

Chapter 3

Structural Domination and Quest for Jewish Identity: A Traumatic Study of Women's Characters in the Novels of Imre Kertesz

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ABSTRACT

*The most distinct outcome of structural domination can be examined through the major historical event of the Holocaust that took place against the Jews. Imre Kertesz was a historical writer who diligently chronicled the injustice and discrimination against Jewish women in his works to highlight the barbarity that they have encountered. The study gives a poignant depiction of the deplorable condition of the women characters, who struggled and quested for their Jewish identity, equality, and liberty. Kertesz's *Fateless* and *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* depict marginalization, discrimination, and victimization of the Jewish women. Hence, the chapter will discuss the texts of Imre Kertesz from the theoretical perspectives of trauma in order to understand the indelible scars and other traumatic disorders of women characters. Along with this, the major concern of the study is to depict the dispossessedness of voice of Jewish women in particular, as a result of which they are at a loss to articulate the recurrence of discrimination, injustice, and oppression they witness.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6572-1.ch003

INTRODUCTION

Imre Kertesz was a Hungarian writer who was awarded noble prize in Literature in the year 2002. He has been the victim of the major genocidal event of the history i.e. the Holocaust and he was successful in incorporating those disastrous incidents of his life in his novels. Along with this, being a survivor of the Holocaust, he himself had felt the pain and tumult that other Jews have undergone through. He was awarded the noble prize for bringing such barbarous issues and pathetic plight of Jews into limelight. The writing style of his novels is much more autobiographical where he describes his personal as well as professional life in detail. Imre Kertesz was one of the seminal figures who stood for liberalization, justice and indiscrimination in the European countries. Moreover, he was unsuccessful to fight against such discriminatory acts and marginalization of the Jews. Through his works, he has deconstructed the agony, violence and torture witnessed by Jews, Jewish women in particular, from the dominant Nazi forces. His works *Fateless* (2006) and *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* (1990) explore several horrific events confronted by these people. These Jewish women were dehumanized and demoralized by the Nazi regime. As a result of this, they suffered from mourning problem, depersonalization and eventually were traumatized. Jews have confronted the wrath and malice of the dominating group in their society and their educational institutions as well. Such barbarism and tortures have broken up their psyches and as a result of this, they were not able to overcome from those past historical events. This legacy of slavery treatment has been transferred to their later generations as well. Imre Kertesz has successfully portrayed the issues of violence, segregation, objectification and discrimination done with Jewish women through his novels. These issues become the primary factors responsible for the occurrence of various traumatic disorders in them. They have suffered and experienced several incomprehensible horrors of the degradation of humanity. Kertesz describes and illuminates readers with the hatred and prejudices that these Jewish women encounter and consequently, they feel submissive and weak before the Nazi regime. This has shattered them completely leading to develop indelible scars in their psyches. Therefore, Imre Kertesz, being a Jewish survivor, has depicted the issues of casteism, race and discrimination that have dragged Jews towards the problem of trauma.

Imre Kertesz, being an advocate of Jews, has provided the Jews of later generation with the agency to speak, stand and revolt against all the injustice and the discriminatory acts done with them. His radical stance of empowering the Jewish women is evident through his depiction of the deplorable and miserable conditions of the Jewish women right from the World War II when the Nazi party came into power to the present time where still these Jews are maltreated and bullied in several parts of the European countries. The major concern for Imre Kertesz is based on the

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