

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The population of immigrants is increasing throughout the world. From the 17th century to the 19th century, millions of Europeans migrated to North and South America, eastern and southern Africa, Australia, and Asia. Some of the countries, such as The United States of America and Australia, even put regulations of limiting the number of immigrants. ‘Immigration is the act of moving to or settling in another country or region. An immigrant is someone who intends to reside permanently, and not a casual visitor or traveler.’ (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia) With the rising of immigrant population, the genre of immigrant writing emerges.

Immigrant writing is literature about the experiences of immigrants, both in the past and the present. It is the expression of immigrants’ feelings

...Their experience, expressed in various genres of writing, attempts to put words to a realization that their uprootedness translates into an inability to fit comfortably in either their new or their old environment. Everything they do, everything they are, and as a result everything they write, is shaped by the fact that they are exiles. Writing, in fact, may take

the form of the medicinal, providing them the best way to explore the unfamiliar. This sense of homelessness and marginality is described and named in various ways by writers...
(<http://www.salzburgseminar.org/ASC/csac1/progs/ASC22/group2>)

Immigrants usually face similar problems and have similar feelings. Since they are away from their motherland, they will be confronted with a new environment and new cultural background. In order to survive, they have to change the lifestyle they usually had and adapt to the new environment. Unfortunately, the process of adapting, leaving behind the old traditions and applying new traditions needs time and a process.

Most of the times, the process involves inner conflicts, whether one will receive the new traditions and give up his old ones easily and quickly or one will take them slowly because he is not ready yet to embrace the new traditions. In the process of transforming, one's identity will be questioned and it becomes an issue, 'The process of old ethnic identities transforming to something new necessarily leads to a gradual acquisition of a new identity (new language, new social ties and redefined gender roles)...' (<http://www.salzburgseminar.org/ASC/csac1/progs/ASC22/group2>) So, many immigrants, including immigrant writers, face an identity crisis.

The authors that I have chosen, Bharati Mukherjee and Angelika Fremd, are immigrant writers. Bharati Mukherjee is an American writer of Indian descent who lives in The United States of America. She was born in India but then she migrated at the age of eight. Angelika Fremd is an Australian writer of German descent. At the age of twelve she migrated from Germany to Australia. She is now living in Brisbane, Australia. Both of the writers are prominent writers who have been

acknowledged by the literary society and they both deal with an identity crisis in their novels.

The novels that I have chosen for my thesis are Jasmine by Bharati Mukherjee and The Glass Inferno by Angelika Fremd. The protagonist in Mukherjee's novel, an Indian refugee, undergoes an identity crisis because her migration from an Eastern country to a Western one causes her to suffer a cultural clash. The protagonist in Fremd's novel undergoes an identity crisis because she had traumatic experiences in her childhood and being a German refugee in Australia, it makes her get a stereotype and a bad prejudice against her race. Identity crisis is "a period during which somebody feels great anxiety and uncertainty about his or her identity and role in life and society" (Microsoft® Encarta® Reference Library 2005. © 1993-2004) They are both having a journey to find their identity and eventually they find their true identity. Using their concepts of their true identity enables me to analyze the characteristics of both the protagonists as women immigrants.

The approach that is going to be used is sociological approach, specifically Kath Woodward's theory of identity. Identity itself is a very vast field. It deals with a lot of questions about oneself. According to Kath Woodward identity enables us to answer the question 'who am I?' (Woodward, 6). The answer to that question is believed to be one person's identity and that is what differs him from other people. Yet, the issue of identity is not that simple.

Even though the general idea of identity is one's answer to the question 'who am I?' identity is not simply formed by that, 'That is only part of the story'

(Woodward, 6). There are many aspects involved in the process of forming an identity. Some of the basic theories of identity are that identity involves:

- Some active engagement by those who take up identities
- The capacity to imagine ourselves and how others would see us
- Class, gender, ethnicity and place which are important dimensions of identity
- Childhood experiences, consciously or unconsciously, which determine identity as an adult.

Forming an identity suggests some active engagement on our part, which means identity requires some awareness on our part and requires some element of choice. We choose to identify ourselves with a particular identity or group. However, although as individuals we have to take up identities actively, identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live. Therefore, identity provides the link between individuals and the world in which they live. Sometimes identity combines how I see myself and how others see me.

A social philosopher, George Herbert Mead, argued that it is the capacity to imagine how others would see us and our capacity to carry images in our heads which are important distinguishing features of a human being. So in our attempt to combine how I see myself and how others see me, we imagine ourselves and how others would see us. For example, if I want to be identified as a successful businesswoman, I will imagine what kind of appearance, body gestures and kind of speaking I will apply in order to give the right message to others that I am a successful businesswoman. Then I will imagine how others would see me to

confirm or make sure that when they see me, they identify me as a successful businesswoman, just as I intended.

Other aspects that influence the forming of identity are class, gender, ethnicity and place. “Class is a large grouping of people who share common economic interest, experiences and lifestyles. Gender describes the systematic structuring of certain behavior and practices which are associated with women or with men in particular societies.” (Woodward, 21) “Ethnic community is a named but loosely bound group of people whose shared identity is related to culture, history and/or language, but whose relationship to territory and statehood is more indeterminate than a nation.” (Woodward, 127) The four aspects are closely connected and influence each other in the process of making one’s identity. For example, gender might be a big problem in an ethnic community which still holds patriarchal or matriarchal culture but it does not really matter in an ethnic community which believes in gender equality. Class is also an important factor because it is a means of classifying the economic and social divisions of a society. In a materialistic community or place, class will be a crucial problem since it will bring inequality between the wealthy and the poor, but will be less of a problem in a fair community or place where justice is for everyone no matter how rich or poor he is. So the four aspects are connected to each other and are important dimensions of identity.

Identity relies upon a conscious, active engagement and element of choice as we know, but it might also involve thoughts and feelings of which we might not be conscious. Freud’s psychoanalysis has one major contribution which is his understanding of the unconscious. “The unconscious mind is the repository of

repressed feelings and desires- often from childhood. These feelings can emerge, for example, in dreams. They can influence the choices we make in later life.” (Woodward, 15) Freud suggested that our childhood experiences, even of which we are not conscious, affect the decisions we make as adults. So identity is constructed by the past as well as by the present.

Several theories of how identities are formed have been researched and published by Kath Woodward, a senior lecturer in The Sociology Faculty of Open University in The United Kingdom. This theory will be applied in analyzing the concept of identity which later will be used as a means of portraying the protagonist’s characteristics as a woman immigrant who deals with an identity crisis.

In analyzing the characteristics or personality of a character in a novel, several characterization techniques can be applied. Characterization is how an author conveys to the reader the personalities of the people he writes about, what sort of people they are and how he makes the reader get to know and understand them. Murphy’s characterization technique in the book Understanding Unseen shows that there are 9 ways in which an author attempts to make his character understandable. Since both the authors, Mukherjee and Fremd, use the first person point of view in their novels, the techniques that are mostly shown in Jasmine and The Glass Inferno are thoughts, reactions and speech.

The use of thoughts in the characterization technique is when the reader is allowed to know or analyze a person’s character by his deepest thoughts. “In a novel, the author can give us direct knowledge of what a person is thinking about.

The reader is in a privileged position; he has, as it were, a secret listening device plugged in to the inmost thoughts of a person in a novel.” (Murphy, 171)

The use of reactions in the characterization technique is ‘...when the author gives a clue to a person’s character by letting the reader know how that person reacts to various situations and events.’ (Murphy, 168)

The use of speech in the characterization technique is ‘...when the author gives insight into the character of one person in the books through what the person says.’ (Murphy, 164)

I am challenged and interested in analyzing the portrayal of a woman who deal with the issue of identity because the problem of identity is a problem that can be faced by every individual, not only by immigrants.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that will be analyzed in this thesis are:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed?
2. What characterization techniques that are used?
3. How does an identity help to reveal the portrayal of the protagonist?

Purpose of the Study

The study is done in order:

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed.
2. To show the characterization techniques that are used
3. To show how an identity helps to reveal the portrayal of the protagonist.

Method of Research

The method of research used in this study is Sociological approach, using the theory of identity by Kath Woodward specifically. I begin with reading the theory, afterwards, select and apply the theories in my analysis.

The type of research used in this study is library research. I begin with reading two primary texts, Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine and Angelika Fremd's Glass Inferno. Afterwards, I apply the Sociological Approach; specifically, The Theory of Identity by Kath Woodward to help me understand the portrayal of the characters better. Research for additional information through internet and other references are also done to support my study. Then, I select, gather and use the information to analyze the two primary texts. Finally, I draw some conclusions from the study I have done.

Organization of the Thesis

I divide my thesis into four chapters, which are preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two I present the analysis of the female protagonist's portrayal in Jasmine and in Chapter Three I present the analysis of the female protagonist's portrayal in The Glass Inferno. Chapter Four is the Conclusion, which contains a comparison between the protagonist's portrayals in the two novels. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendix.