



Infidelity in Munro's "What Is Remembered" and Lahiri's "Sexy"

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Abstract

This study aims at discussing the infidelity of Meriel and Dr. Asher in "What is Remembered" short story and Miranda and Dev in "Sexy" short story. Further, this study uses descriptive and dramatic method in analyzing the two works through characterization by which the researcher means to present the character mainly through description and discussion as well as through reporting the character's speech and action. This study also applies a new criticism as a method about character and characterization to describe the character who cheats in both short stories. The result of the study shows that in "What is Remembered" Meriel has infidelity with Dr. Asher and in "Sexy" story Dev has infidelity with Miranda with the characterization as follows not loyal, responsible, traitor, honest, selfish, infidel, caring, and matured, most of which meets the requirement of being infidel characters.

Keywords: infidelity

INTRODUCTION

Recently, many divorce cases are caused by infidelity. According to KBBI, infidelity is hiding something for one's interests, not being straightforward, and being dishonest. The occurrence of infidelity is of course due to problems in life, especially problems in relationships. Problems in real life also appear to be

reflected in literary works, one of which is a short story. Like the short story "What is Remembered" and "Sexy" which become the object of this research.

The writer of "Sexy" short story is Jhumpa Lahiri. She was born in London, England, in 1967. She continued her education at Boston University. While Alice Munro is the writer of "What is Remembered" short story, she was born in Canada in 1931. She studied journalism and English at the University of Western Ontario.

From the difference between the two authors' backgrounds, they create works with the same issue. In the literature world, many literary works discuss infidelity, such as "Light Years" by James Salter, "Written on the Body" by Jeanette Winterson, "The Days of Abandonment" by Elena Ferrante, "We Don't Live Here Anymore" by André Dubus, "The Man in the Wooden Hat" by Jane Gardam, etc. In life, the story of a relationship tells about the sweetness of life and the struggle of life, but a painful story that must occur in life, such as infidelity. According to Panca (2016), cheating can be interpreted as hiding something for your interests, not being straightforward, dishonest, cheating, and oblique. Infidelity is something that nobody wants to experience because it's a painful thing for anyone who feels it.

According to Syamsuri 2017 (cited in Pittman, 1989), infidelity is a violation of trust, betrayal of a relationship, termination of a deal. In a relationship, if one of the two betrays, it violates a trust they have built. In the end, if the betrayal is known, an agreement is terminated between continuing the relationship or ending the relationship.

According to Shackelford, Buss, Bennett (2002) Infidelity is categorized into two parts: sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity. Sexual infidelity is a condition when someone meets their ideal types directly and has physical contact, including sexual intercourse. An emotional infidelity is a condition when someone meets his or her cheating partner. These encounters occur via cell phone, blind dates, or social media and do not involve physical intimacy (Hestianingsih, A.K. 2018).

Here, the researcher conducts this research with infidelity issues based on both of the short stories. The reason the researcher chooses this issue because nowadays, divorce cases are rampant due to infidelity. A study published in The Journal of Sex Research states that there is one factor that most people cheat.

According to Hestianingsih (2018), 77% of adult participants admit to have an affair because of reduced love. Then 70% of other respondents say that they cheat because they feel neglected, there were also 70 % of respondents say that an affair occur when they are drunk. Meanwhile, several other respondents admit to have an affair because they are angry with their partners. Another cause for cheating is to overcome their inferiority complex.

To find the gap, the researcher refers to some previous studies; first, Francesconi (2004) analyzed "Writing Secrets as 'betraying the past' in Alice Munro's "What is remembered". The result of this study is the writer revealed the secret of Meriel's betrayal with Dr. Asher but it is unknown to Pierre, her husband. The writer said that the secret told by Munro, the author of "What is

Remembered", was a complex discursive procedure. Second, Muhaddast (2017) analyzed "Western Domination In Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Stories *Sexy, This Blessed House, And When Mr. Pirzada Came To Dine* (1999)". The result of this study is to prove the dominance of Western powers in some fictional elements in the short story. Like the superior one, that always uses the West to express its power by providing imaginative creations as well as exclusion East through narrative and dialogue.

Another previous study about Infidelity namely, Putri Utami (2017) the study analyzes "Love Affair Reflected in Paula Hawkins *The Girl on The Train* (2015): A Psychoanalytic Study". The purpose of this research is to reveal the affair in the novel "The Girl on the Train". This research explains how the psychological condition of the three main characters, and reveals infidelity case that is depicted in the novel "The Girl on the Train". The last, Ashley Phillips (2011), stated that "The Infidelity Issue in *Brideshead Revisited* and *Journey into Fear*". This study discusses the 1940s novels related to marriage, namely, affair, because infidelity seems to be a common topic in 1940's British literature.

From four studies conducted above, they examined literature with issue infidelity. Utami's work reveals an affair and uses a psychological approach. Then, the work of Phillips discusses two novels of affair in the 1940s. Then, the gap of the previous studies above is that the researcher's study tends to use the characterization of the characters to support their infidelity. Now, the research fills in an analysis that has not been analyzed yet before in two short stories, namely "What is Remembered" and "Sexy" short stories.

METHODS

Research Approach

The researcher uses descriptive and dramatic method in analyzing the two works through characterization by which the researcher means to present the character mainly through description and discussion as well as through reporting the character's speech and action. Thus, from describing, discussing as well as reporting the character's speech and action, the researcher presents and analyzes the infidelity of the characters. Further, to get clear data to analyze, the researcher uses new criticism to be a primary method to analyze the infidelity of the main characters in those literary works in order to help to analyze the characterization of the main characters.

Kinds of Research

This research is a literary research whose main sources are taken from Munro's "What is Remembered" and Lahiri's "Sexy" from which the researcher quotes the words that have things to do with the main characters' characterization leading to infidelity. Thus, not all items in the works are worth quoting here.

Data Collection Technique

The researcher collects the data in four tables in a note; one part of the data is with the characterization of the characters of the first literary work, the second part is with the characterization of the characters of the second literary

work, the third part is with the infidelity of characters in the first literary work and the last part is the infidelity of the characters in the second literary work.. Therefore, this kind of technique makes the researcher easy to analyze the problems.

Data Analysis

First, the researcher elaborates the main character's characterization related to their infidelity as well as quotes the quotation related to the characterization. Second, the researcher analysis the main characters' infidelity based on the understanding of infidelity mentioned in the introduction in order that the researcher confirms that the quotations are worth quoting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Characterization in Munro's "What is Remembered" and Lahiri's "Sexy"

A. What is Remembered

Characterization of Meriel

Not loyal

First of all, Meriel is an unloyal woman, *"Take me somewhere else," she said. He looked her in the face. He said, "Yes." There on the sidewalk in the world's view. Kissing like mad.*" (p. 14). Here, the quotation shows that Meriel is not loyal to Pierre. Because she kissed Dr Asher, it can be said that Meriel is not cheating because Dr Asher, who misunderstand Meriel's words, made Meriel kissed Dr Asher. However, this is said to be an affair because Meriel does not refuse, nor is she angry when Dr Asher kisses her. Even though she doesn't seem to believe what had happened after kissing, she had kissed Dr Asher.

After they kissed, *"There she would have to cross the little lobby with head bowed and arms clinging to her sides, her whole body permeated by exquisite shame."* (p. 14). Here, explain that Meriel is very embarrassed when she walks to the hotel after kissing Dr. Asher. She is embarrassed and walks with her head down while imagining the incident kissing her with Dr. Asher, and she doesn't think it that will happen.

It wasn't until after Pierre was dead that she remembered one further detail. He had driven her to Horseshoe Bay, to the ferry. He had got out of the car and come around to her side. She was standing there, waiting to say goodbye to him. She made a move toward him, to kiss him... (p. 18)

The proof above shows that Meriel is not faithful because she still remembers the incident in detail when she kissed Dr. Asher even imagined her previous incident with Dr. Asher. As if they are a couple. Meriel kisses Dr. Asher after he drives her to Horseshoe Bay, to the ferry, and seemed to show that Meriel has feelings for Dr Asher.

Characterization of Pierre

Responsible

He works to meet his family's needs and collaborate with Meriel to divide household duties, manage his work, and manage his wife. *"How to be authoritative about mortgages, retaining walls, lawn grass, drains, politics, as well as*

about the jobs that would have to maintain their families for the next quarter of a century." (p. 5). It means that Pierre is a person responsible to his family and thinks about his family's future both at home and at work.

Characterization of Dr. Asher

Traitor

Dr. Asher is called a traitor because he betrayed Pierre, Meriel's husband. He likes Meriel and kisses her. As the quotation *"When she asked him later "Why did you come in there with me?" He said, "Because I didn't want to lose sight of you." (p. 10).* The proof above shows that Dr. Asher likes Meriel. He begins to be interested in Meriel even though they just met when they finished Jonas's funeral. He knows that Meriel is Pierre's wife. It can be said that Dr. Asher betrays Pierre. *"Take me somewhere else," she said. He looked her in the face. He said, "Yes." There on the sidewalk in the world's view. Kissing like mad." (p. 14).* From the explanation, Dr Asher has betrayed Pierre. He knows that Meriel is Pierre's wife, but he can't control himself when he meets Meriel until Dr. Asher kisses Meriel on the sidewalk in the open

Characterization of Aunt Muriel

Honest

Aunt Meriel is an honest person, bluntly says what she says. As in the quote below. She is honest with Meriel and Dr. Asher that she is tired she wants to take rest. Given her old age, it is natural that she gets tired easily. As this proves, *"She said, "I'm sorry, it's rude of me, I have to tell you – I get tired." (P. 13)*

B. Sexy

Characterization of Miranda

A Selfish woman

Miranda is a selfish woman. She is said to be selfish because she is more concerned with her happiness without thinking about Dev's wife when she finds out that her husband is having an affair with her. *"But after she watched his car disappear down Commonwealth Avenue, back to his house in the suburbs, where he lived with his wife ..." (p. 48).* The quotation above shows Miranda is a selfish person. She knows that Dev already has a wife, but she still wants to have a relationship with Dev. She is selfish because she doesn't think about Dev's wife's feelings, even though Dev's wife doesn't know that her husband is having an affair with another woman. The following quotation proves this explanation

"They went to movies at the Nickelodeon and kissed the whole time. They ate pulled pork and cornbread in Davis Square, and a paper napkin tucked like a cravat into the collar of Dev's shirt. They sipped sangria at the bar of a Spanish restaurant, a grinning pig's head presiding over their conversation" (p. 51)

Strengthened by the proof above, they often meet and spend time together such as sleeping together, kissing, taking a walk, eating together, and sharing stories in Miranda's apartment. *"Only Miranda never slept. She watched the clock on*

her bedside table, or pressed her face against Dev's fingers, intertwined with hers ..." (p. 53). This proof explains that Miranda is really enjoying her time with Dev. She pressed her face against Dev's finger, until her face was so close and touched Dev's finger

Characterization of Dev

Infidel

Dev is a married man, but he has an affair with another woman. That woman is Miranda. The following quote evidence this "*He didn't wear a wedding ring.*" (p. 49); the quote shows that Dev is not wearing his wedding ring. He does this to cover up other people's suspicions about him being married and having relationships with other women. "*Somehow, without the wife there, it didn't seem so wrong. At first Miranda and Dev spent every night together, almost.*" (p. 50). That proof also shows Dev is having an affair with Miranda. Dev feels nothing is wrong if his wife isn't by his side. Almost every night, he spends time with Miranda "*The best twelve minutes of the week.*" "*He'd sigh, running a hand along the backs of her calves. Then he'd spring out of bed, pulling on his sweatpants and lacing up his sneakers.*" (p. 53). From this proof shows that Dev sleep in Miranda's apartment for a short time which is only twelve minutes but Dev thinks it is the best time of the week. Then he immediately put on his sweatpants and his sneakers when he wake up. The thing that they do utterly unknown to his Dev's wife. Followed by another proof like the following

They went to movies at the Nickelodeon and kissed the whole time. They ate pulled pork and cornbread in Davis Square, a paper napkin tucked like a cravat into the collar of Dev's shirt. They sipped sangria at the bar of a Spanish restaurant, a grinning pig's head presiding over their conversation. (p. 51)

From the proof above, it explains that Dev and Miranda spend time together, such as watching at the Nickelodeon and kissing, and eating together at the bar of a Spanish restaurant. Dev betrays his wife. He is busy enjoying being with Miranda

Characterization of Laxmi

Caring person

Laxmi is a woman who cares about her husband and also the people around her, like Miranda and her cousins. As in this proving, "Normally Laxmi's phone conversations mainly to her husband, about what to cook for dinner" (p. 48) it sounds simple or can be taken for granted. However, in this husband and wife relationship, it can be said that they care about small things. While she was still at work, she spoke to her husband over the phone to ask what Laxmi should cook for dinner. It is reinforced by other evidence that Laxmi is a caring person, such as proved by the following quotation "*When she wasn't speaking to her cousin, she spoke to her husband, shorter conversations, in which she ended up arguing about whether to have chicken or lamb for dinner*" (p. 51).

The evidence above shows that Laxmi always cares about small things and asks her husband to argue about what to eat, chicken or lamb for dinner.

"In her determination to cheer up her cousin, Laxmi had forgotten" about the boy." (p. 55). Here, the proof shows that Laxmi cares about her cousin's condition. She knows that her cousin is having a big problem with her husband. That he tried to comfort his cousin that his burden was lessened.

Characterization of Rohin

Matured

Rohin is a child who is only seven years old. However, he has an adult-like mind. Rohin makes Miranda realize that she had been doing the wrong thing because she is in a relationship with a married man. As in the quotation "*My mother has puffiness. She says it's a cold, but really she cries, sometimes for hours. Sometimes straight through dinner. Sometimes she cries so hard her eyes puff up like bullfrogs.*" (p. 57). Rohin learns that her mother cried for hours, sometimes crying so hard that her eyes swelled up. However, his mother says that he just had a cold. Rohin knows very well that his mother is crying. The child after Rohin knows the sadness felt by his mother. Rohin told Miranda about the eye gel he found on the glass shelf above Miranda's bathroom sink. Then he asks Miranda the use of the eye gel as the quotation below

"He put the cover of the toilet down, climbed on top of it, and surveyed the narrow glass shelf over the sink which held Miranda's toothbrush and makeup. 'What's this for?' he asked, picking up the sample of eye gel she'd gotten the day she met Dev. 'Puffiness.' 'What's puffiness?' 'Here,' she explained, pointing. 'After you've been crying?' 'I guess so.' Rohin opened the tube and smelled it. He squeezed a drop of it onto a finger, then rubbed it on his hand. 'It stings.' He inspected the back of his hand closely, as if expecting it to change color" (p. 57).

The evidence above explains that Rohin knows what happened to his parents. Rohin says that Miranda is a woman who is sexy. A kid Rohin's age can tell that she is Miranda sexy. Dev says that when they are together, he finds out that his father is in love with a woman other than his mother. Rohin tells Miranda that his father meet a woman his father doesn't know and sit beside him. She is a sexy woman, so that makes his father much in love with her. It makes Rohin's mother cry. However, the mother does not want her child to understand the problems that happened to his parents. His mother says that his mother is not crying as Rohin saw, but his mother is cold. Rohin knows the truth that his mother cries because of his father's deeds.

2. Infidelity in Munro's "What is Remembered" and Lahiri's "Sexy"

What is Remembered

Now, the researcher will explain the story of the affair from *What is Remembered* short story. The story of the affair in *What is Remembered* is the story of an affair committed by Meriel, a married woman. Her husband is named Pierre. The affair happened when Meriel wanted to visit her aunt named Aunt Muriel in Lynn Valley, but Pierre can't deliver Meriel. Beside them is Dr Asher, who is present at Jonas's funeral, a friend of Pierre, who offers to take Meriel to the nursing home where Muriel's aunt lives.

As this quotation, "The man who'd been talking to the doctor had not had any choice but to listen to this conversation, and he said unexpectedly, 'Let me drive you.' (p. 7-8). After they reach Lynn Valley, where Muriel's aunt lives, they chat with Muriel's aunt. After that, they say goodbye because Muriel's aunt is tired, and they decide to go to Stanley Park. Then, something is very surprising happened to Meriel as in the quotation "Take me somewhere else," she said. He looked her in the face. He said, 'Yes.' strengthened by the following prove "There on the sidewalk in the world's view. Kissing like mad" (p. 14). Their relationship grow closer after they kiss, "It wasn't until after Pierre was dead that she remembered one further detail. He had driven her to Horseshoe Bay, to the ferry. He had got out of the car and come around to her side. She was standing there, waiting to say goodbye to him. She made a move toward him, to kiss him surely a natural thing to do ... (p. 18).

Finally, Dr. Asher takes Meriel to the Ferry to meet her husband, and their relationship ends. "*She would never see Asher again*" (p. 16). Their relationship is completely unknown to Pierre. Meriel and Pierre's relationship continued, "*Her marriage with Pierre would continue, it would last*" (p. 16). Even after Meriel is on the Ferry, Meriel lies to Pierre about Dr. Asher when Pierre asks what she did. Meriel says Dr. Asher is hard to talk to when they're together. Though no, they even have time to kiss. As in the quotation below:

"...Then Pierre asked, "Didn't he drive you some place? Where?" "To Lynn Valley. To see Aunt Meriel. "

"So what did you talk about?"

"I found him hard to talk to." (p. 17)

Based on the quotation above, we can conclude that Meriel and Dr. Asher have a special relationship, even though it is only for a short time. The evidence above shows Meriel lies to Pierre when Pierre asks what she does when she is not with Pierre. However, Meriel lies. If there is no special feeling with Dr. Asher, Meriel should tell the truth to Pierre. Unfortunately, they don't. Meriel and Dr. Asher even kiss.

Sexy

In this part, the researcher will explain the story of the infidelity from a *Sexy* short story. The story of the affair in *Sexy* short story is the story of an affair between a married man and a single woman named Miranda. They meet while they are shopping at the department store. After getting to know each other, they often spend time together without Dev's wife knowing, even almost every night at Miranda's apartment. As in the quotation, "*Somehow, without the wife there, it didn't seem so wrong. At first Miranda and Dev spent every night together, almost*" (p. 50). They spend time together in her apartment "*The best twelve minutes of the week.*" He'd sigh, running a hand along the backs of her calves. Then he'd spring out of bed, pulling on his sweatpants and lacing up his sneakers." (p. 53). They are walking on the road, watching movies and treat Miranda as a woman very well. As in the quotation below:

"Dev was the first to tell her that. Unlike the boys she dated in college, who were simply taller, heavier versions of the ones she dated in high school, Dev was the first always to pay for things, and hold doors open, and reach across a table in a restaurant to kiss her hand. He was the first

to bring her a bouquet of flowers so immense she'd had to split it up into all six of her drinking glasses, and the first to whisper her name again and again when they made love" (p. 50).

Then, he says that Miranda is a sexy woman. "*Hi,*" she whispered, *elements of what else to say.* '*You're sexy,*' he whispered back. (p. 51). After several times, Miranda meets a seven years old boy, the son of his cousin Laxmi, Miranda's friend. The boy named Rohin. Rohin is the one who makes Miranda aware that what she had been doing with Dev is something wrong and cannot be justified. Rohin calls herself a sexy woman like Dev tells her. Miranda urged Rohin to tell her what the word Sexy meant.

Finally, Rohin shares that his father falls in love with a woman other than his mother. As in the quotation, "*He sat next to someone he didn't know, someone sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother.*" (p. 59). From Rohin's explanation, Miranda realizes that her actions are wrong with Dev and immediately avoids Dev as if she doesn't want to continue her relationship with Dev, as the quotation below:

"On Sunday, Dev called to tell Miranda he was on his way." I'm almost ready. I'll be there at two. " She was watching a cooking show on television. A woman pointed to a row of apples, explaining which were best for baking.

'You shouldn't come today.'

'Why not?

'I have a cold,' she lied. It wasn't far from the truth; crying had left her congested. 'I've been in bed all morning'" (p. 60).

The evidence above explains that Miranda avoided the invincible Dev from meeting her. Miranda says she has cold, even though she isn't just sad about what she feels right now. Also, he thinks that he and his wife, Dev, deserve better treatment than this.

Apart from discussing the affair between Dev and Miranda. In this sexy story, there is a husband of her cousin Laxmi who falls in love with another woman. As the quotation below:

It was a wife's worst nightmare. After nine years of marriage, Laxmi told Miranda, her cousin's husband had fallen in love with another woman. He sat next to her on a plane, on a flight from Delhi to Montreal, and instead of flying home to his wife and son, he got off with the woman at Heathrow. He called his wife, and told her he'd had a conversation that had changed his life, and that he needed time to figure things out. (p. 48)

The evidence shows that her cousin Laxmi's husband falls in love with the woman he meets on the plane and sit next to her on the flight from Delhi to Montreal. Her husband doesn't come home to see his wife and child, instead he gets her to leave with the woman at Heathrow. Then, he phones his wife to let her know that he finds a more compatible woman with other women. After getting phoned from her husband, the news is very bad for her. She laments that her life will change because her husband falls in love with a woman other than her.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, the researcher comes to conclude that though the characters above have been characterized as follows not loyal, responsible, disrespectful, honest, selfish, infidel, caring, and matured, however, not all the characterization previously mentioned are worth applying here. For example, the characters such as responsible, honest, and caring are not putting here. It means that the researcher finds a problem in applying new criticism. From this problem finding, therefore, the researcher hopes so much that in the future study, there are researchers applying new criticism much better than the researcher of this article so that the development of the literary research will be achieved.

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