



## A Psychological Discretion of an Unmarried Woman in THE PIANO TEACHER

P. Catherine Benita

Assistant Professor, Department of English, PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Dindigul, Tamilnadu, India.

Received 10th November 2016, Accepted 1st December 2016

### Abstract

*An unmarried woman is subjected to interrogation and her emptiness is directly proportional to the loss of inheritance. Struggling for autonomy, Erika a sexually repressed music professor oscillates in between obsession and madness. She is an archival representation of psychological disorder whose self is depleting.*

**Keywords:** Sadomasochistic Voyeurs, Society's Clichés, Patriarchal Society.

© Copy Right, IJRRAS, 2016. All Rights Reserved.

A Piano Teacher is a novel by Elfriede Jelinek is an Austrian feminist playwright and novelist. She was awarded the Noble prize in Literature in 2004 for her musical flow of voice and counter voices in novels and plays, with extraordinary linguistic zeal, which reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power. Her writing is deeply rooted in the tradition of Austrian Literature and her work is multi-faceted and highly controversial. Her novels which showcase the brutality and power play inherent in human relation in a style that is at times ironically formal and tightly controlled.

The novel is a brilliant, bitter and a wonderful portrait of the mother-daughter relationship. The mother, who represents the patriarchal society, dominates her only child; Erika Kohut an unmarried concert pianist and she exert a form of severe control over who she sees as her possession, her precious child, protected against the invasion by any and all men. Erika Kohut, a desperate spinster, put up with her mother who harbors a strain of hope for sincere love. Her constrained life suppresses the hope, and all that might remain is an empty and self-destructive Erika as a lifeless stone chisel by the will of her mother, who is always selfish, having care sparingly about her child's future and she utilizes it for her sole purpose of enlightenment "mother, who has only a tiny pension, gets her choice and Erika pays" (PT 5). Kohut is a victim of all tribulations, human contact in her life is blur and stagnant which finds effort in initiation. She has a strong desperate yearning for human contact outside her constrained life but end up in sharing life with her old mother. Destruction in diversification is possible on Erika's life because it's not her living but her mother's.

"Mother wants to utilize the child's life herself" (PT26). A frustration moors and settles throughout her mother's life to safeguard her only property, the apartment and her daughter. Both cannot escape the equal treatment of the mother. "Her greatest anxiety is to keep her property immovable, tie it down so it won't run away" (PT5). So, Erika is immovable, always at home, if not mother knows where she is. Erika's only property is her piano; her emptiness is filled with music, which gives her pleasure. Her mother is too appreciative of her becoming great pianist. So Erika gratifies her mother's desire by devastating her 'self'.

Erika's mother perceived tradition as only to impose and monitor, stuffing tradition on Erika who gets wound with the curse of her mother. Both exchange one thing in common, that is, hatred and frustration. The life led by two Kohuts is meaningless. Erika always wanting to take revenge, she does indirectly by ignoring her mother's wish instead gives importance to seeking worldly pleasures. She worries nobody to adore her beauty. Her extreme loneliness compels to accompany the mirror for self reflection and admiration. "then, after laying them out, she drapes them in front of her body and gazes at herself in the mirror" (PT10). Erika cannot take pride in having her secrets in custody. Even the choice of dress is made by her mother, only she decides what Erika should wear outside the house. Her favorite dresses hang untouched desiring for freedom from the cupboard. Sometimes Erika becomes paranoid due to rigidity, she feels as a cog in a wheel. She goes far end to derive pleasure through pain because no where she knows in the world where about her happiness nestles. Consequently she cuts her flesh with a razor, which she preserves safely for the continual use, gives her immense pleasure. She is skilled in handling the razor; the blades are destined for her flesh. She finds pleasure seeing her blood oozing like a brook, scarifying until all her frustration oozes. She is very rash, her body is totally under her own mercy; sometimes her own body is alien

### Correspondence

P. Catherine Benita

E-mail: benitadgl@gmail.com, Ph. +9181442 32053

since she feels numb while slicing her flesh. Her life is as lifeless as the razor she holds; rusty and lost its glamour to serves its purpose. “Her hobby is cutting her own body”. (PT 86)

Erika spreads pain as a disease so as to taper off hers. For a visual treat she hurts people on the bus with her instrument which is her defense. She enjoys seeing them cry and she kicks a man whom she doesn't like; even she hurts ladies especially fat. The predominant feeling that lurks in Erika is nothingness. She feels nothing, light like a piece of paper in the rain. She snaps her teeth at times when she feels emptiness. Erika's cannot reform her life by finding a life partner because her mother threatens to kill her if she finds her with any man. “Mother keeps her eyes peeled, she checks, hunts, calculates, concludes, punishes.” (PT81). The mother has built a narrow fence between her emotion and the real world; she sucks her daughter's blood for her life to be prosperous.

Erika is described as spongy, soft and lonely decaying wood in the forest who wanders in solitary. The author compares her with an Egyptian mummy, made of mud, no feelings; barren without fertility. She is infertile, dry like a mud so nobody takes effort to pore water. “She is swathed in her daily duties like an Egyptian mummy, but no one is dying to look at her”. (PT 81) Erika's sexual instinct dominates other feeling so in order to quench her sexual hunger, against her principles where she never exposed to lust before, visits pornographic centers because she wants to feel something. Two kohuts manage to enjoy in each other's arm without any man's

solace. But, things cannot stay unchanged and it becomes even more defective with the entry of Walter Klemmer an young, self confident, looking to trap his piano teacher for an affair. He admires her from all proportion who finds her a delightful looking woman and brilliant especially. Though Erika has her own principle for she cannot submit herself easily but at last fell into the zeal of lust to fulfill her sadomasochistic desires which created havoc in her life. Erika, a technically perfect musician, has become a kind of a sordid, eager to inspect scenes so alien to her nature. She indulges in covert observation of voyeuristic scenes like spying on couple having sex etc.

Erika's motivation behind her violent fantasies are unclear, she harbors a strain of hope for sincere love but her constrained life suppresses the hope and all that might remain is an empty and self destructive life. She is unproductive, never able to manufacture pleasure and decided that only death would bring her consolation, at last cannot withhold the paramount feeling of nothingness so she cuts herself and withered. “Erika Kohut stabs a place on her shoulder, which instantly shoots out blood”. (PT 280) In the end, the book itself is troubled, but has a self-assured and positive approach to darkness.

#### References

1. Jelinek, Elfriede. *The Piano Teacher*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel.
2. London: Serpent's Tail, 1999.
3. <http://www.laurahind.com/newreview/pianoteacher.html>.