

ADAPTATION IN DISCIPLINARY PANOPTICON: KIDNAPPER AS ATTACHMENT AND SURVEILLANCE FIGURE IN 3096 DAYS

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Abstract:

The innate and instinctual ability to seek attention and secure attachment with a primary caregiver, who fulfills all the basic necessities the infant demands, gives the child a sense of security, stability, and protection. The proximity to a principal attachment figure is essential for the emotional, physical, and psychological development of the child. In hostile situations like child abduction scenarios, the child attaches itself to the kidnapper who is the sole provider of his/her principal requirements. The rebellious spirit of the child is nipped in the bud by administering intermittent reward and punishment and the constant disciplining ensured through the belief of Panopticon surveillance. The child employs the defense mechanism regression leading to the reversion of ego to an earlier stage of development and adapts its behaviour to get along in an environment that will ensure the least conflict with the captor intercepting disastrous effects. The abductor becomes both the attachment and surveillance figure to control and command the victim to compliance. In the child abduction memoir 3096 Days (2010), Natascha Kampusch details her imprisonment by Wolfgang Priklopil in a dungeon for eight and a half years and how she adapted herself to the whims of her kidnapper as a survival strategy. It is a testament to her strength and power in the face of most cruel adversities where she was subjected to violence, molestation, and sensory deprivation.

Keywords: Attachment theory, panopticon, surveillance, adaptation, abduction.

Attachment is a reciprocal emotional bond developed initially between an infant and a primary caregiver to restrain the threat and distress the child perceives in the outside world away from the comforts of the womb. The behaviour of seeking proximity to a protective adult, usually the mother, is both natural and normal as the authoritative figure satisfy the needs, primarily food and warmth, and shares communication with them. The caregivers anticipate the responses of the child, nourishing and nurturing, soothing and comforting, and safeguarding them from potential dangers.

John Bowlby in his seminal work *Separation: Anxiety and Anger* (1969) introduced the Attachment theory which propounded the belief that primate infants have the tendency to develop attachment patterns to familiar caregivers as there is a danger of survival due to the exposure to the natural elements. They derive emotional support, protection, and motivation from the caregiver and clings to the mother figure establishing a powerful and indestructible positive bond. Bowlby's experience of working as a psychiatrist in a Child Guidance Clinic in London, where he treated many emotionally disturbed children enabled him to define attachment as "a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby 194).

Unlike animals, humans have a behavioural system which is controlled by the dynamics of long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships with loved ones. The parent as a caregiver initially provides a sense of constant support and security which progresses to periodic excursions into the outside world to get acquainted with the alien territory. The presence of an attachment figure will be significant in the overall development of the personality of the child and for social interactions. When the mother-child dyadic relationship is ruptured, the child becomes vulnerable and distressed over the loss of the secure

emotional bond.

In adverse situations where the child is kidnapped and held captive, a child undergoes adaptation to renew the broken bond and attaches itself to another figure that resembles in providing those indispensable necessities. The child employs regression, a defense mechanism to manage the unacceptable impulses whereby the ego of the child reverts to earlier, more childlike patterns of behaviour to cope. The adaptive behaviour directs attachment of the child from 'mother figure', with whom he directed his/her attachment behaviour by preference, to another person to whom the child is willing to direct attachment behaviour. It is a survival strategy to substitute another person who is conveniently available and the generic term used "towards whom attachment behaviour is directed are 'attachment figure' and 'support figure'" (Bowlby 21).

While principal caregivers discipline the child with the help of mild punishments, the kidnapper adopts harsh means of disciplining. The kidnapper utilizes different strategies to discipline the children when it rebels and becomes obstinate to return to the primary caregiver. Sensory deprivation, violence, drilling, manipulation, and positive and negative reinforcements are timely administered by the kidnapper for the compliance, and to eliminate inappropriate and unacceptable behavioural patterns. Sensory deprivation or perpetual isolation is employed by the kidnapper when the child is deliberately reduced or removed from experiencing the external stimuli or perceptual opportunities. The different methods for perceptual isolation include the use of blindfolds, earmuffs or any devices that cut off the sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste.

Psychological manipulation and drilling are maneuvered in such a way that the vulnerabilities of the victim are used to determine the most effective means of compliance. The kidnapper will use aggressive and ruthless methods to manipulate the mind by drilling beliefs which are quite conflicting and contradictory to the attitude of the victim. Denial of food, water, bathroom breaks, medical care, shaming, and the drilling of thoughts which stands in opposition in order to make the victim comply with the kidnapper's demands. The kidnapper shows intermittent good and bad behaviour where desirable behaviours are rewarded while the undesired ones are punished limiting the occurrence of such responses in future. The kidnapper thus confirms the high frequency of adherence and obedience and less frequency of defiance and refusal.

The kidnapper also functions as a surveillance figure who can discipline the subject with the apparatus of power, the dungeon or the place of captivity. The 'Panopticon' devised by social theorist Jeremy Bentham is a system of control designed like institutional building where the inmates of the prison are observed without being able to tell whether they are being watched or not. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault builds on Bentham's notion of the panopticon and demonstrates it as an apparatus of power and as a symbol of the disciplinary society of surveillance. Foucault adds how the "field of visibility" is a trap and how the subject adapts his/her behaviour accordingly.

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault 202-203)

The kidnapper as authoritative figure places the subject in a constant state of visibility and the efficiency of the surveillance is maximized through technology. In a state of exposure, the victims alter and modify their behaviour in response to their awareness of being observed. Such a motivation induce a reactivity referred to as the 'Hawthorne effect', which was interpreted by Elton Mayo, originally witnessed among factory workers in Hawthorne Works resulting in the improvement of productivity.

3096 Days by Natascha Kampusch, a memoir of imprisonment which has a terrifying predicament, deals with the trials and tribulations of a 10-year-old Austrian girl who was kidnapped on the morning of March 2, 1998, and kept captive for eight and half years by her kidnapper Wolfgang Priklopil. A

communications technician, Priklopil held Kampusch in a small cellar underneath his garage. The kidnapper's home was protected by surveillance equipment and the entrance to the dungeon was carefully concealed. Beneath the garage, behind a small cupboard, a metal doorway led to a soundproofed and windowless room which has been the sanctuary for Natascha. "The cellar had only 5 square meters of space. It had a door made of concrete and was reinforced with steel." (*BBC News*)

Children are programmed to perceive the adults closest to them and immediate in fulfilling their needs as unquestionable authorities, who provide orientation and set standards of what is right and what is wrong. They learn to accept and trust, give voice to their requirements and even become obedient to their commands and orders. They are attachment figures who are responsible for the well-being and safety of the child who plays a monumental role in the development of a child. Natascha realized that her begging and pleading was futile and attained a closure when the door of the dungeon clicked shut ruling out any chances of escape and rescue. From the stories she heard from the news report, she had understood and deduced that resistance could only lead to violence and her own downfall. Her dependence on the kidnapper made her transfer her attachment from her primary caregiver to her kidnapper who will look after her every necessity.

Natascha connected and recreated the role of her primary caregiver in her kidnapper expecting him to do everything her mother usually did, "the bedtime ritual, my mother's hand on my duvet, the goodnight kiss, and an attachment figure who would leave a night-light on and quietly tiptoe out of the room." (Kampusch 45) Natascha wanted a semblance of her home in the dungeon where she made the kidnapper perform the daily rituals her mother indulged in.

When the kidnapper came back to the dungeon later, I asked him to stay with me, to put me to bed properly and to tell me a goodnight story. I even asked him for a goodnight kiss like my mother used to give me before softly closing the door to my room behind her. Everything to preserve the illusion of normality. (Kampusch 45)

She created the protective illusion of transferring the qualities of her mother to the kidnapper. The fear she had imbibed through her knowledge of 'true kidnappers' made Priklopil an attachment figure who provides friendship and support at the right moment. Natascha tried to forget her catastrophe and trauma by imagined the kidnapper as a fatherly figure who was generous enough in taking time to play with a child. The kidnapper's penchant for treating Natascha like an infant dependent on Priklopil made her prone to both surveillance and attachment. The kidnapper would peel every orange for her and put it in her mouth piece by piece imitating the motions that of a mother as if she is unable to feed herself. He would brush her teeth as though she is a three-year-old who cannot hold her toothbrush. He would cut her fingernails grabbing her hands roughly and gripping tightly so that she will not hurt herself. Wolfgang acts as a second mother and a primary caregiver in the dungeon.

Natascha accepts the inevitable that Priklopil is the only person in the nightmare of her abduction and he has become her world as he is only source and communication and affection she finds in her fear and loneliness. Natascha is completely dependent on her captor, as infants and toddlers depend solely on their parents. The minute gestures of affection and kindness, food, clothing, light, air, and her whole survival in this ordeal is depended upon the one man who locked her in the basement dungeon. She admits,

Children can adapt even to the most adverse circumstances. In the parents who beat them, they still see the part that loves them, and in a mouldy shack they see their home. My new home was my dungeon, my attachment figure, the kidnapper. (Kampusch 71)

When Natascha began to make herself at home in the dungeon and turn the kidnapper's prison into her space, into her own room, a bare bulb dictated when Natascha should go to sleep and when she should wake up. She was unaware and uncertain of what day of the week it was, and what date it was. She cleaned the room to make it normal and she says, "I created a film set in which I could imagine that I was home." (Natascha 83)

Natascha tricked herself and withdrew from the thought process of considering the kidnapper as a criminal. He manipulated Natascha's mind by drilling the image that her abduction had been ordered by 'someone' which he exploited by making up a ploy that claimed that her letter, she wrote to her parents was torn by someone injuring him in the process. Thus she confirmed of her belief that the bad guys from the pornography ring pursued her and Priklopil was donning the role of a protector.

Today as an adult, it seems amazing to me that my fear, my recurrent panic, was not directed towards the kidnapper's person. It may have been my reaction to his nondescript appearance and his insecurity, or his strategy aimed at giving me as much as of a sense of security as possible in this unbearable situation by making himself indispensable as an attachment figure. (Kampusch 59)

After the abduction, the mind of the ten-year-old Natascha regressed psychologically back to that of a child four or five years of age. She felt subconsciously regressed and felt small, at the mercy of someone else and free of responsibility. This intuitive withdrawal and adaptation into the mental state of a small child was a transformation Natascha logically perceived for a feeling of normality. She relied on the only adult present and therefore the person of authority for her physical and emotional needs. She behaves like a small child who seeks the attention of the caregiver.

I acquiesced in my role, and when the kidnapper returned to the dungeon the next time to bring me food, I did everything I could to keep him there. I pleaded. I begged. I vied for his attention so that he would occupy himself with me, play with me. My time in the solitary dungeon was driving me mad. (Kampusch 53)

Natascha describes her abduction as “a choreography of terror” as “everything happened in one fell swoop, as if had been a choreographed scene, as if we had rehearsed it together” (Kampusch 33). She had heard stories and news reports of abduction and the subsequent search and rescue operations and how the victims were brutally murdered as they resisted the aggressor. She had paid attention to the reports of the discovery of child pornography ring in Upper Austria. She never saw herself as a girl “the child molesters seemed to prefer” as she was not “the blonde, delicate girl” she saw in the photographs of victims. (Kampusch 28) She was plump, a fact her mother never missed, and she was ridiculed and humiliated for her bedwetting by her mother and at her pre-school. Her unhappy childhood and her parents' splitting up had contributed to her secondary enuresis.

Disciplining is essential for teaching children the expectations, guidelines, and principles to increase desirable behaviour and to decrease undesirable behaviours. Child discipline usually involves rewards and punishments to teach self-control, morally accepted social behaviours, and differentiation of right and wrong. But in child abduction narratives the kidnapper disciplines the child to ensure that she makes no attempt to escape the confines of the prison he has devised and to be respectful and obedient to the directives and commandments. The kidnapper strictly disciplined Natascha giving punishments when she refused to comply with his commands. One of the methods was sensory deprivation in which there was a lack of sensory stimulus perception, taking away one or more of the senses from the awareness of the outside world.

Priklopil made Natascha sleep the first few nights with an excruciating brightness that in turn kept her awake. Natascha was trapped in a state of uncertainty when kidnapper cut off her from all sensory input. In the total lonely darkness inside the dungeon, she came close to losing her mind. Natascha used to scream the walls in the desperate hope that somebody would hear her and rescue her to return to the cocoon of her mother's affection. She says,

When the kidnapper unscrewed the light bulb in the evening and closed the door behind him, I felt as if I had been cut off from everything: blind, deaf from the constant whirring of the fan, unable to orientate myself spatially or sometimes even myself. Psychologists call this 'sensory deprivation'. (Kampusch 68-69)

Food deprivation was another most effective strategies employed by the kidnapper to keep Natascha in line. She was a pudgy child who weighed forty-five kilograms. When Natascha was twelve, her body underwent a sequence of changes with a growth spurt. Priklopil began to ration the food and started insults and accusations linking her eating habits. He developed in Natascha a gnawing destructive self-hate and his own paranoia of the food industry collectively murdering everyone with poisoned food made the food choices even less than earlier. The rationing of food had its consequences as she suffered from malnourishment. Priklopil used hunger to keep Natascha weak and submissive. He revealed to Natascha once, “You are being so rebellious again. I'm probably giving you too much to eat” (Kampusch 139). In extreme cases, she would play a game of imagining the feeling of real food in her mouth by¹ looking at the flyers from supermarket Priklopil brought to the dungeon.

After a while, I made up a game that called 'Tastes'. For example, I would imagine a piece of butter on my tongue. Cool and hard, slowly melting, until the taste pervaded my entire mouth. Then I would switch to Grammelknodel¹; in my thoughts, I would bite into one, feeling the soft potato dumpling between my teeth, filling made of crispy bacon. (Kampusch 138-139)

The kidnapper started his psychological manipulation and drilling once she was locked in the dungeon. He invoked fear in Natascha by saying, 'if you don't do what I tell you, I will have to turn your light off.' 'If you are not good, then I'll have to tie you up.'” (Kampusch 58) He imposed fear on a vulnerable young girl by hammering and drilling the belief that her parents have abandoned searching for her and has moved on with their lives. He made her believe that the letters she wrote for her parents to pay the ransom haven't received any desired results. Natascha had difficulty to cope with such manipulation and in her unguarded and ill-protected moments, she even doubted her conscience. When probed about how he preferred her, he said,

'I saw you in a school picture and picked you out.' But then he immediately retracted his statement. Later he would say, 'You came to me like a stray cat. Cats you are allowed to keep.' Or, 'I saved you. You should be grateful.' Towards the end of my imprisonment, he was probably the most honest: 'I always wanted to have a slave.' (Kampusch 66)

The kidnapper also manipulated Natascha by controlling her essential needs. He played God with a defenseless and powerless victim. Priklopil took Natascha's identity and her history and even denied a mirror to see her reflection. It was a year later, after constant requests that she was provided with a small mirror. She was a puppet in the hands of her captor. Light and darkness, companionship and loneliness, and kindness and violence were alternately administered to manipulate the mind of the victim. She became accustomed to the kidnapper and intuitively adapted herself to new customs and practices which are alien to her senses. He inculcated the thoughts such as,

'I rescued you. You belong to me now,' he said over and over, Or: 'You no longer have a family. I am your father, your mother, your grandma and your sisters. I'm now your everything. You no longer have a past.' He hammered into me. 'You're so much better off with me. You're lucky that I took you in and that I take good care of you. You belong to me now. I have cared for you. (Kampusch 120)

The kidnapper used violence to extract discipline from the captive. Brutal punches to the head, stomach, and face, excessive and sudden outbursts of rage, pushing down while climbing the stairs, insults and screaming, choking and suffocating, and throwing objects leave Natascha nauseated. She made a list of violence in her diary pouring her outrage for being treated like a punching machine. The isolation, beatings, humiliation, and mistreatment she suffered for so long made her panic even at a mere sound of the door. The feeling of mortal fear has been branded in Natascha's brain with a hot iron that she was incapable

¹Grammelknodel are boiled dumplings commonly found in Central European and East European cuisine

of action or reason. She believed with her whole mind that escape could only lead to death. She writes,

In that phase of my imprisonment I no longer had any thought of escape. At the age of fifteen my psychological prison was complete. The door to the house could have been standing open: I couldn't have taken a single step. Escape, that meant death. For me, for him, for everyone who could have seen me. (Kampusch 158)

The kidnapper shifted his behaviour from kindness to brutal violence and then again permeating the mind of the victim with disciplining and a continuous teaching of positive behaviors that will ensure whole acquiescence. Natascha was rewarded with videos, books and other essential things which she requested for when she dutifully performed every action like a passive and submissive being without questioning or resistance. But when she resisted, he used sensory deprivation, denied food and light, and left her in the dungeon for long periods without any reassurance of coming back or leaving her any food for survival. She was permitted to shower upstairs, watch television and sometimes eat along with the kidnapper when she abides by his rules. But she was always tamed by an invisible leash and the kidnapper's control continued to be absolute. Mentioning Natascha's parents and her old life made the kidnapper lose his temper in such an extent that she had to suffer the consequence for days. She says,

The prohibition on my past became a standard component of his visits to my dungeon. Whenever I mentioned my parents, he flew into a rage. When I cried he turned the light off and left me in complete darkness until I was 'good' again. Being 'good' meant I was to be grateful that he had 'rescued' me from my previous life. (Kampusch 119-120)

The kidnapper also enjoys the role of a surveillance figure in the Panopticon of the prison where he can anticipate and witness each and every action of the victim. The psychiatrists believe that the cellar represented a perverse form of security that she never felt in the flat where she was raised. Being a communication engineer, Priklopil was able to make the room soundproof to avoid the sound from penetrating the four walls of the dungeon. Priklopil understood how alarms, radios, and other electrical devices worked and it worked against Natascha as she would be closely monitored for errors and will soon be disciplined using violence. The kidnapper installed a microphone on the radio he provided Natscha with. It was one of the devices he used to observe and supervise the victim. It was a means through which the kidnapper ensured the hierarchy of power and the control he maintained in this prison setting.

This rebuilt radio became a terrible instrument of torture for me. It had a microphone that was so powerful it could broadcast up above every noise I made in my room. The kidnapper could simply listen in on my 'life' without warning and monitor me every second to check whether I was following his orders. Whether I had turned off the television. Whether the radio was on. Whether I was still scraping my spoon across my plate. (Natascha 94)

The kidnapper also eavesdropped outside the victim's room to check whether she complied with what he tasks she has to carry out. If Natascha failed to answer right away to his queries or failed to perform them, Priklopil yelled into the loudspeaker until everything got hammered into Natascha's head. The kidnapper used another mechanism where he denied the victim the pleasures he had bestowed with. He would enter the dungeon unannounced and took away what Natascha considered the prized possessions in this torture chamber. Natascha has to pay a penitent for her misconduct by parting with her books, videos, and food he gifted.

The kidnapper is an omnipresent being with boundless freedom to control Natascha. By placing the subject in constant visibility, the panopticon functions automatically. It helps the authoritative figure an opportunity to penetrate the victim's behaviour. He would call into the intercom in a monotone voice reiterating 'Obey! Obey! Obey!' till she acquiesced to his demands. It was a daily routine to conquer her mind with innumerable commands. His presence permeated the prison, filling up every last inch of space and forcing Natascha to feel the kidnapper in every corner of the tiny cellar room.

He is here. Always. He is breathing at the other end of the line. He could begin to bellow at

any time, and I would recoil, even if I was anticipating it any second. There was no escape from his voice. (Natascha 95)

The victim's belief of being continuously and persistently watched at all times modifies the behaviour to meet the demands of the observer. When Natascha suspiciously checked for peepholes or cameras throughout the dungeon, she was so afraid that she filled the tiniest cracks in the wood paneling with toothpaste there were no more gaps. But she still felt the feeling of being constantly watched. The invisible observer at times asks a series of question through the microphone to confirm whether the victim is obediently fulfilling the chores. Priklopil's questions pursued Natascha and terrified her. He asked, 'Have you eaten your banana?' 'Have you been a greedy pig again?' 'Have you washed your face?' 'Did you turn off the television after one episode?' Throughout her solitary confinement, Natascha felt like a monitored and supervised experiment. And it resulted in a Hawthorne effect where the subject's behaviour is altered by the awareness of being observed. Natascha tried to please and

I felt watched every second of the day, even while I was speaking. Perhaps he had installed a heat-imaging camera so that he could monitor me even as I lay on my lounge in complete darkness. The thought paralyzed me and I hardly dared to turn over in my sleep at night.

During the day, I looked round ten times before I went to toilet. (Kampusch 95)

Natascha adapted to the situation realizing that her survival will depend on how she cooperates with the kidnapper. She dedicated more and more energy to maintaining a 'positive approach' to the kidnapper. She was grateful for all the things he provided as a benefactor trying to make Natascha's life as pleasant as possible. He broke the loneliness in the dungeon by sharing meals with her. Towards the end of her captivity, the kidnapper was so assured of her reliance on him that he organized a ski-trip with her and allowed her to accompany him to the shopping centre.

I was immeasurably grateful to the kidnapper back then for such small pleasures, like the sunbathing or swimming in the neighbour's pool. And I still am. Even it seems strange, I can recognize that there were small, humane moments during my time in captivity. (160)

Natascha admits that the survival strategy she had employed during her imprisonment made her feel the perspective of the insensitive kidnapper. Natascha even became emotional and cried inconsolably when she was told he was dead. She answered those "Getting closer to the kidnapper is not an illness. . . . It is a survival strategy in a situation with no escape and much more true to reality than the sweeping categorization of criminals as bloodthirsty beasts and of victims as helpless lambs that society refuses to look beyond." (Kampusch 147-148)

Natascha tried to humanize her kidnapper as he has shown both sides of his character where he played the role of a protector and a sadistic evil. She was caught between visions of madness and a perfect world where her kidnapper functioned as an attachment figure who was the only physical and emotional contact for years.

Nothing is black or all white. And nobody is all good or evil. That also goes for the kidnapper. These are words that people don't like to hear from an abduction victim. Because the clearly defined concept of good and evil is turned on its head, a concept that people are too willing to accept so as not to lose their way in a world full of shades of grey.

When I talked about it, I can see the confusion and rejection in the faces of many who were not there. The empathy they felt for my fate freezes and turned into denial. (Kampusch 147)

Natascha being abducted in her childhood longed for an attachment figure. In the initial days, she has no sense of where she was, who she with was, and what his motives were. "For a child away from home 'the lack of a sense of time means that separation feels like an eternity.'" (Holmes 43) Priklopil was the only person who could relieve her from this oppressive loneliness. She craved for the presence of another human being, a touch or a hug to reassure of everything going back to normalcy. In contrast, Priklopil who was an anti-social and an introvert wanted approval and affection. He chose the most dangerous means by

which he could find love and happiness. He fit Natascha in his fantasy of an ideal family where she will love him absolutely.

Natascha has accepted what has happened to her as she desperately acquiesced to it with desperation and indignation. Through adaptation, coping mechanisms, and by regressing psychologically, she accepted her trauma and humiliation she was handed over. Though she had planned her escape all along, she subconsciously doubted whether she would be free again to meet her parents and the outside world. The retelling of her life through her memoir will play an instrumental role in making it a survival and how she succeeded it with strong conviction. As Lucy Robinson states,

The retelling of traumatic life stories indicates the possibility of recovery and reconciliation: the relationship between retelling and recovery and suggests that the telling and publication of [...] stories might help to externalise the experience, rendering it less traumatic. (569)

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