

Identity creation and womanhood: A comparison between Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson and the cultural influence in literary context

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Abstract:

The paper undertakes a comparative analysis in the fictional writing of two contemporary authors, Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson, hailing from two different cultures, Chinese-American and British respectively. The paper focusses on the literary works of the two authors to address how the cultural influence shapes their fiction and their use of the English language to establish the female identity and gender expression empowered by their ethnic and cultural roots. The comparative analysis studies the novella *Love in a Fallen City* (1943) by Eileen Chang to identify how the experiences of a divorced woman in China is shaped by the social influences and that marginalises her based on the marital status and relegates her real identity. To draw a comparison with the text critically and study the themes of gender and womanhood, the paper also investigates the novel *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) by Jeanette Winterson. This records the experiences of identifying as a lesbian by an English woman in an English Pentecostal society and the influence of social standards on her identity formation. This approach can significantly study the way women authors use language as a tool to challenge the social standards of heteronormativity and traditional female identity and establish the true female identity.

Keywords: Eileen Chang, Jeanette Winterson, gender, sexuality, identity, language, tradition, culture, patriarchy.

1.0 Introduction

Language serves as an important tool for the presentation of gendered and cultural views that frame the ideologies of the author through rhetorical views to the readers in narrative fiction. Eileen Chang was born in Shanghai to an aristocratic family with her mother belonging to the British cosmopolitan culture and her father from traditional Chinese background who was also an opium addict and ended up divorcing each other (New York Review Books, 2016). The author, who escaped her life in Shanghai and moved to Hong Kong to study literature there, found fame with her literary works that included her self-translations of literary works, despite her challenging personal life that included marriage and divorce before she moved to the US. Eileen Chang's works substantiate the cultural associations with the identity formation of women in then-contemporary China with social and cultural constructs defining the representations of the female body (Li, 2007). These associations of the social ideologies with the representations of the female body also relate to the psychological perception of women and the internalised emotions and values which emerge from the culturally prevailing Confucian philosophy of gender roles and social duties of men and women. However, Hoyan (2019) notes that Chang remains an undisputed and unrecognised figure in the history of world literature and attributes the reason to Chang's moving her Sinophone reader base from China to an Anglophone reader base in the US. This presents a groundwork for evaluating the literary works of Eileen Chang in terms of the expression and representation of gender and culture.

The sociocultural aspects in the representation and construction of gender and sexual identity in literary works are also critical aspects in the works of Jeanette Winterson. Born in 1959, Winterson is known for her quirky and

often comic style of writing and received the Whitebread Award for *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* for the best first novel of that year in 1985, which narrates the relationship of a young lesbian with her extremely religious mother (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). Winterson is known for her use of the violence motif for the representation of the self through the use of language to depict violence pertaining to gender and sexuality such as child abuse and rape where her texts are purely feminist and yet not anti-men (Barry, 2022). With the success of *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* at a time when literature came to a halt in England, Winterson was recognised as one of the few lesbian writers who had achieved mass readership (Morrison, 2006). In novels such as *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* and others such as *Written on the Body* (1992) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), Winterson deals with the themes of love, art, and identity formation while simultaneously reducing the tag of a 'lesbian writer' (Letellier, 2023). This identification and global acclaim of the writer makes it important in the literary academia to study her expression of tradition and culture as well as the nuances of gender and sexual identity of a lesbian woman through the use of language as a tool of expression.

The purpose of this paper is to identify how the female writers having different ethnicity and cultural history establish their gender and sexual identity in the white patriarchal discourse through the use of language as a tool of expressing identity.

Objective 1: to identify the similarities and differences in expressing cultural views in the two texts.

Objective 2: to identify the similarities and differences in the expression of gender and sexuality in the two texts.

Objective 3: to study the use of language as a tool of expression in the two texts.

1. 2.0 Literature Review

This chapter of the literature review paper studies the existing literature and themes based on the role of language as a tool of expression in establishing gender and sexuality identity in the white patriarchal discourse. The literature review analyses the themes based on the research objective of this paper. Following this, the research gap is discussed to understand the need to conduct research in this area.

2. 2.1 Understanding white patriarchal discourse in women's lives

White patriarchal discourse holds the limiting and controlling power of women. Bjork-James (2020) argues that white patriarchal families morally justify the discourse of protecting children and female members from queerness and feminism. The centralisation of children's protection inspires white women to ignore their interests to defend patriarchal intentions (Bjork-James, 2020). Women being stakeholders in a societal setup can directly be affected and influenced by conventional needs. White supremacy promotes women to retain control over power in a patriarchal society (Bonds, 2020). Accordingly, by controlling the sexuality of women and access to the outside world to protect the notions of purity, white supremacists can directly take hold of the existing power. White supremacy nurtures the gender roles within the family from husbands, fathers, and sons, to mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives (Bjork-James, 2020). The gendered notions and practices might shadow the actual expectations and scope of individualisation in the process of maintaining supremacy. In turn, the established power structure can be maintained. The position and privileges of white women are not constructed in isolation but about race and gender to maintain limits of "white supremacist political-economic order" (Bonds, 2020, p.782). This shows that the white patriarchal discourse controls holds, and adjusts the power structure according to its needs. Hence, under the auspices of the framed gendered setup, white supremacy can mould the nature and decision-making power of women.

3. 2.2 Analysing expression of gender and sexual identities

Gender and sexual identities, variations, and expressions might differ based on the social scenario. Crasnow (2020, p.1026) argues that adopting diversity in identities as 'real' relinquishes a set order of hierarchy that balances 'purity' created for identities as opposed to others. Accordingly, the expression of gender and sexual identities might depend directly upon the understanding of the range of diversity. The ideas of purity can be related to the designed notions of what is pure or not. This maintenance of purity by avoiding sexual contact with 'others' is a defence mechanism adopted by white supremacists to maintain "Christian purity" (Crasnow, 2020, p.1037). This practice can limit the expression and acceptance of freedom in exploring sexual and gender identities. These practices can indirectly aid in maintaining the authority of a patriarchal society using women's bodies. Asher (2020) asserts that women, LGBTs, and people of colour have been structured as others and marginalised by heterosexual men who have been the centre of the power positionality. This shows that the expression of gender and sexual identities has been limited by constant otherization and marginalisation. Therefore, the value system is created under the supremacy established by white patriarchy, and it directly alters the expression of womanhood

and sexual identities.

4. 2.3 Exploring the use of language as a tool of expression of gender identities

Language can provide a platform to perform to express, revolutionise, indicate, and liberate identities. The present paper investigates the creation of identity and womanhood in relation to the writing of Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson. Language can reveal the events that arise in a culture with their own relationship to this communal practice (Geyser-Fouche, 2016). The power of language can be exerted over people and be impacted by the prevalent usage (Fouche-Geyser, 2016). As a result, language could be utilised within this manner or device to provide equally interpersonal reflectivity and fresh solutions for that traditional lifestyle. This proves that language is a weapon used in white supremacist culture to reveal the gender identities of women. According to Perri (2022), there has been an interdependence of language and sexual identities, with naming a person by their identity being something women have kept private about in the past. These circumstances suggest that language can be a predominant device, and it has a complex interpersonal association with the obligation, and opportunity to act or stand in relation to community, and ethnicity. Identities in any form, such as sexual, racial, and so on, can be expressed using language that is intricately interconnected with the culture to create an impact on identity creation. In the age of white supremacy, having access to the freedom of expression of women can be a sign of consciously being aware of feelings of self-oppression and the need to have expression that can endure oneself (Perri, 2022). This shows that having consciousness of generalised oppressive notions about women's lives is crucial and commendable for women who choose to use language as means of expression. Along similar lines, the present paper explores the role of language and conscious choice of words in the writings of Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson. Hence, the use of language and expressions help identify female writers having different ethnicity and cultural history establish their gender and sexual identity in the white patriarchal discourse.

2.4 Research gap

The existing literature on the role of language in the expression of gender and sexual identities provides a variety of aspects. The discussions about heteronormativity can be found extensively. However, there is a lack of studies that explicitly focus on the themes of gender identity and womanhood in white patriarchal discourse. Though many literature focuses on the themes of womanhood and identity but not many studies focus on the comparative analysis of novels written by Eileen and Jeanette Winterson. However, there is a scope to comparatively study the role of language as a tool of expression in establishing gender and sexuality identity in the white patriarchal discourse. Studying the identification of how female writers having different ethnicities and cultural histories establish their gender and sexual identity in the white patriarchal discourse through the use of language as a tool for expressing identity can add value to the existing pool of knowledge. Hence, the study uses novels, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* and others such as *Written on the Body* (1992) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), to address the gap of exploring role of language in the expression of gender and sexual identities.

3.0 Methodology

The paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the literary works of Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson through the application of the feminist theory in the analysis of the expression of culture and gender views in the identity formation of women. Feminist theories and literary criticisms are used to study the representation of gender and identity that identifies human beings as a socially constructed form where man is identified as holding the dominating position of the role (Hirschmann, 2017). The application of the feminist theory to the study of the literary works of Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson is performed through the comparative analysis of two literary texts of the contemporary times wither of which belong to the either writer. This comparative analysis unfolds through the application of the qualitative comparative analysis of data which is the 23rd of the 34 efficient data analysis methods in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie and Weinbaum, 2017). This way the present study can compare the aspects of embedded rhetoric meanings in the two compared texts. To that end, the paper studies *Love in a Fallen City* by Eileen Chang and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson. This approach is undertaken to identify the similarities and differences in the expression of gender, and identity influenced by the sociocultural contexts of the tradition, culture and religiosity and how they influence the gender roles that women are expected to play.

5. 3.1 Themes of culture

The themes of gender and culture are identified through the comparison of the two literary texts by both of the authors to identify how the sociocultural background of the authors affect the way they represent tradition and

cultural values in their creation of the characters. The paper analyses instances from both the texts to note how the cultural values are constantly present within the lives and everyday practices of the authors which shape the way they design their narratives of the events and characters. It studies the willingness and reluctance of the characters of accepting the cultural, religious, and traditional values from the novels and identifies how they are very similar to or different from each other in shaping the image and identity of the characters. These notions are further observed to identify how the sociocultural experiences of the authors further contribute to the shaping of their novels and its events. These views lead to the evaluation of the next element of this paper which is the analysis of gender and sexual identity of the authors through the formation of their characters within the text as a representation of their selves.

6. 3.2 Gender and sexuality

The notions of gender and sexual identity are also studied through the comparative analysis of the two novels and their characters. This is done through the identification of how the tradition and cultural views of society creates associations and standards for the establishment of certain gender roles and images which the female characters have to conform to. This conformation to these standardizations is performed in order to maintain their social acceptance in a publicly male dominated society dictated by hegemonic cultural and religious standardization of ideal femininity and familial piety. The paper collects sections from either text which explicitly present instances of direct or indirect forms of opposition to expression of gender and sexual freedom that is presented explicitly or implicitly within the texts. The comparative analysis of the texts for the identification of gender and sexual identity formation of the characters is also meant to identify how the instances of extreme imposition on traditional, religious, and cultural viewers and conformity of women to these standards cause explicit hindrances to the expression of gender and sexual freedom of the female protagonists and restricts them from emerging in their true form. To that end, the paper critically analyses how language is used as a tool for the expression of self-identity and the vehement attempts by the protagonists to embrace their natural selves and reject these cultural standards that aim to restrict their establishment of social position through gender and sexual standards imposed by tradition and religion.

8. 4.0 Findings

	Love in a Fallen City (1943)	Oranges are Not the Only Fruit (1985)
Expressing cultural emotion	The urge and desire to adhere to the traditional values are reflected in the opening of the narrative when the Bai family rejects implementing the daylight saving (Chang, 2007). Despite being behind everyone else, they preferred to their traditional practice while they remain behind in playing the huqin of life. The traditions also reflect when the third brother appeals to tradition when suggesting that Bai Liusu should conventionally mourn for her dead husband even when they were divorced. The cultural connotations are significantly challenged in the narrative through the contradictions of marriage and divorce where divorce is a shameful act that the protagonist had to undergo and hence remains contested by her own family in every sense. On the contrary marriage plays a dual role where it is extremely important for the women in the Bai household for the first time and yet it is a matter of great shame and mockery that Liusu wants to begin her life afresh at the age of twenty eight after she had been through a divorce almost eight years ago. The conventions of social traditions are further challenged when Liusu refuses to be the mourning widow of the husband and goes against tradition when her ex husband died under the logical concern that he had left her.	The traditional views of the novel reflect through the narrator's description of her life with her parents, and most specifically her mother who believed the religious views closely. The religious views of her mother reflected through their Sunday rituals when they devoted to God and ate the sacrificial lamb with potatoes while the narrator recalls her memory of sitting on a lamb one Easter and hearing the story of the sacrificial lamb from her mother (Winterson, 1985). Traditional views are also reflected through her mother's views of children. Moreover, the instances of expressing tradition and culture are furthermore expressed through the accounts of religious conversions that the narrator shares as well as the ones that she remembers her mother narrating, especially the ones about Pastor Spratt who goes on to convert people and the accounts of Pastor Finch who held up the narrator's hand to claim that she might turn out to be the Devil herself one day.
Gender and sexuality	The conflicts of gender begin when the news of the death of Bai Liusu's ex husband who had wronged her arrives to the Bai household and still only to maintain the traditions, her third and fourth brothers ask her to be the widow and mourn. Bai Liusu refuses citing that they had been divorced eight years before and it is not a logical thing to ask her to be the mourning widow. The men ask her not to hold grudge only because the man is dead. Gender is again questioned when Bai Liusu claims that her brothers spent all her money and they refuse and the fourth brother's wife	The problems of gender in the novel are reflected through a stark contradiction of the narrator's mother who was invested in Religious views and her father who lacked it. Further, a comparison of ideal feminine standards are presented through the contrasting images of Miss Jewsbury and the other Church-going ladies such as the narrator's mother. Jewsbury is clever and conducts the Sisterhood choir, "but she's not holy" (Winterson 2007, p.25). Accordingly, the defiance of gender standards through religion is noted when the loss of hearing of the narrator

	suggests that Liusu is bad luck because after her marriage her husband went bankrupt and now they are going through same even when she admitted that her third and fourth brothers used Liusu's money to buy gold. Gender is starkly contrasted with the patriarchal standards when Bai Liusu is forced by her brothers and their wives to go mourning for the death of the husband who had left her and when she attempts to explain her positioning to her mother, she plays things down by saying that they manage the household and are under the pressure of doing so, and thus Liusu must be considerate for their views (Chang, 2007). The gender constraints are starkly intertwined with the traditional views of womanly duties. The contradictions of gender and sexuality is also presented when the whole Bai family takes Liusu's second marriage as a joke and does not give her any attention while they make themselves busy for the preparations of Liusu's sister's marriage as she is to be wed for the first time while Liusu for the second.	is found out by Jewsbury while the mother thought that her child is only Holy that she couldn't hear and was in communication with the Lord. Further, the defiance of gender ideals and the defiance of the religious views are also presented when Elsie comes to visit the narrator in the hospital during her surgery and promises to give her a lesson in numerology and the narrator happily accepts since she knew her "mother disapproved" (Winterson, 2007, p.29). Further, sexuality is a contested matter as the narrator's mother did not approve of their neighbours "fornicating" on a Sunday (p.54) while she implied that her participation in childbirth was by adopting the child of the Lord from the orphanage to prepare and offer the child to the Lord (p.10). Sexuality and gender are intricately intertwined with religious views.
Language as a tool of expression	While the translated version of the text is in English, the original version in Chinese language peaks through with the use of terms that are closely associated with the traditional Chinese culture such as the use of the word Huqin and the naming of the members of the family as Third Master, Fourth Master, Sixth Sister, Fourth Mistress and such rather than using the common English terms like brother, wife, sister-in-law. The characters who are older than Bai Liusu by age and position are also not named and addressed only through their social designation in the family.	The use of language remains essentially aligned with the expression of the religious ideals as well as contradicting them. Language is used primarily to uphold the contradicting views to create a rhetoric disposition of gender ideals and piousness of women that standardised femininity. The primary language English is used originally to express how certain words and expressions are used through rhetoric such as metaphors to express how the Religious views of the pastors and the mother were a confinement of the development of thought and identity for the narrator.

9. 5.0 Discussion

10. 5.1 Love in A Fallen City: Expression of Gender and its Restriction through tradition and culture

The expression of cultural values in Eileen Chang's novel emerge through the traditional views of respect and obedience of the youngsters to the elders and specifically applied to the obedience of women to the men in a household, expressing an ideal patriarchal standard. The narrative opens with the description of the household practices of maintaining the traditional practices and refusing to change with the modern times as the family adhered to running an hour behind the world and in life by not performing the daylight savings like the rest of the country did (Chang, 2007). This notion of the Bai family remaining behind the world in terms of their progress of life is further expressed when the Third Master, Fourth Master, and Fourth Mistress along with Bai Liusu's mother expect her to perform the duties of a mourning widow upon hearing the news of the death of her ex-husband who died due to pneumonia and who had divorced her almost eight years ago. Liusu expresses her dissatisfaction with the imposition of cultural values that restrict her expression of dignity and imposes the social roles of hegemonic femininity as she claims that her brothers do not have any right to force her to mourn for her ex-husband when they did not do anything to help her when she was facing the divorce and rather gambled with her money as she claims "Oh? But now you're not afraid of upsetting me? Now that you've spent all my money, you're not afraid of upsetting me?" (Chang, 2007, p.141). This shows that an identification of the imposition of sociocultural constructs of gender roles that restrict the expression of identity formation by women through patriarchal conventions. Applying the feminist theory in this context leads to the verification of how the social practices of tradition and culture emerged as standardisation of hegemonic duties of women that expects them to value traditions and cultural virtues by foregoing their self-respect. However, this self-expression is restricted to the vocal comment. The continuous reiteration of the need for help followed by dissatisfaction from the protagonist's brother and his action while imposing cultural norms and restrictions can be seen as a direct authoritative extent over women's expression. Perri (2022) can be relevant here as it provides the identification of oppression by women and continuous reiteration in words and language. Analysing this article from the literature review shows that the expression of the protagonist's ideas and reiteration of experience in a sense where she experienced injustice against the continuous generalisation of the ways of treating women is insightful. This can be identified as an attempt by Eileen Chang to reflect her experiences of witnessing the divorce of her parents and the other gendered oppressions imposed on herself and her mother by her father. When Liusu opposes her brothers by identifying their wrongdoings, the Fourth Mistress, despite being a woman, participates in the patriarchal oppression by calling Liusu as an ill omen:

Fourth Mistress, who was standing behind Third Master, laughed. "They say you shouldn't talk about money with your own flesh and blood. Once you start the money talk, there's all too much to say! I've been telling Fourth Master, telling him for a long time now: 'Old Four, you'd better warn Third Master. When you two buy gold, or buy stocks, don't use Sixth Sister's money. It will bring you bad luck! As soon as she got married, her husband spent all his family's money. Then she came back here, and now her family, as everyone can see, is going bankrupt. A real bad-luck comet, that one!' (Chang, 2007, p.141). This shows that objectifying women as bad luck to a family after marriage is normalised in the discourse of white supremacy. It is contrasting that using the money of the mistress to buy and blaming the women for going bankrupt is seen as a normative practice without generating conscious of unjust behaviour.

The above passage indicates how the female members of society such as the Fourth Mistress participates in the imposition of patriarchal domination on Liusu, who embodies an opposition to hegemonic patriarchy and gender roles, by calling her a 'bad luck' as she claims that her husband went bankrupt after marrying her and now her family too is financially deprived because they have to feed Liusu who is an extra mouth in the family, and yet she does not acknowledge the fact that they wrongfully used Liusu's money for their fulfilment, even though she subconsciously acknowledges that they used Liusu's money to purchase gold. This indicates how the cultural values of traditional Chinese society is intricately intertwined with the identities of gender and self-image in the context of everyday household.

The contradictions of gender and culture are also expressed in the novel when the Bai family engages actively in the preparations of marriage of Baolu who is the Seventh Sister of Bai household, a position younger than Bai Liusu, and yet completely ignores contributing anything towards the preparation of marriage of Bai Liusu only because she was once divorced and re-marriage of women was a taboo and significantly objected notion in the then contemporary Chinese society:

The Bai household looked at Liusu's remarriage as some kind of joke, but since they wanted to get her out of the house they ignored the whole business, letting Mrs. Xu manage it. For Baolu, however, they fell all over themselves, bustling about with great fanfare, turning the house upside down. Two daughters in the same house, but one got lots of attention and the other got cold silence. The contrast was painfully obvious (Chang, 2007, p.154). Hence, this evidence shows the irony of women's lives in the patriarchal society.

The notion of a woman marrying for the second time is met with sharp opposition by the family and yet this opposition is swallowed down by the members only because they wanted Liusu to move out of the family in any possible way. The use of language in these instances is presented in order to create a rhetorical impact on the readers to create a feeling of pathos for the readers towards Liusu. Chang's use of language in such an approach to present Liusu as the pathetic hero in the initial phase of the narrative who turns into the villain in the eyes of her family members when the potential groom for Baolu, Mr. Fan Liuyuan, falls for Bai Liusu instead. Language is played out in the novel as a potential tool by Chang for the building and bending of the narrative as well as her characters for the readers outside the text as well as for the other characters with whom they interact within the text. This contributes to the shaping of the perception of gender roles the characters play and the duties they abide by for the readers to establish a social discourse of how conforming to cultural and traditional values in a hegemonic way by rejecting the modernist values that unfold within society outside of the domestic sphere leads to the degradation of human image and dignity formation by creating gender-based hierarchies and subjective oppressions. This also shows that normative gender roles and forceful behaviourism can create a sense of compulsion for every stakeholder of the society including men. This can lead to the normativity of the stereotypical aspects towards the marginalised section of society against the dominant force.

11. 5.2 Oranges are Not the Only Fruit: Restriction of Sexual Expression and its Opposition through Religion

The novel by Jeanette Winterson expresses the conflicts of gender and sexuality in the social context through its contradiction of religious views and its restriction of self-expression through a narrative of the relationship of the lesbian narrator and her religiously pious mother. Winterson (2007, p.10) uses language in both serious and comic forms to express the conflicts between one's sexuality and religiosity through the character description of the mother of the narrator presented through anecdotal instances of her childhood experiences by the narrator:

My mother, out walking that night, dreamed a dream and sustained it in daylight. She would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord:

- a missionary child,
- a servant of God,
- a blessing.

And so it was that on a particular day, some time later, she followed a star until it came to settle above an orphanage, and in that place was a crib, and in that crib, a child. A child with too much hair.

She said, 'This child is mine from the Lord.'

She took the child away and for seven days and seven nights the child cried out, for fear and not knowing. The mother sang to the child, and stabbed the demons. She understood how jealous the Spirit is of flesh.

Such warm tender flesh.

Her flesh now, sprung from her head.

Her vision.

Not the jolt beneath the hip bone, but water and the word.

She had a way out now, for years and years to come.

We stood on the hill and my mother said, 'This world is full of sin.'

We stood on the hill and my mother said, 'You can change the world.'

The above section from the novel presents one of the anecdotes the author uses in the narrative to indicate to the readers the complexities of identity formation in a society that is dictated by blind following of religious views by people such as her mother who understands procreation and child rearing as a form of godly duty that women are meant to perform by showcasing her complete ignorance of the practicalities of the procreational process. What her mother understands as the duty to the god by raising a child and sacrificing her to erase the world of sins is essentially a result of humanly actions of physical pleasures and sexual performances, once of which may be the act of 'fornicating' which her mother considers sinful (Winterson, 2007, p.54). This shows that the application of the feminist theory in the identification of the nuances of gender and sexuality in the dynamics of

religion and tradition presents a constricting space for the self-expression of women. The use of words such as fornicating instead of using the common term of 'sexual intercourse' or 'having sex' by the author in the form of dialogue by her mother is a tactical approach by the author to indicate to the readers the obsession her mother had with religion that led to complete ignorance of the facts of life. This approach creates a comical sense for the readers which creates an ideological and psychological ease for the readers for grasping the crude realities of hegemonic religiosity in the then contemporary society that restricted the expressions of gender and sexual freedom by women through its imposition of a patriarchal form of religion. These words might also impose the traditional ideological norms on the audience considering the variety in audience reception of the present text. Thus, the comical sense while using words in a particular way can also create a chain of thought that can justify the religious authority based on the reception and understanding of the audience.

The perils of religious imposition reflect through the hassles the narrator had to face in her childhood when her mother and the other religious ladies of the church such as Mrs. White believed that the narrator was experiencing a phase with the Lord, which made her go silent, and praised her for her religious virtues. They completely ignored the fact that the narrator had gone deaf and thought it was the Lord's blessings that she was distant and removed from the physical world, including her mother when the narrator wrote a note to her stating "Mother, the world is very quiet" (Winterson, 2007, p.24). This shows that the irony remains clear for the readers when this condition of being deaf by the narrator is found out by Mrs. Jewsbury, whom the religious ladies group, including her mother consider "not holy" for managing a choir group and not visiting the Church regularly because of her tours (p.25) who takes her to visit the doctor rather than her own mother. This plays the irony of life for the narrator as well as the reader which is presented in part comic nature to create a significant emotional cognition of the sociocultural condition of women in a society that is largely dictated by religion.

The orthodox religious nature of the society as explained in the novel can be reflected through the careful use of words that reflect comic nature as well as crude realities of the health conditions of women. The approach of Mrs. Jewsbury to visit the hospital to cure the deafness rather than constantly attaching it to religiosity can create a sense of consciousness that uplifts and prioritise the health of women over notions imposed by the religious aspects linked to the traditional gendered image of a woman. This indicates the way both the texts align with the notion of religion and cultural values as a confinement of the gender and sexual expressions of women through the use of language that create a rhetorical implication for the readers in their understanding of the texts where both the female protagonists are dictated and opposed by people who are related to them by flesh and attempt to impose their own views and practices on them which restricts the self-expression of gender identity by women through the hegemonic understanding of tradition, religion, and culture.

12. 6.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to identify how the female writers having different ethnicity and cultural history establish their gender and sexual identity in the white patriarchal discourse through the use of language as a tool of expressing identity. To that end, the paper identified three objectives which meant to address the implications of tradition, religion and culture in the expression of gender and sexual identities of women which is presented in the selected novels by their respective authors through the strategic use of language to create a rhetorical reading of gender and sexuality. The selected novels *Love in A Fallen City* and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* by Eileen Chang and Jeanette Winterson respectively presents the nuances of patriarchal practices of religion, tradition, and culture that lead to the restriction of the self-expression of gender and sexualities of the female protagonists of both the narratives. The application of the feminist theory in this regard identifies how these notions that are often perceived through hegemonic ideals reject the communal modernism leading to the individual confinement of physical and psychological expression of one's true self in the social identity politics. Considering the variety in audience reception, the reception of the chosen texts for this study might be subjective. However, normative gender roles and forceful behaviourism can create a sense of compulsion for every stakeholder of the society including men. This can lead to the normativity of the stereotypical aspects towards the marginalised sections such as women and girls in this context of society against the dominant force. Thus, texts align with the religious and cultural values as a confinement of the gender and sexual expressions of women through the use of language that creates a rhetorical implication for the readers in their understanding of the texts.

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