

# Corruption and Dispossession in Middlesex

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## **Abstract**

*Jeffrey Eugenides' Middlesex is a story of Greek migrants who find refuge in America after their dispossession and displacement. The dislocation is compounded by moral corruption of the characters associated with breakdown of familial and social values along with the new found liberty they enjoyed in the new land unleashing specter of recessive mutation giving birth to family problem. The study traces the root of corruption by analyzing the text to establish events that take place in remote space and time can have far reaching consequences affecting the present life.*

**Keywords:** Dispossession and displacement, moral corruption, embryonic consciousness, recessive mutation, family problem.

## **The protagonist's two births:**

Jeffrey Eugenides in *Middlesex* raises the issues of dispossession, dislocation and the crisis of identity. He uses the first person narrative that kicks off when the protagonist is forty-one years old making a journey back into the past often returning to the present to remind the readers of the strange reality. It is not merely a recounting of the narrator protagonist's two births as a boy and as a girl: first, when old Dr. Philobosian fails to perceive the undescended testicles of the baby at birth time and therefore declare the baby to be a 'girl' and christened Calliope; and then again as a teenage boy when Calliope's parents take 'her' to a hospital after an accident and doctors there find the existence of undescended testicles stuck in the inguinal canals. It mystifies the readers when Jeffrey Eugenides goes beyond the mysteries of birth showing the protagonist's embryonic consciousness, which enables him to recount his own inception in his mother's womb. His embryonic consciousness takes the dimension of genetic consciousness bestowing him with the power of an omniscient narrator. This power enables him to describe the union of his grandparents and even goes beyond to trace the root cause of the recessive mutation on the fifth chromosome to two and half centuries ago on the slopes of Mount Olympus that passed down through nine generations. This study tries to establish that an event that takes place in remote space and time leaves far reaching consequences leaving anyone's life and family problematic.

## **Portrayal of the Problem:**

Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* portrays the displacement of Lefty and Desdemona Stephanide from Bithynios, their homeland, after the Turkish invasion of Greece in 1922 – making their own and their offspring's familial problem in the form of gender obscurity. However, in the familial problem of the Stephanides' family, besides dispossession and displacement from their

homeland, recessive mutation of the gene that started some two and half centuries ago also plays crucial role (Eugenides 4).

The problem as Knapp in “Family Systems Psychotherapy” says, “Within the *family* system, each member is said to determine the conditions for the development of all the other *family* members. For the *family* as a unit, the surrounding socio-cultural system forms the co-evolutionary ecosystem.” Knapp says it in connection with the development of the family system in which all the three components like individual, family and social environment represent a close-knit, three-tiered feedback system with each of its units belonging to a different “logical” type. Knapp discusses it in the present context of the social development. However, its far reaching consequences have not been envisaged by it. The novel presents consequence of an event in a distant future that passes down through nine generations (4). The recessive mutation remains dormant for generations waiting for the slightest spur after which it falls heavy on the Stephanides. However, for it to appear, it intertwines with their dispossession and displacement. In fact, the dispossession creates conducive environment for the recessive mutation to resurface. However, before that it breaks the family sub-systems.

Knapp quoting Lee Minuchin and Simon writes:

All *families* have subsystems: (a) spouse-spouse (at the top of the hierarchy); (b) parent-child; (c) sibling-sibling. Maintenance of boundaries between various subsystems may range from rigid to diffuse, although the parent's boundary from children is clearly separated by sexuality and responsibility.

This boundary between various subsystems is maintained by different kinds of responsibilities. When this sub-system breaches the boundary, the problem starts. In fact, in *Middlesex*, the boundary between sibling-sibling breaches to take the form of spouse-spouse thereby waking up the generations of dormant recessive mutation.

The seed of the recessive mutation already exists in the land of Bithynios where cousins married (39). Taking cousin marriage as precedent, Lefty proposes Desdemona his own sister and the third cousin (39). It is just as the Azande proverb according to which, “The desire for a wife begins with the sister” (Lévi-Strauss et al. 17). Lefty too expresses his desire for marriage beginning with his own sister. She does not respond directly but gives implied meaning when she commends Lefty for his dance, “You’re a good dancer, cousin” (39). By commending Lefty for his dance as a cousin and not a brother, she implicitly accepts his proposal. Earlier Lefty had said, “Third cousins can marry” (39). It explains why she becomes happy when Lefty says that he is not going to marry neither Lucille nor Victoria, the village belles Lefty had gone for a date earlier (38). This new development later leads to Desdemona and Lefty’s marriage unleashing the monster of recessive mutation on the fifth chromosome that results in their grandchild, Calliope’s becoming a hermaphrodite.

The sibling-sibling relationship between Lefty and Desdemona breaks down when they leave Bithynios, their village, for Smyrna after the Turkish army invades it. In Smyrna, in the chaos of war, people forget relationship. The desperate siblings also forget their boundary when

Lefty proposes Desdemona and says:

“You promised you’d find me a nice Greek girl. Well. You’re it”

...

“It’s too late, Lefty. It doesn’t matter now.”

“But if we lived? You’d marry me then?”

A nod. That was all. And Lefty was gone, running toward the flames. (59)

Desdemona, looking at the situation thinks that is their end, which makes her give her word to marry Lefty. However, Lefty overcomes the barrier of the war. He passes as a French national and secures place, out of Smyrna, for him as well as her in a French ship along with Dr. NishanPhilobosian, an Armenian, who had treated him earlier and who becomes their family physician later in America (47). They later board a ship to America incognito as lovers. They marry in the ship itself. Since, no one recognizes them their transformation from sibling-sibling dyad to spouse-spouse dyad appears to become smooth thus, breaching the boundary of the subsystems.

Later, they settle in Detroit for which their cousin Sourmelina and her husband Jimmy Zizmo help them. Their displacement from the homeland and relocation into a new land and new language help them push their former memory away at the same time recreating a new identity. This process helps them become husband and wife forgetting them to be siblings and passing their life blissfully. They start forgetting their old identity; however, they fail to do so. Eugenides gives his remark in bracket, “But what humans forget, cells remember” (99). The cells wait for the right opportunity to resurface its property. It resurfaces to pass it on to the next generation when “Simultaneous Fertilization” (107) among the cousins Desdemona and Sourmelina take place after watching an erotic drama.

The Stephanides’ family gets first jolt when looking at the “Simultaneous Fertilization” of the cousins, Dr. Philobosian passes remark, “It usually takes a woman five or six months to get pregnant. ... To have you two do it on the same night—a-hundred-to-one odds!” (115). It is unbelievable even for a medical person like Dr. Philobosian. He further cracks medical jokes, “We know now that most birth deformities result from the consanguinity of the parents” (116). DrPhilobosian may have cracked a medical joke light heartedly; however, researchers have established it to be a truth. Robertson and South in *Practical Paediatrics*, writes, “[A] couple who are biologically related are more likely to be carriers of the same disorder than a couple picked at random from general population, and parental consanguinity increases the chance of their children having an autosomal Recessive Mutation.” Therefore, Dr. Philobosian’s light hearted remark about the relationship between consanguinity and recessive mutation has sound and well-studied background. His medical joke creates a chasm between the newly formed spouse-spouse dyad of Lefty and Desdemona that send them apart. Dr. Philobosian’s remark has its repercussion on the other pair also as a result of which, later, Zizmo, Sourmelina’s husband, takes desperate step of killing himself, though; afterward it turns out to be a feigned suicide.

Dr. Philobosian’s remark and his presence become constant thorn to both of the pregnant

cousins. Sourmelina had cast off her lesbianism far away to immigrate to America and marry with Zizmo. In the same way Desdemona and Lefty had shook off their relationship as siblings to marry and lead a conjugal life. But their past haunt and hound them from a person of their past. It comes in the form of Dr. Philobosian who works as a physical reminder of their spiritual corruption. In a way he becomes an unintentional thorn that pricks all of them: Zizmo by DrPhilobosian's remark that the pregnancy is a rare and at least a-hundred-to-one case and it takes a woman five or six months to become pregnant; Desdemona by DrPhilobosian's remark that the consanguinity may result in mutants; and lastly to some extent it is Dr. Philobosian himself whose failure to notice their grandchild Calliope's gender properly send Calliope's life topsy-turvy making the familial problem complete.

Dr. Philobosian's remark makes Desdemona anxious about her offspring's future as a result of which she avoids Lefty. Besides, after the birth of Milton, their first son, the spouse-spouse dyad becomes a triad. Knapp opines:

[W]ith the birth of the first child, the dyad (spouse-spouse) must overnight become a triad; each parent must now relate to the child both separately and as a pair-bond, and must as well adjust to the inclusion of the child's needs into the spouse's availability and interest in the other spouse.

According to Knapp the formation of the triad starts conflict. Desdemona in attending to the child's needs becomes unavailable for her spouse reducing the previous intimacy between the dyad pair. Behind the reduction in the level of their previous dyad bond her fear of genetic mutation that Dr. Philobosian instilled in her mind has immense impact. The protagonist narrator's remark helps to understand it who says:

From then on, my grandparents' relationship began to change. Up until Milton's birth, Lefty and Desdemona had enjoyed an unusually close and egalitarian marriage for its time. But as Lefty began to feel left out, he retaliated with tradition. He stopped calling his wife *kukla*, which meant "doll," and began calling her *kyria*, which meant "Madame." (130)

The formation of the triad changes the relationship between the spouses. Desdemona goes away from Lefty primarily because of the infant Milton and secondarily due to the fear of genetic mutation whereas Lefty fights back with tradition. His response appears in another form also; he starts to give more time to his business. Lefty's reaction of Desdemona's action is just like the transactional rule described by Knapp according to which every part of a *family's* life is "related to the other parts in a way that a change in one brings about a change in all others. Indeed, in the *family*, everyone and everything impacts and is impacted by every other person, event, and thing." However, this action and counteraction in turn gives birth to an unseen competition between Lefty and Milton for Desdemona. It does not only segregate the husband and the wife but also erects a wall between the father and the son that creates lasting effect in their relationship and affects the functionality of the family.

Functionality of the family continues to get jolt with all of the socio-cultural, economic

and political development. However, with each development the fear of genetic mutation revitalizes. It surfaces during the great depression when Lefty's business starts dwindling that sends Desdemona, looking for a job, to the Nation of Islam as a sericulture expert, the only skill she brings from her old country. There she encounters with Fard, the head of the Nation of Islam, who gives sermon on "TRICKNOLOGY" according to which by selective mating "GENETICALLY DIFFERENT"(154) people can be produced. Later, he turns out to be Jimmy Zizmo, her brother-in-law, who is said to have committed suicide. He accuses the cousins of using him to enter into America. Fard even accuses Sourmelina of having illicit relationship with Lefty and begetting Tessie (164).

Fard delivers speech on "TRICKNOLOGY" to control the Muslims but his idea of selective mating to produce "GENETICALLY DIFFERENT" people only gives Desdemona a shock and reminds her of her own incest and revitalizes her fear that her children in future may develop some physical and mental problem. It permanently sends Desdemona and Lefty drifting apart.

Desdemona's fear of genetic mutation exacerbates when Milton attains teenage and starts showing his infatuation for Tessie, Sourmelina and Jimmy's daughter. With Jimmy assumed to be dead, Sourmelina busy in her flower shop job, and lovelorn Lefty confined to his business, Desdemona becomes helpless to stop the meeting between Milton and Tessie, the second cousins, and thus their love affair paving way for the recessive mutation, which she is not able to share with anyone. Therefore, the desperate mother works as a matchmaker between Tessie and Michael to avoid the union between the second cousins. But, this only makes Milton feel rejected by Tessie in favor of Michael. So he joins navy and goes to the battlefield adding substance to the already existing anxiety of Desdemona.

When the dejected Desdemona receives Milton's letter intact, uncensored by the military brass without a single hole, written in English from the battlefield, she becomes happy for a moment, but later realizes that there is no need for secrecy anymore. She says, "God has brought the judgment down on us that we deserve" (194). She is convinced that the inevitable has taken place for the crime she committed through incestuous marriage. Therefore, when Tessie comes with her heart changed after watching war movie to announce the withdrawal of her marriage with Michael and write letter to Milton to "say yes" to his earlier marriage proposal, the miserable Desdemona with a little shrug responds, "You can write what you want, honey *mou*. Miltie he won't get it. ... If you and Miltie want to get married, you have my blessing. ... And may God grant that you never have a child who dies in the ocean" (195). In a sense she has resigned that Milton will not come back alive, which makes her give her consent for the second cousins' marriage. The protagonist narrator gives his comment:

In my family, the funeral meats have always furnished the wedding tables. My grandmother agreed to marry my grandfather because she never thought she'd live to see the wedding. And my grandmother blessed my parents' marriage, after vigorously plotting against it, only because she didn't think Milton would survive to the end of the week. (195)

Desdemona accepted Lefty's proposal in Smyrna amid the chaos of war and the fear that they would not be able to get out to a safer place. Now, after she is convinced that her son's death is inevitable she gives her consent thinking that the proposed second cousins' marriage will never take place. Therefore, her judgment is the product of her desperate position created by the fear of recessive mutation. It is just like the situation in which Shakespeare's Hamlet says to Horatio, "Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats/ Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-81). According to Hamlet Claudius acts hastily to marry the widowed queen Gertrude before the mourning is over because he is desperate to ascend the throne. Claudius' hasty marriage creates confusion and suspicion on his act, so is Desdemona's desperate step that only creates conducive environment for the recessive mutation.

Desdemona, in desperation, gives her consent to Tessie for the second cousins' marriage. But she also vows that if he returns safe and sound she will send Milton to the village and help reconstruct and paint the Bithynios church. Therefore, when Milton gets transfer order to report to the Naval Academy at Annapolis immediately and telephones home, the exulted Desdemona says:

I tell you St. Christopher get you out of the war.  
He sure did.  
Now you have to fix the church.  
What?  
The church. You have to fix it.  
Sure, sure. (Eugenides 196)

Milton intends to repair the church. But he keeps on putting it off. Later he marries and becomes father of Chapter Eleven, the first born son. The war ends and after graduating from Annapolis he serves in the Korean war. Eventually he returns home and takes over the family business. However, the effect of the outstanding obligation keeps on putting the family in tension. It surfaces when the baptism time of Calliope Helen Stephanides, Milton's second child, approaches. Despite repeated requests by Desdemona, Milton refuses to baptize Calliope. Milton's refusal to baptize Calliope agitates her and starts fanning with her "atrocious fans" (219). In fact Desdemona continues to contribute for the restoration of the Bithynios church and receives, in return, her atrocious fans, in which Turkish atrociousness of Greek populace and its culture are described. She is also pestered by the idea that all of the problems they have been facing are the result of their failure to keep promise. She swirls the fan affecting the house. She does it with a force that "issued from a place deeper than her own buried crime" (219). Thus, it reminds her of the displacement from their homeland and the crime of incestuous marriage. This incident continues to influence her throughout her life and even in her old age. The injury becomes fresh when Milton refuses to baptize Calliope. When she talks about the economic status of her daughter Zoe and son-in-law Michael and his position of an assistant in Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, only then Milton relents to baptize Calliope. But his first concern is the fee the church charges for the event. The penny-pinching habit prevents him from baptizing his "daughter" Calliope and, therefore, from going to Greece and keeping the promise to repair the church for saving his life in war and for his safe returns (220).



However, he is not the only Greek concerned with money; most of the Greeks living in America are as materialistic as he is. The construction of Charlevoix church is an example. One of the motives behind its construction is to show the Greek American people's economic prosperity. But Bart Skiotis, the contractor, uses inferior material for the construction of no less than a church resulting in the cracked walls and ceiling leaks. So "shaky foundation" (221) of Charlevoix church reflects not only corrupt behavior of Lefty but the general corrupt attitude of the people. It also forces us to rethink how Lefty establishes himself as a businessman in Detroit. Thus at the root of everything there is corruption not only economic but also moral. His participation in Jimmy Zizmo's rum running business (111) and his auto-erotica, his idea of selling nude photography (159) and above all Lefty's blackmailing Desdemona, in time of crisis, to marry him, speaks about his morality. This moral ethical corruption brought about by the conflict and displacement brings about the problem of recessive mutation.

The root of recessive mutation that remains dormant, no doubt lies in the land of Bithynios where consanguinity is accepted. The protagonist narrator relates his story:

Sing now, O Muse, of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome! Sing how it bloomed two and a half centuries ago on the slopes of Mount Olympus, while the goats bleated and the olives dropped. Sing how it passed down through nine generations, gathering invisibly within the polluted pool of the Stephanides family. And sing how Providence, in the guise of a massacre, sent the gene flying again; how it blew like a seed across the sea to America, where it drifted through our industrial rains until it fell to earth in the fertile soil of my mother's own midwestern womb. (4)

The protagonist narrator, in a poetic way, relates the history of the Stephanides: the way, the gene of the recessive mutation passes down the nine generations; and the way the gene in the guise of a dispossession and displacement flies across the sea to America until it lands into the narrator's mother's womb to give birth to the narrator with birth deformity. However, the narrator does not sing the song of the sibling marriage, which the conflict spurs accelerating the recessive mutation. The song is the view of the omnipresent and omniscient first person narrator who sees through the present case of consanguinity accelerating the genetic mutation paving way for the birth deformity resulting in family disorder. So as to make the family problematic, other factors like construction of gender ideology, notion of freedom, people's class etc. fans it to blow out of proportion.

To make the Stephanides' family problematic, the age old gender ideology that the women's sphere of action is home and hearth plays important role. It is as Jordanova says, "Men were ... potential members of the broadest social and cultural groups, while women's sphere of action, it was constantly insisted, was the private arena of home and family" (162). Jordanova writes this with respect to the eighteenth century physiology and social phenomena and goes on to say that women's occupation is limited whereas men's are unrestricted. Even in the present day broader social fabric this ideology is working reducing women's position only as biological.

In *Middlesex* Tessie's position can be seen to be a mere biological. Apart from it, she is also among the first generation Americans who, in a sense is rootless, friendless and homeless. This rootlessness, friendlessness and homelessness make Tessie long for companion in the form of a daughter in spite of the fact that she has already mothered Chapter Eleven, a son.

Tessie's longing for a daughter is also fanned by women's ignorance and lack of intellectual power, instilled into their head by priests induced religious dogma. It is as Jordanova says, "The classic example of the problem was the uneducated woman under the thumb of her priest who fed her a diet of religious dogma, urging her to believe things which served his interests alone" (163). Thus, the age old superstition and religious dogma guide Tessie, which makes her consider that a daughter can be a companion for her. It makes her long for a daughter and tries to control the sex of the new conception in her womb by "hav[ing] sexual congress twenty-four hours prior to ovulation" (8) and "thirteen days" since her "last" menstrual period (16) so as to time the sperm carrying X chromosome approach the ova.

After she delivers the baby, she becomes happy when Dr. Philobosian announces that the baby is a girl and start rearing her accordingly imprinting gender identity in the brain just as New York Hospital's Sexual Disorder and Gender Identity Clinic expert Dr. Luce's discoveries that cortisol hormone help a girl's psychosexual development allowing them to develop as a normal female and her second great discovery:

[T]hat gender identity is established very early on in life, about the age of two. Gender was like a native tongue; it didn't exist before birth but was imprinted in the brain during childhood, never disappearing. Children learn to speak Male or Female the way they learn to speak English or French. (411)

The construction of Calliope's gender starts when the parents begin to rear the infant as a girl. However, Tessie's strong desire for a daughter blinds her to the fact that her new born baby carries undescended testicles. To make this blindness worse Dr. Philobosian's incompetence to check the new born baby's genital organ properly and the parents' overdependence on the aging doctor and therefore their failure to consult other experts have important role.

In their failure to consult other experts and think about Calliope's physicality Milton's business also plays pivotal role. Milton is "preoccupied with business worries" (225) so much that he begins to leave a little more of himself at the diner each day returning home "a kind of robot" (225). His endeavor to expand the business and thus change his socio-economic position makes him ignore Calliope's odd figure, the absence of female secondary sex characters, and how Calliope is "exud[ing] some kind of masculinity" (304) that play vital role to break down the family.

When the parents take Calliope to the hospital after an accident they come to know the impact of the recessive mutation on their family. There the attending doctor declares the existence of undescended testicles stuck in the inguinal canals. Later, the parents take Calliope to Dr. Luce's clinic who after a series of examinations takes the case as reaffirmation of his theory that gender is a social construct. He opines this because biologically Calliope is a male with all the masculine



sex characteristics. However, Dr. Luce cannot be considered to be responsible for the wrong diagnosis as Calliope misinforms him about “his” sexual feelings towards the female friends. Besides, Calliope hides the fact that takes place in the northern Michigan forest jungle lodge where “he” “slipped into the body of Rex Reese ... like a god” and “kissed her” (374). Thus, “he” tries to possess the Obscure Object, a female friend, and get vicarious sexual gratification through Rex Reese who makes love with her. Calliope’s withholding “his” secret feelings towards the female friends and the vicarious sexual engagement with the Obscure Object to the doctor contributes to his failure to diagnose “his” case. This makes him prescribe twofold treatment of “hormone injection” and “cosmetic surgery” (428), sex reassignment surgery, that will permanently make Calliope a female, which “he” considers unbearable.

The sex reassignment surgery the doctor prescribes frightens Calliope, because, “he” has male sexual orientation. The very idea of permanent womanhood threatens Calliope’s existence and becomes unbearable for “his” maleness. Besides, Milton and Tessie encroach into Calliope’s territory by not asking “his” opinion on the kind of sex “he” prefers to spend the life with. It is as George A. Boyd in “When You Grow Up in a Dysfunctional Family” writes:

In dysfunctional families, parents violate the boundaries of their children. Parents from these families do not respect their children's personal freedom and privacy, they discount their children's feelings, do not honor their attempts at independent thinking and decision-making, and do not allow them to experience their impulses toward creativity, spirituality and self actualization.

Already a dysfunctional family, Milton and Tessie deem it not necessary to consult on Calliope’s choice of sexuality and future course of life, thus, violating “his” freedom and feelings. This violation of “his” boundary along with the closeted male sexual orientation makes “him” to decide flee the hotel, their residence in New York, thus, making complete the Stephanides family break-up.

Calliope’s running away from home to San Francisco is a process of “his” self-actualization. It is a process to transform Calliope into Cal, thus, from a bracketed and questionable “he” to an independent and undaunted he, a process to find his identity and real being, and a process to be free and independent of any ideology social or gender. However, this process only makes the implicit family problem explicit. The ensuing search for the “daughter” breaks down the Stephanides family and ultimately in the process to receive information leading to the lost “daughter” Milton dies in an accident. Milton’s death brings Chapter Eleven to the helm of Hercules Hot Dog, the family business, which he brings aground in less than five years (512) that forces Tessie to sell the house Middlesex from which the title comes. Hence, Chapter Eleven becomes synonymous with the chapter eleven of the law dealing with company bankruptcies.

Milton’s death brings Cal home where he, for the first time, as a boy faces Desdemona, his grandmother, who after seeing him exclaims at his changed appearance and recollects what her mother used to say, “My mother she use to tell me something funny. In the village, long time ago, they use to have sometimes babies who were looking like girls. Then – fifteen, sixteen – they

are looking like boys! My mother tell me this but I never believe” (526). Desdemona through her recollection reveals the problem of hermaphroditism inherent in the village of Bithynios. During the course of conversation she even reveals the taboo against consanguinity and what Dr. Philobosian had said about birth deformities resulting out of the consanguinity of the parents. She goes on to confess her mistake of marrying, and “Not third cousin only. Also brother” (527).

The seed of the recessive mutation sown in the land of Bithynios resulting out of consanguinity that flourished two and a half centuries ago on the slopes of Mount Olympus passes down through nine generations to land within the polluted blood of the Stephanides. Fanned by the conflict, in the form of Turkish invasion, the consanguineous Stephanides immigrate to the United States of America where, spurred by another specter of consanguinity, the narrator protagonist comes into being. The consanguineous Stephanides who immigrate to America live a problematic family life full of fear that their offspring may have birth deformity. Although the birth deformity does not appear in the second generation, it comes with full impact in the consequent generation in the form of obscure gender identity of the narrator protagonist leaving the family in disorder. Therefore, an event that takes place in the remote space and time leaves far reaching consequences governing the protagonist’s life and family problematic.

## Conclusion

*Middlesex* opens with the narrator protagonist’s declarative statement that he was born twice. However, the prognosis of the novel remains slow giving only in piecemeal the reason behind the conflict. It presents the Stephanides, a family who emigrated from Greece to America in 1922 after Turkish invasion of Greece left them dispossessed and displaced. The relocation, resulting out of war, becomes an element that spurs the already existing seed of recessive mutation in the blood of the Stephanides.

They undergo the sufferings brought forth by socio-cultural and economic differences. They live in an age when traditional socio-cultural and economic structure have given way for a new structure free from restrictions and free from ideologies. Above all they live in a land of opportunities where liberty, equality and pursuit of happiness are exercised without any restrictions and who become materially prosperous.

Historical event like war takes place in the remote space and time. However, it may have far reaching consequences that reverberates and shakes people’s life making the family life topsy-turvy. War comes to an end but its consequences keeps on reverberating. It recounts its tale making spatial temporal journey.

Recessive mutation may occur due to the parents’ consanguinity, a form of moral corruption. The Turkish invasion of Greek Bithynios makes the Stephanide siblings, Lefty and Desdemona, flee the country to America, where they live as a couple unrestricted by a taboo of consanguinity, which spurs the seed of already existing recessive mutation. However, the seed blooms after another war, the Second World War, because of which Tessie and Milton’s union as husband and wife takes place. This union brings into the world Chapter Eleven and Calliope, a boy and “a girl.” Later, the “girl” turns out to be a boy who takes the name Cal showing the full

impact of the recessive mutation. This also results in the death of Milton, the grounding of the business and the sale of the house Middlesex.

However, even before the impact of the recessive mutation appears, the fear of it keeps the life of Desdemona topsy-turvy and separates her from Lefty lest she should become pregnant again. Not only this, because of it Desdemona designs the engagement of Tessie and Michael to avoid the union of Milton and Tessie. So, the fear of recessive mutation makes the Stephanides family problematic.

Behind the Stephanides' family problem, recessive mutation and its fear remain supreme. But other factors like their material condition, their culture and religion, the parent-child relation, gender ideology, the notion of freedom etc. also play important role. However, corruption and the war that spurs the Stephanides' fleeing their home village contributing to the recessive mutation remain supreme, which hovers above all the other reasons.

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