

Socio-psychological Factors as Crime Motives in Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" and Sherzad Hassan's "Siege and my Father's Dogs": A Comparative Study

Hardi Hassan Mawlood¹ and Bushra Osman Sidiq²

¹ Master in Kurdish Literature, Ministry of Education, Iraq.

² Master in English Literature, Garmian University, English Department, Iraq.

Abstract: Literature is that mirror through which Society's features can be seen, it can also show the special elements of the same society. Furthermore, the literature of any community is a representation of its people behavior that is why one can say that poets and writers are society's voice. Thus, Feodor Dostoyevsky, the famous Russian writer, is one of those writers who very well understand his society and this is clearly seen in his literary works. For example: "Crime and Punishment" is one of his most famous works all over the world, in this work he explains all the social, cultural, financial, psychological, and political aspects of his society and the people of that society. Likewise, in the Kurdish literature world there is Sherzad Hassan, a well-known and contemporary writer, in his novel "Siege and my Father's Dogs," the same aspects as Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" are shown.

This study has been chosen for one main reason: in contemporary research, there is a tendency to focus on comparative study as to show the differences between two or more society in all aspects of life. Three different methods will be followed in the research: analytical, explanatory, and comparative. As for the aim of the research, is to point out the shared socio-psychological aspects in both novels.

Keywords: Comparative Study, Crime and Punishment, Siege and my Father's Dogs, socio-psychological aspects, psychological factors

1. Introduction

Comparative literature is a branch of literary criticism and an excellent way to understand other nation's culture. Nowadays, comparative literature is highly rated as it does a lot to compare and contrast the literature of different nations. In Kurdish literature, it is important to work on this type of studies to let other nations get to know the Kurdish literature. For this reason, the authors of this paper have chosen two important works in the history of the Russian and Kurdish societies: "Crime and Punishment" and "Siege and my Father's Dogs". In these two novels, there are many aspects that can be compared and through them we will make the readers get to know both societies as literature is the reflection of its society. This paper argues that there a number of similarities between the two novel as far as sociological and psychological problems, all of these factors will lead to the act of crimes committed by the main characters.

2. A Short Introduction to Comparative Study and Comparative Literature

Comparative study is a kind of method that analyzes events, aspects, experiences and facts then put them together to find out differentiations and similarities between them (Mokhtarianpour 9-30). To be specific, in literature, recently this study has taken the attention of a great number of scholars all over the globe and Kurdish

scholars are no different. Comparative study in literature has many schools like: The French School, The German School, and the American school.

From the early part of the 20th century until WWII, the field of comparative literature was characterized by a notably empiricist and positivist approach, named the "French School", in which thinkers and scholars like Paul Van Tiegham experienced works forensically, searching for evidence of "origins" and "influences" between literary works from different nations often termed "rapport des faits". Therefore, a scholar might try to search how a particular literary idea or motif traveled between different nations over time. In the French School of Comparative Literature, the study of influences and mentalities over takes (Damrosch 99–112).

Like the French School, German Comparative Literature started in the late 19th century with the same principles as the French School of Comparative Literature, both school worked on different works that had similar backgrounds and emphasizing the detective work and detailed historical research that these schools had demanded. After World War II, the major developed largely thanks to one scholar in specifically, Peter Szondi (1929–1971), a Hungarian who worked and taught at the Free University Berlin (Lubrich 47-67). Lastly, the American School of Comparative Literature reacted to the French School, postwar scholars, together termed the "American School", tried to return the field to principles more directly concerned with literary criticism, not focusing on the detective work and detailed historical research that the French School had asked for. The American School was more aligned with the internationalist visions of Goethe and Posnett (working on reflecting the postwar request for international cooperation), looking for instances of humanely "truths" based on the literary prototype that came to life throughout literatures from all times and places (Ibid). So in this paper, the researchers follow the American School of Comparative Literature to compare between two works from two different nations that were written in two different timelines.

2.1. Short Synopsis on Both Novels

Both of the novels "Crime and Punishment" and " Siege and my Father's Dogs" are considered great literary works to the Russian and Kurdish societies. The first is written by Feodor Dostoyevsky (1821) who is one of the most prominent writers ever been in the history of literature in general and the history of Russian literature specifically. The second novel "Siege and my Father's Dogs," is written by Sherzad Hassan a Kurdish writer who was born in Irbil- Iraq in 1951.

"Crime and Punishment," first published in 1866, the novel is a psychological explanation of the poor former student Raskolnikov, who has the idea that he is an abnormal person able to use spiritual and supernatural responsibility of using evil means to make humanitarian goals, this leads him to the act of killing people. The act produces nightmare guilt in Raskolnikov (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rodion-Raskolnikov>).

On the other hand, "Siege and my Father's Dogs," first published in (1996) explains the difficult life of a Kurdish family who lives with a patriarch father that controls every bit of their life. The story is told from the point of view of one of his sons. This son lives with a great number of siblings that his father had from several marriages and they all live in one big castle without being able to get out from it. They are all held in the castle by their father who prevented them from ever getting married, he only let them work nonstop. All the family members have no right to speak or utter opinions on anything, the only thing that they are allowed to do is to work twenty four hours. The elder son is so angry with his father's behavior that's why, one day; he decides to kill him while he is asleep with one of his wives. Prior to this, a fortune teller tells the father that he is going to be killed by one of his sons. So, the elder son does kill his father and frees his siblings from the castle, but all of them confront the elder son and criticize him and accuse him of ruining their lives. Eventually, the elder son realizes that all those events were daydreams he was having and none of them were true (Hassan 9).

3. Sociological and Psychological Factors in "Crime and Punishment" and "Siege":

3.1. Sociological Factors: Economical Division or Class Differences

The economical state of any society changes the direction of it and divides it into two levels (classes), poor and rich. Therefore, because most of the riches make use of the poor to make themselves even richer, this action causes tension and clashes between the different classes. Karl Marx (1818-1883), the Communist writer and thinker has a direct opinion on this matter: "the clashes between different genders and classes, is unavoidable in any society" (Sharif 179).

The speaker and main character of "Crime and Punishment, Rasklinkove, explains the situation in Saint-Petersburg in Russia, as a city that has high regards for money. Thus, a great class division can be felt in the city and the buildings and places of the poor are almost destroyed and unlivable whereas, the riches live in high quality neighborhood and buildings. Raskolnikov gives a number of different reasons for murdering, as the story goes around the reasons as to why this young man does the act of killing. The clearest, strongest reason seems to be a wish to prove his ascendancy to the rest of humankind. But he also says: that he committed or that he did it only because of a need for cash. The narrator hints in Part I that Raskolnikov's physical hunger, the dirty environment in which he lives in, and his declined health might be reasons for making him as weak as to be able to take human lives as Dostoyevsky himself reveals it in his novel: "Human nature is not taken into account, it is excluded, it's not supposed to exist! ... They believe that a social system that has come out of some mathematical brain is going to organize all humanity at once and make it just and sinless in an instant, quicker than any living process!...The living soul demands life; the soul won't obey the rules of mechanics". (Dostoyevsky).

Similarly, the same social condition can be seen in "Siege and my Father's Dogs," the father considers himself as the main pillar of his society and the main breadwinner who without him everyone will die out of hunger, he is also the one who collected a huge fortune using the people of the siege including his own descendants. The writer, Hassan, states that most of rich people collected their money by making wrongdoings that is why that money at the end usually will be spent in vain. An example of this is showed when the main character kills his father, a grave digger appears named (Zewan), this Zewan takes a part of the money left by the father in return, he will not tell on the son who killed his father: " who will listen to Zewan, a Zewan who on that night when we buried our father, I had to give him my Arabic horse to buy his silence in order not to tell everyone that we killed our father," the elder son explains. (Hassan 13).

3.2. Sociological Factors: Injustice

Justice has always been one of the most important pillars of all societies, and it has always been one of the main causes that created the main conflicts of any Psychological novel. In both of the novels, injustice has been one of the main issues that creates the main clashes between the characters. And as it was already clarified, when justice is absent, crimes will rise up. In "Crime and Punishment," there are many incidents of injustices for example, the incident when Rasklinkov, the main character in the novel asks his colleague for money to help him and his family, but his friend's conditions are no better. Another instance is when the former employer Arkady starts to drink alcoholism and leaves his children sleep without any food. To top it off, that employer will die at the end of the novel when a cart run over him and ironically this cart is owned by a rich man! Rasklinov doesn't want to be silent while all that is happening around him that is why he decides to validate justice in his own way. As he explains: "why so far no one could have stopped all this injustices, grab their tails and send them right to hell" (Dostoyevsky 558-559).

The same takes place in "Siege and my Father's Dogs" the same injustice maybe in different aspect of life. Patriarchy is one of the main themes of this novel at the same time is one of the injustice of any society. This problem is greatly used in the novel by the character of the father. There are several instances where this action affects the lives of the rest of the characters, for example, the father is allowed to freely go out the siege

any time he wants, whereas his wives and children are not. On the top of this, all the children were deprived of marriage, but the father figure was getting married almost every year. The narrator takes the case further up when he says that even the animals in the siege were facing injustice and dealt with horribly. "I had to kill him, as I never met anyone who would have both: a stick to help him walk and another one to help him hit. That is why my father has always said: it is very difficult for a man to enter his home without any sticks," (Hassan 26) the Big Brother narrates.

3.3. Psychological Factors: Sex

One of the special things for human is sex and the sexual relationships between humans. Accordingly, this relationship and its perception changes from a society to another depending on some factors: religion and rules are among them. In the Russian society, at the time the novel was written, some words were used to describe such people who were doing sex in exchange of money like, (white face and prostitute). At the same time those people were given a yellow card to distinguish them from others. Sonia, one of the main characters in Dostoyevsky's novel and Raskolnikov's friend always carried a yellow card. Sonia's mother complains about this: "my daughter would have to carry a yellow card that is why she was not able to stay with us" (Dostoyevsky 40). In contrast, in siege's society sex is forbidden and limited only to be done by the father and this leads to an explosion of sexual desires once the father dies when all the women in the family start to do random and out of marriage sex(which is a taboo in this society) with their servants and strangers. The narrator (the big brother) talks about one incident where one of his sisters (Zulaikha) dies having sex with the grave digger, and how she dies while having sex as she doesn't know what is proper and what is not:" Zulaikha died that night, not out of happiness, no, dark blood was running all over the place, blood that had been collected for thirty years. It didn't stop." (Hassan 16).

3.4. Psychological Factors: Lack of Psychological Relief

It is agreed upon that class level and economical state have great effects on self-assurance and psychological relief. Both writers almost have close views on this: in "Crime and Punishment," the writer, has greatly explained the role of young people, but he also states the fact that they live miserable conditions. For example, Rasklinkove would have to quit college and more to this, he lives in the base of an ancient building of five floors. The writer describes Rasklinkove's character as sympathetic and loving who would spend every cent he owns to help others, he also loves a poor girl who would be known by people as the yellow card girl (prostitute) to get her daily bread and help out with her family. In one of the strongest quotations in the novel, Rasklinkove describes a poor boy who would like to pass by a rich neighborhood:" in a hot evening of July, a young boy went out of his small room in neighborhood (S) slowly stepping to bridge (G), each time he would pass by there, he would feel fear and great discomfort and the feeling of embarrassment was all over him." (Dostoyevsky 2006- 21).

The same is true for Hassan's novel, the main character always feels psychologically unease and always has a feeling that he wants to escape from the Siege that his father has built and put him and the rest of the family in. it is true that the father has built a siege for his family, but it lacks every conditions of living, it even doesn't have a proper bathroom as the narrator portrays. The pursuit of getting out from this siege and the desire to get freedom to him and his family, put the big brother in a hard psychological state: "it is wonder that I haven't died yet and still living, I live in the heart of darkness and humidity. Unfortunately, I lost all powers, I'm adapted to darkness just like a bat, but oh! I really desire a little light, it is a dream that I constantly have in my father's siege, and I want to grab a piece of light inside this darkness." (Hassan 12).

4. Conclusions

Russian literature and Kurdish literature both focus on their communities and this is clearly shown in this study by using comparative studies. The paper has got some conclusions: first, there are a number of Comparative Schools of Literature, but the best one so far is the American Scholl of Comparative Literature.

Second, both novels focus on the lives of young boys who don't know what to do because of the hardships of life. Third, both novels reflect on the importance of economy and money and its effect on shaping human life.

Fourth, both novels reflect the communities' desire for sex and how human being is weak when facing sex. Finally, both novels show the uneasiness of the individuals of the societies therefore, the focus on psychological problem is strongly expressed in both novels

5. Acknowledgements

First of all, I have to thank the Almighty who helped us to come up with this paper I would have to show appreciation and gratefulness to Emad Shukur and Hawar Karim who helped us by providing sources on the Kurdish Novel, we also would have to be thankful to those who assisted us even with one word.

References

- [1] Mokhtarianpour, Majid. *Islamic Model of Iranian Pattern Development Process Model*. The Pattern of Islamic Development of Iran, 2016, 4 (8), 9-30.
- [2] Damrosch, David, "Rebirth of a Discipline: The Global Origins of Comparative Studies", *Comparative Critical Studies, British Comparative Literature*, 3 (1): 99–112, 2006 ,retrieved Dec 18, 2011
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ccs.2006.0006>
- [3] Lubrich, Oliver, "Comparative Literature – in, from and beyond Germany", *Comparative Critical Studies, British Comparative Literature*, 3 (1): 47–67,2006, retrieved Dec 18, 2011
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ccs.2006.0012>
- [4] Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Rodion Raskolnikov". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 17 Feb. 2011,
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rodion-Raskolnikov>. Accessed 27 March 2022.
- [5] Hassan, Sherzad. *Siege and my Father's Dogs*, Kurdistan: Ghazalus publication house, 2011.
- [6] Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Translated by Raouf Begard, 1st ed, Ranj's publication house: Kurdistan. 2006.
- [7] Cohen, Bruce. *An Introduction to Sociology*. Translated by Hemin Sharif, Chwar Chra publication house: Sulimania, 2010