Tribhuvan University

New Womanhood in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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August 2018

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled,

"New Womanhood in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*"

To my original work carried out as a Master's student at the Department of English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus excepted to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis's design and conception or in presentation style, and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for the thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no material with to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis paper

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August 2018

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

This thesis Entitled "New Womanhood in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*" Submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, by Mr. Kishor Karki, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to heartily thank my Supervisor Mr. Yadav Adhikari, who supported me in every possible way to finish this work. Also, many thanks go to the luminaries of English Department, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, who stood by me whenever I needed help along this wonderful journey.

I would further like to thank my friend Mr. Rameshwor Aryal who provided me scholarly guidance with his deep insights and experience.
I wish to extend my thanks to my family and friends who were always there to support me and lift my morale till the finishing touches of this research.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude is to my parents- Mr. Mukunda Karki my father, and Ms. Radha Karki, my mother who guided me by their soul and without whom I would not have been who I am. I would like to acknowledge my better half Ms. Rashmita Karki and son Avigna Jung Karki for instilling faith and belief in me. To them, no effusiveness can repay anything of what they bestowed.

August 2018 Kishor Karki

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the realm of new female subjectivity in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery.* Since female subjectivity is a broad term, the research is narrowed down to discuss new (meaning recent) female roles and boundaries and analyze social-constructionism versus self-constructionism in Coelho's work. How does the female protagonist Linda acts and reacts in her world with the encumbrance and predicaments she encounter? How are they similar and dissimilar in terms of social constructionism and self-constructionism?

Hence, this thesis basically aims at comparing the subjectivities of the heroine and the societal forces that shape their characters. In the first chapter, the focal point is Linda as a socially constructed character. The critical background will depend on major critics on Third-Wave feminism like Rebecca Walker. Furthermore, sex relations are explored according to the theorists. The third chapter concentrates on Linda as a self-constructed character, immune to societal forces in Coelho's *Adultery*. The closing chapter sums up the main points. The author's approaches to his work are also shortly presented and appraised.

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Chapter I: Introduction

What provides the impetus for this research is the question of how females of different races and cultures in the novel interact in the spaces of the other locations and construct their identities. As an alternative to the notion of an 'original' female identity, forever fixed in the antagonistic paradigm of 'male' and 'female', or third wave feminist thinkers offer the possibility of a 'space' for the enunciation of subjectivity. This research seeks to answer the question if there is a return to the performance of identity as females travel from their ‘home location’ towards ‘alien’ location, the re-creation of the female self in the world of travel.

This research work discusses the critical process of the formation of third wave of feminist discourse. Therefore, discussion of the 'first' wave and the 'second' wave sets forth in the initial chapters. This research chooses female community as its research issue which is subsequently portrayed in *Adultery*. Taken together, this work represents the current situation of female community in Europe.

In this recent novel *Adultery,* Linda, the protagonist, claims she is “a highly regarded journalist,” (3) narrates the story of a happy but boring marriage. Linda commits adultery, despite, by her own admission, being married to a loving and unbelievably understanding but unnamed husband. She begins: “Ah, but I haven’t introduced myself. Pleased to meet you. My name’s Linda,” (1) she says in a manner that sounds gracious, even charming, then continues, “I’m in my thirties, five-foot-eight, 150 pounds, and I wear the best clothes that money can buy (thanks to my husband’s limitless generosity). I arouse desire in men and envy in otherwomen” (1-2). Linda expresses her platonic conception of her own.

Linda is married to a very rich man about her age who loves her and provides everything she could ask for. But Linda, of course, feels that something is

missing – though hardly for any original reasons. She is a stereotype, bored with married life and lacking motivation.

So, deep sense of dissatisfaction with native place, people and culture mixes with her individual wish to board a flight. In this sense, she was preparing for what was to come. Her relationship with her family and friends is also one of the many other instances to reveal her disavowal and disengagement. This defiance is viewed as crucial attitude in new female-in-becoming.

This research aims to analyze the status of female character(s) in *Adultery* more in term with recent feminist critics' observation—The Third Wave Feminism. Many earlier researches in the works of Paulo Coelho have tended to focus on the psycho-social difficulties of characters in their respective works. However, this research will focus on the life of these female characters follow as something of historical necessity, rather than the 'forced' and 'worse' form of human existence. Lives of female as portrayed in *Adultery* do not come to a stoppage even after their settlement in alien hands. They live in-between husband and lover; they are faced with difficulties to adjust through often 'alien' cultural realities where their original cultural location becomes a far cry. Yet, this new location comes with the possibility of emergence of 'new' female. The female characters tend to free themselves from the shackles of cultural persistence and subordination back home, and flourish with their own identities in alien hands. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the resources of hope for female identity ingrained in Coelho's *Adultery.*

Linda's affair begins when she goes to interview a powerful politician, Jacob König, in his office. He is an old boyfriend from high school whom she had once kissed, no more than that. Shortly after the interview, Linda turns down his advances: She hopes he sees her large gold wedding ring, explains she has to pick up her kids

from school, and declares, “Look, the past is the past” (27). He says they should have lunch sometime. But within a few paragraphs, she kneels down and unzips his fly. So, their “affair” begins, but it comes across as simply animal-like rather than robustly lustful and human.

In one of the more explicit scenes, Linda describes their copulating: “He grabs me by the hair like an animal, a mare, and his pace grows faster. He withdraws in a single motion, rips off the condom, turns me over, and comes on my face.” Later, Linda laments that she must pretend she’s a “devoted wife instead of a wounded animal”. Her lamentation takes a sharp turn in the development of her story.

Jacob gives her helpful advice on how to deceive her husband: he tells her to take a shower before hugging him and to throw away her panties “because the Vaseline will leave a mark.” Linda claims to be addicted to Jacob. During the affair’s course, she plots to kill Jacob’s wife but doesn’t follow through. About as deep as Linda gets is comparing herself to Frankenstein’s monster, “A Modern Prometheus,” (119) the subtitle of Mary Shelley’s book. And sometimes she compares herself to the Jekyll-Hyde character. She does ask herself, just once, “Where are my morals?” (182) But that’s the scope of her soul-searching.

Her epiphany, reaches at the end of the story after paragliding with her husband — who still doesn’t have a name — is little more than a set of hackneyed aphorisms about the nature of love. She realizes that “To love abundantly is to live abundantly” (4). This revelation is the core of her discontent.

The seed of her discontent, Linda suggests, was an interview she did with a writer who said simply, "I haven't the slightest interest in being happy. I prefer to live life passionately, which is dangerous because you never know what might happen next."

The propulsive narrative of "Adultery" relies on similar suspense: How far will the increasingly unhinged Linda go to satisfy her desires? Will sin and betrayal eventually beget crime and punishment?

The spark that sets Linda aflame is another interview, this time with an old high-school boyfriend who has become a politician. Now married to a philosophy professor, Jacob König is an unpleasant, narcissistic creature — "entirely focused on himself, his career, and his future," (5) Linda is smart enough to note. But then she, too, is a self-obsessed navel gazer. Perhaps, moral considerations and journalistic ethics aside, they are a match?

The interview itself bores Linda. But their professional masks quickly slip. He kisses her, and she responds like a character out of a male porn fantasy, promptly kneeling down and performing oral sex. The encounter precipitates a destabilizing mix of guilt, arousal and obsession.

Though Jacob seems at best a distraction from marital ennui, Linda imagines herself in love with him. "It's thrilling to fight for a love that's entirely unrequited," (5) she decides, in part because it is an experience utterly new to her. After a particularly brutal rendezvous, she is smitten by Jacob's fifty-shades-of-greyness: "I love what he has awakened inside me. He treated me with zero respect, left me stripped of my dignity" (5). Here she expresses her dualism created in between desire and emotions.

Ignoring Jacob's selfishness and habit of infidelity, Linda concludes that the biggest obstacle to her happiness is his wife, Marianne. So she devises a crazy scheme to purchase illegal drugs and plant them at the professor's office.

Along with Linda's spiritual musings and a few graphic sex scenes, he offers satirical jabs at some broad targets: the regimentation and politeness of Swiss society,

the ideological blinders of the psychiatric profession, the shallowness of contemporary journalism.

At one point, Linda visits three psychiatrists and tells them she has "murderous thoughts." Their diagnoses are all over the map, and include "transference," "hormonal disturbances" and drug use. "We're not shamans who magically drive out evil spirits," (103) one therapist tells her. Whereupon she decides to interview a Cuban shaman for her newspaper, promises him secrecy, and ends up cutting and pasting her article from the Internet. Coelho gives *Adultery* a literary value by allowing Linda to find behavioral parallels in biblical stories, Greek myths, religious history and especially the science-run-amok of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It is not initially clear whether the self-destructive Linda is flirting with mental illness, moral turpitude or the monster that potentially lurks within all of us. Linda's story is the story of new womenhood.

Coelho further explores expectations by resolving Linda's problems without punishing her. But, unfortunately, darkness is all too often more intriguing than light. A spiritual awakening — attained through paragliding, of all things — makes for a riveting conclusion to an otherwise compelling tale of existential angst, marital betrayal and sexual sin. Redemption (or liberation) finally lands when Linda finds out that real satisfaction lies not in happiness but pursueing inner passion.

A woman around her thirties begins to question the routine and predictability of her days. In everybody’s eyes, she has a perfect life: a solid and stable marriage to a rich and loving husband, sweet and well-behaved children and a job as a journalist she can't complain about. However, she can no longer bear the necessary effort to fake happiness when all she feels in life is an enormous apathy, boredom and depression.

All that changes when she encounters an ex-boyfriend from her adolescence. Jacob is now a successful politician and, during an interview, he ends up arousing something in her she had not felt for a long time: passion. She will now do anything to conquer that impossible love, and will have to go down to the pit of human emotions to finally find her redemption.

While third-wave feminists do not have an entirely different set of issues or solutions to long-standing dilemmas, the movement constitutes, more than simply a rebellion against second-wave mothers. What really differentiates the third wave from the second is the approach it offers to some of the problems that developed within feminist theory in the 1980s. The third-wave feminism makes three important approaches that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second wave. First, in response to the collapse of the category of "women," the third wave foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multi perspectival version of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wavers embrace action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political. In other words, third-wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition.
The first step in understanding third-wave feminism involves an evaluation of its self-identified proponents. Seeking to provide a comprehensive overview of the movement, Leslie L. Heywood has put together a two-volume set, *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism* (2006). The first volume provides an encyclopedia of key terms and concepts from A–Z, while the

second contains excerpts from primary documents. The second volume opens, appropriately, with the famous passage by Rebecca Walker, who reportedly kicked off the new movement in 1992 when she declared, “I am the Third Wave” (Walker, 5). Walker, like many early third wave activists, situates herself in opposition to media-publicized postfeminists (some might say antifeminists) like Katie Roiphe, Camille Paglia, and Rene Denfeld, who gained prominence by creating caricatures of second-wave feminism and then lambasting them. In contrast to those voices, third-wavers “do not completely reject the agenda of second-wave feminism” (Heywood, 139); they simply seek to rid feminist practice of its perceived ideological rigidity. As Walker explains:

> For many of us it seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn’t allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressor, good against bad. This way of ordering the world is especially difficult for a generation that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial, and knowing and loving people who are racist, sexist, and otherwise afflicted. (22)

While Walker may be accused of exaggeration, she nonetheless presents the critical perspective expressed in much of the self-identified third-wave literature.

In the decade or so following Walker’s proclamation, a large number of popular books declared the existence of a new wave in feminism.

Heywood helpfully includes excerpts from most of these books and others in her second volume. Together these volumes present a vision of third-wave feminism that is hard to thematize for several reasons. First, the majority of these texts are loosely edited collections of first-person narratives that are anecdotal and autobiographical in nature. Second, many of the essays focus on media icons, images, and discourses rather than on feminist theory or politics per se, which makes a comparison to second-wave feminism difficult. Third, these volumes make clear that third-wavers embrace a multiplicity of identities, accept the messiness of lived contradiction, and eschew a unifying agenda; these hallmarks make third-wave feminism difficult to define. In fact, when asked to define the new movement, Baumgardner says, "This insistence on definitions is really frustrating because feminism gets backed into a corner. People keep insisting on defining and defining and defining and making a smaller and smaller definition—and it's just lazy thinking on their part. Feminism is something individual to each feminist" (146). Collective approach to understanding feminism is a narrow approach.

In contrast to their perception of their mothers' feminism, third-wavers feel entitled to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual or otherwise), and actively play with femininity. Girl power, or girlie culture, is a central—yet contested—strand within the third wave. Its proponents argue that "our desires aren't simply booby traps set by the patriarchy. Girlie encompasses the tabooed symbols of women's feminine enculturation—Barbie dolls, makeup, fashion magazines, high heels—and says using them isn't shorthand for 'we've been duped.'

Using makeup isn't a sign of our sway to the marketplace and the male gaze; it can be sexy, campy, ironic, or simply decorating ourselves without the loaded issues"

(Baumgardner and Richards 2006, 302–3). The third-wave desire for girl power seems simultaneously authentic, playful, and part of the younger generation's project of reclamation, which also redeploys terms like "bitch," "cunt," and "slut."

The third-wavers depict their version of feminism as more inclusive and racially diverse than the second wave. In fact, Heywood defines third wave feminism as "a form of inclusiveness" (xx). Third-wave feminism "respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person" (xx). It also "allows for identities that previously may have been seen to clash with feminism" (xx); you can now be religiously devout or into sports or beauty culture, and still be a feminist, for example.

Paulo Coelho and His Aesthetics

Paulo Coelho was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on August 24, 1947. As a teenager, he wanted to become a writer, but his parents wanted him to pursue a more substantial and secure career. At the age of 17, his introversion and opposition to his parents led them to commit him to a mental institution. He escaped three times before being released at the age of 20. Once released, he abandoned his ideas of becoming a writer and enrolled in law school to please his parents. He stayed in law school for one year.

In 1986, Coelho walked the 500-plus mile Road of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, a turning point in his life. On the path, he had a spiritual awakening, which he described in his book *The Pilgrimage*.

Before becoming a full-time author, he worked as theatre director and actor, lyricist, and journalist. He wrote song lyrics for many famous performers in Brazilian music. His first book, *Hell Archives*, was published in 1982. He has written over twenty-five

books since then including *The Alchemist, Brida, The Fifth Mountain, The Devil and Miss Prym, Eleven Minutes, The Zahir, The Witch of Portobello, Like a Flowing River,* and *Adultery*. He received numerous awards including Las Pergolas Prize, The Budapest Prize, Nielsen Gold Book Award, and the Grand Prix Litteraire Elle. In 1996, he founded the Paulo Coelho Institute, which provides aid to children and elderly people with financial problems. In 2007, Coelho was named a Messenger of Peace to the United Nations.

In this recent novel *Adultery,* Linda, the protagonist, claims she is "a highly regarded journalist," (3) narrates the story of a happy but boring marriage. Linda commits adultery, despite, by her own admission, being married to a loving and unbelievably understanding but unnamed husband. She begins:
"Ah, but I haven't introduced myself. Pleased to meet you. My name's Linda," (1) she says in a manner that sounds gracious, even charming, then continues, "I'm in my thirties, five-foot-eight, 150 pounds, and I wear the best clothes that money can buy (thanks to my husband's limitless generosity). I arouse desire in men and envy in other women" (1-2).

Linda is married to a very rich man about her age who loves her and provides everything she could ask for. But Linda, of course, feels that something is missing – though hardly for any original reasons. She's a stereotype, bored with married life and lacking motivation.

Linda's affair begins when she goes to interview a powerful politician, Jacob König, in his office. He is an old boyfriend from high school whom she had once kissed, no more than that. Shortly after the interview, Linda turns down his advances: She hopes he sees her large gold wedding ring, explains she has to pick up her kids from school, and declares, "Look, the past is the past" (27). He says they should

have lunch sometime. But within a few paragraphs, she kneels down and unzips his fly. So, their affair begins, but it comes across as simply animal-like rather than robustly lustful and human.

In one of the more explicit scenes, Linda describes their copulating: “He grabs me by the hair like an animal, a mare, and his pace grows faster. He withdraws in a single motion, rips off the condom, turns me over, and comes on my face.” Later, Linda laments that she must pretend she’s a “devoted wife instead of a wounded animal” (53). This statement outlines how a women is sexually assaulted even in desiring relationships.

Jacob gives her helpful advice on how to deceive her husband: he tells her to take a shower before hugging him and to throw away her panties “because the Vaseline will leave a mark.” Linda claims to be addicted to Jacob. During the affair’s course, she plots to kill Jacob’s wife but doesn’t follow through. About as deep as Linda gets is comparing herself to Frankenstein’s monster, “A Modern Prometheus,” (119) the subtitle of Mary Shelley’s book. And sometimes she compares herself to the Jekyll-Hyde character. She does ask herself, just once, “Where are my morals?” (182) But that’s the scope of her soul-searching.

Her epiphany, reaches at the end of the story after paragliding with her husband — who still doesn’t have a name — is little more than a set of hackneyed aphorisms about the nature of love. She realizes that “To love abundantly is to live abundantly” (4). This underscores her philosophy towards her life.

The seed of her discontent, Linda suggests, was an interview she did with a writer who said simply, "I haven't the slightest interest in being happy. I prefer to live life passionately, which is dangerous because you never know what might happen next" (2). Her aesthetics towards life is not equivalent towards being happy.

The propulsive narrative of "Adultery" relies on similar suspense: How far will the increasingly unhinged Linda go to satisfy her desires? Will sin and betrayal eventually beget crime and punishment?

The spark that sets Linda aflame is another interview, this time with an old high-school boyfriend who has become a politician. Now married to a philosophy professor, Jacob König is an unpleasant, narcissistic creature — "entirely focused on himself, his career, and his future," Linda is smart enough to note. But then she, too, is a self-obsessed navel gazer. Perhaps, moral considerations and journalistic ethics aside, they are a match?

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Ignoring Jacob's selfishness and habit of infidelity, Linda concludes that the biggest obstacle to her happiness is his wife, Marianne. So she devises a crazy scheme to purchase illegal drugs and plant them at the professor's office. Along with Linda's spiritual musings and a few graphic sex scenes, he offers satirical jabs at some broad targets: the regimentation and politeness of Swiss society, the ideological blinders of the psychiatric profession, the shallowness of contemporary journalism.

At one point, Linda visits three psychiatrists and tells them she has "murderous thoughts." Their diagnoses are all over the map, and include "transference," "hormonal disturbances" and drug use. "We're not shamans who magically drive out evil spirits," one therapist tells her. Whereupon she decides to interview a Cuban shaman for her newspaper, promises him secrecy, and ends up cutting and pasting her article from the Internet.

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Linda's story is the story of new womanhood.

Coelho further explores expectations by resolving Linda's problems without punishing her. But, unfortunately, darkness is all too often more intriguing than light. A spiritual awakening — attained through paragliding, of all things — makes for a riveting conclusion to an otherwise compelling tale of existential angst, marital betrayal and sexual sin. Redemption (or liberation) finally lands when Linda finds out that real satisfaction lies not in happiness but pursueing inner passion.

A woman around her thirties begins to question the routine and predictability of her days. In everybody’s eyes, she has a perfect life: a solid and stable marriage to a rich and loving husband, sweet and well-behaved children and a job as a journalist she can't complain about. However, she can no longer bear the necessary effort to fake happiness when all she feels in life is an enormous apathy, boredom and depression. All that changes when she encounters an ex-boyfriend from her adolescence. Jacob is

now a successful politician and, during an interview, he ends up arousing something in her she hadn't felt for a long time: passion. She will now do anything to conquer that impossible love, and will have to go down to the pit of human emotions to finally find her redemption.

Critical Appraisals

As this book is yet to generate volumes of critical observations, provided the late publication in 2014, there are some prominent critics nonetheless.

Khadija Raza, a teacher and published author at the Oxford University Press, writes in *The Express Tribune*:

> At best, Coelho can be appreciated for attempting to explore the heart, mind and soul of a woman going through a mid-life crisis, but his failure to connect Linda to the reader is evident as one can neither empathise or be enraged by her actions or give her the importance that her character commands. Overall, *Adultery* is a disappointing read. Coelho could have changed the fate of the book by adding more insights but instead chose to focus on the character's sexual discovery making the reader feel like a voyeur. The narrative has a flat tone with a trite conclusion and Coelho's half-hearted references to spirituality and religion are inadequate to weave a cohesive plot. (34)

The novel has all the usual Coelho ingredients: relationships gone wrong, introspection, inner conflicts, spirituality, Biblical references and of course the didactic rant. But it lacks cohesion. For those who imbibe Coelho's spirituality, the Biblical references and spiritual connections are loose unlike the well-researched and well-assimilated references in his earlier works. The dialogues are weak and forgetful

and fail to create a bond between the character and the reader. Event the rant — usually a rich Coelho monotone — is dronish.

Similarly, Roman Vaark opines:

> Thirtysomething Linda has it all. She's fabulously wealthy with an adoring husband, two perfect children, and a challenging job as a journalist. Then, during an interview with a writer, his throwaway comment about preferring dangerous passion to comfortable happiness sets Linda on an increasingly out-of-control cure for her restless boredom. Desperate to climb out of her angst, she concludes another interview assignment, this time with Jacob Konig, an old high school boyfriend-turned-rising Swiss politician, by performing quickie oral sex. Konig, already being blackmailed for a previous affair, leads Linda into an ugly liaison of debauched sex and vengeful jealousy. (125)

Though each has so much to lose, they flagrantly push the envelope of their egocentric needs. It is a risky literary challenge to generate interest in a character who rails wildly against her self-described boring life.

While adultery was a pain, or shame, for females, it is quite different for Linda. This is a process of self-exploration for her, and this is the major research thirst as well. This research aims to analyze the status of female character(s) in *Adultery* more in term with recent feminist critics' observation—The Third Wave Feminism. Many earlier researches in the works of Paulo Coelho have tended to focus on the psycho-social difficulties of characters in their respective works. However, this research will focus on the life of these female characters follow as something of historical necessity, rather than the 'forced' and 'worse' form of human existence.

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The way Linda manages her changing identities is the way of new females who have many options to lead their life other than the traditional social values have assigned them. This is possible because of the third wave of female identity affirmation.

Chapter-II

Theoretical Modality: The Emergence of New Feminism

This chapter explores a wide array of popular and academic literature on third-wave feminism in an attempt to make sense of Linda's estrangement from her family in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery.* Linda belongs to the generation of married females in late twentieth century, thus qualifying the work to be vied from the perspective of third wave feminism, or the new feminism. This novel by Coelho on its face may seem like a confusing hodgepodge of personal anecdotes and individualistic claims. But the true gist of this research is based on the rebellion against small things by the new females like Linda. This chapter therefore weaves around the theoretical discussion of third wave feminism; new feminism.

While third-wave feminists do not have an entirely different set of issues or solutions to long-standing dilemmas, the movement does constitute, as this research argues, more than simply a rebellion against second-wave mothers.

What really differentiates the third wave from the second is the tactical approach it offers to some of the impasses that developed within feminist theory in the 1980s. That is to say, third-wave feminism makes three important moves that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second wave. First, in response to the collapse of the category of "women," the third wave foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiple version of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political. In other words, third-wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that

operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition.

The first step in understanding third-wave feminism involves an evaluation of the claims of its self-identified proponents. Seeking to provide a comprehensive overview of the movement, Leslie L. Heywood has put together a two-volume set, *The Women's Movement Today: An En-cyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism*. The first volume provides an encyclopedia of key terms and concepts from A–Z, while the second contains excerpts from primary documents. The second volume opens, appropriately, with the famous passage by Rebecca Walker, who reportedly kicked off the new movement in 1992 when she declared, "I am the Third Wave" (Walker 5). Walker, like many early third-wave activists, situates herself in opposition to media-publicized postfeminists like Katie Roiphe, Camille Paglia, and Rene Denfeld, who gained prominence by creating caricatures of second-wave feminism and then lambasting them. In contrast to those voices, third-wavers ":do not completely reject the agenda of second-wave feminism" (Heywood 139); they simply seek to rid feminist practice of its perceived ideological rigidity. As Walker explains,

> For many of us it seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressor, good against bad. This way of ordering the world is especially difficult for a generation

> that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial, and knowing and loving people who are racist, sexist, and otherwise afflicted. (22)

While Walker may be accused of exaggeration, she nonetheless presents the critical perspective expressed in much of the self-identified third-wave literature. In the decade or so following Walker's proclamation, a large number of popular books declared the existence of a new wave in feminism. These texts include Rebecca Walker (ed.), *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (1995); Barbara Findlen (ed.), *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (1995); Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (eds.), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (1997); Marcelle Karp and Debbie Stoller (eds.), *The BUST Guide to the New Girl Order* (1999); Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (2000); Daisy Her-na´ndez and Bushra Rehman (eds.), *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* (2002); Merri Lisa Johnson (ed.), *Jane Sexes It Up: True Confessions of Feminist Desire* (2002); Rory Dicker and Alison Piep-meier (eds.), *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* (2003); Michelle Tea (ed.),*Without a Net: The Female Experience of Grow-ing Up Working Class* (2003); and Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin (eds.), *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism* (2004). Heywood helpfully includes excerpts from most of these books and others (excluding *The BUST Guide*and *The Fire This Time*) in her second volume. Together these volumes present a vision of third-wave feminism that is hard to thematize for several reasons.

First, the majority of these texts are loosely edited collections of first-person narratives that are anecdotal and autobiographical in nature. Second, many of the essays focus on media icons, images, and discourses rather than on feminist theory or

politics per se, which makes a comparison to second-wave feminism difficult. Third, these volumes make clear that third-wavers embrace a multiplicity of identities, accept the messiness of lived contradiction, and eschew a unifying agenda; these hallmarks make third-wave feminism difficult to define. In fact, when asked to define the new movement, Baumgardner says,

> This insistence on definitions is really frustrating because feminism gets backed into a corner. People keep insisting on defining and defining and defining and making a smaller and smaller definition—and it's just lazy thinking on their part. Feminism is something individual to each feminist. (qtd. in Strauss 2000)

Overall, however, this popular literature contains four major claims about how third-wave feminism differs from second-wave feminism— claims that contain some truth yet overstate the distinctiveness of the new movement from its predecessor. First, third-wavers emphasize that because they are a new generation, they necessarily have to have their own distinctive version of feminism:

> We are the first generation for whom feminism has been entwined in the fabric of our lives; it is natural that many of us are feminists. . . . This country hasn't heard enough from young feminists. We're here, and we have a lot to say about our ideas and hopes and struggles and our place within feminism. (Findlen 6–7)

While many second-wavers bemoan the invisibility of feminism among young women, Baumgardner and Richards assert that "feminism is out there, tucked into our daily acts of righteousness and self-respect. . . . For our generation feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it—it's simply in the water" (17). Unlike their mothers' generation, who had to prove themselves, third-wavers consider

themselves entitled to equality and self-fulfillment—"the legacy of feminism for me was a sense of entitlement" (Findlen 6)—even as they recognize continuing injustices.

Third-wavers want their own version of feminism that addresses their different societal contexts and the particular set of challenges they face. For example, young women today face a world colonized by the mass media and information technology, and they see themselves as more sophisticated and media savvy than feminists from their mothers' generation. A lot of third-wave literature emphasizes the importance of cultural production and critique, focusing particular attention on female pop icons, hip-hop music, and beauty culture, rather than on traditional politics per se. *Bitch*, for example, advocates "thinking critically about every message the mass media sends; it's about loudly articulating what's wrong and what's right with what we see" (Jervis 263). In the newly published *bitchfest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of "Bitch" Magazine*, the editors argue that "anyone who protests that a focus on pop culture distracts from 'real' feminist issues and lacks a commitment to social change needs to turn on the TV—it's a public gauge of attitudes about everything from abortion . . . to poverty . . . to political power. . . . The world of pop culture is . . . the marketplace of ideas" (Jervis and Zeisler xxi–xxii). While every generation by definition confronts a new historical context, that alone does not seem sufficient to declare a new wave of feminism.

Our media-saturated culture calls for increased attention to cultural cri-tique, but second-wave feminism also attended to cultural traditions, pro-testing the Miss America pageant and creating women's music festivals, for example. In fact, second-wave feminism included an entire strand devoted to such issues: cultural feminism. Moreover, second-wave feminism still exists and, as a recent study shows, a woman's understanding of what feminism means has more to do with where and when she

entered the discourse than it does with the year of her birth (Aikau, Erickson, and Pierce 107). Consequently, it is more helpful to understand third-wave feminism as a particular approach rather than using it to label women born within certain years or who occupy a certain age group. Second, third-wavers claim to be less rigid and judgmental than their mothers' generation, which they often represent as antimale, antisex, antifemininity, and antifun. For example, Naomi Wolf refers to second-wave feminism as "victim feminism" and portrays it as "sexually judgmental, even anti-sexual," "judgmental of other women's sexuality and appearance," and "self-righteous" (Wolf 14–15). She says second-wave feminism wants women "to give up 'heterosexual privilege' by not marrying, instead of extending civil rights; to give up beauty, instead of expanding the definition." It "believes sensuality cannot coincide with seriousness" and "fears that to have too much fun poses a threat to the revolution" (Wolf 15). While this picture clearly paints a popular caricature of second-wave feminism, it also provides a convenient foil against which third-wave feminism can define itself. In contrast to their perception of their mothers' feminism, third-wavers feel entitled to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual or otherwise), and actively play with femininity.

Girl power, or girlie culture, is a central—yet contested—strand within the third wave. Its proponents argue that "our desires aren't simply booby traps set by the patriarchy. Girlie encompasses the tabooed symbols of women's feminine enculturation—Barbie dolls, makeup, fashion magazines, high heels—and says using them isn't shorthand for 'we've been duped.' Using makeup isn't a sign of our sway to the marketplace and the male gaze; it can be sexy, campy, ironic, or simply decorating ourselves without the loaded issues" (Baumgardner and Richards 302–3). The third-wave desire for girl power seems simultaneously authentic, playful, and part

of the younger generation's project of reclamation, which also redeploys terms like "bitch," "cunt," and "slut." In defining third-wave feminism as fun, feminine, and sex-positive, however, third-wavers unfortunately play right into the popular misconception that second-wave feminism was dour, frumpy, and frigid. While second-wave feminism did split during the 1980s over questions of pornography, prostitution, and lesbian sadomasochism—a topic discussed more fully below—it is important to note that the sex wars were a split within second-wave feminism. In other words, rather than breaking with its predecessor, third-wave feminism grows out of one important faction within the second wave. It is revisionist history to conflate second-wave feminism as a whole with the so-called antisex feminists and third-wavers with the prosex side. Such a depiction reinforces the commonly accepted caricature of second-wave feminism as antisex—a view that is clearly overly generalized, inaccurate, and reductionist to anyone who has more than a superficial understanding of the movement (Kelly 219). Since each feminist case is individual, generalization does not do any justice.

Third, third-wavers depict their version of feminism as more inclusive and racially diverse than the second wave. In fact, Heywood defines third-wave feminism as "a form of inclusiveness" (xx). Third-wave feminism "respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person" (xx). It also "allows for identities that previously may have been seen to clash with feminism" (xx); you can now be religiously devout or into sports or beauty culture, and still be a feminist, for example. Like a lot of third-wave edited collections, the Heywood volume of primary sources includes not only pieces by women on race, class or both but also a

significant number of texts that discuss the experience of living with multiple identities—biracial, bisexual (2006), transgendered, or multicultural.

Taking multiple identities into account complicates fem-inist analysis, but, these authors argue, that is what has to happen in order for feminism to speak to the experiences of young people today. While it is commendable that third-wave feminism makes diversity a central feature, it is a misconception to believe that second-wave feminism was composed of all white, middle-class women. Indeed, it may surprise many second-wave feminists to learn that third-wavers claim the writings of feminists of color from the early 1980s as the beginning of the third wave (29), since those writers were central to second-wave feminism as it developed historically.

Third-wave denies the important role they played in second-wave feminism; extracting them makes the second wave whiter than it was. As Astrid Henry points out, that move "enables younger feminists to present their new wave as more progressive and inclusive than that of their second-wave predecessors," which allows them "to position themselves as superior to the feminists of the past in their seeming ability to make *their* feminism anti-racist from its inception" (Henry 126). This is not to deny that second-wave feminism, like its first-wave predecessor, often had a white, middle-class bias, but so does third-wave feminism. For example, *The BUST Guide to the New Girl Order* posits the existence of "our own Girl Culture—that shared set of female expe-riences that includes Barbies and blowjobs, sexism and shoplifting, *Vogue* and vaginas" (Karp and Stoller xv). Obviously, memories of playing with Barbie and reading *Vogue* probably resonate more with white girls than with others. And what about the class privilege of the third wave's alleged founder—the Yale-educated daughter of Alice Walker and god-daughter of Gloria Steinem—who had the

resources to create a major foundation during her early twenties (Heywood xvii). Indeed, the authors of *Manifesta*—both of whom served as editors at *Ms*.base their analysis on conversations with their friends, all of whom "live in New York City and mostly work in the media" (Baumgardner and Richards 22). Thus, solipsism can affect even those with the best intentions. Finally, third-wavers claim to have a broader vision of politics than second-wave feminism, to have no "party line," and to focus on more than just women's issues (Heywood 367). Heywood argues that third-wave feminism "has never had a monolithically identifiable, single-issue agenda that distinguishes it from other movements for social justice. One of its main emphases, in fact, has been on feminism and gender activism as only one part of a much larger agenda for environ-mental, economic, and social justice, and one of its main arguments is that it is counterproductive to isolate gender as a single variable" (Heywood xx). Third-wave feminism seems to include any approach, as long as it pays attention to gender issues and favors social justice. Here again, third-wave writers overemphasize their distinctiveness. Second-wave feminism did not focus only on a narrow number of women's issues. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many feminists saw gender equality as inextricably connected to the struggle for socialism.

Alternatively, the Greenham Common women's peace encampment made peace a feminist issue—a controversial claim that some see as essentializing. Indeed, the concept of the "personal is political" actually renders almost every issue political. Moreover, with (at least) four major schools of thought (liberal, socialist, radical, and cultural), second-wave feminism can hardly be seen as having one party line. Such an assertion can only come from a stunning ignorance of the historical development of feminist theory. Because third-wavers frequently overstate their distinctiveness while

showing little knowledge of their own history, the movement has been widely criticized by second-wavers.

For example, in *Not My Mother's Sister* (2004), Henry makes a convincing case that third-wave feminism can be viewed as the rebellion of young women against their mothers and as their desire to have a feminism of their own, even though their political agenda—when they have one—remains quite similar to that of their mothers. As Steinem comments, "It will take a while before feminists succeed enough so that feminism is not perceived as a gigantic mother who is held responsible for almost everything, while the patriarchy receives terminal gratitude for the small favors it bestows. . . . I confess that there are moments in the pages of Rebecca Walker's *To Be Real* when I— and perhaps other readers over thirty-five—feel like a sitting dog being told to sit" (Steinem xxii). Indeed, third-wave feminists often argue against a straw woman—a frumpy, humorless, antisex caricature of second-wave feminists that papers over the differences and nuances that existed within that movement. At the same time, second-wave feminists can also be overly defensive or dismissive of the younger women's perspectives (Evans 231). The second-wave feminists appeared to be class conscious.

Framing the Third Wave

Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford's *Third Wave Feminism* (2007) and Heywood's two-volume *Encyclopedia* both try to make sense of third-wave feminism by providing an academic vision that frames the movement theoretically. Unfortunately, the format of these two books plays into the lack of clarity about the nature of the movement. *Third Wave Feminism* consists of a collection of loosely related essays, originally written for a conference on the topic in 2002. Heywood's *Encyclopedia* provides an alphabetized list of key concepts related

to the topic with little overarching analysis, which makes her own viewpoint hard to discern. Unless completely familiar with the entire primary literature on third-wave feminism, it is hard for a reader to perceive the ways in which Heywood shapes her own vision of feminism through the choices she makes about what to include in the reader. For example, it seems strange at first that Heywood chose to exclude *The BUST Guide to the New Girl Order* from her volume of primary documents, especially since *BUST* is frequently cited as central to the movement, even in her own introduction (xix).

Excluding it, however, means excluding some of the more purely sexual, consumerist, and frivolous pieces of the third-wave move-ment—pieces in which individuals detail the pleasures of "cock-sucking" discuss the "mysterious eroticism of mini-backpacks" glorify a history of shoplifting makeup and then throwing it away or recount the experience of gazing at one's own cunt. Indeed, Stoller, one of the editors of *BUST*, reportedly declared at a conference that "painting one's toenails is a feminist act because it expands the notions of what a feminist is allowed to do or how she may look " (13). She reportedly suggested, "maybe we should be painting our nails in the boardroom . . . in order to bring our Girlie-ness into male-defined spaces" (qtd. in Baumgardner and Richards 305). This is how the culture has restrained feminism.

Heywood's decision to exclude such material from her third-wave collection pushes the movement in a more serious direction-which I see as a positive move. Her volume, along with that of Gillis, Howie, and Munford, plays the role of nudging third-wave feminism in a more theoretically coherent and productive direction. Together the books suggest that third wave feminism should be seen as a response to the series of watershed changes within feminist theory and politics mentioned above,

even though the movement remains inchoate. The remainder of this essay builds on the efforts of these two works by teasing out more deliberately the distinctive contributions third-wave feminism makes to feminist struggle. More specifically, it is my argument that while third-wave texts often exhibit certain limitations—a youthful myopia, an ignorance of history, and a sense of self-importance—overall third-wave feminism does make sense as a new yet still embryonic stage of feminist politics. Third-wave feminism presents a tactical response to three major theoretical challenges to second-wave feminism: the "category of women" debates (initiated by feminists of color) that shattered the idea of a shared women's experience or identity; the end of grand narratives through the decline of Marxism and the rise of poststructuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism within the academy; and the sex wars that fractured the unified political stand of feminism on many important feminist issues. In short, the third wave responds to the debates of the 1980s that hobbled feminist theory and practice.

Third-wave feminism responds to the 'category of women' debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s that began with a critique of the second-wave contention that women share something in common as women: a common gender identity and set of experiences. The concepts of 'woman' and 'experiences' are closely connected within the second wave and, along with personal politics, form the three core concepts of that movement. In short, classic second-wave feminism argues that in patriarchal society women share common experiences, and through a sharing of their experiences with one another in consciousness-raising (CR) groups, they can generate knowledge about their own oppression. Once they realize that what they thought were personal problems (e.g., uneven division of household labor, male-centered sexual practices, domestic violence, etc.) are widely shared, they can see the ways in which the

patriarchal structure of society produces such problems, and the personal becomes political. Third-wave feminists rightly reject the universalist claim that all women share a set of common experiences, but they do not discard the concept of experience altogether. Women still look to personal experiences to pro-vide knowledge about how the world operates and to trouble dominant narratives about how things should be. Indeed, the personal story con-stitutes one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism, and the movement has not moved beyond this genre over time—as illustrated by the recent publication of both *bitchfest* and *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists*. The phrase "the personal is political" still forms the core of feminism, and sharing personal experiences functions as a form of CR within the third wave. Second-wave CR in its classic form occurred in face-to-face settings; however, plenty of proverbial lightbulbs went off outside of such gatherings as well (Evans 31). The second-wave feminism emphasizes to deal each feministic case individually.

Many second-wavers wrote books—although they tended more toward ambitious theoretical analyses than personal storytelling—and, as Elizabeth Kelly remarks, texts like "'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm' passed from hand to hand in tattered photocopies" (235). While the third wave lacks any formalized structure, similar to second-wave CR groups, the hope seems to be that through reading or hearing about the life experiences of a diversity of individuals, young women will gain insight into their own lives and the societal structures in which they live. Women's and gender studies courses provide additional markets for third-wave literature. Many third-wave stories strive to demonstrate the gaps between dominant discourses and the reality of women's lives. Some third-wavers, for example, use their

own experiences growing up in interracial or multi-cultural families to illustrate how the politics of race, class, and gender play out in people's lives.

For example, Cristina Tzintzu´n writes, "I worry about dating whites, especially white men. . . . I see what a white man did to my beautiful, brown, Mexican mother. He colonized her" (195). Other essays show how their authors don't properly fit into societal or feminist categories—how they are misunderstood, mistreated, hurt, or angered by dominant discourses— which exposes the human costs of hegemonic narratives and thus works to undermine their legitimacy. Unfortunately, however, the critical messages embedded within these personal stories often remain unspoken. For example, Tea published *With-out a Net* so women could tell their stories of what it's "like to grow up receiving messages from the dominant culture that to be a female is to behave in a way that will get you eaten for lunch in your roughneck city" (xii). Most of the stories in the volume movingly convey the difficulties of growing up poor, yet they remain personal stories, leaving readers to construct a critique of dominant ideologies. The same is the case with a good deal of the third-wave material. When they do take a more analytical approach, third-wavers tend to focus a lot of attention on media images of women.

Many complain that they do not see themselves represented in the mass media because they occupy minority subject positions, such as trans (Serano 81) or butch (Savoie 96), for example. *Bitch* editors Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler point out, however, that no one really sees herself reflected: "Most of us looking to celluloid for a reflection of our-selves will be sorely disappointed, no matter what our gender (even if we see ourselves as pretty standard males or females—Hollywood archetypes are limited about plenty more than the strict boy/girl thang" (51). Others find themselves identifying in an unusual way: "I'm not sure exactly when or how it happened, but at

some point in my childhood I began to think I was a white guy trapped in the body of a black girl. And not just any white guy, either—a guitar player in a heavy metal band. . . . I'm a black female metalhead" (Chaney 26). While such stories might be read as simply personal accounts of the struggles of growing up, this third-wave tactic implicitly reveals the fissures between conflicting narratives about gender. Building on Judith Butler's theoretical insights, Munford argues that third-wavers sometimes "deploy performative strategies that rely less on a dissonance between anatomical sex and gender identity (as in the instance of drag), than on a tension between opposing discourses of gender within female-embodied sexed identity—in particular the Madonna/whore and girl/woman binaries" (271)—think the Riot Grrrls, Courtney Love, or Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

By occupying female subject positions in innovative or contradictory ways, third-wavers unsettle essentialist narratives about dominant men and passive women and shape new identities within the interstices of competing narratives. There is no one way to be a woman. The continued emphasis on personal experiences within the third wave illustrates the falsity of second-wave claims that women have a common identity based on shared experiences. While some feminist theorists have wondered how feminism can continue without the category women, the third wave approach seems to abandon the idea of creating a social move-ment as the goal of feminism, which alleviates the need for a shared identity upon which women can act together. This does not mean an abandonment of all politics, however.

Third-wavers tend to take an anarchist approach to politics—calling for immediate direct action or understanding individual acts as political in and of themselves (Berger). For example, one author writes, "To the extent that collective action is needed, third-wave feminist politics should be understood as coalitional

rather than unified" (Stone 22). Third-wave feminism continues the efforts of second-wave feminism to create conditions of freedom, equality, justice, and self-actualization for all people by focusing on gender-related issues in particular, even as it offers a different set of tactics for achieving those goals. Since as many similarities exist as do differences, why continue to use wave terminology? The wave metaphor certainly has some limitations.

First, the metaphor implies that the two waves of feminism are tied to particular demographic generations, which is counterfactual and unhelpful.

Second, it fuels the vision of generational rebellion, which is "divisive and oppositional" (Jervis 135) and obscures more than it reveals.

Third, as Kimberly Springer argues, the entire wave metaphor is organized around the activities of white women, overlooking the activist work of black women that preceded and followed the so-called waves (34). This statement reveals the moment taken forth by black women.

Finally, third-wave feminism focuses almost exclusively on American feminism, often prioritizing issues that at best do not resonate internationally and at worst undermine the possibility of transnational coalitions. Yet while there are good reasons to reject the wave metaphor, this terminology developed at a particular moment in time and continues to be used; consequently, it requires theoretical commentary. As I hope I have demonstrated, "third-wave feminism" does contain the seeds of a new approach within feminist theory and politics that I believe has great potential.

As Ednie Kaeh Garrison puts it, "Although it is by no means guaranteed, I do still want to believe the name-object 'third wave feminism' has transformational potential. However, this potential can be realised only when feminists and their allies

take the lead in defining and demarcating its content, not in flippant, irreverent, sound-bite versions of intellectual wish-wash palatable to the media and the public, but with careful attention to the messiness, the contradictions, the ambiguities, and the complexities such an endeavour inevitably entails" (195). While distinctively American, third-wave feminism potentially offers a diverse, anti-foundationalist, multi-perspectival, sex-radical version of feminism that could move American feminism beyond the impasses of the 1980s and 1990s. Third-wave feminism is not yet a social movement—and it may never be. Because it strives to be inclusive of all, collective action constitutes one of its biggest challenges, and one that it shares with other anti-foundationalist discourses, such as radical democracy. In fact, third-wave feminism is not unlike radical democracy. Both require the constant engagement of participants in the struggle for a better world. There are no predetermined answers and no guarantees of success, just the inspiration for critical engagement with the lived messiness of contemporary life.

Chapter III:

Linda: A Heroine on Her Own Account

The main themes in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*; such as, adventure, alienation, affirmation of female self, is discussed in this chapter in the light of the theory of new female subjectivity, third wave feminism and agency. How do these themes affect the character of the heroine and how are new female subjectivities akin to or different from Linda? Whenever pertinent, there are cross-references with Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*. Coelho‖s work concentrates on the spirituality of sexuality rather than its corporeality. Its pivotal infrastructure is the soul not the body of the heroine. Linda's character is independent and free. Linda is a woman who wants to discover the world through adventure. She has three aims in her life: adventure, money and a husband.

The story revolves around Linda, a thirty-something wife of one of the richest men in Switzerland. Her main problem, it seems, is that she doesn't have any problems. She is the mother of two children, works as a journalist, and is such an epitome of awesomeness that she "arouse(s) desire in men and envy in women." Her husband adores her and she is practically living the ideal life. But she still hates pretty much every aspect of her existence and finds herself struggling with boredom due to a "lack of passion and adventure" (12). She is bored of routinely organized living.

To eliminate the predictability of her comfortable routine, Linda decides to replace her "missing joy with something more concrete — a man." A man who isn't her husband, of course. The object of her desire is a former high school boyfriend Jacob, now a prominent politician running for office. Their paths cross when she has to interview him for the newspaper. Nostalgia hits, lust takes hold, and Linda sets out on a road that might have life-altering consequences. One might think these consequences frame the narrative, but the book never delivers the kind of

repercussions that would seem realistic or create the necessary tension to keep the story interesting. Nor does it explain why the reader is supposed to give a hoot about its central character, a woman who comes off as repulsively self-absorbed and shallow. Linda's introspection and soul-searching read more like narcissistic ramblings as she tries to justify her actions, meandering through the topics of love, depression, joy, self-fulfillment and life in Geneva, while making contrived references to (better) works of literature.

Perhaps Linda's actions and choices would have made more sense if we were given a chance to get acquainted with some of the people around her, but that doesn't really happen. We find out the bare minimum about her (seemingly passive and unbelievably understanding) husband, and next to nothing about her children. The only supporting character who is fleshed out is Jacob, the man Linda obsessively pursues, but he comes off even worse than she does. A womanizer who has apparently had a string of affairs despite being married to the "complete woman" (who Linda wants to "destroy pitilessly"), he just seems like a person who doesn't have a meaningful connection with anyone.

Because she does not reveal her feelings towards him, She starts to feel and think that "love was something very dangerous" (5). A while later, Linda is confronted with a second love opportunity yet she does not let it go as the first one. Here, she starts to think of herself as an experienced young woman, who had already allowed one grand passion to slip from her grasp, and who knew the pain that this caused, and now she was determined to fight with all her might for this man and for marriage, determined that he was the man for marriage, children and the house by the sea.

In this passage, one notes words that reflect self-consciousness, like 'think', 'experienced' though 'young', and 'determined to fight.' Besides, Linda is endowed with the mentality of a mature woman. She wishes this man to be her husband:

> When we meet someone and fall in love, we have a sense that the whole universe is on our side. I saw this happen today as the sun went down. And yet if something goes wrong, there is nothing left! No herons, no distant music, not even the taste of his lips. How is it possible for the beauty that was there only minutes before to vanish so quickly? (9)

These very euphoric feelings of Linda do not last long because this dear lover abandons her for the sake of his politics. Alienation seems as if it does not like the idea of leaving her alone. Linda thinks that life "rushes us from heaven to hell in a matter of seconds" and love is "a cause of suffering" (11). Her viewpoint of men tends after this relation to be a negative one for "men brought only pain, frustration, suffering and a sense of time dragging" (14). Moreover, she decides not to fall in love again "because love spoiled everything" (14). She hardly professes the fire inside her.

Moreover, there is a reversal of gender roles. She is the subject holding control; he is the object. She is the one to “use” the other; he is the one “being used.” Her asset is her body and feminine beauty which is not “used by him” as an object of mere pleasure. Linda’s power lies in her seduction.

Why is Linda attracted to Jacob? What exactly is she feeling? And what is she actually going through? She herself isn’t sure, and keeps questioning her own thoughts, troubles, and motives for the entirety of the novel. Meanwhile, there isn’t enough character development or even a strong, convincing arc that would make her a compelling individual. For most of the novel, as the events limply unfold, the

protagonist doesn't seem to come out any wiser, and neither does the reader. When her eventual moment of epiphany does arrive, it feels tedious and hackneyed.

As with every Paulo Coelho novel, Adultery tries to dispense some wisdom, although it's often hard to tell what these lessons really are. Perhaps it is precisely because this novel was written by such a celebrated author who generates higher expectations that the result is so underwhelming. Beloved to a global fan base that venerates him for stories laced with optimism and insight, Coelho is not only the best selling Portuguese language author of all time but also one of the most successful writers in the world. The Brazilian author's 1988 allegorical novel The Alchemist is a phenomenon, a magical fable that blends spirituality and philosophy to inspire its readers. That spark, sadly, is missing in Adultery.

Sure there are moments that do resonate, such as the sentiment that people can be "afraid of things changing, but at the same time dying to experience something different," and of course the overall themes of searching for meaning, love, and happiness are unlikely to be foreign to anyone reading this book. But we don't get a meaningful discourse on any of these topics and are instead left with a superficial take on love and depression by way of a protagonist that is a walking cliché.

It also doesn't help that a couple of times the book turns into '50 Shades of Adultery', taking unnecessarily descriptive and gratuitously graphic interludes; the effect is jarring and does not go well with the author's overall style.

Adultery never quite succeeds in making a connection or generating empathy, and ultimately leaves us with more questions than answers. The book is a fairly quick read and its plain prose, slight plot, and trite characters offer only a few moments of inspiration towards the end which do not make up for the dull journey that gets us there.

The novel's central themes have been tackled much more interestingly in various other works, and we would certainly have expected someone of Paulo Coelho's calibre to present a more original and affecting take on these subjects.

The Swiss narrator of Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho's latest novel introduces herself as a woman with little cause for complaint — beyond a faked orgasm or two. In her 30s, Linda has a rich financier husband who loves her, two children, and a reporting job at a respected Geneva newspaper. "I arouse desire in men and envy in other women," (2) she adds smugly, wrapping herself in cliché.

Yet despite her abundant good fortune, she feels trapped in routine, mired in a life devoid of passion or risk "in the safest country in the world." She tells herself: "Since I married … time has stopped" (27). Later she will encourage our complicity: "Who hasn't felt the urge to drop everything and go in search of their dream?" (39)

With voyeuristic relish, "Adultery" charts Linda's downward spiral as she struggles with boredom, depression and envy — and, finally, with appetites that threaten to destroy everything she most values.

The seed of her discontent, Linda suggests, was an interview she did with a writer who said simply, "I haven't the slightest interest in being happy. I prefer to live life passionately, which is dangerous because you never know what might happen next" (2). She outlaws the stigma of being happy.

The propulsive narrative of "Adultery" relies on similar suspense: How far will the increasingly unhinged Linda go to satisfy her desires? Will sin and betrayal eventually beget crime and punishment?

The spark that sets Linda aflame is another interview, this time with an old high-school boyfriend who has become a politician. Now married to a philosophy professor, Jacob König is an unpleasant, narcissistic creature — "entirely focused on

himself, his career, and his future," (172) Linda is smart enough to note. But then she, too, is a self-obsessed navel gazer. Perhaps, moral considerations and journalistic ethics aside, they are a match?

It is a hazardous world that is full of exploitation, manipulation and jeopardy. It is based on the objectification of the female body. In addition, people who work or control the sphere of this universe are surely people devoid of moral values. Coelho's heroine is an autonomous entity, a human being and this being - transcending gender boundaries – is absolutely not impeccable or immaculate.

She keeps reminding herself that she is an adventurer. She is nostalgic to the feeling of love. She wants to be loved and feel alive. Estrangement alienates her from love. A woman who is able to think of love and adventure in the depths of her loneliness is so full of self-consciousness and agency. She can find a way out of every trouble she encounters. Her subjectivity is self-constructed no matter how many and profound predicaments she encounters. She is conscious of herself.

The interview itself bores Linda. But their professional masks quickly slip. He kisses her, and she responds like a character out of a male porn fantasy, promptly kneeling down and performing oral sex. The encounter precipitates a destabilizing mix of guilt, arousal and obsession.

Though Jacob seems at best a distraction from marital ennui, Linda imagines herself in love with him. "It's thrilling to fight for a love that's entirely unrequited," she decides, in part because it is an experience utterly new to her. After a particularly brutal rendezvous, she is smitten by Jacob's fifty-shades-of-greyness: "I love what he has awakened inside me. He treated me with zero respect, left me stripped of my dignity" (5). Ignoring Jacob's selfishness and habit of infidelity, Linda concludes that

the biggest obstacle to her happiness is his wife, Marianne. So she devises a crazy scheme to purchase illegal drugs and plant them at the professor's office.

At one point, Linda visits three psychiatrists and tells them she has "murderous thoughts." Their diagnoses are all over the map, and include "transference," "hormonal disturbances" and drug use. "We're not shamans who magically drive out evil spirits," one therapist tells her. Whereupon she decides to interview a Cuban shaman for her newspaper, promises him secrecy, and ends up cutting and pasting her article from the Internet.

It is not initially clear whether the self-destructive Linda is flirting with mental illness, moral turpitude or (as Coelho seems to intend) the monster that potentially lurks within all of us. Linda's story is our story, but her evident narcissism — who among us wouldn't settle for a rich, loving spouse and a prestigious, enjoyable career? — erodes our sympathy. Even harder to swallow is the apparent saintliness of her husband, who fits no one's stereotype of an investment fund owner.

Coelho further upends expectations by resolving Linda's problems without punishing her. But, unfortunately, darkness is all too often more intriguing than light. A spiritual awakening — attained through paragliding, of all things — hardly makes for a riveting conclusion to an otherwise compelling tale of existential angst, marital betrayal and sexual sin.

Adultery opens as we meet Linda—a journalist for a respectable Swiss newspaper—and her daily routine and mini-autobiography: E*very morning, when I open my eyes to the so-called "new day," I feel like closing them again, staying in bed, and not getting up. But I can't do that (1).*

She discusses her loving husband, her children, family habits, and work:

> My name's Linda. I'm in my thirties, five-foot-eight, 150 pounds, and I wear the best clothes that money can buy (thanks to my husband's limitless generosity). I arouse desire in men and envy in other women And yet, every morning, when I open my eyes to this ideal life that everyone dreams of having but few achieve, I know the day will be a disaster. (3)

Her so-called "fairy tale" life comes to a halt. After an interview with a famous writer who states: " I haven't the slightest interest in being happy. I prefer to live life passionately, which is dangerous because you never know what might happen next." The day after the interview, Linda realizes that she never takes any risks:

> I know what lies ahead of me: another day exactly like the previous one. And passion? Well, I love my husband which means that I've no cause to get depressed over living with someone purely for the sake of his money, the children, or to keep up appearances. (4)

Over the course of the novel, Linda slowly realizes the heap of boredom and loneliness she has grown accustomed to. In addition, she runs into her former boyfriend, Jacob Konig. Also suffering from unhappiness, Konig's political career is increasingly on the rise and the two rekindle their passion once again through an illicit affair. Linda's life and mental stability spiral out of control as the affair takes over and threatens her life. Her struggle now is "to confront deep emotions and to make a choice." Linda is probably one of the most relatable characters to women who've been married for years, had children, and are accustomed to their routine, stably. Her life was boring! This novel is all about her journey to learn how to live.

So much for grace and charm. Who in fiction or in life introduces themselves like this? A "highly regarded journalist"? Throughout the book, Linda's character and

her journalism get no better. She comes off like a minor character in a comedy of manners, but she's serious. She might have the heft to fill the shoes of a central character in a short story, which this novel resembles, but not because it's short and powerful. It's not. The material, the slight plot, and what little meaning there is could have been easily condensed into a longish short story. Linda is married to a very rich man about her age who loves her and provides everything she could ask for. But Linda, of course, feels that something is missing – though hardly for any original reasons. She's a stereotype, bored with married life and lacking motivation.

Linda's affair begins when she goes to interview a powerful politician, Jacob Konig, in his office. He's an old boyfriend from high school whom she'd once kissed, no more than that. Shortly after the interview, Linda turns down his advances: She hopes he sees her large gold wedding ring, explains she has to pick up her kids from school, and declares, "Look, the past is the past" (27). He says they should have lunch sometime. But within a few paragraphs, she kneels down and unzips his fly. So, their affair begins, but it comes across as simply animal-like rather than robustly lustful and human.

In one of the more explicit scenes, Linda describes their copulating: "He grabs me by the hair like an animal, a mare, and his pace grows faster. He withdraws in a single motion, rips off the condom, turns me over, and comes on my face." Later, Linda laments that she must pretend she's a "devoted wife instead of a wounded animal" (128). She admits the torture that she attains from her desire.

Jacob gives her helpful advice on how to deceive her husband: he tells her to take a shower before hugging him and to throw away her panties "because the Vaseline will leave a mark." Linda claims to be addicted to Jacob. During the affair's course, she plots to kill Jacob's wife but doesn't follow through. About as deep as

Linda gets is comparing herself to Frankenstein's monster, "A Modern Prometheus," the subtitle of Mary Shelley's book. And sometimes she compares herself to the Jekyll-Hyde character. She does ask herself, just once, "Where are my morals?" But that's the scope of her soul-searching.

Her epiphany, if you can call it one, reached at the end of the story after paragliding with her husband — who still doesn't have a name — is little more than a set of hackneyed aphorisms about the nature of love. She realizes that "To love abundantly is to live abundantly," and later that "All you can do is look at Love, fall in love with Love, and imitate it." Linda transforms the experiment into a first step in the profession. It is her high sense of adventure. Little thoughts come across her mind about the invalidity and immorality of such a job. It is her self-consciousness, the consciousness of a being that wants to explore and know the body in order to understand the soul. She is like Siddhartha in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. Like him, she wants to go on a journey of self-discovery of the two aspects of human beings: good and evil:

> [S]he would find adventure, money or a husband, as she had always dreamed she would . . . Instead of feeling depressed, she felt proud - she was fighting for herself, she wasn't some helpless person. She could, if she wanted to, open the door and leave that place for good, but she would always know that she had at least had the courage to come that far, to negotiate and discuss things about which she had never in her life even dared to think. She wasn't a victim of fate, she kept telling herself: she was running her own risks, pushing beyond her own limits . . . (74-75)

Putting on appearances and pretending to be someone other than whom she really is are neither detrimental nor showing inconsiderateness towards others. She does not spare a thought pretending that she knows them. Linda is an honest woman. She is honest with herself as well as others.

In Coelho's novel, there are some passages that reflect women's dependency on men and their lack of agency. For example, one of these passages shows the nature of the first relationship between Adam and Eve; "Original sin was not the apple that Eve ate, it was her belief that Adam needed to share precisely the thing she had tasted. Eve was afraid to follow her path without someone to help her, and so she wanted to share what she was feeling" (225). This does not negate men's complicity. However, it confirms women's lack – which was explored before according to Freud and Lacan - and their inferiority to men. Coelho agrees with such notion yet he also believes in the reversal and reversibility of gender poles; "[A] man is also a woman; he wants to find someone to give meaning to his life" (225). There is nothing such as gender boundaries or fixed position of gender poles in Coelho. It is all reversible. “A Dangerous Method” is a movie adapted by Christopher Hampton based on his play “The Talking Cure” which is also based on John Kerr’s “A Most Dangerous Method,” the story of Freud, Jung and Sabina Spielrein. Sabina - a woman suffering from hysteria yet later cured of it and trained to become a psychiatrist – asks Jung what seems a rhetorical question; “Don’t you think that there’s something male in every woman? And something female in every man? Or should be?” Jung’s answer is in the affirmative. Hence, the man also lacks something whatever it is as woman does. The lack in both leads them to seek each other. When they find each other, they should not seek to possess one another.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

A Struggle over Female Subjectivity

After plunging into the analytical study of Linda's presentation in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*, some theoretical exploration of some terms is demonstrated. In his incisive polemic *Subjectivity*, Donald E. Hall succinctly attributes subjectivity to "a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity" (3). In *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*, social constructionism is defined as "[a]n epistemological theory according to which material forces emanating from social and cultural institutions construct individual identity and subjectivity" (322). Thus, self-constructionism stands as opposed to social constructionism in the struggle over subjectivity: who is to control? Agency is also defined as "[t]he power of a human subject to exert his or her will in the social world. To have agency is to have social power; to lack it is to be ignored or subjugated by others who possess it" (306). In this sense, to what extent is Linda conscious of the factors and forces that shape her personality and constitute her individuality the research is the research issue which has been sufficiently discussed in the chapters. Hence, Linda is not solely responsible for the repercussions of her decisions and actions. Somehow, it is the society that affects her: her free will rarely controls her mode of actions.

One of the central issues for feminism is the cultural construction of subjectivity. The main thesis is directly feminist, the exploration of the novel concentrates on the circumstances and impulses that make Linda choose another male partner in the process of a way of living. In other words, the ways in which we understand our bodies, or our embodiment, depends upon the culture in which we

live. The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution.

Chapter I explores in part the communal forces that shape the individuality of Linda and reflect her agency. How does social constructionism forge her character? How does she react? In other words, to what extent is she self-conscious of what occurs to her? Such questions get the answers according to major critics of Paulo Coelho.

In this way, Coelho has miraculously rescued Linda from the oppression of 'adultery' and the social stigma attached to it. Insofar as Linda's adultery rescues her from her stillness and psychological burden, adultery no longer remains a sin but a necessary trajectory to the height of peaceful survival. Coded as a sin in society, adultery has been criminalized in earlier social context. But, in this book, which remains the major thirst of this research, adultery is the symbol of resurgence.

In addition, the implementation of masquerade by Linda is tackled and how it contributes to her subjectivity in the light of feminist theorists-the third wave theorists. Chapter III sheds the light on the subjectivities of Linda altogether with deeper comparison of her demeanor and behavior in addition to approaching similar or opposing situations that encounter her. The conclusion sums up the foregoing discussion of subjectivity-new womanhood in particular, with reference to the researcher's opinion of the purpose of the research.

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