

Celebrating The Fragmented Whole: Sadat Hasan Manto's Heroines' Way To Happiness

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Abstract

The act of storytelling specifically in the literature is constructed to understand the intricate nature of identity. Identity as an independent construct is a very strong premise in literary texts because of the possible enacted of human communication is enacted in the world. Identity is like a kaleidoscope that consists of different small pieces of colored glass and mirrors signifying different identities. Same like the changing patterns of colors and image which change according to the amount of light it absorbs the narratives of identity in the literature also changes according to the assimilation of stories and context. Hence, literature becomes the best mirror to reflect different aspects of the social identity through the social constructs and struggles. The purpose of this study is to conceptualize different constructs of identity with the narration as an important component of identity formation through the concept of the fragmented whole in the works of famous Indian writer Saadat Hasan Manto. The purpose of this study is to re-conceptualize women's identity by giving examples of Manto's heroines.

Keywords: Identity, representations, narration, Manto, fragmented whole.

Introduction

Origin and Background of Identity

Identity is a social construct that tells who you are, what you think of yourself, and how are you perceived and viewed by the world. Identity refers to the set of traditional characteristics which provide recognition to a person or thing in society. It is what makes a person distinctive and unique in the world through self-conception, determination, and social presentation. Identity as a theme in the literature is associated with the artistic contribution of the writer who can sometimes be easy to associate with and sometimes complex and unfathomable. Writers often construct characters who challenge social constructs with their act and move. Hence, to understand the character in literature, it becomes necessary to contemplate the norms of behavior and contextual background of a literary text. However, the construction of identity is influenced by the stereotypical views of a character's culture, class, and gender as shown through the

complicated narration by the writers. Identity is often articulated in the literature so that the reader can understand and relate to the characters and their emotions.

Literature makes our identity by shaping our consciences and social constructs through strong and influencing narratives. Strong narratives are formed by developing empathy and self-awareness with the people and see the society, world, and their struggle from their perspective

Identity is used as a strong premise in many literary texts. For instance, William Blake in his poetry 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' constructs various cultural myths and identities to highlight his romanticist views ideas and his concerns with individualism in an elusive and multifaceted manner. Another prominent writer Seamus Heaney constructs her characters through individual reputation and ancestral heritage in her work 'Beowulf'. In the 19th Century, realist writer George Eliot in her novel *Silas Marner* constructed the identity of her character as an outsider by challenging the idyllic identity constructed by the society and community.

Identity is one of the prominent themes across several forms of literature. To understand the behavior and actions of the character, the readers require to scrutinize a character's identity. As Dan McAdams rightly said, "If you want to know me, then you must know my story". Human beings are 'tellers of tales' (McAdams, 1996) and 'storytelling animals' (Walter Fisher, 1984). The storytelling and narrating are to understand the complex nature of identity-based on observation and perceived knowledge (Josselson, 1995). Therefore, the narrative of identity is an assimilation of pieces of stories to form a salient sense of self.

The first motivation of this study looks at narrative as a foundational concept of identity and the second motivation looks at the exploration of Manto's heroines to validate the theories of identity.

Manto as a writer

The stories and characters selected for this study are the creation of Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), an eminent Urdu writer. He is known for writing on some serious issues like partition, migration, and social identity. He wrote for marginalized peoples, openly mocking orthodoxy that sought to suppress some voices. Manto's characters are prostitutes, madmen, and pimps who are mostly constructed at a constant struggle with identity, contradiction, and archetypes. Manto was a fearless champion of the truth and was disdainful of any kind of hypocrisy. They are often nameless people whose human essence and relentless quest for identity and dignity he sought to explore. What Manto constantly tries to point out through his stories is that society has failed to provide succor to those who are most in need. It's a dog-eat-dog world; only the fittest survive. But even in those circumstances, love flourishes and dies, and small human deeds stand out for their poignancy. Manto's stories shock the reader with their graphic yet humane descriptions. It is not just his writing techniques but also his keen observation of society and surroundings. Manto says, 'A man remains a man no matter despite his poor conducts', 'A woman is branded a whore, even if she were to deviate for one instance'. Manto had once famously written, "To the men who say that women from 'good families' must come into the world of cinema, I have a question- What is it that you mean by 'good families?'"

Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze how the narration is a foundational concept of identity;

2. To explore how Manto's heroines form the fragmented whole of the identity.

Literature Review

The concept of the narrative of identity finds some place within sociological and psychological discussions. The definitions of narrative and identity are fragmented and vary across fields (Kraus, 2006). Narrative identity demands the individual to make an identity by integrating life experiences into a story of self that provides purpose and a sense of unity in the life.

To justify the use of narrative of identity, this study will review foundational theories of identity and will explore where the narrative of identity resides in Manto's stories.

Narrative: A Paradigmatic Shift

Life anticipates telling and draws meaning from the narratives of life (West, 1987; Bochner, 2001). Although life stories may be based on some reliable facts which are not determined by them (Bochner, 2001). The lack of factual determination for life stories is the problem of argumentation and reasoning can only be removed by discourse about the human condition that confined to rational standards of study (Fisher, 1985; Risman, 2009). The concept of narrative knowing challenges the positivist claims about knowing and knowledge (Mumby, 1993; Taylor, 1999). Hence, the rational world paradigm (foundation of identity theories) sees narrative as the result of puzzles that are solved through evidence and reasoned discourse (Rowland, 1987; 1989). The narrative makes stories important that are seized, organized, and make sense of the phenomenal world through stories (Banks, 2004). These stories become an important part of the everyday interactions narrated by many people in different contexts (Langellier, 1989). Thus narrative becomes important to understand individual identity and role of the character in the stories (Hinchman, 1997). Therefore, it is important to explicate the idea of the narrative of identity in the stories. For that first it is required to understand the idea of identity (England, 2010).

From the perspective of social production of individual identity and self it is important to understand self-meanings (how individual view the self on the understandings gleaned from everyday interactions), develop self-understandings (how individuals understand the self by concerning interaction with others), (Blumer, 1962; Kuhn, 1964; O'Toole, 1968; Lo Conto, 2008) and build self-concepts (the mental images of individual self, based on the performing meaning of self) (Burke, 1981; Cressey, 1953; Dinitz, 1958; Denzin, 1972, 1975; Reckless, Reitzes, 1980; Mutran, 1984).

Theoretical perspective

Identity

Identity theories are constructed to show how identity affects psychological processes, socialization, and behaviors. This study explores identity theories to look at the effects and process of identity formation. Therefore this section will focus on a select set of foundational theories of identity formation that have important place in building and developing the concept of identity. This study will explore the nature of identity theories and the need to capture the role of narrative in identity formation by looking at different theories of identity.

Foundational Theories

Erikson: Psychosocial theory of development.

In discipline of developmental psychology, Erikson originated the psychosocial theory of development (1959). He explicated eight stages of human development in the identity. These stages of identity are infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Human identity is formed and developed in these stages as life progresses. In these stages, the development of human personality and fluctuation of identity constantly goes on till the end of life. In each stage, the self or ego suffers a crisis that needs to be resolved before moving to the next stage. In the first stage i.e., infancy, the human must resolve whether to trust or no other humans. This chosen identity becomes an overlap between 'whom I think I am and what others perceive me to be' (Vera, 2005). The same happens with the other stages of identity formation for which Erikson talks about healthy identity formation which directly leads to psychological well-being and physical self-acceptance. This healthy identity formation will help in building the trust that 'significant others will recognize and accept us'. This resolution becomes a part of the identity with the shift into early childhood. The human development process of Erikson is a source of validation for a person's chosen identity (Vera, 2005).

Erikson 's human identity formation stages are used from a post-positivist perspective in the literature (Freilino, 1985; Marcia, 1988; Peterson, 1990; Franz, 1995; Slater, 2003; McAdams, 2006).

Mead: Identity and symbolic interactionism

In 1922, Mead gave a lecture entitled, "A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol" which helps in bridging the gap between social psychology and sociology through philosophy. This framework can be found in the symbolic interaction which has been the foundation of the sociological theory (Callero, 2003). According to the symbolic interaction, human behavior is determined by the ascribed influential and subjective meaning to a situation, not by the objective facts of a situation. This meaning is acted upon following symbols that are part of social constructs. These symbols become the language that humans use to construct reality (Berger, 1966; Domenici, 2006). The same is the case with the self or ego which is never fixed and constantly redefine and revised through the social interaction with generalized others (Clausen, 1968; Weinstein Deutsch berger, 1963; Stryker, 1983; Johnson, 1992; Butt, 2008).

Tajfel and Turner: Social identity theory

Further, the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner says that an individual's desire to belong to a certain social community and identification with others enables to epitomize certain self-identity to enhance personal self-esteem and self-worth ((Tajfel, 1986; Nesdale, 2001). This self-identity formation further leads to self-categorization and social comparison. Self-categorization allows one to see as a part of larger social identities. (Stets, 1996). The social comparison allows placing self and ego into a role (such as gender, class, ethnicity, etc.).

Stryker: Identity theory

Identity Theory (IT) proposed by Stryker (1968, 1987), includes social and psychological perspective of identity formation by following a common set of principles. These common set of principles are the actors in a social structure that categorize each other which is known as role enactment. According to this identity theory the self or ego rises in the context of social interaction through the instruction of socialization. Hence, identity is defined as a set of meanings that sustain the self (Stets, 2000). This self

comes is comprised of multiple identities through name and role of external processes and others in the identity formation. Self allows the individuals to play different roles in the society. It brings an ideal identity on the basis of social support and rewards received for the enactment of that identity.

Gergen: Postmodern identity

In looking at foundational identity theories, it is important to look at both ends of the philosophical paradigm. Gergen in *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*, outlined major components of postmodern perspective of identity formation. Human beings in social contemporary life presents the self-saturated by media and fragmented in nature with all the technological advances (Gergen, 1991). All the human beings appear to each other as single identities, unified of whole, however, with social and self-saturation, each individuals comes to harbor a vast population of hidden potentials. These selves are relational and constructed within relationships to such an extent that the self and ego only exists with other relationships (Gergen, 1991).

These identity theory presented above shows the influence of social structure in forming the identity or behavior of the individuals and the internal dynamics within the self that influence the behavior (Burke, 1997; Burke, 1981, 1991; Cast, 2002; Stets, 1996, 2000; Tsushima, 1999; Risman, 2004, 2009).

Fragmented Whole

A fragment is a small piece come off a larger piece or whole. Identity is fusion of how the individuals see themselves, how they interact with other individuals, and how they define their existence internally. Individuals make observations and interpretations of the surroundings and tell a story about what they believe they know (Josselson, 1995). Therefore, human beings understand and make sense of self and ego in the world through experienced and encountered stories of life. Our identity is formed through the narrative and is reconfigured throughout life within the narrative. This discussion is not only about the linear narrative theory but also about the abstract pieces of the story brought into everyday interactions. Individuals use narratives to reconstruct a sense of self (Young, 1989). There is always an acknowledgment of identity that is narrative in both process and nature. In the retelling of stories, identity emerges and finds cohesion and coherence in the narratives. Stories exist because of the identities we construct and the identities exist through the assimilation of the stories in current identity studies. The question, then comes up, how the stories of everyday life used to construct the identity. This question is answered through the theories of narrative of identity, focusing on the process of construction that allow the identity narratives to understand why individuals undertake certain behaviors, viewpoints, and ideologies. To fully explore this question of identity construction, this study broaden current views of identity and narrative to include less structured and more fluid explanations. In discussions of narrative as a paradigmatic shift it is an implicit understanding that humans use narrative to make sense of life (Fisher, 1985, Bochner, 2002; Roberts, 2004).

Thus, the study presented above clearly indicates a gap in understanding of how narratives are used in the process of identity formation.

3. Methodology

The research is qualitative and explanatory in nature. The mode of analysis is close reading and textual analysis of Manto's works. After the close reading of Manto's selective stories, the analysis of the

characters in the stories was done based on the characteristics drawn from the theories of identity and narrative. Manto's short stories were used as components of analysis, along with the researches available on the databases such as various articles, essays, books, etc.

Delimitation

The study deals with the narrative identity issues delimitating itself to the issues of identity and the relationship between identity and society. This study is also limited in terms of stories selected. Only six stories from the translated collection of Manto 'Manto's World' (2000) by Khalid Hasan were used to analyze the characters. These stories are Das Rupay, Siraj, Mozail, Kali Salwar, a Woman's Life, and Odour.

Result

Women in Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories

Manto was labeled as being primitive, sarcastic, and vulgar because of harsh and taboo topics. He openly talked about women sexuality. Manto is known to have portrayed women as he saw men without creating distinctions in their morality or making judgments about them despite their roles rather than treating women as sexless objects or having repressed their sexualities.

Raza Rumi in *Reclaiming Humanity: Women in Manto's short stories*, tries to analyze the unique perspective of Manto's heroines. She says by observing that Manto's heroines are 'complex, strong, and ambiguous metaphors of humanity' (Rumi, 2012). His heroines appear as defiant even in the taboo and social marginalization circumstances." (Rumi, 2012). The heroines in Manto's work are portrayed as sex workers and victims traditionally cast away by society. The humanist perspective of Manto shows how the dregs of the earth like swindlers and prostitutes innate humanity and proves better than the moralists and the pious. Through these strong characters, Manto criticizes society for treating them in an ill manner by showing their humanity on account of being impure and immoral. In Manto's world, these heroines deal with basic survival issues by fighting against the norms made by society.

One such story by Saadat Hasan Manto is 'Dus Rupay' translated as 'Ten Rupees'. This is the story of a girl called Sarita, the juvenile girl, who is almost forced into prostitution by her mother, enjoys her casual outings, and is always supposed to be on the receiving end. Sarita is portrayed as young, bubbly, full of life and vitality. She is not ripe and professional to enter into the field of prostitution according to the society. She changes the dynamics of her position by returning the money in the end saying 'this...why should I take this money?' In a sudden 'role reversal' she comes out as a 'giver' and not a 'taker'. Manto describes Sarita as not beautiful and fair-skinned but as stout. Manto implies by introducing her with the generic third-person pronoun instead of her name, to address all the girls of the society. Das Rupay serves as an unnerving reminder of everything that's at stake for and taken away from a young girl when she is raped.

The irony of Sarita's innocence, as revealed in Manto's signature plain-speak, is that she considers whatever happens to her on the 'stone-cold benches of Worli' or on 'Juhu's wet sand' completely normal. Something she presumes happens to all girls. In Das Rupay, Manto contrasts Sarita's love of riding cars with her dread of closed spaces. Her claustrophobia and unease with such hemmed-in spaces give one an unsettling insight into the trauma girls caught in similar situations must go through. In telling Sarita's story, Manto also shows how the agency of masculinity drives men to commit such acts with brazen impudence.

The young men who have paid for Sarita's 'services' feel they are free to harass her. Deeming the girl as one's personal property is the hallmark of patriarchal agency. The sense of authoritarian ownership can stem from money, as in the case of Sarita's clients, or from the superiority of class, caste and simply from the chromosomal happenstance of being born as a male. Das Rupay stirs and shakes as much with its social commentary as with its literary brilliance.

In another such short story, Siraj, the heroine Siraj who is defined as weird, rebellion, and lives on her own terms. She resists the social norms instead of becoming a victim of her circumstances. She chooses self-respect over love. She plays the role of a prostitute who makes all her customers run away on one pretext or another. Her pimp has a soft corner for her who takes her to Lahore, where she admonishes her coward lover. She gave the impression of being slightly annoyed with everything, with Dhondoo and the lamp-post he always stood against, with the gifts he brought her and even with her big eyes which ran away with her face.

In Mozilla the heroine Mozail, a free-spirited Jewish woman who flirts with Tarlochan but does not pay any heed to marry him. She lives on her terms without any filters and ultimately dies while trying to save Tarlochan and his fiancée. She chooses to stay true to herself, unapologetic, and brash, even right before her death. Her most distinguishing character trait was her individuality which makes her stand apart. She gives her life away to save another man. Her independent thought is another important trait that makes her stand apart. She lives and dies on her terms. Manto's characters became famous because of the humanitarian features that were embedded within them. The women in Manto's writings had diverse personalities and held their individualistic grounds. Mozail then, completely naked, confronts the Muslim rioters, who seem to be distracted by her. One of the rioters offers her his sheet to which she replies 'Take away this rag of your religion – I don't need it.' Through this story Manto depicts how a woman is valued in society following her appearance. Mozail was a free-spirited woman who has control over her life. She puts aside her religious leanings to save the lives of two individuals of a different faith. She is intelligent, courageous, independent, and far-sighted – unlike several men that surround her. Women's bodies have been used to mark territories since times immemorial. She lends her robe to another woman which leaves her naked. When a man belonging to a group of Muslim rioters offers her a sheet to cover herself, she refuses. She says that she does not need the 'rag of their religion' to save her dignity. These short stories by Manto do not take sides. They are a social commentary on the carelessness of the Indian government that put the lives of thousands of people at stake. As he did not shy away from calling out the government for pitting one individual against another, he was arrested with charges of 'obscenity'. It is needless to say that his groundbreaking work and contribution to Indian feminist Literature needs to be read more by every thinking and feeling human being.

Manto, as depicting the stories of different women says, "Literature and film, are like saloons where bottles have no labels. I want to taste each one myself and figure out which is what."

In a Woman's Life, the protagonist Saugandhi's self-respect is crushed brutally by a customer who rejects her in a humiliating manner. She reaches home in an emotionally battered state and finds Madhu there who again begins to spin a tale and she lashes out at him. The story marks her journey from 'innocence to experience. She was very naïve and had the desire to be loved. This combination make her vulnerable. The coming of age of a naïve prostitute, who at the beginning of the story is an emotional fool and keeps losing her money and her self-respect for Madhu, the sanity inspector who visits her often. When rejected by a customer at midnight for her physical appearance she comes face to face with reality. She reasserts

herself after realizing her self-worth. She throws Madhu out and in the final act of defiance, embraces her Mangy dog. Saugandhi's character was far more powerful than that of many righteous wives portrayed in his stories. Manto's portrayal of Saugandhi was what earned him criticism from conservatives. Standing up against exploitation in the workplace is quite uncommon even in contemporary times due to the repercussions that may follow for women but Manto's characters were doing this much earlier than us, by fighting the harassment and even the economic exploitation they were facing. In Hatak, we meet Saugandhi, who is a sex worker. Manto leaves aside moral judgments and lets his readers know how hard she works to make a living. There is a particularly heartwarming scene in the story where Saugandhi, while combing her hair and looking at the mirror tells herself, 'the society did not treat you fairly Saugandhi'. She is a lovely character, who doesn't indulge in self-pity and states things as they are. She is a creation of Manto.

In Odour (Boo), the protagonist is portrayed through an unnamed woman of a low caste (Ghatin). In this story, the Ghatin became the source of the protagonist's perennial desire. As it happens prostitutes are generally on the receiving end and are forgotten once they are used as commodities. They are the ones who keep looking for their so-called lovers but here, in this case, Manto plays a masterstroke by placing Ghatin at the center that holds the power over the man whom she once met to the extent that he loses interest in his newly wedded wife. She was sensuous, raw, and unusual.

In the Gift (Kali Salwar) this story talks about a hardworking yet naïve prostitute who faces a downfall in her business after she moves from Delhi to Ambala with her lover, Khudabaksh. The protagonist Sultana is portrayed as naïve and gullible. She too began like Sugandhi but in the end, after gaining experience, she has reconciled with her fate which Saugandhi was not able to do (innocence, experience, reconciliation). Both women could see through each other's lies. Their desire to have something new for 'Muharram' had put them into this situation. One has to understand the human dimension which is equally present in the so-called 'prostitutes' where they cannot let go of their 'religious-cultural desire to have something new to wear on Muharram as per the societal conventions. Her desire to have a Black salwar for Muharram makes her part with her earrings after she has already sold her bangles. She gives her earrings to Shankar and he gets her a new salwar and tells her a false story. In an ironic twist, she meets another prostitute Mukhtar who is wearing her earrings. It takes both of them a few minutes to realize that they were duped by Shankar.

Conclusion

The most important task for any woman in the society is to form an ideal identity. The women are expected to form an ideal role that demands from them to be attractive, mature, intelligent, confident, feminine, decisive, soft-spoken, loyal, and above all, the one who can listen and obey the patriarchy. Thus the identity formation for women becomes crucial because the way in which the women define themselves ultimately serve as the foundation for their life. Manto's portrayed his women in such a way which goes against the so called norms of ideal women. He sometimes addressed them on the behalf of whole women community who are facing the same problem of the society. He presented them with a sense of deterioration where they know what they are doing and how they are doing. This mindset in a way challenges the set norms of women's identity where a women's identity is only constructed through the dominant men. If a man wants, he can turn the women into the profession of prostitution because he

is the bread bearer and giver. He feeds the needs of the women, hence he is the only who will name the role and identity of the women. Manto's heroines challenged this set patriarchy by sweet rebelling where even the dominant men did not know how they are exploited by the sweet gesture of the women. Manto did not portrayed the women characters as fair and beautiful who can seduce the men through her charm and elegance, but rude, blunt, and an average which can appeal from other women to challenges the patriarchy and make a fragmented whole. They create their own ways of happiness in small things which make them feel proud on what they do. The purpose of this paper was to conceptualize the theories of identity through narration as a core of identity formation and performance by providing the examples from the famous Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories. This study looks at narrative as the central component to identity. This paper provides a new avenue for identity formation and exploration by depicting an interpretive process of identity and narrative.

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