood. Through the character Ty in the novel *Stolen*, the problems of fragmented childhood is clearly analyzed in this paper.

Keywords: obsession, fragmented childhood, frustration, love

Lucy Christopher's *Stolen* is a renowned novel which stresses on kidnapping and psychological abuse along with the naturalistic inscape of the desert. In the novel *Stolen*, Christopher wants her young readers to think and question their relationships, especially driven by the hormonal changes. Christopher discusses her debut novel *Stolen* as an

important novel for young women to read. She also stresses the boundaries between love, self-control and obsession. Her character Ty's attachment towards Gemma is not love but prolonged obsession. Gemma's infatuation towards Ty in the beginning gives rise to her problems. Towards the end of the novel, the author portrays Gemma's personal strength and uprightness and how she tackles to distance herself from the problematic Ty.

Childhood is considered as an important period for the growth and development of human beings. In this world, it is necessary for each and every living organism to be taken care of. Human beings need more care and concern during their early years as they are very fragile. In the days of childhood the role of mother is inevitable. Any child needs indisputable care from its mother and from those around it. During the early days, the baby does not have the ability to satiate its basic needs. The child draws the attention of its mother or the caretaker by crying. Usually, the mother deems to be the lovable caretaker in the early years.

A child who lacks the early care and concern often develops into a fragmented personality compared to children who have a good childhood. Some theorists consider that the relationship that develops between mother and child during the early period of its development acts as the prototype for the child's sense of basic trust and the foundation for its later development. This shows the importance of early years under mother's care. In the novels *Stolen* readers can see the problems of fragmented childhood.

The protagonist in the novel *Stolen* is predominantly prone to dysfunctional behaviour. His fragmented childhood is one of the major causes for his dysfunctional behavior. In each and everyone's life, childhood plays a pivotal part as it has close connection to the psychic development. According to Tyson, "our adult personality is the result of the emotional experiences we had while growing up" (Tyson 83).

In the novel *Stolen*, Ty's problematic childhood is revealed through his undesirable social behavior. Ty is not a born criminal, his frustration and prolonged expectation to be loved makes him an abductor. He has many good qualities within himself. Though, he desperately needs Gemma by his side, he changes his mind in order to save her from death. He is entirely engulfed by the thoughts of saving her from death. In this perspective he is quite different from a conventional kidnapper.

Generally captors who kidnap little girls abuse them sexually and torture them by cruel punishments, if they do not oblige to them. They try to keep them under their control by confining them. Ty is an exceptional captor. He gives Gemma maximum freedom within the confined territory. His love and care for Gemma are seen on their way to the mining area. For instance, Ty supports her mentally to be strong, he says, "You just need to wait it out. I'm here, and I know how to help. Just don't panic" (*Stolen* 249). He is entirely blinded by his love for Gemma, which is the reason behind his idea of kidnapping Gemma.

Family is a great source of one's early emotional experience. Only from the family a child learns the way of relating to others and also it helps the child to develop a sense of self. Psychoanalysts are "more interested in understanding the origin of psychological problems rather than the origin of psychological strengths" (Tyson 83). Lois Tyson is a renowned psychologist who says only a family can support one and help them to overcome their obstacles in life. In the novel *Stolen*, the major cause for the psychological problems in the main characters is closely analyzed.

Tyson in her *Using Critical Theory: How to Read and Write about Literature* has given a clear account of the defenses to keep themselves away from the experience which are repressed and the core issues which are responsible for the self-destructive behaviour. It is

said that one's adult personality is the result of emotional experience one has while growing up.

Christopher portrays her protagonist Ty's unfulfilled desire to be loved by someone truly is what makes him a male prostitute and a kidnapper. He sells his body just to get money to build a world of his own. He tells her everything to make her understand how much he loves her. He says, "I was a professional dater. I went out with whoever wanted me, and I was whoever they wanted me to be: James Bond, Brad Pitt, Superman..." (*Stolen* 167). His unconditional love makes him forget about the moral code of the society. Childhood experiences like sibling rivalry, envy, insecurity, loneliness and many other factors also contribute for the shaping of adult personality. Due to the lack of good childhood experiences, he suffers from a damaged adulthood.

Family is a place where a child gets its psychological development. Ty does not get this development in his family. Ty's complicated childhood is the core of his dysfunctional behavior. Ty's parents get separated at his young age. The familial bond gets manipulated after the separation of Ty's mother and father. Ty is educated by Mrs. Gee and the local aborigines. He does not know that there are many kids living in this world like him. It is evident from his conversation with Gemma in the middle of the novel. Ty says, "I thought I was the only one in the world. I mean, Mrs. Gee told me that there were others, but I didn't believe her" (*Stolen* 87).

Ty becomes a failure in life as he does not have the proper love and care in his early days. He becomes psychologically impaired and obsessed with Gemma as if she is his only consolation. Ty's life becomes distorted due to his early fragmented childhood. This paper shows the importance of one's early days and how it becomes responsible for the course of one's entire life.

Works Cited

Christopher, Lucy. *Stolen*. Chicken House, 2010.

Tyson, Lois. *Using Critical Theory: How to Read and Write about Literature*. Routledge, 2011.