

Theme of Scepticism, Deception and Suicide in the novel, ‘The Lost Man’ by Jane Harper: A Psychoanalytical Study

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Abstract: Nathan’s brother Cameron is *The Lost Man* in novel; he goes through the psychological crisis and comes out with the justification of his brother’s death. The novel deals with depression, isolation, conflicts and individual social sentiments. It is interpreted in this study about the character’s behaviour as to how they have formed relation with each other and their impact in society.

(Keywords: Scepticism, deception, society and individual and social conflict)

The Lost Man is a novel by an Australian novelist, Jane Harper. The story is narrated by the protagonist, Nathan Bright, the oldest of three brothers, Bub and Cameron are his two younger siblings. The story begins at a remote graveyard where, under the scorching sun, Nathan and Bub are gathered around Cameron’s dead body. Nine years ago, Nathan was banned from entering the closest town of his wife for not following the rule of that town. Nathan begins pondering over whether the rest of his family members are at risk of meeting the same fate as Cameron, being isolated in the middle of the grief of losing his brother, the story revolves around the question whether Cameron had committed suicide or he was killed.

The novel begins with the search for Cameron’s whereabouts and his missing. He had gone to Lehmann’s Hill, which is a four-hour ride from his home. Bub got stuck on the way reaching there, he found that Cameron was not there, Bub tried to contact him on radio but it was not in range that is what Bub informed Nathan about their plan.

Bub’s feeling of becoming irrelevant and unimportant at the farm shows how he had been afraid of the isolation and Cameron’s wife goes to starch man’s grave that clearly signifies her struggle with the pain of the loss of a husband and they need to find a closure.

“I feel like the Cameron that I knew could get lost in all this.”

Siblings’ rivalry, feeling of being side-lined hold a strong reason for developing a cruel and violent attitude towards each other, this can also be one of the reasons for Cameron’s death. Another aspect conveys the view related with the ownership of the property Nathan and his son share a strange relationship due to Nathan’s divorce with his wife Jackie.

Nathan, Harry, Bub and Cameron are the brothers, who work at the farm. Nathan is banned in the town of his wife for not paying attention and extending a helping hand to his father-in-law when he was about to collapse due to heart attack, with the law of the village, he was banned to stay there except post office and bus station.

Bub was baiting the dogs for money and Cameron was supposed to warn him. He thinks it might be Bub who killed Cameron. Ilse is the mother of Nathan and his brothers, she tells Nathan to book an appointment for a check-up, Katie was impregnated by Cameron. Katie and Simon are the couple servants hired by Cameron upon knowing that she’s pregnant Cameron told her to go for abortion Katie said Nathan to keep it a secret as Simon does not know about it. Bub is asked about killing people’s dogs for money Nathan asks him about his dog Kelly and both fight, Harry dislikes their behaviour and tells them they don’t want to see their face for the rest of the day. They tell them to behave themselves as Cameron’s mourning is yet not over.

Police’s reports indicated that Cameron was a serial rapist. Domestic violence is also a dominant theme. There are some injuries shown on Cameron’s wife’s body and Cameron had gone to the graveyard to look for documents that had been hidden there before Katie had left the farm in Simon’s car without informing him.

Nathan realises that he was not just to avoid the need of his father-in-law himself, he calls his wife, Anne apologises to her for not being the best husband and best father and for leaving her father on the road. Nathan goes out to find out the envelope with Duffy, Cameron’s dog. Sophie and Lo or Cameron’s children Sophie plays guitar and Lo paints pictures. Nathan helps his nieces to overcome the grief and the trauma of losing their father by being there with them. Nathan praises Sophie’s guitar and Lo’s paintings.

“Nathan repositioned Sophie’s hand on the neck of the guitar and moved one of her fingers on the string.” (page 339)

Nathan notices an envelope attached to the back of the painting Ilse snatches away the envelope from Nathan. She explains to him about the incident how Cameron was going to harm his wife and daughters, Liz had decided that her daughters would not continue suffering at Cameron’s hands. Liz hides the documents behind Cameron’s painting. Ilse sees Cameron, he was digging the ground in the search of what is hidden there. Ilse leaves the place and drives Cameron’s car leaving him at an isolated place to die under the scorching sun. Her action clearly shows her cruelty.

Feeling of isolation, constant tensions, conflicts, sceptic attitude towards each other’s action and intentions are the major theme of this novel. Jane Harper has explicitly pictured the trauma of all their minds, how their actions are affecting each other’s lives and their minds. Their actions have affected them and led to the mental upheaval. They try to combat the situation by finding out the truth and the real culprit.

There is an incident when Nathan saw his brother Bub urinating at his father’s grave when he asked him about his action he complains about his father who is normal that he had never been a good man and he's not regretting his action on the other hand he’s assuring him that he won’t do so on Cameron’s grave, this action shows Bub has a troubled mind, he has a kind of unsettled mind which has affected his action and he's trying to cleanse this all, he's trying to release all his hatred and disturbed feelings by urinating on the grave. This doesn't look normal. The author has tried to picture a disturbed mind that has resulted into disturbed or unpleasant action.

The novel unfolds suicidal cases dismantling the theme of rejection, isolation and depression. Perry McGrath who killed himself sometimes during the previous Christmas after his wife left him and Brian Taylor who had wandered off while drunk and had drowned in the River.

We see that throughout the novel, Nathan tries to find out the cause of Cameron’s death, He believes that he had uncovered the truth. Initially he thought that Katie Cameron’s servant is carrying his unborn child would be one of the reasons for his stress and he underwent a serious depression and killed himself.

The major themes which resonate in this novel are conflicts and stress which are caused by the characters. If one is disturbed, his mental state is not only leading him to discontentment but also causing others mental peace at risk, resulting in depression. Cameron and Kattie fight due to some conflict. Cameron and his wife clash and face continuous tension which strangulates their relationship and finally Cameron dies.

Carl Bright is shown through the novel to be an aggressive and violent man, but his abuse was not always of a physical nature. The perpetrator of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and the long-lasting impact on Cameron’s mind of that abuse which can be seen in his actions. He rapes a girl and gets away with the charge as he was a minor at that time. There are other minor characters who commit suicide due to feeling of loneliness and isolation.

Cameron abuses other women, the way he treats his own daughter and wife reflects his disturbed mind.

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