

Domestic Abuse in Caryl Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*

العنف المنزلي في مستشفى كاريل تشرشل في وقت الثورة

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Abstract

This study aims at analysing Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*. It explores Child Abuse and the reasons behind family abuse to their children. Furthermore, the study investigates the issues that incited child abuse. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher makes use of "Urie Bronfenbrenner in the Bioecological Model of Human Development theory". The present study is significant because it is concerned with everyday activities due to which children are subjected to parental abuse, in other words, the emotionally painful events that cause psychological, physical, and sexual disturbances in children. The current study builds a clear image of child abuse in Caryl Churchill's selected play.

Keywords: Caryl Churchill, The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل مستشفى تشرشل في زمن الثورة. حيث تستكشف الدراسة الإساءة للأطفال والأسباب الكامنة وراء الإساءة الأسرية لأطفالهم. علاوة على ذلك، تبحث الدراسة في القضايا التي تحرض على إساءة معاملة الأطفال. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة استخدم الباحث Urie Bronfenbrenner في النموذج البيولوجي البيئي لنظرية التنمية البشرية. وتعتبر الدراسة الحالية مهمة لأنها تتعلق بالأنشطة اليومية التي يتعرض لها الأطفال من إساءة معاملة على يد الوالدين، وبكلمات أخرى، الأحداث المؤلمة عاطفياً التي تسبب اضطرابات نفسية وجسدية وجنسية لدى الأطفال. تبني الدراسة الحالية صورة واضحة لإساءة معاملة الأطفال في مسرحية كاريل تشرشل المختارة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كاريل تشرشل، المستشفى زمن الثورة، العنف الأسري، إساءة معاملة الأطفال.

1- Introduction

This study aims to examine child abuse in Churchill's 'The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution' play, wherein the researcher will apply the concept of 'Context' from PPCT (Process–Person–Context–Time), as developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the Bioecological Model of Human Development theory, on this play during the analysis.

The cruelty of Europeans as viewed by Churchill's Fanon is undeniable: the Doctor, the Police Inspector, the husband and his wife, Monsieur all demonstrate, in their own distinct ways, that torture and annihilation are both the usual and a patriotic duty. Monsieur was born into a settler family in Algeria, but is identified as a Frenchman: "This is where I was born. [...] I'm already in France".. Monsieur is a government official and his role as a settler and one of the colony's senior administrators strongly suggest that he is also a landowner. Monsieur and his wife have a conditioned, ingrained

racism, with Monsieur seeing the colonial enterprise as an "endless battle to confine, conquer, and pacify" what he calls "urban and rural components."

2- English theatre

Churchill defines English theatre as a collection of 'dreary dramas from the depressing fifties' (Churchill 1960: 445), nostalgic for an imperial past that is morally wrong. Such productions, she says, just reinforces already-acknowledged political failures without presenting plans for serious change. Churchill observes that the characters, Jimmy Porter and Alison, are left stuck in their infantile fantasies and sadomasochistic psychodrama in *Look Back in Anger*, an allegedly state-of-the-nation play. Regrettably, Porter's bigotry against his wife remains uncontested - indeed, it is applauded as a valid outlet for his political rage. Aston can only fumble his way to eventual quiet in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. In Arnold Wesker's *Roots*, an ideology of passionate love is proposed as a remedy for socialist idealism's failure. While Churchill, like her English contemporaries, believes Beckett and Ionesco portray unhelpful dystopias, she recognizes the innovative nature of their language and visual paradigms and advocates a utopian quest to investigate socialist goals in methods that generate change. (Roberts, 2007)

Throughout the 1980s, theatrical culture was subject to a range of political and economic forces that "created a massive feeling of dislocation and

discontent." Apart from financial losses, legislators did not seem to understand the aesthetic significance of artistic ideals. Thus, as we will see, theatre was not only susceptible to budget cutbacks, but also to censorship. Interference by the government in performance and writing contributed to a feeling of unease. Thus, commercially unviable works faced the possibility of being prohibited or terminated. Thus, commissioning artists became wholly dependent on the criteria of the incumbent political party - the Conservatives – who essentially disregarded artists' actual sentiments. In other words, the aesthetic worth of artworks was sacrificed for the sake of profit. Rather than that, the artist's role was to advocate political principles. (Roberts, 2007)

Finally, there has been a tendency to use Churchill as the British embodiment of a feminist writer, burdening her with the responsibility of portraying women's lives and difficulties in the United Kingdom. Male playwrights do not have this duty (unless they are writing from a minority subject perspective), and this pigeonholing explains in part the increased hush around her work after 1990, when she took experimental agendas to new heights. (Rebellato, 1999)

3- Synopsis of The Hospital at the Time of Revolution

Caryl Churchill authored *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution* (1972), a theatrical play based on Algeria's battle against French Occupation in the

1950s. The characters are based on case situation from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and the main character is Fanon himself. The text highlights important questions concerning oppressive political forces' strategic use of power, which is especially obvious in times of crisis, as well as the causes and repercussions of oppressed peoples' retribution. Churchill sees terrorism as part of a cycle of oppression and vengeance, in which mean both of colonized and the colonizer exhibit abnormal behaviour. This paper looks at the complexities of colonizer and colonized construction in hospitals, which are all too often overlooked in modern history. (Luckhurst, 2007)

The play takes place at the Blinda-Joinville Hospital in Algeria during the French Revolution. The drama is divided into ten scenes and depicts five patients and two of the doctors, although it begins and ends with a toddler named Françoise.

Patients from Algeria Fanon's characters in the play have no names or titles and are merely referred to as A, B, and C. A is a resistant warrior who feels compelled to use explosives because he has no other option to combat the government's forced loss of his individual rights. He has been separated from his wife, family, work, and house due to his service in the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale* – National Liberation Front). He has attempted, but failed, to commit suicide while trapped in this heinous misery. B is in

clinical shock after suffering a full emotional and physical breakdown as a result of torture. He is afraid of being attacked again and is unable to interact with people. He says barely a few words, and when he runs into his former torturer, who is also receiving treatment at the hospital, he has to be stopped from killing himself: 'Let me die.' I'm afraid I won't be able to return' (Shorts 1990: 146). C is often mistaken for a European owing to his pale skin, feels terrible for not joining the resistance, and believes delusorily that other Algerians see him as both a coward and a traitor. All three situations point to a loss of self-awareness and disintegration, which Fanon describes in depth in his writings. The colonial aim of eradicating the Algerian has pushed mental health to breaking point: "colonialism pushes the people it rules to continuously ask themselves the question: "In reality, who am I?" " (Fanon 1967, p. 200) Survival and self-definition can only be achieved by fighting back once an oppressed people has reached "the point of no return," as Fanon argues in his essay *Concerning Violence*: "The development of violence among the colonised people will be proportionate to the violence exercised by the threatened colonial regime" (Fanon 1967: 69).

Fanon is a black man in his thirties. He is the director of the psychiatric department of Algeria's Blida-Joinville Hospital. He is dressed in white. Fanon, who emerges as a mainly mute witness, was the chief of an Algerian hospital's mental ward. In the play's longest interaction, the readers watch a

visibly terrified French "administrator" and his wife attempting to get their problematic daughter, Françoise, classed as mad. Among the other patients are a French police officer who takes out his fury on those he interrogates on his own family, and two indigenous Algerians, one a death-haunted rebel, the other a passionate nationalist who is continually accused of cowardice.

Monsieur and Madame are both Europeans in their forties. Françoise, their daughter, is seventeen years old. She is dressed cleanly and prettily in an almost childlike way.

4- Child Abuse in *The Hospital at the Time of Revolution*

Churchill's portrayal of Frantz Fanon as a man of strategic reserve establishes a stage presence that acts as a vehicle for exposing both colonizers and colonized pathologies: Europeans and Algerians alike speak to Fanon, their confessions showing deeply broken psyches and a sense of self defined only by imperial aggression's philosophy and practice. As with the real guy, Churchill's Fanon cannot risk open rebellion while at work without jeopardizing his life. The hospital is a glasshouse of resonant tensions, a makeshift haven for government critics and engineers, and it operates in a perilous state of uncertainty. Outside the hospital's gates, segregation is impossible, and Europeans and Algerians coexist uncomfortably, constantly wary of one another. Fanon's diagnosis of mental diseases is based in the colonial process itself. By setting the play in a

hospital, Churchill emphasizes the paradoxical and destructive circularity of a colonial system that promises civilization but is based on a nexus of deviant beliefs and behaviours that promote the growth of mental disorders. As a result, Churchill's hospital becomes a microcosm of the much wider madhouse that Algeria has become under French domination.

The hospital is portrayed as an environment that represents the results of the war on society, one of the main ones being the psychological conflict or mental illness that the researcher found whilst writing her thesis.

Françoise's parents seem to have continuously treated any signs of emerging autonomy on her side with suspicion, which included attempts to distance herself from them and act independently. In the present, her parents' worry is unrelenting. For instance, her mother objected to her ironing unsupervised, despite the fact that she had worked in a laundry without incident for the previous year. Mr and Mrs Abbott saw their daughter's autonomous use of her own mind as synonymous with 'sickness' and a rejection of them. According to her mother:

"MADAME. I don't think she'll be able to speak to you. Come along now, sweetheart, sit up and speak to the doctor. You make me really ashamed. Because she's not like this at all, Doctor. She's a very polite and very intelligent girl. The way she's

behaving now is all part of the trouble. MONSIEUR. We haven't got all day to sit here.

FANON. Françoise?

FRANÇOISE. I am dying. " (Shorts 1990: 104)

Fanon's two meetings with the Police Inspector show a man defined by duty and career, much like Monsieur. The Inspector's full-time experience as a torturer is required for the revolution, and he regularly works extra. He suffers from insomnia and nightmares, is always irritable, and is unable of stopping himself from committing insane and vicious assaults on his wife and small kids. His transformation into a vicious murder machine, as shown by his lack of remorse for the Algerians he tortures or murders as well as his delight in terrorizing his wife and children.

According to the character of Françoise in the play while she describes her thoughts, "the clothing was lovely, but underneath it, I was decaying away. I was gradually vanishing. The dress is wandering about alone. I unbutton the buttons and insert my hand. I'm lost under the garment and have no idea where I am. As a result, when I remove it, nobody is there". They cannot see Françoise since she was whisked away upstairs, and no one entered the room. My mother designed the gown with the intent of murdering me. It devoured me. That was a poisonous gown I wore.

Françoise's only options for resistance in the restricted environment in which she is involuntarily imprisoned are "madness" and metaphor. Additionally, she disrupts the family colonial line by removing herself from the possibility of a "suitable" marriage. As tactics of resistance, those accessible to Françoise all seem to entail unavoidable self-sacrifice and have a limited (local/domestic) influence on the atrocities' perpetrators.

Even in Fanon's words, Françoise's character may be regarded as colonized. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he describes colonialism as follows: "[Because] colonialism is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to constantly ask themselves, 'In reality, who am I!?' " (200). Ironically, it seems as if Françoise is the one who is always asking and unable to answer this question in Churchill's writing. This probably establishes Fanon as the script's most steady and, in the performance setting, possibly most powerful person.

As a result, Monsieur tries to feel in his victory that led him to be madness during the time because of the war and this situation reflected on his family as we see in the play, in terms of what happened to his daughter until they left her in the hospital at the end. After all, what she faced from abuse and pain by her parents and became a part of her life then they left her alone in the hospital.

Another side of the war's effects on another family is the guilty French Algerian who continually rejects his white skin and cultural background, urgently attempting to take on the role of a revolutionary bomber with his black partner. These two are so preoccupied with their respective issues that their talks hardly cross paths or interact.

In addition, one of the main stories that occurs because of the war was when a boy who had just turned fifteen years old killed his friend, and his friend's mother and sister, because of the impact of the colonial war.

According to the theory, in this situation the internal conflict of the violent thoughts called "microsystem" because the impact happened the inside family (immediate environment).

According to the theory used to analysis this work, the family is a part of the child abuse. The parents developed different issues from the war that made them hate themselves and punish their families, especially their children.

They are either unable to talk or are denied the ability to speak because they are the carriers of an unnameable truth.

Contrary to what we have seen previously, Surprisingly, Stephenson and Langridge (1999) suggest that they did not assert, as is sometimes assumed, that parents or families contribute to the development of schizophrenia in their offspring. They proposed that 'schizophrenia' may not exist at all - a considerably more extreme view, but one they eventually reached. They

made no attempt to deny the fact of 'crazy'. They have seen patients who seemed to be shattered by their pain as professionals. However, they questioned whether the acts and words of these specific individuals amounted to lunacy, and if they did, whether it made sense to confine that madness to a clinical entity and name it 'schizophrenia'. They questioned if, in light of their circumstances and the context of their lives, the patients' behaviours and comments were more understandable than everyone had assumed (Elaine, 2000).

Conclusion

As it is showed find in this study, *The Hospital at the Time of Revolution* discusses child abuse during the war. The play answered one of the main questions that one might ask about the war if it has had an effect on the child. *The Hospital* represents to the reader a clear image of how war effects the closest environment of the child.

The results of this study, according to the C "Context" of PPTC of the selected theory for the analysis, showed the reader proof of how the war was made in the families, and it is considered one of the main reasons that may have led to people's madness during the persecution they faced. She ultimately could only live in the hospital instead of living with her parents, which occurred because her parents became, metaphorically, tormentors of

the earth. Thus, the impact of war not only affects the society of the child, but also their immediate environment (microsystem), according to the theory proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, namely the Bioecological Model of Human Development.

It is also showed what happened to the Police Inspector, how he tormented his wife and his two daughters. All these images are illustrative of the effects of war on society in general, and on families in particular, driving some to madness, especially those in direct contact with people work in the military. There are many issues that arise due to people becoming caught up in war, and the result is the same, madness, that directly affects the families and societies of the child.

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