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IRAN'S PERSPETIVE: A DECONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS OF "A SEPARATION MOVIE" THROUGH APPLICATION OF BINARY OPPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This essay is a deconstructive and post-structural analysis of the movie "A Separation" or "Jodaei Nader Az Simin (original title)" written and directed by Asghar Farhadi, as the best Foreign Language Film of the Year 2011, through application of binary oppositional parallels of *Id vs. Ego*, *Bourgeoisie vs. working class of society*, *Logicality vs. Morality*, *Patriarchy vs. Matriarchy* and *Adulthood vs. adolescence* can represent the individuals serious problems rooting from their own negligence and discriminatory senses. It is scrutinized and divulged that not only is society the prime responsible for collapse of coherence of individuality and humanity, but also the inuring to one prospective reality by individuals gainsays the other priorities in which the lack of consciousness plays the principle role for their failures and devastations in the vital issues. Moreover, it is depicted that how morality plays as a key factor as control mechanism.

Key words: deconstructive, post-structural, binary oppositions, discrimination, id, ego, patriarchy, bourgeoisie, morality.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Separation, Jodaeiye Nader az Simin (original title) (2011) written and directed by Asghar Farhadi, It is a depiction of life of Nader and Simin arguing about living abroad. Simin prefers to live abroad to provide better opportunities for their only daughter, Termeh. However, Nader refuses to go because he thinks he must stay in Iran and take care of his father who suffers from Alzheimers. Nader is a decent man but a stubborn one, and he neglects his wife. Too proud to ask her to stay with him, he lets her move back to her mother's place while he and Termeh- a gravely serious girl who learns she must downgrade her principles in a society- are left together to look after his aged father with Alzheimer's disease. He hastily hires a poor woman named Raziye as a daytime caretaker later he fires her and shoves her out the door for suspicion of stealing his money. Later on, her husband Hoojat takes Nader to court for manslaughter of her un-born-child. In general this is a representation of two different classes of people that everybody is caught in a web of pride and ego, morality and so-called logicality, money and honor, Nader as a bourgeoisie and Raziye as a working class who stand in front of each other. Thereby, this study aims at surveying some binary oppositions existing between the individuals or classes to divulge the roots of the problems and further issues in which, in critical theory, it is the system by which, in language and thought, two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another (Smith, G. 1996) for instance, Man/Woman, Black/White, Life/Death, Inside/Outside, Presence/Absence which can reveal much structurally.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. ID VS. EGO, CONSCIOUSNESS VS. UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Most of our problems are rooted in our unconsciousness as Dr. Heffner (2002), states that Freud believed that the majority of what we experience in our lives, the underlying emotions, beliefs, feelings, and impulses are not available to us at a conscious level. It is interesting to see how Nader's father acts more of an unconscious as the main reason for Nader and Simin's separation' start because of Nader's father who suffers from Alzheimer and his opposition with leaving his father behind for migrating to a foreign country. His father, firstly, is a conscious reason for Nader's disagreement for going with Simin due to the fact that he wishes not to leave his father "[...]Simin says: his [father] doesn't know Nader is his son [...] Does he know you are his son? Nader says: nevertheless I do know he is my father". However, once the issue of Raziye's abortion shows up, all the attention and consciousness are deviated to the court of law and proving Nader's innocence, Raziye's claims and Termeh's conditions. Interestingly as Nader's father is constantly accompanying him, he is no longer the center of his attentions. Nevertheless, at the end of the movie when Nader is acquitted from committing any guilt of manslaughter, his father passes away (wearing the black clothes in Iran is the token of bewailing for a death of someone). However, it is axiomatically seen that while Nader's father is no longer in the way, they end up in the court again. It can be stated that Nader's father who was a conscious reason for their separation in the beginning, has become an unconscious reason for their separation now where there is no more reason left for their separation (the scene of Nader's and Simin's presence in the court). This matter is per se an indicative of the result which unconscious and immaturity are the main reasons of collapsing a life time and life's values though there can be other examples too.

2.2. BOURGEOISIE VS. PROLETARIATE

In this movie the distinctions between the middle class and working class is axiomatically depicted. Working class and bourgeois class in each community, display varied kinds of behavioral conflicts and expectations in opposition to each other. Rich societies reinforce the idea that the poor are dangerous (Morris, 1994). It has been since far that the poor or working classes are under oppression of the wealthy class of society. The bourgeoisie and aristocratic families in contrast with working class people which arose since 1970, access to higher social and political power (Metz 1987). This subject is axiomatically conspicuous. Nader and Simin are both educated and rather from rich families. In contrast, Raziye's family is from working and not well educated. In the beginning of the movie Nader, strangely, tries to treat them good and make trust on Raziye. He also puts his house key outside the door which shows he trusts his neighborhoods who are some like Nader himself. However, what is seen as the movie goes on is quite changed and blames Raziye to stealing his money, even without the slightest evidence yet Nader believes all his neighbors who are alike him. It shows the fact that the bourgeoisie regarded the workers as savages and the lower classes as barbarians (G. Leclerc 1979). As the movie goes on, a conversation between Termeh and her grandmother, as she is asking Termeh some history questions, reveals their real idea towards the low class people; *Termeh says: In Sassanid time, people were divided into two classes; bourgeoisie-royal and normal people's class, where suddenly her grandmother corrects her by saying: vulgar class* and "[...]what are they saying? They keep saying, our child, our child, talking as if his 18 year-old boy is murdered by a knife in the street". Next point to mention is that, they are so worried about Termeh's presence even in court of law which they think it might affect her, but they are totality ignorant about the little girl of Raziye who has to be sitting there for long times days and days.

2.3. LOGICALITY VS. MORALITY

Aristotle believed that morality is a quality which makes a man shaped and good as well as empowering him to perform his tasks in the best way possible. It's a propitious output when his doings are away from extremism and squandering (Mirian Far 2006). The more poverty a nation has, the higher the "religiosity, morality" in that nation. In general, richer countries and families are less religious than poorer ones (Barry Ritholtz 2010). What we are seeing is by no means varied from these creeds as there is a parallel contrast between the moral beliefs of Raziye as a representative of poor class of society who is highly moral and Nader as a representative of upper-middle class of society who abuses the moral thoughts of Raziye for his personal benefits. Generally, morality is the true shaper of

Raziyeh as it is of Nader, though with two distinctive trends. Nader's lack of morality and Raziyeh's morality are the contrastive points causing both to trouble each other. Morality is a mechanism for social control (Bertram H. 1999) as well as it will help maintain a social order that can include exploitation and oppression (Vin-Opocet Wilmot 2012). Hence, Raziyeh is a redneck morality follower figure whereas Nader is a so-called morality believer who manipulates it whenever his logic orders. As an example, Raziyeh somewhere is taking care of Nader's father when she is faced with a situation that he has done in his pants, but the first thing she does, is calling a clergyman whose number she carries along all the times in her note which shows her constant grasp with Islam's rules; *I've come as a housekeeper for taking care of an old man but he's pissed in his pants. Because he can't, I want to know if I can change him and if it is a sin according to Islam?* Worth noting that when Nader is going to give ransom to Raziyeh, as they had already settled the matters, he wants her to swear to Quran against what was to be done for further settlement of the issue, which pins Raziyeh's family doom. The abuse of her morality is so explicit in the end of the movie.

2.4. PATRIARCHY VS. MARTIARCHY

In movie, the oppression and negligence of woman is explicitly depicted in a third-world society, as Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* states "to emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bear to man" (Bressler 2007). A worldwide issue as however, it is vital to parallel the man and the woman in Islamic societies due to the fact that Islamic society's rules are much varied with the rest of the developed un-Islamic ones. It is based on this Quranic hadith that 'God has created men and women equally' as Pisan states the same as "God created men and women as equal beings" (Bressler 2007 p. 171). Though the un-equalities have always been between men and women from which men are normally given the most power and rights. This is no exception for Islamic societies.

Nader and Simin, as representative of Iranian culture and society man and woman, are encountered together in the court of law where they both are disputing over getting the custody of Termeh, though, Nader is enfranchised so and the law also supports him. He looks to know that he is over-powering Simin in decision making and choice right through abusing his natural superior distinctions. This is by no exception different with what Simon de Beauvoir (1949) states that societies are patriarchal [...] and woman becomes the Other, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male (Bressler 2007 p.172-3). The scene of playing hand-football right after Simin leaves the house to go and live with her mom, represents the climax of playing and negligence of all the important values from Nader's side. Nader as a dictator just considers his own benefits through using the patriarchal and social power which he never backs down. It is substantiated in some scenes as following; 1. Despite the fact that he knew Raziyeh was conceiving a baby, he pushed her outside though he denied any acknowledgment; however, when Termeh proved him that he could have known the truth of Raziyeh's baby, he keeps his manhood and plays a fast and loose game through using his glib-tongue, turns the table toward himself to make Termeh believe that he didn't do anything wrong at all. 2. When Nader is going to jail because he doesn't have any bail to get out and is forced to go to penitentiary, Simin brings him a bail but he sees it a devastation of his manhood in front of his wife. Next time when they are arguing about the pressures which Termeh is shouldering not only Nader accepts his faults but also yells scolds Simin nastily and that she can get her bail back from the court of law because it is a stigma if he is out with her bail. It is contrary with feminism beliefs in Iran as Najmabadi (1998) points out that "these years are the years of growth and thriving for women to fight for their rights and worth". Overall, patriarchy is serving as one of the main reasons and roots for all the upcoming problems in his and other's lives.

2.5. ADULTHOOD VS. ADOLESCENCE

Adulthood is the world of maturity and wise which stands in contrast with the world of adolescence, the world of experience, personality molding, growth and social acceptance. Children in their childhood possess special traits such as recreation, curiosity, surveillance and scrutinizing look (Haghshenas 2011) which means they shape based on what they behold. Of these ages, the most sensitive and delicate is the age of puberty especially for girls which start at the age of 10-15 (Dr. Boeree 2009). Their parents are their most available shapers and behavioral paradigms and what is expected of parents is to be correct ones. Interestingly, in the Separation movie, this issue is so broadly represented as clearly as possible. Here we are confronted with the struggles of these two generations, adulthood and adolescence. Nader as the father tries to take Termeh under his supervision to teach her how to learn and to be a grown up girl. Since beginning of the movie, Nader teaches the sensible and delicate 12 year old Termeh not to accept the wrong thing no matter who says that. Though, as the movie goes on, it is witnessed that Nader is bending

these laws for his benefits wherever needed. Termeh as a growing adolescent is exposed into this contradictions of adulthoods, that's why Termeh is showing some signs of premature adulthood. Termeh, likewise, as it is witnessed, lies in the court of law without even being told, just to support and keep his father in the family. It can be considered as a distortion of Termeh's pure soul as a young sensible girl.

The role of Nader is detectable as a husband for Simin, as a father for Termeh and as a son for his father. As a husband, he is a true selfish and patriarch. As a son, he is a true good caretaker son who devotes anything to his father, even, he retreats going abroad with his family, and ends up his matrimonial life. But the most eye-catching role of his, is as a father which stands in opposite side with the two other roles and in front of Termeh as the most emotionally affected character due to the fact that she is in her critical age of growth. In one scene he rages over Termeh over a word in the conversation when he is asking the synonym of vocabulary "[...] *guarantee* [...] *when something is wrong is wrong, no matter who says that*". He busts off to teach Termeh the sovereignty of logic however his binary oppositions in his behaviors is the most apparent when they are compared with the existence of Termeh. Termeh is a pure, socially successful girl on her age, but turns out at the end to lie and socially broken as well as a devastated family girl just because of her parents as adults as in a scene after a debacle that her parents make at her school "*Termeh says: didn't I tell you not to come in front of the school? [Nader disregards Termeh and horns the car]*". This scene represents Termeh's understanding of her devastated social acceptance among her friends as well as her un-satisfaction to Nader for being so stubborn to throw the towel for his faults, however, the aftermaths of these pressures and effects are not known to us as the movie doesn't go on. Normally adults are supposed to be wiser than adolescences, however lack of care to the behaviorism of this benefit, will end up devastation of many things including the most importantly the young.

3. CONCLUSION

A Separation as an agent of deconstructive movies in Iran is an axiomatic representation of many social and family problems inside. Nader and Simin's disputes over matters is a stringboard of upcoming serious issues such as Termeh's mental and social pressure, devastation of Raziye's and Nader's family and some ruined social relationships and friendships.

A deconstructive and structural analysis of the movie through exerting binary oppositional parallels of id vs. ego, bourgeoisie vs. working class, logicity vs. morality, patriarchy vs. matriarchy and adulthood vs. adolescence is the best way of discovering the roots of Nader's social family problems and further aforementioned issues. Of these, the most explicit significance maker is the opposition of adulthood vs. adolescence which makes the most sense and represents the main roots of social family problems in this movie.

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