

Class Consciousness in Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere* Represented through Mia Warren

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Abstract

This research investigates class consciousness in Celeste Ng's novel, *Little Fires Everywhere*, focusing on the character Mia Warren. Utilizing a Marxist theoretical framework inspired by Georg Lukacs, the study explores Mia Warren's experiences and the factors contributing to her class consciousness. It analyzes the impact of class consciousness on her life, highlighting her encounter with class warfare upon arriving in Shaker Heights. The research employs both internal and extrinsic methodologies to examine the depiction of bourgeois and proletariat characters, as well as the portrayal of class consciousness. Key factors identified include inequality, exploitation, and class consciousness. The study concludes that Mia Warren's struggle with class consciousness underscores the challenge of overcoming social marginalization and achieving equality. By addressing these issues, the paper aims to dismantle the stigma of social inequality and promote a state of non-discriminatory equality.

Keywords: class consciousness, novel

A. INTRODUCTION

Class Consciousness is the proletariat only perfects itself by annihilating and transcending itself, by creating the classless society through the successful conclusion of its own class struggle. The struggle for this society, in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is merely a phase, is not just a battle waged against an external enemy, the bourgeoisie. It is equally the struggle of the proletariat against itself, against the devastating and degrading effects of the capitalist system upon (Lukacs 1923: 91). The Novel it is condition, it is future, it is new author has become a potential news item. Publicists create some of this and is mere hype, but it is not all commercial manipulation. For instance, the growth of reading groups was not created by marketing departments. The extraordinary burgeoning of these groups suggests not just a hunger for reading but rather stranger an appetite for critical discussion (Mullan, 2006:4). According to Kennedy and Mullans research, it has been demonstrated that a book can indeed be considered a purely fictional essay. Nevertheless, it cannot be discounted that the novel may also draw inspiration from real events, thereby encompassing a wide spectrum of narratives

across different genres. This diverse range of stories has the potential to captivate readers, piquing their curiosity about the protagonists' destiny and serving as a catalyst for meaningful discussions and future personal growth.

In *Marx and Literary Criticism*, he offers an analysis of the relationship of literature to its historical context, and of literature to political activity. He also situates Marxist critique in the larger context of understanding the human relationship to society and civilization. (Eagleton, 1976: 3). The correlation between literature and Marxism in literary works is predicated on a comprehensive comprehension of the historical society, as it acknowledges the inseparability of human beings from their subjective experiences and explorations in life.

This paper examines the challenges faced by Mia Warren as she endeavours to navigate and adapt to the affluent residential setting of the bourgeoisie, commonly referred to in Marxist theory as the middle class. Mia's primary objective is to secure her daughter Pearl's enrollment in a desired school and achieve social parity within her neighbourhood, all while striving to maintain a modest lifestyle by seeking cost-effective resources to sustain her daily needs. Furthermore, Mia undertakes the pursuit of dual employment in order to afford the opportunity for Mia to attend the esteemed educational institution in Shaker Heights.

The novel that is investigated is *Little Fires Everywhere* (2017) that is written by Celeste Ng, is a captivating novel set in the seemingly perfect suburban community of Shaker Heights. The story revolves around the intertwined lives of two families: the Richardsons, an affluent and meticulously planned family, and Mia Warren and her daughter Pearl, who bring a sense of disruption with their unconventional lifestyle. As secrets are unveiled and relationships evolve, conflicts arise that challenge the community's harmony. Through its well-developed characters and thought-provoking themes, the novel explores motherhood, identity, race, class, and the complexities of human relationships, ultimately questioning the notion of perfection and the choices that shape our lives.

Little Fires Everywhere was written by Celeste Ng in September 12, 2017 as a inspiration from her own life after growing up in the planned community of Shaker Heights, Ohio. "It really shaped me into the person that I am," Interviewed with IndieWire in 2020. "And I wanted to write a book that would unpack that." Her work is often based on things that puzzle her and, with this story in particular, Ng didn't just want to look at what Shaker Heights meant to her own personal development, but where it fits in America and its ideals.

The research topic and target of this study are aligned with the issue presented in the introduction. The aim of this paper is to uncover new insights into the phenomenon of Little Fires. The dissemination of information regarding class consciousness serves to enhance individuals' comprehension of the disparities in resource allocation, opportunity, and power within society. This heightened level of consciousness can enable individuals to identify systemic injustices and imbalances that not be readily discernible.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers conduct qualitative research, it suggests numerical data and tables are not accorded primary importance. The primary data source implemented in this study is the textual content collected from the novel entitled *Little Fires Everywhere*, authored by Celeste Ng and the theory from Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These are the quotes of *Little Fires Everywhere* that potrays Mia Warren getting awareness after when she lives in Shaker Heights with her daughter Pearl Warren:

“Pearl is working at the college level already. But I can’t afford private school.” (NG 2017: 19)

The quote mentioned above suggests that the daughter of Mia Warren is facing challenges in her desire to attend a private school in Shaker Heights. This is due to the fact that private schools in the Shaker Heights area are considerably expensive, making them accessible only to a select few who can afford the substantial fees required for admission. It is worth noting that these private schools are primarily located in the Middle Class area of Shaker Heights. Consequently, Pearl Warren, the offspring of Mia Warren, aspires to secure admission into the most prestigious private educational institution in Shaker Heights. To achieve this objective, Pearl endeavours to engage in collegiate-level academic pursuits and diligently accumulate funds, so ensuring her eligibility for enrollment in the aforementioned institution. This is explained by theory of Georg Lukacs from his book *History & Class Consciousness* that class consciousness is concerned neither with the thoughts of individuals, however advanced, nor with the state of scientific knowledge. For example, it is quite clear that ancient society was broken economically by the limitations of a system built on slavery. But it is equally clear that

neither the ruling classes nor the classes that rebelled against them in the name of revolution or reform could perceive this. In consequence the practical emergence of these problems meant that the society was necessarily and irremediably doomed.(Lukacs 1920: 1)

In the context of literature, Lukács ideas suggest that literary works can contribute to the development of class consciousness by reflecting the experiences and struggles of different social classes, highlighting the contradictions within society, and portraying characters who become aware of their place within the class structure and repairing the position to be equal standard.

Another proof that Mia Warren's demonstration of class consciousness becomes evident as she chooses to park her VW or Volkswagen Rabbit in the central area of Parkland Drive, instead of the affluent locality of Shaker Heights, encompassing Winslow Road. The statement is supported by the following quotation :

“Mia and Pearl had moved into the little rental house on Winslow Road, the tan VW Rabbit already battered, even then pattered away down Parkland Drive”(NG 2017: 15)

Based on the quote above, the researcher for this study arrives at the inference that Mia Warren possesses a level of familiarity with the concept of a class consciousness. The researcher posits that Mia Warren's reluctance to create disturbances on Winslow Road in Shaker Heights, where she currently resides, suggests her understanding of the class consciousness. This inference is supported by the aforementioned remark. The researcher believes that Mia experienced a sense of class consciousness for the first time in Shaker Heights, as seen by her desire to avoid creating excessive disorder on Winslow Road.

Mia's class consciousness is evident in her discernment of the relative opulence of her neighbor's automobile in comparison to her own. This phenomenon can be attributed to the presence of socioeconomic disparities between individuals of higher income and those belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata, such as the proletariat, to which the speaker identifies herself. Mia's articulation of this statement serves as evidence of her awareness regarding the societal position she holds due to her socioeconomic class, which necessitates her involvement in the struggle for socioeconomic equality. The aforementioned comment exemplifies the individual's cognizance of the societal function assumed by individuals

belonging to her particular socioeconomic stratum, among various other factors. It is said that the presence of class consciousness within the proletariat, exemplified by individuals like Mia Warren, serves as the primary catalyst for the occurrence of class consciousness.

Another proof that Based on the quote mentioned above, the researcher for this study deduces that Mia Warren possesses a certain level of familiarity with the concept of a class consciousness. The researcher concludes that Mia Warren possesses an understanding of the class based on the quotation provided, as she demonstrates a desire to avoid causing disruption on Winslow Road in Shaker Heights, where she currently resides. The researcher concludes that Mia had a sense of class consciousness for the first time in Shaker Heights, as seen by her desire to avoid creating excessive disorder on Winslow Road.

Upon Mia Warren's arrival in Shaker Heights, Ohio, she encountered the formidable task of managing the various expenses linked with her desires, as the nature of her profession necessitated a higher level of financial gain. Despite the passage of an entire month, the artist's sales record only reflects the successful sale of a single artwork. Simultaneously, a significant portion of the population residing in Shaker Heights consists of individuals who possess enough access to a range of amenities, notwithstanding the elevated expense of daily commodities inside the locality. Consequently, Mia Warren plans to conduct an inquiry into the geographical distribution of establishments surrounding Shaker Heights, with the aim of identifying alternative locations that offer goods and services at a comparatively lower cost than those available within Shaker Heights. The statements is supported by the following quotation :

“They learned where the cheapest gas station is—at the corner of Lomond and Lee Roads,” (NG 2017: 17)

Through her class consciousness, "class consciousness develops more or less spontaneously in the course of class consciousness," she said, referring to how he gained this awareness of her class. That is, socialist intellectuals or a vanguard party with a highly develops class consciousness needs to educate and guides the proletariat to avoid a lapse into a reformist, "trade union consciousness" that failed to move beyond demands for better pay and conditions to the call for an outright revolution (Johnson 2014:81)

Another proof that after Mia Warren became aware of the issue, she made the decision to take on numerous jobs at the same time. These jobs included painting, housecleaning, flower

arrangement, and cake decorating. Her goal is to not only satisfy her everyday necessities but also to be able to send Pearl Warren to college and fulfill her desire of becoming a mother. The statement is supported by the following quotation :

“she took up a series of odd jobs: housecleaning, flower arranging, cake decorating.”

The researcher takes the conclusion that is illustrated how Mia Warren is destroyed by class consciousness extremely well in *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng's, draws their conclusion from the quotation that is just presents. There are some people who are really impoverished and are willing to do anything for her life, such as work as many hours as possible in order to pay for her rented house, and her day by day necessities.

Mia Warren's personality may be traced back to Elliott Johnson's book in 2017 "Historical dictionaries of religions, philosophies, and movements" by Karl Marx's researcher of class consciousness.

“The proletariat as a whole became aware of itself as a single class with a common interest and with a common enemy in the capitalist. This development of an awareness of a class identity is the process of the formation of class consciousness, and proletarian class consciousness is a vital prerequisite for revolution.”(Johnson 2014:138). The researcher for this study, who drew the conclusion that is contrast of Mia Warren Class consciousness in her life as a new neighborhood and struggle to find the cheapest options.

D. CONCLUSION

Building upon the preceding research outlined in the preceding chapter, the primary aim of this study is to examine the essence of the class consciousness shown in the literary work entitled *Little Fires Everywhere*. The class consciousness is characterised by the presence of two opposing factions, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In the context of the novel *Little Fires Everywhere*, Elena Richardson and her family are commonly referred to as the Bourgeoisies. In contrast, the characters Mia Warren and her daughter Pearl Warren are portrayed as members of the proletariat.

The novel *Little Fires Everywhere* delves into the exploration of class consciousness through two distinct avenues. These entities symbolise the ongoing conflict between distinct socioeconomic groups. Mia Warren's ability to persevere in the face of challenging

circumstances is evident, even in the presence of Class consciousness. In light of the economic difficulties, Mia Warren engages in the Class consciousness in Shaker Heights as a means of ensuring her survival by employing various strategies that align with her personal preferences, including culinary pursuits, domestic maintenance, horticulture, and artistic endeavours. Mia's engagement in the Class consciousness is driven, partially, by her current financial hardships and, notably, by her aspiration to secure enhanced educational opportunities for her daughter, Pearl Warren, within the esteemed educational establishment of Shaker Heights. Mia Warren's involvement in Class consciousness can be attributed to her exposure to a series of transformative experiences, both during her active participation in the movement and in the subsequent period that ensued.

As a conscientious maternal figure to her daughter Pearl Warren, she navigates through the challenges and experiences that life presents. Furthermore, she is driven to assert herself in his financial sphere, striving for economic parity within a novel elite setting characterised by a prevalence of affluent individuals occupying esteemed positions. Mia possesses a comprehensive understanding of this milieu, prompting her desire to assimilate seamlessly into the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

Moreover, the researcher observes that Mia Warren experiences a degree of exploitation in her life subsequent to her relocation to Shaker Heights. This exploitation arises from the interactions between Mia Warren, who serves as an indentured servant, and Izzy Richardson, the daughter of the Richardson family. Specifically, Izzy Richardson engages in conversation with Mia Warren while the latter is still engaged in kitchen cleaning duties. Nevertheless, Mia Warren did not respond to anyone but Izzy Richardson, providing her with a self-introduction that seemed to imply that there was no issue between them.

The daily routine of Mia Warren is characterised by her aspiration to achieve economic parity and personal growth. Residing in an affluent neighbourhood within the upper middle class stratum, she diligently cultivates the habit of frugality, meticulously saving her financial resources. To this end, she engages in a systematic examination of maps of Shaker Heights, seeking out items that align with her budgetary constraints and personal preferences.

The conclusion drawn from the analysis is that Mia Warren endeavours to eradicate the societal perception that workers are subjected to oppression and lack significance, while the affluent possess boundless vitality. This is achieved via the acquisition of knowledge and the

adoption of appropriate actions, hence facilitating the elimination of the stigma associated with unattractiveness and promoting equality among individuals without differentiation.

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