

"THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN": POWER STRUGGLE IN FORMING FAMILY RELATIONS

Assist Lecturer. Danear Jabbar AbdulKareem

General Directorate of Education in Diyala

Danearjabbar1990@yahoo.com

مدرس مساعد دانيار جبار عبدالكريم

مديرية العامة للتربية في ديالى

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the representation of power over others. The tools to control others, is to treat them like the capitalist treat their workers. This kind of notion is presented in the novel The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom. The power struggle better represented and defined by Marxism, therefore the representation in The Five People You Meet in Heaven is different from the relation between the classic capitalist and their workers. This study will take the Marxist representation to another level, and uses the family relation rather than the **ruling class-working class** ones in the novel, the father will be the **ruling class** who tries to use his power and authority over his wife and children whom considered as **working class** in this study.

Keywords: power, Mitch Albom, family relations, ruling class, working class, authority, neglect.

الخلاصة

تتناول هذه الدراسة تأثير السلطة على الآخرين. أدوات السيطرة على الآخرين هي معاملتهم كما يعامل الرأسمالي عماله. يتم تقديم هذا النوع من الفكرة في رواية The Five People You Meet in H Heaven للكاتب Mitch Albom. إن الصراع على السلطة تم تمثيله وتعريفه بشكل أفضل من خلال الماركسية، وبالتالي فإن التمثيل في The Five People You Meet in H Heaven يختلف عن العلاقة بين الرأسمالي الكلاسيكي وعماله. ستأخذ هذه الدراسة التمثيل الماركسي إلى مستوى آخر، وتستخدم العلاقة الأسرية بدلاً من الطبقة العاملة - الطبقة الحاكمة في الرواية، حيث سيمثل الأب دور الطبقة الحاكمة التي يحاول من خلاله استخدام قوته و سلطته على زوجته وأولاده والذين يعتبرون الطبقة العاملة في هذه الدراسة. الكلمات المفتاحية: السلطة، Mitch Albom، العلاقات الأسرية، الطبقة الحاكمة، الطبقة العاملة، السلطة، الإهمال.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, novel must compete with other form of writing in order to gain the attention of scholar and general audience. Writing novel may be different from other types of writing, because it works as a reflection of real life and tackles everyday issues and matters. As stated by Wellek and Warren, novel is "a picture of real life and manners" (1973, 216). Novel is a fictional story that has extrinsic and intrinsic elements. Perrine stated that novels are usually an experience of the life of the author (1966, 41). The author makes efforts to display the real life through the events of the novel. The writer rebuilds the events with imagination which reflected in the characters' lives. Yet, a novel should be an entertainment tool for the reader. It means we have to enjoy the story and the lessons that it carries. That's why it must be interesting at all times, and must have a structure and purpose and it should be affective and coherent (Wellek & Warren, 1973, 212). Albom could be one of those writers who get into the world of writing novel because of real life experiences. He had a bachelor degree in sociology and after graduation he performed as a musician and recorded number of songs. Then, he got his master degree in journalism and MBA from Columbia's School of Business and worked as sports journalist in New York. In 1995, he met his old professor Morrie Schwartz who was suffering from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. This encounter intrigued him to write his first novel Tuesdays with Morrie (1997) and started a career as a writer. He used this overwhelming moments that is full of human emotion and feeling to his artistic achievement. (Rahmahwati,

2014)Moving on, writing of his other novel *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* (2003) is also has something to do with his personal experience and his uncle Eddie is the source of his inspiration (Sangraula, 2011). The *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* was very successful and in (2004) turned into TV movie and it was the most watched TV movie of the year within more than 19 million viewers. The novel is about a person named Eddie, who is an old veteran that got wounded in the war. After the war he worked at amusement park. Later, he was killed by a falling cart in the park when he tried to save a little girl. Eddie is considered the protagonist and the main character around whom the story centers. The only positive side was his mother who supported him and took a good care of him. But unfortunately she could not do anything when his father abused and neglected him. This verbal and emotional negligence lead Eddie to question his worth every time and he always tried to do something that made his father proud but unfortunately that never happened. Many approaches might be appropriate and applicable to analyse *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* but Marxism fits better because of the industrial era that witness a lot of power struggle and problem. The power struggle affected the family within itself and breaks its bond and closeness. Therefore, this research will look into this family connection in details and try to understand this unhealthy psychological relationship in the family which seems very trekking and unstable. The father has the power over his wife and children and he gains his power from his position as a head of the household who is taking care of his family. He never treat his wife and children the way it should be. He treats them the way the ruling class treating the working class and he takes the position of the employer.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the years, the family prepares its member to accept and deal with the power of authority. This power is represented by the father which the children has no alternative but to accept. In the beginning of the bourgeois era the authority was rational when certain situation accrue. This power of authority became a condition of historical progress because the authority of the father was not always arbitrary but deep-rooted in the practice experience in production. (Shaw, 1985)Bases of rationality is absent in the current world. The father gain his authority and power through his possession of money. This domination of power is independent of personal and moral qualities that's why we can't give it any moral justification anymore. If the children does not have any independent means in life, then they have to continue to deal with the patriarchal power in spite of its inequalities (Folbre, 1982). Therefore, the children has nothing but to learn and surrender their will and try to adapt and deal with the existing conditions. The power and authority of father was at the expense of the mother. The way the power was distributed was very helpful to the development of capitalism at early ages because it helps to boost the required performance that is rooted firmly in the mental structure of people which does not need to be imposed from outside. The authority of the father has helped in schooling and disciplining the children in accepting that authority. Within a little training, the performance of individual was enhanced in accepting and obeying the power of authority. (Horkheimer, 2002)The power and relation between the father from one side and the mother and children from another side is a bit challenging because of the distribution of authority. In order to showcase and understand the power of authority is better to use Marxism and the notion of power and control through the power of economy. According to Marxism, Economy is one of the main elements that resulted in the gap between the bourgeoisie and proletariat and the causes of this inequality lie "in the organization of capitalism itself." (Ritzer, 1992, 468). The same struggle could be found in the same family and each member of them could represent one side of this classification.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Marxism is a theory of value and it based on labor. Which are the economy for all the institutions and social actions (Berlin, 1963). The value that based on labor creates a disruption in the society in general and maybe in the core of the same family Understanding the family "in Marxist terms" is to relate it to the "overall mode of capitalist production" (Gerstein, 1973, 103). Such determination by economic relationships needs that the processes which define the family be constituted so as to give rise to inputs essential to the economic order. The constitution of the family as a social organization seems to require that it is considered as an economic organization. Marxism positions power as the real base (Marx, 1844) (Tyson, 2006). This power and authority that the father has over the rest of the members of the family is fed by his controlling of the families economy and mean of production. That's why Marx and Engels stated that the actions and human institutions are economically determined and that the class struggle is the basic agency of historical change (Marx, 1859, 20). This struggle between classes affects families within itself not only the labor- master relationship. Class structure depends on economic relation in dividing the people and creates the conflict between the two parts of the society (Korsch, 1963). Any distinction in such relation always leads to struggle and as a result of that people get

oppressed due to their economic situation. In this study, the father falls under the umbrella of capitalism who does not care about the workers whom are the wife and children. He never takes them seriously and it seems they have no voice to be heard in this household because he is the one who takes care of them financially.

METHODOLOGY

Power and authority is the essential cause of producing the relationship between the father and the rest of the family. Being the provider gave him the power and the say in the house, no one has a voice and they have to listen and obey him plus dealing with his negligence and temper. This way of treatments teaches Eddie how to be a discipline person which helps the capitalist to have a discipline worker that give his full commitment to produce maximum profit despite minimal wage that they provide. This study shows how much power is affecting the main characters of the novel. Big part of this power is being represented by the father against his wife and children. It also shows how the notion of the ruling class is represented by the father as a 'rights' towards his wife and children who will be considered as the working class in this particular study. In addition, this paper shows how much the characters had been affected by their position in the society and their respect to their self being. Albom discusses these issues that affects the American society\family through the setting of the novel and showed how people were affected by these values which determined by the economy. The gap in the economy creates a big struggle even in the same family which leads to some kind of negligence, oppression and deprivation eventually.

THE ANALYSIS

The class struggle is the basic pattern in history which is applied widely in literary works. There is always a struggle between the working class and the ruling class and it is this conflict that brings people to ruin. In the novel *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* there is a different kind of representing of social classes i.e. The struggle is within the family and also inside the person himself/herself by thinking they are nobody and they did nothing great in their life. Eddie is a good and a clear example of this phenomenon, his way of thinking always creates a conflict in his mind. His father always let him to feel that he did not do anything great in the course of his life, and this leads him to be miserable till the last moment of his life. The relationship between Eddie and his father is one of the important once to focus on. His father always portrays his ruffian character instead of his love towards Eddie. This then opens up the possibility to see the similarity between the father and the figure of capitalist, which often seen as the power that oppresses people. Eddie's father being rough to him and the way he treats him almost the same how the ruling class is treating the working class in Marxists point of view. He did not care about him at all and all he cares about is playing card and drinking. Once Mickey put his hand under Eddie and flipped him dangling by his feet, the mother came to rescue not the father. The mother shouted "Careful, Mickey!" Eddie's mother yells. Eddie's father looks up, smirks, then returns to his card game" (Albom, 2003, 15). The people that are inferior are expected to obey the superior just because they are relying on them to survive. Eddie is his father's son. So, he cannot disobey him whether he likes it or not because his father feeds him. This is clear when he has an argument with his older brother. The moment his father shouted and looked at Eddie he went silent and stopped complaining. Eddie winces. He hates having to wear Joe's old things. "Stop wiggling," his mother says. "They HURT!" Eddie whines. "Enough!" his father yells. He glares at Eddie. Eddie goes silent. (Albom, 2003, 27-28) Eddie's father was not supportive of his children. He was an aggressive drunk man that that worked at Ruby Pier park. He usually came back home drunk and treat Eddie and his older brother in a very bad and violent way. This treatment affected the children in their independent life later on. This behavior and the way he treated his children influenced Eddie's and Joe's life too. He used to lash his anger upon them when he lost at playing cards and the bottles of alcohol had been emptied. He brought his anger to Joe and Eddie's life when "He raked through the meager toys, hurling them against the wall. Then he made his sons lie face down on the mattress while he pulled off his belt and lashed their rear ends, screaming that they were wasting his money on junk" (Albom, 2003, 61). Moving on, we can see that the element of power struggle that can be seen when the wife is helpless while their children is being slapped by her husband. Even though she is one of the parents but in this situation she cannot help her children being beaten by her husband. She just stands there beside them, looking helplessly. This then proves how significant the power that her husband holds as the leader of the family while she can only sit there and watch. In this case, Marxism makes people seem to be governed by structures and power and those who are in the working class as seen as merely puppets. The wife does not agree with the way her husband treats their children, but she can only stand there and keep her mouth shuts. Yes, she is seen as someone that runs the house entirely but at the same time her role is seen as least significant by her husband. When he used to beat them, they pray that their mother come to rescue but their father warned her and

told her to "stay out of it. She stand in the hallway, "helpless as he was, made it all even worse" (Albom, 2003, 61). This is happening maybe due the fact that they live in the era where the voice of a woman is seen negligible and unimportant because the father has the authority as a provider and someone responsible financially. Eddie did not felt his acceptance in his father's eyes. Therefore, he always looked for approval and love. Despite his working from a young age, he never praises him. This treatment create a sad feeling inside him which he never felt good enough. Eddie envied his brother because he looks clean while Eddie's fingernails stained with grease. Eddie used to flick them trying to get them cleaned but he stopped when he noticed that his father looking at him (Albom, 2003, 62) Eddie never wanted to end up like his father that's why he has no desire to work at the park. He wanted to get a better life in order to flee the oppression that his father practice over him. He got more oppression the older he got which leads him to dream to be an engineer, and to be something that his father might be proud of eventually. His father did not want him to go to university rather working at Pier like himself, he snapped when he heard that Eddie want to be an engineer "What? This ain't good enough for you?" And later, when he'd suggested Eddie take a job there after high school, Eddie almost laughed, and his father again said, "What? This ain't good enough for you?" (Albom, 2003, 73) It was not easy to be an engineer when his father did not agree and did not helped him that's why he found something faster to try to get his self-worth. That is why he decided to participate in the war. His family support him and make him a cake which is a symbol of family connection written on it "Good luck! Fight hard!" (Albom, 2003, 77). But when his father knew about the news he "lit a cigarette and blew the smoke out slowly. "When?" was all he asked" (Albom, 2003, 33). When Eddie is being saved from the WWI and he is being admitted to the hospital, his family comes to visit him including his mother, brother and wife. They all go to his bed and welcomed him back from Philippine and glad that he is save. However, it does not happen to his father. Instead of getting closer to him, he chooses to stand near the window and watching him from quite a distance. He looked down at Eddie and "Eddie tightens every muscle in his body and attempts, by sheer will, to force the tears back into their ducts" (Albom, 2003, 63). It seems that Eddie still ask for his father's approval and acceptance but he did not care like how the Capitalist really does not have to concern about their workers. No matter how bad the worker has gotten into, they just ignore it. The only one who supports Eddie to seek his dreams is his mother who loves him unconditionally. His mother Marguerite also plays a big role in his life by supporting him especially when he came back from the war and accepting and loving him with his leg injury which is caused by his captain through the war. Eddie loses connections to friends and family as a result to what happened to him and his feeling of being nobody anymore. He was depressed but his father saw that as a weakness that is why he got agitated with him every day. His father still not proud of him in spite of his participating in the war and getting injured which caused him to walk with a cane for the rest of his life. He pushed him to start to work rather than just sitting at home. For the first time Eddie got angry which causes a greater gap between them. His father shouted at him and repeated "Get up," he yelled now, his words slurring, "and get a job". The old man was wobbling, but he came toward Eddie and pushed him. "Get up and get a job! Get up and get a job! Get up . . . and . . . GET A JOB!" (Albom, 2003, 63) Eddie stores a lot of regret and anger about his life internally. His father's way of treatment was the main reason that he stores that hatred toward him even after his death, believing he is the reason and blaming him for ruining his life. He had the feeling of being nobody and worthless because of his father's way of treatment. That's why he felt nobody even when he sacrifice his life trying to rescue the little girl. He keeps asking "Did I save the little girl? At the pier. Did I save her?" then Eddie slumped. "Then my death was a waste, just like my life" (Albom, 2003, 29). Finding a job was very helpful to be independent and get by financially. Getting by financially will give Eddie the independent and authority to control his life's decisions. It would also help him to get away from his father's control and bad way of treatments. Having the financial capability was the answer to most of the struggles that Eddie and his mother going through that caused by his father and the society. Luck of incomes helped the oppressor to hold his oppression and power over the oppressed ones.

CONCLUSION

In short, power is playing a major role to form the relationship even in the same family. The family bonds through power and control. In the novel *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, the family characters relationship is like the relationship of capitalist with the worker, here the father represents the power of the capitalist while the wife and children are the workers that never been taking seriously and has no power to determine their self being in the family decisions. Therefore, this paper shows how much the characters had been affected by their position in the society and their respect to their self being. In addition, this study shows how much power and authority is affecting the main characters of the novel which is having no voice and say in whatsoever Materialism is the

mean of the power that the father had over his wife and children. This kind of treatments leads to some kind of oppression that the Marxist highlights in their view about the relationship between the ruling class which represented by the father in this particular paper and the working class which represented by the wife and son. Finally, this paper takes the notion and Marxist believes to a different dimension that does not involve employer-employee kind of relationship but still reflects the power of employer over the employee clearly.

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