

The Transmuted Self: Peeping into Jaycee Duggard's Ab-Humanity in *A Stolen Life*

¹Uttam Boruah, ²Shrestha Bharadwaj

Abstract:

She was a little girl forced into a woman. With a raped body and a shattered existence, her mind, body and soul were torn down into nihility. Kidnapped at the age of 11, Jaycee Duggard was incarcerated by Philip Garrido for 13 years. Physically, mentally as well as sexually assaulted by Philip, Duggard's identity as a human was invalidated, forcing her into emerging as an 'ab-human'. She was just an object of male pervasive desires that reduced her existential consciousness and her notion of self. A reduced self, she had to suffer the ultimate crisis of her body that eventually determined her presence. The present paper tries to analyze the shattered self of Jaycee Duggard and the consummation of her identity as a human being. Her space of confinement, both physical and emotional, and her subaltern identity that aided in reducing her extant and individuality, will also be examined.

Keywords: *Ab-human, Body, Identity, Self and Space.*

I. Introduction

Body, an accumulation of corporeal sensory organs and surreal feelers, operates as a speaking vestige about and for human existence. The body caters to one's perception of our identity. Imagination should not replace sensory cognition when it comes to procurement of knowledge. Mark Johnson's book *The Body in the Mind* (1987) offers the claim that all thinking originates in bodily experience. (Miall 191) In essence, the body is indispensable for the completion of our self. Body, as the *Samkhya* conveys, is either male or female, either *purusha* or *prakriti*, or in the Chinese convention either *yang* or *yin*. This dualism embarked on the problems existing between the genders since time immemorial. Plato suggested that the soul has no gender. He was very critical of the gender stereotypes (male, female and hermaphrodite) created by the society and discriminating the latter two on the basis of their body structure and emotional assemblage. In addition, Francois Poullain de la Barre says that the mind has no sex, our society remains stuck to the conception of bodily distinctions. The concept of gender, filled with all criss-cross lines of difference, is such a category that comes on the way of social relations. In essence, gender is a social construct, following which particular roles and responsibilities are

¹ Research Scholar, Department of English, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

² Research Scholar, Department of English, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

determined. When 'body' is integrated with gender, the very word becomes a referral to the female body. The female is deemed to be physically weak, representing all weaker traits like submission, vulnerability and emotion, whereas the male body represents authority, firmness and reason. In the individual sphere, women are represented through the body and men through rationality. Human physicality, which is constituted of body and gender, goes through a societal deductive method, and finally the body and the 'self' become interchangeable. The body becomes a memento of the 'forgotten self' of an individual. Descartes' punch-line "I think therefore I am" has been violently mutilated in the pages of history and societal sphere. A woman's violated self is presented as "they think therefore I am." Wollstonecraft, one of the pioneers of the women rights movement, writes in her 1792 text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,

To preserve personal beauty, woman's glory! The limbs and faculties are cramped with worse than Chinese bands, and the sedentary life which they are condemned to live, whilst boys frolic in the open air, weakens the muscles ... artificial notions of beauty, and false descriptions of sensibility have been early entangled with her motives of action. (55)

Words create reality and the terminology used to describe a particular phenomenon becomes cultural semions. When it comes to describing a female body, terms like 'thick lips,' 'bulky breast' turn to be very expressive. In due course of time, they become tools of racial administering and sexual autocracy.

In her memoir *A Stolen Life*, Jaycee Lee Duggard speaks about the heart wrenching experience that she had to endure during her lifetime. She was kidnapped by a man known as Philip Garrido and was kept as a prisoner in his house for 13 years. The kidnapping of Jaycee happened on June 10th, 1991, when she was 11 years of age. She was taken by Philip Garrido while strolling towards the school bus station. Although searches began by the California Police department yet she could not be traced. Carl Probyn, her stepfather, saw her seizure and chased the perpetrators on his off road bicycle. After Duggard's return, Philip and Nancy Garrido were arrested by the police. They conceded to capturing and assaulting Duggard on April 28, 2011. Duggard was held in concealed tents, sheds, and shelters for a long time in the region behind the home of the Garridos at 1554 Walnut Avenue in Antioch, California. During her incarceration, Duggard gave birth to two little girls, who were 11 and 15 at the time of her return. Duggard was kept as a prisoner by Philip in his house till 2009. She was sexually abused and was forced to give birth. In 2009, during one of his sexual counseling programmes and visits to the University of California for a lecture on self-control, he unintentionally made a passage for Duggard's freedom. Garrido was sentenced to 431 years of life imprisonment on June 2, 2011. Furthermore, his significant other, Nancy, had to face 36 years of life imprisonment.

In her seminal work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir rightly says, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman." (152) Jaycee Duggard had to undergo such a fretful time that she was made to become a woman in her teens itself. Her memoir *A Stolen Life* echoes the death of her 'self' and her individual consciousness. She was exploited physically as well as mentally. Her body became the object of 'sexual gratification' for her abductor Philip, who raped her, ravishing her body. She writes, "I am bleeding "down there." I am so scared. Am I dying? Why am I bleeding? He says it's okay—he just "popped my cherry." (51) A girl, who has not even grown physically, got rammed by a demon unto the point that her 'self' really got devastated, which can never be conjured up.

Beauvoir, taking into account the Hegelian concept of the 'self' and the 'other', complains that woman is always situated in the position of the 'other' and man is always considered to be the subject self 'I'. She says, "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other." (180) Beauvoir wanted to free woman from the male deprecation of equal status by calling her existence both 'transcendent' and 'immanent'. A woman is able and free since she has transcended the animal part of her life. The potential happiness within her does not depend upon being warm, well-fed and gratified. Her immanence is manifested through her ability to bring forth the next generation in a proper animalistic manner, which in no way affects the future. Though theoretically a woman is being talked about, but here we are seeing the bildungsroman of a girl who is made to be an 'early woman'. Her sexuality is hacked in an age when she could perceive this as physical ramification only. Jaycee was the object, the other, who was forced to submit to the 'subject' Philip, who defined the existence of her life according to his conditions, whims and fancies. The gendered body of a woman is considered a collective asset for the particularly male chauvinistic society. She is always denied an individual identity. The 'space' that a woman is given in the society is always marginalized as a 'sub' category. She is implemented only through her sex appeal, as an artifact whose worth is to be determined by the patriarchy and for the patriarchy. For Philip Garrido, Jaycee Duggard was the outlet of his 'sexually fantastical desires.' Her space was to be decided by him being the superior self, who eventually confined her to a small room for 13 years, raping her at times, and using her body to gratify his sexual fantasies.

According to Philip, he acted as per the command of the God, who had taken decisions for his subject. It was actually Philip, the 'God,' who decided the fate of Jaycee. She states, "He explains to me he has a sex problem and that he took me so I could help him with his problem so he wouldn't have to bother anyone else with his problem. He says it consumes his mind and that by me giving him an outlet I am saving others." (72) As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rightly says in her *Can the Subaltern Speak* "...the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow." (287) Jaycee was denied any voice or identity of her own by Philip. She was constructed into becoming what her possessor wanted her to become. His romanticized strategy destructed her original self, defining and building her 'new self' as a voiceless being, deliberately muted and without any history. His gazed possession over her body made it a "panoptic", as Sandra Bartky rightly says,

In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement. Woman lives in her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other." (72)

Philip Garrido was a hooded figure who could shield his criminal intensions behind some euphemisms like 'God's will,' 'sex problem' to gratify his desires and inflict obliterations upon her to deny 'growth.' This 'panoptic' gaze compelled Jaycee to develop a kind of contempt for herself, which affected her psyche and her emotional state. His objectification of her body and her individuality muted her, restricting her from realizing the actuality of the circumstances. She was forced into becoming a subaltern entity conforming to the phallogocentric ideal of Philip as Sandra Bartky says "The exigencies of female tenderness are such as virtually to guarantee the man's absolution by the woman- not on her terms, but on his. Moreover, the man's confession of

fear or failure tends to mystify the women's understanding not only of the power dimensions of the relationship between herself and the particular man, but of the relations of power between men and women in general.” (112) The manipulated self of Jaycee eventually conformed to the portrayed tenderness of Garrido. She started to rely on his presence and forgive him for his atrocious act.

This new space made Jaycee's self limited. Though strong-willed to get her family back, she started considering the space allotted to her to be her destiny. The fear-psyche she carried made her conform to the novelty. An adolescent, who had just started to buckle up her 'self,' was introduced to a new arena which became her 'home' as well as 'identity.' Her socialization was yet incomplete. She missed her mother, her baby sister and a friend. Her social sphere was limited which again got reduced with her abduction. Society was a non-entity to her, so did socialization. The way she was kept, fed and treated, became her way of life. She knew no society apart from Philip. Now she knew herself as Philip saw her. Her 'self' was brutally raped as she was treated like an animal, as a sex object and as someone, who does not possess a voice, a marginalised. To make the symbol more acute, she was given a society of animals, which too were used according to human's own whims. No sooner had she developed a bonding with her pets, than they were taken away from her. Thus, the social being which was evolving within her was overtly destroyed again and again.

Elongated permanence either reduces or enhances. This reduction or enhancing has both emotional and physical inferences. The way Darwin establishes his notion of natural selection, in the same way psychological undercurrents stabilise emotive progression. In the physical world Darwin sees patterns of natural selection, which are recurrent in the human domain too. Fixed laws and behaviour can never be expected from a man as nature itself does not follow any specific characteristics and behaviours. Phillip's character and the way he is presented, do not excite any pity or sympathy in the mind of the reader. On the other hand, continuous companionship marks the relationship between Jaycee and Philip. This stagnancy in their connection reduces Jaycee's anger and contempt and increases her dependence and pity towards Philip. This law of natural choosing leads to the development of the Stockholm syndrome that describes Jaycee's emotional state as a captive. A sexual subject or a sexual abuse victim, Jaycee develops an unknown but emotional attachment with the captor, Philip. She dreamt of a star boy who, she says: "...is able to open the window of my prison and I take his hand and he flies me all around the world. But in the end he always returns me to my prison. I wonder why this is so.” (49) She describes this emotional bond which she has newly developed, "I feel I am bound to these people—my captors—by invisible bonds instead of constant handcuffs. No one seems to care that I am there.” (160) This justified her submission to the phenomenon. It is clear from her saying that a new-bonding was in the pipeline. Simultaneously, this also suggests that she was upset with her family members. Until this point, nobody had come to her rescue and she was unaware even of the attempts made to find her out. Her discontentment added to the growth of a soft corner for the captor, who was at least taking care of her basic needs. On the other hand, self-contempt in the mind of the captor elicits pity for the hostage and that works in a significant way, to bridge the gap between the two. Jaycee's inactivity to run away even once glued her to the new space.

Jaycee's world was shrinking day by day. The longer her captivity went on, her emotional longings kept on decreasing. In a very tender age she was uprooted from the soil, which was her own. Though small and

limited, she now possessed a world, 'a room of one's own.' The subjectivity that Jaycee once owned had now been annihilated and she was turned into an object, a sex toy. She was experiencing as well as experimenting. By the time, she was freed from her chains she was determined to withstand everything, to undergo Philip's experimentation, his 'runs.' Her indecisiveness regarding the escape was just the initial step to the displacement of her stepfather from the canvas and situating Philip in that slot. Philip was a 'fatherly figure' to her, which she could not locate in her stepfather, Carl Probyn. Jaycee said, "The truth is I really don't want to stay home all day with him (Carl) anyway. I look forward to going to school most days because it gives me time away from all of his criticism." (24) She wanted to be at school even though she was sick because it helped her escape all the harsh words thrown by her stepfather. Jaycee was just like any other child who always longed for her stepfather to shower love unto her, the way he loved and expressed care for her half-sister. Even after all the episodes of sexual exploitation of young Jaycee, she felt happy with Philip's fatherly side only. She wrote,

I tell myself he is not touching me in a sexual way; it is more a fatherly way now. Not that I would know what that is like. I want to find love one day. The kind of love I read about, but it sounds so unlucky and unrealistic to hope for that... (198)

The above-quoted line clearly states what she looked for is love all over, and the hatred she received instead made her troubled and alienated from her family. Therefore, her psychological attribution on Philip made her more comfortable to the new space.

It was her death as an individual whose self culminated at the hands of Philip Garrido. Her body was her ultimate identity that was chosen by Philip to serve. Garrido here says: "...with God's help he is coming to understand the voices that he hears, and God has cured him of his sexual problem. I will believe that when I see it." (163-164) Her firm belief in Philip made her identity merge with the new system. Philip's idealized self of Jaycee is opposed to her original self that tended to destroy her psychological and emotional growth. She lost her identity as a self-conscious human being. All conflicts of interests are now resolved in a way that Jaycee conformed to the prevailing norms by revering and believing them. Consciousness finds different dimensions eliminating rigidity and orthodoxy. Carl Gustav Jung states that "The self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality..." (481) He added that self is "the archetype of wholeless and the regulating centre of the psyche...a transpersonal power that transcends the ego." (476) For Jaycee Duggard, the centre of her psyche was the self of Philip Garrido. He defined her totality: self, emotions etc. which can be termed as an "ego death" for her. Explorer of the consciousness James Stewart says about ego death that "Simply put, it is the dying of the sense of self, of individuality, or of that which I conceive myself to be as perhaps different than what I am. [It is] ...the dying of the conceptualized sense of self. In many ways ego death at its optimum is the fluid flexibility of adjustment to the ongoing expansion into the mystery of consciousness, and at its most challenging, the horrifying experience of attachment and rigidity." (Harrison 40-41) Her 'self' was now confined to the new space she was relegated to, which was the single room where she was captured and kept for thirteen years. After the death of the evolving self of this young girl, Jaycee now possessed a borrowed self and became a puppet in the hands of Philip Garrido.

In her book, *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva defines the abject as that which lies outside of “the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable”, and which cannot be “assimilated” into normal experience (1). The actual self of Duggard transitioned into being ambiguous. When she was finally rescued by the California Police department, she was unable to comprehend the freedom she was finally getting. She tried to escape from the police, trying to hide her present state of captivity. The “breath of life” for her was determined by the backyard of Philip and that small room she was confined into. Duggard’s mental state started to consider the ‘unreason’ of her life as the new normal. She eventually felt reluctant and afraid to go outside or socialize. At some point of her life she insists on the fact that she felt afraid even to go to the beach. This psychological state resonates the notion that there existed a unique problem that has no name which the American feminist Betty Friedan talked about in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan also talked about the problems- frustration, psychological distress and secret sufferings of 1950s house wives in America. Jaycee too could not withstand her joys of newly acquired freedom. Her ‘shade to sunshine’ experience made her indecisive, indeterminate and distressed. This new-normalcy was none but a problem to her.

Along with her self, her independent sexuality was degenerated and was ultimately forced into being a transmuted entity, an ‘Abhuman’. Patricia Waugh defines ‘abhuman’ as “the potentially or actually ruined body or subject which would be linked to the ‘ruin’ of the text.” (524) Jaycee Duggard’s body becomes a cultural text, decayed and shrivelled, still bearing the brutal imprints of the lustful eyes of patriarchy. She faced the ultimate fate of a ‘pet’ that is kept in the house. The manner in which an animal is treated, Duggard faced exactly the same. She was initially handcuffed in order to be tamed; her food was determined by her abductor-owner Philip. Even her sexuality was made to operate according to his choices. Her two daughters were taken away from her in order to provide them to Nancy, his wife, depriving her from her right to motherhood. Besides, forced to become pregnant, Jaycee’s body also became an apparatus for the Garrido family. Her body was utilized to give birth to Philip’s children. She was manipulated to consider them as ‘sisters’ and all three were to call Nancy their mother. She was the ‘ruined body’ whose human identity was destroyed and mutilated. Her identity as a normal human is questionable during those 13 years. Although physically she was apparently looking like a human entity, but her self was transmuted. A psychological “abhuman”, Jaycee Duggard was a transformed entity: dependent, exploited and manipulated.

A reduced voice is a personality killed. Society, in its crudest form, murders the emerging voices. Humans, while paving the way of success and fulfilment, use others as a ladder. The Postcolonial texts explore the same patterns and stereotypes under which the voiceless and powerless are ground. The pattern that is observed in those discourses, are also seen in the homogenous society. Here, only the subjects differ. It is just a grapevine communication that does not conform to any rule-based systems. Rules and customs are manipulated in order to suit the plots of the socially, economically, politically and culturally superiors and to marginalise the poor, the caste and class-wise ‘lower’. Jaycee Duggard’s life story tries to delineate the horrors that she had to endure for a period of 13 years. A small teenager of 11 years, she had to ultimately face that which was the torture of a lifetime to any girl. Her capture made her a non existential entity that disappeared from the life-world. Compelled to being a sex slave, she was exploited sexually as well as mentally. Her conscience as well as her conscious self was trampled by her abductor. This one Jaycee Duggard represents the entire group of

women and girls who had to endure the same fate. The world everyday witnesses numerous accounts of rapes, murders, and kidnappings etc. that are usually unheard and unspoken of. Such incidents imprint an abominable picture of the person in front of her own consciousness that can ultimately lead the victim to end her life. Philip Duggard's mental thoughts and his 'code of conduct' represent the typical mindset of the social structure that denies the woman an identity of her own. A female is identified only by her assets: breast, lips, hips etc. i.e. only through her sexual potency. She is always an object of desire, subject of 'fetish' as well a 'phobia.'

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