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A MARXIST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF DANIYAL MUEENUDDIN'S SHORT STORY 'IN OTHER ROOMS, OTHER WONDERS'

ABSTRACT

In other rooms, other wonder (2009) is a collection of eight short stories by Pakistani-American author Daniyal Mueenuddin. The eight stories have a waning but still dominant feudalistic – capitalistic society of 80's and 90's Pakistan for a setting, where extreme luxury goes hand in hand with exploitation of the lower class. This study only focuses on one story that shares its title with the title of the book, which is In other rooms, other wonder. This story has been viewed from the perspective of Marxism, Marxist feminism, Post-colonialism feminism, female objectification but not from the view of Marxist Feminism Social Reproduction Theory. This study endeavors to analyze the story using Marxist Feminism SRT as theoretical framework through Alan McKee's textual analysis, to create best possible interpretation. The study found that the reproductive labor provided by women is ambiguous in its nature thus underpaid. It also finds that women providing reproductive labor are often exploited through class pressure by upper-class and through patriarchy by lower class

KEYWORDS: Marxist Feminism, Social Reproduction Theory, In other rooms, other wonder

Introduction

In other rooms, other wonders (2009) is a collection of eight short stories by Pakistani-American author Daniyal Mueenuddin. The eight stories have a waning but still dominant feudalistic – capitalistic society of 80's and 90's Pakistan for a setting, where extreme luxury goes hand in hand with exploitation of the lower class. The stories also show how both men and women of lower class come to manipulation of others as a reaction to society with extreme gap among social classes. In the same way, the subject of research for this paper is a story that shares title with the title of the book, which is In other rooms, other wonders. The story is narrated in a way that the class struggle could be seen. The protagonist, a young lady named Husna, later turns mistress of the old rich man, has infatuation with becoming a lady of upper class as her past generation were once feudal. She had developed that infatuation from her parents repeated praises of past. She wanted a quick path to upper-class. However, with the necessity of job leads to becoming a mistress of the rich man, named K.K Harouni. A critical reading can show that there are three streaks of Marxist feminism in the text by the author. The first is that, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) focuses on how values of capitalism play roles in the lives or relationship of people relating to desires that may be carnal or spiritual. These relationships, when it comes to lower class women, might turn to one of oppression and exploitation if they are unpaid productive labor. Just as the case with the protagonist, though she does receive gifts but her services are not recognized as social wage. The second streak that can be seen what Alexandra Kollanti (1952) believed that Women's franchise of a capitalistic democracy only heightened the class power of some women over others. This could be seen in the story how the

protagonist is made small by the women of upper class women. The third streak in the text could be seen in form of patriarchy as source of oppression of women in producing social labor. Bhattacharya's describes SRT as primarily concerned with understanding how oppression of gender are coproduced in a capitalistic patriarchal society (Bhattacharya 2017, 14). This could be seen in how the protagonist is treated by other servants in the 'Lahore house'. Hence, the story has in itself three most important tenets of Marxist feminism SRT perspective underlying in its text, which has not been researched till now.

1.1. Thesis Statement:

Marxist Feminism's Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) states that class politics are central to questions of social reproduction and the gendered oppression of women (Fernandez Kelly 2000). This shows that the oppression of female gender through reproductive labor is co-produced with a capitalistic- feudalistic society. In other rooms, other wonders (2009) the author shows, through the text, how mistress of a wealthy feudal is paid less to no remuneration for her services. Moreover, the text also shows that the labor of lower class women often go unrecognized by both men and women of upper class. Another Marxist Feminist element could be seen in the text of the story is that women are pressured by upper class through prestige and lower class through patriarchy.

1.2. Research objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1.2.1. To identify the treatment of female gender of lower social class by both men and women of upper class and lower class of Pakistan through the story.

1.2.2. To analyze through the story, the ways in which capitalistic and feudalistic society of Pakistan co-produce reproductive labor.

1.3. Research Questions:

1.3.1 How is the female gender of lower class treated by both men and women of upper and lower class of Pakistan in the story?

1.3.2 What are the elements of the story that shows the ways in which capitalistic and feudalistic society of Pakistan co-produce reproductive labor?

2. Literature Review

In other rooms, other wonders (2009) is a collection of eight short stories by Pakistani-American author Daniyal Mueenuddin, that has been viewed from the perspective of feminism, Post-colonialism feminism, female objectification and even Marxism and Marxist feminism to show case Pakistan's feudalistic society of 70's, 80's and 90's. However, the short story of In other rooms, other wonder, has not been analyzed from the perspective of SRT till now. In article by Almas et al (2019) 'Subaltern Women: Shadows of the Other in In Other Rooms Other Wonders', uses Gyatri Spivak's theory that looks in detail how women in post-colonial society are separated from mainstream society. Even though Spivak has wrote for women of the sub-Continent from Marxist Feminist (Armstrong, 2020). The paper focus how the text of 'In other rooms, other wonders' men maintain patriarchy thus remains controller of resources while women suffer at the sidelines. However, the paper only focuses on 'othering of women' and not how the women remain subjected to unpaid reproductive labor, may it be emotional labor. Another paper by Shaehroz Anjum Butt (2021) 'you are What You Own: A Transitivity Analysis of In Other Rooms, Other Wonders' focuses on growing gap in social-classes in developing countries of the world. The paper explores themes of Marxism in the text of the story 'In other

rooms, other wonders', his article discovers 109 clauses that shows themes of Marxism can be seen in the forms of Marxism feminism, objectification and commodification, and class struggle. Another Marxian view of the story can be seen in 'Distribution should undo Excess: A Marxian Deconstruction of In Other Rooms, Other Wonder' (Butt et al, 2022). Using model of lexical cohesion by Halliday and Hassan (1976) Marx's class stratification has been explored through the text of the collection story. The researcher analyzed through the model that the story has characters divided in to two categories: oppressor and the oppressed.

After Marxism and Marxist Feminism, the story has been analyzed by researchers from the perspective of Post-colonialism. 'You Sell Me Out: Representation of Peripheral Pakistan in Daniyal Mueenuddin's In Other Rooms, by Other Wonder' by Naziret al (2022) takes Edward Said's postcolonial as framework to view the story through global commoditization of cultural differences and othering of culture through Daniyal Moueenudeen's story. This includes mainly the othering of women of feudalistic society of Pakistan. Another article that looks at the story through the lens of Post-colonial Feminism is written by Yousaf et al (2023) named 'Postcolonial feminist analysis of the short story collection In other rooms, other wonders by Daniyal Mueenuddin. The research is textual analysis using the concept of "Sisterhood" by Chandra Mohanty. The textual analysis showed that women are not only fighting for their rights but also for their identity in a post-colonial partriarchal society. The study shows the different reaction to the post-colonial society that they are in; some characters fight back, while some accept it.

The third way how the collection of stories by Daniyal Mueenuddin has been researched is through the perspective of gender dynamic. In 'Gender Dynamics in Mueenuddin's In Other Rooms, Other Wonders: A Textual Analysis' Afzal et al (2023) endures to find how and where the boundaries of patriarchy has been constructed in society through the text of the story by using Cornell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. The research finds that even though women try to change their circumstances through men however they fall back into their previous positions, no matter the struggle. Another feministic view of the research has been employed by Turyalay(2023) in 'Analysis of Daniyal Mueenuddin's in Other Rooms, Other Wonders: A Feministic View'. The researchers have used a Gayatari's feministic perspective and employed textual analysis and close-reading as technique. The research explores women in different roles as wife, sister, daughter and as a woman and their dependence on economy, along with lack of basic human needs.

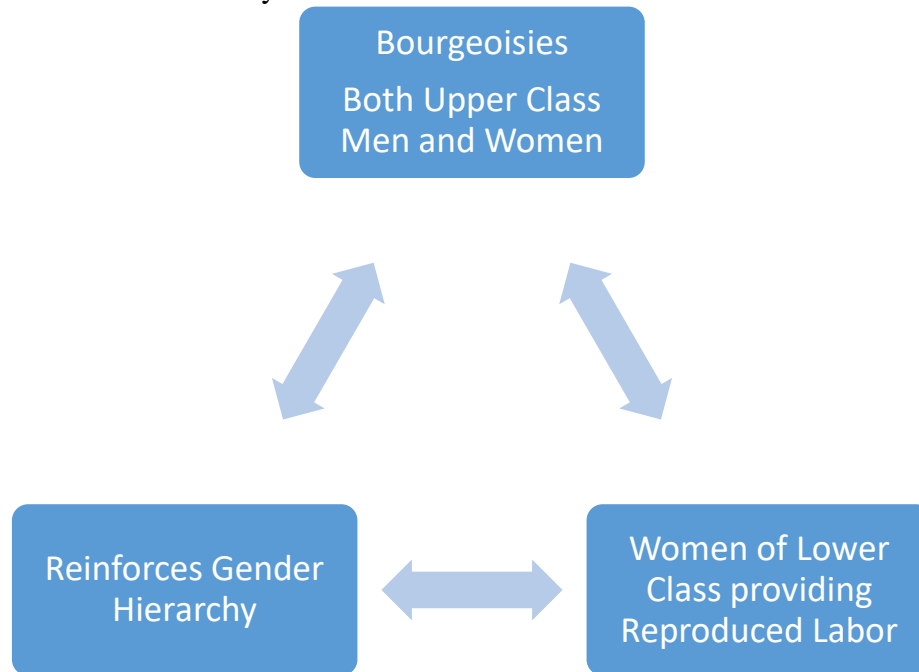
All the researches mentioned above show that In other rooms, other wonders (2009) by Daniyal Mueenuddin shows that the story has not been as yet analyzed from the perspective of Marxist Feminist Social Reproduction Theory.

3. Research Methodology:

In order to find answers to the questions, Marxist Feminism SRT has been used as theoretical framework whereas Textual Analysis by Alan Mckee has been applied to the selected texts from the short story, In other rooms, other wonders (2009). The selected text has been analyzed so that most likely interpretations are established. The following model is designed to better understand the theoretical framework presented by Marxist feminism SRT. The characters' interactions, dialogues, thoughts and behavior will be analyzed through textual analysis.

The following model has been created by the researcher only for the better understanding of the theoretical framework applied through textual analysis of the story. The model will help with

understanding the behavior of protagonist as women in relation to different class present in capitalistic-feudalistic society of Pakistan.



4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reproductive labor; an ambiguity

The story begins with the line ‘Husna needed a job’. The theme follows throughout the story, where she applies for being a mistress and as her contract ends, she leaves with few boxes. However, the job has neither name, status or any description, unlike any man of this society will have for himself. Husna, the protagonist, even when she worked with Begum Harouni, a lady still had no clear job description which the author describes in the following manner; ‘The butler, knowing that Husna served the old Begum Harouni in an indefinite capacity, somewhere between maidservant and companion, did not seat her in the living room’. The writer in the text recurrently presents the readers with the ambiguity of Husna’s job description, especially when writer explains what Husna did when she worked with the Begum; ‘Taking service in an ambiguous position with Begum Harouni had been the greatest concession she ever made to her mediocre prospects, and having made this concession increased her determination to rise, although she had no idea how to go about it. The writer again shows the ambiguity associated with reproductive labour available for women in a capitalistic –feudalistic society of Pakistan when he says that ‘She would even have sought a place in the demimonde of singers and film actresses, bright and dangerous creatures from poor backgrounds—no upper-class woman would dream of entering those professions—but she had neither talent nor beauty. Only determination and cunning distinguished her, invisible qualities’. These lines from the text show that women of lower class had not much of options to get rich quickly. Moreover, reproductive labour coincides with emotional labour, when the women of lower class have no skill or no to less education in the society might not have much to provide other than becoming caregivers to children, young or old people mainly, as shown in the story. This element of reproductive labour can be fairly found

in the line from the text that says, 'She wanted to keep her part of the bargain, and had only herself to give. It hurt her that it was so little; she imagined that her body, her virtue, meant almost nothing to her'. In the same manner, the protagonist provided her labor by giving her everything to K.K, and even entertained his friend. The text explains it thus; 'they envied him the possession of Husna, while at the same time being slightly relieved on reaching their lugubrious houses after a few hours in her company'. This leads to another concept of SRT which emotional or affective labor, this means that Husna provided K.K with affective labor by controlling her emotions through her stay. She made of different emotions as she thought would be most productive for her; 'She wheedled, petted him, became frosty, became nice'.

4.2 Treatments of lower class women by upper class women

According to Marxist Feminist Allexedra Kollantai(1956) claims that the new capitalistic-feudalistic society has only worked for the rights of upper class women and not the lower class women. This means that women of upper class also pressurize women of lower class aswell. There are many instances in the text where this could be seen. When the first upper-class women who husna encounters on her first day at K.K's prestigious house, the behavior of exerting class pressure by upper-class women on lower-class women could be identified, when the text says 'The woman eyed Husna, as if pricing her, and Husna shrank into herself' and when 'Riffat looked meaningfully at Husna once or twice'so she could categories Husna. To this Husna reaction is self-explanatory when the writer says in the text, 'Husna was not a guest, not even really a presence, but a recourse for the old lady, to fetch and carry, to stay beside her so that the begum would not be left sitting alone'. Later, when Husna encounters K.K's youngest daughter, married to a wealthy man, the author writes that after Husna initiates conversation, "I am very glad to meet you," said Husna. "I have heard so much about you." Her head had sunk into her shoulders. Sarwat looked down at the girl with a wolfish grin, almost spoke, then turned to her father. "You look well, Daddy". During the same conversation when Husna puts in few words the reaction of the upper-class women dealing with lower-class women says it all, 'Sarwat looked at her in amazement, as if the furniture had spoken. "Tell me about the land," she said to her father. She continuously ignores her. Later at the end of the story when K.K dies and at his funeral she oversees many rich women attending the funeral, the text says her reaction was 'She felt that only she truly cared, that she had lost more than all the others. And yet she wanted to be like them, they were what she had lost'. Thus, the text shows that she could not be accepted in that society by the upper-class women, no matter how much envied them. This surely is what Marxist Feminist SRT have fought throughout the 20th century.

4.3 Exploitation of women through reproductive labor

The capitalistic-feudalistic society has a wid gap among the rich and the poor. This creates a want of social upward movement by many in the society. The text shows that the protagonist is no different when it says, 'Husna's mind would hang on these symbols of wealth, not letting go for hours. She sensed that all this might come to her through Harouni, if she became his mistress.' Thus, its shows that capitalism co-produces reproductive labor, which later leads to exploitation of women. Moreover, it is the class difference that makes Husna appear different for K.K which he found attractive, this is well explained in the text; 'She behaved and spoke unlike the women he normally met, for she had always inhabited an indefinite space, neither rich nor poor, neither servant nor begum, in a city where the very concept of a middle class still found expression only in a few households, managers of foreign banks and of the big industrial concerns, sugar and textiles and steel'. This means the middle class was still emerging in

Pakistan, till then the dynamics of the society led to many forms of exploitation of women. Later, when she becomes a mistress, the reproductive labor or affective labor shows that, as the text says, 'She had expected this to be as simple as the signing of a check, a payment'. The reproductive labor that she had provided was much more precious than what her employer thought of it, this is when the text says, 'The moment with K. K. meant a great deal to her, but not in the way that he understood it— without meaning to, she had given herself completely'. Moreover, she was highly underpaid, this could be seen in the text of the story ; 'After Husna had a few times complained of not having money, of wearing torn clothes and broken-heeled shoes, K.K. instructed that she should be given a tiny allowance'. Only 'tiny allowance' was provided for her services as mistress to the rich old man. This shows how women are often exploited by providing reproductive labor as it often goes unrecognized.

4.4 Role of patriarchy and treatment of lower class women

Before, Husna is accepted as mistress the male workers only deem her a worker but still not an equal. However later, they treat her nothing more than a low life. Her equal treatment is only her own illusion and not reality when the text says; 'Understanding this oblique reference to the fact that Chacha Latif treated her with little ceremony, as an equal, Husna sweetly replied, "He's well, Uncle, thank you'. The day it is known that she has been taken a mistress the servant's attitude around her becomes aggressive. When Husna asked for a car from K.K to get her belongings from Begum's house the reaction of Chacha Latif was explained clearly from the text; 'At first the butler, Chacha Latif, would not let her in, but Husna raised her voice and became abusive, and the servant, knowing that she might later be in a position to injure him, let her do what she wanted'. In the same way when she sees servant gossiping about her with the driver, the text clearly shows how women of lower class are treated by lower class men especially; "Nothing? Not anything at all?" replied Husna, speaking in sharp Punjabi. And then, leaning back in the seat, patronizingly, "You drivers are always the clever ones'. Even after becoming a mistress, she still is treated badly by men of the lower-class, the text shows how patriarchy comes into play when Husna tell K.K 'I have to crawl even in front of them. Yesterday Hassan swore at me'. Later on, when K.K is under a heart attack, Husna wishes to follow him to the hospital, the Doctor reminds her of her status by saying "Don't, this isn't about you. Prepare yourself now. Remember who you are.(doctor)'. This shows that patriarchy comes to play at every step , making it impossible for Husna to move upward socially, even if she wanted to.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the reproductive labor provided by women is ambiguous in its nature thus underpaid. It also finds that women providing reproductive labor are often exploited through class pressure by upper-class and through patriarchy by lower class. However, the field of Social Reproduction is ever growing; this study can be further expanded in the direction of exploring reproductive labor in the sub-continent.

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