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Cultural Conflict and Emotional Politics in Betty Mahmoody Novels

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Abstract:

This paper explores the cultural conflict as well as the politics of emotions in the novels of Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter* and *For the Love of a Child*. She has given in her novels the emotional conflict of bi-cultural marriages and their children's identity. Betty detailed her relationship with an Iranian American Doctor and a journey from a patience to become an Iranian man's wife. *For the Love of a Child* explored the stories of several couples are entrenched in bi-cultural marriages. Betty's has analyzed about such tragic marriage lead her one of the causes is the emotional conflict and politics of emotions. Emotions are collective and universal phenomena, though affected by culture. Some emotions are general and are experienced in parallel ways as a reaction to similar events across all cultures, other emotions demonstrate extensive cultural differences in their forerunner events, the way they are experienced, the response they bring about and the way they are perceived by the surrounding of society. Novels serve as an indication against intercultural relationships and features cultural differences between America and Iran.

Keywords: Emotions, Politics, Culture Conflict, Bi-cultural marriage.

Introduction:

The history related to emotions withstand on the belief not only the expression of feeling but also the feelings themselves are changing and so are feeling as well as their expression interconnected. The social significance and strength of emotions is historically and culturally uneven. In the view of many historians, emotion is therefore, merely as primary sort of history as class, race, or gender. The relationship between culture and emotions are originates in the book of Darwin, *The expression of man and animals*. He claimed that emotions and the expression of emotions are universal. Since that time the universality of the seven basic emotions has provoke a debate amongst psychologists, anthropologist and sociologist. Several references can found how culture and emotions interlinked. Triandis shared a definition of culture that “a shared set of beliefs attitudes, norms values and behavior organized around a central theme and found among speakers of one language in one time period, and in one geographic region”. Cultures have an effect on every facet of emotions. Recognizing which emotions are appropriate to be express and even how they should be flaunt are all influenced by culture. Yet more vitally, cultures differently influence emotions, meaning that delve into cultural context is source to understanding emotions. Understanding cultural conflict and politics of emotions with the perspectives of Betty Mahmoody is important for the present article. She is an American Iranian author. She has written a masterpiece, in other words, a waiting call to the world where children became the victim of bi-cultural marriages and bi-cultural surrounding. They live in a chaos and suffer for their identity. Betty Mahmoody’s novel *Not Without My Daughter* creates the sensation in the world where the organization became an active to help such trap children in foreign culture.

Objectives of Study:

The aim of this paper is to research the cultural conflicts handled in the novels of Betty Mahmoody. She is the witness and victim of the politics of emotions and cultural conflicts. Through the study of *For the Love of a child* Betty had explored the world and the crises in bi-cultural marriages .Betty Mahmoody had given the references of various character from the alien countries settles in America and got marriage and then migrate to their homeland. This paper aims to examine the reason behind the migration and failure of the marriage. The objective of the study is to create cultural awareness.

Review of Literature:

Maja Mugerle wrote an article on “The Orientalism in *Not Without My Daughter* by Betty Mahmoody” which aims to describe construed integrations of the East by the westerns. It exposed a number of condemning cultural, ethnic and religious stereotypes about east. Smeeta Mishra wrote an article entitled “Saving Muslim women and fighting Muslim men: Analysis of representation in the New York Times.” This study analyzed stories about Muslim women living in non-western countries were often stories about political violence. Dr. Gautami Pawar wrote a paper entitled “Culture and cultural conflict in Betty Mahmoody *Not Without My Daughter*.” The paper examines culture and the cultural conflict in *Not Without My Daughter*. Amruta M Nair and Geetha R. Pai wrote an article entitled “Dilemma and Cultural Conflict in the book *Not Without My Daughter* by Betty Mahmoody Betty”, life experience is not very far for the culture of patriarchy that fosters against women in Iran. Ivana Pandelika wrote experience of otherness and class of culture in the literally context Betty’s view from idealism to Orientalism explored her story as a warning to the other women who might find themselves in similar situation to her, but she achieved much than she intended. Hossein Nazari wrote an article entitled “*Not Without My Daughter: Resurrecting the American captivity Narrative*” explores captivity as a hell.

Cultural conflict and Emotional Politics in Select Novels of Betty Mahmoody

Betty Mahmoody’s true life story:

Betty Mahmoody narrates in her autobiography *Not Without My Daughter* bi-cultural marriages and conflicts within, the culture had a great impact on human beings. She further states that

“Iranians proved to be stubborn about assimilating western culture. Even those who lived in America for decades often remained isolated, associating mainly with other expatriate Iranians. They retained their Islamic faith and their Persian customs.” (1987)

Betty shared her long life span with an Iranian culture and her analysis about Iran and Iranian cultures have a touch of fear, anger, feelings of otherness. Iranian culture in her views have a specific direction. It is difficult to convincingly put into nutshell the tremendous devotion demonstrated in Betty Mahmoody’s true life story, *Not without My Daughter*. Betty Lover met

and married Dr. Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody an American trained anesthesiologist born in Iran. While they were both living in Michigan with their little girl, Mahtob, was nearly five years old, Dr. Mahmoody whose nickname was “Moody” decided that his family should visit his homeland. Moody assured his wife that the trip was just to familiarize her and Mahtob to his relatives but, what started out as two week family gathering revolved into two year traumatic dream. Although his marriage to Betty looked to be on caring and love, the few years in America had be difficult ones for Moody. After he affects a malpractice put them out of a job for a year. Betty diagnosed her husband’s deep depression. May be it was these feelings of little dignity that helped to awaken his sudden interest in the political affairs of his country. After the Shah had been force out from Iran, Moody is yearning for his homeland. His intensified attitude toward America seemed resentful. When Betty, Moody and Mahtab first arrived in Iran, they stayed with Moody’s sister Ameh Bozorg and her family, whom Moody had not seen for years. The Bozorgs were truly religious Muslims getting up early in the morning does Islamic prayers and reading the Koran. Then one day, hoping that the long extended vacation had finally came to an end, Betty was informed that a mistake had been made, someone had forgotten to confirm their flight reservations and they had been cancelled. Betty realized the politics of emotions had done. He had planned this all along.

“Moody held our American and Iranian Passport as well as our birth certificates.”(Betty Mahmoody 1987)

Betty and her daughter could not leave Iran without Moody’s permission and he would never allow to it. In 1987 Betty Mahmoody arrest the world’s attention and admiration with the compelling and hearting story of her virtual imprisonment in Iran and succeeding during escape with her daughter Mahtob. *Not without My Daughter* topped international bestseller lists and alerted the world to the inference of intercultural relationships and the issues of intention and parental child abdications. Five years after the publication of her book, Betty still receives hundreds of letters each year from women and men in similar circumstances, each advice help and encourage them. In *For the Love of a Child* Mrs. Mahmoody recollects where she leave behind all of the American Embassy in Turkey. She illustrates her cultural readjustment to America and her relentless fear of her husband’s retaliation and her extreme disappointment with a legal system that cannot provide shield sto her daughter or herself.

“Worst of all I discovered that I had lost control of my fate. Under Iran’s fundamentalist Islamic Law, both Mahtob and I were considered Iranian citizens and Moody was our absolute master we could not leave the country without his written permission”.

(Betty Mahmoody1987)

Hostility has damage a child’s sense of self. Betty has always wanted Mahtob to be proud that she’s half Iranian to learn more about her heritage. When Mahtob and Betty made it back to Iran she didn’t understand that others shared the same fear of losing their children to set in a foreign land. After the publication of her book she came to realize that cross cultural abduction more common than anyone suspected. The abduction does their own father or mother with the help of politics of emotions. Firstly, the spouse became the victim of emotions and then children. Betty was emotionally too much attached her husband she easily accepts dishonest oath on Koran taken by Moody. She believes that her husband is a pure hearted man and will never play an emotional politic.

In Raymond William’s influent book *Culture and Society*, profoundly he investigates the intricate relationship between culture and society. Taking out their mutual influence on each other and exploring how they shape very fabric of our lives. By examine various examples throughout history, Williams pointed how culture is not merely a product or reflection of society but an active force that both mirrors and shapes the social systems in which it exists.

1. “Culture is not just limited to high art and literature but encompasses the entire range of practices, beliefs and values within a society.”
2. “Culture is dynamic process that is shaped by historical social and economical forces, constantly evolving and influencing society”.
3. “Culture is a site of struggle and contestation reflecting power relations and hierarchies and has the potential to both uphold and challenge dominant ideologies.”

In enfolding, Raymond Williams, exploration of culture and society in his book *Cultural and Society* emphasizes the dynamics nature of culture, constantly influence by historical social and economical forces.

Conflict of Culture:

There were deep-rooted problems in marriage and it usually restricted from cultural differences. These issues genuinely confused Moody. Cultural politics is an analytical forming of politics in society that recognizes. Culture is a central point for political struggles over meanings wherein different societal groups negotiate. Cultural politics involves symbolic as well as material practices. Geographers generally conceive of cultural politics as spatial politics. That is the struggles in cultural politics are situated; they take place in specific sites localities and areas. They are formative of multiple political subjectivities. A cultural politics evaluate therefore asks who is able to speak in these struggles. Feminist scholars have shoulder us that emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapers the very surface of bolides as well works. So in a way, ‘ we do reel our way.’ This analysis of how we ‘feel our way’ approaches emotion as form of cultural politics or worlds mulling.

The cultural politics of emotions is widened not only as an analysis of the psychologies and privatization of emotions but also as an account of a model of social structure that reflects the emotional intensities, which allow us to discourse the question of how subjects become invested in particular structures such that their termination is felt as a kind of death.

“My Analysis examines the spatial politics of fear and the way fear restricts the mobility of some and external the mobility of others.” (15)

Sarah- Ahmad- *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*

As Graham Little puts it:

“Emotions run the other way too sometimes starting “Out their” and Diana’s death is a prime example of this- but living up with something in us so that we feel drawn on and become personally involved”. (Little 1999:4)

The central principle for selecting Mahmoody’s novel is an analysis of stories from the Muslim background that literary texts in the last three decades, an increasing number of women’s dramatic stories, who have experienced living in a Muslim country as well as having a romantic relationship with foreigners have recently appeared encourages readers to explore a different culture. For an illustration, the novel *Not Without My Daughter* belongs to the first ones

depicting the life in an Islamic country that were published after the Velvet Revolution (1989) in Slovakia. This novel as a motivating bestseller about a heroic woman and mother, but more importantly, it has an unquestionable evidence about the tensions between East and Western culture. Both examined Islamic cultures are amount of the Orient, which, according to Edward W. Said (2003: 52) “is largely the world of text through books and manuscripts.” The plot setting in selected novels describes the culture of countries. Finally, in order to achieve the highest possible validity of it, author had the personal experience with life in both a Muslim country and the USA, made valuable and reliable sources of intercultural differences. The research of the intercultural differences is centered on the Hofstadter’s findings. In spite of the objections to his research that numerous cultural and national facets are simplified (Pecníková 2013),

Comparison of cultures is imaginable while comparing the emphasis placed on individual elements of human behavior in a particular culture. These fundamental trends of the members of the society are called cultural aspects and cannot subvert to each other According to Hofstede, “dimensions are aspects of culture that can be measured in relation to other cultures.” (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010: 31). These cultural dimensions can be combined to create a typology of national culture dimensions. In addition to Hofstede, the typology of cultural dimensions was also attempted by Fons Trompenaars in collaboration with Charles Hampden-Turner. “Models of cultural dimensions are based on bipolar scales, which in extreme positions have the extreme form of a single feature” (Poliak 2015: 23).

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Cultural dimensions are an noteworthy device in challenging cultures, as they detail to the perspective of the culture, which an individual comes from. Currently, Hofstede provides an opportunity to compare cultures in the so-called 6- dimensions model, describes in details the ways, manifestations and standards of behavior in particular cultures. The following cultural dimensions that are contained 1. “Power Distance expresses people’s relationship to a certain authority. The high-power distance index reflects that members of society accept and expect an uneven distribution of power in society. Conversely, a low degree of power distance means equal relationships in society.” 2. “Masculinity vs Femininity express the distribution of male and female roles in society. In masculine societies, assertiveness and toughness are preferred in connection to material success, while in feminine societies; modesty and interest in quality of life

are preferred. Masculinity is typical of cultures, in which gender roles are strictly differentiated, femininity – of cultures where gender roles overlap.” 3. “Individualism vs Collectivism – individualist societies do not usually feel a great commitment to the family, while collectivist societies form cohesive groups. This dimension correlates with the amount of gross domestic product per person. A country, and level of individualism of the members of the community.”

4. “Uncertainty Avoidance reflects how people feel threatened by uncertainty and unknown impulses and situations.” 5. “Pragmatism expresses how people cope with the fact that much of what is happening around them cannot be explained. In normative societies, most people have a strong desire, even the need to have explained as much as possible. They have a keen interest in establishing absolute truth and personal stability. In such a society, there is a clear respect for social conventions and traditions, a focus on achieving rapid goals and a low tendency to save for the future. In a pragmatic society, most people do not need to have everything explained, believing that it is impossible to fully understand the complexity of life. The challenge is not to know the truth, but to live an honest and decent life. Pragmatic societies believe that truth largely depends on the particular situation, context and time. In addition to this, societies are able to accept inconsistencies, adapt to circumstances and conditions, postpone, save, invest and persist in achieving results” (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010: 275). 6. “Indulgence means in particular general enjoyment of life, leisure, entertainment, holidays, etc. The value of the indulgence index expresses how a certain society is able to renounce them. Societies that suppress the satisfaction of their needs does so by adhering to strict social standards (ibidem: 281).” On the contrary, the situation in America is different. Equivalent prospects, hard work and the associated elevation are the foundation of American society. Mahmoody recognized the above-mentioned possibilities to live a better life in America. She made herself from a clerk to head of department. By marrying to an Iranian anesthesiologist, she gained into the supposed sophisticated society. Unexpectedly the traumatic incidents of her stay in Iran eventually fetched her distinction, differentiation and wealth. Her ex-husband Moody embodies the fulfillment of “American dream”. As the author stated, “he got to America on a student visa, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree and taught mathematics in a high school for several years.” He was fascinated to mechanical engineering, so he moved to school again. The company he worked for was a subcontractor for NASA and contributed in the Apollo project. When he was thirty years old, he determined to become a doctor. This profession is highly esteemed in Iran. Both his

parents were doctors. He obtained a green card that allowed him to practice the profession of doctor in the USA and was a good qualification for obtaining US citizenship. Moody's life in America was relaxed until the burst of the Iranian revolution. For nearly two decades he did adopt many of the practices of Western society and, unlike so many of his colleagues distanced himself from politics. He discovered a world far different from his childhood, one that offered affluence, culture, and basic human dignity that surpassed anything available in Iranian society. "Moody truly wanted to be a westerner." (Mahmoody and Hoffer, 1989: 68). American society is recognized for affirming opportunities for everyone, in spite of gender, race, religion or ethnicity. Hosseini also expressed himself as a good example of a fulfilled American dream. He claims he came to America almost without money, with a suitcase of clothes and family had a successful doctor career. Currently, he is one of the world's most respected authors. The power distance index reached the lowest level in Afghanistan. Professor Rarick and his team compared neighboring countries in the region, such as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are characterized by a high level of power distance. It is necessary to remind that respondents were of so-called elite part of Afghan society. Mahmoody accepted the possibilities to live a better life in America who lived in Iran at the time of the Khomeini's reign, described the life in Iranian families, in which male and female roles were divided that is typical for a masculine society. Women cooked and served food. However, baking bread was a man's duty. If a war broke out, this task was taken over by women. The division of roles relates not only to tasks but also to the position and status in the society. Mahtob remembered how children used to sit in a place other than adults, which she, despite Iranian customs, ignored.

Conclusion

Emotions play a vital role in politics, culture, society, shaping identities. The politics of emotions is domestic work and migration setting interplay of power dynamics, cultural practices and affective experiences. Emotions, Politics, Culture are interlinked with the existence of human beings. Betty Mahmoody depicts the predicament of women in cross cultural encounters through her novels. Every aspect of culture and emotions has good and bad features and it differs on the circumstances and how it will be use. Betty as a mother emotionally attached with her daughter Mohtob and for daughter's sake she coped with the cultural barrier as well as geopolitical circumstances. The title of her novels proved that if a mother is emotionally strong

for the safety of her children and she walked the exotic path of her life. Mixing culture is not new thing, difference is only the result that arises from this socializing, the emergence called hybrid identities. Globalization generates countless opportunities for intercultural contacts, thus creating multicultural societies. Culture is created by man and for man but today we do not want to understand the sole purpose behind the cultural veil.

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