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Table Of Contents:

Feminism and the Film Adaptation of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility…..………..……...1

Liping Zheng

The Politics of Gender in Ursula Le Guin's "The Dispossessed"……………………………………………………...................16

Auguste Nalivaike

The Private Letters of Samuel Richardson: An Insight into The History of Clarissa………..26

Gioiella Bruni Roccia

Estrangement of the Cultural Material in Algerian Narratives................37

Khadija Belfarhi

A Discordant Harmony – A Critical Evaluation of the Queer Theory from an Indian Perspective…..50

Srija Sanyal

Abhik Mait

Irene's Journey: A Theoretical Perspective of Cultural Identity Development…………………...……..………………….....................72

Saleha Azmi

Susan Peet

Deborah G. Wooldridg

Feminism and the Film Adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*

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Abstract

Sense and Sensibility is Ang Lee's first Hollywood film, which is adapted from Jane Austen's 1811 novel of the same name. Produced in 1995, it cinematically visualizes an early, inchoate stage of feminist consciousness that is crafted in the binary opposites of Austen's main fictional characters. This article engages with the feminist theme of the film version of *Sense and Sensibility* directed by Lee. Through an elaborate analysis of the two female protagonists' sense and sensibility by reading some relevant scenes, it will explore the representation of British women's life experiences and argue that the rendering of feminism extends a transcendental sympathy for women's sufferings, or rather, their emotional distress in the synchronic patriarchal society in *Sense and Sensibility*. What underlies the discourse of sense and sensibility is the two heroines' nonautonomous life predetermined by the male-dominated social system in the late eighteenth-century England. The purpose of this essay is to examine the feminist messages of Ang Lee's film in his portrayal of the Dashwood women's predicament, with reference to the original fiction that is contextualized in particular social and cultural context.

Keywords: *Sense and Sensibility*, Ang Lee, feminism, Jane Austen, women, marriage.

1. Introduction

Sense and Sensibility is Ang Lee's first Hollywood film. It won the Best Adapted Screenplay at the Oscar Awards in 1995 and rapidly brought tremendous fame to the Chinese American director. The film is a British period drama adapted from Jane Austen's first novel by the actress Emma Thompson, who also acted as the leading role of Elinor Dashwood in the film. Despite the fact that "identity" is an overarching theme permeating most of Ang Lee's film works, feminism is a notable subject matter which has been

relatively neglected by scholars but worthy of investigation. In the context of this female-centered film, one can discern the obvious feminist messages.

This study engages with the feminist theme of *Sense and Sensibility* directed by Ang Lee. Through an elaborate analysis of the two female protagonists' sense and sensibility by reading some relevant scenes, it will explore the representation of British women's life experiences and argue that the rendering of feminism extends a transcendental sympathy for women's sufferings, or rather, their emotional distress in the synchronic patriarchal society. In the film narration, Ang Lee utilizes binary opposites in the delineation of two parallel protagonists with contrasting personality traits. In the unfolding of the storyline, after undergoing mental torture in varying degrees, the characters gradually transform from weak into strong individuals, capable of coping with the adverse social and cultural milieu. Starting from the history of feminism and critical theories of feminism in cinema, my study principally attempts to deal with this research question: To what extent does *Sense and Sensibility* reveal the feminist theme? The purpose of this essay is to examine the feminist messages of Ang Lee's film in his portrayal of the Dashwood women's predicament caused by sexist law, with reference to the original fiction that is contextualized in particular social and cultural context.

2. What is Feminism?

Feminism, broadly speaking, can be concisely defined as a monolithic concept of social movements and ideologies whose guiding principles aim at women's equality and rights with men. The activists of feminism are called feminists. To know more about what feminism is, it is necessary to examine the evolution of feminism in retrospect. Chronologically, feminism, which modern feminist scholars commonly refer to, can be divided into three stages: Women's Liberation Movement (retrospectively called first-wave feminism as well), second-wave feminism, and third-wave feminism. Originally, Women's Liberation Movement was the first feminist movement which arose in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth century. Its major concern related to "women's suffrage." To be more specific, holding the common contemporary belief that all men and women should be equal under the law, the campaign was committed to striving for equal voting rights with men. After its ultimate success in the 1920s, there emerged the second-wave feminism spanning from the early 1960s to the late 1980s which aimed to expand women's equal rights in more areas, such as education, employment, health care, politics, and the like. Simply stated, second-wave feminists fought against sexism in a much broader scope. And the second wave emphasized the importance of unity and sisterhood. Then the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the third-wave of feminism, which purportedly launched itself as a response to the unfulfilment of the second-wave feminism's goals.

It was known for transcending the barriers of race, ethnicity, belief, class, social status, and sexual orientation to pursue equal rights for all women throughout the world. Compared with the second wave, the agenda of the third wave became more inclusive and global.

The third-wave turned out to be a turning point for the continuous feminist movement. It seemed to have gradually lost its momentum, in contrast to numerous activists' massive initiatives and campaigns in the past. During this period, academia and popular media became the main site for discussing feminism. But the polarization of pro- and anti-feminism forces complicated the issue of feminism. On the one hand, there emerged within feminism a division of activist groups and different theories of academic feminism, thus causing various conflicts. As a consequence, the connotations of feminism became diversified. On the other hand, oppositional voices and negative images concerning feminism and feminists came to the fore. According to Kim A. Loudermilk's summary in her book *Fictional Feminism: How American Bestsellers Affect the Movement for Equality*, three aspects were primarily involved in the heated debates of the 1990s: "the battle over 'political correctness,' the idea of 'postfeminism,' and the 'backlash' phenomenon."[1]

Now, it is debatable that we are living in a new era of "postfeminism." Despite its frequent appearance in the literature of feminism, there is neither a unanimous definition of postfeminism nor a distinct boundary between postfeminism and the third wave. Generally, the former is closely interrelated with the latter. As Kathleen Rowe Karlyn notes, in *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*, postfeminism evolves into "a contradictory mixture of feminist and antifeminist notions."[2] Karlyn also claims that postfeminism is "a sensibility that has characterized contemporary, popular understandings of gender, and the broad discursive field that frames both Girl Culture and the Third Wave."[3] Echoing Karlyn's argument, Rosalind Gill writes that "postfeminism should be conceived of as a sensibility." Moreover, in Gill's definition, it embraces some interwoven elements, such as:

> the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference.[4]

In the ongoing discussions of postfeminism, a strange cultural phenomenon is occurring that more and more young women increasingly repel the label of feminism or refuse to identify themselves with being a feminist, despite the fact that most of them approve of the fundamental principles of

feminism. Nonetheless, in the feminist discourse, postfeminism is a highly polemic concept, which some feminist scholars even deprecate. As Lisa Tuttle contends, “no matter how the term is redefined or justified, its use is anti-feminist, for it works against the continuing feminist struggle by seeking to limit feminism, to define it and place it in history.”[5] In this regard, Esther Kaplan responds by saying: “Maybe we’re in an age of postfeminism, but that doesn’t mean feminist objectives have been accomplished, so much as that antifeminism is acceptable.”[6]

Needless to say, feminism is a problematic term that is difficult to conceptualize, let alone the multifarious feminist theories. Apart from the three “waves” of feminism and postfeminism, there exist diverse versions of “feminisms” in current feminist scholarship, within different analytical approaches. To take an example, Isobel Armstrong, among others, classifies feminism into three categories in *The Radical Aesthetic*: “Expressive, Phallic, and Ludic feminism.”[7] Her taxonomy of feminism is based on the commonality of a large range of major writings by feminism’s scholars. “Expressive” writers, like Helene Cixous, Elaine Showalter, and bell hooks, revolve around women’s universal experience of violence or oppression which triggers women’s cry of pain and invokes the call for solidarity. “Expressive” feminism contributes to improving the “practical lives of ordinary women.”[8] “Phallic feminism” is basically a unified name of two patterns of feminism, Marxist and Freudian or psychoanalytical feminism which dominate the feminist critiques. The essential element of the former is “the anguish of class,” and that of the latter is “the anguish of Oedipal sacrifice.”[9] As Armstrong puts it, “the economic structure of women’s oppression, the ‘without’ which organizes sexual difference, women’s psychic lives and their entry into the symbolic order – these are the inexhaustible lyric themes of Phallic thought.”[10] “Ludic feminism,” under the lead of Judith Butler, refers to the models of sexuality in which the intricate relationship between language and body, sex and gender are elucidated in detail.

Rather than debating feminism per se or expatiating on theories pertaining to it, this study attempts to investigate the feminist attributes of the female-centered film *Sense and Sensibility*. Hence, when it comes to the term feminism, in my interpretation of Ang Lee’s cinema I use it very loosely. No matter how differently feminism has been defined, from my standpoint, feminism, in whatever medium it is presented, means standing for women’s rights, equality, freedom, opportunity, autonomy, choice, and well-being. No one will deny that women’s liberation movement and historical waves of feminist campaigns have substantially changed women’s lives and influenced the world.

3. *Sense and Sensibility*

Although many literary scholars account *Sense and Sensibility* as one of Jane Austen's most obscure or least studied novels, if compared with other works like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*, its 1995 film adaptation largely reversed the original work's fate. The film achieved enormous success, commercially and artistically. It made such a hit that it aroused a new surge of Austen's adaptations on silver screen and television in the years that followed. Undoubtedly, Emma Thompson's Oscar-winning screenplay, Ang Lee's characteristic directing, excellent actors and actresses and so on, deserve the credits for the film's widespread tremendous popularity. Also, as Lindsay Doran, the film's producer from Columbia Pictures, writes in her introduction to Thompson's book *The Sense and Sensibility Screenplay and Diaries* (1996), the film epitomizes all the key qualities that would constitute a good novel-turned-into-film, such as "wonderful characters, a strong love story (actually, three strong love stories), surprising plot twists, good jokes, relevant themes, and a heart-stopping ending."[11]

3.1. Contextualizing Feminism in *Sense and Sensibility*

Sense and Sensibility reproduces the social conventions, traditional codes of conduct, and most importantly the intricate relations between love, marriage, money, property, and duty, in the countryside of England at the turn of the nineteenth century. Through the portrayal of the outer social milieu and the inner struggle of these female characters, it brings the contemporary viewers back to their hardship, helplessness, repression, and agony that the women in Austen's time underwent. At the very beginning, the film provides the historical and cultural setting of the tale. What comes into our sight is a deathbed scene when Mr. Dashwood, unburdens his apprehension to his son John Dashwood from an earlier marriage. The dying old man is deeply worried about the dowry thing of his daughters and their ominous future after his demise. Accordingly, the father, at his last gasp, implores his sole legitimate heir to make a serious promise to be generous to his half-sisters. Clearly, he feels so anguished about the statutory inheritance which will immediately lead to the impoverishment and misery of his wife and daughters. The dialogue between Elinor (Emma Thompson) and her little sister Margaret (Emilie François) exposes the cruel reality the Dashwood women have to face: [12]

> ELINOR: Margaret, are you there? Please come down. John and Fanny will be here soon.
> MARGARET (V/O): Why are they coming to live at Norland? They already have a house in London.
> ELINOR: Because houses go from father to son, dearest - not from father to daughter. It is the law.
> ELINOR: If you come inside, we could play with your atlas.

MARGARET (V/O): It's not my atlas any more. It's their atlas. (34)

It is true that upon their arrival John and his wife Fanny (Harriet Walter) displace the elder Mrs. Dashwood (Gemma Jones) as head of the manor. Moreover, John, under his wife's interference, soon breaches his promise of giving more financial support to the impoverished Dashwood women. Elinor's explanation about "the law" brings to light the eighteenth-century women's fundamental unfair treatment in entailment. In a large sense, the unequal right of inheritance relegates women to a passive state without financial autonomy, which will easily bring about females' subordination to males. They are driven into a dilemma: marriage, as a matter of fact, becomes the only way to change women's destiny; but it is basically difficult for women without a considerable dowry to marry well. It is conceivable how eager women are to find a good husband, thereby attaining financial security and improving their social standing. One might think that it is not far-fetched to associate Jane Austen's similar family encounter with her unmarried life. Or to put it another way, Austen interweaves her personal misfortune into her fiction to voice her feminist complaint against the patrilineal inheritance.[13]

The subsequent depiction of the Dashwood women's misery is likewise able to strike a chord with spectators who identify with feminism. We are shown that they dramatically fall from a prosperous life of landed gentry to a precarious situation of poverty. For instance, after they are dispossessed of the entire estate at Norland, Elinor has no choice but to discharge most of their servants and sadly say goodbye to her beloved horses, which implies that they are losing their comfortable life. The transition from prosperity to poverty, along with the marked disparity of identity, makes all of them suffer: Descending from hostess to homeless, Mrs. Dashwood cannot forbear weeping all day long; Filled with grief and apprehension, Elinor desperately tries all means to seek a new residence with an extremely tight budget; Marianne (Kate Winslet) becomes truculent, and vents her displeasure with plaintive music; Little Margaret chooses to hide herself from seeing anybody. Visibly, the early part of the film is suffused with a doleful tone. There is no exaggeration to say that the vicissitudes of the central characters' life, which will be discussed in detail later, are rooted in the patriarchal society of the late eighteenth century when British women unfortunately did not share some basic rights with men that we contemporary audiences take for granted.

Aside from the inequality in the right of heritance, *Sense and Sensibility* illuminates the issue of women's employment in relation to gender roles. Back to the days when Austen grew up, women were still restricted within the domestic sphere. Conventionally, it was uncommon that women freely jumped out of the confines of tradition to take up a profession and make their own money. In the bucolic horse-riding scene, Elinor and Edward enjoy themselves

in the pastoral view and their developing intimate relationship. But their conversation delivers a thought-provoking message of the awkward predicament the Dashwoods are stuck in:

> ELINOR: You talk of feeling idle and useless. Imagine how that is compounded when one has no choice and no hope whatsoever of any occupation.
> EDWARD: Our circumstances are therefore precisely the same.
> ELINOR: Except that you will inherit your fortune.
> ELINOR: We cannot even earn ours.
> EDWARD: Perhaps Margaret is right.
> ELINOR: Right?
> EDWARD: Piracy is our only option. (49)

Elinor's words sound so audacious and blunt that they "shock" Edward. Having neither heritage nor work, she is straightforward enough to pour out her worries about their difficult situation in front of her suitor. Her ironic allusion to the disadvantageous status quo of women at that time—no legacy, no means of livelihood, which Austen personally experienced as well, hits the nail on the head. Without access to employment women were rendered incapable of obtaining economic independence, which justifies the assumption that all they could do was to procure a good husband. In this regard, Mary Wollstonecraft relates women's dependence upon marriage with their destitution of a proper education in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She assumes that "If they were better educated, women would not then marry for support, as men accept places under government, and neglect the implied duties."[14] Wollstonecraft's view is reasonably plausible, but it does not necessarily apply to the case of Dashwood sisters. As far as the film and the novel are concerned, both Elinor and Marianne are well-educated and intelligent, as with the author Miss Austen. Nevertheless, Austen had to have her first novel *Sense and Sensibility* published at her own expense after almost sixteen years of its completion.[15] As a rebuttal to Wollstonecraft's point, it might be convincingly argued that Austen's case serves as incontestable evidence of the straitened circumstances that educated women were likely caught in. To a certain degree, it mirrors what Margaret Kirkham observes in *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* when she responds to Wollstonecraft's aforementioned opinion: "But as things are, the employments open to them 'far from being liberal are menial.' Even a girl of good education could look forward to nothing better than being a governess."[16] A heavy feministic message is articulately conveyed in the disguise of this romantic horse-riding episode. Simultaneously, the unfavorable circumstances throw the two heroines into a passive position and foreshadow the setbacks they are to be confronted with.

As the plot unfolds, the film shifts its focus on the central theme of love and marriage. Edward Ferrars (Hugh Grant) is the elder of Fanny's two brothers, namely, the legal inheritor of the Ferrars' large estate. His visit to Norland Park embarks on a bumpy road to love. In stark contrast with his snobbish, selfish, avaricious sister, Edward is surprisingly found to be an affable, considerate, cultivated gentleman. His qualities, such as wit, modesty, morality, and compassion, resonate with those of Elinor. Naturally Edward and Elinor hit it off well. Before long, his sojourn ignites Mrs. Dashwood's hope for a potential good marriage for her eldest daughter Elinor. Therefore, she intentionally delays their departure for the new habitation—Barton Cottage in Devonshire which is rather far, so that Elinor can take advantage of the opportunity to develop the romance. Yet, beyond her expectations, she finds herself overwhelmed with humiliation and anger instead of happiness.

Following a long shot of the camera, we see another sweet scene in which Elinor and Edward are strolling down a beautiful field. With their backs on us, they seem to be immersed in their happy chitchat in an intimate atmosphere. Then the camera rapidly switches to a close shot where Mrs. Dashwood and her daughter-in-law Fanny coincidentally catch sight of the couple's intimate contact—Edward drapes Elinor's falling shawl back over her shoulders. At the very moment, from the visual angle of Mrs. Dashwood and Fanny, the audience can see their side faces. While Edward is full of tenderness and affectionateness, Elinor smiles coyly but happily. On beholding this scenario, Mrs. Dashwood, beaming at Fanny, initiates a substantial conversation, which is so significant that it is worth quoting here completely:

> MRS DASHWOOD: We are all so happy that you chose to invite Edward to Norland. He is a dear boy and we are all very fond of him.
> FANNY: We have great hopes for him. Much is expected of him by our mother with regard to his profession-
> MRS DASHWOOD: Naturally.
> FANNY: And in marriage. She is determined that both he and Robert will marry well.
> MRS DASHWOOD: Of course. But I hope she desires them to marry for love, first and foremost? I have always felt that, contrary to common wisdom, true affection is by far the most valuable dowry.
> FANNY: Love is all very well, but unfortunately we cannot always rely on the heart to lead us in the most suitable directions.
> FANNY: You see, my dear Mrs. Dashwood, Edward is entirely the kind of compassionate person upon whom penniless women can prey - and having entered into any kind of understanding, he would

> never go back on his word. He is quite simply incapable of doing so. But it would lead to his ruin. I worry for him so, Mrs. Dashwood. My mother has always made it perfectly plain that she will withdraw all financial support from Edward, should he choose to plant his affections in less . . . exalted ground than he deserves. (56-57)

The overtones of Fanny's logic on love and marriage are both comprehensible and threatening to old Dashwood: Your "penniless" daughter can never match up with my brother; if he chooses an unsuitable marriage at his own will, his right of primogeniture will be abrogated. Fanny's acerbic words, along with her air of overbearing superiority, make Mrs. Dashwood almost petrified. Fanny severely thwarts her ambition and incites her sense of humiliation. She flies into rage. To maintain her self-esteem, immediately afterwards Mrs. Dashwood summons her daughters to set off for Barton Cottage, a guest accommodation on the estate of her cousin, Sir John Middleton. In doing so, the budding love between Elinor and Edward strikes aground because of the problem of "dowry." As we know from the later plot, Elinor's great anguish is increasingly exacerbated by Edward's previous secret engagement with Lucy Steele and the rumor of their marriage.

In the social context of Austen's fiction, marriage was virtually likened to the conversion of currency, or rather, an event of merging assets. In the matrimonial alliance of families, economic and social status normally took precedence over true affection. Furthermore, according to Deborah Kaplan's extensive study in her *Jane Austen among Women*, "marriage was the only option that enabled women of the lesser gentry to secure their social status economically. Even women with substantial legacies could not achieve adequate social repute without realizing the conjugal destiny marked out for them in conduct books."[17] Kaplan's study explains why making a good marriage was the main goal which young girls were trained for in the conventional rules of the mainstream society. Likewise, it vindicates the popularity of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conduct books, which accorded great importance to marriage as a means of changing women's destiny. Despite this, as the statistics gathered by Kaplan have confirmed, approximately a quarter percent of daughters descending from English middle- and upper-class families failed to find ideal spouses in their lifetime in the last decade of the eighteenth century. What deserves our attention is that the essential cause of the high celibacy rate lay in the "intensification of patrilineage customs."[18] Concerning this phenomenon, there could be no better example than Jane Austen herself. The novelist, as well as a large number of her contemporaneous elite women, was forced to remain unmarried all her life. From another point of view, one can argue that Austen's lifelong singlehood is per se a feminist declaration of independence which protests

against patriarchal social customs, pecuniary matrimonial values, and the exploitation of women in the marriage market. For many of those widowed women and their daughters just like the Dashwood family, life was so hard that they "could only attach themselves as dependents to the domestic circles of their relatives."[19] With the downturn in fortune, their daughters' marriage prospects were destined to be murky.

The gender-based social and historical milieu in England, which reappears authentically in the initial scenes taking place at Norland Park, frames the tone of *Sense and Sensibility*. It recounts far more than the romance of the main characters. From all indications discussed above, the victimization of the young women, represented by their constraints of inheritance right, freedom of employment, and choice of marriage, is arguably more central to the subject matter. What is in store for the two sisters are emotional and mental trials and tribulations in their pursuit of love and marriage. The feminist rendering of the film is inextricably linked with the feminist tendencies of Austen's original work. That is to say, the director visually lays bare Austen's feminist thinking hidden in her debate of the two sisters' sense and sensibility.

3.2. Contrasting Two Main Characters' "Sense" and "Sensibility"

To investigate the representation of the film's female images, it helps to conceptualize "sense" and "sensibility". As the title manifests, *Sense and Sensibility* contrasts the two Dashwood sisters' oppositional temperament which leads to the tension of their sisterhood as well as their different kinds of wretchedness in their courtship. To better understand what the two terms imply, it is indispensable to go back to Austen's narrative. At the end of the novel's first chapter, the writer introduces the two heroines at length. The elder sister Elinor, nineteen years old, exemplifies "sense". She is depicted as a prudent girl who behaves moderately and has a good control of her emotions:

> [Elinor] possessed a strength of understanding and coolness of judgment which qualified her … to be the counselor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract … that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart;--her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them …[20]

Marianne (L) and Elinor (R)

In marked contrast, Marianne, two years younger than Elinor, personifies "sensibility". She is painted as an impulsive, unbridled girl who has no reserve to express feelings on any occasion: "Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything, her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent."[21] Although she endows them with some common merits, clearly Austen attempts to underline the remarkable difference of the two sisters' disposition, especially in their expression of feelings.

The dichotomy of Elinor's sense and Marianne's sensibility essentially reflects the contrasting relation of two ideological trends—Rationalism and Romanticism. In the post-Revolutionary period of the eighteenth century, Rationalism, with its dominant role in the ethos of British society, valued reason or rational thought and choice in scientific areas and many spheres of life. Then towards the century's end, when Austen and her characters lived, Romanticism, which is often associated with liberalism, emerged to propagate the significance of emotion and nature, thus forming a confrontation with rationality. As Gilbert Ryle points out in *Jane Austen and the Moralists*, "*Sense and Sensibility* really is about the relations between Sense and Sensibility or, as we might put it, between Head and Heart, Thought and Feeling, Judgment and Emotion, or Sensibleness and Sensitiveness."[22] For the women intellectuals in Austen's age, the sense vs. sensibility question was reduced to a man vs. woman debate. In a mass of literary works, man was made to be the incarnation of rationality, while woman was stereotyped as an emotional creature. Here Susan Moller Okin's reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau offers us a good example:

> Woman's function is seen as physical and sensual, whereas man's potential is seen as creative and intellectual. For centuries, the extreme disparities between the method and extent of the education of the two sexes have been conveniently glossed over, as they are in Rousseau, as the case is made that women, while intuitive and

> equipped with a talent for detail, are deficient in rationality and quite incapable of abstract thought.[23]

However, the enlightened women refuted such an assertion of women's innate tendency of irrationality. "Like other 'moralists'," as Margaret Kirkham notes, "they thought Sense, or Reason, a better guide to moral principles than Sensibility, or Feeling, and wished to show that women were no less capable of rational judgment than men."[24] On the grounds of this, many critics state that Austen gives more weight to Elinor's compliance with social conventions, like decorum and restraint, than Marianne's recalcitrant sensibility, thus concluding that Austen endorses Rationalism rather than Romanticism.

Yet, based on the film version's *Sense and Sensibility*, it can be argued that the director offers equal importance to both Elinor's sense and Marianne's sensibility. By constructing elaborate parallels and contrasts between the two central characters, from the feminist point of view, the film features the affliction and struggle which Elinor and Marianne both experience, their temperamental conflicts in relation to values of love, and their gradual transformation into a balance between sense and sensibility, when both relationships, as well as their sisterhood, go through turns and twists.

4. Conclusion

Ang Lee's film *Sense and Sensibility* cinematically visualizes an early, inchoate stage of feminist consciousness that is crafted in the binary opposites of Austen's fictional project. What underlies the discourse of sense and sensibility is the two heroines' nonautonomous life predetermined by the male-dominated social system in late eighteenth-century England. It puts forward a series of prominent feminist issues, such as equal right of inheritance, free choice for occupation, and so on. Their inferior economic status puts their fate into a vicious circle of poverty. On the one hand, their loss of economic independence forces them to take recourse in marriage. On the other hand, their autonomy in marriage is greatly impaired in a capitalist society where marriage is more like assets merging between families.

Consequently, Elinor and Marianne, despite their contrasting ideologies, are vulnerable to the repercussions of their thwarted relationships. After living through hardships and emotional tortures, the two sisters come to realize that neither the sense nor the sensibility each of them persists in is a perfect principle in providing the strength for either of them to cope with the real difficulties they are ineluctably confronted with. In such a particular social and historical context, they need to reach a balance of sense and sensibility, which the director interprets as "two elements that represent the core of life itself."[25] The double wedding of the heroines does make a happy ending of *Sense and Sensibility*, which might be considered as an ideal in fictional

feminism. However, what calls the audience's attention is in effect these women's hardship, setback, anguish, and temperamental transition along the sinuous course of pursuing happiness. Before directing this film, Ang Lee confidently said to the producer Lindsay Doran that "I want this film to break people's hearts so badly they'll still be recovering from it two months later."[26] There is no doubt that the director has accomplished that.

Notes

1. See Kim A. Loudermilk, *Fictional Feminism: How American Bestsellers Affect the Movement for Equality*. New York&London: Routledge, 2004, p. 1. For a detailed interpretation, see Loudermilk's introduction to "Fictional Feminism," pp. 1-15.
2. See Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011, p. 27.
3. Ibid., p. 27.
4. Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (2007): 147-66.
5. It is cited in Loudermilk, *Fictional Feminism*, p. 6. See Lisa Tuttle, *Encyclopedia of Feminism*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1986, p. 256.
6. It is also cited in Loudermilk, p. 6. See Esther Kaplan, "Gunning for Feminism," Village Voice 26 December 1989, p. 23.
7. Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000. See "Debating Feminisms" of Part 4 "Feminism and Aesthetic Practice," 197-238: 208.
8. Ibid., p. 210.
9. Ibid., p. 211.
10. Ibid.
11. Emma Thompson, *The Sense and Sensibility Screenplay and Diaries*. New York: Newmarket Press, 1996. See Linsay Doran's introduction, 7-16: 11. Also, I would like to note that the British spelling remains unchanged in all the quotations from Thompson's work throughout my thesis.
12. All references to the film lines come from Thompson's *The Sense and Sensibility Screenplay and Diaries* and are noted with page numbers parenthetically.
13. Gene W. Ruoff, *Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, pp. 7-11. According to Gene's interpretation of the historical context of Austen's writing, Austen's family misfortune partly resembles that of the Dashwood women.

14. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Miriam Kramnick. Penguin edition, 1975, ch. 5, *passim*. Cited in Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction*. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1983, p.44.
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The Politics of Gender in Ursula Le Guin's "The Dispossessed"

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Abstract

Ursula Le Guin is one of the most important and critically acclaimed science fiction writers. Her fiction is well-known for depicting various feminist themes: gender equality, the social construction of gender and gender roles, sexism, patriarchy, and motherhood. While Le Guin's relationship with feminism developed and changed throughout her career as a mainstream author, *The Dispossessed* (1974) received much attention from feminist critics. Feminist critics were generally disappointed with the lack of feminist thought in relation to language, narration and portrayal of women. The aim of the article is to engage with feminist critique as well as to address such conceptual issues like the construction of gender and gender roles, the distinction between biological sex and gender, and finally, to re-examine gender politics in "The Dispossessed". The article suggests that "The Dispossessed" portrays the social construction of gender and gender roles, gender equality and challenges gender norms. In doing so, the novel advocates feminist cause and promotes feminist values, most importantly – gender equality.

Keywords: Science fiction, feminism, gender equality, feminist criticism, Ursula Le Guin.

Introduction

Ursula Le Guin is one of the most significant and commercially successful science fiction writers. *The Dispossessed* (1974) won both the Hugo and Nebula awards – the most prestigious science fiction awards. Throughout her writing career, Le Guin has gained a wide readership and her work is still relevant today.

Le Guin is critically acclaimed not only for the quality of her science fiction, but also because her work encompasses a wide variety of feminist themes. *The Dispossessed* portrays such feminist topics as gender equality, women's rights, social construction of gender roles, motherhood and criticism

of patriarchy. While Le Guin's complicated relationship with feminism changed and developed throughout the years (Le Guin, 1989), *The Dispossessed* received a considerable amount of feminist criticism.

Analyzing Ursula Le Guin's fiction in terms of feminist critique is still relevant, because her novels have multiple editions and are read by new generations. The readership is changing as well as the perception of the novels. Furthermore, Le Guin often speaks on matters such as feminism and literature.

While more radical feminists point out the contradictions in Le Guin's work, others appreciate her approach to gender politics as more promising compared to other female science fiction writers (Bassnett, 1991). The purpose of this article is to engage with such feminist criticism and to re-examine the gender politics in *The Dispossessed*. This article is an attempt to argue that the novel engages with feminist thought and advocates the feminist cause.

The Dispossessed was published when Second Wave Feminism was thriving. Women rights gained momentum and it was significant that literature reflected the developments of the women's liberation movement. Second Wave Feminism was concerned with structural gender inequality in society and the slow implementation of legal and institutional changes. According to Second Wave Feminists, gender equality could not be achieved simply by changing the law. Radical social changes regarding gender roles also needed to take place at the same time in order to achieve gender equality. Challenging the existing balance of power between women and men was a key to deconstruct the existing social order (Harrison & Boyd, 2003).

Feminism as theory and practice has evolved and changed considerably over the last decades. Some argue that the objectives and troubles of Second Wave Feminists are now obsolete. At least in the Western World, women have achieved institutional and legal equality with men; therefore, it is better to concentrate on identity politics. Now scholars and activists talk about different types of feminism, diversity and the politics of language. Moreover, many feminists get involved in discussions about the different understandings of feminism. It has become rather easy to overlook and forget the main and unifying objective of feminism – gender equality.

Feminism, Gender and Gender Equality

Activists and scholars are not able to agree upon one solid definition of feminism. A wide range of positions have been established within feminist criticism since the 1970s. Disagreements and debates have emerged in three areas: the role of theory, the nature of language and the meaning and value of psychoanalysis (Barry, 2009). The concept of feminism has many implications, some differ greatly from others. There have been different waves of feminism and at this point, there is no unifying consensus regarding the state of feminism.

For the purposes of showing how complicated it is to define feminism, some of the biggest disagreements of feminist theory and practice are pointed out. One of those is how to define ‘a woman’, womanhood and everything that follows from such notions. Is one born ‘a woman’? Does one ‘become a woman’? Does ‘a woman’ simply mean a set of biological characteristics? Can ‘a woman’ be only understood in relation to ‘a man’?

Other great disagreement among many feminists is over the purpose of feminism. Some feminists argue that the sole purpose of feminism is the empowerment of women without much thought to the deconstruction of the notion of ‘a woman’. It is said that women are equal to men and the only thing that needs to be done is to reclaim power (Swirsky & Angelone, 2016). Other feminists strongly believe in the deconstruction of gender binary in general, because such binary does not represent all genders and does not empower anyone (Hines, 2015). Therefore, different types of feminism emphasize different commitments, and gender equality is not necessarily the most important one. The reasons for different commitments include different social and political issues, different traditions, environments and multiple contexts in which the need for feminism arises (Rooney, 2006) Furthermore, any attempt to define feminism as theory ends up criticized of further reproducing gender binary (Rooney, 2006), and it is related to the argument that gender as a concept should be abolished.

Most feminists agree that women suffer from systematic social injustices because of their biological sex, meaning, *because they are women*, therefore, a commitment should be made to achieve equality between the two sexes (Whelehan, 1995). However, one of the main disagreements comes from understanding and identifying the source of oppression (Whelehan, 1995). Different feminists identify different sources of oppression and patriarchy. Some argue that the system is the enemy, while others concentrate on oppressive language and history. There are serious conceptual problems with such terms as ‘politics’, ‘equality’, even ‘oppression’, and many conflicts among feminists arise because of different perceptions of those terms both in theory and practice.

Moreover, there is a huge gap between theory and practice in feminism. Feminist theory does not do activism, it does not lobby in the corridors of government buildings, protest against inequalities, and does not provide help for women who survived domestic violence. Feminist activism, on the other hand, pays very little or no attention to theory or development of theory.

It may simply be that theory and practice in the case of feminism serve different purposes but, what the author calls a side-effect of this dichotomy, is that it weakens both theory and practice and leaves no solutions for major disagreements. While some scholars are working on deconstructing the

concept of 'a woman' using theories of postmodernism and language, in some parts of the world women's rights movements only gain momentum, and that would not happen if those people did not identify themselves as women.

Many feminists agree that gender is socially constructed. The term 'gender' is used in this article because it is not the purpose of this analysis to deconstruct the term but to re-value the novel that relies on this term. Gender is:

A social construct; a cultural phenomenon that assigned different roles to women and a whole apparatus of imposed behaviour patterns, expectations, thoughts, aspirations and even dreams. It is not 'biological' or 'natural' that women should take the bulk of childcare responsibilities; this has occurred as a result of social and cultural developments that should be changed to the benefit of women and, most feminists believe, men. (Harrison & Boyd, 2003, p. 301).

Despite all the difficulties and inconsistencies in both feminist theory and practice, 'feminism' in this article is defined as 'gender equality'. It may seem like a simple definition, but the author believes it is helpful in analyzing literature. Feminism evaluates the power dynamics between men and women, and the focus on sexism, patriarchy, private and public spheres of life (Harrison & Boyd, 2003). It is worth acknowledging that both terms 'gender' and 'equality' carry some 'philosophical weight' and may become the subjects of endless discussion. The definition of 'gender' is outlined above, and equality is defined as equal opportunities, treatment, rights and responsibilities for all genders. This definition includes the analysis of power relations which is an essential purpose of feminism. Therefore, the definition can be broadened: *feminism's main objective and value is gender equality, and it concentrates on the analysis of power relations and patriarchy in existing societies*.

Second wave feminists were the first ones to talk about the social construction of gender (Lefanu, 1988). Feminist criticism in the 1970s concentrated on exposing "the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural mind-set in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality." (Barry, 2009, p. 117). It was also very concerned with the representation of women in media: television, films, books, magazines (Barry, 2009)

The analysis of the novel is going to be carried out in relation to the portrayal of gender equality, social construction of gender and gender roles, and criticism of existing power relations and patriarchy. The article also examines how gender equality is understood, achieved and exercised in *The Dispossessed*. These research questions are listed below:

- Is gender equality portrayed in the text?
- Is social construction of gender portrayed in the text?
- Are gender roles challenged and questioned in the text?

Feminist criticism of Le Guin's work

Feminism in the 1970s was divided into two different factions. Liberal feminism was often viewed as elitist and ignorant towards non-white, lower social class women. Black feminists questioned white privilege and challenged liberal feminism. One the one hand, Le Guin could be perceived and describe herself as a feminist, while on the other hand, she could be criticized by radical feminists for discrepancies in her work (Bassnett, 1991).

The most prevalent criticism of Le Guin is that her novels are not feminist enough, (Marcellino, 2009) because they do not question gender binary and male privilege, heterosexuality and the monogamous, nuclear family (Lefanu, 1988). One of the most important questions feminist critics ask is "why Ursula Le Guin's 'people' are always men" (Lefanu, 1988, p. 136), and women only have a marginal role (Bassnett, 1991). Men are the ones who travel to the unknown planets, go on adventures, and solve theoretical and political problems: "because the novel features a male protagonist it necessarily replicates the standard male quest narrative and thus reproduces patriarchal ideology'' (Libretti, 2004 p. 306). Women in *The Dispossessed* do not come across as independent, empowered or even likeable characters (Lefanu, 1988).

Some critics suspected that the lack of radical gender politics in Le Guin's novels had to do with her popularity as a mainstream author. However, Le Guin does not use her popularity to challenge the content, form or style in the literature of science fiction. She does not exploit the possibilities that science fiction offers her; instead she chooses to portray a male character going through a crisis (Lefanu, 1988).

On the contrary, some critics defended Le Guin's choice of male protagonists by arguing that: "There was no way to write about women doing things. If you wanted to write adventures, it had to be the men who were having them. That was just one of the hard facts of the marketplace" (Zimmer Bradley, 1985, p. 29). What is more, in 1960s and 1970s most of science fiction audience consisted of male readers and Le Guin's narrative introduced them to the concept of gender equality (Marcellino, 2009).

The Gender Politics in *The Dispossessed*

In *The Dispossessed* a scientist, named Shevek, is leaving his home planet Anarres to visit a world unknown to him – the planet Urras. He had read about Urras and talked to people on Urras, but never imagined going to a planet so alien to him. Both planets in the novel are portrayed as opposites: they are juxtaposed to highlight and problematize political systems and gender inequality.

In the first chapter, Shevek is leaving Anarres in a spaceship and encounters an Urrasti doctor. They engage in a conversation about the

differences between two planets. Shevek is surprised to notice that there are no women working on the spaceship, and asks Dr. Kimoe why that is, and he replied that "running a space freighter was not women's work." (Le Guin, 2002, p. 17). Dr. Kimoe then asks Shevek: "Is it true, Dr. Shevek, that women in your society are treated exactly like men?" (Le Guin, 2002, p. 17).

Shevek and Dr. Kimoe are shocked to realize the differences in treating the opposite gender on both planets. The author argues that the fact that Le Guin mentions gender equality and portrays such a scene in the very first chapter of the book makes it one of the most important themes throughout the novel, and the author states, it was intended this way. With this particular scene, Le Guin emphasizes the different treatment of women in sciences, technology and academia, and presents an alternative vision – the planet of Anarres, which sustains gender equality, where women are treated equally. Later, Shevek contemplates the institutions of marriage and prostitution, which do not exist on Anarres, because they are oppressive. The text then continues to criticize marriage and prostitution and treats them like the results of patriarchy that creates gender inequality.

The episode mentioned above also presents a critique of gender roles and suggests that they are socially constructed. For Shevek, it is unimaginable that women should not work in science or technology. He does not suppose that women have lower intellect and fewer abilities compared to men. The text suggests that gender roles are socially constructed and not a result of biology, and does not have an objective reasoning. It is an unpleasant surprise for Shevek that women are not allowed to participate in the same activities as men on Urras, because he comes from a society which treats women and men equally. Shevek simply does not know of a reality which treats women and men differently. He does experience a similar conversation with Pae, another Urrasti, about women in science. Shevek asks whether all scientists on Urras are men, and Pae answers: "Scientists. Oh, yes, certainly, they're all men. There are some women teachers in the girl's schools, of course. But they never get past Certificate level." (Le Guin, 2002, p. 63). When Shevek asks why, he says: "Can't do the maths; no head for abstract thought; don't belong. You know how it is, what women call thinking is done with the uterus. Of course, there's always few exceptions, God-awful brainy women with vaginal atrophy." (Le Guin, 2002, p. 63). Here, the text highlights the sexism and gender stereotypes in the Urrasti society: women cannot do calculations, they are irrational, and reduced to their reproduction system. Smart women are met with disgust and suspicion because they are not considered to be feminine enough. Shevek then says to Pae that about half of the scientists on Anarres are women. Pae responds with a statement that women do not belong in the labs; you "have to keep 'em in their place." (Le Guin, 2002, p. 64). Women's place on Urras is a domestic sphere. Pae asks Shevek if he finds "any women

capable of original intellectual work" (Le Guin, 2002, p. 64) and Shevek reveals to Pae's surprise that the two most significant heroes and theorists on Anarres were women. Pae points out that you cannot tell the sex of a person from their name on Anarres because there is no drawing of "distinction between the sexes" (Le Guin, 2002, p. 63).

Women have the same jobs as men on Anarres: they are scientists, teachers, they work in the mines, they farm the land – there is no gender division regarding occupation in Anarres. Such a portrayal of gender equality regarding occupation is very important, because it suggests an alternative to what many women experience in real life. Women on Anarres can also choose to stay with their babies or take them to a nursery after it is born. Women can choose not to participate in raising a child that is theirs, and men can choose to participate. Shevek is raised by his father and in the nursery with other kids. Shevek's mom, Rulag, decided to keep working instead of raising him, and in Anarresti society this is a norm. Motherhood is not perceived as something that is destined for every female to experience. Motherhood is a choice. So is fatherhood. Women give birth, but they are not expected to take all the responsibility of taking care of their children. They are not expected to participate in this private sphere of life, and leave the public sphere and science to men. Such a portrayal of gender equality in relation to domestic life criticizes and deconstructs the existing social order when women stay at home with the kids and men are the only 'bread-winners".

Shevek also has an interesting encounter with an Urrasti woman, Vea. She is glamorous, rich, and provocative. They meet several times, and their conversations portray other feminist concerns – the objectification of women and the implications of such objectification. Women on Urras are treated as something (not someone) radically different from men. Society on Urras has a very clear distinction between the two genders and this distinction seems reasonable and unquestionable for Urrasti people. One of the first questions Vea asks Shevek is "How do you tell men from women?" (Le Guin, 2002, p. 165). For Vea, the difference comes from the looks, clothes, bodies, occupations. Shevek does not differentiate between two genders based on those categories. In fact, throughout the novel, the only difference between women and men on Anarres is that women give birth and even though they are not treated differently. Vea and Shevek talk about the institution of marriage and family. She asks whether Shevek is married and he says that he has a partner. As it has been mentioned before, marriage on Anarres is considered to be the oppressive institution that disadvantages women, therefore, women and men treat each other as partners in case they choose a long-term partnership. Shevek and Vea have dinner together and she expects him to pay, while he finds it difficult to even accept the concept of money (that does not exist on anarchist Anarres), let alone that she expects him to pay for

her: “Vea did not take charge of the ordering, making it clear that Shevek was in charge of her” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 176).

The novel criticizes the objectification of women and female body. On Urras, Vea is only a body. Women are not people; they are bodies that can only gain power exploiting them. The text emphasizes the difference between how women are treated on Urras and Anarres and criticizes the Urrasti way of seeing women as objects of sexual pleasure.

Vea asks Shevek if she is very different from Anarresti women: “Are they all terribly strong, with muscles? Do they wear boots, and have big flat feet, and sensible clothing, and shave once in a month?” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 178). To Vea’s disgust Shevek answers: “They don’t shave at all.” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 178). Vea even seems incapable of understanding other women without referring to their looks.

Shevek finds it difficult to understand Vea’s position regarding gender roles. He then states that Vea only pretends to be happy with the social norms on Urras: “you know that in the eyes of men you are a thing, a thing owned, bought, sold. And so you think only of tricking the owners, of getting revenge” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 179). Their conversation uncovers one more important way to socialize females into gender roles: females are socialized into believing that existing social norms are beneficial for them. They grow up to believe that men may run the governments, but women control men. They grow up to believe that their bodies are not owned and that they can take control any time. They grow up to believe that the system sustains gender roles because it advantages everyone in the system.

Shevek’s partnership with Takver portrays gender roles, expectations and social norms regarding reproduction and motherhood. One evening, Shevek comes back from work and finds Takver on the edge of a nervous breakdown. She is tired from pregnancy: “I’m sick of crying all the time. Damned stupid hormones! I wish I could have babies like the fish, lay the eggs and swim off and that’s the end of it. Unless I swam back and ate them…” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 198). Feminism is concerned with reproduction rights, pregnancy and motherhood, because the existing system creates many inequalities because women bear children. Takver does not think of pregnancy as natural, enjoyable or mandatory. She wished she could change the way the reproduction works. It does not have to be personal. Takver is a strong woman who understands how the system uses motherhood to control women: “I think that’s why the old archisms used women as property. Why did the women let them? Because they were pregnant all the time – because they were already possessed, enslaved” (Le Guin, 2002, p. 273). Feminism is very critical of the notion that all women want to become mothers and that motherhood is natural, inevitable thing. Motherhood as a biological fact is used to construct a social role for women. The text here portrays exactly what feminism is concerned

about – not all women want to go through pregnancy. However, the existing social norms and politics pressure women into becoming mothers.

The Dispossessed portrays a society which treats both genders equally. On Anarres, all women and men share the same responsibilities, are treated equally, and moreover, there are no gender roles. There are no expectations based on gender from any of the individuals. Females give birth, but motherhood is understood as a choice rather than an obligation. Rulag, Shevek's mother, chooses to continue her career instead of raising him, and does not necessary for this reason she was given an unpleasant character. The representation of a free choice is much more important in this text than the impression of the certain character. Rulag is strong, independent and determined. Such a portrayal of a female character is significant in science fiction, and challenges the stereotypical representation of a woman as submissive and controlled by her biology. Takver, the author suggests, is also portrayed outside the boundaries of gender stereotypes. She is a scientist and does not hesitate to leave Shevek and their common household when the famine hits Anarres, and everyone struggles to survive. Her education and expertise are needed in one of the parts of the planet and she decides to leave. Takver is not portrayed as a fragile, scared woman. She takes matters into her own hands and is not afraid to lead a life without a man. This is another important portrayal of a female, the researcher proposes – independent, educated and brave.

The main protagonist in the novel is a man, but it does not undermine the feminist representation of female characters. In addition, Shevek is quite a feminist himself. He does not understand or justify the gender roles and inequality on Urras, and he does not reinforce them.

Conclusion

To conclude, *The Dispossessed* portrays gender equality, the social construction of gender, and gender roles. The novel challenges such constructions and questions the necessity of gender roles, and is highly critical towards gender inequality. Therefore, the author proposes that gender politics in *The Dispossessed* engage with feminist thought and advocate feminist cause. They promote feminist values – most importantly – gender equality. In addition, the readers are encouraged to rethink their own perceptions of gender, and, consequently, the space needed for changes in gender politics is created.

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The Private Letters of Samuel Richardson: An Insight into The History of Clarissa

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Abstract

This article begins with a look at the culture of epistolarity in Eighteenth-century England, providing first an overview of the growing diffusion of letter writing in the most various contexts. In particular, the private letter – the so-called *familiar letter* – became a favoured means to overcome material and psychological distances, proving to be capable of crossing even social and cultural barriers. The deep meaning and the widespread influence of this written mode of communication are emblematically embodied in the literary life of Samuel Richardson. As a novelist, Richardson expanded the dramatic possibilities of the narrative genre by his innovative use of the letter form. Moreover, he famously conducted an intense correspondence with his readers, establishing an epistolary network which accompanied the long and complex gestation of his masterpiece, *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady.* The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which Richardson's private correspondence configures itself as a critical metadiscourse, which is able to offer a penetrating insight into the history of *Clarissa*.

Keywords: Eighteenth-century culture, Familiar letter, Samuel Richardson, Correspondence, Clarissa.

Introduction: The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century

The growing diffusion of letter writing in Eighteenth-Century England is a phenomenon widely investigated by critics, to the point that the letter has been considered as the symbolic form of the age of Enlightenment: used for every kind of writing, from scientific treatises to manuals of behaviour, from political essays to novels, from periodicals to private correspondence (Altman, 1982). In particular, the private letter, the so-called *familiar letter*, became the favoured means of overcoming the distances of space and time in order to create the effect of presence and intimacy even in the absence of an

interlocutor. Thus, epistolary communication simulates, on the level of writing, the practice and effects of a conversation between family members or between friends; and it spreads to the point of becoming a social practice, capable of crossing even economic and cultural barriers (Anderson, Daghlian, & Ehrenpreis, 1968).

A significant example of this phenomenon is represented by the periodical press, which right from the beginning of the Eighteenth Century promotes the publication of a dense network of private letters, through which single individuals are involved in a sort of collective communication. It is enough to think of the pioneering enterprise carried out by Daniel Defoe in the *Review* with the invention of the *Scandalous Club*, deliberately addressed to "curious readers", which provided a special column dedicated to an epistolary exchange between Mr. Review and his correspondents. Besides, shortly afterwards, the ingenious expedient was to be adopted and perfected by Steele and Addison, first in *The Tatler* and then in *The Spectator* (Downie & Corns, 1993).

Thus, the familiar letter became an object of interest and curiosity to the public in such a way that this form of writing was deliberately conceived and cleverly inserted in a fictional context. "It has become indeed so common a practice among authors to feign a correspondency and give the title of a *private letter* to a piece addressed solely to the public", Shaftesbury remarked in 1711 (Shaftesbury, 1999, p. 347). Moreover, one of Shaftesbury's most influential essays appears in the form of *A Letter to a Friend*, so that the philosopher's reflections assume a dialogical dimension, which is typical of a conversation between friends (Shaftesbury, 1999, pp. 29-69).

In the light of the above, it might be worthwhile to read again some penetrating pages of Gadamer on the primary role of "conversation" and "dialogue" in the process of human understanding, and therefore on the derivation of the epistolary form from the basic structure of question and answer (Gadamer, 2004). In this perspective, the letter can be considered as a written transposition of the dialogical process, which is connoted for its capacity to amplify and fix the distance between two constitutive moments of a relationship, so as to offer the interlocutor a suitable space in which to be received, or rather a predetermined time for reflection. Consequently, then, epistolary writing can be qualified as a sort of in-depth dialogue, meditated and pondered in the prospect of an illuminating distancing, capable of objectifying and unravelling not only the problematic knots of the questions involved, but also the emotional states that are normally associated with them (Earle, 1999).

For all these reasons, as already pointed out, the letter asserts itself as the symbolic form of the British Enlightenment. For its particular flexibility, for its availability to receive every kind of content, for the conversational

freedom it offers, the *familiar letter* occupies the space of an undefined liminality, mediating between the private dimension and the public sphere, between truth and fiction, between domesticity and the market environment (Brant, 2006; McKeon, 2005).

The Familiar Letters of Samuel Richardson

This characteristic mediation between private and public, between reality and fiction is emblematically embodied in the literary life and career of Samuel Richardson. Typographer, printer, publisher, editor, author of epistolary novels, Richardson covers all the typical roles and stages that make up the process of letter writing (Eaves & Kimpel, 1971). Appreciated as an innovator of language in its grammatical and lexical aspects, he is quoted several times in the famous *Dictionary of the English Language* of Samuel Johnson (1755), who recognized him as a "word-maker" and admired his capacity to express feelings effectively in his writing (Eaves & Kimpel, 1971, p. 338).

The figure of Samuel Richardson should also be understood in the light of his socio-cultural condition. As a printer by profession and a member of the middle class, he did not have a classical education. In his letters, he defines himself as a business man, with all the duties and limits of this condition. Nevertheless, his role as an author brings him into contact with people of the upper class society: thus, when writing to ladies of the aristocracy, he often makes a point of asking for advice on appropriate expressions concerning an upper class environment. In other words, Richardson represents an interesting case of the *outsider*, capable of mediating and transmitting innovative linguistic forms and styles (Montini, 2009, pp. 21-22).

Among the most surprising innovations, we cannot avoid mentioning the extremely vivacious network of communication that he established with the readers of his novels. In other words, Richardson was the creator and promoter of what we would today define as *forum* and opinion groups, involved in discussing and influencing the authorial decisions regarding the development of the plot and the destiny of the characters. But this kind of private/public conversation, for the author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, came about in the form of *familiar letters*.

Thus, together with the complex elaboration of his novels – especially the last two, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* – Richardson began an intense exchange of letters with a large number of correspondents, all belonging to the intellectual middle and upper class, and among them many young women. On his death in 1761, he had accumulated an incredible quantity of letters concerning, above all, the composition, revision, publication and interpretation of his narrative works. Indeed, of the three novels written by the author, *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* (1747-48) stands out

as the most important thematic hub of this extraordinary correspondence, both from the quantitative point of view and for the biographical and critical interest of the subjects dealt with (Keymer, 1992). Here is a significant example, which shows the effectiveness with which a *private letter* can transform a personal, or even intimate dimension into a matter of public importance:

> Sir, my nervous infirmities you know – time mends them not – and *Clarissa* has almost killed me. You know how my business engages me. You know by what snatches of time I write, that I may not neglect that, and that I may preserve that independency which is the comfort of my life. I never sought out of myself for patrons. My own industry, and God's providence, have been my whole reliance. The great are not great to me, unless they are good. And it is a glorious privilege, that a middling man enjoys who has preserved his independency, and can occasionally (though not Stoically) tell the world, what he thinks of that world, in hopes to contribute, though but by his mite, to mend it. (Carroll, 1964, pp. 174-175).

These words were written by Samuel Richardson on 21 January 1751 in a letter addressed to the French translator, Jean Baptiste de Freval, to whom, by the way, the imminent publication of the extended third edition of *Clarissa* was announced. This is little more than an extract from one of the richest and most representative collections of letters throughout the Eighteenth Century. The passage quoted above would suffice to testify the importance of the motives which appear in these *familiar letters*, all the more surprising for the conversational style that allows a natural transition from the home environment to the public sphere. Besides, the dignity exhibited by the author in affirming his economic independence, based on tireless working activity (which he defines "business"), calls to mind the famous letter that Samuel Johnson addressed to Lord Chesterfield in February 1755: a letter which the author of the *Dictionary* was shortly to make public and which was to take on the emblematic value of the manifesto of the modern intellectual.

At this point, it seems opportune to offer a brief reconstruction of the complex editorial affair which led to establishing the canon of Richardson's letters. Indeed the first and fundamental collection of the novelist's private correspondence is due to the writer, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who in 1804 published *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*: the work, in six volumes, contains about 400 letters, a third of which was written by the author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. However, no matter how remarkable and praiseworthy Barbauld's achievement was, her work does not seem to be faultless, especially if judged in the light of the modern criteria of philological restitution. Barbauld shortens the texts arbitrarily, omitting dates or transcribing them wrongly; she attributes letters to different correspondents from the original ones, modifies

spelling and punctuation, and summarizes several letters in one without ever pointing out the changes she has made (Montini, 2009, p. 25).

Further collections which followed in the Twentieth Century are doubtlessly less rich than the preceding one; but the edition that constituted an unavoidable reference in Richardson's bibliography is the one edited by John Carroll (1964), which presents 128 letters in a chronological order, all signed by the author, scrupulously edited on the basis of manuscript sources. This choice coincides only in part with Barbauld's letters, favouring, in the immense amount of material available, the documents mainly dealing with literary matters. But in particular, *Clarissa*, the lengthy epistolary novel that Barbauld had already recognized as Richardson's undisputed masterpiece, is also the central point around which the most significant part of the author's correspondence revolves (Ross, 1985). The letters in question, then, cover a period of time from 1744 to 1757: that is, from the testimony of the first missives concerning the writing of the novel – the first two volumes came out in December 1747 – to the entire following decade.

Letters concerning *Clarissa*

Indeed, it is the complex gestation of *Clarissa* that induces Richardson to start an intense network of epistolary exchanges with various correspondents, among which are not only friends, men of letters, critics, and translators, but also, and above all, ladies and affectionate female readers. With his intense work of writing in full flow, the author submits to this numerous and composite group of interlocutors the parts of the novel as he writes them. In his letters, he asks for suggestions and corrections; he anticipates and discusses his narrative solutions and enters into the merits of the motivations animating his characters. But above all, Richardson is concerned about the proportions that his work is taking on, as revealed by the insistent request to some of his correspondents in order to make the necessary cuts. Here is what the author says in a letter of 1744:

And I have run into such a length! – And am such a sorry pruner, though greatly luxuriant, that I am apt to add three pages for one I take away! Altogether I am frequently out of conceit with it. Then I have nobody that I can presume to advise with on such a subject. – But last week, indeed, I took the liberty to send the beginning of it to my indulgent friend, Mr. Hill, whose sincerity I cannot doubt; but whose favour to me makes him so partial, that, if he approve, I shall not be without my diffidences. But if he prunes it, as I have requested he will, without mercy, then perhaps shall I have the courage to proceed with more alacrity. (Carroll, 1964, p. 61).

In actual fact, the length of the work, evident from the initial phases of its elaboration, is not extrinsic to the nature of *Clarissa*, nor is it simply ascribable to the author's temperament, that is, to the detailed way of

proceeding which characterizes his writing. On the contrary, as underlined by Angus Ross (1985), the material extension of the novel is an integral part of its complex capacity of meaning and of its expressive force. However, what is important to emphasize above all, in this context, is the fact that Richardson became more aware of what he was creating – of the innovative originality of his narrative technique – precisely through the laborious process of metawriting that is carried out in the pages of his private correspondence. Scanning his letters in their chronological order, it is possible to grasp, in the varied repetition of recurring themes, the progressive configuration of a plan which is also the development of the author's consciousness (Bray, 2003). In particular, the author appears more capable of using a specific kind of writing, being fully aware of its intrinsic complexity. Indeed, the most evident difficulty, arising from the modality of "writing to the moment", as the author of *Clarissa* acknowledges, consists of indulging in a certain prolixity of style. This is what Richardson declares in a letter of 13 August 1756, replying to the criticisms of Smollett and inviting his rival novelist to undertake this type of epistolary narrative (Carroll, 1964, p. 328).

With this in mind, it is worth rereading the wide and articulate reconstruction of Richardson's life "with remarks on his writings", which Anna Barbauld feels the need to put forward, before presenting her collection of letters of 1804 (Barbauld, 1804, p. vii). In truth, much more than a biographical essay is contained in this *Life of Samuel Richardson* where the female scholar, with profound critical intuition, collates the main narrative modalities that characterized the origins of the *novel* (Barbauld, 1804, pp. vii-ccxii). Thus she compares Richardson's epistolary writing with the homodiegetic narrator of Smollett's *Roderick Random* and, on the other hand, with the epic form theorized by Fielding and the omniscient narrator of *Tom Jones*. The conclusion that Barbauld draws is that the method of "epistolary correspondence", as she calls it, can truly represent a valid mediation for the development of the realistic novel, inasmuch as it includes within itself the positive aspects of the two alternative forms. Moreover, noteworthy is the fact of having focused attention on the comparison between Richardson and Fielding, the crux of the critical debate on the novel until today (McKeon, 1987). Besides, it is no coincidence that Barbauld devotes particular attention to the fundamental question of narrative time – a question which emerges with much concerned insistence from Richardson's letters. If Fielding's narrator can allow himself to be either concise or lengthy, according to the needs of the story being developed, the epistolary form, on the other hand, is not compatible with the speed of the style (Barbauld, 1804, p. xxvi). Moreover, the accurate control of the connection between chronological time and narrative time, as every novelist knows, is of essential importance in achieving the effect of reality. All the more, then, the author of *Clarissa* must question himself on the material time allowed for the

epistolary interaction between his characters, in order to make their intense letter exchange credible. Writing to his friend, Hill, in a letter of 20 January 1745, Richardson puts it in these terms:

> Length is my principal disgust, at present. Yet I have shorten'd much more than I have lengthen'd; altho' it will not appear so by this first parcel; having taken in a month in time. The fixing of dates has been a task to me. I am afraid I make the writers do too much in the time. If lazy ladies, that is to say, ladies who love not writing, were to be judges, they would think so: especially if not early risers. (Carroll, 1964, p. 63).

It is also interesting to observe how, starting with the fact that the work is excessively lengthy, the author comes to affirm the character of innovative originality of his writing, albeit keeping to the usual modesty topos. Objecting to the proposals of Aaron Hill regarding certain cuts to the text, Richardson appeals to the laudatory comments of some friends, who had identified in those same passages the emergence of what they defined as "a new species of writing" (Carroll, 1964, pp. 75, 78). The expression recalls, at least for the reader of these pages, a famous statement of *Tom Jones*: in the introductory chapter of the second book, the narrator declares that he is the "founder of a new province of writing" (Fielding, 1985, p. 60).

The perspective adopted by Richardson is evidently different: thanks to the technique of "writing to the moment". The author moulds his epistolary style in order to embody the character's personality, achieving in *Clarissa* a singular dramatic intensity. Furthermore, the innovative intention is also confirmed on the level of moral content, and precisely in relation to the characterization of the two main characters. Thus in the above quoted letter, wanting to show Lovelace as a totally despicable character, Richardson declares with resolute determination:

> I intend in him a new character, not confined to usual rules: and something indeed new in each, or I should not have presum'd to scribble. If absurd or unnatural, they ought not to appear at all: but this I must say, that I had not in my aim to write, after any thing I ever read, or heard talk'd of. (Carroll, 1964, p. 77).

On looking more closely, however, the most innovative element of the work consists precisely of its complex dialogical and dramatic modality, which not only gives life to the characters, making them express themselves from within, but also develops the entire matter in such a way that every event is filtered through the prism of multiple points of view and of different interpretations. It is exactly this dynamism that leads to the creation of round characters, of totally credible personalities, even beyond the intentions declared by the author. This is highlighted by Masolino D'Amico in his *Introduction* to the novel, where he emphasizes how Clarissa is "infinitely

enriched by a fundamental ambiguity", whereas the character of Lovelace, together with a feeling of repugnance, ends up provoking in the reader an irrepressible impulse of attraction (D'Amico, 1996, pp. xvi-xvii).

This constitutive duplicity of the characters, which makes *Clarissa* an absolute masterpiece, is also to be found widely mirrored in several pages of Richardson's letters, where the author discusses on the contrasting opinions manifested by his readers, and in particular by some passionate female readers. Thus he writes to the daughters of Aaron Hill in a letter of 14 December 1748:

> What pride you give me in your approbation of my Clarissa! – And how charmingly just is your correction of Miss Howe! Would you not wonder, were you to hear, that such there are as prefer that lively girl to her? And still more, were you to be assured, that there are numbers of your sex, who pity the Lovelace you are affrighted at, and call Clarissa perverse, over-delicate, and hard-hearted; and contend, that she ought to have married him? (Carroll, 1964, p.102).

However, the acme of the emotional and ethical tension, in these letters on *Clarissa*, coincides inevitably with the most controversial and unexpected narrative solution, which concludes the history of Clarissa with her saintly death. The final dénouement of the story, or rather of *The History of a Young Lady* (Richardson, 1985), represents a choice both humanly suffered and contrasted by male and female readers, and at the same time passionately defended by the author (Budd, 2007). Richardson's private correspondence obviously bears ample traces of the lively debate conducted on such a crucial point: a point which inevitably called into question, for both the author and the readers, the meaning of the work as a whole. An exemplary testimony of this metaliterary drama is a letter of 15 December 1748: an extraordinary long letter addressed to Lady Bradshaigh, *ideal reader* par excellence and a leading voice in the pages of Richardson's correspondence. In a central passage, where he discusses the ending of *Clarissa* with vibrant yet affable tone, the author confutes the arguments put forward by his most affectionate correspondent:

> But let us suppose the story to end, as you, Madam, would have it; what of extraordinary would there be in it? After infinite trials, difficulties, distresses, and even disgraces (her delicacy and situation considered), see her married. See her an excellent wife, an excellent mistress, and even an excellent mother, struggling thro' very delicate and very painful circumstances; what though common, not the less painful and delicate for being common. See her foolish and obstinate relations reconciled to her: see Mr. Lovelace in his behaviour to her all that can be expected – from a tender a fond husband – What is there unusual in all this? Except in the latter case an example as dangerous as rare! (Carroll, 1964, pp. 106-107).

As in a sort of palimpsest, the author's letters reveal the unending process of writing and rewriting of the novel – writing which has materialized on the page, even if only temporarily, or that which has remained at the planning stage of ideas: the possible or improbable solutions, the proposals considered, the hypotheses discussed, and above all the continual oscillation between the opposing reasons of the mind and of the heart. The intrinsically dramatic quality of Richardson's masterpiece, symbolically represented by the image of the duel, which opens and closes the novel, is reflected in all levels of the textual structure and in the entire process of composition of the work (Budd, 2007). Significantly, also the critical metadiscourse on *Clarissa*, which unwinds through the pages of Richardson's private letters, configures itself as a skirmish, where the author defends his own narrative solutions. Or better, he fights to defend the reasons which led him to write the history of *Clarissa*, as he himself points out in another passage of the same letter to Lady Bradshaigh. Perhaps it is not without significance that, at the culminating moment of the novel's publication, when announcing to his friend, Hill, the imminent publication of the last volumes, Richardson keeps his distance from the categories of the *novel* and of the *romance* in order to assert the tragic character of his *Clarissa*: "These volumes will shew you, Sir, that I intend more than a novel or romance by this piece; and that it is of the tragic kind" (Carroll, 1964, p. 100).

Conclusion

After the publication of his third novel, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), Richardson turns his hand to the revision of his private correspondence, with the intention of reorganizing an enormous amount of material in view of a possible edition. Writing to Lady Bradshaigh on 19 November 1757, the author consults his most affectionate interlocutor on this matter: according to the judgment of some trusted friends, the correspondence between them would represent, in its entirety, "the best commentary that could be written on *The History of Clarissa*" (Carroll, 1964, p. 335).

Indeed, the fundamental instance emerging from Richardson's private correspondence, as we have seen, is the structuring of a truly critical discourse on *Clarissa*, which moreover conveys an eloquent testimony of a *work in progress* in continuous transformation. The form of the familiar letter, then, is at the origin of the hermeneutic dynamism which underlay the writing of the work from the very beginning of its elaboration. Within and without this epochal novel, the letter constitutes the generative kernel of the dialogical process from which the complex stratification of *The History of Clarissa* is interwoven. Based on a terrain of confrontation (and of clashes) between the exploration of interiority and so-called public opinion, Richardson's epistolary writing affirms itself as a tool of elaboration for a new model of cultural

communication (Keymer, 1992). The exchange of letters between several correspondents transposes, in the narrative structure of the *novel*, the flexible and interlocutory character of a cognitive process which conforms to the rhythm of conversation and dialogue. As Margaret Doody has intelligently remarked: "The structure of the book is itself a mode of knowledge" (Doody, 1998, p. 107). Even more so, one could say that the exchange of private letters, in its progressive development, reveals the immanent epistemological principle underlying the composition of the novel: that is, the dialectical movement of distancing from the work in order to objectify the process of composition, followed by the subsequent act of continuous re-approaching the text. It is precisely this conscious effort of alternating roles, this participating detachment of the novelist from *his* heroine, that seals the story of *The history of Clarissa*:

One word more, only, as to my Clarissa. – I think of going thro' my present reading of the piece, being got into the 4th century of letters (monstrous number!); and then shall let the poor Unhappy sleep! – If you will be pleased to favour me so far as you have gone, and intend to favour me with going (and are your observations irrecoverably lost?) I shall take the benefit of it; tho' with the licence that I hope you will not be greatly displeased with me for taking. And, when the books are returned, I shall by comparison be better able to judge of all. (Carroll, 1964, p. 84).

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Estrangement of the Cultural Material in Algerian Narratives

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Abstract

Enculturation becomes a distinct concept in Algerian literature as contemporary writers belong to more than one culture and develop accordingly different enculturations. The cultural material is manipulated by bicultural writers rendering usual images very strange reflecting the writer's struggle with his two languages, two identities and two cultures. Writers' identification with the Algerian culture is variable and results in estrangement of very neutral practices such as ceremonies, local spaces, traditional habits and groupings. In a cross cultural analysis, the present paper aims at showing how the cultural material is estranged in narratives by means of intensifying negative values of cultural images.

Keywords: Cultures, interaction, estrangement, enculturation, texts, Algerian literature.

Introduction

Belonging to two cultures resulted in cultural interaction born generally as the result of migration and colonialism. The latter is the case of high tension engendered from the long contact between groups of people different from each other in their language and culture. The French colonialism in Algeria lasted one hundred thirty years and led inevitably to marriages between French and Algerians. The second generation is the case of children growing up within two identities different not only in language and culture but also in enculturation as it is not easy to settle in one culture in detriment of the other because the two, though different, are their parents' cultures. This issue is echoed in literature whereby identity and culture have long been conceptualized from the perspective of struggle and tension. Writers belonging to more than one culture and speak more than one language have usually a special image about interculturality. The result of colonialism, mixed marriages and migration is the emergence of not only multilingual writers but most importantly multicultural writers. The latter's link with culture is often

the source of conflict and tension especially in the case the writer has two different cultures as it is the case of postcolonial writers. Algerian literature expressed in the French language is good example on cross-cultural literature.

Algerian literature expressed in the French language has been the case of writings often reflecting a special reaction towards another culture. The latter can be the French colonizers' or the result of migration. The long stay of France in Algeria resulted in bilingual and bicultural states. Native Algerian writers write to proclaim their identity and culture while the non-native writers have different concerns vis-à-vis the cross-cultural state. It is often about alienation with the Algerian culture to the extent of estrangement. Writers of split identity and culture seem ill at ease with one of their cultures, especially in case of mixed marriages as it is the case of Nina Bouraoui and Leila Sebbar, to list just few of them. The reader of their texts, especially if he/she is Algerian and very familiar with Algeria's cultural practices, notices the estrangement of the cultural material because the reader may experience a double estrangement as he/she estranges the writer's estrangement of behaviours, acts, manners, words, reactions that can be rather no more than cultural practices.

The present paper tackles estrangement of the cultural material by setting the view that writers of split identity do not write independently of their cultural split, especially when the double belonging results in a split along two different states. It conceptualizes the idea that the writer's alienation to the other's culture and with which he/she shares several aspects, is a true picture of his struggle of belonging and his acknowledging the value of his culture and the insignificance of the other which exists with his own culture in a counterpoint, and his externalization and estrangement towards it is a version of his inability to set line between the two cultures.

The estrangement of the cultural material is analysed from extracts obtained from two different sides: the first one is considered as an ordinary narration of events wherein a description of a cultural practice is presented as it is actually perceived in its real occurrence. The other one, by contrast, is the estranged material wherein the writer defamiliarises the target objects and presents them far from their real occurrence. Meanings and interpretations are supported from the writers' texts because the text is the primary evidence. Meaning is made within the context that the writer situates his text in. Our evidence of estrangement stands on the textual comparison between the occurrences of the same object in two different positions; one is ordinarily like any other cultural practice, whereas the other is defamiliarised or estranged.

1. Estrangement in Literature

Estrangement originated in philosophy with Arirtole's conception that poetic language ought to have the character of something foreign, something

outlandish about it. Estrangement spread out later politically in the works of the Russian formalists like Brecht, Tolstoy and Shklovsky. Brecht reflected upon political estrangement while Tolstoy and Shklovsky dealt with estrangement in art. Tolstoy is the unsurpassed master of estrangement. His narratives create through estrangement a particular reading enjoyment that places texts far from banality as Tolstoy denounces automatization. Artistic estrangement was launched by Shklovsky in his "Art as Device" 1917. His theory of estrangement reflects upon Brecht's theory, arguing that defamilirization and strangeness refresh perception:
"by "estranging" objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long ad "laborious". The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artefact itself is quite unimportant" (1976, p.6).

Shklovsky's theory of estrangement in arts differs from that of Tolstoy. Shklovsky produces estrangement fictionally from an outsider character who presents a familiar reality seen differently by the reader. Similarly, Robinson (2008) defies estrangement as: "a term signifying a specific way of perceiving or realizing an already automatized phenomenon" (p.79). It is making the similar very dissimilar by taking objects out of their original context through estrangement devices. In this respect Shklovsky says:
The image is not a constant subject for changing predicates. The purpose of the image is not to draw our understanding closer to that which this image stands for, but rather to allow us to perceive the object in a special way, in short, to lead us to a "vision" of this objects rather than mere "recognition" (p.10).

Estrangement emerged from the inability of a person or group to accept the other which is different from it at levels such as colour, race, belonging, geography and culture. With the growth of migration and multilingualism, nowadays writings become featured with alienation and estrangement. Writers estrange objects in ways to show their own experiences with the context of these objects by making a negative analogy between a familiar and defamiliar occurrence. Algerian literature expressed in the French language, for example, is marked by these devices whereby ordinary objects get reshaped in unusual ways, reflecting writers' lived experience not with the object itself but with its cultural context. Estrangement in literature takes different new forms from those of the 1930s as nowadays writers are multilingual and multicultural, making of their texts heterogeneous in both language and objects of representation. The literary material is estranged not for making a vision out of the object itself as did writers like Albert Camus, Kafka, and others, but rather for creating a sense of rejection and alienation with the social and cultural behavior linked to the writer by means of mixed marriage, migration or as consequences of colonialism. In that, writers make a distance between

the real image of an object and that presented in the text through estranging it. Modernints' use of estrangement was to reshape objects in unusual ways. What is new in "peripherical literature" is that writers estrange an object by bringing it in a strange context to appear dissimilar from the general context, and overloading it with negative intensifiers which increase in the estrangement degree. The used objects are mostly unused in the writer's mother' or father' culture; and by estranging them, the writer depicts a cultural conflict he/she had towards that culture.

The estrangement of cultural material renders the word, or linguistically speaking, the signifier taking another signified (the conceptual image) which is intensified with the values, often negative, that the writer adds. For example, when talking about "make-up' in a literary text, this image is more or less universal referring to a traditional cosmetic tool. Eyeliner or "khol" in Algerian Arabic is described in a strange manner by Leila Sebbar who intensifies it with more negative values, rendering the usual image loosing sense and brings, therefore, another one defamiliar to the Algerian reader. In this respect, Lyotard says:

(...) estrangement ontologically resides or dwells in language itself, and that this language or tongue (langue) is already divided from itself. The function of literary work, then, is to intervene in this divide or fissure and "extract through its passage from the secreta of the tongue a new idiom; literature is a paroxysm between the locuteur and the language or tongue." (as cited by Sood, 2004, p.68).

2. Enculturation in Algerian Literature

With the emergence of multilingual and multicultural societies, literary writings become featured with new aspects often bringing the notions of culture and representation in problematic rapports. Living in contact with a second language is likely to result in a bilingual contact situation engendering a bicultural state. Writing about the latter is a delicate task mainly due to problems related to enculturation. A lot of people take enculturation for granted and think that it results from multiculturalism, but in practice it is not always as so. In its broad sense, enculturation is adaptation and understanding, and acceptance of cultural practices:

Enculturation concerns the acquisition of those rules, understandings and orientations that provide, among other things, contoured maps of the landscape of community life and heuristic guides for effective participation. Through the lens of a "person-centred ethnography", the study of enculturation attends to how individuals come to develop more or less adaptive (or maladaptive) interpretations, representations, expectations, evaluations, feelings, intentions, and so one, concerning their socio-cultural milieu and their positions within it

from perspectives that are both socio-centric and personal. (Poole, 2002, p.834)

In its depiction of cultural practices in literary texts, enculturation takes another shape and reflects sometimes conflicts and tensions. The writers' enculturation is seen as recurrent images in their writings with the aim to say again what has gone, what has been liked and what has not. Culture and identity head the struggle which fails to be erased from the writer's past. The reality of this representation acknowledges the factor of space which plays a significant role in not only building new identities, but also, struggling culturally over the here-and-there consciousness. Literary writings are among the other artistic fields to which globalization left a trait. The task of literature is not only the depiction of unified issues; rather, the moving of individuals resulted in the diasporas and questiones unification of belonging and representing culture. Cristou says in this respect:

Migration is a phenomenon which has brought about unprecedented changes not only in the movement of people but also in their identification, which, although negotiable, are at the same time intimately and ultimately connected to the notion of place. This new type of movement extends to new kinds of social spaces and cultural fields that question previously stable notions and fixed entities. (2006, p.15).

Sharing the same view, Skelton and Allen argue that culture, which is seen historically as unchanged, is set under external influences:

It (culture) is also influenced by, influences generally interacts, with contemporary social, economic and political factors. Geography too is significant. It is not just about where you are on the world map, for example, but about the ways in which space and place interact with understanding about being a person (2013, p.6).

As the result of individuals' moving along different spaces, the notion of "sociocultural wholes" given that whole societies get transported and moved in other societies. Literatures expressed in their non-native languages are often associated with different links to the native and second culture, and, therefore, situates beyond the issue of native vs. home land issues, or racism matters. Culture and identity become rather a critical discourse moving away from the national literary culture. This rapport is testified not only by characters' orientation towards either culture, but also by texts differentiating between full and partial enculturation. Algerian literature written in the French language, for instance, has different visions of the Algerian culture, especially the traditional practices that grew up as a dominant aspect in the life of people. In that, the Algerian native writer differs markedly from the non-native Algerian writer in depicting literarily these cultural practices.

Algerian literature established a particular position in the literary world. From Kateb Yacine's Nedjma to Kamel Daoued' Meursault contre-

enquête, Algerian literature expressed in French could be distinguished as independent literature:

It was not until after 1950 that native Algerian writers made their mark, particularly in fiction. Novels by Mouloud Feraoun (Le Fils du Pauvre, 1950), Mohamed Dib (the Algerie trilogy, 1952-7), Kateb Yacine (Nedjma, 1956) and Mouloud Mammeri (La Coline Oubliée, 1952) were often autobiographical in inspiration, sought to correct the view of Algeria presented by Franco-Algerians and raised issues of biculturalism and colonialism (Coward, 2008, p.442).

Literature in Algeria is expressed in the languages of the country, namely Arabic, standard and dialectical, Amazigh and French. Algerian literature expressed in French realized its own status in world literature. The beginning of Algerian literature, 1950's, aimed at proclaiming an identity of Algerian literature, independent from French despite the fact that the latter is its language of expression. It had the main purpose of establishing a national entity seen in works of Kateb Yacine, Mouhamed Dib, Mouloud Feraoun and other famous writers. After the independence another wave of writers emerged with influential works like those of Rachid Boudjedra, Assia Djebar and Leila Sebbar. The present day literature in Algeria is likewise very rich with names like Nina Bouraoui, Kamel Daoued, Yasmina Khadra, and Salim Bachi. Its concerns vary between political, social and cultural. In general, the peculiarity of Algerian literature is seen in its denunciation, struggle, acculturation, cultural conflicts reflecting real concerns of independent Algeria.

Among the delicate issues in Algerian literature, the cultural scratch occupied a big portion in literary texts of Algerian and French Algerian writers. Whether it is fiction or diction, the texts speak about themselves and if they are contrasted hereby, it is to reveal how the same object is perceived differently within two literary contexts. Different or similar seems less important when this same object is semantically dense with estrangement.

Enculturation fails to define with clear dimensions. In the literary text, this issue is more noticed than in any other field of representation since writers' acceptance and rejection of cultural practices is seen from the way they narrate. There are particular objects, generally belonging to traditional practices, seen or depicted with more estrangement and defamiliarization than others. This emphasis on object's selection may be an indication of the writers' orientation, which is, if going deeper, an acceptance or rejection of that object, or it can be an estrangement resulting from comparison between two cultures wherein, one is seen 'better than the other". It is usually the case of cultural shock resulting from the incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, practices, while the idealized patterns call for relativizing culture and read each culture in its context because the latter is responsible of its learning, sharing, transmitting and changing, and, therefore, responsible of its justification. Culture, rather,

becomes an abused material through which the writer reveals his conception of a lived experience as he experienced a given object differently and brings back this difference in his narratives. This unconscious culture is made free in the text and without considering the effects of the negative estrangement upon the reader. In essence, the conflict results from the inability to stand in one "sociocultural whole"; rather, defining in intersections made of the literary material strange and alienated.

3. Estrangement of Cultural Material in Algerian Literature

French Algerian writers with split belonging expressed their struggle to identify to either culture through their texts. Although the latter framed with literariness and may not literarily be no more than fiction, they do in reality depict images lived under the tension of their split and enculturation:

I search for my identity. My gaze is often sad. I resemble my father struggling to remember Amar. His photograph. My new role. (…). I don't want to be Algerian. I don't want to be French. Its my strength against other people. I am nondescript. It's a war against the world. I become unclassifiable. I'm not ethic enough. (Nina Bouraoui,Tomboy, 2007, p.18).

Nina Bouraoui is a French novelist writing about split identity. Bouraoui lived in Algeria and then was uprooted, a matter that created in her a sense of split and double belonging depicted throughout her texts. Her writings present to the reader an image of the alienation she lived during her childhood and continued even in her life as a writer. Bouraoui's balance between two cultures practically questioned not only whom she is within the two, but also whom she wanted rather to be. In other words, which culture she wished to have and belong to more? The same questions are raised by Leila Sebbar, who is like Bouraoui, split between two parental belongings:

Algeria will never leave me. And I will born to myself (it needs long years and hundred of pages) of the union which dazzled me without blinding me. Algeria with France, my father Algerian with my French mother. A story so singular, so strange, so discrete that I begin slightly to want, be able to talk about, write about (p.78).

Leila Sebbar is a French Algerian writer writing about the issues of identity, belonging and exile. Sebbar is born of an Algerian father and a French mother in Algerian and left for France to settle there.

The remarkable in Algeria literature expressed in French is both the peculiarity and the singularity of writings in the sense that writers depict issues that are not shared as recurrent themes of the post-colonial period. This can be due to the fact that more singularity features narration. For example, what Sebbar ad Bouraoui see as struggle and conflict often associated with diasporas and alienation is rather unseen with other who do not estrange the cultural material. In particular, it is about names like Mouloud Feraoun, Assia

Djebbar, Rachid Boudjedraa and others. In other words, what French writers see dark, unfamiliar and strange in Algeria –as a country, nation, culture, language and religion- is rather unnoticed or of least importance for national writers. May be for the latter there are more important issues to depict in writing. Assia Djebbar, for instance, represents an example of a feminist writer writing about women's experiences in Algeria and the oppressive images a woman is seen through. She is too concerned with cultural differences and issues of identity but she depicts the latter with less tension and alienation as it is the case of other writers like Bouaroui and Sebbar. In other words, images of estrangement to the Algerian culture are more felt with writers descending from two different belongings to whom exile, uprooting and, most importantly, cultural markedess, imposed struggle and conflicts.

To conceptualise Algerian writer's estrangement of cultural material, texts writing on the same object from different writers are contrasted in terms of how and why the same cultural material is seen differently, that is, how and why in one text the estranged object is just a basic word like any other word and in another text it is rather estranged ad defamiliarized. The objects of study include description of Algeria, a description of traditional objects, description of local ceremonies, description of villages and other spaces. The aim throughout is to contrast between texts of different enculturations in terms of estrangement of local spaces, estrangement of cultural habits, estrangement of groupings. The corpus comprises extracts from Assia Djebar, Mouloud Feraoun, Leila Sebbar and Nina Bouraoui.

4. Estrangement of Local Spaces

Living within two different cultures develops in the writer preferences to spaces instead of others, especially that the notion of space is a pure cultural property belonging to tradition more than physical space. When Raspail talked about Algeria in her novel "*La Chaouia D'Auvergne*", she described it with estrangement and full ignorance in terms of a physical space:

Ah! Poor young child, I will tell you what I heard: it seems yes. It is called Algeria; it is in North Africa, as they said! Me, you know, I m not so educated to tell you much. You should know it better than me. You have to ask your teacher to show it to you in the map of geography! But sure in Africa it must be very hot (…..) (p.7).

Liliane Raspail is an Algerian writer lived in the colonial period and supported the Algerian independence. Born of an Algerian father and a French mother in Batna, East of Algeria, Raspail narrates the colonial period. She is like several writers settling in the intersection of two cultures. The very beginning of her novel is an estrangement of a space that other Algerian writers may not approach with the same estrangement device. "It is called Algeria; it is in North Africa, as they said!", as if Algeria is no more than an

insignificant village somewhere in the world. And to learn about it, "You have to ask your teacher to show it to you on the map of geography!" the device used in the description of Algeria is more than defamiliarization; it is ignorance and estrangement as Algeria is not to put in a lost angle as the writer did.

A counter text describing a local space in Mouloud Feraoun's novel Days of Kabylia (1954) is an example of description of a local space free from defamiliarization and estrangement:

Those who return and say bad things on it, do it a bit in a fit of pique. They want it to be horrible, and, without doubt, it (village) understands them since they return from far, after a long absence, the head is still stored with nice images. In the inside, they like it a lot, whatsoever they say. They always finish by seeing it as it is and finding its charms, but, at this moment, they identify to it (p.11-12).

Days of Kabylia is full of images describing one of the Algerian places, Kabylia with images of peace in a rural society including description of markets, mosque, public place "Djemaâ", ways of lives, and traditional practices. Mouloud Feraoun is a native Algerian writer known for his famous novel "The Poor Man's Son" (Le fils du Pauvre). In Days of Kabylia, Feraoun describes his village in a special way starting with an estrangement which can be felt by visitors of the village to the feeling of waning and appreciation that the local inhabitants feel towards the village after return from beautiful places but the charm of the village is felt though. The description of the village is an estrangement of the estranged : Feraoun's description of the village is in itself dual as it raises at the beginning a quality seen as such by its returning inhabitants and then reminds the latter of its singular charm which is seen as beautiful and special to these particular inhabitants and not others. The second quality estranges the first one. The text of Feraoun is a counter text to Raspail's in the way how an ordinary space is described and seen. Both texts occur with the introduction and are first descriptions of a space. In these narratives, there is a kind of resistance to something that is in essence a lived conflict of wanting things to have been done differently. Writers with double culture cannot act away from this intersection and whatsoever is his enculturation to the other's culture, he/she is still in tied relation to one of his/her culture.

5. Estrangement of Cultural Habits

What is natural, by means of culture, in a given society can be seen rather strange by others for the differences in behaviours associated with cultures. Estrangement of cultural habits is recurrent in French Algerian writers who have grow up in Algeria. The latter, like any other North African country, is marked by the traditional culture whereby cultural habits grow up as a defining feature of the whole society despite its interlocal differences.

When Leila Sebbar talks about women's way of veiling, she shows a big estrangement. She presents a picture of a woman unusual to the reader who may cast it upon what he/she knows and find it, therefore, defamiliar:

Women do not unveil when they sit in the chair near to the desk. They show their faces without removing the veil (…). They all wear bracelets which jingle when they shake their hands. They do a lot of gestures and speak most of time. My father let them speak as much as they want (p.30).

Sebbar seems unsatisfied with some cultural habits in her father's culture. She describes women's veils by estranging both the veil and the way it is worn. She even mocks of women's behaviour when she says they show their faces without removing the veil. By moving a lot, the face becomes visible. Sebbar does not describe the cloth, but brings an image which is not clear. The knower of the Algerian society of the 50's and 60's can recognize that women wore "El Hayik[1]", which is part of the Maghreb's heritage. The reader of Sebbar's text may find it contradictory the fact of showing the face without moving the veil. But the knower of the tradition of wearing "Laa'jar" which wore with El Hayik", understands that when talking and moving, parts of the face can be visible. In fact, Sebbar knows "Laa'jar" and "El Hayik" but estranges them with her descriptions. The above estrangements to cultural habits developed as such due to living enclosed in the colonial era. Assia Djebbar, with similar themes, does not see the clothes of that period from such a closed perspective as Sebbar:

He went very early to uncle haircutter. He wore his ceremony suit, the Turkish baggy trousers, silk waistcoat embroidered with golden thread, jacket of feast days, his red fez wrapped in a white linen turban on the head, which made him majestic, his beard and mustache combed closely (p.47).

In the above text, Djebar describes an Algerian man living in the colonial period. At that time (50s) old men, like women, had special cloths. Unlike young men in their way of dressing, Oldies in important events wore traditional clothes which have different origins including Amazigh, ottomans and Andalous. They are considered as traditional cloths because even in the colonial period, they were worn occasionally and by oldies. These cloths are as important as it is the case of a black trouser and white shirt in a European ceremony. Djebar does not have the estrangement of the cultural practices that she rather appreciates when she says "which made him majestic".

Another image of estrangement of cultural habits is seen this time with Sebbar (2010) when she talks about the "khol" or eyeliner:

Some are tattooed, others not. They have eyes darkened by khol. We don't see their hair under the scarf tied to the head. (p.30)

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1 See the following link for more information about « El Hayik » : http://www.daraziza.com/hayek/histoire.html

The same make-up is described by Sebbar as rather obscuring the eyes of women. A counter text describing khol is seen in the following text by Djebar (2003):

Passers with white veil made with satin and silk, those eyes blackened with khol stare at you, over the veil stiffened on of the nose. (p.54)

We have two adjectives which seem synonymous: "blackened" and "darkened". Sebbar uses the word "darkened" which may seem from a first reading as describing the eyes. But the writer does not say dark eyes, but instead "darkened" by khol. She means the circle draw around the eye and not the eye itself as dark. It is a demamiliarised picture of woman putting khol. She wants rather to say that the way they put khol renders them dark. Djebar, by contrast, give the image as it is in its real use: "eyes blackened with khol" khol is black and colours eyes with this color. Djebar does not estrange khol as presents the image as it is. The two adjectives are different in the value given to khol. Black is the color black while dark is lacking light and tending towards black. It means dark is more than black in value. Djebar says blackened and gives quite a physical description to the make-up. As similar to saying "blackened with eyeliner". Sebbar, by contrast, add a second negative value to black which is dark. She aimed at estranging "khol" that the eyes of those women are rather dark and not necessarily beautiful as they think themselves.

6. Estrangement of Grouping

Arab societies, like Chinese and other communities in Asia, live in groups and celebrate the important events together even the simplest ones like simple dinner. This habit is purely cultural descending from the common sense of "grouping" which is central in the Arab thought and culture. Images of grouping with family, friends and even far relatives leave in people special senses and feelings. Sebbar (2010) estranges grouping by saying:

The mother of my father, her daughters who live with her surround us, kiss us, speak to us….We reply while we are eating. They are gorging us. They say in their language: "eat, my daughter, eat" (p.18).

A countertext, quite under the same theme of grouping, seems rather appreciated in the text of Djebar (2003) "The disappearance of the French Language". Djebar describes her main character "Berkan" eating with his friends:

We eat in noise, but with the pleasure of inhaling the sea air; (p.60).

Despite their immobility in terms of relax and comfort, grouping remains memorialized in one's mind. The estrangement is very explicit in Sebbar's text: "The mother of my father, her daughters who live with her surround us". In the Arab tradition, the big family is tied and one can know all his family members even if it is a large family. The same picture may lack in Sebbar's

French culture where families are more detached. She found grouping something defamiliar. For example, asking someone to eat in a lunch or a dinner with his/her family is a cultural habit used especially by old people as a sign of generosity and welcoming guests. It is a kind of generosity used when eating and aims at giving importance to people. After a long estrangement, Sebbar later in the same paragraph recognises this aspect when she says:"They nourish us with frenzy, a motherhood joy" (p.19).

A similar text of estrangement of grouping is seen in Bouraoui's description of her father's family to the extent that the text itself sounds strange to the reader who may feel a kind of exaggeration:

I don't believe my family so numerous, nieces, aunts, cousins, great-aunts, smaller aunts, mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, dressers, makeup, musicians, eaters, travelers , mourners, all women palette is there, from the west, north and south of Algiers was held in my honor (Bouraoui, p.25).

Bouraoui estranges the presence of all the invited members of her family. She even says "all women palette is there". She even says they come from places very far from the center of Algiers: "from the west, north and south of Algiers". In other words, she estranges their coming and their grouping in her ceremony. Like Sebbar, she lacks this image in her French culture. Grouping is rather usual in the Arabic culture. During the colonial period, most families in Algiers celebrate marriages by inviting all family members, including cousins and even very far relatives.

7. Conclusion

Cultures' interaction is clearly seen in literary representation as writers reveal not only cultural conflicts, but also their view of cultures' interaction. It has been shown throughout the comparison of different texts depicting Algerian writers' enculturation that the sense of estrangement of cultural practices is frequent in those writers split between the Algerian and French cultures by means of migration or parental belonging. The estrangement of cultural practices results in a secondary view to the Algerian culture considered and interpreted in terms of alienation and resistance to enculturation. This has been seen through a textual contrast between texts written on cultural practices characterising the Algerian society. There are texts which estrange some cultural practices through defamiliaring cultural objects and bringing them in a strange context which is unusual and different from the real occurrence of the estranged object, that is, different from the sociocultural context of the cultural object. This has been shown in cultural objects such as ways of dressing, eating and grouping. Writers forgo the natural aspect of cultural images and render them overloaded with estranged images. For example, grouping is seen appreciated by the native writer while

strange and abnormal to writers on the counter side because they look at it from a secondary perspective rather than a simple cultural practice.

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A Discordant Harmony – A Critical Evaluation of the Queer Theory from an Indian Perspective

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Abstract

Queerness or rather queer sexuality in India has always been the favourite child of debate and discussions. Queer identity in India has always suffered through the dilemma of to be or not to be. As Dasgupta puts it, "Identities are complicated to begin with and become more complicated when relating them to nation and sexuality". Given the diversity of India in terms of not only culture but ethnicity as well, Indian sexual identities are the product of "Mulipicitous effects and perceptions of tradition, modernity, colonization and globalization" (Dasgupta, 2011) that are more often in conflict with each other than in a harmonious synthesis. The main argument of this paper is to trace a lineage of queerness in India both in terms of its representation in literature by analyzing The Editor (1893) and The Housewife (1891) by Rabindranath Tagore; Lihaaf (1941) by Ismat Chugtai; and R. Raja Rao's The Boyfriend (2003), and how it prevailed in reality or the societal perception of the same. Providing a literature review by building a bridge in between the ancient and the contemporary India, the paper attempts to trace the missing links of when and how queerness went behind the curtains only to reappear in front of a more complicated, confused and probably a more rigid audience.

Keywords: Queer, LGBT, gendered-behavior, mainstream, subaltern, cross-dressing, Hindu Mythology, Judith Butler, Tagore.

Introduction

Unlike the West, the Hindu society does not have the concept of 'sexual orientation' that classifies gender on the basis of who they desire to be. However, there is a strong, ancient concept of third gender, which is for individuals who have strong elements of both male and female in them. According to Sanskrit texts such as the Narada-smriti, Sushruta Samhita, etc., this third sex or gender includes people who have conventionally been called

homosexuals, bisexuals, transgender people and intersex people (LGBTI). Third genders are described in ancient Vedic texts as males who have a female nature—referring to as homosexual men or feminine-gendered males. The gender/sexual role of third genders has, for long, been predominantly associated with receiving penetration from men, just like the gender/ sexual role of manhood has been to penetrate men, women or third genders. However, the Kama Sutra, by Vatsyana, clearly describes third-gender men assuming both masculine and feminine identities as well as both receptive and dominant sexual roles.

Over the years, the representation of queerness in Indian literary texts has acquired a space of its own; a "unique" space. By "uniqueness" it is desired to draw the attention towards the peripheral status that has been tagged with queerness; it is something that lies beyond the already drawn, easily understandable, universally acknowledged and intellectually (or morally) approved territory of the society.

It is a widely known fact that gender fluidity and homosexuality has always been there in the Indian subcontinent. Be it mythology, or Kamasutra or several folkloric tales germinated from different regions, India has a long association with queerness. Indian mythology has dealt with the subject as an indispensable part of life cycle where role playing or sex-change is a common, regular and acceptable notion.

The region, which is now known as South Asia, despite its cultural, linguistic, and literary differences, has enough common elements within them to be discussed as single nation. It is quite similar to the shared history of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which has ample common elements to be discussed as the history of a single nation. Hence, while analyzing the texts the paper will refer to them as Indian only, though they may presently fall in the geographical boundaries of other nations and cultures. This paper further attempts to dispel the myth that alternative sexual alienation is purely a western idea and issues of 'erotic justice' is alien to Indian culture (Kumar, 2014). Analysis of texts, such as, Rabindranath Tagore's The Editor (1893) and Housewife (1891), Lihaaf by Ismat Chugtai (1941), and Raja Rao's The Boyfriend (2003), forms an integral part of this paper. The paper also attempts to trace the lineage between the existence of 'queer'-ness in the Indian subcontinent by referring to not only literary texts, but mythological tales, cultural and religious practices and the societal perception as well. It attempts to problematize the statement that *"simultaneously marginalized by nation-state & mainstream cultural discourse, the figure of the dissident sexual citizen in India has been, by and large, written out of history and visibility"*(Choudhuri, 2009). It also raises the question in the conclusion that had queerness been always there and an integral part of the Indian culture, how come they are mere voiceless creatures in the present times. The paper also

highlights some of the fundamental challenges faced by the queer community (as also emphasized upon through Rao's The Boyfriend), and how measures are being taken to acknowledge the voices, yet how it can never be enough.

Queerness in India

A critical moment of rupture in Indian queer sexuality occurred with the release of Deepa Mehta's film Fire in 1996. In the film Sita, remarks to her lover Radha, *'There is no word in our language to describe what we are or what we feel for each other.'*(Dasgupta, 2011)

To present India with a concrete historical background would be a challenging and equally complex task. India has been a melting pot of several diversified cultures that have invaded the country over time and have some strong cultural imprints left on the land. From the earliest Vedic culture up to the colonial era, India has been a witness to a multitude of laws and changing attitudes. Similarly, it is difficult to state the literature of India as one single literature as it carries several different literatures within its womb. But it is equally interesting to discover the array of examples of homoerotic love and relationships in the vast canvas of Indian literature (starting from the ancient texts to the contemporary texts in diversified regional languages).

As pointed out by Ruth Vanitha, "*while same-sex desire was not uniformly valorized or celebrated in pre-colonial India, homosexuality rarely called for punitive measures before the British instituted the Antisodomy Law in 1861*"(Kidwai, Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History, 2001). What exactly is 'homosexual' or what all leads to 'homophobia' in India is something that is difficult to trace. There exist rituals such as that of *aravani*, which has its roots in pre-colonial India, and is quite similar to the Vaishnava tradition in Bengal that involves, and approves of, adoration of a male deity by a male devotee (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu). In ancient and medieval India, Krishna and Arjun from the great epic Mahabharata were often referred to as 'two Krishnas' (Kidwai, Same Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature, 2000), indicating a bond of friendship that goes beyond marriage and procreation, and is socially accepted and admired as well. The Mahabharata, the great Indian epic, has several other examples of same-sex attachments that are not only approved of but are admired by the society. Further, in order to avoid contradiction with the established gendered norms, Indian literature also displays examples where a trope is utilized for legitimizing the same-sex relationships. For instance, in Bengali literature, the Krittivas Ramayana, attributes the birth of Bhagirath to the sexual union of two females, through the divine sanction of the god Sankara. Here, the same-sex union is approved of and is legitimized, but only through divine intervention. The 'divine intervention' acts as a 'trope' that is used to legitimize something which otherwise could not be socially accepted.

Another ‘trope’ is the ‘sex-change’ that happens many a times in the Indian mythological tales. The gender-fluidity also brings about the gender-ambiguity, and therefore, a deity might appear in any form – male or female or even a transgender, and also in a non-human form. Further, in the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu takes the form of the enchantress, Mohini, in order to trick the demons into giving up Amrita, the elixir of life. Shiva later becomes attracted to Mohini and spills his semen on the rocks which turn into gold. Vishnu’s courtship with Siva results in the birth of Ayappa, who is born of the sexual union of two men. But this instance falls in the territory of divinity, and hence, is approved of. Pattanaik who writes that rather than Mohini becoming pregnant, Ayyappa sprang from Shiva's semen, which he ejaculated upon embracing Mohini. In another version, the Pandyan king Rajasekhara of Pantalam adopts the baby. In this version, Ayyappa is referred to as ayoni jata, "not born from a vagina", and later Hariharaputra, "the son of Vishnu and Shiva", and grows up to be a great hero.

Religious-cultural practices, thus, have roots deep within the Indian history, were approved of and tolerated in pre-colonial India, and have survived the defamation brought about by the British. But what is unfortunate today is that these subaltern identities have merely survived and not ‘lived’ or ‘allowed to live’. The transgender community of Hijras in India is one such subaltern identity who has survived everything over the many leaps and bounds of time, yet, today stand at the periphery of the societal territory. Hijras are castrated men who do not have a vagina constructed, and live by the means of prostitution, extortion and other forms of social parasitism (Choudhuri, 2009). They reside outside of the mainstream culture, yet are ‘normalized’, i.e., they are present in quite a number; the acknowledgement of their existence is unavoidable, yet their existence and their existential rights go unnoticed and unacknowledged. Their position in the society is counterbalanced with the worship of Bahuchara Mata, one of the many incarnations of Mother Goddess worshipped across India, and thus, their existence is sanctioned, but ‘acceptance’ within the territorial boundaries of the society still remains in question.

History of QueerIdentity and Hindu Mythology

Alan Danielou says that “*The hermaphrodite, the homosexuals and the transvestites have a symbolic value and are considered privileged beings, images of the Ardhanarishvara*”(Danielou, 1984). Not only gender, but also sexuality has certain hegemonic normative connotations set out within society. This notion of hegemonic sexuality as well as the way in which the body incorporates and expresses hegemonic gender and sexuality is presented by gender theorist Judith Butler (Butler, Bodies that Matter, 1993). Nachtragtlichkeit describes the ways in which an infantile experience that is

either incomprehensible or traumatic is nonetheless somehow retained by memory unconsciously and reactivated at a later time in a different context. The notion comes from an early stage in Freud's speculations and was used to explain the mechanism of hysteria, in which a traumatic early experience is reactivated in terms of a less traumatic later provocation. Signification involves the constant reactivation of significant material in new and unpredictable contexts, which thus produces new significance and new meanings. In Sophocles' drama the unfolding of the tragedy involves Oedipus' gradual discovery of his own guilt. This in Freud's explanation is: "*the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father*" (Strachey), 2010 (1955)). Freud argues that the power of this artwork lies in the ability of the poet to force us into a transferred recognition of what he calls "our own inner minds." Those same impulses (to patricide and incest with the mother) are still lurking yet "suppressed" within all of us. Oedipus' unconscious guilt stands figuratively for our own unconscious guilt. "Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scene of our childhood" (Strachey), 2010 (1955)). Lacan's version of the triangulated Oedipus complex (mother—child—father) combines Freud's theory with structural linguistics, developed as we have seen particularly from the theories of Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Jakobson. Symbolization thus acts as an introduction to the world that is at the same time an introduction to the concept of "lack". The introduction of a meaningful element disrupts the perfect unity of the imaginary relation, which only has the sense of a perfect unity by virtue of the meaningful element that excludes perfection. The experience of lack is therefore intrinsic to human existence. This "lack" manifests itself not only as "penis envy" in females but in the males, a subconscious desire to adopt the elaborate body of the female and its physicality. This new queer identity potentially subverts stable distinctions between identification and desire and also by extension, the secure and heavily defended polarities of masculine and feminine subjectivity.

The desire to transcend the gender typification imposed by society has always been present throughout the ages. Goldman writes of transsexualism in Hindu literature: "Few cultures have accorded this phenomenon so prominent a place in the realms of mythology and religion as has that of traditional India." Queer manifestations of sexuality, though repressed socially, squeeze their way into the myths, legends and lore of the land. Many deities in Hinduism and Indian mythology are represented as both male and female at different times and in different incarnations or may manifest with characteristics of both genders at once such as the Ardhanarishvara (The Lord whose half is a woman) created by the merging of the god Shiva and his

consort Parvati or the hermaphroditic Laxmi-Narayan. This form of Shiva represents "the totality that lies beyond duality" and is associated with communication between men and women or between beauty and physical prowess. Changes of sex and cross- dressing also occur in myths about non divine figures. One such figure is Shikhandi, a character in the Mahabharat. During the Kurukshetra war, Bhishma recognized him as Amba reborn and refused to fight "a woman". Accordingly, Arjuna hid behind Shikhandi in order to defeat the almost invincible Bhishma. In the Javanese telling, Shikhandi never becomes a man but is a woman equal to a man and is the wife of Arjun. Arjun himself is an example of gender variance. When he refused her amorous advances, the nymph Urvasi cursed him that he would become a "kliba", a member of the third gender. Arjun took the name Brihannala and dressed in women's clothes and taught the arts of music, singing and dancing to the princess Uttara and her female attendees of the city ruled by king Virata. The birth of Ayappa in Hindu mythology, refers to the "completeness" of an androgynous identity that has always been looked upon as one of symbolic perfection from classical antiquity.

According to Tamil versions of the Mahabharata, the god Krishna – an incarnation of Vishnu – also took the form of Mohini and married Aravan. This was in order to give Aravan the chance to experience love before his death, as he had volunteered to be sacrificed. Krishna remained in mourning in the Mohini form for some time after Aravan's death. This marriage and death of Aravan are commemorated annually in a rite known as Thali, during which Hijra (Indian "third gender") take on the role of Krishna-Mohini and "marry" Aravan in a mass-wedding, followed by an 18-day festival. The festival ends with a ritual burial of Aravan, while the Hirjas mourn in Tamil style: by beating their chests in ritual dances, breaking their bangles and changing into white mourning clothes

The story of Ila, a king cursed by Shiva and Parvati to be a man one month and a woman the next, appears in several traditional Hindu texts. After changing sex, Ila loses the memory of being the other gender. During one such period, Ila marries Budha (the god of the planet Mercury). Although Budha knows of Ila's alternating gender, he doesn't enlighten the 'male' Ila, who remains unaware of his life as a woman. The two live together as man and wife only when Ila is female. In the Ramayana version, Ila bears Budha a son, although in the Mahabharata Ila is called both mother and father of the child. After this birth the curse is lifted and Ila is totally changed into a man who goes on to father several children with his wife. Numerous deities have been considered patrons of third-sex or homoerotically-inclined people. This patronage can originate in mythological stories about the deity, or from religious practices and rituals. For example, Conner and Sparks argue that the goddess of fire, love and sexuality, Arani, has been linked to lesbian eroticism

via rituals in her honor: for example two pieces of wood perceived as feminine, called the adhararani and utararani, are rubbed together, simulating a spiritual lesbian interaction.

Bahuchara Mata is a patron goddess of the Hirja. In popular iconography she is often shown riding a rooster and carrying a sword, trident and a book. Various stories link Bahuchara to castration or other changes in physical sexual characteristics, sometimes as the result of her aiming curses against men. Bahuchara is believed to have originated as a mortal woman who became martyred. In one story, Bahuchara is attacked by a bandit who attempts to rape her, but she takes his sword, cuts off her breasts and dies. In another story, Bahuchara curses her husband when she catches him sneaking to the woods to engage in homoerotic behavior, causing his genitals to fall off and forcing him to dress as a woman.

Stories also link Bahuchara to gender variance after she becomes divine. One myth concerns a king who prayed to Bahuchara for a son. Bahuchara complied, but the prince grew up to be impotent. One night Bahuchara appeared to the prince in a dream and ordered him to cut off his genitals, wear women's clothes and become her servant. Bahuchara is believed to continue to identify impotent men and command them to do the same. If they refuse, she punishes them: for their next seven incarnations they will be impotent. This myth is the origin of the cult of Bahuchara Mata, whose devotees are required to self-castrate and remain celibate.

Samba, the son of Krishna, is also a patron of eunuchs, transgender people and homoeroticism. Samba dresses in women's clothes to mock and trick people, and so that he can more easily enter the company of women and seduce them. In the Mausala Purana, Samba, dressed as woman, is cursed after being questioned about "her" supposed pregnancy. As a result of the curse, Samba, although remaining male, gives birth to an iron pestle and mortar.

Medieval Hindu temples such as those at Khajuraho depict sexual acts in sculptures on the external walls. Some of these scenes involve same-sex sexuality, for instance, a woman caressing another women engaged in intercourse with women, man receiving fellatio from another man etc. have been depicted therein.Further, the Rajarani Tempe in Bhuvaneshwar, Odisha, depicts a sculpture of two women engaged in oral sex. Examples such as these are scattered everywhere in the Indian subcontinent, evidently pointing towards the existence of same-sex relationships since the ancient eras itself.

Queer Identity and its Impact on Literature

Queer identity in the sphere of Ancient Indian Literature incorporates Hindu philosophy that bears the concept of a third sex or third gender (tritiya-prakriti – literally, "third nature"). This category includes a wide range of people with mixed male and female natures such as effeminate males,

masculine females, transgender people, transsexual people, the intersexed, androgynes, and so on. However, the original nature of third-gender has nothing to do with sexual orientation as is reported by the sects of modern LGBT and contemporary west. Third-genders have no connection with sex among men (which is universal). Third-genders are of a different gender from males and females because they have a female inside regardless of who they are sexually attracted to. Participation in religious ceremonies, especially as cross-dressing dancers and devotees of certain temple gods/goddesses, is considered auspicious in traditional Hinduism. Some Hindus believe that third-sex people have special powers allowing them to bless or curse others. In the Hindu narrative tradition, stories of gods and mortals changing gender occur. Sometimes they also engage in heterosexual activities as different reincarnated genders. Homosexual and transgender Hindus commonly identify with and worship the various Hindu deities connected with gender diversity such as Ardhanarisvara (the androgynous form of Shiva and his consort Parvati), Aravan (a hero whom the god Krishna married after becoming a woman), Harihara (an incarnation of Shiva and Vishnu combined), Bahuchara Mata (a goddess connected with transsexuality and eunuchism), Gadadhara (an incarnation of Radha in male form), Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (an incarnation of Radha and Krishna combined), Chandi-Chamunda (twin warrior goddesses), Bhagavati-devi (a Hindu goddess associated with cross-dressing), Gangamma (a goddess connected with cross-dressing and disguises) and the goddess Yellamma. There are also specific festivals connected to the worship of these deities, some of which are famous in India for their cross-dressing devotees. These festivals include the Aravan Festival of Koovagam, the Bahuchara Mata Festivals of Gujarat and the Yellamma Festivals of Karnataka, among others. Deities displaying gender variance include Mohini, the female avatar of the god Vishnu and Vaikuntha Kamalaja, the androgynous form of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi.

LBGT interpretations are also drawn in the legends of birth of the deities Ayyappa (a god born from the union of Shiva and Mohini), Bhagiratha (an Indian king born of two female parents) and Kartikeya (where the fire-god Agni "swallows" the seed of Shiva after disturbing his coitus with his consort Parvati). Some homosexual Hindus also worship the gods Mitra and Varuna, who are associated with two lunar phases and same-sex relations in ancient Brahmana texts.

Gender variance is also observed in heroes in Hindu scriptures. The Hindu epic Mahabharata narrates that the hero Arjuna takes a vow to live as a member of the third sex for a year as the result of a curse he is compelled to honor. Ila, a king from Hindu narratives, is also known for his/her gender changes.

Some versions of the Krittivasa Ramayana, the most popular Bengali text on the pastimes of Ramachandra (an incarnation of Vishnu), relate a story of two queens who conceived a child together. When the king of the Sun Dynasty, Maharaja Dilipa, died, the demigods become concerned that he did not have a son to continue his line. Shiva therefore appeared before the king's two widowed queens and commanded them, "You two make love together and by my blessings you will bear a beautiful son." The two wives, with great affection for each other, executed Shiva's order until one of them conceived a child. The sage Astavakra accordingly named the child "Bhagiratha" – he who was born from two vulvas. Bhagiratha later became a king and is credited with bringing the river Ganges down to earth through his austerities.

Hindus have many sacred texts and different communities give special importance to different texts. Even more so than in other religions, Hindus also foster disparate interpretations of the meaning of various texts. The Vedas, which form the foundation of Hinduism for many, do not refer explicitly to homosexuality, but Rigveda says regarding Samsara that Vikruti Evam Prakriti (perversity/diversity is what nature is all about, or, what seems un-natural is also natural), which some scholars believe recognizes the cyclical constancy of homosexual/transsexual dimensions of human life, like all forms of universal diversities. People of a third gender (tritiya-prakriti), not fully men nor women, are mentioned here and there throughout Hindu texts such as the Puranas but are not specifically defined. In general they are portrayed as effeminate men, often cowardly, and with no desire for women. Modern readers often draw parallels between these and modern stereotypes of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sexual identities.

Historians Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, in their pioneering book, Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History, for the first time compiled extracts from Indian texts, from ancient to modern times, including many Hindu texts, translated from 15 Indian languages. In their accompanying analytical essays, they also demonstrated that Hindu texts have discussed and debated same-sex desire from the earliest times, in tones ranging from critical to non-judgmental to playful and celebratory.

Historian Devdutt Pattanaik summarizes the place of homosexuality in Hindu literature as follows: "though not part of the mainstream, its existence was acknowledged but not approved." Other Indologists assert that homosexuality was not approved for brahmanas or the twice-born but accepted among other castes.

In his book, Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex, Vaishnava monk Amara Das Wilhelm demonstrates how ancient expressions of Hinduism accommodated homosexual and transgender persons much more positively than we see in India today: "Early Vedic teachings stressed responsible family

life and asceticism but also tolerated different types of sexualities within general society."

Other significant texts include: The Mahanirvana Tantra that exclude the third-gendered from the right of inheritance, although establishing they have the right to be financially supported by their family. The Kama Sutra is an ancient text dealing with kama or desire (of all kinds), which in Hindu thought is one of the four normative and spiritual goals of life. The Kama Sutra is the earliest extant and most important work in the Kama Shastra tradition of Sanskrit literature. It was compiled by the philosopher Vatsyayana around the 4th century, from earlier texts, and describes homosexual practices in several places, as well as a range of sex/gender 'types'. The author acknowledges that these relations also involve love and a bond of trust.

The author describes techniques by which masculine and feminine types of the third sex (tritiya-prakriti), as well as women, perform fellatio. The Second Part, Ninth Chapter of Kama Sutra specifically describes two kinds of men that we would recognize today as masculine- and feminine-type homosexuals but which are mentioned in older, Victorian British translations as simply "eunuchs." The chapter describes their appearances – feminine types dressed up as women whereas masculine types maintained muscular physiques and grew small beards, moustaches, etc. – and their various professions as masseurs, barbers and prostitutes are all described. Such homosexual men were also known to marry, according to the Kama Sutra: "There are also third-sex citizens, sometimes greatly attached to one another and with complete faith in one another, who get married together." (Vatsyayana, Kama Sutra, 2.9.36, 2010). In the Jayamangala of Yashodhara, an important twelfth-century commentary on the Kama Sutra, it is also stated: "Citizens with this kind of homosexual inclination, who renounce women and can do without them willingly because they love one another, get married together, bound by a deep and trusting friendship." After describing fellatio as performed between men of the third sex, the Sutra then mentions the practice as an act between men and women, wherein the homosexuals acts are scorned, especially for brahmanas. (Vatsyayana, Kama Sutra, 2.9.37, 2010)

The Kama Sutra also refers to svairini, who are "independent women who frequent their own kind or others" (Vatsyayana, Kama Sutra, 2.8.26, 2010) — or, in another passage: "the liberated woman, or svairini, is one who refuses a husband and has relations in her own home or in other houses" (6.6.50). In a famous commentary on the Kama Sutra from the 12th century, Jayamangala, explains: "A woman known for her independence, with no sexual bars, and acting as she wishes, is called svairini. She makes love with her own kind. She strokes her partner at the point of union, which she kisses" (Vatsyayana, Films for Liberation, 2014). The various practices of lesbians are described in detail within the Second Part, Eighth Chapter of the Kama Sutra.

There are other ancient Hindu/Sanskrit texts that refer to homosexuality. The Sushruta Samhita, for example, a highly respected Hindu medical text dating back to at least 600 B.C., mentions two different types of homosexual men (kumbhika – men who take the passive role in anal sex; and asekya – men who devour the semen of other men) as well as transgender people (sandha – men with the qualities, behavior and speech of women). It also states that men who behave like women, or women who behave like men, are determined as such at the time of their conception in the womb. The Sushruta Samhita also mentions the possibility of two women uniting and becoming pregnant as a result of the mingling of their sexual fluids. It states that the child born of such a union will be "boneless." Such a birth is indeed described in the Krittivasa Ramayana of Bengal.

Other texts list the various types of men who are impotent with women (known in Sanskrit as sandha, kliba, napumsaka, and panda). The Sabda-kalpa-druma Sanskrit-Sanskrit dictionary, for instance, lists twenty types, as does the Kamatantra and Smriti-Ratnavali of Vacaspati (14th century). The Narada Smriti similarly lists fourteen different types. Included among the lists are transgender people (sandha), intersex people (nisarga), and three different types of homosexual men (mukhebhaga, kumbhika and asekya). Such texts demonstrate that third-sex terms like sandha and napumsaka actually refer to many different types of "men who are impotent with women," and that simplistic definitions such as "eunuch" or "neuter" may not always be accurate and in some cases totally incorrect. In his article Homosexuality and Hinduism, Arvind Sharma expresses his doubt over the common English translation of words like kliba into "eunuch" as follows: "The limited practice of castration in India raises another point significant for the rest of the discussion, namely, whether rendering a word such as "kliba" as "eunuch" regularly is correct..." (Sharma A. , 1993).

The Arthashastra of Kautilya represents the principle text of secular law and illustrates the attitude of the judiciary towards sexual matters. Heterosexual vaginal sex is proposed as the norm by this text and legal issues arising from deviation there from are punishable by fines and in extreme cases by capital punishment. Homosexual acts are cited as a small offence punishable by a fine.

Sangam literature use the word ‘Pedi’ to refer to transwomen. Likewise, the famous Sangam period characters of King Koperunchozhan and Pisuranthaiyar are another example for same sex love and They are said to have not seen each other at all and yet shared love and regard for each other, so much, that they die at the same time at different places. For instance, the friendship between King Pari and poet Kabilar is shown as something more than just friendship. There are lyrical undertones suggestive of the intimate

relationship they had. But since there are no explicit representation, one can only postulate a possibility.

In the modern times, the homoerotic and so called 'queer' relationships passes through many lanes and by-lanes of ancient Indian literature, which still have impact on several of the present day festivals and rituals. The paper now arrives at a juncture where it will take up some of the significant texts of modern Indian literature (20th century and onwards) that I believe have an eternal essence of the 'queer' space in the context of present times.

The texts chosen in this section include two short stories by Tagore, Lihaaf by Chugtai, and Raja Rao's The Boyfriend. There exists numerous other texts to be discussed in the context, yet the choice of this particular set is diverse in its nature, and present vivid scenarios for the 'queer' spaces in the post-colonial India.

Rabindranath Tagore, held an iconic status in the late 19th century and 20th century and contributed significantly in shaping the literature of Bengal and India. His renown was not confined to his literary wonders only; the ideologies presented his commentaries and essays on Indian philosophy, nationalism, nature and the Indian social structure in general, widely shaped the 20th century India. One of his greatest achievements was perhaps the establishment of Vishwa Bharati University in Shantiniketan, West Bengal. He envisioned a university as a place of learning and not just a mere place of academic knowledge transfer. He envisioned such a place of learning where the geographical barriers cease to exist, where the world, the Vishwa, meets Bharat, India; and gets dissolved in a barrier free world of knowledge, learning and innovations. Yet, shattering all that Tagore envisioned about Vishwa Bharati, it is said that the university became known more for encouraging and nurturing effeminacy in its students. But it is difficult to be certain about the origin of this sentiment (Choudhuri, 2009).It could probably beits pastoral settings or its explicit encouragement of performing arts over professional disciplines that contributed towards such a sentiment about the university. For instance, filmmaker Satyajit Ray – one of the university's alumni, actually had expressed serious apprehensions about enrolling there because of this disrepute (Choudhuri, 2009). This paper, in the context, discusses how Tagore's perception of queerness was related to and also a critique of non-conformed masculinity. The paper discusses two of his other short stories, The Editor (Sampadak, 1893), and Housewife (Ginni, 1891) in the context, and also establishes the fact that Tagore presented his critique of "the way masculinity was constituted and perceived in colonial and nationalistic discourse in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century"(Choudhuri, 2009) in these stories, as also gets reflected in several of his other works such as The Divide (Byabodhan, 1891). Tagore, in a way, attempts in dismantling the universally perceived notions of gendered behavior.

One of the stories to be discussed in the context is Sompadok (The Editor), a story about a man who is compelled to enter the feminine sphere of domesticity when his wife dies leaving behind their only daughter. With the urgent need to find a means of livelihood, Tagore emphasizes on the masculinity of the profession that the protagonist chooses. Writing satirical farces with all aggression is surely a masculine activity. Being the Sampadak immediately gave him the relief from the domestic duties that he was compelled to involve in, and also made him socially visible apart from the obvious tag of being the 'man' doing the obvious duty of earning the bread and the butter instead of preparing it. The equation of writing as a job with machismo paved the way for him to attempt in elevating his sagging self-esteem by "identifying himself with an icon of hyper masculinity". The editor's fame meets with an abrupt end when the zamindar of the neighboring village sets up a rival publication, berating the fine rhetorical exercise in blunt, down-to-earth prose, consequently inviting humiliating sallies from friend (Choudhuri, 2009). The protagonist's urge to disengage himself from the private sphere and his pleasure of being associated with the outer sphere, is what becomes noteworthy in the context. It is the principal of role reversal that his relationship with his daughter works upon. Instead of the father embracing 'fatherhood', it is the daughter who embodies the maternal role in time. It is interesting to note that a man's exercise of his manhood comes into existence by oppressing two of the most historically oppressed classes: women and the economically deprived. In order to establish his manhood, he conveniently withdraws the nurture that he should have been providing to his motherless child, further establishing the notion that such as task is gendered in the society's perception (i.e., feminine) (Choudhuri, 2009).

The story starts with a clear demarcation of the public and private spaces, and more importantly, they clearly emerge as gendered spaces: the outer sphere or the world, referring exclusively to the masculine sphere of economic activity, social visibility and political agency; posited against the inner sphere or the home, referring exclusively to the feminine sphere of caregiving and nurturing: When my wife was alive I didn't give much thought to Prabha. I was more involved with her mother than with her...I would, whenever I was in the mood, romp around with her; but the moment she started to cry I would return her to her mother's arms and make a speedy escape. I never considered what care and effort was needed to bring up a child"(Tagore, 1991).

But with time, it is well established that the domestic sphere is something that could not be completely overlooked. There is gender fluidity, the ambiguousness, which emerges by the end of the story. It is this transitional fluidity of gender that the 'queer' space lies in. The father comes back to the domesticity as he loses his hold over the professional sphere. As Choudhuri

puts it "the resumption of domestic/filial duties left behind by the dead wife— gestures towards a moment that embodies a possibility of moving between gender-segregated spaces. It is this mobility that is understood as redemptive"(Choudhuri, 2009). The masculine has to take a rebound towards the feminine domestic sphere and it is within this transitional sphere that the 'queerness' - the anomalous - resides.

Tagore's critique of socially perceived masculinity gets reflected in yet another of his short stories - Housewife (Ginni). The tension between the public and private spaces are once again established with a critique of culture that has branded itself as 'pure masculinity'; it refuses and becomes violently intolerant towards anything that goes beyond the established gendered behavior that strayed beyond these specified, inflexible limits(Choudhuri, 2009).

The story is about Ashu – a shy, reticent, young schoolboy, who is victimized by his austere schoolteacher Shibanath as effeminate, passive and androgynous to the world (here, it is the entire class). Ashu's only fault is that he is caught playing house-house with his younger sister, and thus, he is brandished as guilty of sexual transgression. Moreover, the victimization is done by none other than his teacher Shibanath, who stands for the hypermasculanity, the aggressive machoism. "The "clean-shaven" Shibanath has "close-cropped", hair but flaunts his "short pigtail" (tiki)— his mark of Brahmanism— with pride" (Choudhuri, 2009). He is the epitome of the quintessential uber male setup valorized by the society, who find immense pleasure in verbally assaulting his pupils, often giving them humiliating name. In Ashu's case, it was Ginni or Housewife that was bestowed upon him by Shibanath, exposing him to a crueler environment of insults and marred reputation of manhood. There is a demarcation of spaces that can be observed in the story – the private space of Indian household is deemed as purely feminine that stands in complete contrast to "the public space of rational masculinity" (Choudhuri, 2009); and also, inferior to the latter to a great extent. But the other students in the story seems equally victimized and aware of Shibanath's cruelty; an attack on one's name is like attacking the very personality of the person; and Shibanath does exactly the same; "the students are painfully aware of Shibanath's violent erasure of their personalities" (Choudhuri, 2009). It is interesting to note that Shibanath dubs Ashu as Ginni which is a colloquial term for the word grihini, which means the mistress of the household, but actually refers to that particular part of the Griha or the house that is feminine. In other words, the feminine represents the household itself – with her own identity being suppressed within the domestic duties. Whereas, in contrast, the male counterpart of the same is grihakarta, literally translating to as the Master of the House, including the feminized part and the females within that boundary. "Shibanath's choice of the appellation ginni not

only underscores Ashu's supposed effeminacy, but also gestures at the misogynistic ordering of gender hierarchy" (Choudhuri, 2009).The story is seen by many (including Choudhuri) as a response by Tagore to his liberal yet rigid upbringing in the Thakurbari. As unorthodox as Tagores about gendered behavior, it was surprising to witness the emphasis on the 'masculine' dimension of education of the male adolescents of the prestigious Thakurbari. Consequently, young Robi (Tagore) was well versed with the sport of wrestling - considered essentially a masculine sport, could swim the Padma (river) on the Tagore estates and walk 25 miles in the hills at a stretch – all signs that could be read as the showcasing of masculine aggression. In the story, Ashu, as stated by the narrator (his classmate), could be never seen playing with other boys. He was always this boy with a demurred personality who could only "sit with his legs and the end of his dhoti dangling down from the bench, while all the boys stared at him" (Tagore, 1991)as Shibanath, the avatar of Yama himself, hurled nonsensical ridicule in all his masculine aggression. This sudden exposure of his private self completely alienates Ashu from his peers and instantly marks him as the 'other' pushing him towards the periphery, as his peers, who share the same fate, also joins the chanting of 'Housewife! Housewife!' In the story, it is not only Ashu's guilt that his fate cruelly plays upon, but he is instantly brandished as the 'queer' – the odd one out, who cannot stand up to the culturally marked and universally acknowledged ideal of hypermasculanity. It is quite similar to the victimization of the androgynous males, who find no voice in this socially structured "'pure' model of masculinity purged of the every trace of the feminine" (Choudhuri, 2009).

Another author without whom this discussion remains incomplete is Ismat Chugtai. Published in 1942, Chugtai's most celebrated story, Lihaaf, presented the queer love like no other and also, garnered controversy like no other. Published in an Urdu literary journal Adab-i-Latif, Lihaaf was leveled with the charges of obscenity and Chugtai was summoned by Lahore court in 1944. Accused of blasphemy and promoting immorality, Chugtai chose to contest the charge instead of apologizing for his literary creation, and even went on to win the case. Lihaaf is the story of same-sex, i.e., lesbian relationship, between two women, narrated by a pubescent girl. It is said that the story is inspired by one of her own childhood encounters where she could see what was happening but was unable to grasp the meaning of it; the same has been presented by the narrator of the story, who sees what goes on within the lihaaf (the quilt) but is yet to fully grasp the meaning of why, how and what exactly it means. The story revolves around Begum Jaan, the aristocratic friend of the narrator's mother and her relationship with her maid and masseuse Rabbo. Neglected by her husband, who takes special fondness in pursuing young boys, and confined to the female quarters, i.e., zenana, of the

household, the only confidant that Begum Jaam finds herself with is Rabbo. It is not only her expression that is restricted, but her sexuality as well; it is more like her existence is confined within the four walls of zenana altogether. Stripped off of any means of expression, Begum Jaan actually discovers and further explores her liberation (especially sexual), within the four walls. The blossoming and wanders of the relationship is witnessed by the narrator, who is dumped in the household by her mother. It is interesting to note the gender roles, and the transitional fluidity that runs within the rigid gendered behavior. The narrator is put up to this household as a punishment by her mother for fighting with her brothers. She is dumped in the zenana so that she learns more of the 'feminine' behavior and will possibly learn to curb and eventually cure her tomboyishness. But instead of learning the know-how of the incarcerations and restrictions that are supposedly should be willingly embraced by a woman, she discovers the 'blasphemous' relationship between Begum Jaan and Rabbo. The relationship is witnessed, but not entirely understood, by the narrator; but the partially comprehended images of intimacy keep returning to haunt her(Choudhuri, 2009). It is further interesting to note that the zenana is represented as the feminine corner of the household which is pure and is traditionally constructed to maintain the sexual piousness and purity of the women – both married and unmarried. Here, it is a space in the marital home, which assures that no physical contact is being made with the Begum of the house, with the exception for the Nawab (the only male with access), who never bothers to visit the sphere. The sphere, though stands for everything that is feminine, including fertility, remains sterile. Instead, it transforms as a stage where Begum Jaan acts out her sexual frustrations. The zenana becomes an outlet for the baffling expression of femininity and feminine desires, and in the present context, can be deemed as the queer space. Another queer space is the lihaaf itself, which is the central symbol in the story; it is the queer space-within-a-queer space (the zenana)-in-a-space (the household as a whole). Both the zenana and the lihaaf become spaces that contain and conceals at the same time, the queer desire. The quilt is an ambivalent object that conventionally associates itself with the feeling of comfort and protection. The quilt surely becomes a space of comfort for Begum Jaan as it is within this territory that all her sexual frustrations find their voice. It also becomes a tool of protection in a way by visually obstructing the happenings within it, which could have been inappropriate for a young girl (the narrator), especially since she witnesses their heaving quilt with growing terror and fascination the narrator witnesses their heaving quilt with growing terror and fascination: "When I fell asleep Rabbo was scratching her back…At night I awoke with a start. It was pitch dark. Begum Jaan's quilt was shaking vigorously, as if an elephant was struggling beneath it" (Chughtai) (Choudhuri, 2009). There are no direct visuals of the physical intimacy that goes on between the two women, except

for the scratching of the back and the constant massage that Rabbo gives to Begum Jaan. Such instances of physical intimacy also demonstrates the need of healing that Begum Jaan's stale and stagnant marriage needs, and Rabbo, acts as nothing but a healer to this, on a metaphorical level. The massage becomes elixir, similar to the sexual acts which act as elixir to our mental and physical needs. After discussing everything about the text, it still remains kind of difficult to mark it as an example of a queer text, since "the very nature and dynamics of desire remain ambiguous and almost literally veiled" (Choudhuri, 2009). The queerness, as presented in the story, can also be read as 'situational lesbianism' where Begum Jaan is compelled to fulfill her unmet sexual needs with the immediate picks available to her. This further problematizes the issue and also sheds light to the fact that it is more about the female body and its desires/needs that has historically been oppressed and exploited, thus, also taking a feminine turn in the discussion. Essentially with Lihaaf, Chugtai remains Urdu literature's one of the most courageous and controversial writer and its most resolute iconoclast(Jena, 2013). Just as Tagore's The Editor commences with a clear demarcation of the public and private life, it is this demarcation that gets dissolved in Lihaaf. Chugati encounters the truth of woman's body, her realization and consciousness and the under currents of the sexual desire, without labeling it anything (Jena, 2013). It was the truth – the simple naked truth – devoid of any queerness or any other label, but was strong enough to stir a tempest into the socially constructed civilized world of gendered behavior.

Queer space, takes yet another depiction in R. Raja Rao's The Boyfriend. Published in 2003, the novel presents the queer world of 1990s India, where the protagonist, Yudi, a freelance journalist, and more importantly, a gay franeur, seeks a space of his own. Living in Mumbai, Yudi "leads a bachelor life with his routine involving travelling in local trains and visits to public toilets and picking up boys, especially those belonging to working class to have casual sex" (Dua, 2014). Milind, a nineteen year old (or probably in his early twenties) Dalit boy, is the discovery of Yudi one of many such encounters at a Churchgate loo. Fearing him to be a hustler, Yudi hurriedly set him off after the act. Yet, his actual emotions for Milind is realized by Yudi only when the city is exposed to ugly communal riots of Babri Masjid and Yudi is fearful for the life of Milind. They meet again and separate again throughout the story, and their union never attains the same fate as any other straight couple's does in the urban backdrop of Mumbai. The urban landscape of Mumbai, the city of dreams, too, restricts the subaltern to dream of a free existence. Yudi, an urban gay, therefore weaves in and out of the Mumbai gay underbelly from time to time. The city cannot offer any option to its dissident sexual citizens and the subaltern queer spaces merges with other marginalized spheres of the city. Rao's choice of a gay protagonist is

interesting as it challenges the very 'visible' spaces of the society. The depiction of local trains, Yudi's profession et al are all coexisting with the 'visible' spaces of the society, yet is marginalized. They are everywhere, just like the other queer entities such as eunuchs, yet deemed invisible in the vast geography of visible straights and gendered behavior. In the novel, the protagonist goes on to hunt the urban city everyday seeking his sexual gratification and the process becomes repetitive till he gets emotionally involved with one of his 'picks'. But the boundaries of civilization appears more specifically than ever and it is interesting to note that the courtship of Yudi and Milind takes place only in confined places of restricted queer walls – Café Volga, "amidst the psychedelic lights of the gay nightclub Testosterone, their brief time as a couple is portrayed within the confines of Yudi's bachelor apartment (affectionately and flippantly dubbed Mate House)" (Choudhuri, 2009). Though Yudi, being the upper class (when compared with the social status of Milind), has the liberty to take picks of his choice, Milind's situation is further complex for his social status of being a Dalit. Belonging form a marginalized class, Milind is stripped off of any kind of expression perhaps since his existence; he is probably never taught of the concept of 'free expression'. That is perhaps, towards the end of the story Milind is married off to a girl of his parent's choice, and Yudi is back to his cruising flanerie life. In a way, Rao's Mumbai acts as a closet that hides its male queer population "locked in schizophrenia that alternates between unwilling performances of heterosexuality and furtive pursuits of same-sex love" (Choudhuri, 2009).

Queerness Today

With the dawn of the 21st century, India has been so much influenced by the "western" British culture, that it adopted the 19th century British ideologies as its own. Gradually, India entered a phase of individual identity as a nation where ideas of secularism or empowerment were penetrating deep into the minds of the masses. Liberty was also yet another facet of this – liberty from foreign rule that has already been achieved; now what remained was to achieve liberty from the evil residing within. The caste system, poverty, unemployment, shifting gender roles etc. became pivotal in this context. The Constitution of India was in the making and India was getting ready for it's much awaited and desired status of Swaraj. But nowhere amidst all of this queerness found even an inch of space for itself. It is as if it never really existed.

The land of Kama sutra suddenly had an awakening and realized that something considered carnal never actually existed in its history. "Some of the most private of the 'private troubles' in my understanding are possibly the sexual and erotic aspects of human life which are missing from sociological

concerns in India and South Asia" (Kumar, 2014). Even though characters such as Shikhandi, and Chitrangada – The Warrior Princess, forms an integral part of ancient Indian literature, yet people choose to remain completely ambiguous about the queer identity. They never are willing to acknowledge the possibility of the presence of multiple sexes within an individual; this is a country which denies the fundamental rights to a section as brutally as they crush their rights to existence. Desire has always been socially organized and regulated. Desires should only be addressed when one has to take forward the family line. These are some of the facts that have been spoon-fed since childhood to all of us. Free expression of desire means 'violation' to both men and women, though, in definitely different contexts. Suppression of desires of the weaker sex has always found expression in literature with an array of writers taking up the issue. Tagore's Binodini is a sheer example of explicit boldness in her expression of 'longing for a man's touch'. And what more can be expected from the mankind when the gender war is still on. Further, to complicate the scenario, there emerged a section who came from the 'no-man's land'. And the mankind in such a diversified country decided to deny their very existence as if they were never there. The entire gender dichotomy can be summarized in single question, "is compulsory heterosexuality only about controlling desire or is it about dictating that the world can have only two kinds of people—women and men?' (Kumar, 2014). Despite being such awareness about the 'gender' topic being so significant, the usual discussions of gender issues confine to stretch beyond a certain point. It all boils down to the men-women dichotomy and never addresses 'gender' as the umbrella term covering every gender under its shade. The presence of gender identities beyond the usual man-woman gamut seems invisible to the audience and they remain at the backstage – voiceless, expressionless. They are the lives lived outside the definable and bound imagination of our society (Sharma M. , 2006). Cossman aptly points out Eve Kosofsky Sedwick'sstatement (Sedwick, 2008) in her Epistemology of Closet, where she wrote that it was axiomatic that 'the study of sexuality is not co-extensive with the study of gender" and consequently, voicing Sedwick's statement yet again, "anti-homophobic inquiry is not co-extensive with feminist theory" (Cossman, 2012). In 2008, the state of Tamil Nadu recognized the "Third Gender"; with its civil supplies department giving in the ration card a provision for a new sex column as 'T', distinct from the usual 'M' and 'F' for males and females respectively. This was the first time that authorities in India have officially recognized the third gender. Chennai 2009 serves as a milestone in the history of queer activism in India. The Delhi High Court decriminalized homosexuality, and thus, overturned the criminal law that defined same-sex relationships and activity as 'unnatural offence'. In doing so, an aspect of the infamous Section 377 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was nullified on the grounds that the criminalization

of consensual sexual acts in private infringed the fundamental rights guaranteed to the individual under the Constitution of India (Choudhuri, 2009). Consensus is the key in the judgment; non-consensus sexual acts continue to be a criminal offence in the eyes of the law. The decision was the outcome of an initiative taken by Naz Foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the interest of the people and human rights. A few days prior to this, LGBT activists and supporters organized a Pride Parade in Chennai on June 29, 2009. A large number of LGBT people and supporters swarm the city wearing masks; 'masks' were a defining element of the parade. This is because the masks were protecting the true identity of the 'queer' yet, allowed them to be one of the many in the 'visible spaces' of the society. It is interesting to note that the masks were primarily of pink color with feather dusters – traditionally associated with femininity; and the usage of these "indicated a subversion of received notions of gendered and sexual practices, a key philosophy in queer activism" (Choudhuri, 2009). However, despite this added signification, the masks continued to be what they primarily are: a device to obscure identity, an unwillingness to "come out" to the public (Choudhuri, 2009).

Conclusion

Queer theory inthe field of post-structuralist critical theory in western literary criticism emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of queer studies and women's studies and includes both queer readings of texts and the theorization of 'queerness' itself. Heavily influenced by the work of Lauren Berlant, Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Jack Halberstam,David Halperin, José Esteban Muñoz, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self and upon gay/lesbian studies' close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities. However, its dominating overshadow on society is noticeable in all periods from classical antiquity to the modern age. And although represented in all cultures and throughout the ages, the Indianness of queer literature deserves special mention and detailed exploration.

Queer theory "focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire". Queerness has been associated most prominently with bisexual, lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, intersex bodies and identities, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Queer theory's attempted debunking of stable (and correlated) sexes, genders, and sexualities develops out of the specifically lesbian and gay reworking of the post-structuralist figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions. Queer theory examines the discourses of homosexuality developed in the last century in order to place the

"queer" into historical context, deconstructing contemporary arguments both for and against this latest terminology.

Queer identity suffers the most deplorable trauma in the present day, even though they have substantial voice today. It is ironic that despite having such a significant presence in both the outer and inner world, they are still invisible – unacknowledged and stripped of their existence. The best that still happens is their forceful merger with the mainstream, which further complicates the situation. Having presence in the past, and also in the present, the ‘queer’ is still the ‘subaltern’ entity which is apprehensive about its existence in the future. On the other hand, works such as The Editor or Housewife, exposes the everyday ridicule that the gendered-behavioral society brings upon an individual. Anything beyond the established parameters is a threat, and should be violently crushed in order to ‘cure’ mankind of its ‘sins’. This paper presented with ample instances to exemplify the same and dispel this myth. In mythology, which forms a basis for several cultural practices in the daily life, and in the society of pre-colonial India, queer co-existed with the mainstream. Then it went behind the curtains with the British Anti-Sodomy Law (Section 377), and has now reappeared again with significant knowledge, presence and courage, to fight for their existence, only to a more rigid audience with a contorted sense of morality.

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Irene's Journey: A Theoretical Perspective of Cultural Identity Development

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Abstract

Irene Meyer is a fictional character in a novel titled, I don't know…I mean…you know… (Azmi, 2014), who gives voice to the crises and commitments involved with identity development among adolescent females in a suppressed society. Irene's identity is heavily influenced by the cultural contexts of her development. Four theoretical perspectives illustrate the thinking, feeling and raw emotion of a young woman seeking her identity. Marcia's theory of adolescent identity development is used as a framework to lend voice to the struggles and insights that may be unique in various cultural contexts. Implications for lessons learned, drawn from the four theoretical perspectives, are provided at the end of the article.

Keywords: Adolescent development, cultural identity, cultural context.

Introduction

Women of India, like women of other regions of the world, develop a sense of personal and cultural identity through a complex series of events, experiences, and personal developmental tasks. The purpose of this paper is to utilize a fictional character from a novel to illustrate the personal thoughts, crises, dilemmas involved in an adolescent female's development that ultimately leads to the achievement of her personal identity. A premise of this paper is that personal knowledge gained through the process of identity development leads to power. Many agree that knowledge is power (Winfrey, 2014). A recognition of the aspects of identity development may help individuals reach clarity about issues of identity, thus promoting a sense of power. Power is a central component of culture, especially as it relates to issues of gender and economic independence.

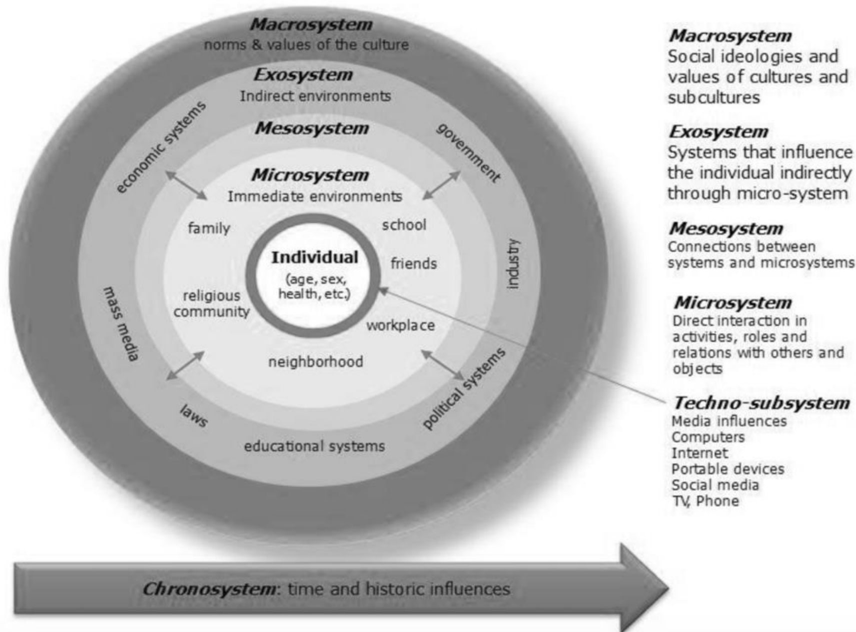
In 2014, the word of the year was culture (Rothman, 2014). People were curious about the definition of the word and what it meant in context to

the world today. Does culture change? How does this change impact the world? What are the elements of culture? Aligning with the purpose of this paper, these questions are organized around the following conceptualization of culture: Culture pertains to the values, beliefs, and behavior that are learned from a group of people. Culture ensures the survival of group identity and creates a sense of belonging. Identity is how one perceives self and is constructed by the integration of language, social structures, gender, and culture. There is a complex relationship between culture and identity. Cultural identity is not static; it evolves over time. Tension emerges as one goes through the journey of life and questions one's held beliefs, values, and behavior. Cultural identity can change due to social, political, economic, and contextual factors, especially over time. The contributions of culture upon a person's identity development are well documented (Rubin & Menzer, 2010).

I.

Theoretical Orientations Associated with Cultural Identity Development

First introduced in the 1970s, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is widely utilized to explain processes of how the environment impacts child/human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The model incorporates five socially organized subsystems that provide the environmental context of development. The systems include the microsystem (relationship between person and immediate environment such as family, school, peer groups), mesosystem (relationship between two or more microsystems), exosystem (relationships between two or more settings in which one setting does not contain the developing person—for example, a child and his/her parents' workplace), the macrosystem (overarching influences of culture, belief systems, resources that impact a developing person) and the chronosystem (the influence of change or consistency that persists over time—relationship between the person and patterns of culture, economics, customs, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The microsystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem will be explored in this paper in the context of impacting cultural identity development (See Figure 1).



http://drewlichtenberger.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Bronfenbrenners-Bioecological-Model-Graphic.png
Figure 1: Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Lev Vygotsky (1978) theorized about sociocultural influences on development. Vygotsky wrote extensively about the impact of three key concepts; social interaction, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (https://www.learning-theories.com/vygotskys-social-learning-theory.html). The premise of this approach is that individuals construct sociocultural knowledge in the context of social interactions with others. Development is maximized when learning and development occur within the ZPD under the direction of an MKO. The ZPD is the theoretical and conceptual space between where a person functions independently and where a person functions with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (coach, teacher, peer, etc.). According to Vygotsky, growth and development happens in this space. See Figure 2 for an illustration of ZPD.

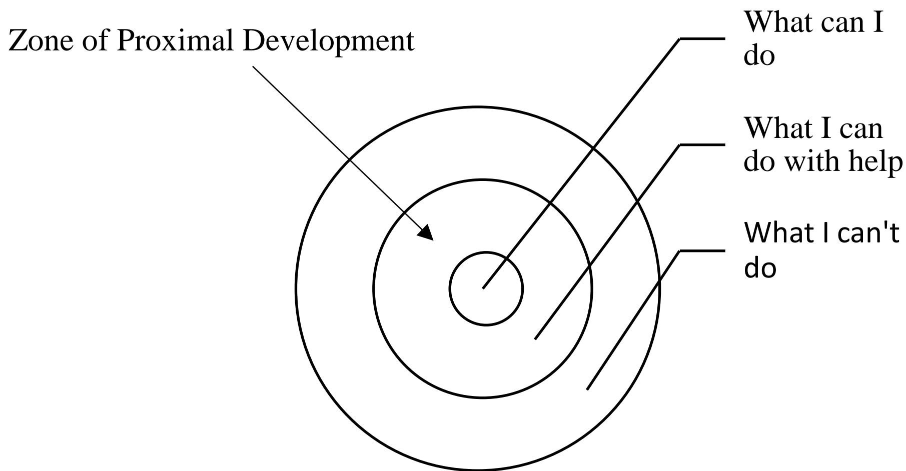


Figure 2: Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

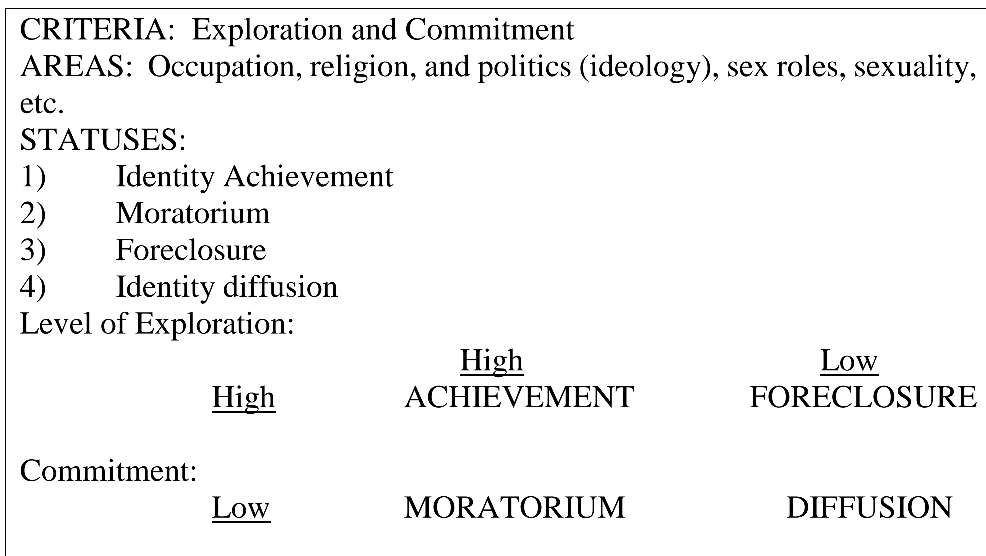
Developmental theorist Erik Erikson (1950, 1964, 1993) suggests that psychosocial development in life is achieved through a series of crises. The successful resolution of one crisis provides the foundation for future developmental tasks. How one resolves each crisis determines the next step in psychosocial development. The central task of adolescence, according to Erikson, is to resolve the crisis known as identity development versus identity confusion (1994). Erikson's theory of development takes into account the impact of external factors such as parents, culture and societal norms upon personality development from childhood to adulthood (See Table 1). According to Erikson, clarity about personal identity development is critical before a person can proceed to the next critical task, intimacy vs. isolation (1963, 1964).

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development			
Age	Conflict	Resolution of "Virtue"	Culmination in old age
Infancy 0 – 18 months	Basic Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope	Appreciation of interdependence and relatedness
Early Childhood 18 months-3years	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will	Acceptance of the cycle of life, from integration to disintegration
Play Age 3-6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	Humor, empathy, resilience
School Age 6-12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	Humility, acceptance of the course of one's life and unfulfilled hopes

Adolescence 12-18 years	Identity vs. Confusion	Fidelity	Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception
Early Adulthood 18-35 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Sense of the complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely
Adulthood 35- 55 or 65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	Caring for others, empathy and concern
Old Age 55 or 65-death	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Existential identity; a sense of integrity strong enough to withstand physical disintegration

Table 1: Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Building upon the work of Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development model, James Marcia (1966, 1980, 2009; Marcia and Josselson, 2012) concentrated on adolescent development. Marcia focused upon understanding the identity development during adolescence. He suggested four distinct identity statuses that may be experienced during adolescence. These statuses are consistent with the premise of Erikson's theory, which asserts life as a series of crises and how one resolves each crisis determines the next step in psychosocial development. Figure 3 provides an overview of the four statuses of adolescent identity development according to Marcia.


CRITERIA: Exploration and Commitment
AREAS: Occupation, religion, and politics (ideology), sex roles, sexuality, etc.
STATUSES:
1) Identity Achievement
2) Moratorium
3) Foreclosure
4) Identity diffusion

Level of Exploration:

		High	Low
	High	ACHIEVEMENT	FORECLOSURE
Commitment:			
	Low	MORATORIUM	DIFFUSION

Figure 3: Marcia's Model of Identity

Marcia suggested that the four identity statuses are based on the criteria of exploration (active search among alternatives) and commitment

(demonstrated investment) in important areas of life such as occupational choice, religious and political ideology and ideas about relationships (Marcia & Josselson, 2013). The four statuses are:

- Identity Foreclosure is when an adolescent accepts the ideology system that the familial unit has provided. This acceptance provides an example of a false identity which is rigid and does not assist the adolescent in developing the skills to manage a crisis in the future. Identity foreclosure is characterized by high levels of commitment without any identity exploration or crisis. For example, an adolescent who accepts cultural and gender role teachings without personal critical examination.
- Identity Diffusion is a state of struggle or exploration, but the adolescent does not develop an ideology that is one's own. The adolescent does not experience an identity crisis or identity exploration and there is no commitment to any particular identity. For example, an adolescent who is neither committed to an identity nor is particularly concerned about the lack of exploration of personal identity development.
- Identity Moratorium exists when an adolescent is in a state of exploration/crisis but is not committed to any particular identity. In this stage of development, the adolescent is actively exploring and/or having an identity crisis but has not made a decision or developed a commitment to a particular identity. For example, a person who may be in exploration mode but is low in commitment to determining his or her personal identity.
- Identity Achievement is marked by a state of identity clarity by the adolescent. The adolescent has made a commitment to an ideology and has more of a direction toward the future and occupational goals. These decisions are autonomous and have assisted in the development of a formed ego identity. Upon this clarity, a person has acquired identity achievement. For example, a person who has experienced an identity crisis/exploration and has reached a conclusion/commitment about his or her personal identity.

A Journey: Identity Issues Within An Inflexible Society

The novel, I don't know…I mean…you know…, (Azmi, 2014), was inspired by the experiences of young females between the ages of 15 and 22 from moderate to high income families in a cultural environment that allows oppression and discrimination based on gender and cultural identity. The journey described in the novel by Azmi (2014) is one that documents the thoughts, feelings and experiences of adolescents at each of the four stages of Marcia's identity development. The novel was inspired by qualitative research using interviews and participant observation.

Irene Meyers, the main character in the novel, provides insight into the crisis/struggle of an adolescent female from a restrictive culture. James Miller is a supporting character in the novel who plays a pivotal role in Irene's development. As a child, Irene Meyers was sure of what she wanted from her life. Over the course of years and an eventful life, Irene finds herself drawn inside the confines of her fear, caged in her confused soul. Born and raised in a society bound by traditions, religion, and culture, Irene finds it hard to relate to any of the conformities. When trying to pave a way for herself she is looked down upon as a rebel, a deviant, and selfish. This book chronicles the life of a young girl in a city in India, who struggles to stand her ground, defying irrational social norms and beliefs, and having the courage to follow her dreams.

Using Irene's words, we aim to help the reader recognize components of identity development in an effort to help all reach clarity about who we are and what we believe. Through gaining insight into our personal identity, we achieve personal power.

Excerpts from the Novel as Related to Identity Development

What follows below are the four processes of identity development as outlined by Marcia (1966, 1980), along with excerpts from the novel.

<u>Identity Foreclosure</u>

Irene Meyers begins her journey by utilizing an identity based on external forces such as family, without exploring independently her own identity. Marcia's theory suggests that at this level of identity development a person is highly committed to a belief but the belief has not been examined or the person has not been through any type of identity crisis. The following passage illustrates the stage of identity foreclosure:

One last touch of gloss on my pouted lips, dark eyes and crazy hair, I stomp out in style, ready to experience the rave. Men, women, gypsies and hippies, wannabes and junkies all around me excited and high. Happiness. Just pure happiness is the only vibe you get here. From every damned soul who had been looking for it. Suddenly we all know what it is that we want from life. Peace. Yeah, I am here and I feel I can sense that in every person who is dark and twisted quite like me, wishing for peace. We dance and we dance and then we just dance and dance and dance and dance some more.

'Excuse me' he said with a funny part British part Italian accent, or it could have been slurred with what he had been smoking. This outlandish person is now walking towards me, and I look around for my friends, they are busy doing the same, approaching other pretty strangers and I wonder what I should hit this man with. The beer in my bottle was still there and I had paid for it. No, I wouldn't waste it. I walk backwards. And he tells me, 'Ma'am please, I just need a lighter.' Damn.

I'm in bed now. It's a cold morning, but I am sweating. I'm so thirsty I could drink up the pool I had partied in. But I have no strength to move. I lay in bed, now dreaming of water. My mind is playing tricks. The design on the ceiling above my bed starts to move. It does a circle then becomes a straight line, traveling across the wall, my eyes follow the lines, it glides like a snake, but changing shape, and colors. It is now a fish! Water. I need some water. My throat is parched. There are folks lying on the floor, on the couch. Some I don't even know. I try to call out my friends, but they lay dead like me and I try to shut my eyes and not think of water. I see black and white circles intertwined in one another, they move so fast, the color becomes grey. Now its techno color. Neon and bright. I raise my head. Enough, I'm not going to die thirsty. I might as well have my last wish. A little water. My head is heavy. I fall back. Now asleep.

Irene is describing the lifestyle of an adolescent/early adult who is participating with the cultural norms of same-age peers. Irene seemingly is blindly participating in the adolescent party scene without an examination of her commitment to the lifestyle. There seems to be no crisis here and a high level of commitment to the activities. These characteristics define identity foreclosure.

<u>Identify Diffusion</u>

Within this excerpt, Irene is struggling as an adolescent with developing her own ideology. She is in an identity crisis and she is working toward resolution.

Back at home, Irene was pondering on the words of James. Have I really stopped enjoying life? Do I not make attempts to be happy in the moment? Am I always judging people and wanting better? But isn't desiring for better considered healthy? I mean, if people don't desire anything at all, aren't they depressed? Not wanting anything, isn't that a sign of depression? But heck, I am the most depressed soul, and my wants are just way too much. I need some balance. But isn't that mediocre? Being balance, safe and average? Where's the thrill in life if you don't take risks? Where's the fun in knowing what you are eventually going to get? But then, I get so frustrated if I do not get what I want, and that too instantly! But isn't impatience a virtue? I mean in today's day and age when the whole world is in such a race for the top, shouldn't you be worried to get the pie first? But then, do I want to be like the millions of ordinary people looking for the pie? Shouldn't I take another route? A different path? A path no one has dared to? Yes, I guess I did, didn't I? Which is why my choices seem odd to the society, absurd, a chimerical plan for my life. And girl, haven't they rubbed that on you? I am too afraid to make my own decisions now. Asking myself a zillion times if what I am doing is right. I get so worked up if I have to stay back late for work. I hate to be answerable

to anyone. For once, I'd like to set my mind free of such thoughts and simply focus on work. Sometimes, having to justify myself over and over is overwhelming, it's suffocating.

Identity diffusion involves a lack of commitment and no real crisis either. Here Irene is questioning, but she does not seem to be in a crisis. She is wondering but not intently exploring.

Identity Moratorium

Irene continues her identity development but is increasing the intensity of the crisis as illustrated in this excerpt below. Irene is still exploring and experimenting with options and the experimentation is important to her in her development at the stage. She has still not made a commitment to a particular identity but she seems to be actively searching for her own identity.

Why create so much fear before you take the first step? Why create rules for the game you yet don't understand? The walls are cemented so strong with uncertainty, without an understanding, built with fear and without any reasons, built with guilt and without any personality, that it becomes so hard to break that wall. It's a terror. It's a crime to do so. If you do that, you are made to fear that you will lose yourself, you will lose your ground, and you will lose your principles and all that makes you sane as a person. But what I see standing on top of this wall, is clarity. With breaking that wall I see what I am capable of. Beyond that wall I understand myself. But, I will not break it. For I will be uprooting what my people call it, "our very foundation". But when I'm floating into my own desires and decisions, I feel alive. Their voices drown out when I drown below. I love that sinking feeling, falling into nothingness. Falling and knowing that I am not going to get hurt. I will just be guarded by water all around me, hugging me and loving me, touching me and enveloping me in its welcoming charm, keeping me away from the madness of the earth and telling me that I was right to choose the uncertain waves. My heart has stopped beating fast, I am calm and I'm going down. But just when I start to feel comfortable in there, the water turns cold, it seems to understand me, for it pushes me out of my comfort. It compels me to fight for my life. It turns colder and warns me, that I stayed in there too long. That I need to move on, into another unknown, learn and come out alive. I can't breathe.

I fall deeper down in the ocean. The weeds of uncertainty trap my legs, making it impossible for me to move. The weeds twirled around my ankle appear to be like the fear in my head instilled by the society, I can't take any step ahead. I want to cry, the weeds are suffocating me. My time is running out. But then, I see myself as a survivor out of this situation, I am certainly made for better things to deal with, but for now I am dealing with the entangled fear of weed. I set my goal, of coming out of my decision alive. The weeds

unwind. Not wanting any help, nor any power, I put all my faith in myself and keep pushing myself.

What have I learnt? Certainly there must be something in this wild creation so huge and cold, at first loving but now unrelenting to help me, smothering me to learn something here. I take the lesson. I have to keeping pushing forward. I have to keep moving ahead. I feel alive when I kick my legs to fight for something. To fight for my breath. It is rewarding. I don't know which way I am going, but I am sure making a path on my own, of my own, and I can live or die with that. Without any regrets.

Irene's thought process in this excerpt clearly show a growing crisis. She is questioning, wondering and asking questions but she has not reached any conclusions. She is clearly in the moratorium stage because her angst is obvious and she has not yet reached a solution to the angst.

Identity Achieved

In the end, Irene experienced and struggled with her identity crisis, explored all options available and then made a commitment to a new identity that broke from traditional norms.

Irene looked fragile, vulnerable and in distress. James couldn't help but notice, though very tall, Irene made for a slim frame, with slender bones. In her black dress and deep emerald earrings, Irene for once looked like a complete woman, thought James. James wasn't sure what could possibly be such a problem back home. But he did not breach that topic. For now, all he wanted was for her to have a real good time.

And Irene didn't want any of that. She did not get out of her house this time to have some fun. She did not want a breath of fresh air. She did not want some temporary relief from her problems. All she wanted was surety. She wanted that strength in her where she could put her foot down and get what she wanted. It was that time now. No more lies, no more fooling herself, no more crying, no more pretending to be happy. She wanted strength and courage. And she was ready to take it from anything that was even remotely willing to give that to her. But here in the madness and shenanigans of the party, with lights glittering all around her, Irene wondered what she would need to ignite that spark in her. Until now her dreams though big and wide as the ocean, had also seem to be wavering just like it. Amid the blinding lights, she saw people dancing, laughing, loving and living in those moments. Irene wanted that blinding light in her heart, she wanted to illuminate and spread that spark in every nerve and every cell in her body, just like James had told her that afternoon. She wanted her blood stream to be running wild inside her body making her relentless; she wanted her heart to be beating to the music of success and her eyes to be shining bright with happiness. "Just believe" said a voice in Irene's ear from behind. She turned around quickly to see James

standing very close to her. She then turned to look far away at the horizon smiling.
"Just believe and know that you will go beyond that horizon, and you've already achieved half the battle" he continued with a smile. She looked at James, who was now standing beside her, his light eyes gleaming with the lights around, 'no, it must be the intensity with which he believes in himself, that make him shine so bright' she thought and asked him softly, "everything will be okay, right?" Without wasting a heartbeat, he answered, "Everything is okay Irene" Those words hit Irene hard and deep. It cut out all negativity and the confusion.

Those words magically seemed to take away all her burden. Irene suddenly felt a gush of blood rush up in her head, her mind was instantly at peace, the tangled thoughts seemed to disappear for a moment and Irene felt light and carefree. "Yeah!" she beamed, "That works for now. I mean, yeah, everything IS okay James, all I have to do is simply believe in myself. You pierce my soul. You make me want to become a better woman."

The final excerpt shows Irene reaching peace and clarity about herself. With the help of a more experienced other, she is able to reach a level of calm and peace. She experienced the crisis but used that tension or stress to propel her to greater clarity about herself and her values. Achieved identity is often a struggle. It can take years and pain. But when achieved, it can result in true identity. In order for Irene to move to Erikson's next stage of psychosocial development, successful resolution of identity is required (1963).

Conclusion:

Lessons Learned from Irene

1.) Culture provides the context for identity development – Women across the world are impacted by the cultural environment of their broader surroundings. Whether a woman grows up in a repressive/traditionally bound/non-secular country such as India, or a western country, beliefs, messages and ideologies are powerful organizers. As Bronfenbrenner demonstrates, the ecological context that a person is exposed to has a powerful influence on many aspects of development, including identity development. An important part of the developmental process is recognizing the influence of culture upon development and reaching some level of resolution with it. The value of analyzing Irene's character is in our ability to see her thought process, struggles and clarity. Bronfenbrenner's concept of the chronosystem aids in understanding the impact of generational differences, historical differences and cohort differences in the development of identity roles.

2.) Identity development can be facilitated with a more experienced peer/expert. James plays an important role in Irene's development. James is a

more experienced other who is helping Irene to achieve important realizations. Identity development is heavily influenced by important characters/relationships. Irene's thinking was clearly influenced by the input, questioning and insight offered by James. Thus, James was questioning and probing within Irene's zone of proximal development. Lev Vygotsky's theoretical notion of the zone of proximal development is a valuable lens to use to understand James' contributions to Irene's development.

3.) Identity development often happens in the context of a developmental crisis. The four excerpts demonstrate Irene's angst in her identity development. We witness a growing sense of questioning, unease and unrest in Irene's thought processes. She is challenged to decide who she is and what she believes. Erikson's theory clearly describes the importance of conflict resolution as an important component in the development of psychosocial and identity development. Only upon the successful resolution of a crisis is a person able to move on to higher levels of psychosocial development.

4.) Identity development has many facets. Marcia's theory helps us understand Irene's relationship between exploration/crisis and commitment. The four aspects of identity development are clearly seen in the excerpts; Marcia's theory and Irene's words help the reader to more fully understand the statuses of identity development within an adolescent female. The knowledge of these aspects helps the reader more fully understand the facets of identity development within adolescent populations.

Women of India, like women all over the world, are stronger and more powerful when they successfully resolve identity development conflict during adolescence. Crisis resolution during adolescence sets the stage for additional personal development in adulthood.

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