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The Depiction of Modes of Parenting in Moses Isegawa's Abyssinian Chronicles

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This article examines the portrayal of the modes of parenting in Moses Isegawa's Abyssinian Chronicles (2000). There are various forms of parenting according to scholars like Diana Baumrid. I put my modes of parenting into two categories; cruel parenting and good and caring parenting. I also argue that the community plays a lot in parenting. Therefore, I interrogate how the community parents the children in the text. In my discussion, I show that parenting moves and surpasses being a role for just biological parents and moves to all members of the community and therefore, my judgment of parenting does not just concern biological parents but concerns all those who play a role in a child's upbringing. I also bring out the fact that a person's adult behaviour is influenced by the kind of parenting he/she faced as a child. All this is discussed as I take a close look at the narrative techniques that Isegawa uses to depict the modes of parenting that I discuss.

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INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a global phenomenon in a way that many African novels have depicted it. In Uganda, some novelists have handled the theme of parenting. They include Jeniffer Nansubuga Makumbi in *Kintu*, Gorette Kyomuhendo in *The First Daughter* and Moses Isegawa in *Abyssinian Chronicles*, whose novel is the basis of this study. According to Saovakon Virasiri, Jintana Yunibhand and Waraporn Chaiyawat (2011), parenting means the roles performed by a person that possesses parental status in order to suitably and positively enhance development in every aspect of their child's life. These scholars argue that parenting is one of the most complicated, challenging, and potentially rewarding tasks that a family or an individual can perform. They add that it is a learned task whereby an individual provides for the physical and emotional well-being of a child. Parenting is a key theme in African literature especially in the African novel. Moses Isegawa in *Abyssinian Chronicles* covers very many themes but among those many themes, there is an issue on parenting. Even though various scholars like Diana Baumrid have come up with various parenting styles, I discuss the novel paying attention to cruel parenting, love and care parenting and community parenting.

Theoretical Framework

The study used the psychoanalytic critical theory. It was founded by Sigmund Freud. Harold Bloom in his critical work, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), as cited by Kazuko Narusawa (1988), confirms Freud's assertions. He argues that the originality of the works should be defined against the works of their poetic predecessors. He goes ahead to give the anxiety of separation. He asserts that this brings about an anxiety of exclusion or separation from the mother and soon joins itself to death anxiety or the ego's fear of the superego. He further talks about the battles between strong equals. He calls a writer that comes belatedly, an epebe and his predecessor, a precursor. By using the analogy of Freud's Family romance, he explains their relationships, where an

epebe inevitably faces his precursor and fiercely fights with him for the purpose of priority. These battles may be battles between father and son or mother and daughter. The pattern of creating literature by means of the energy for father-son battles is essential for Bloom's theory. In other words, what Bloom does, is rewrite literary history in terms of the Oedipus complex. These complexes are very critical in this study. These complexes determine the manner in which a parent behaves towards his child.

According to Stephane Michaud (2009), psychoanalytic criticism helps to explain philosophy, culture, religion, and literature, particularly its language and style. He asserts that Freud, who is the father of psychoanalytic criticism, had an acute sense of language and style. He argues that understanding literature rests on processes of translation, comparison, and interpretation of fine details. It is against this backdrop that I used Michaud's assertion to analyse the narrative techniques that are used to depict the modes of parenting in the novel.

Michaud continues and argues that according to Freud, analysis should be grounded in the personal experience of psychoanalytical cure, which involves in-depth questioning of oneself, going far beyond the sphere of intellectual knowledge. He argues that analysis should be based on personal experiences. The personal experiences shape what the author writes and even shape the behaviour of the fictional characters in various works of art. Personal experiences equally shape the manner in which parents handle their children. I used this tenet to analyse the modes of parenting in the novel.

For Imtiaz Ahmad (2021), psychoanalytic criticism is the analysis of the author's unintended message. This analysis should be based on the biographical circumstances of the author. He argues that the main aim is to analyse the unconscious elements within a literary text based on the background of the author. This is the best way of understanding a literary text properly and psychoanalytically. Therefore, this

criticism focuses on the personality of the author as it examines his/her personality through literary works, life events, personal experiences, desires and asks questions of the author's attempts to reveal his/her hidden desires, emotions etc. He further asserts that understanding the author's psyche helps in analysing the deeper and hidden meanings of texts and their fictional characters. This therefore means that what the authors present comes from the unconscious mind.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted as the overall design. The research comprised a qualitative research approach. The researcher used close reading of the texts. The researcher employed textual analysis techniques to get information on modes of parenting. Qualitative content analysis was used. The researcher edited the obtained data to ensure accuracy and uniformity as well as to minimise errors by using a textual checklist. The data were analysed qualitatively using the textual analysis technique. The obtained data was interpreted and categorised using a checklist which included the depictions of modes of parenting. The researcher analysed how the categorised data was used to frame the depictions of modes of parenting in the novel.

Results and discussion

Parenting styles shall be tackled basing on whether they are authoritarian or non-authoritarian. Authoritarian parenting is represented by cruel and harsh parents. There is a lot of violence meted on to children in the novel as Nabutanyi (2013) states that Isegawa's protagonist's persona also enables him to illustrate how often the violence inflicted on children in some African middle-class families arises from parents' misreading of childish curiosity. He adds that;

'There is a direct connection between Mugezi's beatings and starvation and his parents' and

guardians' authoritarian parenting and obsession with fetishised objects' (148-9).

Already Nabutanyi is showing that many middle-class homes set rules which must be followed and failure to follow them (rules) leads to violence against the children. Cruel parenting involves parents trying to implement the right code with a lot of orders without giving the children a chance to have a say on what affects them.

Abandoning one's offspring is cruel, and Isegawa depicts it. Using flashbacks, Isegawa presents Serenity's mother as the first parent in this category. She abandons her family when Serenity is just 3 years old. She leaves him and his sisters with nobody to parent them.

The behaviour of Serenity in adult life is affected by the lack of a mother in childhood. This is in support of Sigmund Freud a Psychoanalytic critic who argues that our adult behaviour is as a result of childhood experiences. It is also in line with Amma Darko's and Lorraine Waterhouse's argument that those who suffer abuse when young are often inclined to be abusive when they grow up, as cited by Nabutanyi (2013, p.155). Even when Serenity gets obsessed with tall women, his sister cannot stand it because their mother too was tall but abandoned them. These sisters adjust to her absence with great equanimity and could not bear his obsession with tall women. The flashback used helps us as readers to reflect on the possible reasons behind Serenity's awkward behaviour. He is very much affected by the events that happen before the narrator is born.

Serenity himself abandons his daughter that he fathers from Kasiko, Jo Nakabiri. She (Jo Nakabiri) later informs Mugezi that Serenity, their father got rid of her mother in order to marry in church and after that he paid no much attention to her welfare. Aunt Kasawo also abandons her son and only thinks about him after fifteen years. She only thinks about him before she is gang raped by the seven brothers. Mugezi the narrator narrates about her aunt's

reminiscence that, “*For the first time in fifteen years, Aunt Kasawo thought about the son she had disowned after his father’s attempt on her life*” (Isegawa, 343). This reflection equally develops the characters of the people in the action at this moment. Through the flashback, the cruelty of some parents is clearly brought to our eyes as explained above. It is paradoxical that the people supposed to parent their offsprings are the ones abandoning and neglecting them. But such happens because of childhood experience. Freud asserts that our childhood experiences affect our adulthood conduct. Those that are abandoned in childhood also abandon their children in adulthood.

Whereas Serenity and Nakabiri are abandoned, Padlock on the other hand is ignored. This happens as soon as she is born. Through a flashback, we get to know about Padlock’s past as Serenity contemplates about it. He says, “*Her parents had ignored her as soon as her brother Mbale was born*” (60). The birth of her brother left her doing all the hard work—the digging, cooking, washing, and fetching of firewood. This flashback helps to understand the reasons behind her adult behaviour. She is treated cruelly in childhood and she also treats those under her care in the same way. Whatever that her parents do is done to help her know how to manage a home, ‘*she had to learn how to run a home*’ (60), but unfortunately, she is learning by being tortured. She is exposed to a lot of hard work than she should handle. According to Kahn, literature is dependent on the facts of life and this kind of handling is a fact of life. Therefore, *Abyssinian Chronicles* is good literature since it handles the subject of parenting from Padlock’s point of view. However, Padlock’s treatment has signs of harsh parenting though it is done to prepare her for her adult life.

Through superb and vivid descriptions, parenting is shown as being harsh, cruel, and full of torture to the parented. Many parents think that for a child to grow with the expected acceptable behaviour, they have to use an iron hand to achieve the set goals.

They believe that the way one is brought up helps shape the way s/he will live as an adult an idea possessed by Freud and Bloom who argue that our childhood shapes our adulthood. As a parent in the convent, Padlock uses the iron hand obsessively leading to her expulsion. She hurt seven children as the duty mistress in charge of school liturgy and general discipline. As a married woman, her stance on imparting discipline does not change. She often slaps her eldest son Mugezi for behaving contrary to her expectations. All these incidents and many more are shown in various touching descriptions. For instance, when the family (Serenity and Padlock) are moving from the village to the city, she slaps the boy for trying to board the cab. Mugezi describes the incident thus;

I touched her, smudging dress. She cringed and, with blinding speed, drove her palm full into my face. I fell back in the mud and, in protest, rolled once and twice (Isegawa, 68)

This is the first instance that we see Padlock slapping the boy. However, the choice of words is articulate and selected with purpose to show his parents’ cruelty. This according to Nabutanyi (2013) is use of sensational register and adds that Isegawa furnishes a language for his protagonist meaning that the language is smeared in such a way that it carries a lot of meaning during descriptions. For instance, the action verb ‘cringed’ and ‘drove’ are used out of proportion to show the anger with which Padlock challenges Mugezi’s action. The hyperbolic description of her actions as having “blinding speed” or her slaps as ‘driven’ into Mugezi’s face illustrate Sara Ahmed’s argument that “the face of a suffering child places [the public] in a position of charitable compassion” (2014).

Still using vivid descriptions, Isegawa shows that the slapping of children and Mugezi continues. When Mugezi with curiosity of finding what is beneath the glittering on the second-hand bed and destroys the head board, he is slapped. He says that,

“At that moment a furious palm swept hot air into my face. Two fingernails sank into my lower lip, carefully avoiding my lethal teeth” (Isegawa, 136).

Padlock again slaps the boy when he warns her about her bleeding. He describes the slap and the force it has as a tree trunk, *“Something like a tree trunk split in two by lightning flew sideways and hit me with such force that the lights went out”* (Isegawa, 106). On top of slapping, she knocks the boy on the head. When she is away to her parents’ home, she comes wondering and asking the person that has been in charge in her absence. Unfortunately, she asks as she knocks the boy on the head. *“‘You, you, you, you, and I said you’. For emphasis, she cracked me hard on top of my head with her knuckles”* (Isegawa, 176). The slapping and knocking on the head are cruel methods of parenting. These descriptions are superb in a way that they ignite our sense of vision. I argue that the descriptions used are coupled with the use of visual imagery and the two make us see the cruel parenting of Padlock towards Mugezi. This is what Nabutanyi in his study refers to as ‘parental Cruelty’.

Furthermore, vivid descriptions are used to show that apart from using slapping, Padlock uses the canes more especially the guava canes. These, like the slaps are a means to ensure that her children grow up in the expected manner. Even much later when Mugezi has left home, she still uses the guava switches on the shitters. She wants to parent all her children in the same manner. Padlock’s children’s behaviour leaves Aunt Kasawo perplexed. Mugezi says that,

If the last-born child was going to get any leeway in comparison with the firstborn, it was not going to be much. Padlock still used the guava switch with grim determination and was not above sending a defaulter to bed on an empty stomach (Isegawa, 346)

This guava switch use and caning is of long ago. When Mugezi spies on her back in the village pit

latrine, he uses it for the first time on him. He says that,

“I tried to explain, but the cutting edge of Padlock’s anger, aided by a guava switch, could only slash, whack and thrash” (Isegawa, 70).

Every morning Mugezi is woken up with a certain cruel method by his mother. The description puts it that,

She either shook me gruffly by the shoulder, barked in my ear, doused me in cold water or used her favourite tool, a guava switch. She used these methods in rotation, one for each day of the week (Isegawa, 94).

In the secrecy of their bedroom, the despots plan on how to torture the boy. He thinks of the words he over hears in the bedroom;

“Robber! Killer! Torturer! Who was robbing, torturing, and killing my spirit every day? Who tortured me with terrible words, with the smell of shit and the fire of guava switches?” (Isegawa, 113).

This secrecy shows how Padlock is determined in using the guava switch to make Mugezi docile. For any misunderstanding with Padlock, the guava switch is brought out. He talks of it in a jovial and humorous manner;

Glad that the criminal had been revealed by working of God’s grace, Padlock gave me twenty guava switch strokes on each occasion. Every stroke was invested with all the past angers, past frustrations, and past suspicions, I swaggered like a police officer after flooring a troublesome criminal.....Padlock could not stomach it. She called me back and cut me thrice with the switch on my right calf (Isegawa, 158)

The use of the guava switch is again a method of discipline on others particularly the shitters. She

uses the guava switch on the shitters that steal others' property. It is stated that,

'She reached under the green sofa and removed three finger-thick guava switches.... Padlock was all over the shitters like a hungry eagle terrorising a brood of hens' (Isegawa, 160).

Even when Mugezi tries to save the shitters, he is given the guava switch. He describes the scene that,

"She cut me across the back, and an innocent shitter got knocked down as Padlock turned, clumsily, like a buffalo speared through the ass. I jumped and sat down again. I got four more cuts. It hurt, but I couldn't cry out (Isegawa, 161).

The use of the guava switches is the culture to which Padlock believes. This echoes Michaud's (2009) assertion that psychoanalytic criticism helps to explain the culture. Again, according to Freud our childhood experiences affect our adult life. Padlock is tortured in her childhood and she also tortures her children in adulthood.

Other people that believe in caning include Father Mindi. Isegawa vividly depicts the way Father Mindi uses the cane as a measure of instilling discipline to the seminarians. When he catches Mugezi reading during prayer time, he gives him three canes on the government meat. This kind of treatment is more than discipline oriented. All these descriptions touch various sensory organs especially the sense of sight and the sense of touch. In reading, one can see the use of the guava switch and equally feel the pain inflicted by using the guava switch. Heather Montgomery as cited by Nabutanyi (2013, p. 153) argues that there is a distinction between discipline and abuse and that communities will intervene to protect the child who they feel is being maltreated. He believes that this kind of treatment is not about discipline but it is rather child abuse and I agree with this belief. This argument is in line with the psychoanalytic literary critics who argue that analysis of literature should be based on

the author's unintended message as put forward by Imtiaz. The caning of Mugezi is a minor issue but such according to Imtiaz is what should be analysed to understand literature. Such descriptions which seem to be unintended are actually the ones that carry a lot of meaning.

Torture to Mugezi is again seen through vivid description when his father disciplines (beats) him over the second-hand bed. Serenity, most of the time cares less about disciplining the children and leaves the role to his wife Padlock. But when Mugezi defaces the headboard, he canes Mugezi strangely. The beating comes as a way of disagreeing with Mugezi's destroying of the head board. The disagreements that exist between Mugezi and his father can be described as battles between two equals like that of father and son as highlighted by Bloom. Serenity thinks that Mugezi is trying to challenge his authority by destroying the headboard. The despots pay more attention to material possessions than human life. He describes the hitting;

Serenity was all over me with his suede shoe. For a moment, I was too overwhelmed to do anything about those scalding blows with cooked rubber. Up and down, left and right it went, guttural groans of you-saw-it-coming issuing from his twitching mouth.....I was being thrown into the air now, (Isegawa, 141)

This kind of punishment falls short of the expected treatment by one's parent. Moreover, he is punished for not being given an explanation from the word go. Mugezi knows that had it been his grandfather or grandmother, they would have told him instantly that that was a head board not like Serenity and Padlock who simply warn with; *'if you touch it...'* (133). This description helps to compare the parenting style of Mugezi's grandparents with that of his biological parents.

Through characterisation, Isegawa portrays the impact that the switches have. The use of the switches leaves Mugezi wondering on the kind of

parents that his parents are. As he cleans the house, he finds 'a neat bundle of five half-dry guava switches, carefully cut on both ends' which he believes Padlock intends to use on the shitters. He knows that Padlock would use any excuse to use the switches, say, bad school performance. He asks, "Was this bundle an indicator of Padlock's predictability, parental incorrigibility, or despotic fallibility? Or all three?" (Isegawa, 177). At the end of the day, he wonders whether the use of switches is for those various reasons. But the three combine to add on to Padlock's desire of fighting against indiscipline among her children. This depicts not only Mugezi's character but also Padlock's character. Padlock is portrayed as despotic parent whereas Mugezi is depicted as an intelligent boy that questions his parents' parenting style. But in doing so, Padlock believes in psychoanalytic maxim that adult behaviour is shaped when one is young and she does everything possible to achieve it.

Love and Care in Parenting in *Abyssinian Chronicles*

The other category of parenting is with those parents that show love and care. To care and provide is what parenting is to some parents. Using flashbacks, the love and care of Grandpa and Grandma is brought to us. It is through a flashback that we learn that Serenity's father tries to provide an education to him. Grandpa knows that a man is judged by the way he provides for his offspring and by the education he gives them. He provides education out of love with the hope that Serenity will become his future lawyer. We again learn of Grandma who is also like her brother through a flashback. She loves and cares for Mugezi better than his biological parents. She is always there to save him from torture—the torture from his biological mother. When Serenity and Padlock are moving to the city, Grandma shows that she is willing to care for young Mugezi with love. Padlock slaps him and throws him into the mud. Mugezi says;

"Grandma picked me up. Rain broke out. She lifted me, mud, and all, and carried me to her

house. It was not the first time that she had rescued me or watched me suffer" (Isegawa, 69).

This is the second time that grandma rescues Mugezi. The first is when Padlock is punishing him for spying on to her in the pit latrine. This time Padlock is caught off guard and young Mugezi escapes to hide behind Grandma. In this, Mugezi tries to compare the parenting way of his mother with that of his grandmother which is in agreement with Michaud a psychoanalytic critic who asserts that literature rests on the processes of comparison. The way Grandma is always there whenever Mugezi is need of help helps to show how loving she is towards Mugezi. This is comparable to his biological mother that brings this torture to him. The flashbacks used here help to clearly show the love and care that grandma has towards the grandchild. It helps in comparing her love and parenting style with that of her biological mother that lacks that love. I therefore argue that flashbacks help to show the caring and parenting style depicted through Grandma.

Through vivid descriptions and first-person point of view, Isegawa shows that Grandma's love is extended to the public. The descriptions depict that she delivers many babies with love. In Mugezi's own words, he brings to us how Grandma nurses these expectant mothers with love. She would even ask these women to show her their bellies. She stroked them, kneaded them, felt them, and advised the women accordingly. This love is shared by many. By the time their (Grandma's and Mugezi's) stint ended in 1971, they had delivered more than fifty babies. The vivid descriptions help to depict Grandma as a caring parent who gives her love to everybody that needs it. This description is brought out using the first-person point of view and we therefore believe that it is true love as it is narrated from a first person that shares on it and witnesses it being shared to others. This kind of love is never seen at Mugezi's parental home of Serenity and Padlock. He sees it at his primary school and feels

at home while at school not home. It is where merit matters and everybody has same chances like any other. He even feels that time passes quickly when he is at school. In a descriptive way, Mugezi narrates that;

School was my paradise; there I competed on level ground, and did my level best to reach the top. It was the only place where I drew complements from adults; I also drew pleas for help from fellow pupils, who regarded tests as I did the heaps of excreta, I had to deal with every morning (Isegawa, 95).

This is evidence that school is home away from home for Mugezi. The school is contrasted with the home in which the room that Padlock uses to house her sewing machine is referred to as the ‘command post’ a term that is usually used with the military. This is understood by analysing the fine details which Michaud (2009) highlights as being core to understanding literature. Whereas the ‘command post’ is just a name for the room, it is a place where most of the times Mugezi is punished from. It looks just a name but in understanding the fine details, one understands that it carries a lot of meaning in understanding the cruelty possessed by Padlock.

When Mugezi is growing up, he parents others. Using the first person narrator, he depicts that his nature of parenting is full of love. When Padlock is away, Mugezi parents the shitters differently. Michaud asserts that understanding literature rests on the processes of comparison. Mugezi tries to compare his own parenting method with that of other people especially his parents. He shows the shitters a different way of doing things with words not with switches. He also parents Aunt Lwandeka’s children. He becomes a father to these fatherless children. He makes them do their homework like a biological father would do to his children. Like Mugezi, Aunt Lwandeka also parents her children with love. She is the opposite of her sister Padlock. Comparing the two helps us to understand the different parenting ways. She plays with her children and even tells them stories. In loving them,

she expects discipline from them. Mugezi narrates that;

Aunt bathed all her children herself, scrubbed their backs and examined their feet carefully. She held them and let them vomit in her lap or shower her with diarrhoea when they were ill. When they had measles, and their eyes went red, and they refused to eat, and they cried incessantly, she would plead with them, ask them to be quiet and tempt them with nice little things. She would show a high degree of patience even if she herself was feeling very tired (Isegawa, 293).

This nature of parenting is full of love. She does everything but demands discipline from the children. Parenting with love may make the parent also do the same at the adult age basing on the argument of Amma Darko and Lorraine Waterhouse as cited by Nabutanyi that the way one is treated in infancy is the way he will treat others in adult age which is a view of the psychoanalytical critics like Freud. This first-person narrator helps to witness his own view of parenting. He prefers talking about the mode of parenting with the child since it is him/her (child) that is being affected by it.

Community Parenting in *Abyssinian Chronicles*

Parenting as already noted is done by both biological and non-biological parents. The non-biological may be relatives or even non-relatives. In *Abyssinian chronicles*, the schools are part of the places that parents the young ones. This is in line with what Mawusi (2013) has already proposed in arguing that one can be a parent to biological and non-biological children. The discussion therefore is about the community involvement in parenting.

To start with, the aunts and uncles are parents though are not biological parents to the children. Using a flashback, Isegawa shows that some of the aunts are shown to parent as they officiate in the marriage ceremonies. As Padlock is getting married, she is parented by her aunt-Nakibuka. Because of

this, Nakibuka gets in touch with Serenity but also tells him about Padlock's past the reason Padlock hates her. Aunts are shown as being there always to play vital roles. When Padlock is sent away from the convent, a concerned aunt takes her up and parents her. The aunt even gets her a job as a filling clerk in a small-cotton buying firm. She comes at a time that Padlock needs her most when she has lost the zeal of living. It is the time when her parents have failed and they therefore seek help from other relatives. The role played by the aunt helps Padlock believe in living again as it is during this period that she meets Serenity and agrees to marry him. This flashback helps to know the circumstances through which Padlock and Serenity start their family.

Through a flashback, we learn that Lwendo himself is not parented by his biological parents. He is taken care of by a kind catholic couple that expects him to become a priest and parent other children. Mugezi narrates of him that,

"Lwendo is an orphan. He never knew his real parents. He had been brought up by a kind catholic couple with a big family as one of their children. It was while at the seminary that he discovered that his benefactors were not his real parents" (Isegawa, 390).

This couple plays a role in Lwendo's life. He lives because of the nature of parenting that he gets from his care givers. This unfolding of his life is through a flashback meaning that it (flashback) brings to us the reality and makes clear most of the unclear events. The discovery itself makes Lwendo understand that he has to develop his course of life according to what he needs for his life and that is how he joins the guerrillas in the bush. This is in line with the views of the psychoanalytical critic-Freud who argues that one's childhood affects one's adult life.

The community is also seen through the role played by grandparents. Through vivid descriptions, Isegawa shows that the better life of Mugezi is when he stays with Grandpa and Grandma. It is here that

he feels loved and listened to. For anything, he is given a word as to why it is bad or good. The love given to him is what Padlock does not agree with. She thinks that the boy has been pampered and therefore plans on how to break him. She fails to parent her eldest son and sends him away to her sister's home to be parented well. Padlock and Serenity think it is devilish for him to keep home and keep fornicating with Lusanani-Hajj Gimbi's wife. As they plan to have him in the seminary, his aunt is there to parent him. The nature of parenting possessed by Aunt Lwandeka is different from that of his biological parents. Lwandeka parents the children with love, care, and passion not like Padlock who uses switches and slaps to parent. This is in line with what Michaud a psychoanalytic critic puts across when he argues that understanding literature rests on the processes of comparison. In this Mugezi's biological parents' manner of parenting is compared to that of non-biological. The descriptions help to show the nature of parenting that the community upholds in comparison with that of Mugezi's parents. We learn that in the bid to create a disciplined or docile child, Padlock and Serenity use more force than necessary the reason that Gimbi's youngest wife rhetorically asks, *'She is not your mother, is she?'*

Moses Isegawa uses vivid descriptions to depict that Padlock and Serenity view the seminary as a good place to parent Mugezi. But the seminary falls short of Mugezi's expectations. It is seen through vivid description that the seminary is a torture chamber for the seminarians there. The seminary tortures the boys the way Padlock tortures Mugezi. Mugezi shows the problem with seminary life in the description below;

The Hydra at the heart of the autocracy commonly known as the seminary system bore three venom-laden heads: brainwashing, schizophrenia, and good old-fashioned dictatorship.... Therefore, a seminarian's mandate was to please, obey and be docile and trustworthy (Isegawa, 197).

The words used in this section show the nature of torture at the seminary. The words, ‘autocracy’, ‘venom-laden’, ‘brainwashing’, ‘schizophrenia’, and ‘dictatorship’, all combine to depict the shortfalls of the system and lucky enough they are brought out in the first-person point of view meaning they are true since we get them from the affected person. On this Nabutanyi (2016) comments that such ‘*deliberately macabre diction highlights the terrible life to which this discipline-oriented institution subjects’ children*’. The seminary is therefore not a good area for parenting. It does not suit Mugezi’s expectations and I too do not believe in parenting by starving the parented. Because of this, a lot is done to change what takes place at the seminary. Mugezi even gets Lwendo to protect him from the tyranny of older seminarians. Lwendo is to be like a body guard to him. Understanding the seminary life is achieved through Michaud who believes that criticism helps to explain the religion. Padlock believes that religion can easily impart good morals to the young ones.

CONCLUSION

According to an article by Crawford Krysten (2021), Obradović Jelena is quoted to have said that;

Parents have been conditioned to find ways to involve themselves, even when kids are on task and actively playing or doing what they’ve been asked to do. But too much direct engagement can come at a cost to kids’ abilities to control their own attention, behavior, and emotions. When parents let kids take the lead in their interactions, children practice self-regulation skills and build independence.

From my discussion above, the assertion holds a lot of water. Whereas the best parent is expected to set guidelines, s/he parents well when s/he considers the children’s views. The novel under study has depicted those parents that over involve themselves in their children’s activities. They have ended up totally failing to achieve what they strive to achieve. This is where these parents have been found to have

strict rules to be followed without question as evidenced through Padlock and Serenity. These parents tend to abuse their children in the name of disciplining them. Edgar Nabutanyi has drawn a comparison between child abuse and discipline in *Abyssinian Chronicles*, as he argues that

“There is a direct connection between Mugezi’s beatings and starvation and his parents’ and guardians’ authoritarian parenting and obsession with fetishised objects” which lead to his beating to make him disciplined.

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