

# **Trajectory of Women's Writings from Fragmented Identity towards Creative Schizophrenia**

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towards Creative Schizophrenia

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*Dedication*

*To my mother,*

*Whom I find anew in the texts written by women*

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### Abstract

*Trajectory of Women's Writing from Fragmented Identity towards Creative Schizophrenia* is the study of articulation of sexual identity through language and genre of women authors. Through the literature review of theories by psychoanalysts, poststructuralist feminist linguists and postcolonial philosophers, the fragmented of sexual identity has been analyzed. Then by close reading of Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* (1983), Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not Only Fruit* (1985) and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera* (1987); a trajectory of representation of women's sexual identity from fragmented structure towards creative schizophrenia is traced out. It has also been shown how women's fragmented sexual identity befits the genre and language and styles the women authors choose as art crafts.

Key words: sexual identity, unconscious, fragmented identity, language, genre

## Introduction

“This course is designed in such a way that would intrigue the students to know more about English prose and would grow a keen interest in them for fiction.”

This is what our course instructor of *Introduction to Prose* said in the first class of my Fresher Year. After long seven years this still ring in my years and I can gladly say that while doing that course many of us already knew that we would do our major in English Literature. We fell in love with literature, the poetic language and how the authors are narrating the reality through language.

I grew a personal interest in the writings by women authors especially after reading Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Susan and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*. While my Undergraduate thesis was on madness and women in women's writing, I started to see women writers more as feminist agents while doing my Postgraduate courses. Especially reading the French feminist's works along with postcolonial women writers' works opened up a new horizon for me to look at women's writings. This was enhanced by the postmodern courses I was taking. I was amazed how these theories were showing me a possibility to go beyond the binary opposition of any kind of identity.

Elaine Showalter's fear that “[b]y the end of her freshman year, a woman student would have learned something about intellectual neutrality; she would be learning, in fact, how to think like a man” (Showalter 1971: p855) was proved wrong by ENH department as we were taught to resist and critique a text from gender neutral perspective; especially the readings of theories on masculinity during Postgraduate literature courses has helped me to see both women and men as the victim of constructed patriarchy.

Personally the trajectory of my interest on literature took direction from English fiction to English fiction by women and then especially towards fiction in English by women with working-class background who were writing not as a means of art but also to earn money and recognition.

The first chapter would give a detailed description of my knowledge that prompted me to choose working on this topic. I would try to explain how identity is always multi-faceted and never a monolithic characteristic. I would bring in views of Lacan, Freud, Said and Bhaba to explain identity and its fragmentation.

This multifaceted view of identity is reflected in literary theories as well. Poststructuralism talks about the many versions of a meaning and the postmodern theories say that there is no fixed identity or ideology. The third wave feminists apply these theories in their writing. Since women have more fragmented identity they feel more at home while writing with broken, fragmented sentence structure. I will also discuss the trajectory of women writings from broken consciousness towards the schizophrenic writing style. How women writings journeyed from feminine to female writings will also be shown here. So I would give a detail description of the poststructuralist feminist's works that I would be using to defend my arguments in this paper.

I would also talk briefly about the trajectory of women writers from the earliest women writers of English to the roughly contemporary women writers of fiction in English. And also what has made me particularly interested in selecting Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* (1983), Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruits* (1985), and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera* (1987).

In the second chapter I would talk about the portrayal of the construction of fragmented identity of women protagonists in the three novels. And in the third chapter I would talk about how these women writers are dealing with identity in their style of writing. I would see how the genre, literary tools, they are choosing reflect the very fragmented nature women's sexual identity.

Then there would be an overall analysis of women writers around the world especially in South East Asia and how there can be the extension of my thesis. In the end, I would conclude my thesis by wrapping up my thesis with a final word about my findings of the thesis.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Trajectory of language of depiction of sexual identity of women**

One has several identities. The whole concept of a human being is not essential but a contingent form of various identities. Here in my thesis I will focus mainly on sexual identity of women in the writings of women writers. Sexual identity is important because Freud said all human beings are sexual beings (Freud 1905). Especially for women sexual identity is important because this has always been used against women to keep low in the social ladder. Most often her own sexual identity becomes her enemy. Multi-faceted identity makes a human being. I have narrowed my focus to sexual identity because this is one identity that has created the patriarchal society and being used politically against a certain class of beings called women and also confining the men in a stagnant social construction of gender role. In this thesis I have narrowed down my focus to the social construction of sexual identity and its articulation. Now what is a woman?

The identity of women is constructed and contingent to many facts such as race, class, phallogocentric epistemology and many other factors. Sexual identity is also not fixed. It is a practice that creates a sex and not the ontological differences that create a male or a female (Butler 1990).

In many cases, that the 'female' or 'woman' is rather constructed through the dominating patriarchal culture. The dress, shoes stylized for women are often designed in such a way that would make her something less than a human being. The sexual identity has also used against women to keep them away from being educated. By the patriarchs the power of female deities was overturned and a continuation of patriarchal society started (Beauvoir 1949). In

phallogocentric epistemology, like religious scriptures Bible, Quran and seminal philosophical texts such as that of Freud's theories on sexual identity all sees 'male' as norm and 'female' as something less than or different than males. (Mitchell: 1982. p 8). So here I would give a detail review of the theories and texts that has created the base of this thesis I am going to establish.

### **Freud's view on identity**

If we want to understand identity, Freud's theories are a seminal text to get a view of how sexual identity is constructed in a child. Freud says in his essay "The Dissolution of Oedipal Complex (1924) about the rite of oedipal complex. His oedipal complex theory defines how a child acquires his/her gender identity. Both the boy and the girl give up the mother while the boy identifies with the father figure and the girl identifies herself with the mother. The boy replaces his first love object with other women when he grows up but the girl has to go through two task as Lacan says in her book *Feminine Sexuality* (Lacan trns 1982). First the girl gives up her love object and then she gives up her homosexual desire.

The suppression of the desire for the mother creates an unconscious which reveals in dream or in literature according to Freud. In his book *Art and Literature* (1985), Freud mentions that authors try to regain the pleasure that he or she once received in his/her childhood play by recreating the repressed desire in texts. Further, in the essay "The Uncanny" (Freud 1919), Freud says that literature displaces the repressed anxiety in a way that might not be the direct representation of the original anxiety or desire but still literature becomes the means of the expression of that what was hidden under the ego.

So reading of Freud's theories says us that while oedipal complex is the rite through which a girl or a boy comes to accept the sexual identity, this oedipal complex is also the first repression that creates the unconscious in a child. The repressed desire, emotions as an unconscious, then direct themselves towards either in psychotic problems or through the channel of dream, writing, etc.

### **Lacan's view on identity**

Lacan stretches the psychoanalytical theories further to find out how one identifies oneself for the first time as "I". In his essay "The Instance of the Letter" (Lacan 1957. Norton 1977) he says that in the mirror stage a child sees itself from the point of view of its mother. But when it sees its reflection in the mirror, its former idea of self-identity crushes and it enters the Symbolic Order of language. Now Lacan's notion of phallus is not anything real but a myth created by the language the child faces. He says "the phallus is a signifier...not a phantasy...[and] even less the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolizes," (Lacan trns 1982). It gets the identity of "I" by the language, though this same language takes its pre-given identity that was formed according to its Symbiotic relationship with the mother. (Lacan 1957)

In his essay "The Instance of the Letter" Lacan points out that an Unconscious is like a letter (Lacan 1957). He brings out Freud's books *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, Jokes and their relations in the Unconscious and The Interpretation of Dreams* saying that Freud deals unconscious as if it is language. Then he says "the indestructibility of unconscious desire' lies in memory that insists on reproducing itself in the transference" (Lacan 1957). Lacan also talks about how "dream-work follows the laws of the signifier" (Lacan 1957). He also elaborates that before the mirror stage a child identifies itself from the perspective of its mother and this notion of mother itself is very fragmented like just a hand or a breast or a face. So the child's identity is

always very fragmented, displaced with imaginary perceptions along narcissistic phantasy. (Mitchell 8) Unlike R D Laing's stand on human beings being the divided self (Mitchell 5) Lacan states that we all are always so constituted in a split and the idea of whole is just another illusion. He draws out from the works of Freud that unconscious is built like a language. It is not a split from conscious or linguistic ego but rather as sophisticatedly built as consciousness. Therefore, Lacan's reading of the psychoanalytical passage of the formation of sexual identity is determined by the language that a child gets exposed to.

French Philosophers and feminists lean widely on Lacan's psychoanalytical theories. They broadens the connection between the fragmented identity and the delineation of this fragmentation in the language. This fragmented identity is reflected in the literary theories as well. Derrida was the first person to mention the word deconstruction. He suggested a new way of reading text where one should deconstruct the binary oppositions of the novel. He also suggests that each word can create a new meaning and thus the reading of a text should be subjective as each reader has a unique background while reading the same text (Derrida 2001).

Deconstruction also merges with postmodernism and postcolonialism. Both postmodernism and postcolonialism detonate a space for the accommodation multi-narration, binary oppositions and dichotomies and the mixture of genres to express the fragmentation of the world. The poststructuralist feminist theorists further breaks the binary line between sex and gender and are trying to show that how both body and sex are constructed along with one's gender. It's through poststructural reading of the texts I would try to show how the women writers are writing their sexual identity. The poststructural feminist linguists analyze how women's fragmented sexual identity is articulated through the language. The French feminist linguists, also known as the

third generation of feminist, whom I would discuss in this thesis, are Lucy Irigaray, Helen Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Monique Wittig. I would link their theories with the gender theories of Judith Butler to understand better how for women language and sexual identity is interconnected.

Women's multi-erogenic organs give her a multi-faceted sexual identity (Irigaray 1977). Lucy Irigaray tends to see literature from the perspective of women's multi-erogenic organs. She says that since a woman is not a sex but many she uses the multi-narration, multi-layered narration to write her body and while dealing with women sexuality.

[W]oman does not have a sex. She has at least two of them, but they cannot be identified as ones. Indeed she has many more of them than that. Her sexuality, always at least double, is in fact *plural*. Plural as culture now wishes to be plural? Plural as the manner in which current texts are written, with very little knowledge of the censorship from which they arise? They remain rather unfamiliar pleasures in the sexual differences as it is currently imagined, or rather as it is currently ignored the other sex being only the indispensable complement of the only sex. (Irigaray 1977)

The "masculine specularization" of women's desire as concentrated only on vaginal pleasure certainly excludes women from their own sexual pleasure and thereby leaves a rather fragmentary life, Lucy Irigaray further adds. Her other sexual pleasure can only be responded silently, hiding from others the same way women had to use her creativity hiding her own identity and name to craft her creative pieces (Irigaray 1977).

Now we can bring Freud here saying if the repressed is expressed through literature then the repressed many sexuality of women reflect in the style of their writing. Since women's sexual identity is not monolithic, her expression or narration is also not monolithic. When the first text *Purple* uses multi-narrative to tell the stories of women, the second text *Oranges* uses multi-layered narration and the third text *Borderlands* uses both multi-layered and multi-narration.

Helen Cixous criticizes the phallogocentric language and phallogocentric epistemology that plays an important role in crafting women's sexual identity. She criticises the bible pointing out that it starts with the name of the Father and The son. She puts a question forward saying that then where does the mothers belong. In her essay "Sorties" Cixous says explains more how women write many "tongues":

Her libido is cosmic, as her unconsciousness is universal. Her writing also cannot help but go into the future, without ever inscribing or recognizing contours, during those vertiginous heights crossed by the others, and the ephemeral and passionate dwelling places that lie within him, with her, within them, which she inhabits just long enough to watch them as possible to the unconsciousness from which they arise....She allows herself to speak the tongue of a thousand tongues, sound without obstruction or death (Cixous: 1989.p 334)

Helen Cixous focuses a lot on the poetic language and believes that only poetic language is feminine and reflects the language that human beings develop during the symbiotic relation within his/her mother. She says in her essay "The Laugh of Medusa."

But only the poets not the novelists, allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless

country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffman would say. Fairies. (Cixous. Medusa 295)

Cixous then talks about how women should write. She believes that women should write their body. The way a women's body is confined, her soul and imaginary are also confined. She says that "by writing herself, women will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display [...] Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (Cixous 295).

In all the three texts that I have chosen for close reading, we see that women writers are breaking the silence of their confined body through writing. In the first novel we see that the whole novel is an exchange of letter between two women, the two sisters. In the second novel we see the protagonist herself is a revision of the genesis by her mother. Then the protagonist of *Oranges* re-writes the bible from a woman's perspective. In the third fiction we find the protagonist going beyond the dichotomy of man and woman and deleting the binary line crafting a new method of narrating history, which she terms as 'autohistoria.' This reflects what Cixous says:

It is by writing, from and toward woman, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem. (Cixous 296)

The rewriting of the history seen in the three novels, shows that women "unthinking" the history and rewriting not only the history of subalterns but also the grand history. In all the three novels

we find that the personal history of women blend with grand history of their culture and nation as Cixous reflects that “women unthinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield. In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women as well as national and world history” (Cixous 298).

Then Julia Kristeva picks up the theory of Lacan’s theory of a child’s self-identification through the point of view of a mother. She believes a poetic language is feminine be it written by a man or a woman. She points out in her book *Poetic Language* that every literary text consists of phenotext and genotext. Phenotext is the physical text that we read and the genotext is the emotions, drives, desire, repressions that created the text. The phenotext tries to create an order of the genotext but the chora, the repression occurred in mirror stage, pre-linguistic stage comes up and creates a schizophrenic nature in the texts. Kristeva claims that is why all the experimental texts are a deliberate fragmentation of the order (Kristeva 1984).

Now talking about capitalist representation of psychoanalytical theories by Freud and Lacan, we should also understand that if ‘women’ is seen as a class then there won’t be any class if we dissolve the class of men. Monique Wittig talks a lot about writing the female body by deconstructing the phallogentric language. She says in her essay that “once the class “men” disappears, “women” as a class will disappear as well, for there are no slaves without masters. (Wittig 548)” She further explains that “there is no possible fight for someone deprived of an identity, no internal motivation for fighting, since although I can fight only with others, first I fight for myself” ( Wittig 549)”

So if women writers are writing about the individual history along with the history of the nation and the world; they are reflecting what Monique Wittig says “This real necessity for everyone to exist as an individual, as well as a member of a class, is perhaps the first condition for the accomplishment of a revolution, without which there can be no real fight or transformation. (One is not Born a Woman 550)” For Monique Wittig this can only be possible in a lesbian relation. So according to her perspective it is through writing a lesbian body one can break the phallogocentric narration of a body.

However writing the body does not mean only the sexual body but also the ‘location of the body’ as Adrienne Rich says “to locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go (Rich 640). So when the three authors I have chosen to write about are writing the body, they are also writing the many factors that locate and create the body.

As Lacan believed that in the Symbolic Order, a child gradually gives in to the phallogocentric language and adopts the social norm of the language, the poststructural feminist stretch the theory further and says that how the repetition of acts performed on a body create the sexual identity of a child. Gayle Rubin in her book *The Traffic in Women* (Rubin 1986) says that if the social norm was that both father and mother take care of the baby equally, there would have been chances that the baby would grow up as a bisexual with equal attraction and desire for both sexes (Rubin 1986).

Judith Butler draws her groundbreaking theory that the ‘body’ is constructed by stretching the theories of Rubin and adds that there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that

identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be the “results”.

She says:

“the very categories of sexual identity of gender are produced or maintained in the effects of this compulsory performance, effects which are disingenuously renamed as causes, origins, disingenuously lined up within a causal or expressive sequence that the heterosexual norm produces to legitimate itself as the origin of all sex” (Butler 729)

Moreover, feminist writers deconstruct the female subjectivities by offering a new possibility for a new woman with a mish-mashed identity. Three such feminist writers are Donna Haraway, Gloria Anzaldua and Monique Wittig. Donna Haraway creates a “cyborg,” who is a blend between human and robot, Anzaldua brings the option of “mestizo,” who has no fixed culture, nation or language and Monique Wittig writes the ‘lesbian’ who is neither a man nor a woman. They talk about the language in border. They emphasize on a new language that transcends beyond any border.

Haraway says:

If we are imprisoned by language, then escape from that prison-house requires language-poets, a kind of cultural restriction enzyme to cut the code. [...] Moraga’s language is not “whole”; it is self-consciously spliced, a chimera of English and Spanish, both conquerer’s languages. But it is the chimeric monster, without claim to an original language before violation, which crafts the erotic, competent, potent identities of women of color. (Haraway year)

Now when we talk about women of colour we also need to keep in the mind between the oppression by the colonisers as Cora Kaplan cautions us in her essay “Pandora’s Box.” As Said talks about the construction of Self/Other dichotomy in his book *Orientalism* (Said year) and *Culture and Imperialism* (Said year) we also understand how the West has created a myth of ideal identity. The colonized community try to conform to that identity in vain. What they can do is just mimicking.

So Homi Bhaba’s stand on identity is that it is culturally based and that culture is also not specific but a mixture of many other identities. Most often identity becomes the representation of the mimicry.

In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no ‘itself’ (Bhaba 90).

Both Walker’s and Anzaldua’s texts concern a lot about racial mimicry while Winterson’s text also shows a mimicry if not of colonisers but that of heterosexual norms. And I would show how mimicry only splits the identity more unless as Anzaldua suggests it is blended internally with pre-colonial or symbiotic identity.

With the background of understanding how sexual identity is constructed from the point of view of psychoanalytic theories and how that identity can be articulated into the language as the French feminist linguist offer, I would now proceed to explore the genealogy of women writers.

### **Genealogy of Women Writers:**

Now I would talk about the genealogies of women writers. Like M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (1999) I too want to say that:

Our use of words like ‘genealogies’ or ‘legacies’ is not meant to suggest a frozen or embodied inheritance of domination and resistance, but an interested, conscious thinking and rethinking of history and historicity, a rethinking which has women’s autonomy and self-determination at its core. (Alexander and Mohanty 1999)

Studying genealogies help us to compare how women’s writers are winding their trajectory making a place in the canon of literature that is ruled mainly by male writers. Besides genealogies also show us specific experiences, identity, culture and history of women authors which helped them to craft the fiction they have created.

The earliest novelist of English fiction is a woman, Aphra Behn. She wrote from her experiences in the African colonies where she travelled with her husband. Her *Oroonoko* (year) is still now a very prominent novella if one wants to study postcoloniality and the gaze of woman. Then in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Ann Radcliff’s gothic novel *Mystries of Udolpho* (year) also was popular text among women. Professor Azim says in her essay “The Development of English Fiction” that [W]omen novelists dominate the nineteenth century, both as writers of domestic fiction (Jane Austen),

Gothic fiction (Charlotte and Emile) as well as of social realist fiction (George Eliot) (Azim 153).

Though Jane Austen's domestic fictions were praised by Virginia Woolf, who herself was a great novel writer of twentieth century, she condemns both Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot for writing in a pseudonym. She rages:

How Eliot's novels was ground-breaking and yet she wrote n a male pseudonym ( It was the relic of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late in the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sandall the victims of inner strife as their writings proves ought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. (Woolf 57)

The question arises if they had written in their own name would they have got any acknowledgment in the patriarchal literary space. Emily Dickinson who created her own style of writing poems was not even considered by her male publisher Higginson while Christina Rossetti while writing about love and sexual desire between women in the most subtle way had to imitate the male tradition of writing poems and had to take a another name to publish in a journal.

However, as if to satisfy the rage of a foremother, the contemporary women writer are not only boldly writing on their name but also courageously breaking the old male tradition of writings.

Woolf also criticizes the fragmented consciousness in Charlotte Bronte's eponymous heroine in *Jane Eyre*, "that is an awkward break. [...] her books will be deformed and twisted. [...] She will write of herself where she should write of her characters. She is at war with her lot" (Woolf Room 76).

Though Woolf thinks the sudden jerk or writing of one's own self, I have mentioned above how French feminists are advocating the women's writing of her subjectivity. Cora Kaplan too believes that

Bronte insists that even the confined and restless state could produce "many and glowing" visions. Art, the passage maintains, can be produced through the endless narration of the self, through the mixed incoherence of subjectivity spoken from subordinate and rebellious positions within culture. It was this aesthetic that Woolf as critic explicitly rejected. (Kaplan page number)

As Cora Kaplan says this 'many and glowing' consciousness of women have always been suppressed in the novel. Bronte's Bertha is a mad woman and had to die to give the docile woman Jane to get what she desires from life (Kaplan page number), Eliot's strong masculine girl .... Has to drown. Susan and Gubar question if patriarchal canon has left women of only the choice of angel and monster what will women author do? [quote]. While the new women writers are writing the body they are celebrating the many and fragmented psyche of women. The madness, schizophrenic nature of women is reflected in the broken, fragmented style of women's writing. One good example of this kind of writing can be Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) using a writing style called "creative schizophrenia" a term that I have borrowed from Simon Gikandi.

The writer who operates in the space between cultural traditions draws inventive energies from 'creative schizophrenia': speaking in an androgynous idiom, this writer does not have to choose between self and community, between private discourse and a national language, or even between the subjective experience and historical traditions. (Simon Gikandi 11)

I would link Gikandi's term "creative schizophrenia" with Lacan's unconscious stage of fragmented desire, identity, drives and Kristeva's symbiotic stage of chora. I would try to see if the first identity formed is very fragmented and chaotic (Lacan 1957) and poetic language reflects the splitting identity of chora stage (Kristeva 1982) then how women authors are using the "creative schizophrenia" to delineate the sexual identity of women which is also very fragmented.

Going back to Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) we know how Bertha Mason was silenced and locked up in an attic. Susan and Gubar in their book *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) says that male authors have created this myth of angel/monster dichotomy for women in such a way that many women falls in the trap and kills either the monster or the angle in their writings. Bronte's Bertha can be read a schizophrenic character in a medical who at times feel love towards her husband Rochester and on other occasions feels murderous towards him, she always stays calm seeing her brother Mr. Mason but one day inconsistently stabs him. Bertha cannot be seen and accepted with her dual nature whereas Jane, the angel, gets all the attention by the author. In my reading of the three texts in this paper I would try to find out how the contemporary writers are dealing with the fragmentary schizophrenic nature of women whom the patriarchy has shunned away.

It should also be noted that though Virginia Woolf succeeded in writing an androgynous novel *Orlando* (1928) she had to adopt a satirical, humorous and a mythical fairytale mode to craft the story of Orlando. Unlike her towards the end of twentieth century when Alice Walker, Jeanette Winter and Anzaldua are talking about the androgynous man and woman, they are placing them in realist context.

Elaine Showalter's essay "Female Tradition" talk about how the narrative style, content are changing. Like her I too have noticed that there is an "imaginative continuum" (Showalter 1982) in women's writing and this is what made me interested in writing my thesis on works by women authors. Then, Showalter talks about three phases of women's writing: Female, feminine and feminist (Showalter 1982). In this thesis I think Walker's novel can be categorized as feminine, Winterson's novel as feminist and Anzaldua's text as female. However, Showalter's accusation that "puberty, menstruation, sexual initiation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause- the entire female sexual life cycle- constituted a habit of living that had to be concealed" (Showalter 1982) are over come in the writings of women that I am going to analyse in this thesis paper.

While writing the taboo, the women writers are being innovative and creating new neology, words to write the body The use of English becomes more creative with the emergence of authors writing in English, such as postcolonial countries or African American women writers. Patricia Wauch says in her essay "Postmodernism and Feminism" that

Rather than searching for scientific proof or metaphysical certainty, or a structural analysis of economic or social inequality, we should now recognize that the way to understand and to change our world is through the artificial mutation and manipulation of vocabularies. There is no truth awaiting our discovery, only 'truths' to be invented through the creative uses of language. (Patricia Waugh 345)

Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One's Own* criticizes women's preference for writing journals and novels. The first two books that I have chosen are fictions, one is epistolary novel and another is semi-autobiographical novel. Only the third text that I have chosen is a mixture of two genres: personal essay and poems.

I have taken these three different genres to show how the situation the women are living in befits the genre and style they use, who seem to deal with roughly the same ideas sexual identity yet chose three different genre, writing style. All of them are from working class background and as Woolf wanted, they were writing not just to craft art but also to earn money.

Also the protagonist of these novels are somewhat struggling for similar goals, that is establishing one's identity. They are lesbians but here I have seen in my thesis the 'lesbian as a space rather than as an essence' (Farewell 102). When the narration of love and intimate friendship between has been delineated 'slantly' in earlier literature by as those of Emile Dickinson, Christina Rossetti and George Eliot, the contemporary women writers are more vocal about the sexual relationship between women. They use this homosexuality as a space to explore women's sexual identity further. Stenson says in her essay:

"When the disease model of homosexuality gave way to more current theories of sexuality, so did fiction by lesbians. [...] As the authors' self-identity has strengthened and become more positive, so too has fictional identity. Lesbian authors and characters have moved from an isolated existence to one that celebrates the plurality of their identities and their intersections with many diverse communities. (Stenson 224)

A lesbian women's sexual identity is more fragmented and tabooed about the writings of Rossetti and Dickinson. Analyzing all these psychoanalytic theories and poststructural feminist theories along with the readings about the genealogies of women writings have made me inquisitive to look for literature written by women and to see whether the theories I have explained above reflect on their writings, whether women while centralizing their focus on sexual identity they are actually going back to the stage of chora. So I have taken the novel of three women all of

whom are from working-class background and all of them are searching for a validation of their sexual identity. They are also not writing just for art's sake but also with a political agenda and also for earning money, the way Aphra Behn did many years back and Woolf wanted women writers to follow Behn as well (Woolf 1928).

Objective: I want to trace the intersection of patriarchal religion, class, sex and gender to understand how women's sexual identity is rather constructed than an essential facet.

Thesis Statement: Women's fragmented sexual identity constructed through the intersection of religion, class, sex and gender becomes befitting in the fragmented, pastiche style that they use to narrate the depiction of women's sexual identity.

## **Constructed Sexual identity of Women as an Intersection of Religion, Sex, Gender and Class**

Feminism will be able to break free of its belief in Woman, Her power, Her writing, so as to channel this demand for difference into each and every element of the female whole, and, finally, to bring out the singularity of each woman, and beyond this, her multiplicities, her plural languages, beyond the horizon, beyond sight, beyond faith itself...

Julia Kristeva in "Women's Time": 1981

"The body" appears as a passive medium on which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument or medium for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But "the body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender

Judith Butler, *Gender Butler*: 1990

Our identities are still constructed through social hierarchy and cultural differentiation, as well as through those processes of division and fragmentation described in psychoanalytical theory. The identities arrived at through these structures will always be precarious and unstable.

Cora Kaplan *Pandora's Box*: 1985

Women novelists today [...] see themselves as trying to unify the fragments of female experience through artistic vision, and they are connected with the definition of the autonomy for the women writers.

Elaine Showalter *A Literature of Their Own*: 1982

The third generation of feminists believes more in individual identity than positing a collective identity from the point of view of religion, class, sex, or gender. So in this chapter I would try to

focus on how women subjectivity is created through the intersection of religion, class, sex and gender and yet how this sexual identity is subjective in each woman's case.

Religion is the most totalitarian ideology that imposes the first sexual identity to a body. This is why all the three writers have spent a good amount of pages talking about the influence of religion in the construction of the sexual identity of their women. Showalter correctly analysed that feminist writers started to "attack the patriarchal religion" (Showalter 1982).

Moreover all these women writers have chosen to deal with the multiplicities both of an individual woman and women by narrating the psychosexuality of many women in the same text. Since all the three writers are depicting a strong loving bonding between women, we do not see much rivalry between women as a means of class distinction. Still we see how class factor affects the women's identity. Most importantly the heteronormative inscriptions of sex and gender on body construct the sexual identity (Butler 1990).

However while Walker's *Purple* questions the formation of heteronormative identity and Winterson deconstructs the patriarchal impositions, Anzaldua reconstructs the sexual identity that is beyond the binary oppositions of male and female.

The first book that is Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* starts with reminding the phallogocentrism in a religion by showing that how religion and patriarchy merges with one another. The patriarchal threat to remain quiet about the rape by her father also suggests that she can talk to God if she wants to but not to anyone else. The threat "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (Walker 1983: 1) depicts the silenced voice that Virginia Woolf and other feminist writers are encouraging the women to express. This threat also

shows that she can talk to God because even God is “patriarchal male supremacist, (Walker: 1983 ix)” as Walker writes in the preface for her tenth anniversary edition of the novel *The Colour Purple*. The initiation of religious spirituality in the protagonist’s life comes at the same time of her sexual initiation. The very first page of the book describes the rape of Celie by her step father whom she knew as her biological father. In the naïve and confused state of mind, being a ‘spiritual captive’ (Walker ix) Celie answers her mother’s interrogation saying the child is “God’s” as she “[don’t] know no other man or what else to say” (Walker: 1983 4). Celie becomes the symbol of Virgin Mary giving birth to God’s child. The feminist reading of Virgin Mary says that virgin mother is celebrated to suppress the woman sexuality.

Imperially written Bible and history create another effect on coloured women’s identity. Both Celie and Shug believed God was a white man. This reminds me of Tony Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye* (year) where Pecola too think that God has blue eyes and thus she longs for blue eyes. Celie’s notion of God is that “he big and old and tall and grey bearded and white” with “bluish-grey” (Walker 175) eyes. Shug laughs and says “cause that’s the one that’s in the white folks’ white bible” (Walker 175). Celie and admits and says that the God she is writing to is a man and thus like all other men He too is “trifling, forgetful, and lowdown. (Walker 173) Both Shug and Celie felt down by the image of their God. Shug confesses knowing her God is a white man, she first loses interest. Celie further says that “if [God] ever listened to poor colored women the world would be a different place. (Walker 173)” So, though we see that Celie serves the church whole-heartedly, deep inside her heart she is not happy with her God. The spiritual initiation of Celie silences her identity in the same way the psychoanalytical theory of oedipal complex represses a girl child’s homosexual desire.

### Rewriting the Ontological and Gender Identity

Alice Walker questions the essential identity of sex and gender. But she crafts the inquisitiveness under the heterosexual normative in such way that shows that she has not deconstructed the identity but rather shows a possibility of other facets. The central character of the novel is a lesbian but as we have seen in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), Haelequin Babin was not considered as a perfect woman. The then anatomy specialist asserted that she was a grown man and that is why she feels desire for women. So Celie too becomes deformed body. By the age of twenty she stops menstruating. Menstruation makes a woman remember every month about her body that is different than a male body as Beauvoir says in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) that "menstrual blood is peculiar, it represents the essence of femininity" (de Beauvoir 181). Now when Judith Butler is saying that she is trying to deconstruct the constructed sex, she is not saying that she is trying to dissolve the binary male and female. What she is saying how the formulation of a sexed body further oppressed the women. Butler says in her essay "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'" that [t]o deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorized" (Butler 397: Cahoon 2003)

Here we see that the deformity of her body makes her more valuable for marriage as her husband can have sexual pleasure as much as he wants without the fear of bringing more children to whom he would have to feed and clothe. Stopping the very menstruation, that makes a woman capable to marry as marital sex is always considered as reproductive sex, becomes the very strength as her bribe. I think Alice Walker, by telling the readers that Celie does not bleed

monthly and thus will never be 'big' again, prepares a foundation for Celie to come out as a lesbian. Gayle Rubin says in her book "*The Traffic in Women*" that "if women are exchanged, in whatever sense we take the term, marital debts are reckoned in female flesh" (Rubin 182).

We further see how when people becomes non-normative sexual and gendered being, how the family and kinships falls apart. Celie loses the symptom of being a female body but continues to be the stereotypical feminine woman in her family life. She takes care of her husband's children and keeps the house neat and clean. Though she does not feel that she is suffering thus because it is lot of women. She rather sees it as serving God. So though from outside, as it is from Albert's sisters' perspective or Sofia's reflection she is suffering being the wife of Albert, Celie herself transcends beyond the violence bestowed upon her by the patriarch of her house and sees it more spiritually saying she is just a servant to God. In one interview, Walker mentions that she has left her marriage because in marriage a woman becomes a servant. So she reflects that through the life of Celie.

However, neither Sofia nor Harpo feels this spirituality. While Sofia loves doing the entire outdoors chores, Harpo loves cooking and taking care of children and home. Sofia answers to Celie's amazement that Harpo never coked at home saying that "I bet he wanted to, she said. It seems so natural to him. But Mr. You know how he is." (Walker 57) This comment reflects Lacan's reading of psychoanalysis that says that a boy identifies with father figure because he believes otherwise he would be castrated by the father. Though Harpo is naturally inclined to do the works culturally known as feminine, he preferred to suppress those wishes as long as he was under his father's roof.

Nevertheless, the phallogentric society does not allow Harpo to remain happy with his feminine household chores. Michael says in his book that “We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control” Harpo (Walker 30) and men cannot meet these expectations they started to feel failed. He starts feeling castrated by his wife, the masculine figure who often reminds Celie of Amazon warriors. His inferior complex goes to such extent that he suffers from bulimia voluptuously eating to be ‘big’ (Walker 102) and strong like Sofia. Similarly, Celie thinks one reason Albert is nice to Shug is she is stronger and weightier than Albert, so he is afraid of her. Thus, when we undo the sex of our body, our gender roles also change and thus change the familial roles one play in a domestic atmosphere.

We also see that by identifying the sex with the same-sex parent does not determine the same-sex of a person as Butler shows in her book *Gender Trouble*. Sofia has always fought against the men in her family. Three of her brother supported her. She has also preyed with arrow and bow. So, though she identifies with her tyrant father in strength, masculinity, her desire does not go towards her mother. She remains straight. This also reminds me of Judith Butler when she says that identifying with the father does not always direct the desire towards the girl’s mother.

Though, in the beginning of the novel we see such non-normative ontological and gender identity, the books ends with the heteronormative characterization of the same people. We see Harpo has turned out to be a strong man. On the other hand, Sofia who always hated to do the household chores ends up taking care of children, cooking for the family. Even Mary Agnes who left to be independent singer is seen helping Sofia with kitchen work whereas Harpo teacher his daughter history of liberation day of America.

While the cultural construction of sex and gender norms build one facet of women's identity, the racial projection of identity brings another layer for women of color. The wisdom of women is suppressed by the internalized racial identity. Celie's mother's forward thinking and wisdom made her 'mad' according to the neighbors who the "plans she talked about were grander than anything they could even conceive of for colored people (Walker 158)." Celie's 'mad' mother is the lost mother Walker talks about in her essay "In the Search of the Garden of Our Lost Mother." Moreover, Sofia's strength like Amazonian Warriors though make her quite respectful in her family, this same strength is punished by the white Mayor and his wife. They did everything possible to break down the strength of Sofia. Like Celie, Sofia too gives in to the oppression in the jail and then by the white Mayor and his wife, realizing that being rebel only would make it hard for to get the freedom.

Not only that the colored women are suppressed by internalized racial identity or gives in to the racial power, they also try to mimic the white culture believing in vain that would give them some respect. Mary Agnes, being the illegitimate child of a white man, and thus with a yellow complexion, takes the disguise of a white woman to rescue Sofia from her punishment. Because she wants to be one of the white women, her own uncle rapes her to point her that she does not belong to the white community even though she is fathered by a white man. Mary Agnes narrates that "He say if he was my uncle he wouldn't do it to me. That be a sin"( Walker 90). As I mentioned above, Agnes remains what Bhaba says "white but not quite white" (Bhaba 1994). By mimicking, the black women are only bringing humiliation for them. Thus incestuous violence becomes a crime done by only whites, as the white fathers and uncles rape their daughters and nieces in Black society. Shug turns astonished knowing Celie was raped by her biological father as she "thought it was only white folks do freakish things like that" (Walker 103).

Finally though women's sexual pleasure is acknowledged in the text, their free sex life is not. The women in the novel whoever dared to lead a free sexual life either died or condemned or had to retreat back to 'home.' Albert's wife who like Celie's mother was never named in the novel, after being slighted down by her husband gets involved with man. But the boyfriend kills her off while she was coming back from Church. After knowing the way the church cursed Shug, it seems like an anathema by the church that the boyfriend kills the women who chose a sexual life out of home. Still, women's mobility is seen also as "the space of movement [from the male space to the female space] is at its center defined by female desire, the desire of one woman for another" (Farewell 102). Both Celie and Nettie escape the violence by taking shelter under a woman's roof.

Motherhood is another important facet of women's sexual identity that Walker explores in her novel. Both Shug and Celie are childless. Shug had to leave her children with her mother as she is a working woman and also because she admits that she is not very good with her children. And Celie's illegitimate children were estranged from her by her stepfather. In this context, both Shug and Celie find the maternal pleasure and warmth in each other "with no warped, psychological insights attending the exchange" (Farewell 102). However, as I mentioned earlier Walker only evokes new possibilities of sexual identity of women without being abruptly non-normative, here also both Celie and Shug ends up accepting their children. Shug had to fly to her son to make up for the maternal need she always bore inside her unknowingly and Celie gets united to her lost children.

Shug's notion that sexual initiation does not mean losing virginity unless she gets pleasure seemed to me groundbreaking and the perfect deconstruction of the concept of women's

virginity. Beauvoir mentions in her book *The Second Sex* how sexual act is always a war and how Romans called Messalina, an “unconquered” because no lover could give her “full pleasure” during copulation. Though Celie is raped by her father and conceived two children and consummated her marriage, she remains virgin till she made love with Shug. She not only stops menstruating but also becomes frigid. Her frigidity is not just her frozenness towards feeling sexual pleasure. Her frigidity comes from not knowing her body, not exploring her own sexual desire and pleasure that her own body offers her. Audre Lorde says in her book *The Uses of the Erotic* (1978) that “The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling [...] But the erotic offers a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation, nor succumb to the belief that sensation is enough” (Lorde 3)

The scene of the homosexual scene between Celie and Shug is remarkable because it shows neither had any prior experience of lovemaking with a woman. It is almost by chance they found out that they are enjoying each other’s caressing and thus while Celie turns out to be lesbian, Shug turns out to be a bisexual woman. However like Dickinson’s lesbian relationship, Shug and Celie’s relationship also remains hidden from the view of heteronormative hegemonic society. But Walker is narrating the story of women from 1930s and that time women were more confined than the time when Walker is narrating the story. Celie grows frigid again by her maddening anger against Albert knowing that all these he was hiding the letters from her. But Shug reassures her “titties gonna perk up, button gonna rise again” (Walker 131) and this becomes a premonition of Celie’s internal strength which can only be strong if she accepts her desires of her body, her several erotogenic zones as Irigaray talks about in her book *The Sex Which is Not One* (1977).

Moreover, Celie can choose to live her sexual preference only under the protection of her husband Albert. Socially she still remains Albert's wife, as she herself narrates to Nettie how Albert would come and save her from her suitors: "Everytime I go to Harpo's some little policy salesman git all up in my face. Mr\_ have to come to the rescue. He tell the man, This lady my wife. The man vanish out the door" (Walker 236). Beauvoir comments on her book *The Second Sex* that "A man is more annoyed by an active and independent heterosexual woman than by an unaggressive lesbian; only the first assaults the masculine prerogatives; sapphic love affairs by no mean run counter to the traditional distinction of the sexes" (Beauvoir 427). Nevertheless, in the end we see Albert has incorporated his feminine part in him. And this makes him more acceptable to the family and above all makes him in peace with himself. Kristeva says in "Sorties" that Admitting the component of the other sex makes them at once much richer, plural, strong, and to the extent of this mobility, very fragile. (Cixous: 1989, 235).

Finally, women's fragmented sexual identity is beautifully expressed by Alice Walker in the scene where Shug teaches Celie about the many erotogenic parts of women's sexual organs.

*Shug: Right down there in your pussy is a little button that gits real hot when you do you know what with somebody. [...] But other parts good too, he say. Lot of sucking go on, here and there, she say. Lot of finger and tongue work.*

*Celie: Button? Finger and tongue?*

*Shug: Here, take this mirror and go look at yourself down there, I bet you never seen it, have you?*

*Celie: Naw*

*Shug: And I bet you never seen Albert down there either.*

*Celie: I felt him [...] You come with me while I look.*

While Celie was absorbed looking with wonder at her own body and remembering how she felt good while breastfeeding her children and considering it as the best part of motherhood, she is halt by sudden caution from Shug.

*Shug: Albert and Harpo coming.*

*Celie's narration: I yanked up my drawers and yank down my dress. I feel like us been doing something wrong. (Walker 74-75)*

Celie's sexual identity becomes fragmented into many facets by her own reflection at mirror, which can be read as the mirror stage of Lacan, as she changes from this very day knowing she is different than what her sexual experiences with her step father and husband have taught her. Then Shug's gaze, though friendly create another facet. While the final 'masculine speculation' of the gaze of the men coming that stops her from her self-pleasure becomes the symbolical confinement of women's many sex referred by Lucy Irigaray (Irigaray 1977). Thus no matter how the characters are woven with a deconstructed sex and gender identity, it always ends up in hegemonic heteronormative structure.

### **Deconstructing the identity constructed by the intersection of religion, sex, gender and class**

Like the protagonist of the first chapter, the protagonist of *Oranges are not the Only Fruits* become a spiritual captive of religion since she has been adopted by her Mrs Winterson. Jeanette's identity is mostly determined by her position as an outsider in the religious

“subsociety, almost exclusively female, which is itself outside the dominant culture” (Klein 333) in which she has been brought up. As Bonnie Zimmerman observes “Jeanette’s coming out story, her understanding of difference, and her experience of maternal power [...] are placed within the context created by her particular class and religious culture, not divorced from it” (Zimmerman 230). Unlike the protagonist of the first chapter, Jeanette was brought up with special care from her mother. However the special care does not mean that her mother was very loving, instead she was a tyrant mother. Mrs Winterson believed Jeanette is the chosen to change the world. One conversation was almost mythical like that of any other spiritual avatar.

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.’

Unlike Genesis, the book of Bible, in Winterson’s chapter “Genesis,” the chosen one to save the world is not a male child but a female child. Mrs Winterson brings up her child teaching her all about Bible. Her trust on Jeanette being the chosen one is so strong that at the age of seven when she became deaf, her mother believed she is possessed by the spirit. However, in spite of her conservative faith on Church and Bible, she teaches her daughter not to trust the priests saying :

She told me all about the lives of the saints, how they were wicked, and given to nameless desires. Not fit for worship; this was yet another heresy of the Catholic Church I was not be misled by the smooth tongues of priests.

‘But I never see any priests.’

‘A girl’s motto is BE PREPARED’ (emphasis by writer, Winterson 15)

Though, an avid follower of Church, Mrs Winterson knows about the hypocrisy of the priests and the ways it discriminate or takes advantages of women. This also shows that though Jeanette is initiated into phallogocentric religion she is not learning to be submissive towards patriarchal culture. This can also foretell that Jeanette will grow up with abhorrence towards men.

When in the first chapter we have seen that Celie starts to feel disgust against men because of her sexual experience with her father as a small child who did not even know that time there is “nothing down there so big” (Walker 102) Jeanette too start to remain ‘prepared’ for any threat of sexual or unfair means from the priests. So being educated to be aware of the priests she is the only to notice that the priest is stealing the sandwiches while preaching at her home. The representation of priest stealing away makes the priest more human than Godly being.

Jeanette’s religious faith is further subverted by the school education. Her dark religious views are condemned by school teachers. The school becomes the institution against religion. It is due to her teacher reluctance to give good marks on her drawing, she slowly started motifs out of biblical characters. And since she didn’t find friends who matches with her disposition she started to avoid the company of her classmates and spends more time on library. Library gives her the privilege to read about literature George Eliot, Christina Rossetti and others who would later enlighten her about the possibility of a lesbian love.

Unlike Walker’s *The Color Purple*, in *Oranges* we see strong roles played by church women. They are taking most of the important tasks of the church, only the pastor is a male figure. So though brought up in a very religious ambience, Jeanette has reasons to believe in women’s strength. Jeanette says “we’d always had strong women, and the women organized everything. Some of us could preach, and quite plainly, in my case, the church was full of it” (Winterson

131). Still her lesbianism like in Herliquin Baben's case is seen as masculinity by the church. The Church council decided that since Jeanette is doing all the men's duties even preaching messages, she has started thinking that she has become a man. Only curbing her power can make keep her on her own place. Jeanette's mother says "having taken on a man's world in other ways [she] had flouted God's law and tried to do it sexually" ( Winterson 131).

Moreover, contrasting to Walker's novel, in *Oranges* homosexuality in women is more condemned than any heterosexual promiscuity. Besides, homosexuality in men is allowed to certain extent by the church. Once Jeanette exclaimed that 'at least they could hold their hands' (Winterson 131). Here after roughly fifty years of Beauvoir's observation about the attitude towards male homosexuality, we see how the scenario has changed to opposite dimension. Here male homosexuality is to some extent accepted in the society while the female homosexuality is completely prohibited.

Unlike Celie, who lives her lesbian sexuality under the protection of her husband, Jeanette protest against Church's absolutist power screaming on top of her voice: "to the pure all things are pure" (Winterson 45). Moreover when Church subjugates her power, she protest and declares to leave the church. The pastor becomes a little softer seeing her determination and allows her to take the bible, even then she sticks to her decision and says that she would leave the church. The last chapter where this takes place is named as "Ruth." She stops at Ruth because this book bible talks about a lesbian couple which the patriarchal church hardly focuses on. Though the bible acknowledges the lesbian relationship, in the end Ruth marries a man. Similarly the book ends showing Melanie not only has married a man but has also forgotten all the memories together with Jeanette.

The phallogocentrism in the Bible also prompts repulsion in Jeanette against men. Jeanette reflects during the Harvest Festival Banquet that:

*Father and Son. Father and Son.*

*It has always been this way, nothing can intrude.*

*Father Son and Holy Ghost* (Winterson 87)

Julia Kristeva in her essay “Women’s Time” also questions if “In the name of the Father, the Son... and the Women? (Kristeva 1981: p 222). Jeanette too questions and rebels against the rhetoric of religion but feels spiritual one with God. Though she leaves the church, she misses her God. She searches once more her God who was her nearest friend. Like Celie, Jeanette too transcends her religious views from phallogocentric performative act towards spirituality that transcends beyond the boundary of any binary opposition. Not only religion but other facts also made Jeanette choose her sexual identity.

### **The gradual inclination towards homosexual desire**

When the first novel, *The Colour Purple* deals with how not only the society but also the family structure itself is very heteronormative, here in *Oranges* we do not find any patriarchy in the family structure. The father of the family seems to be in a shadow all the time. Except the priests, all the major characters in the book are female characters. The narrator often speaks about her father as “her husband.” Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* (1992) talks about how black people are always there in the novels of colonisers as a shadow. The feminist reading of Morrison’s revelation shows women characters are also there in male writer’s novels as shadows and now Winterson is turning the dice on the other way round to show how unlike white male

writers, here Winterson is bringing the usually suppressed characters in the foreground of her novel.

Though in the beginning we see the protagonist's mother believes in religion and identifies herself more with the religious ideology but not particularly to the priests, the novel ends with her complete dependency on church and the chief priest. This again reminds me of Lacanian point of view of phallus. Patriarchy does not necessarily to be the father, but it is more cultural, sociological authoritarian figure (Lacan trns 1982). As Gyale Rubin says in her book *Traffic in Women* (1975) that if a child could be brought up with equal love of a father and a mother, then the child would be bisexual (Rubin 199). Here since the mother figure is more powerful and strong in the family, this might be the chance why Jeanette turns into a lesbian. Another reason might be that her mother has always taught her to stay safe from men even before she went to school. Moreover when a young man starts paying attention to her, Mrs Winterson teaches her not to allow any man touch 'on the part'.

But even before that when Mrs WInterson was seeing the old album of ancestors she would spend more time seeing two pages titled as "Old Flames" Once Jeanette saw a woman's photograph and when the inquisitive daughter asked Mrs Winterson about the girl of the photo, she secretly removed the photograph from the album. There was something in her secretive attitude that shows that she had a homoerotic relationship with Emily, one of her boyfriend's friend and the only women who has been placed under the criteria of 'old flames.'

Then Ms Jewsbury also told Jeanette she does not know how but she is quite confirmed that Mrs Winterson has "worldly knowledge." Therefore, there is this inkling of homoerotic element in the novel from the very first chapter. The Narrator's mother spends only an hour in bed with her

husband which gives a subtle notion that they hardly have any sexual life. Like Celie the narrator's mother too seem have a repugnance towards male body. Her hatred towards being pregnant is such strong that she preferred adopting a child. Then in her album with the photos of "Old Flames" (Winterson 15) there is a photo of a woman. Perhaps the quest for the lesbian love started from the narrator's mother's life. When the mother found none and took reclusive in being excessive religious and finding Lord in marrying someone beneath her. The question arises that whether she married beneath her so that she has an upper hand in the family as we see in the novel. The narrator's father is always in a shadow and hardly plays any role in the narrator's life.

Not only in her family, she also looks around her society and even there she does not find men desiring. She thinks men are like beasts and unlike fairy tales in reality kisses do not turn frogs into princes. She wonders what happens to the women who marry beasts whether they turn into a prince like the fairy tales 'Beauty and the Beast.' She observes her uncle who is all hairy and compares him with the princes of fairy tales and concludes that being hairy is the last thing a prince would have. This reflection is interesting to notice because Jeanette is focusing more on male beauty than their prospectus regarding job or social status. So here again Winterson is deconstructing the stereotypical masculinity.

She tries to get reclusive in library and explains how she takes the long way instead of the short-cut as there she finds couple and the "girls are always pressed against the wall." Again as readers we feel that more than the sexual act, the way and norms of sexual acts where the pressing of girls against the wall works as metaphors of sexual subjugation in a heterosexual relationship disgusts Jeanette. So while reading in library she thinks about her options:

*There are men in the world*

*There are women in the world*

*There are beasts in the world.* (Winterson 71 )

However she also wonders that to have babies some women ought to marry beasts. Though she thinks it is not fair to keep the beast free in the street. If she had a way she would have find a ration for the beasts in the area.

It's in the midst of this confusion of hers she gets involved with Melanie though Jeanette was not aware of what 'is happening' to her. She describes:

She stroked my head for a long time, and then we hugged and it felt like drowning. Then I was frightened but couldn't stop. There was something crawling in my belly. I had an octopus inside me.

And it was evening and it was morning; another day. (Winterson 86)

However, it is not out of nowhere that she fell in love with Melanie. This is where Judith Butler's performativity comes. Even before her awakening of sexual desire for Melanie, both her body and mind were constructing its own identity that is non-normative. However we then get the chance to call her lesbian because she chose to live her lesbian sexuality going against the hegemonic heteronormativity. When she says she would repent she said it just to fool the church so that she can get away from her confinement. Like all her other vices and virtues, she believes her homosexual desire is just her another demon.

Nevertheless, there is always a sexual threat no matter whether that is heterosexual or homosexual. When sexual violence has become something that women speaks courageously in

their creative writings, the same-sex violence is still something writers are afraid to speak about and they say 'slantly.' The narrator makes love with Jewsbury though she hates it and when she comes back to Jewsbury for Melanie's address, Jewsbury opens the door and says "I would say after a little while" (Winterson ). Even though the narrator remains silent what she does after entering Jewsbury's home, a reader gets the feeling that the narrator had to have sex with Jewsbury before getting the address. Moreover another time when she was found by the Lost Society about her second affair, she goes to Elis and emphasizes on how the comfort of just sitting together like a friend really mattered to her. In the end, we see the narrator do not greet Miss Jewsbury and refuses her financial offer and invitation. And it is that time the narrator becomes self-dependent who can choose when and with whom to she would make love. She even at one point says she would hold back her desires and must take the time to make an earth under her foot.

So, Jeanette Winterson's chosen sexual identity has formed mostly due to her way of growing up. While as I have mentioned how her mother had a great influence subconsciously on Jeanette to turn to women, her relationship with her mother turns worse after her coming out as a lesbian. Mrs Winterson never believed that Jeanette is possessed by demon. She always thought he daughter is just being a rebel. Mrs Winterson who turned down her own homosexual desire to be 'normal' than being 'happy' just could not found any sense in her daughter, who is not even her biological daughter to come out not only as a lesbian but moreover as someone who is preferring her sexuality over her long learnt religious knowledge and her connection with the church.

The mother was struggling hard to be the 'normal' accepting the hegemonic heterosexual norms and even went further to accept the council's decision that "being messenger is men's job." The

heterosexual perspective of phallographic church and the patriarchal homophobic society reflects Freud's perspective that women tend to be homosexual as a result of "masculinity complex" (Freud 1953. P 265). In spite of living the life of celibate, Mrs Winterson cannot escape from being termed as a whore, her own daughter Jeanette says that "if there was anything called a spiritual whore, my mother was one" (Winterson 132 ). Later we also see she has painted the white roses into red and Jeanette wonders uncomfortably what she and the pastor doing behind the door in the kitchen. It seems that while Mrs Winterson has suppressed her homosexual desire, living a life almost that of a celibate, she is actually involved in a platonic, spiritual marriage with the Pastor as her favourite book is *Jane Eyre* were she changes the ending and retells the story to her daughter where Jane marries Mr. River. Rosemary Curb reflects that "Heterosexual daughters, [...] are more likely to experience rites of passage which facilitate separation from mothers in socially sanctioned ways. [...] The lesbian daughter has no clear-cut rite of separation" (Curb 356). Jeanette's comment on her mother and Mrs Winterson's attitude towards Jeanette's homosexual identity create the whore/virgin as an influence of the heteronormative and heterosexual hegemony of patriarchal society.

### **Reconstructing the sexual identity as a new mestiza**

Gloria Anzaldua, in her fiction *Borderland/ La Frontera* (1987), creates a new possibility of sexual identity of woman who embraces both femininity and masculinity as well as many other plural identities in her. She says, "as a mestizo, I have no country...as a lesbian, I have no race...and that as a 'feminist' I am cultureless" (Anzaldua 43). Anzaldua, who like Anzaldua and Winterson, comes from a working class background of a minor ethnic group, boldly refutes the American culture of institutional religion and absolutism of patriarchal power. In her book, she

delineates the “cultural assumptions and a worldview which contrast sharply with those underlying most non-Indian literature” (Dyke 339) of American or White canon. Anzaldua makes a connection to all her fragmented identities which are derived by the multiple colonization of her Chicana culture and the new borderlines created as an effect of colonization. It is through unifying all the fragmented facets of her identity, Anzaldua believes one can be a true mestiza woman. While unifying all the broken pieces of her facets, a mestizo woman does not have any fixed nation, culture or race, thus each woman becomes idiosyncratically unique while accepting other women with particular individualities. Anzaldua’s construction of mestizo woman with plural identities then becomes the celebration of schizophrenic identity in a woman.

Gloria Anzaldua reconstructs the sexual identity of Chicana women in the most possible multifaceted varied pattern. She tries to create the Chicana Identity of women in such a way that she ‘learns to juggle cultures’ (Anzaldua 101). As in all indigenous culture, for a Chicana woman, religion and culture blurs at a point. For her religion is more like a mythology that Malinowsky observes “mythology is the sacred tradition of a society... a body of narratives woven into their culture, dictating their belief, defining their ritual, acting as the chart of their social order and the pattern of their moral behavior” (Malinowsky 249). So Anzaldua reclaims the deities like *Coatlicue*, *Cihuacoatl*, *Tonantsi*, *Coyolxauqui* and *la Llorona* who were subsided by the male deities of Aztec rulers. She condemns how the patriarch of Aztec rule for empowering male deities over female deities because during the reign of female deities, the society was more egalitarian and there were less violence in the society. “The tribal God Huitzilopochtli killed his sister, the moon goddess Malinalxoch, who used her supernatural power over animals to control the tribe rather than wage war” (Anzaldua 54). The Chicana culture do not hold the history of a place where “the women flee to safer ground and establish their own societies, carefully

protected from intrusion by men” (Crowder 243) but rather belongs in the same society with men and still without the patriarchal violence. She condemns the ruling elite of Aztec nation for they had “subverted the solidarity between men and women and between noble and commoner” (Anzaldua 56). Thus throughout her book she tries to undo any binary line constructed between man and woman, or class or race distinction.

The religion first crafted the identity for Aztec women. Before the Aztec rulers became powerful and tyrannical, ‘people worshipped the Lord and Lady of Duality, *Ometecuhtl* and *Omecihuatl*. Before the change to male dominance, *Coatlicue*, lady of the Seroent Skirt, contained and balanced the dualities of male and female, light and dark, life and death” (Anzaldua 54). Anzaldua believes that there should be a third state beyond the duality and that is the ‘plural personality...operating in a pluralistic mode” (Anzaldua 101) and thus urges her people to accept *Guadalupe*, the version of *Coatlalopeuh*, brought to Aztec Indian culture by Spanish rulers “who is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the old world and the new, of the religion and the culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered” (Anzaldua 42), a fusion of multi-dimensional symbol of Chicana being.

Moreover, Anzaldua accepts the both monster and angel that duel in women’s psyche and try to break the women from the dichotomy. She again goes back to the silenced history of women goddess *la Chingada* and *la Llorona*. She complains “the true identity of all three has been subverted- *Guadalupe* to make us docile and enduring, *la Chingada (Malinche)* to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and *la Llorona* to make us lone-suffering people. This obscuring has encouraged the *virgin/puta* (whore) dichotomy” (Anzaldua 53) She demands that “the struggle of *mestiza* is a feminist one” and “the first step is to unlearn the *puta/virgin* dichotomy and to see

Coatlopecub-*Coatlicue* in the Mother *Guadalupe*” (Anzaldua 106). Thus while accepting *Guadalupe* she reconstructs the harmony between oppressed and oppressor, native and foreign culture, old and new world; by accepting the raped mother (*la Chingada*) and the mad mother (*la Llorona*) who first kills and then seeks her lost children, she accepts the plurality, the schizophrenic identity that exists in a woman.

But to accept the plurality that exists in one’s body, she needs to be self- exploring and find out the Shadow Beast, a term she uses for women’s psychosexual autonomy. The tradition of silencing the women is innately embedded in Chicana culture. The three directions that women can turn to are at “church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute or to the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons” (Anzaldua 39). These self-autonomous women are condemned by the Chicana culture and yet one should go beyond all the outside authorities. She recalls her past:

At a very early age I had a strong sense of who I was and what I was about and what was fair. I had a stubborn will. It tried constantly to mobilize my soul under my regime, to live life on my own terms no matter how unsuitable to others they were. Even as I child I would not obey. I was “lazy.” Instead of ironing my younger brother’s shirts or cleaning the cupboards, I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. Every bit of self-faith I’d painstakingly gathered took a beating daily. Nothing in my culture approved of me. (Anzaldua 38)

Here again we remember how writing is never a vocation for women to choose as her identity according to the social law. The deviance from the social norms as a writer makes her feel like a

queer who are often killed in Chicana and Mexican culture. The difference in women's life other than her onus as a woman and a mother can never be accepted by the society. The writing gives her another facet of identity that she struggle to bear in the patriarchal canon of writing. So, when she writes herself and while writing writes her culture, nation, history, body. Again with Anzaldua we see that according to Kristeva she is metaphorically going back to the stage where she sees herself through her mother by reclaiming the lost female deities and according to Cixous while writing her history she is also writing the history of her culture and nation. She breaks what Woolf demanded from women writers that she ought not to write herself but to write her characters. And yet her holistic narrative as a project to create Chicana identity reflects what Woolf says in her essay that "life is not a series of gig lamps but a halo" (Woolf 1928). She says that "queer are the mirror reflecting the being different, being heterosexual tribe's fear: being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human" (Anzaldua 40). Her own writing too creates the horror. And this reminds me of how poetic language is related to chora, pointed out by Kristeva.

Feminism is not only one woman's empowerment but a collective solidarity between women. So when Anzaldua gets her autonomy with her education, she not only writes her personal stories but an autohistory to reclaim the lost egalitarian sexual identity. She also not only writes women sexuality but also spends lines of male sexuality. She writes a whole poem about witnessing the rape of a man by colonizer men. The way Butler sees relationship between America and Iraq as a relation between patriarchal man and a woman (Butler p. 294. Cahoon 2003), Anzaldua too sees the colonizing men as a victim of patriarchy. Though like Walker, Anzaldua too sees male oppression is more anglo than being general and says "machismo is actually an Anglo invention" and thus the "Anglo, feeling inadequate and inferior and powerless, displaces or transfers these

feelings to the Chicano by shaming him (Anzaldua 105). She feels that men are more confined in the stagnant gender roles existing in heterosexual society. But believes only gay men has the courage to express the woman in them. So she suggests for a “new masculinity and the new man needs a movement” (Anzaldua 106). Her egalitarian view on queer and homosexuals do not remain only in personal sphere, nor even in her poems, but she goes beyond that and together with two other faculties and students in her University talks to homophobic students who were afraid of their homosexuality.

Her dissatisfaction against heterosexual absolutism and heteronormativity is so strong that whenever she is trying to explore the Shadow Beast she tries to overcome the obstacles formed upon her body by heterosexual norms. She says

We try to make ourselves conscious of the Shadow-Beast stare at the sexual lust and lust for power and destruction we see on its face, discern among it features the undershadow that the reigning order of heterosexual males project on our Beast. Yet still others of us take it another step: we try to awaken the Shadow Beast inside us. [...] On the face of the Shadow Beast we have seen not lust but tenderness; on its face we have uncovered the lie. (Anzaldua 42)

The above quotation also shows that this shadow beast is also a female sexuality. Anzaldua said that she needed forty years to listen to the shadow beast, the snake inside her. This can be read as an acceptance of her lesbian nature not only personally but as solidarity with other homosexual women around the world.

She talks about how being aware of one's desire, one becomes more spiritual. She says that by accepting the *Coatlicue* one embraces her desire and that makes her peace with her inner self. She resolves *Coatlicue* is the symbol of "the darks sexual drive, the chthonic (underworld), the feminine, the serpentine movement of sexuality, or creativity, the basis of all energy and life" (Anzaldua 57). Thus along with accepting one's 'docile' self, she should accept her dark sexuality as well.

Finally Anzaldua explains the spirit of women's psyche that Walker and Winterson talks about in their book. She explains everyone living a borderland becomes sensitive towards the sixth sense, which she terms as *la facultad*. She says that

Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest- the females, the homosexuals of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. (Anzaldua 60)

Only through experiencing this soul, one can turn towards the Self from I. Anzaldua is more assertive than just seeing herself as a victim and thus transcends from "I" to Self and believes in the multi-faceted identity that a women has. The first thing that women should do is to bring back the dual identity of *Coatlicue* and accepts the *Guadalupe*, the Goddess who not only brings a bridge between men and women but also the culture of rulers and ruled. This soul or *la facultad* can be read as the unconscious of Lacan or the stage of chora mentioned by Kristeva. The final celebration of schizophrenic, chaotic identity can only be achieved by accepting both the symbolic order and symbiotic order that both Kristeva and Lacan speak about, as I mentioned

in the first chapter. Thus, Anzaldua crafts a reconstruction of sexual identity of women through accepting all the plurality that exist in her body and psyche.

### **Conclusion**

Now comparing the novels, we can see that women's write ups hardly concentrates only on personal, rather it transcends to other fecundities that holistically create a myth of sexual identity of women. Therefore, we can see that women's sexual identity is constructed as an intersection of class, gender, sex, and religion and is not essential norm but contingent on many different facts. The protagonist on the fiction I have discussed here have transcended from the performative patriarchal hegemonic society into a spirituality that breaks the binary oppositions of class, sex and gender. While Walker and Winterson talks about the fragmented identity of women, Anzaldua unites the fragmented identities of women to celebrate the schizophrenic multiple reality of women's sexual identity. In the next chapter I would see how Walker, Winterson and Anzaldua are using the literary tools such as language and genre to reflect the fragmented identity of women and whether the schizophrenic sexual identity can be used as a creative tool in the creative crafts of women authors.

## Women's creative craft of sexual identity through language and Genre

Narrative is simply there like life itself... international, transhistorical, transcultural

Ronal Barthes *Music, Image, Text* (1977)

A writer must assume both a particular and a universal point of view, at least to be part of the literature. That is, one must work to reach the general, even while starting from an individual or from a specific point of view.

Monique Wittig, "The Point of View: Universal or Particular?" *Feminist Issues* 3 (2) (Fall 1983): 68

In this chapter I would discuss how the authors have crafted women's sexuality through language. In the last chapter I have seen how Walker, Winterson and Anzaldua have shown the fragmented sexual identity of women. As language is unconscious, according to Lacan, and Kristeva too says that a text can be read in two ways as phenotext, the physical structure of the text and genotext, the unconscious, desire, psyche that created the text, I would talk about both the style and background of the authors. They are not only deconstructing the phallogentric writing style of male canon of literature but also reconstructing the language and genre to write women sexuality. Walker uses the epistolary novel as a communication between two sisters living in Africa and America to show the discriminating black/white dichotomy to construct the sexual identity of African-American working class women in the 1930s South America. Winterson uses multi-layered narration to show the internal split of her sexual identity. And Anzaldua deconstruct the colonial English language and breaks the sentence structure to genre into many layers to reflect the celebration of the plural identity of 'mestiza' women and thus makes the schizophrenic nature ingrained in women as a creative tool for her fiction.

Walker's epistolary novel becomes the metafiction when after the novel ends she comes in to say in the last page that "I thank everybody in this books for coming" and sign as "A. W., author and medium" (Walker 262). She wanted to narrate the stories of her ancestors living in 1930s Georgia.

Alice Walker is an African-American writer born in 1944. Growing up in the share-cropper's family she was in the midst of poverty. Yet her mother was determined to send her to school by working eleven hours a day to pay for her college. Though as a child of a sharecropper's family she was expected to help her parents in the field. Her mother protested saying "You might have some black children somewhere, but they don't live in this house. Don't you ever come around here again talking about how my children don't need to learn how to read and write." Her mother's strength remained ingrained in Alice Walker's mind and she later wrote an essay called "In the search of our Mother's Lost Garden" where she describes her mother's creativity and the need to go back to the tradition of foremothers, "guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength-in search of my mothers' garden, I found my own" (Walker p 24316, Norton) This is not the autobiographical narration of the author, yet the subjective narration of "I" gives it the flavor of an autobiography. Walker says in the interview she felt a connection with her ancestors while writing this novel and felt as if not she but they are the ones writing this novel. So Alice Walker becomes the truthful mediator and the author of the stories of her lost mother. Alice Walker chooses epistolary novel as genre because the love, desire, sexuality, and gender norms can only be questioned in secrecy by women of 1930s. Walker is not trying to create a Utopian story, but just trying to make a true representation of her ancestors.

The letters also become the contact zones between two sisters living in two different continent, in two different context. Inderpal Grewal in her book *Home and Harem* (1996) points out that "contact zones are everywhere and are contained in particular discursive spaces that embody and control the narratives of encounters with differences" (Inderpal 4) Thus letters become the strongest literary tool in the epistolary novel to depicts the opposite position of African who have been enslaved in America and who are still living in Africa. The letters also represent the private, closed space only where women can talk about sexualities, about the most intimate sex relations, talk about sexual oppression without the fear of being condemned by the society.

The multi-narrative expressed through letters depict the plural voice or facet that can be found in history. The West created the Self and Other dichotomy to put the oriental in high standard (Said 1978). But while post-colonial writers write history they do not singularize their narration but gives the voice to the oppressors as well. For example Jean Rhys in her book *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1999) gives voice to both the anglo male patriarch and also to Bertha whose voice was silenced in the narrative of a white woman, Charlotte Bronte's narration in *Jane Eyre*. Besides, as the letters do not communicate between Celie and Nettie, they create a spacio-temporal gap between the narrations of the two sisters (Hayden 1987). This becomes then the true depiction of lost ancestors about whom Walker is writing after many years. Finally the multi-narration of the novel through the letters of women shows the idiosyncratic African-American women each of whom has a different story to tell. As Judith Butler says we should not make woman a general term, so here too each woman has been given a voice (Butler 1990).

Walker uses language very politically in her novel not only to speak to her ancestors and living African-American but also to give voice to the silenced mother and sisters of her community. She uses African-American language because this would make the book available to the African –Americans she is writing both about and for. In an interview with *The Guardian* she says, "if I were using a more standard English, which in their time would only have been spoken by the people who oppressed them, I could not express this experience - it would have been frightening to them" and so she wanted to use the language which the people about whom she is writing actually spoke.

Then she gives voice to the women through blues songs. These songs are particularly African-American speciality derived from the limbo journey in the indent ship (Simon 1992). To depict the multiple identity of women, Mary Agnes who gets the colour complexion from her white father and thus known 'yellow' rather than a 'black' girl. She is more fragmented than a 'black' girl because she is neither black nor white but a mixture of two. She sings "they calls me yellow/ like yellow be my name/ But if yellow is a name/ Why ain't Black be the same/ Well, if I say Hey black girl/ Lord, she try to ruin my game" (Walker 92).

Further Walker shows Celie speaking like a man in mind while feeling sexually aroused seeing Shug in red dress: “Girl, you looks like a real good time” and this is something she observes that “men say stuff like that to women” ( Walker 77).

Very subtly Walker use her symbols to demonstrate a possibility of egalitarian society and the freedom of woman. She brings the old tradition of African-American women of weaving quilt with pieces of many different clothes. The quilt not only shows the multi-faceted nation but also the poetic talent of women (Walker Garden). Then out of so many things Celie becomes interested in making pants for woman though culturally it was high culture fashion especially for Africa-American women. The pants made by a woman who has never travelled becomes a paradoxical metaphor for travel and mobility for women. Her use of colour also shows the sexuality of women. Celie makes a pant for Shug where one leg is purple and another is red. Shug is vibrant with desire, happiness and her free sexual life and thus red symbolises her inner eroticism whereas she is also in deep love with a woman whom she desires sexually also. And purple expresses the colour of her homosexual love with Celie.

*Oranges are Not The Only Fruits* (1985) is a semi-autobiographical novel by Jeanette Winterson which depicts the coming out story of a lesbian teenager who confronts and go against the church and gradually chooses to be lesbian. Winterson grew up in a working class with a mother who was a ‘monster’ (official website of Winterson) and wanted to make Winterson a missionary. In the preface of 1991 edition of this novel Winterson narrates how dinginess was suffocating her. It is that time she was writing this novel as the only means to overcome the poverty and frustration of no job. When the first chapter questions the phallogocentric grand narratives and phallogocentric society and language, this chapter would show Winter is confronting directly the phallogocentric grand narratives and phallogocentric society to deconstruct the sex of her body.

Jeanette Winterson is deconstructing the grand narrative of religion through her semi-autobiographical novel *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* not only by mixing genres but also by retelling the grand-narrative of religion, incorporating pseudo-myth and literary allusions. I would see the connection between her life and the shadow of that in her creative writing. Being brought up to be a missionary, Winterson has depth of knowledge on Christianity and Bible. She seems to be another version of the white missionary in Walker's novel *The Colour Purple* who makes her missionary knowledge a recluse to live an anonymous life. Only here, the protagonist Jeanette is far more stronger as she leaves the church and chose to live her own life.

Winterson uses retelling of Bible, multi-layered narration and a subjective tone as her tools to tell her story. She chooses eight books of Bible as the title of her eight chapters. The first five books are called books of law and here too in the first five chapters we see the heterosexual laws ingrained in the society. The last three books focus on finding the home, that is Palestine. So in Winterson's last three chapters as well we see how she comes out a lesbian, and accepts her sexuality.

The chapter ends at the Book called Ruth of the Bible where there is the depiction of a lesbian couple. This chapter seem to depict the Woolf's way of starting the book "But..." Though it is the last chapter, the book does not seem end here. In fact it leaves the readers of the new beginning of a new possibility, a hope. The story seems to be the continuation of where Woolf stopped Chloe love Claudia... elaborate and make it proper...

Multi-narrativity of the same tale of the protagonist can be read by the light of Lucy Irigaray's *A Sex Which is Not One*. The way a woman can experience sexuality in many different erotogenic zones, the narrator also showing that like many women she is also not one. Especially the fact that she is a lesbian she is not getting the vaginal pleasure, but that does not mean that she is getting any less sexual satisfaction as she gets equal pleasure from other parts of her body. Gerard Genette in his essay "Narrative Discourse" that we should give special preference to spacio-temporal narrative and the act of

protagonists in that continuum. Nettie's letters came to Celie when Nettie has already left America, she has grown old and many of the issues about the oppression of Blacks in America does not impact on Celie as it would have done if she has got the letters while those were written to her.

Retelling the protagonist's story in multi-narration by reference of Bible and the ancient Greek literature of Sir Perceval and by creating a pseudo-myth break the phallogocentric epistemology, Winterson create a new dimension of women's writing by incorporating the pseudo-myth about a women's quest along with narrating the story of Sir Perceval's adventure. Sir Perceval and the narrator have the same quest as both of them are struggling with same-sex love that the society and religions condemns and prevents them to satisfy. Unlike Alice Walker, Winterson do not use multi-narrative, but a multi-layered narration of her quest for her love. Hayden says "Hayden White from "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" that "far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for windowing experience with meaning, narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (Hayden 265). Hayden also says that we need to construct a mythic representation of reality as reality itself "wears a mask of meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience" (Hayden 265). Again here go back to Lacan's idea of Real as myth. Like Celie who was experience multi-sexuality while unraveling the monolithic sexuality of her, Winterson too represent the many sex and gender roles by narrating the story of her own sexual awakening and search from many different genres.

As Orientalism shows how spirituality is linked to East and science is linked with West, the women writers seem go beyond geographical binary line and exemplifies Jungian psychoanalysis of spirit as a part of unconscious. Winterson says in one of her interviews that writers do not need to go to East to find myth and spirituality as the Christian Bible can still help writers to find the archetype for their books

However though Jeanette says in her interviews she finds it 'faddish' to borrow eastern spirituality in western literature as they still have their own spiritual, mythical resources which they still can deconstruct

or give new meaning, she herself uses African shamanism, voodoo and other Islamic allusions in her novel. Still it does not seem 'faddish' rather being brought up in the missionary culture, she discloses how these missionaries are bringing back artifacts from Africa or India. Moreover her allusion from different cultures and religions only shows her acceptance of differences existing in the world. The first mention of multi-cultural artifacts is from her memory of seven years told by Mrs Elice. Later we see that she is only person who is very accepting towards her sexual difference and choice, her lesbianism.

This I would read as what Lucy Irigaray posits as women's writing as it evades the male singular narration towards a diversity the way female body do not have monolithic phallus but multiple sexual organs and erogenous zones.

There is also this wrong notion that homosexuality is a very new topic whereas it was always ever since Bible was written. This is the reason Winterson brings the book of the Bible called Ruth, the story of love and strong bond two women. The fact that she deconstructs the cliché saying that time heals everything also tends to express that women has a long trajectory line and they cannot just forget what happened earlier to other women.

Winterson says in her preface she wanted to craft the story in a new fashion. She says that "Oranges marked the beginning of my experiment with style, structure and language [...] It is the duty of every generation of writers and artists to find fresh ways of expressing the habitual circumstances of the human condition" (Winterson xv).

Her transition from preacher to a writer is reflected in the new style she uses for writing. Winterson believes it is better to be a 'prophet' than being a preacher. Here she represents what Lyotard says about postmodern writers what Lyotard says about the postmodern writer who "is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to

the text or to the work (Lyotard 337). Thus, while Winterson is deconstructing the grand narrative, she is also recreating a completely new style of writing different not only from the male tradition but also from the tradition shown by the foremothers of literature by women.

### **Creative Schizophrenia to overcome the literary tyranny**

Among all these three writers Anzaldua has the most fragmented life, language and identity. She is a Chicana writer with hardly any Chicana literary genealogy to follow. Writing seems to her a form of spirituality. The pastiche of prose and poems to ‘transform someone is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is nahual, a shaman’ (Anzaldua 88)

Anzaldua crafts her narrative in multi-language that is the core language of Chicana people. She feels that the Chicano Spanish is a ‘bastard language’ and ‘not approved by any society’ (page number not mentioned in the book). Still her choice of language reflects what Ngugi O’Thiongo says about African languages that the speakers of every little tribe should do what Shakespeare did for English language, what Tolstoy did for Russian language (O’Thiongo 1986).

She divides her narration in many different parts like that of Kate Millet to show how in every sphere of life she is subjugated but also to create a new consciousness for women, a creative schizophrenia. Finally she sums up all her in one essay called “New Consciousness” and then in poetry part she sums up all her messages in a final part called El Retorno. This writing style reminds me of Doris Lessing’s style in which writes *The Golden Notebook* (1962) where she tries to write a separate diary for each different sphere of her life. But ultimately in the golden notebooks she unifies the all the separate narrations and also does in such a way that the author becomes androgynous.

The horror that Kristeva talks about can be seen in her poems where she depicts the rape of both man and women by the white male rulers. She breaks the illusion that most male poets created by depicting the beauty of woman. Even when Robert Browning was portraying his necrophilia towards his lover whom

he has just killed, we see him how he is depicting the beauty of her hair. Here Anzaldua breaks that illusion and depicts the horror of horror. The poet becomes more 'abjected' as told Kristeva in her book *Powers of Horror* when she crafts the poem from the perspective of the rapist. This reflects what Derek Walcott ponders in his essay "The Muse of History" that "the great poetry of the New World does not pretend to [...] innocence, its vision is not naïve. In such poetry there is a bitter memory and it is the bitterness that dries last on the tongue" (Walcott 372). As Monique Wittig suggests she also writes the body with new vocabulary. She uses poetic language to express her thought. She beautifully expresses the lovemaking between two women with new images:

A cool tendril pressing between my legs/entering./Her finger, I thought/but it went on and on./At the same time/an iciness touched my anus,/and she was in/and in and in/my mouth opening/I wasn't scared just astonished/[...]Looking down my body I saw/her forearm, elbow and hand/sticking out of my stomach/saw her and slide in/I wanted no food no water nothing/just her-pure light wound inside me./My roommate thought I was/ having an affair./ I was "radiant" she said. (Anzaldua 172)

To depict the "mosaic of cultural fragments" (Craw 91) of Chicana culture, Anzaldua embeds a portion without any punctuation in the chapter called "The Coatlicue State." Similarly she writes another poem "Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone" in the same manner with run on lines not maintaining the semantic structure of a sentence. So not only the sound and metaphor but even the visual presentation of Anzaldua's writing portrays the fragmentary schizophrenic nature of a Chicana women's sexual identity. Not that Anzaldua writes about the fragmentation of the women's psyche and sexual identity but she herself gets rather schizophrenic while writing. She says writing makes her ill. She cannot eat and think properly while she is writing. She believes pregnancy of nine months with a baby is much easier than the "multiple pregnancies" of a writer. Thus her writing exemplifies the true creative schizophrenia.

Therefore the women writers are reflecting their fragmented identity in the fragmented structure or narration they are using as style for their writing. By being subjective towards their choice of literary tools

women author are representing the idiosyncratic women in their fiction and thus de-stereotyping the myth of woman body and sexuality. Looking at the writing style of these three women writers closely tells us now that women are trying to deconstruct the phallogentric language and genre to give a new space for women with plural identity. This may infer that while the patriarchal created the myth of heterosexuality as Lacan told which I mentioned in the first chapter, these new languages may change the hegemonic perspective or heteronormativity and constructed sexual identity of women. In the next chapter I would try to make an overall analysis of the three texts to share my opinion after reading them closely to find an interconnection between language and sexual identity.

## Overall Analysis

Every writer will have to find her own voice, and her own vision. Inevitably, a woman writer writes as a woman, not as a generic woman, but as the (highly specific and idiosyncratic) woman she is.

Toril Moi, "I am not a woman writer" 2008

Conscious is power. To create a new understanding of our literature is to make possible a new effect of that literature on us. And to make possible a new effect is in turn to provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects.

Judith Fetterley "On the Politics of Literature" 1998

The aim of the thesis was to explore how women's sexual identity is constructed as an intersection of religion, class, sex and gender and how women writers articulate this construction of sexual identity as a reflection in the language and genre they choose for crafting their creative pieces. Through a close reading of the fictions by Alice Walker, Jeanette Winterson and Gloria Anzaldua, I attempted to analyze the diversity of contingent acts that construct the fragmented sexual identity of women and also how they are delineated in the genre and the language used to depict the constructed identity.

My overall analysis of the three text *The Colour Purple* (1982), *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruits* (1985) and *Borderlands/ La Frontera* ( 1987) has changed my opinion in the beginning that I made about the phase of each of these books that Showalter talks about. *The Colour Purple*

being told in a heteronormative safe zone to narrate non-normative sexual identity can be said as feminine while *Oranges Are Not The Fruits* with a protagonist who confronts against the church and family to accept her own sexual identity can be categorized as feminist. Yet Walker's novel become feminist by the independence and feminist agency of Shug while Melanie's yielding to the heteronormative social expectation by suppressing her sexual subjectivity towards the extent of being bovine can also be seen as feminine. So both these texts along with the text by Anzaldua can be categorized as feminist texts.

The close reading of the texts has also shown how the sexual identity is gradually constructed as an intersection of religion class, sex and gender along with racial identity. This reflects Lacan's theory of the construction of self as I have mentioned in the literature review (Lacan 1970) and also Judith Butler's theory that the construction of a sexuality identity is an act of performativity. While Walker's fiction and Winterson's fiction are bildungsroman, the third fiction depicts a pan of history of Chicana culture. So, in all the three texts we see a gradual construction of sexual identity.

All the three texts show that women writers have a pattern of writing that is very unique. As Wordsworth has said that one has to be in nature to write a poem on nature, women writer's schizophrenic identity befits them the genre they are using. So the fragmented nature of a genre that is a feminist style of writing follows more the call of stage of chora than following the male tradition of postmodernism. However, the term postmodern philosophy breaks the binary line between male and female, and thus women writers when write try to go beyond their body that is confined under the sexual identity of femininity.

My critical and close reading of these three texts have enlightened me personally as I could see how these writers are crafting the art of fiction according to what the French poststructuralist have suggested. Moreover these texts have given me new language to talk about and see women's body from the perspective of idiosyncratic woman rather than from a class of women.

In the beginning of my paper I was trying to search a psychoanalytic influence on women's writing. If Freud and Lacan talk about how unconscious is reflected in language, then the French feminists say that it is by writing one's body the unconscious gets reflected (Cixous 1975). Moreover, Julia Kristeva says that any poetic language is feminine (Kristeva 1980). So when women writers are writing creative pieces they go back to their homosexual relationship with their mother. This stage established as chora by Kristeva is fragmented, haloed by phantasmatic aura. And the only closest depiction of this stage is supposed to be fragmentary. Though the earliest literary critic like Virginia Woolf condemns the fragmentary consciousness of women writers, the French feminists believe that writing the woman body would psychoanalytically be fragmented as women's sexual identity is very fragmented (Irigaray 1985).

The fragmentary style that these authors use to depict their sexual identity reflects the French feminist's suggestion as women's sexual identity itself very fragmented. Moreover, the fact that they chose a homosexual protagonist help them to depict the possibility of a sexual identity breaking the binary opposition of man and woman, as the class of lesbian devoid itself from the identity of man and woman (Wittig). But they use it more because their fragmentary subjectivity befits the genre and style they are using. In the first book, Alice Walker is an African-American women and her national identity "African-America" itself is fragmented by two nations, and with colonial history she has a past through her ancestors in Africa, and a present in America. So there

is the fragmented temporal identity as well. Further, first by the history of slaver, then her own personal history as a sharecropper's child, all created a multi-faceted broken identity. Therefore, The epistolary genre as a contact zone between two nations becomes then the most efficient tool for Walker to express her fragmented identity. The letters received years after they have written also depict the temporal fragmentation of Walker's colonial identity.

In *Oranges*, Winterson's fragmentary identity is constructed by her displacement in a subsociety of church and also which is also very female. It is her in-betweenness that create the psychic gap from which she gradually constructs her own sexuality as well as write this semi-autobiographical novel. Her multi-layered narration reflects the pluracity that Luce Irigaray talks about. The portrayal of female subsociety reflect Lacan's theory that identity is not constructed through phallus as a penis of father, but the Law of Father, here it was the church and the patriarchal and homophobic society. Winterson's choice of retelling the Bible's theme stories in different color and aura also comes from her experience as a preacher and teacher of Bible in the church.

Finally Anzaldua's novel goes back to the chora, the displaced, fragmentary identity that one should embrace. Anzaldua repeatedly stresses on going back to the past to identify oneself with the power of female deities. And those deities were manifestation of plural identities. She writes the woman body more closely than the other two writers. She creates new metaphors and imageries for depicting the lovemaking between two women and thus comply to the example drawn by Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body* (1973). Thus the women authors seem invest their own subjective experiences in their writing. While incorporating their experiences the women writers tend to transgress beyond the horizons of individual and social construction of self. All

these writers centralizing the sexual identity, show how identity is constructed as an intersection of religion, class and gender and thus goes beyond their personal history, as Cixous suggested to the women writers (Cixous 1975).

Moreover the century long trajectory from the fragmented consciousness towards creative schizophrenia can also be seen in these three fictions that I have worked. While in the first fiction, as it depicts the women of early twentieth century, we see the creative and intelligent women had to be mad and die like Bertha of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). The second fiction depicts the women of 1980s as strong and powerful than the men and almost as an mimicry of patriarchal men, especially the tyrant mother of the protagonist. And the third fiction celebrates the androgyny in a woman and the fragmentation that it brings with plural identity and makes the schizophrenic reality as a tool of creativity.

When the first novel uses the proper form but just break the singular narrativity to break the concept of absolutism, the second fiction brings in multi-layered version of same personal narration to show a how a story can be told in different ways and the third fiction breaks the form, genre, semantic structure and even the genre to create the schizophrenic nature of women psyche, or the stage of chora. Thus my observation after the close readings of these three texts is that women writers are creating unique style of using the language that they were silenced for a long time to articulate the fragmented sexual identity.

Lastly I would talk a bit more on the trajectory of women's writing towards "creative schizophrenia." Walker deals with black/white dualism by the exchange of letters between two sisters, one living in "Black" Africa and the other living in 'White' colonial America. Then, Winterson reflects her internal splits through the multi-layered narration. But Anzaldua unifies

the chaos in an androgynous mind, the breakdown of female psyche and the splitting of into several parts by cultural, linguistic and individual subjugation of sexual identity in her fiction by accommodating multiple languages, different genres, both structured form and writings without any punctuation. Thus her art craft of fiction becomes the true depiction of ‘creative schizophrenia.’

Though it is not the part of my thesis but I think it would be interesting to see how men write their sexuality. Since male sexuality is constructed as well, it can be studied, whether men too would give central importance to sexual identity to write love and intimate bonding between men. The new way of depicting sexual identity in literature would also help to break the constructed stereotypical sexual identity of both male and female. The concluding remark is the depiction of idiosyncratic construction of identity would always be unique in its own way.

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