

THE REALISM OF ERRONEOUS CONVICTION IN ROBERT MAYER'S *THE DREAMS OF ADA*

Ms. Navya Sree, MU(23PEL0003), MA English Literature, Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore –49

Mr. NR Gowrishankar, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore –49

ABSTRACT :

This article deals with how Robert Mayer's *The Dreams of Ada* depicts the psychological and societal consequences of false conviction as it relates to the issue of erroneous conviction. We demonstrate how Mayer's work emphasises the frailty of the legal system and the terrible effects of erroneous convictions on people and their loved ones through a critical examination of the text. And also reviews the factors that lead to and are associated with false confessions. Following an explanation of the three sequential processes misclassification, coercion, and contamination, that lead to the gathering information of untrue confessions, the three psychologically different kinds of false confessions, voluntary, compliant, and persuaded as well as the impacts of using erroneous confession proof in the field of law enforcement are covered. In summary, the article ends with some implications for lowering the incidence of false confessions and raising the quality of confession evidence used in court against a defendant.

Keywords: -False conviction- Erroneous- Social Justice- Denice Haraway-Tommy Ward- Karl Fontenot

In the article Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot's genuine story is told in Robert Mayer's novel *The Dreams of Ada*. After being questioned about Donna Denice Haraway's disappearance for over five hours, Tommy Ward eventually admitted to the rape and murder of the missing woman. It was eventually discovered, though, that Tommy Ward's confession was fictitious and based only on a dream. Despite this, Tommy Ward and his companion Karl Fontenot were charged by the police when he admitted to the murder. Without a body or a weapon of mass destruction, Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot endured jail time for a period exceeding ten months prior to their conviction. Denice Haraway's body was discovered four months later on the day Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were supposed to pass away prior to their stays being approved. *The Dreams of Ada* is a novel about mischief, unresolved and justice gone wrong. On April 28 1984, Denice Haraway was employed at McAnally's convenience store when she vanished. When three customers came by, they watched a man and a woman exit the store right before they entered and found it empty. After a misunderstanding, the police were called, but they were directed to the erroneous store. The manager was summoned in by the police when they eventually arrived, and he or she wiped off the counter without looking for potential fingerprints. The spouse of Denice Haraway received a call alerting him to his wife's kidnapping. Steve Haraway took part in a massive search for his wife the following day, but nothing turned up. A number of witnesses came for Tommy Ward within a few days. A convenience store employee from across the street came for Tommy Ward to describe how, in the few hours prior to Denice Haraway's disappearance, two men had entered her establishment, acting strangely and unsettling her. After the clerk described the men, a composite sketch was created. One of the sketches was selected by the McAnally's eyewitnesses as the man who left the store with the woman, who the police identified as Denice Haraway. Numerous calls to the police department providing potential identification for the two individuals came in after the sketches were made public. Tommy Ward's name was one of the two that appeared more frequently than the others. Tommy Ward had a justification for the night in issue, but the police were ordering him in. Over five months had gone by. One day, a man entered the police station and related how Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot had admitted to killing Denice Haraway to a gathering of individuals during

a party. This information turned out to be false, and the police proceeded to search for Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. Tommy Ward was discovered by the authorities working for a siding firm in a nearby town. Tommy Ward voluntarily joined the police force. But Tommy Ward had altered his story for that particular night. After growing suspicious, the police set up a lie detector test for Tommy Ward. Tommy Ward dreamed about the Denice Haraway disappearance the night before the test. Tommy Ward disclosed this dream, "Tommy explained the dream: that he was at a keg socialise and after Tommy Wards he and two other men were sitting in a pickup truck by the power plant near Ada, where he grew up, along with a girl. Tommy instructed the man to leave the girl alone after the girl rejected one of the two men's attempts to kiss her. He then expressed a desire to return home. You're home already," remarked one of the males. Tommy found himself at home when he peered through his window. He was standing by a washbasin, attempting in vain to wash black liquid off his hands, just before he woke up. The content in the dream was altered by the police to reflect their version of events from the night Denice Haraway vanished. Tommy Ward was questioned nonstop about the specifics of the dream until, after a few more hours, he gave in. Tommy gave in, believing the police narrative and worried about his own safety. "Sure, whatever, it was only a dream." Then, with "none of that dream bullshit," the cops switched on a camera and recorded Tommy's "confession," which was finally shaped into something far different from what Tommy Ward had previously described. During the trial, the state solely presented the "confession" as evidence and the police during his questioning after learning that he had failed the lie detector test. Tommy Ward eventually discovered that he had confessed on camera. Karl Fontenot was apprehended by the police a few days later and likewise made a confession. Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were charged with murder despite a number of discrepancies on the confession tapes, such as the fact that both claimed Odell Titsworth assisted them in killing Denice Haraway even though the police knew he couldn't have. The case's legal issues prevented the trial from happening for several months. Since Denice Haraway's body had not been located, the defence believed the prosecution lacked sufficient evidence to proceed. But in Oklahoma, it's not required to have a body to prove a murder. The prosecutor was confident in moving continue with the trial without a body because of an earlier court ruling. The prosecutor persuaded the judge during the preliminary hearing that he had sufficient evidence to establish the existence of a crime and to grant permission to show the confession tapes to the jury. In court at this hearing, Tommy Ward also provided testimony that identified him as having been there at the crime scene. Although this too turned out to be false, it strengthened the prosecution's case. During the trial of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot, the prosecution called a number of witnesses who identified Tommy Ward as being at McAnally's on the night of the crime. Even Denice Haraway's husband was unable to attest to the confession tapes' exact description of the clothes she was wearing the night she vanished, according to the prosecution. The confession recordings were then shown by the prosecution. Following several days of deliberations, the jury found the defendant guilty. A few days later, Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot received death recommendations from the same jury. The scheduled date of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot's execution was January 21, 1987. It took many days before Tommy Ward's intended execution to obtain a stay of execution until his appeals could be exhausted due to a paperwork error. The body of Donna Denice Haraway was recovered from a field where a hunter had found it the day before, the day before Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were scheduled to be executed. It seemed like Denice Haraway's body had been shot in the head. But when Tommy Ward's attorney requested a new trial on the basis of this evidence, the court decided that since the gunshot wound may have happened after death, it did not prove that Denice Haraway had not been stabbed, as stated by Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. The prosecution's use of the confession tapes during the trial tipped the jury against each defendant, leading to the eventual need for new trials for Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. Karl Fontenot's trial was scheduled for the same place as the first trial—Pontotoc County. Evidence would be presented by Karl Fontenot's attorney to suggest that his confession was motivated by remorse over his mother's passing. But the jury remained unmoved, and they returned a

guilty verdict. When it was revealed that the jury had not been given the choice to condemn Karl Fontenot to life in prison without the possibility of release, the second time that Karl Fontenot was a Tommy Warded the death penalty, the judgement was reversed. After that, Karl Fontenot received a life sentence without the possibility of release. There was also a second attempt at Tommy Ward. After Tommy Ward's trial was rescheduled to a different county, Tommy Ward gave the opening statement. Tommy Ward was found guilty a second time, though, since the confession tape appeared to predominate the evidence once more. Tommy Ward was given a life sentence with the possibility of release after 25 years. Now the causes and consequences of false convictions affects the social life of an individual because it may lead to them to spent their entire life in it. For social scientists, mental health experts, policy makers, and the general public, false confessions present significant questions. They continue to be one of the most biased sources of false evidence that result in erroneous convictions because they are continuously among the most common, but misunderstood, causes of error in the legal system. Additionally, covered are the psychological rationale for the various forms of false confessions, their origins and correlates, and the implications of using false confession evidence in court. An erroneous is confessing to a crime and giving a thorough account of it. Due to the lack of monitoring data, the challenge of locating key case materials, and the difficulty of ascertaining the underlying truth, the frequency of false confessions is unknown. In the majority of reported false-confession cases, questions regarding the confessor's innocence cannot be entirely dispelled, even current study. It is impossible to establish an incidence rate of scientific significance. The process of getting untrue confessions involves several steps, including psychological coercion, influence, persuasion, and police acquiescence. They are more prone to happen in particular situations and to people who possess particular personality qualities. Preventing false confessions requires an understanding of this process. Three consecutive mistakes misclassification, compulsion, and contamination often result in erroneous convictions following police-induced false confessions. Investigators falsely identify innocent people, accuse them during questioning, and put pressure on them to produce a post-admission narrative often providing information about both public and private crimes. A misclassification error occurs when a defendant is wrongly classified as guilty or innocent, which results in erroneous convictions or acquittals. Furthermore, misclassification errors generally refer to the error of categorising something or someone incorrectly, which can have detrimental effects or lead to erroneous conclusions or outcomes. The coercion error refers to the mistake of forcing or coercing someone into making a false confession, statement, or admission, often leading to wrongful convictions. The introduction of outside information or evidence, which can skew a witness's testimony and cause misleading or erroneous memories, is known as the "contamination error." False confessions carry serious repercussions, including the incarceration of innocent persons and erroneous convictions. The accused can lose their freedom and endure emotional distress while serving years or possibly decades in prison. False admissions cause relationship problems, harm reputations, and have legal repercussions including probation and penalties. The real offender is still at liberty to carry out more crimes in the interim. Important resources are wasted in the investigation and prosecution of false confessions, and even in cases where fresh evidence turns out, clearing the accused can be difficult. False confessions ultimately undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system, underscoring the need for reform and stronger safeguards against forceful questioning techniques. The implications of false confessions are sensitively examined in *The Dreams of Ada*, highlighting the significance of making sure that confessions are trustworthy and voluntary. Police investigators will continue to extract false confessions that result in erroneous convictions as long as the myth that innocent people do not confess in response to psychological interrogation endures. Social scientists and mental health specialists need to keep up their efforts to inform the public about the rising number of false confessions that are documented, as well as the interrogation techniques that encourage them and ultimately result in the conviction of innocent people.

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