

**GENDERED VIOLENCE AND HEGEMONIC
MASCULINITY: A FOUCAULDIAN AND
BAKHTINIAN CRITIQUE OF ELENA
FERRANTE'S MY BRILLIANT FRIEND AND
THE STORY OF A NEW NAME**

BY

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**Gendered Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity: A
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My Brilliant Friend and *The Story of a New Name***

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Gendered Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity: A Foucauldian and Bakhtinian Critique of Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* and *The Story of a New Name*** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Gendered Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity: A Foucauldian and Bakhtinian Critique of Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* and *The Story of a New Name*

This research explores the nuances of gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity and the consequent impeding underpinnings in the formation of identity of female protagonists of Ferrante's novels *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012). This study triangulates Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, Bakhtin's notions of monologism, dialogism, monoglossia and heteroglossia and Foucault's ideas concerning heterotopia, the places and spaces of marginalized, discursive power structures and their role in obstructing agency and identity to devise the theoretical framework. Syllogizing these Connellian, Bakhtinian and Foucauldian conceptualizations, this research has investigated the infiltration of authoritarian monologic power structures in the lower strata of society which orchestrates gendered violence, class warfare, financial exploitation and corruption at the micro levels of society. This study has particularized the monologic power relations which infiltrate the micro levels of society in the postwar Italy to hinder and resist the dialogic ambits as portrayed by Ferrante in the selected texts. Furthermore, this research has investigated the factors that prompt the hegemonic violence which espouses masculine and feminine violence and in turn obstructs female growth and identity. Subsequently, it has exposed the nuances of gendered violence as a result of the intersections of class and gender authoritarianism which impede and hegemonize growth, agency and identity as portrayed in the heterotopic Neapolitan society through the female protagonists.

Keywords:

Gendered violence, hegemonic masculinity, monologism, dialogism, heteroglossia, heterotopias.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MBF for My Brilliant Friend

TSOANN for The Story of a New Name

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Also, when there was nobody to care or to know, this gigantic effort on the part of an insignificant little moth, against a power of such magnitude, to retain what no one else valued or desired to keep, moved one strangely.

(Virginia Woolf)

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DEDICATION

To a candle, who swore to rob the darkness that robs its light.

To the eclipsed sun in my mouth that did not explode.

To the patience of unpainted canvases, dry brushes and unwritten poetry.

To the endurance of my mad heart.

To the hope of annihilation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the discursive class power relations that propound masculine dominance and violence which consolidates into feminine violence, subjugation, otherness, marginalization, and impeding identity. Further, it argues that gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity, as a consequence of class authoritarianism, espouses, triggers and promotes gender authoritarianism. It also attempts to examine the monologic reifications of society that do not allow the scope for dialogic/hybrid voices and denies them their rights to growth and a separate identity formation.

Class as a societal force is the locus of developing identity and mediating power relation between men and women. Like Marxism, most of the theories have been gender blind, stripping women of any recognition in social institutions and relations. However, in recent theoretical revisions and progressions, it is pointed out that class relations are imbued with ongoing social construction of gender thus rendering gender as a hegemonizing and hegemonized societal factor, intertwined with class struggles.

Class and gender as a cumulative force has an overlapping effect on people's experiences. Gender is embedded in the hierarchal structure in a way that any change in gender order tends to threaten hierarchy itself. Therefore, gender relations are immersed in the basal social structure, linking individual experience to external, immediate and wider economic and political processes. Traditional power relations situate men in the leadership roles and women are allocated supportive role and are accepted as long as they do not challenge the hierarchy. Any attempt to alter these roles is perceived as mutinous and a circle of authoritative violence and submission is induced between gender dynamics.

As this study aims to investigate the authoritative phenomenon while locating the source of women's oppression, providing an overview of authoritarianism is ineluctable. Authoritarianism is an individual's conviction regarding suitable relationship between a group and its members. It stretches from a spectrum of authoritarianism to autonomy, in which authoritarianism subscribes to putting collective autonomy and cohesion ahead of individual needs and values and is driven towards the sacrifice of group cohesion for the autonomy of a person (Feldman 43).

Bob Altemeyer's work in defining authoritarianism as a societal phenomenon is significant. He sees authoritarianism as a social attitude that is picked up through multiple interactions and experiences with people who hold conventional or unconventional beliefs and lifestyles. Altemeyer's scale of right-wing authoritarianism measures the degree to which people defer to established authorities, show aggression toward out-groups when authorities sanction that aggression, and support traditional values endorsed by authorities. According to the three dimensions of authoritarianism established by Altemeyer, conventionalism refers to a high degree of adherence to social conventions where individuals endorse the norms established by authorities. Authoritarian submission then is the submissiveness to authorities which are perceived to be justifiable in their existence in society and lastly, authoritarian aggression is a general aggressiveness directed against deviants who are perceived to be targets according to established authorities (Altemeyer 1988). Expanding this milieu to class and gender, the research aims to explore the impeding effects of such authoritarianism on the identity of female protagonists.

The power discord between genders can be understood by dialogical materialism through which heteroglossic othered women challenge the monologic pervasive structures. The Russian philosopher, literary critic and linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin's work is significant in the fields of cultural history, aesthetics, literary theory, ethics and philosophy of language. Here, however, in my research, Bakhtin's notions are employed on his merit of being a social theorist. Holquist has pointed out in *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his Word* (2002) that the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism has been used to disrupt patriarchal harmony and liberate the feminine voice (185). His idea of dialogism and heteroglossia related to diverse voices counter the monological truth of authoritarianism.

Bakhtin propounded the idea of heteroglossia in the essay "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) as an attack on the idea of linguistic purity and argued that a single unitary language is comprised of internal multiplicity of languages. Michael Holquist defines heteroglossia in *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his Word* (2002) as "many-languagedness" and "plurality of relations". According to Bakhtin, the monoglossical dominance is bound to be ruptured by heteroglossia. Andrew Robinson explains that the monoglossic or "one dimensional thought" turns deaf to the "voices of difference".

Holquist explains, “In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness” (Holquist 17). Dialogic consciousness generates a multiplicity of perception. Contesting meanings emerge as otherness becomes a binary of center¹ vs. non-center. The relational differentiation between self and the other renders the existence of self in relation to other which incarcerates self. The existence of self is co-dependent rather than individualistic. Hence, existence as a dialogue between self and the other is verbatim dialogism.

In contrast to monologism, dialogism is double or multi-voicedness. It not only allows multiple perspectives to enter the monological discourse - all the while seeking to contest and alter it - but also entails “the distribution of completely contradictory elements within different perspectives of equal value” (Robinson). The researcher finds close proximity in Bakhtinian dialogism and Foucauldian heterotopia owing to the simultaneous presence of incompatible elements in a certain place. This point also establishes a link between these two theoretical notions employed in this study.

In literary analysis, dialogism is applied to analyze the diversity of voices, styles of discourses and point of views. These notions are extended to the social world where monologic authoritarianism is bent to subjugate and hegemonize the dialogic and heteroglossic othered. In stretching the concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism to Neapolitan socio-cultural history of the novels, I aim to explore the challenges monologic authoritative discourses pose to the variegated elements of identity of female protagonists.

While scrutinizing the monologic authoritarian strains in the novels, an analysis of the way power is distributed discursively in the various strata of society and contributes in forming or deforming identity is significant. Michel Foucault, a French postmodernist, has greatly shaped the understandings of power relations. According to him, ‘power is everywhere’, embedded in discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’ (Rainbow 9).

Michel Foucault theorizes on how power is infiltrated to the lowest strata of society and abstractly and systematically works to create a space of otherness and identity turmoil. In *Discipline and Punishment* (1995), Foucault explains that the

¹ Center for Bakhtin is a relative rather than an absolute term and hence does not refer to a place of privilege.

integrated system of power is exerted through “a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together and traverses it in its totality with effects of power that originate from one another.” (Foucault 177).

The idea of place as heterotopic entity has been widely applied in social sciences. Michel Foucault introduced the notion of heterotopia in 1967, relating it to the study of space and hence focusing on the places which act as “spaces of otherness”. His approach can be extended to social concerns. Heterotopia, in contrast to utopia, can be defined as a representation of space which contains undesirable and imperfect aspects; where it is difficult or impossible to belong (Richardson 3). The concept of heterotopia establishes the presence of cultural, political and economic differences which provoke the issues of identity. In this way, heterotopia is linked with cultural production and ontological considerations of the world. I argue that the socio-cultural space of Ferrante’s Neapolitan novels act as heterotopia, marginalized and hegemonized place for the identity of the protagonists under study.

As I will provide an in-depth view exegesis of this point under scrutiny in later chapters, feminine experience is not separate but rather saturated in the masculine experience. Laurie A. Finke endorses this notion in the book section “A Powerful Infidel Heteroglossia: Toward a Feminist Theory of Complexity” (1992) that women's "experience" is permeated with and not distinct from the practices by which masculinist cultures reproduce their domination. Hence, I argue that masculine hegemony and violence is responsible for ensuing violence in feminine counterparts. This stance by no means aims to essentialize masculinity as when the researcher establishes gender-power relations as co-constructed social phenomenon, it is interpreted as masculinity in its traditional role as well as the multiplicity and alteration it affords in the active social practices. In doing so, the researcher garners R. W. Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity which suffices the tenets of this project.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is in vogue since 1980s whence it came to be understood as “a practice that maintains men’s authority over women to continue” (Connell 832). R. W. Connell, an Australian Sociologist, is famous for renegotiating and revising the concept of hegemonic masculinity in her book, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (2007). She bases her theorizing of

gender by considering gender as a multi-faceted, historically evolving structure of social relations – relations constructed in active social practices. She recognizes the multiplicity of masculinities that exist across time and culture.

Hegemonic masculinity as a practice legitimizes men's dominance and justifies the subservient and peripheral status of other males and females in a society. However, hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed attribute rather it depends on various social and psychological processes. Since gender relations, authoritarianism, aggression, and violence, are linked to hegemonic masculinity, this study will attempt to investigate the circumstantial nature of hegemonic masculinity and its consequential nuances in feminine violence and formation of identity. Further, I am providing a comprehensive overview of the author and the texts I have selected for this study.

Elena Ferrante is an Italian author whose works have been translated into many languages. She is recognized for her four volume books called Neapolitan Novels for which she was nominated Strega Prize and an Italian Literary award. She is also listed as one of the *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people. The major themes of her works are female friendship, love and infidelity, fractured communities, and the unhappy, often transactional nature of relationships between men and women.

Ferrante's Neapolitan novels are recently adapted in a series by HBO and her other works are also widely performed on stage and screen. This four-volume series consists of *My Brilliant Friend* (2011), *The Story of a New Name* (2012), *Those Who Leave And Those Who Stay* (2013), and *The Story of the Lost Child* (2014), translated by Ann Goldstein in to English, dealing with different phases and ages of life of Lila and Elena.

The story revolves around the life of two perspicacious girls, Raffaella Cerullo (Lila) and Elena Greco (Lenuccia or Lenù) born in Naples in 1944. It spans forward as Lila and Elena try to make lives for themselves in a violence imbued culture which impedes their growth and confounds their identity.

My Brilliant Friend (2011) is set in 1950's post World War II Italy and approaches Italian history, politics and social life. People fight to make ends meet in Lila and Lenu's impoverished Neapolitan neighbourhood during a period of widespread poverty and unrest. Loan sharks control their neighbourhood, which is riddled with

violent killings fueled by love and money. Though gradually, Lila and Lenu are awakened to the political underpinnings which have a dark influence in their society.

While growing up, the two best friends learn to rely on each other and their paths repeatedly diverge and converge. The novel opens as Elena in her 60s reflects back to her age at six when she met and bonded with Lila in school and common hatred of Don Achille. They get more competitive as they become older. Lila does better academically than Elena. However, Lila is unable to continue her middle school because her parents won't pay for it, but Elena does. Lila's father makes shoes, while Elena's father works as a porter at a hotel in Naples. Without Lila's brilliance, Lenu continues to grip the top position in her studies.

At the age of thirteen, Lila develops into a beauty of the neighbourhood. Elena aspires to be like Lila and takes different measures to achieve it. When Lila cannot continue her studies, she exerts all her energy into getting out of the neighborhood where her family has been living on the mercies of Solara family for generations. Elena too has the same goal of rising above their birth place and status. Lila starts working with her brother Rino to make shoes which will excel in sales under their family name, Cerullo.

Meanwhile Elena keeps studying with Lila's help in Greek and Latin. Later Marcello Solara tries to court Lila with his money and power but Lila refuses while Elena is away flourishing in her studies. She goes to isle for a summer, romances with Nino Sarratore and is sexually assaulted by his father. Elena returns to find Lila inclined towards Stefano Carracci, who belongs to the wealthiest families in the neighborhood, as oppose to despicable Marcello Solara. At the climax of the narrative, Lila Cerullo discovers, Marcello in the middle of her wedding ceremony, that her new husband Stefano Carracci has betrayed her to her despised old suitor Marcello Solara in order to start a company with the affluent.

The Story of a New Name (2012) revolves around Lila and Lenu's young adult life when Lila's marriage has imprisoned her and Lenu finds a way to get higher education amidst all her anxieties and insecurities. Lila suffers abuse in her marriage. She is forced to work for the detested Solaras while relentlessly looking for escape. Lila and Lenu's friendship becomes putrid when Lila starts an affair with Nino Sarratore whom Lenu loves. Soon, Nino grows weary of Lila's intellect and leaves her. After

spending an evening in Lenu's intellectual circle, Lila feels that her hard-earned cocoon of lavish status is a hoax and she lashes out at Lenu. To this, Elena responds by cutting her off and goes to university of Pisa to pursue her higher education.

Meanwhile, Lila's husband, Stefano Carracci has an affair with Ada due to which Lila decides to leave him. She, along with her son, escapes to an impoverished neighborhood with Enzo, her childhood admirer. After graduating, Lenu writes a book which becomes an instant success but nobody in her neighborhood acknowledges her success. The story ends at yet another cliffhanger when Lila is seen working in a sausage factory where she faces constant physical and sexual harassment. Even amidst this horrendous escapade, Lila has a brilliant idea to hold onto.

Based on the textual and theoretical tenets discussed above, this research undertakes the examination of class power dynamics that promote male dominance and aggression eventually result in feminine violence, subordination, otherness, marginalization, and identity obstruction. Additionally, it contends that gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity are endorsed, caused by, and promoted by gender authoritarianism as a result of class authoritarianism. It also makes an effort to look at the monologic reifications of society that deny dialogic and hybrid voices the chance to be heard and deny them the chance to develop their own distinct identities. This research also triangulates the selected Bakhtinian, Foucauldian and Connellian notions as instruments to analyze the nuances of gendered violence, hegemonic masculinity, class and gender authoritarianism in Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012).

In the following subheading, I have established my situatedness as a researcher.

1.1 Thesis Statement

This study particularizes the monologic power relations which infiltrate the micro levels of society in the postwar Italy to hinder and resist the dialogic ambits as portrayed by Ferrante in *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012). Furthermore, this research investigates the factors that prompt the hegemonic violence which espouses masculine and feminine violence and in turn obstructs female growth and identity. Subsequently, it exposes the nuances of gendered violence, which as a

result of the intersections of class and gender authoritarianism, impedes and hegemonizes growth, power and identity as portrayed in the heterotopic Neapolitan society through the female protagonists.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity which in turn espouses masculine and feminine violence that confounds the female identity?
2. How do monologic power relations work at micro-level in postwar Italian society which hinder the dialogic ambits?
3. How does gendered violence, as a result of the intersections of class and gender authoritarianism, impede and hegemonize growth, power and identity as portrayed in the heterotopic Neapolitan society through the female protagonists?

1.3 Delimitations

This study is limited to the translated² novels, *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) by Elena Ferrante. This research only uses the first two novels from the Neapolitan quartet for a number of reasons. The first being the sufficiency of the textual support required as per my theoretical framework. The selected texts compliment and fully justify the theoretical nuances and scholarly undertakings in my study. The second reason is that the structure of the texts is not linear which means that the narrative, though being a bildungsroman, is crafted with flashback and flash forwards which allows me to justify my arguments without compromising the plot. It also contains micro narratives from protagonists' lives and there are narrative jumps from different times of protagonists' lives. The theoretical framework is restricted to Connellian idea of hegemonic masculinity, Bakhtin's notions of monologism, dialogism, monoglossia and heteroglossia and Foucault's concepts concerning heterotopia, discursive power structures and their role in obstructing identity and agency.

² Ferrante's work has been translated into many languages and these translated texts are critically acclaimed. Hence, the translatability of these works does not affect the interpretations deduced in current study.

1.4 Research Plan

This study contains five chapters. In Chapter one, I have developed the rationale of my study by explaining the key concepts and introducing the theory and how it is employed to examine the facets from Ferrante's novels. I have elaborated the aspects like monologism, dialogism and heteroglossia, heterotopias, and hegemonic masculinity of Bakhtinian, Foucauldian and Cornelian theories respectively, their inter link and how they will be used to analyze the texts. Here, I have also presented a brief summary of both texts *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012). Finally, I have elaborated the social relevance and significance of my study.

In Chapter two, I have explored the secondary sources to establish the situatedness of my research in existing scholarship. This chapter also covers various aspects the selected texts have been approached with. This review traces the gaps in the existing critical corpus and also contextualizes my study.

In Chapter three, I have discussed the research design of my thesis. I have triangulated the Bakhtinian, Foucauldian and Cornelian notions. I have also discussed the qualitative research design of my study with the help of Catherine Belsey's theorization on textual analysis. This chapter also discuss the relevance of my study with the selected theories and explains how the theories suit the selected texts.

In Chapter four, I have analyzed the selected texts *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012). I have justified my questions in the light of Bakhtinian, Foucauldian and Cornelian notions.

In Chapter five, I have summed up my argument and have presented my critical findings. I have also provided recommendations for further research on the Ferrante's texts.

1.5 Social Relevance and Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore the gradation of gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity which are central discourses in literature and social sciences. It generates a discussion which foregrounds female experiences from postwar Italian society and brackets the factors that impede and hegemonize female agency. It also specificates the monologic jurisdiction and symbiosis of masculine and feminine violence which inhibit the dialogic ambits in the heterotopic Neapolitan society. In doing so, this study lends a wider significance as it becomes contextually relevant to all societies. The lack of the

availability of creative text from Anglophone Pakistani society for supporting the researcher's theoretical framework does not reduce its coterminous relevance. Thus, this research is a contribution for determining concrete possibilities for resistance and social change in any socio-historical context by recognizing the fractures in feminine growth and identity due the discursive and dominating power structures.

This research is significant owing to its contextual relevance to Pakistani society. This study explores the impeding factors in the creation of a stable feminine identity and the power dynamic between genders that is in dialogue with authoritarian structures like class, hegemonic masculinity, gendered violence and pervasive capitalist economic conditions simultaneously.

Hegemonic masculinity is ubiquitously present globally and is prominently exercised in Pakistani society as violence against women and transmen, widening the gender disparity. An encouragement of a specific type of social masculinity like showing toughness, aggression, violence, hiding emotions, inexpressiveness can be observed. It places females in a subordinated position to males. Men who show a deviance to these characteristics are categorized as having feminine attributes. These men resort to bullying and aggressive behavior to establish their normative masculinity.

The recent uproar over Aurat March is an example of hegemonic masculinity which denies the right of cultural production to the heteroglossic feminine voices. Transmen in Pakistan are the most prominently marginalized victim of hegemonic masculinity as they lack access to basic rights as education, health and job opportunities. Fizza Fatima (2020) notices in a blog published under the heading of *Hegemonic Masculinity and Its Effects: A Social Stigma* that in Pakistan, men exercise their dominance by resorting to toxic practices like sexual and physical violence against women and transgender and displaying aggression. They are more likely to have mental health issues.

Sexual harassment and exploitation of females is a way of securing position in male hierarchies at work places hence economic participation of females is reduced. Hegemonic masculinity is translated into traditional customs in Pakistan that are deviant and immoral. These include rape, sexual harassment, acid assaults, being burnt alive, abduction, domestic violence, forced marriages, dowry murder, physical and mental torture, and honour killing. Similar psychological, physical and sexual abuse

which permeates domestic, economic and political spheres is analyzed by the researcher in the Neapolitan novels studied in this project.

This research analyzes the postwar Italian society and the consequent instabilities in the micro strata of society as experienced by females. This is culturally relevant to Pakistani society as Pakistan as a postwar country is home to similar turmoil and social conditions so by studying similar cultural practices, a possibility of rethinking of larger cultural practices as source of oppression is created. It enables me to recognize the elements which hamper and influence feminine identity and can prove to be step towards understanding the source of oppression to female agency and thus eliminating such structures to create opportunities to help construct stable conditions for their existence.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review's objective is to place my research in the trajectory of existing critical corpus by reviewing the relevant researches. The objective of reviewing these researches is to contextualize my project within the present scholarship and also finding the gaps in the existing critical knowledge in my premise of study. I have reviewed the studies that are either partially or completely relevant to my study. Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) chart multiple liminal spaces of postmodernism, post war fiction, fictionalized autobiography, feminism, allegory of cultural and historical exploration, experiences of aspiring women, politics, patriarchy and writer's writing process. A few works in this regard are discussed henceforth.

2.2 Review of the Sources

Santovetti claims in her article, "Melodrama or metafiction? Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" (2018), that Ferrante's work owes its success to the fusion of high and low art. The author goes on to investigate Ferrante's narrative's sources structure and identifies the melodramatic style as represented by the "low" sources, while the "high" component is represented by the antinovel tradition's self-reflexive, metafictional techniques. Santovetti demonstrates how Ferrante's novels are melodramatic according to the explication provided by Peter Brooks' theory. The pervasive melodrama takes a metafictional hue owing to its postmodernist self-reflexivity.

While reviewing Donnarumma's analysis of Neapolitan novels as melodrama, Santovetti writes that Ferrante's novels have an anti-melodramatic drive which vandalizes its own narrative structure and offers no resolution or happy ending in the traditional melodramatic sense. Santovetti thence analyzes the postmodern narrative strategies, self-reflexive, metanarrative, metafiction, autofiction that is unstinting in the novels and helps to bring high and low art together.

Santovetti discusses the importance of writing in Lila and Elena's symbiotic relationship. The reflection on writing or the reasons of writing is collected in the framing chapters. Elena's writing is seen as an attempt against her withering memory of her beloved brilliant friend but it can also be seen as an act of defiance against Lila who did not want to remember any part of her past life. Contrary to this, I will discuss writing as an act of rebellion in dialogic discernment (against the monologic strains in society).

Santovetti considers the act of writing as a medium for the repressed to come to the surface for the protagonists. Writing hides the horrors and also makes them visible. When Santovetti describes writing as surveillance, she discusses it in Ferrantian connotation of being vigilant or feeling alive. On one hand writing offers Elena an escape from violence and misery of her childhood but on the other hand it keeps the memory of the damage fresh. Hence writing in this way offers no consolation or happy ending. Santovetti discussed the presence of blurring between real and fictional in the writing. Lastly the author discussed the act of writing as a medium of self-exposition. So while Lila profits off the life of her friend, Lila, she exposes herself too. I will analyze this self-exposition as dialogic.

The author concludes that Ferrante's Neapolitan novels are self-reflexive texts; what Calvino calls hypernovel – a novel carrying all elements of its own negation. She categorizes them as "postmodern" novels about the development of a writer who, while writing the story, reflects on the writing process and what it means to be a writer today, especially as a woman. This study, while focusing on structuralist and postmodernist aspects, lacks an attention to socio-cultural and economic factors which shape the lives of the protagonists which thence is the focal point of my study.

Katrin Wehling-Giorgi in the article titled "Playing with the Maternal Body: Violence, Mutilation, and the Emergence of the Female Subject in Ferrante's Novels" (2017) bears close affinity to the current study as it centralizes on violence as experienced by mothers in Ferrante's works. It explores the way social structures effect the conflict and violence ridden construction and notion of mothering and motherhood. To reflect on Ferrante's renegotiation of feminine subject, the author scrutinizes several of her works including Neapolitan novels with a special emphasis on *My Brilliant Friend* (2011). Giorgi analyzes the emergence of a new feminine subject considering

the repulsive, violating or violated, crippled status of mothers in conflict with the forms of desire in Ferrante's works. Further it analyzes how Ferrante's strong female characters subvert conventional ideas about motherhood. Unforgiving and fierce maternity as opposed to nurturing, self-abnegating, asexual is a challenge to the religious and social stereotypes.

Giorgi explains that the maternal body is the target of violence but it can also be seen exerting violence, more in emotional domain less than in physical domain and appear as the agents of wrath and anger. Ferrante uses the opportunity to relate culture with female gender to question the normative portrayal of motherhood. Giorgi also discusses the significance of Julia Kristeva's concept of abject while analyzing the linkages in Ferrante's work between maternity and subject formation. According to Kristeva, abject is the notion of human response to the potential meaning collapse brought on by the blurring of the lines between subject and object, self and other (Giorgi 4). In the formation of the subject, a metaphorical "matricide" equates to breaking away from mother but the maternal body also remains the focal point of desire. Hence, the abject aspect linked with maternal body colors it as both desirable and aggressive. This can be observed in Ferrante's protagonists who when undergoing the process of individuation, are afflicted with contrasting feelings of wanting to break away as well as falling back into the stifling and nurturing clutches. Ferrante goes against the current of the male dominated discourses of maternity and explores fluid nature of femininity and maternity while engaging with non-normative such as violent and violated portrayals of maternity.

Ferrante is observed to be influenced by psychoanalytic and feminists theories when a link is established between early language formation, formation of the subject and maternal body. The use of dialect is closely associated with the formation of the subject and maternal body. The use of dialect gives an access to child to the maternal body in infancy, developing a love filled bond. At the same time, the local dialect has a dark undertone of violence as it is influenced by the surrounding culture of animosity, which Ferrante's female characters increasingly see as a means of expressing the male dominance which they were exposed to as children (Giorgi 6). Thus the local dialect is the bearer of violent fights and exchanges which plague the Elena and Lila their entire lives, adding to their anxieties and desires to break away. They have internalized this violent dialect too, carrying it around in their beings. The symbiosis of mother tongue

and local dialect is the carrier of the contrasting and abject feelings towards the maternal body; she is desired and rejected. Elena's hatred towards her mother is most prominent when she detests her mother's clumsy use of Italian grammar in contrast to her Maestra Oliveiro. It reflects her feelings of shame of the class category she is bound to.

Another significant point discussed in this article is the maternal inaccessibility. Lack of availability causes to dread desertion, emotional maltreatment, and rejection, as is explained by the recurring theme of Elena's doll. In a rare instance of joy, Elena's doll is sporting a frock sewn by her mother. In this manner, a connection between the toy and the parent is created. When Lila throws the doll into the dark cellar, it indicates an emotional severance from the mother and loss. It had a devastating effect on Elena. The irretrievability and abandonment of the doll indicates an impossibility of the return to the maternal figure. Additionally, it alludes to Lila's rejection of domesticated and submissive femininity, which, in Simone de Beauvoir's view, is introduced to girls through doll role-playing. This point is deemed significant in connection to the current study as it is the first act in the novel that starts a chain reaction of identity crisis in the protagonist.

Emma Van Ness in the article, "*Dixit Mater: The Significance of the Maternal Voice in Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels*" (2016) investigates the modes of representation of motherhood in Ferrante's Neapolitan Tetralogy. Van Ness examines Lila and Elena's relationship to motherhood and how Ferrante provides a reevaluation of motherhood by replacing the mute mother with a thinking, speaking figure. Van Ness employs Julia Kristeva's conceptualization of herethics to analyze the cultural reevaluation of motherhood.

Ferrante's narratives largely dwell on mother-daughter relationships. Van Ness argues that the tension in Neapolitan novels is sustained through the speaking of maternal. Ferrante challenges and fights against the conventional mother signifier in her portrayal of maternal identity. Van Ness explains that "the Mother exists in the pre-symbolic realm" which is related to infancy, unable to articulate or form thoughts. Furthermore, according to psychoanalysis, this rejection of mother makes the child identify with father - the phallic signifier. Van Ness observes that Elena's development follows the Freudian course as Elena rejects her mother due to lack of individuation, physical deformities, lack of support for Elena's education and career. Elena as a

maternal figure is a contradictory and complex mother in the making who does not simply bear witness to the suffering of a man (reference to Mary's quiet witness to Jesus' suffering) but also tells her own and Lila's story.

Van Ness explains that Ferrante establishes it from the very start in the novel through the trope of dolls that Elena and Lila's story is linked with motherhood. The rejection of dolls is the rejection of traditional maternity. When the risk of leaving the dolls in the pitch-black cellar is mitigated by the perception of another girl through the dolls, it becomes tolerable. Van Ness further throws light on this experience through Simon de Beauvoir's explanation in *The Second Sex* that the dolls represent a whole body, a passive being. Girls are encouraged to alienate themselves, adorn the dolls like they want to be adorned and imagine to be princesses and fairies. By doing this they surrender themselves as an object. This is true for the Elena and Lila at the start of the quartet novel. The dolls symbolize the socioeconomic status and the beleaguered psyches of the girls (Van Ness 297). The girls play with their dolls and engage in mimicry but at last Lila instigates the generational cycle by throwing the doll in the cellar.

Van Ness situates Lila's antimaternal act inversely with Freud's concept of *fort-da* where rather than a boy's rejection of toy indicating the separation from mother, it indicates the rejection of traditional maternity by Lila and Elena. Elena follows the suit in throwing the doll. This rejection opens up new opportunities for them.

Van Ness sees Ferrante's depiction of Lila as the "violator of taboos" and personifies a shift from the conventional maternal identity. She personifies estrangement, laceration, and annoyance. Before it could recognize her as a despicable human, she pushes her "doll-child" into the dim cellar.

Van Ness identifies another aspect through which Elena and Lila distinguish themselves from their mothers and that is language. As opposed to their mothers, the girls are proficient in Italian. When the incidents of violence are described associated with Lila at her school, Lila's various traits like sensitivity, precocity and intelligence come to light which set her apart from her mother, Nunzia Cerullo. Lila is self-taught and her mother has nothing to do with her academic success. When Maestra Oliveira asks Lila to display her literary ability in front of her mother by writing a word on board, Lila omits a letter knowingly. Van Ness analyzes this incident as Nunzia being "a figure

of censure, of repression". This way Lila separates herself from her mother who resides in the pre-symbolic realm.

Similarly Elena's desire of academic success and creative fulfillment is an attempt to sever herself from her mother, Signora Greco, who is "abjection personified" (300). Signora Greco's violent tendencies, disapproval of Elena's education and progress in a way discourage her to be like her mother.

By referencing Julia Kristeva's theory, Van Ness comes to the conclusion that Ferrante's manic deconstruction of the mother, as well as the repetitions, reflections, and worries of the maternal, give voice to what Kristeva refers to as the "unspeakable" of the maternal as a female experience. Traditional morality has failed in Ferrante's historical storytelling, according to Van Ness (309). Van Ness refers to Ferrante's creation of a speaking maternal, female consciousness as "invaluable contribution in the ear in which women's bodies remain the sites of patriarchal control, manipulation, and domination" as replacing the myth of silent, heavenly motherhood. (310). This article holds special significance to the current study as it explores Lila and Elena's identity as entwined with maternal and maternity, experiences with/of unspeaking and speaking mothers, creation and evolution, rejection and severance of their own maternal identities.

Alison Lee discusses the significance of female bonding between Lila and Elena in the female identity formation in the article titled "Feminine Identity and Female Friendships in the 'Neapolitan' Novels of Elena Ferrante" (2016). Lee writes that Elena realizes that she is in Lila's shadow and is limited by her but still she is dependent on her. Elena finds refuge in Lila's friendship from the chaos and violence of the neighborhood.

Elena secures her escape from the precarious neighborhood by becoming a writer and marrying a university professor but there is no escape from the cruel and tender friendship. This friendship has such strong holds in each girl's thought that sometimes it almost seems like a merger personality. Lee demonstrates the truth of this point by showing the coalescent quality of their name. Lila also goes by the name Lina and Elena by Lenu which "intensifies the ambiguity in their personalities" (493). Lila-Elena friendship bond is a "narcissistic dis-investment" with a sacrificial quality where Lila wills her brilliance into Elena.

Lila is enlarged because of Elena's success but the admiration also conceals hate evident from her rebuke of Elena's second novel which questions the fantasy of a shared personality. Elena sees Lila as a mirror for the affirmation of her identity but what she sees is a better version that's seems unachievable. Still, Elena thinks of herself as incomplete and non-existent without Lila. She brightens everything for Elena and add intensity to it, elevating her from a mediocre existence.

Lila and Elena live in each other's folds, merging and de-merging continuously. Individuation is an inaccessible goal in this realm. The merging is the admission of a foreign body within. Lee writes that there is discontentment in both protagonists' sexual relationships due the absence of the admiration that they associate with each other. The essential giving and receiving of admiration is the desired quality with which the women know themselves. This closeness also brings hatred. Through Mitchell's theorization of the rivalry attached to the subject-subject relationships, Lee observes that Elena wishes Lila to die so that she can have the room for her own growth.

When Elena tries to stand up for her uniqueness, she keeps getting drawn back into the chaos of the amalgamated personalities. This ordeal creates the potential of creativity. Together they master the narratives that scare them. Lila's colonization of Elena's thought evokes Elena's creativity.

Elena Ferrante's weekend column (2018) in *The Guardian* discusses how everything is positioned centralizing males even after a century of feminism and women cannot simply be themselves. She comments that the way of women's being is deeply clawed by male domination. Everything is codified according to men's need and even when competing with them, women are just formulation bricks to elevate them; all the while being careful about not to offend them. Ferrante recalls an admiring remark made by a friend, who said that she had taught herself to avoid being "too beautiful, too brilliant, too attentive, too independent, too generous, too forceful, or too kind." (Ferrante).

According to Ferrante, this too-ness causes males to respond violently and females to become hostile toward one another as they compete for the scraps left by the males. The too-ness in men, however, "produces admiration and positions of power" (Ferrante). This results in the suffocation of female power and autonomy. Women remain silent for the sake of peace and quiet and don't truly belong to themselves. Their

defects, virtues, crimes, pleasures, cruelties and even language is "obediently engraved in the male hierarchy, are punished or lauded according to codes" that don't actually belong to women (Ferrante). This perspective is relevant to the rationale of current study as I will analyze the monologic dismissal of too intelligent and too opinionated female protagonists and explicate how the male authoritarianism instigates violence among females.

The Neapolitan novels as a study of familial saga entrenched in violence were a subject of the article "Staging a Word: Overcoming and Recovering Familial Bonds in Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" by Emanuela Caffè (2019). Violence emanating from patriarchy is an important aspect in Neapolitan novels. In the first section of the article, Caffè utilizes Kristevian concept of abject to show the influence of patriarchy in compromising familial bonds.

Ferrante sketches a staunch patriarchal society that imposes rigid gender roles which cause exploitation and victimization. Caffè writes that every woman in neighborhood is "physically conquered and emotionally consumed her husband" (107). Women are manipulated by the male relatives. They start mimicking the violent male image and lose their sense of subjectivity and control over their own image. Melina and Lila are two foregrounded characters that end up losing sanity due to patriarchal exploitation. Caffè notices that when Elena reads the *Carla Lonzi's Sputiamo su Hegel* (1970), she discovers that how patriarchy dominated the theories and philosophies of canonical thinkers and expropriated women's power, pushing them to a role of self-sacrifice. Women's subjugation by their husband is one facet and another is the social relationship that ties the mother and feminine subject with Kristevian abject.

The importance of mother-child bond in the identity formation in the light of Kristevian abject is discussed in detailed in the review of Van Ness's article. Here, however, Caffè explains that the Kristevian abjection of repulsion and rejection of maternal is a product of patriarchy. Caffè recalls Luce Irigaray's consideration that patriarchy has a negative influence on women's relationships with their mothers. Elena's matrophobia is seen as an act aligned with widespread practice of marginalizing women but also a rejection of passive and abject femininity.

In the second section of the article, Caffè debates the transgenerational transmission of violence. This transgenerational behavioral resemblance is exemplified

in the way Lidia, Donato's wife, and her relatives Lila and Marisa inherit Melina's animosity. Violence is something that has been genetically encoded by the surrounding in the inhabitants' DNA which thus has been passed onto the daughters and sons. Other characters like Stefano enters into an adulterous relationship with Ada, Melina's daughter, who acts like her mother in jealousy. Melina's son, Antonio, inherits her mother's mental instability when he is forced into military service and also by the pressure for the violent role that patriarchy wants him to play. He ends up teaming up with the mobsters of the neighborhood, Solaras, like his father. Further, Nino, Donato's son, becomes a womanizer like his father even though he despised him for his adulterous tendencies.

Stefano, who at first appear as a gentle character, later becomes a violent and corrupt person like his father, Don Achille. His violent tendencies stem from the society's imperative of the treatment of wives and also from the genetic lack of empathy. The last example that stands to the testament of this trajectory is Gennero, Lila's son, whom Lila has kept away from the neighborhood and educated him but he ended up displaying the same violent tendencies like the other children of the neighborhood.

The third section of the article focuses on the combined social and genetic factors that perpetuate and sustain violence. Challenging the popular belief at the time where the novels are set that it is only that genetics determine the behavioral, Ferrante asserts that environment is also responsible in the makings of the self. Lila is acutely aware from the start of the tetralogy that money, class, education are the tools that rule the society. She wants to control the current injustices and power disparities since she is aware of them. To achieve this, she marries Stefano. She uses her wealth and her knowledge of computers to help her friends.

Elena, too under the influence of Lila, becomes a successful writer. Lila's attempts to abolish hierarchies first seem to be in vain as violence is not only enveloping her neighborhood but also the entire world, she realizes. Caffè notices that Lila's efforts are not entirely in vain as the neighborhood does try to mimic her positive efforts. She replaces the men in "taking possession of Elena's body and the surroundings" (115). Elena also welcomes this fusion of their identities referring to the plurality of an individual's identity.

Caffè explains in the light of Muraro's conceptualization that in order to establish a social existence women need to form an interdependent bond which is exemplified in Lila and Elena's bond. It is because of this bond that Elena becomes a successful writer, welcomes her second pregnancy and is able to understand her mother's struggles. Elena's fear and disgust of becoming like her mother is an outcome of transgenerational trauma. Though later Elena comes to understand that her mother's limp is a symbol of society's violence on her mother. Elena's sciatica pain during her first pregnancy is a way the violence that was wrought on her mother manifests in her which indicates the inescapable nature of genetic and social inheritance.

Ruth Glynn equates Lila with the city of Naples, critiquing the novels with feminist and postcolonial theories in the article, "Decolonizing the Body of Naples: Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" (2019). Aligned with the tradition of metaphorical correspondence of bodies and cities in twentieth and twenty first centuries, Glynn writes that the city of Naples is a gendered female. Owing to the corporeal construction of Naples in literary and cultural spheres, Glynn considers Naples as "somatope" (body place) according to the conceptualization of Ramona Fernandez. The centrality of corporeality or body image is the fulcrum of the plot in Ferrante's tetralogy where the narrative is wrapped around Lila's allusive body.

Other than the corporeal aspect embodied by Lila, is the experiential aspect portrayed by cultured gaze of Elena. The heuristic between Elena and Lila is what is between Naples and the "northern gaze". Glynn aims to show that the values associated with Lila and Elena allow the alterity of Naples and enable to read it as something other than what literary and traditional corporeal frames have been labelling it.

While discussing Lila as a metaphorical embodiment of Naples, Glynn writes about the contradictions that arouse the fascination. The chaotic Lila embodies the enigmatic and arcane cultural practices of the city by being at once strong and frail, beautiful and broken, tender and intimidating, vulnerable and capable of tremendous violence. Glynn draws a parallel between the capacity of Naples and Lila of destruction and recreation. Like Naples, Lila is incoherent and is unable to "govern her incomprehensible interiority" and is "resistant to the structures of regulatory modernity" (267).

To Glynn, this parallel of Lila-Naples is problematic as nowhere in the text Elena compares Lila and Naples. Moreover, Naples is metaphorized through the bodies of many other characters rather than one, which adds to the fragmentary nature of the city. Another problem with this corporeal stance about Naples is that it paints the city as the other.

Elena, however, describes Lila as exotic and dangerous in her narration but her education and mobility from central Italy to northern Italy helps her write the city in another way, with a new understanding. Elena's visit to northern Italy with her father as a child fills her with an awe and a promise of settling at a better place, escaping from the inferior southern niche. Naples is a place from where Elena wants to escape. Her experience of being called out for her Neapolitan accent cements her fear of deformity that she had been struggling to shun. She feels discomfort while walking on the streets of Naples as she has internalized the northern gaze.

When Gigliola's blotched and distorted body is found, Elena aligns it with the city of Naples; a place of violence and hostility. Elena awakens to patriarchal narratives that colonize the female self and starts to reconcile with her city of origin. Her acceptance of the limp that she abhorred in her mother is an example. She reassess her origins and this time she has a new acceptance and appreciation for Naples.

Another relevant study is titled as "Elena Ferrante and Patriarchy: Lessons from *L'amica Geniale (My Brilliant Friend)*" by Maria Clara Calheiros (2019) in which seeks the development of a new dialogue in the feminist theories through the current literature, including *My Brilliant Friend* (2012). Ferrante's Neapolitan novels are a critical staging of patriarchy and the position of women in it. Calheiros writes about the re-emergence of patriarchal discourses in the academic circles and Ferrante's novels provide a chance to re-evaluate the feminine experience of the world. With an emergence of #MeToo movement, there have been a rise in lawsuits against the movie stars and other people in the position of power which has once again brought the "women issues" in focus of academic circles.

Ferrante's Neapolitan society is the center stage of patriarchy from which Elena and Lila want to break free. Elena resorts to education and independent career to achieve the goal and Lila decides to marry a rich guy from the neighborhood, using marriage as a method of social advancement, usually accessible to women in patriarchal

societies. In this course of the protagonists' emancipation and sexuality, Calheiros writes, Lila seems like a conformist as compared to Elena who forges her identity outside of traditional values. Yet Lila's resistance to the traditionalist sexual morality is prominent on two accounts. First, when she resists her pregnancy and rejects it once it happens as it affirms the detriment of her dream of going to the school. Lila's resistance here is not only psychological but also physical. Being pregnant means that her body does not belong to her anymore.

Second episode of Lila's revolt against the patriarchal clutch on her body and identity is when Solaras want to display her wedding picture in their shop to elevate the sales. Lila leaves this decision to Stefano, her husband who gives in for the prospect of monetary outcomes in collaboration with Solaras. Lila realizes that she is a commodity to her husband and her body is nothing more than an object. Her deconstruction/reconstruction of the photograph which shows her aspiration of escape from the clutches of marriage or patriarchy.

Moreover, when Elena decides to leave her husband in the favor of feeling her emotions intensely for another man and leaves her daughters to be taken care by the grandparents, she depicts a deviance to the traditional patriarchal values of maternity and marriage. Elena feels burdened with the guilt and receives backlash from her mother and mother-in-law.

Calheiros concludes that Lila and Elena challenge the patriarchy but without turning into the "heralds of morality". These two women traverse their way through the precarious patriarchal society but do not present the image of an ideal women or an attempt to be superior to men. They grapple to identify themselves as women and in the course of doing so make questionable choices and embody desires like real women. Their rejection of traditional image of motherhood is the deconstruction of the idea of nature female. Hence, rather than projecting a female image aligned with the sanctions of radical feminists, Ferrante's heroines depict the real experiences of women under the dominating yoke of patriarchy.

The next article titled "Alethurgy's Shadows: Truth-Telling between Women in Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" (2020) by Jennifer Doyle analyzes the sexual violence and the agentic dimension in rape. First of all, Doyle explains the concept of Alethurgy as used by Michel Foucault as the bringing truth to light as opposed to what

is hidden, unspeakable or forgotten which she stitches to the accounts of rape, molestation, and agentic quality of the sexual experiences of Lila and Elena being brought to light.

Doyle then with the help of different theorization comes to the point of epistemic/testimonial violence and injustice the rape victim experiences. The testimony of rape victim is over determined by the possibility of lying or a result of prior trauma. “The epistemological asymmetry” privileges the men and ignorance in the rape culture which does not take into account what the victim felt if the man didn’t perceive it. Further the silence of women about their pleasure and violation contributes to the inability to distinguish between the two.

While explaining the agentic role in violation, Doyle explains that in rape culture the position of women as objects in violence is normalized rather than as agentic subjects in violence as victims sometimes suffer from their own confusion about the nature of their real desire. Nonetheless, rape is misogynistic and violent organization which “exerts a definitional force on our experiences of sexual harassment, our sense of sexual happiness, intimacy, and truth” (329).

Sexual violence is a well-integrated part of the landscape of violence in Ferrante’s novels. Hence Doyle examines the narrator’s sense of sex and knowledge that governs the friendship. Elena Greco’s first novel was widely misread due to sex scene which is later disclosed as based on her own experience with Donato Sarratore. She is perceived by men as open to sexual experience at all times. Men of her neighborhood call her a whore. A friend of the publisher tries to take advantage of her in the booth on the beach. A guest of the bohemian party turns up in her room at night and demands sex.

Elena is molested by Donato on her fifteenth birthday. She describes the feeling of disgust of Donato and of her body’s pleasurable reaction to him. After two years, when Lila’s rape is disclosed and she is having an affair with Nino in which Elena is providing Lila alibis, Elena finds herself on beach; dwelling on her insufficiency to attract Nino to her and wanting to have something horrible done to her so that she can escape her current self. She encounters Donato and loses her virginity to him and then abandons him coldly in an act of defiance. Here, Elena has an agentic subject role in her victimization as she wants to feel important and garner a new self.

Lila experiences hardcore violence since childhood as beatings from her father, brother, and husband. Her rape on her honeymoon is a display of power by Stefano who has to bend Lila to obey him. The gruesome account of Lila's rape make Elena feel that her experiences of sexual violation were inferior and she never tells Lila about them.

Doyle states that the sexual experiences of the girls matter as their friendship is shaped by it. There are instances when Elena has sexual thoughts about Lila but could never be explicit. Their friendship is marred by the grief about "possibilities of lost love" as Judith Butler writes in *Gender Trouble*. Elena has thoughts about Lila's body while giving her bath on the day of her wedding. Doyle writes that when Elena has sexual thoughts about Lila's unsexualized innocence, she inserts herself in Donato's place and Lila in hers. Lila being penetrated by Stefano gives her so much pain that she wants it to be done to her too.

Further Doyle argues that Elena ascribes an abundant sexuality to Lila that she can't live up to. Lila finds no pleasure in sex which can be due to her coarse experience of child abuse, harassment, physical assault and rape. Elena's decision of not to disclose years of sexual violation, or "not me" moment as opposed to "me too" moment, is a deferral to Lila's suffering. Elena explains that the language did not allow them to confide as it was a language of violence, attack and defense.

About a quarter of Katrin Wehling-Giorgi's article "Unclaimed Stories: Narrating Sexual Violence and the Traumatized Self in Elena Ferrante and Alice Sebold's Writings" (2021) focuses on the traumatic experience of sexual violence in Ferrante's Neapolitan quartet in relation to Lila's character. Giorgi takes the narration of sexual violence in female authored texts as a way to subvert global hegemonic norms. She bases her argument primarily on trauma and its manifestation in construction and deconstruction of the self but misses the implications of other patriarchal and hierarchal factors that are essential in understanding Lila's fragmentation of the self. Hence, this identified gap will be addressed in my study.

At another instance, Giorgi mentions that the voices of Ferrante's protagonists challenge the master narratives of sociopolitical and linguistic power structure but does not provide any further insight into the matter. A potent observation in this article is how gendered violence shapes the relationships between characters. Lila's inability to process emotion and the urge to erase herself from people's life is a product of trauma

and grief. However, Giorgi here does not comment on Lila's impact on the people around her, including the nurture and violence she prompts. This unexplored aspect is will be subject to scrutiny in my analysis.

Sernaz Arslan's article "Appropriation and Gendered Spaces: A Discussion on Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" (2022) provides an insight into the urban appropriation to gender construction of Lila and Lenu. It discusses Rione as a socially constructed space where the protagonists are shaped and the transformative impact of landscape in female's lives. This article is significant as it discusses the interconnectedness of gender and space, an aspect that my study also addresses with Foucault's concepts of heterotopias. My study is different from this in its approach to space as a marginalized center where Lila and Lenu not only are shaped but also contest and transform the surroundings. Hence, whereas Arslan's article garners its major argument from the geographic landscape, my study takes more of a philosophical approach to space where the female protagonists contest against hegemonic norms.

Stephanie V. Love explores the ambition to forge an educated identity in the chapter titled "An Educated Identity: The School as a Modernist Chronotope in Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels" in the book *The Works of Elena Ferrante: Reconfiguring the Margins* (2016). Elena Greco is split between the elusive world of her education which is in complete contrast with her violent and poverty stricken neighborhood. Even accomplishing the unusual feat of getting advanced education, an alien aspect to the girl of her neighborhood, Elena is troubled by the identity of her roots. V. Love notices the distinct violent and brutal language of the neighborhood in contrast with Italian of educated sphere. Elena's desire to achieve "an educated identity" is at war with the fear and violence ridden identity of her origins.

V. Love explains that the dichotomy between neighborhood and the school embodies the symbolic and ideological narrative. The "totalizing concepts of WWII modernity" are characterized by this antagonism which determine the characters behavior towards their emerging world, their needs, desires and aspirations. V. Love writes, "In the idiom of WWII modernity, the school represents the hopes and dreams of a developed national future, while the neighborhood represents the past and the poverty that the modern nation is unable to overcome." (72).

V. Love then takes the dichotomy of school/neighborhood as “the motif of modernist chronotope” as per Bakhtin’s conceptualization and argues that the story depicts a seamless transition from one chronotopic domain into another, defying modernity's attempts to establish a clear distinction between the past and present. This gives Lila and Elena "divergent but connected" destinies. They transgress the strict dichotomous narratives of modernity. Lila is sharp witted and neither can be allocated to school nor neighborhood. Elena is also estranged with her family and the educated world. The modernist ideals have become embedded into new notions of personhood and effect the identities. The cost of progress in the post WWII Italy is steep in having to choose between the allegiances to the customs of origins and pursuing the progress associated with elite culture through the values of school.

As school is the nascent of modernity, Elena in pursuit of an educated identity develops into an ideal modern individual in its folds. Elena has to subject herself to a torturous rhythm of discipline which later turns into the exhaustion of contentment. The transition between school and neighborhood brings various social and emotional implications and the resultant tensions and contradictions shape Lila and Elena’s identities. In school, they push each other to excel in studies and their experiences are shaped by a shared sense of violence and fear. The civility and good manners at school stand in stark contrast to the local violence, which points to a deeper social unrest.

V. Love writes that Lila and Elena represent the two possible outcomes of modern binary. Lila being the dropout of the school is aligned with the culture of neighborhood. She marries at sixteen and escapes the violent clutches much later in life by pioneering the computer technology. However, Elena is still a student when Lila is a wife. Another significant motif is the North/South dichotomy in which South is reduced to a backward other. Elena faces the bearings of being southern while studying at the University of Pisa. Lastly, due to the school’s distinction notion of modern personhood, Lila and Elena forge different identities than their parents. Especially Elena forms a conflicting sense of self and a persistent lack of belonging.

2.3 Conclusion

While reviewing the critical literature available as secondary sources, I have found that the aspects scrutinized in my study have not been explored before. However, various journal article, web/newspaper articles, and books are relevant to my study and form a

meaningful trajectory towards the aspects discussed in my research project and lead to some significant findings. Reviewing these secondary sources has enabled me to establish the authenticity and originality of my research by indicating the gaps in the existing scholarship.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research triangulates Bakhtinian, Foucauldian and Connellian notions as instruments to analyze the nuances of gendered violence, hegemonic masculinity, class and gender authoritarianism in Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

In this research Bakhtin's notions are employed on his merit of being a social theorist. Holquist has pointed out in *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his Word* (2002) that the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism has been used to disrupt patriarchal harmony and liberate the feminine voice (185). His idea of dialogism and heteroglossia related to diverse voices counter the monological truth of authoritarianism. The power discord between genders can be understood by dialogical materialism through which heteroglossic othered women challenge the monologic pervasive structures.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), Bakhtin developed the notion of unfinalizability in contrast to monologic truth which ridicules the belief and practice of a single dominant perspective in favor of the world that is shaped by multiple utterances or dialogism. Bakhtin propounded the idea of heteroglossia in the essay "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) as an attack on the idea of linguistic purity and argued that a single unitary language is comprised of internal multiplicity of languages.

Michael Holquist defines heteroglossia in *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his Word* (2002) as "many-languagedness" and "plurality of relations". According to Bakhtin, the monoglossical dominance is bound to be ruptured by heteroglossia. Andrew Robinson explains that the monoglossic or "one dimensional thought" turns deaf to the "voices of difference". In opposition to the monologism or monoglossia i.e. an authoritative discourse, heteroglossia refutes dominance and authoritative character in a case for multiple and hybrid utterances.

Similarly, dialogism can be understood as languages that stratify a single language are in a dialogue with each other. Holquist explicates a dominant “official discourse” which is totalitarian in essence and does not recognize otherness or an attempt to form a “single, collective self”. These outer official discourses which Holquist calls “autism of the masses” rejects the existence of “other selves” which are “beyond what they posit as normative” (Holquist 51). The external authoritative discourse is contrasted with internal pervasive discourse or inner duality/inner speech. This inner speech is open to dialogical relations and opposes authority through personal opinion which is unsupported by external authorities.

Holquist explains, “In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness” (Holquist 17). Dialogic consciousness generates a multiplicity of perception. Contesting meanings emerge as otherness becomes a binary of center³ vs. non-center. The relational differentiation between self and the other renders the existence of self in relation to other which incarcerates self. The existence of self is co-dependent rather than individualistic. Hence existence as a dialogue between self and the other is verbatim dialogism.

Andrew Robinson in his article, “In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia” explains monologism as counterposed to dialogical principle, signifying dominance of a single consciousness or discourse in all fields, ideologies, practices, beliefs and desires. It ridicules the presence of any contrasting thought or consciousness. “Another consciousness” (as contrast to the monological thought) is not recognized in a monological world and hence the subjects are reduced to the status of marginalized and othered. The dominant monological truth, Robinson explicates, is allowed to deny the rights to other consciousness and “each subject’s ability to produce autonomous meaning is denied” (Robinson).

In contrast to monologism, dialogism is double or multi-voicedness. It not only allows multiple perspectives to enter the monological discourse - all the while seeking to contest and alter it - but also involves “the distribution of utterly incompatible elements within different perspectives of equal value” (Robinson). The study finds close proximity in Bakhtinian dialogism and Foucauldian heterotopia owing to the

³ Center for Bakhtin is a relative rather than an absolute term and hence does not refer to a place of privilege.

simultaneous presence of incompatible elements in a certain place. This point also establishes a link between these two theoretical notions employed in this study.

Bakhtin perceives language as multi-layered, dialogic and co-constructed which coincides with the social constructivist view of gender⁴. Hence, Bakhtin's work is deployed to engage in the conversations of non-normative and diverse gender roles. The dialogic becomings accompany heteroglossia as the utterances of a single individual represent diverse viewpoints which coalesce and collide through the past, present, and future; and are mediated through socio-cultural and historical circumstances. Based on this, Bakhtin's work is employed in this study to analyze the colliding interests of multiple social groups or more specifically, multiplicity of consciousness of genders within a single space. The heteroglossic nature of utterances provide a chance to study the tensions between the traditional and innovative forces as will be observed while analyzing the texts.

In literary analysis, dialogism is applied to analyze the diversity of voices, styles of discourses and point of views. These notions are extended to the social world where monologic authoritarianism is bent to subjugate and hegemonize the dialogic and heteroglossic othered. Considering dialogism, the social world is also made up of multiple voices, perspectives, and subjective 'worlds'. Bakhtinians view humanity as fundamentally indeterminate and unfinalizable. People have to constantly struggle against the monologic external definitions of their thoughts and actions, which have a hindering effect on their identity. In stretching the concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism to Neapolitan socio-cultural history of the novels, I aim to explore the challenges monologic authoritative discourses pose to the variegated elements of identity of female protagonists.

Michel Foucault's conceptualization on the discursive nature of power is especially relevant to the study while scrutinizing the monologic authoritarian strains in the novels. According to Foucault, 'power is everywhere', diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (Rainbow 9). In his various works, Foucault analyzes power as it manifests itself in society, schools, hospitals, factories, homes, families, and other forms of organized society. He theorizes on how power is

⁴ Social constructivist view of gender holds that gender is a product of social norms. Gender is a contextualized identity rooted in social expectations and gender performance.

infiltrated to the lowest strata of society and abstractly and systematically works to create a space of otherness and identity turmoil. In *Discipline and Punishment* (1995), Foucault explains that the integrated system of power is exerted through “a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another.” (Foucault 177).

Further, Foucault argues in his lecture “Of Other Spaces” (1986) that all human cultures are a form of heterotopias. He defines heterotopias as “different places, other places” which act as “counter sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 24). Considering this, heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing several spaces and sites that are in themselves incompatible, all in a single real place (Foucault 25). I align this capability of juxtaposing several incompatible sites in a single heterotopic place as an affirmation of Bakhtinian notions of co-existence of monologic and dialogic voices in the Neapolitan Italian society where a patchwork of conflicting voices contest each other.

The idea of place as heterotopic entity has been widely applied in social sciences. Michel Foucault introduced the notion of heterotopia in 1967, relating it to the study of space and hence focusing on the places which act as “spaces of otherness”. His approach can be extended to social concerns. Heterotopia, in contrast to utopia, can be defined as a representation of space which contains undesirable and imperfect aspects; where it is difficult or impossible to belong (Richardson 3). Foucault categorizes heterotopias as heterotopia of crisis and heterotopia of deviation. The latter of these is relevant to the study as heterotopia of deviation are the places where “the individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Foucault 25).

Thus, heterotopias can be places where people are marginalized and hegemonized for not conforming to the norms. The concept of heterotopia establishes the presence of cultural, political and economic differences which provoke the issues of identity. In this way, heterotopia is linked with cultural production and ontological considerations of the world. I argue that the socio-cultural space of Ferrante’s

Neapolitan novels act as heterotopia, marginalized and hegemonized place for the identity of the protagonists under study.

Masculinity and femininity are in a constant dialogue with each other in any socio-cultural setting but this dialogue has been seldom considered as a force that cumulatively shapes the overarching power relations. They are formed and deformed under the influence of each other and are simultaneously bound to class and various social institutions. A feminine heteroglossia is now surfacing in literature which presents history and culture as experienced, (re)shaped and produced by female perspectives; a privilege rather denied to females in the past. Feminine experience is not separate but rather saturated in the masculine experience. Laurie A. Finke endorses this notion in the book section “A Powerful Infidel Heteroglossia: Toward a Feminist Theory of Complexity” (1992) that women's "experience" is saturated with and not separate from the practices by which masculinist cultures reproduce their domination. Hence, the researcher argues that masculine hegemony and violence is responsible for ensuing violence in feminine counterparts. This stance by no means aims to essentialize masculinity as when I establish gender-power relations as co-constructed social phenomenon, I interpret masculinity in its traditional role as well as the multiplicity and alteration it affords in the active social practices.

Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as an oppressive binary to the experiences of subordinated men and women. It is a term refracting into an indication of a hierarchal male experience or masculinities and an opposition to cishet “male stream thought”. In this study, two facets of hegemonic masculinity are identified and employed. First is the oppressive hegemonic masculinity to both male and female experience but with an emphasis on female subjugation and second is the plurality of masculinities.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is in vogue since 1980s whence it came to be understood as, according to Connell and Messerschmidt, “a practice that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (“Hegemonic Masculinity” 832). In the dicotomy of hegemonic masculinity and subordinated masculinity, the former was considered normative if not normal; though only a limited number of men would enact it. As hegemonic masculinity embodied the most venerated way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it and it legitimized global

subordination of women to men. The men who would not enact hegemonic masculinity were considered complicit. The hegemonic force was more aggressive towards female complicity and less confrontational towards males.

In the article, “Understanding Men: Gender Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities” (2001), Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as a form of masculinity that is “culturally dominant in a given setting” (17). It might not be most common form but is most visible and even the non-enacting males gain benefit from it. Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic in relation to gender as a whole. It is a concept of “the privilege men collectively have over women” (17). However, as the theorists believed that the gender relations and hierarchies are subjected to change, hegemonic masculinity can be a product of circumstances and might change over time. Moreover, the concept of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities is helpful in articulating the difficulties of men to respond to injury, trauma or emotional and physical instabilities.

Connell also points out in “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005) that the idea of “masculinity is flawed because it essentializes the character of men” (837). Additionally, masculinity is situated in the social practices rather than being embedded in personalities of individuals and hence can differ according to the varied gender relations.

In a further branching out, Connell discusses Demetriou’s classification of hegemonic masculinity into external and internal shafts. External hegemony refers to the “institutionalization of men’s dominance over women” and internal hegemony refers to “the social ascendancy of one group of men over all other groups of men” (845). Lastly, for Connell social structures are verbatim patterns of constraints that are puppeteered through through power and social institutions like Foucault. The consequential nuances of feminine violence and formation of identity are analyzed in this study as being rooted in hegemonic masculinity. As hegemonic masculinity is linked to aggression, violence, authoritarianism, and gender relations this study will also attempt to investigate its circumstantial nature.

The research finds close proximity in Bakhtinian dialogism and Foucauldian heterotopia owing to the simultaneous presence of incompatible elements in a certain place and space. The presence and interaction of incompatible monologic and dialogic

voices is the aspect that makes the Rione a heterotopia. This point also establishes a link between these two theoretical notions employed in this study. Moreover, it is the capacity of heterotopic space where the interaction of incompatible voices and factors, like hegemonic masculinity, produces and promotes gendered violence. Hence, the notions employed from all three theorists interact and validate each other.

3.3 Research Methodology

The qualitative method of research is employed in this project. According to John W. Creswell in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed method Approaches*, qualitative research is defined as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social and human problems” (Creswell 32). This is an inductive style of research focusing on individual meaning. Methods, data collections, procedures and analysis are not fixed and interpretations are not absolute. Content analysis as a type of qualitative method is used in this study. Open ended questions and use of emerging approaches are prominent aspects of qualitative research to analyze textual data. This method of research allows me to access contextual meanings, make subjective interpretations, and create an agenda or a chance to bring reform (Creswell 47).

3.4 Research Method

The method of textual analysis is used in this research which I am explaining through Catherine Belsey’s explication in “Textual Analysis as a Research Method” in Gabriele Griffin’s book titled *Research Method for English Studies* (2013). Belsey contemplates the exploratory nature of textual analysis saying that textual analysis is “indispensable to research in cultural criticism” (Belsey 160). In textual analysis, I pose some questions and seeks answers to them. “Textual analysis as a research method involves a close encounter with work itself, an examination of the details,” Belsey states (Ibid). She identifies the following questions while approaching a text:

- What is the text about?
- What kinds of prior knowledge might illuminate it?
- What difference does it make if we locate the work historically and textually?
- What position or range of positions does the text offer its reader?

- How can we best let the text set the agenda for research that will generate insights?
- How far can we expect to arrive at a definitive interpretation?

Belsey advocates the originality of research but also validates the connection of current research to prior knowledge and making a contribution to it. Further, pure reading does not exist as reading is always influenced by extra-textual knowledge and this is where the secondary sources come at play which are important for the progression of textual analysis. Another feat of secondary sources is that they provide a well-informed and coherent meter of what can be said and has already been said hence they lead to finding something new to dig (Belsey 164).

Belsey states that the process of interpreting a text must be understood as the “effect of a relation between a reader and a text. There may be dialogue within the text, but the text also engages in dialogue with the reader” (Belsey 166). So, the text offers a range of possible interpretations. This, however, does not entail that text forces us to see it in a certain way rather it is the reader who adopts a certain critical vocabulary which allows the text to invite certain positions for the addressee. “The text, as a tissue of signifiers, then, makes certain demands on the textual analyst, provides the material of analysis” (Belsey 167). The interaction of textual material and outside world then renders certain meanings.

Moreover, text illuminates in a different light with every encounter. Even in repetition, there is originality as it is dynamic with perception. Text may offer certain constraints but a good textual analyst can choose to look from an angle conducive to the end goal. “Any specific textual analysis is made at a particular historical moment and from within a specific culture” (Belsey 169). Hence, the text can have multiple possible readings and is able to provide something new.

CHAPTER 4

GENDERED VIOLENCE AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: A TRIANGULATION OF BAKHTINIAN, FOUCAULDIAN AND CORNELIAN REFRACTIONS OF FERRANTE'S FICTION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the texts of Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) using the lens of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in terms of monoglossia and heteroglossia, Foucault's notions of pervasiveness of power and heterotopias and Connellian conceptualizations on hegemonic masculinity.

Elena Ferrante is an Italian author whose works have been translated into many languages. She is recognized for her four volume books called Neapolitan Novels for which she was nominated Strega Prize and an Italian Literary award. She is also listed as one of the *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people. The major themes of her works are female friendship, love and infidelity, fractured communities, and the unhappy, often transactional nature of relationships between men and women.

Ferrante's Neapolitan novels are recently adapted in a series by HBO and her other works are also widely performed on stage and screen. This four-volume series consists of *My Brilliant Friend* (2011), *The Story of a New Name* (2012), *Those Who Leave And Those Who Stay* (2013), and *The Story of the Lost Child* (2014), dealing with different phases and ages of life of Lila and Elena.

The story revolves around the life of two perspicacious girls, Raffaella Cerullo (Lila) and Elena Greco (Lenuccia or Lenù) born in Naples in 1940s. It spans forward as Lila and Elena try to make lives for themselves in a violence imbued culture which impedes their growth and confounds their identity.

My Brilliant Friend (2011) is set in 1950's post World War II Italy and approaches Italian history, politics and social life. People fight to make ends meet in Lila and Lenu's impoverished Neapolitan neighbourhood during a period of widespread poverty and unrest. Loan sharks control their neighbourhood, which is riddled with

violent killings fuelled by love and money. Though gradually, Lila and Lenu are awakened to the political underpinnings which have a dark influence in their society.

While growing up, the two best friends learn to rely on each other and their paths repeatedly diverge and converge. The novel opens as Elena in her 60s reflects back to her age at six when she met and bonded with Lila in school and common hatred of Don Achille. They get more competitive as they become older. Lila does better academically than Elena. However, Lila is unable to continue her middle school because her parents won't pay for it, but Elena does. Lila's father makes shoes, while Elena's father works as a porter at a hotel in Naples. Without Lila's brilliance, Lenu continues to grip the top position in her studies.

At the age of thirteen, Lila develops into a beauty of the neighbourhood. Elena aspires to be like Lila and takes different measures to achieve it. When Lila cannot continue her studies, she exerts all her energy into getting out of the neighborhood where her family has been living on the mercies of Solara family for generations. Elena too has the same goal of rising above their birth place and status. Lila starts working with her brother Rino to make shoes which will excel in sales under their family name, Cerullo.

Meanwhile Elena keeps studying with Lila's help in Greek and Latin. Later Marcello Solara tries to court Lila with his money and power but Lila refuses while Elena is away flourishing in her studies. She goes to isle for a summer, romances with Nino Sarratore and is sexually assaulted by his father. Elena returns to find Lila inclined towards Stefano Carracci, who belongs to the wealthiest families in the neighborhood, as oppose to despicable Marcello Solara. At the climax of the narrative, Lila Cerullo discovers, Marcello in the middle of her wedding ceremony, that her new husband Stefano Carracci has betrayed her to her despised old suitor Marcello Solara in order to start a company with the affluent.

The Story of a New Name (2012) revolves around Lila and Lenu's young adult life when Lila's marriage has imprisoned her and Lenu finds a way to get higher education amidst all her anxieties and insecurities. Lila suffers abuse in her marriage. She is forced to work for the detested Solaras while relentlessly looking for escape. Lila and Lenu's friendship becomes putrid when Lila starts an affair with Nino Sarratore whom Lenu loves. Soon, Nino grows weary of Lila's intellect and leaves her. After

spending an evening in Lenu's intellectual circle, Lila feels that her hard-earned cocoon of lavish status is a hoax and she lashes out at Lenu. To this, Elena responds by cutting her off and goes to university of Pisa to pursue her higher education.

Meanwhile, Lila's husband, Stefano Carracci has an affair with Ada due to which Lila decides to leave him. She, along with her son, escapes to an improvised neighborhood with Enzo, her childhood admirer. After graduating, Lenu writes a book which becomes an instant success but nobody in her neighborhood acknowledges her success. The story ends at yet another cliffhanger when Lila is seen working in a sausage factory where she faces constant physical and sexual harassment. Even amidst this horrendous escapade, Lila has a brilliant idea to hold onto.

Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) is a story of friendship, womanhood, identity and a nation, all rife with violence and trauma. It is a depiction of a society which situates man as a system. The violence that goes into maintaining this hyper-masculine system initiates an ouroboros of identity struggles, political, social, familial and emotional turmoil which the protagonists, Lila and Lenu, contest through their dialogic existence in that post-world war II society. Using Catherine Belsey's textual analysis as a research method, I am analyzing the dialogic feminization of Neapolitan society.

Further, in this chapter, adhering to the framework of qualitative research method, I am extrapolating authoritarian monologism and resulting contesting heteroglossia, the hegemonic masculine strains and resultant masculine and feminine violence, the pervasive monologic power relations in the microcosmic heterotopic society and resulting hindrance in the dialogic ambits, and gendered violence as a result of the intersection of class and gender authoritarianism as a hegemonizing agent for the power, identity and growth of the protagonists.

4.2 Hegemonized Genders and Identities

The factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity in the Neapolitan society are entrenched in politics of class, social and financial capital, and gender. The first factor that causes hegemonic masculinity operates on the principle of a constant negotiation between violence and survival. This impoverished slice of Italian society is still plagued with the repercussions of World War II and is in a process of rebuilding from them. People

die with diseases with no medical aid, food is scarcely earned, and education is a luxury. Elena recalls, “We lived in a world in which children and adults were often wounded, blood flowed from the wounds, they festered, and sometimes people died” (Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend* 19). For Elena, the world is filled with words that killed: croup, tetanus, typhus, gas, war, lathe, rubble, work, bombardment, bomb, tuberculosis, and infection. As a consequence, fear is an intimate companion to identities.

Moreover, people could die from normal things too, like throwing rocks. Daily life was imbued with violence; hurling horrible curses and disgusting obscenities was the standard procedure. Scenes like Lila being thrown out of the window for insisting on going to school, Melina and Lidia wrestling each other on the stairs are common. The children have internalized this culture of violence too. Enzo and his friends exchange a row of rock throwing at Lila and her friends for being better at school is one such example. The only way to survive in the Neapolitan society was doing harm before someone could harm you. Always living on one’s beam ends, people incontrovertibly conformed to whatever ensured their survival which were often full of violence and exploitation.

A well-permeated culture of loan sharks, as exemplified by the character of Don Achille in the very first chapter of *My Brilliant Friend* (2011), poses another threat which I have established as a financial factor contributing to hegemonic masculinity. Don Achille was “an ogre”, the “greatest threat of our time” (Ferrante, *MBF* 16), Elena recalls. Everything awry is traced back to him. Elena and Lila witness Signor Peluso, a carpenter and an ever broke gambler, become a victim of Don Achille’s debt and wrath. Peluso accuses Don Achille of taking his carpentry shop by stealth and turning it into a grocery store, his loss in gambling and being criticized in public for not being able to feed his family. When Peluso confronts Don Achille, he is thrown mercilessly with such force in front of everyone that he barely remains conscious.

Displays of such “monstrous nature” which “sucked blood from other while never losing any himself” (Ferrante, *MBF* 13) has tainted the society long before Lila and Elena’s existence. Elena’s father, who passed as a decent man comparably than other violent men in the society, continuously hurls insults at Elena’s mother for having a distant thread of familial relationship with Don Achille which leaves her mother angry and Elena frightened and hence adds to the familial/household tensions. Impecunious

families are dependent on the loan sharks who make their money in black market, spread terror through violence to subjugate the people in their locality and hence set the tone for being a man in the society.

Being a man in the Neapolitan society means being aggressive, authoritative, tough, and inexpressive. It means practicing toxic tendencies like bullying, sexual, physical and emotional violence, manipulation, hiding sensitivity and subordinating all men and women who do not conform to the prescribed identities, like Connell suggests while conceptualizing hegemonic masculinity in the article, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005). This financial exploitation espouses rigid class and gender definitions of monologic nature.

Another equally central social factor that contributes in shaping hegemonic masculinity is the rigid gender roles. Men are supposed to be providers, the financially deft ones and women are either supposed to maintain homes and rear children or work in the capacity of subordinate to their men. The Carracci women help in the grocery store but the owners are the Carracci men. The shoes that Lila manufactures are supposed to bring her brother the financial stability and glory and later, they are to be capitalized upon by her husband.

Lila’s talents are a commodity to be sold and harnessed for first her brother’s gains and later for her husband’s. Her intolerance towards this monologic patriarchal structure is what brings a dialogic turmoil in her life and in the life of people around her. Brawling, cursing and fighting is as normal as breathing among men inside and outside home alike. Any man possessing slight gentleness presents a stark contrast. Elena’s father, who abuses her mother but has never hit her at least while growing up, is considered a far gentler person than the rest of the men of the community. Enzo’s unwillingness to serve in the war is harshly judged upon and his later trauma is taken as something unprecedented in the society. Enzo’s character is essentially a foil to the multiple representations of hegemonic masculinity in Neapolitan society. Donato Sarratore’s willingness to help Melina, a widow, read and write poetry is considered womanish. Hence, the monologic structure of gender roles in the Rione shape hegemonic masculinity.

The above mentioned factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity espouse masculine and feminine violence. As depicted in the above instances, masculinity rests

on displaying violence in personal and public spheres. Women are silent witnesses of masculine violence which put them in a constantly aggressive existence. “To cause pain was a disease” (Ferrante, *MBF* 24), Elena recalls while reminiscing about her childhood observation about women being quarrelsome with each other even more so than men. Her childhood imagination informs her of little animals coming to her neighborhood in the night and making her mothers and grandmothers angry like “starving dogs”. Men are equally infected with rage but they calm down at the end owing to the grand violent gestures that they can afford. Women, however, appear to be silent and compliant but wallow in a rage that has no end.

Domestic violence is another perpetual aspect that instills silence fear, silence and a sense of subordination in women which results in confounding their identity. Lila and Elena are well acquainted with their mother being cursed and abused by their fathers. In fact, violence is such a casual phenomenon in the Rione that rather than its existence, its absence is a thing of shock. Elena and Lila grow up seeing their mothers becoming victims of domestic violence. These frequent beatings did not require a pretext. “Fernando instead yelled, threw things; his rage fed on itself, and he couldn’t stop. In fact his wife’s attempts to stop him increased his fury, and even if he wasn’t mad at her he ended up beating her (Ferrante, *MBF* 68).

When Lila is thrown out of window by her father, there’s no protest against it. As Elena recalls, “Fathers could do that and other such things to such impudent girls” (Ferrante, *MBF* 69). Instances of such domestic violence were small things as compared to the widespread violence in the neighborhood. “Blows were given and received. Men returned home embittered by their losses, by alcohol, by debts, by deadlines, by beatings, and at the first inopportune word they beat their families, a chain of wrongs that generated wrongs” (Ferrante, *MBF* 69). A shocking example of hegemonic masculinity is observed in Stefano’s character who marries Lila to ‘straighten her out’. After betraying Lila by selling her shoes to Solaras, he rapes and beats her.

He repeated that remark two or three times, each time louder, as if to assimilate fully an order that was coming to him from very far away, perhaps even from before he was born. The order was: be a man, Ste’; either you subdue her now or you’ll never subdue her; your wife has to learn right away that she is the

female and you're the male and therefore she has to obey. (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 37)

Stefano has to live up to the traditional idea of masculinity by hegemonizing Lila's body and intellect. There was no acknowledgement or reprimand on Lila's marital rape or beatings. In fact, this was all too normal, aligned with how a man should behave with his woman to keep her in line. "Lila remained standing most of the time, it hurt to sit down. No one, not even her mother, who was silent during the entire visit, seemed to notice her swollen, black right eye, the cut on her lower lip, the bruises on her arms" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 40). Lila told her friends and family that she fell on some rocks in Amalfi. Even her sarcastic tone while telling this lie was believed by the women who "knew what had to be said when the men who loved them and whom they loved beat them severely" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 41).

There is nothing deviant about Lila's lie or the marital rape and beatings especially because everyone in the neighborhood thought that Lila deserved it and so "the beatings did not cause outrage, and in fact sympathy and respect for Stefano increased—there was someone who knew how to be a man" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 41). These consequential wrongs of hegemonic masculinity carried by men are manifested into women as passive aggression and confounded identity.

4.3 Monologism VS Dialogic Constitution of the Subjects

Rione is a microcosm of monologic power relations which hinders the dialogic ambitions. Lila and Elena's strong dialogic voices threaten the monologic authoritarianism creating a contesting interplay of monologism and dialogism. Monologic power manifests itself through class stratification, patriarchal authoritarianism, and financial strains which hegemonize female agency and identity.

Lila and Elena's existence is a refusal to participate in the business of reproducing society with all its identities intact which gives birth to feminine dialogics. Post-war Neapolitan Rione is a deeply patriarchal society. Ferrante uses the feminine voices to disrupt the patriarchal harmony. Rione is a male dominated and crime ridden neighborhood which means pervasive subjugation of the weak, especially of women. Both Lila and Elena are deviants in such society. Elena describes Lila as "very bad" because "she did not obey or seemed frightened" (Ferrante, *MBF* 19). The patriarchal

monologic authoritarianism does not allow women to outsmart men, if they do, they suffer with consequences like being attacked with rocks or becoming victim of domestic violence.

Early on in the story, Lila and Elena are attacked with rocks because they competed against the boys and won in answering questions in the classroom. “When we left school a gang of boys from the countryside, led by a kid called Enzo or Enzuccio, began to throw rocks at us. They were angry because we were smarter than them (Ferrante, *MBF* 19). Further, Lila’s brilliance is unparalleled and her courage is unflinching. She has a characteristic determination of plunging into the face of adversity to make her way. Lila is not only denied the chance to continue her studies but is also prohibited to have any connection with education. Her father would not approve of her reading the copy of *Little Women*. “Her father, lately, would get angry if she merely took it out to read” (Ferrante, *MBF* 56). Despite this Lila assured Elena that she would take the test by preparing from the books Elena would lend her. Quarrels start at home as Rino, her brother, sides with Lila. He is only met with slaps that quieten him.

“If you pay me I’ll take care of sending her to school,” Rino said.

“School? Why, did I go to school?”

“No.”

“Did you go to school?”

“No.”

“Then why should your sister, who is a girl, go to school?” The matter almost always ended with a slap in the face for Rino” (Ferrante, *MBF* 56). It was most peculiar that if the males of the family did not get education, Lila, a girl would. Nonetheless, Lila decides to plead her case with her father that he might allow her to study, knowing that her little person will not bring a change of heart in her father. Consequently, she is thrown out of the window mercilessly, like an object. “Suddenly the shouting stopped and a few seconds later my friend flew out the window, passed over my head, and landed on the asphalt behind me. I was stunned. Fernando looked out, still screaming horrible threats at his daughter. He had thrown her like a thing . . . she was bleeding; she had broken her arm” (Ferrante, *MBF* 68).

Lila is thrown out to the public space where she now aims to empower herself; first by becoming a part of the system but ultimately becoming disillusioned and then working against it. This setback is like a blow to her which affects her deeply. Having to give up on her education gives birth to a resentment that would become a chronic part of her identity. Lila's intellect and desire to escape her circumstances is a challenge to monologic power structures like fixed gender norms, class and financial stratification.

Financial disadvantage for women is more nuanced and afflicting as compared to males. Now an adolescent, filled with the angst of being disadvantaged because of being poor and a woman, Lila comes to realize that the only thing that can improve one's life is money. Lila focuses on increasing family's wealth by secretly working on inventing shoe designs in her father's shoe repair shop to help her brother Rino in making money.

Rione being a place that provides little opportunity to even males could never give precedence to a female's chance of availing a better life. A female's talent, potential and intellect is supposed to help enhance a man's stature and hence Lila must employ her brilliance to help her male relatives succeed and hence Lila, trusting that her brother is different than the corrupt men and loan sharks, like Solaras and Carraccis, works to make his prospects better. However, not soon after Lila experiences her first distinguished episode of dissolving margins in the firework scene, which is a numbing experience of violence. This is when she sees her brother, Rino, is just like any other man in the Rione. "She seemed to see him for the first time as he really was: a squat animal form, thickset, the loudest, the fiercest, the greediest, the meanest. The tumult of her heart had overwhelmed her, she felt as if she were suffocating. Too smoky, too foul-smelling, too much flashing fire in the cold" (Ferrante, *MBF* 74). Lila witnesses a crumbling of edges of her beliefs and hopes. Her brother, succumbing to monologic structure of violence, broke the outline of the world and demonstrated its terrifying nature. Lila is betrayed again by her brother and husband when they sell her designs to Solaras. Lila had refused Michele Solaras proposal for marriage to avoid becoming a part of their authoritarian violence and the corruption that they corroborated in the society. Lila's decision to marry Stefano was a dialogic act to break the circle of violence and corruption but she became a victim of it nonetheless. "Lila remembered the discussions she had . . . with Stefano during their engagement, the plan to separate

themselves completely from their parents, from the abuses and hypocrisies and cruelties of the past” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 34). Lila’s consent to marry Stefano was on the terms of distancing themselves from the cruelties and violence of the past and present. Disillusioned, once again, Lila wants to break the monologic order by having something of her own.

Lila is a dialogic aberrance that contest the power stratification in Rione. She is constantly trying to defy the very nature of Rione. She didn’t want to be reduced to her new surname or become just another one of Carracci’s possessions. Lila immerses herself in setting up a new grocery store and tried to become as independent from everyone, especially her husband as possible. The new grocery store was not the only thing she tended to. She also went to the small work site in the Piazza Di Martiri where Stefano now partnered with Solaras worked. Lila inspected the site and added a touch here or there to make it better. She then got to the old Carracci family grocery store and made changes to make is more efficient. From increasing Ada’s pay to paying for Pasqual’s teeth extraction, Lila puts up a fight against the obscene and unrelentingly cruel world around her. She also helped Elena with books in an attempt to pave a way for her out of this neighborhood and to have a life that she could not. Lila is repulsed with the idea of getting pregnant. She finds no meaning in it. Carrying a child or carrying a Carracci child means a resignation that negates Lila. She subtly wages a war against her husband, mother in law and Pinnucia and her brother Rino, a resistance that lets her remain true to herself. She recounts the wrongs that her relatives, by marriage and by birth, had done and were doing to her. “They have placated Michele,” she said, “just as they placated Marcello. They used me—to them I’m not a person but a thing. Let’s give him Lina, let’s stick her on a wall, since she’s a zero, an absolute zero” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 108). The Solaras want to put her wedding picture in the Cerullo shoes in the shop, which is another way of subduing Lila. Lila did not have consent for this but is forced to go along because of her husband. Despite this, Lila finds a way to resist. She is not going to let Solaras have what they want without any fight. She tells Elena, “All I know is that they have to kill me to do what they want with my photograph” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 109). She stands firm on not being a pawn in her husband’s scheme anymore. She is not going to let Stefano sell her as he sold himself to Solaras.

Lila's depiction of herself through disfiguring her wedding photo is the tumultuous crumbling of her identity as a result of the strains of monologic authoritarianism. Lila's act of using her photograph is a medium of dialogic contest against monologic patriarchal hegemony. She took stripes of black paper and started pasting it here and there to portray the shredding of her 'self'. "The body of bride Lila appeared cruelly shredded" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 112). Much of her had disappeared: her head, the stomach, an eye, a hand rested on the chin, the silhouette of her figure and the shoes. The intensity exerted in producing the image of disfigurement has overwhelmed her in the deliberations of self, the truth. She wanted to raise a quarrel, a fight as directed by her dialogic self. In Michele's words, this is Lila erasing her 'self' or depicting she has been erased. Lila further pours red and blue in the cracks of the photograph. Red, a color of resistance and the gashes on her body and mind, and blue to indicate bruises. Lila is frenzied, engulfed in portraying the fury directed against her 'self' and the need to erase herself. With the stripes black paper, with the green and purple circles that "Lila drew around certain parts of her body, with the blood-red lines with which she sliced and said she was slicing it, she completed her own self-destruction *in an image*, presented to the eyes of all in the space bought by the Solaras to display and sell *her shoes*" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 116).

Lila felt like losing her contours, dissolving and disappearing in Stefano as all the while dialogically contesting the monologic powers, she is also being shaped by them. The upper panel of the photograph is most prominent which was devoid of Lila's head and in its place all you could see, at the top, was a very vivid eye, encircled by midnight blue and red, indicating the abuse, rape, and slaughter of her dreams. Lila had been the smartest in the neighborhood, her dialogic whims stronger than anyone else. Her decision to marry Stefano to surpass the cruelties of past and present had blown into her face. She had been the most clever but not as powerful and clever as the men around her. She feels a doomed sensation of becoming a part of everything she detested. She earned this with her labor by working at the Carracci grocery store. But she says, "nothing in there is mine, Lenù, it's made with Stefano's money. And Stefano to make money started with his father's money. Without what Don Achille put under the mattress, working the black market and loan-sharking, today there would not be this and there would not be the shoe factory" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 116). This is not where it ends. Stefano, Rino, her father would not have sold a single shoe without the money

and the connections of the Solara family, who are also loan sharks. She realizes she's become a part of the very wheel of corruption that she wished she put an end to. In her childhood, Lila's ardor for retelling the story of Don Achille's murder and imagining that the killer is a woman shows her desire to put an end to the monologic power structures of hegemony. "Surely she imagined that the murderer was female only because it was easier for her to identify with her" (Ferrante, *MBF* 70). This contradiction between her inner dialogic narrative and outer monologic powers causes her identity turmoil. Bakhtin's theorization on monologism versus dialogism helps in identifying the encroachment of women in Ferrante's work.

Lila and Elena are the heteroglossic othered women whose dialogic voices are a challenge to monologic structures. Applying heteroglossia to the Rione means that every voice relates to, is competing, conflicting and is shaped by other voices. Lila and Elena display the heteroglossic diversity of voices when they aspire to rise above the place of their birth by educating themselves or by making money. "She said that, after she went to school, she wanted to earn a lot of money for the sole purpose of making her brother the wealthiest person in the neighborhood. In that last year of elementary school, wealth became our obsession (Ferrante, *MBF* 59). The girls learn about their social disdain gradually when their knowledge increases. Even this awakening is full of dead ends. The ones who don't shake hands with the loan sharks or earn their money from the black market have this noose of becoming nothings. So, the perplexities of becoming nothing loom large over Lila who turns to the obsession of becoming rich so that she can surpass this neighborhood. Lila asks Elena:

"Do you know what the plebs are, Greco?"

"Yes, the people, the tribunes of the plebs are the Gracchi."

"The plebs are quite a nasty thing."

"Yes."

"And if one wishes to remain a plebeian, he, his children, the children of his children deserve nothing. (Ferrante, *MBF* 58)

Accompanying all this ruin was the warping force of patriarchy on female creativity. As its persistent violence inhibited the dialogic ambitions. Very early on in the novel, Don Achille, the local wealthy and corrupt head of Carracci family is something like an ogre

to children due to his violent notoriety. “I was to act as if neither he nor his family existed” (Ferrante, *MBF* 15). He picks up Peluso and hurls him towards the wall on a dispute over a shop. Don Achille is later murdered by someone. The normalization of this violent power is accepted and ignored by everyone as they depend on it for their survival. This ferocious behavior is adopted by young boys too who cannot let girls win. In an episode of losing in a quiz to Lila, Enzo assaults the girls on their way back home. “When we left school a gang of boys from the countryside, led by a kid called Enzo or Enzuccio, who was one of the children of Assunta the fruit and vegetable seller, began to throw rocks at us. They were angry because we were smarter than them (Ferrante, *MBF* 20). The girls are othered due to their difference of aptitude.

Lila and Elena are shaped by each other as much as they are shaped by the violence around them. They form a dialogic interdependence. They support, contest and counter each other. At the very start of the novel, Elena at the age of sixty, declares that Lila wanted to discard every ounce of the neighbourhood where she grew in. In this old age, she decides to relinquish the dark clouds of her past; forgetting and removing every moment by disappearing. “She wanted to vanish; she wanted every one of her cells to disappear, nothing of her ever to be found. She wanted not only to disappear herself, now, at the age of sixty-six, but also to eliminate the entire life that she had left behind” (Ferrante, *MBF* 12-13). Lila’s decision is consequence of her turbulent identity shaped by various traumas and setbacks in achieving her aspirations and potential.

There is nothing pleasant in the past for Elena to reflect on. Her world was full of bad news and physical, emotional and psychological wounds. Amidst this Elena and Lila find each other with whom they can test their potential, share inspirations and aspire to create a separate identity. “I devoted myself to studying and to many things that were difficult, alien to me, just so I could keep pace with that terrible, dazzling girl” (Ferrante, *MBF* 34). The unafraid spirit of Lila encouraged Elena to push her boundaries too. “Lila didn’t obey and didn’t even seem frightened” (Ferrante, *MBF* 19). Elena is fascinated by Lila’s courage and intellect. Holding onto Lila means that Elena has more than her violence prone and poverty stricken existence in Rione. It is what sets her apart and endorses her dialogic ambitions. Lila’s fierceness meant freedom. On the other hand, Elena’s chances to pursue her education and escape their origins is what Lila envies. With all her brilliance, Lila could not avoid becoming victim to Rione’s

merciless cycle of violence. Lila's efforts to make money, to marry Stefano, resisting motherhood, and dissolving into Stefano, all are efforts to compensate what she could not if she were given the opportunities to study. Although resentful, Lila helps Elena with studies. She buys her books, feeds her, and practices lessons with her. When Lila is getting married and changing her path, she is concerned about Elena's studies and is ready support her monetarily to have her continue her studies. Lila wants her to escape the neighborhood which she could not.

Another example of dialogic voices being shaped by monologic authoritarianism is that Lila is forced to take on the violent attitudes that she detests to get the work done because that is the way Rione works. She shouted, and cursed while getting the business dealings for the grocery store done. In an answer to Elena's upset gaze on witness one of such incidents, Lila gives a snort of contempt and turned to her to apologize says, "If I don't act like that, they won't even listen to me" (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 128). The monologic control over public and personal space has a rippling effect that alter the dialogic voices and causes a dissonant identity.

The established status quo uses its dominance to preserve the monologic power structures and resist all social change that could affect their privileges. Along with the above mentioned instances, Lila's resistance to raise her kid like other neighborhood kids, struggle to non-conformity to the roles in marriage, attempts to escape the abusive marriage is a dialogical resistance to the male order of her world.

Dialogism and heteroglossia establish self as a multiple phenomenon. The dialogic becomings accompany heteroglossia as the utterances of a single individual represent diverse viewpoints which coalesce and collide through the past, present, and future; and are mediated through socio-cultural and historical circumstances. The heteroglossic nature of utterances provide a chance to study the tensions between the traditional and innovative forces. According to Bakhtinian heteroglossia, people have to constantly struggle against the external monologic definitions of their thoughts and actions, which have hindering effect on their identity. Elena, as an educated woman has a heteroglossic othered existence in the neighborhood. Also, she is as much affected by violence in Rione as Lila. She grows up witnessing her mother, and neighborhood women becoming victim to domestic violence, harassment, abuse, and rape. Her tense relationship with her mother is a metaphor of her struggle of not turning in to a typical

woman from Rione. She is embarrassed by her mother's coarse dialect, her illiteracy, her limp and unappealing appearance. Being worn down by house chores, poverty, and struggle to manage money, her mother opposes her education. Elena adopts people pleasing attitude to stay teacher's favorite or to keep herself attached to Lila. The only problem that she recognized in her life is her mother. She says, "The problem was my mother; with her things never took the right course" (Ferrante, *MBF* 32). From very early on, she senses that her mother did her best to make her realize that she was superfluous in her life. There was not the slightest agreeableness between them. Her mother represents everything that Elena wants to escape or leave behind.

Her body repulsed me, something she probably intuited. She was a dark blonde blue-eyed, voluptuous. But you never knew where her right eye was looking. Nor did her right leg work properly—she called it the damaged leg. She limped, and her step agitated me. Sometimes I heard her angrily crushing with her heel the cockroaches that came through the front door, and I imagined her with furious eyes, as when she got mad at me. (Ferrante, *MBF* 32)

That's why Elena becomes focused on Lila as she embodies everything opposite to her mother. Lila is brilliant and agile. Elena lives in a constant fear of her mother's limp. Detaching herself from her mother is her first heteroglossic act. For her, Lila is relentless in the face of any adversity so she decides to model herself after that rebellious girl. She forms a dialogic pact with her. Elena's mother is her first monologic challenge. Lila's disobedience contained breathtaking opportunities that her conformist mother could never sanction.

Elena's first out of the neighborhood experience stems out of Lila's mind. She lies awake the night before they decide to go to the sea, wondering what lay beyond the perimeter. She recalls that day as her true experience of "pleasures of freedom" (Ferrante, *MBF* 63). It can be sufficiently said that the idea of rising above and going farther than the boundaries of Rione is birthed on this trip.

As a teenager, Elena becomes depressed because of her changing physique. The Solaras assault Ada, a girl of their age and she realizes that they are at the mercy of the Solaras. "You know why the Solara brothers think they're the masters of the neighborhood?" "Because they're aggressive." "No, because they have money" Lila replies (Ferrante, *MBF* 100). As a result Elena and Lila realize that either they, too, had

to make money, more than the Solaras, or, to protect themselves against the brothers, they had to do them serious harm.

Womanhood becomes a traumatic experience for Elena. She learns to lower her gaze and ignore obscenities. Then came the political awakening, and the knowledge of the exploitative cycle in Rione. She hopes to detach herself from that sum of the misdeeds and compliances and cowardly acts of the people she knew, whom she loved, whom she carried in her blood. The people which included the man who fought in the war and killed, the one that turned in a lot of people, and the one starved his own mother. The house where they tortured and killed, on the stones where they marched and gave the Fascist salute, the corner where they inflicted beatings, all of this is stamped in her blood. “These people’s money comes from the hunger of others, this car was bought by selling bread adulterated with marble dust and rotten meat on the black market, that butcher shop had its origins in stolen copper and vandalized freight trains, behind that bar is the Camorra, smuggling, loan-sharking” (Ferrante, *MBF* 134).

Like Lila, Elena wanted to scrape off the generational cruelties and exploitation and escape from the things of before. Going away from the neighborhood, she finds contentment in the disappearing of the overbearing body of her mother and Lila’s violence prone life. Elena is assaulted by Donato Sarratore which makes her feel guilty and a disgust is originated within her. Moreover, Elena is devastated by the diverging paths with Lila. She contemplates Lila’s talent going to waste, her brilliance being marred by the usual fate of every woman in neighborhood. Her source of validation fades. She is caught in the skeptics of missing out on what Lila is going to have, a family, money, house; things she is far from. This severance creates a dissonance in her identity.

Lila’s social mobility to upper class has its own impact. It makes Elena realize the vulgarity of being a plebian. Another thing that constantly challenges Elena’s identity is the wish to escape her mother, to distance herself from the “ugly gaze” of her father and mother. She feels increasingly pressed under the disassociation with Lila, and consequently with herself. Elena, hence is a heteroglossic othered entity whose identity ricochets between rejecting her mother, identifying with Lila, having a jarring initiation into womanhood, and finding her own anchor.

4.4 Dialogic Heterotopias

...if love is exiled from cities, their good nature becomes an evil nature.

_Ferrante, *MBF* 167

The socio-cultural space, Rione, in Ferrante's Neapolitan novels act as a heterotopia, a marginalized and hegemonized place for Elena and Lila's identity. Foucault argues in his lecture "Of Other Spaces" (1986) that all human cultures are a form of heterotopias. He defines heterotopias as "different places, other places" which act as "counter sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24). Considering this, heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing several spaces and sites that are in themselves incompatible, all in a single real place (Foucault 25). I align this capability of juxtaposing several incompatible sites in a single heterotopic place as an affirmation of Bakhtinian notions of co-existence of monologic and dialogic voices in the Neapolitan Italian society where a patchwork of conflicting voices contest each other.

4.4.1 Heterotopia of Gendered Violence and Otherness:

Rione is a space of otherness for both Lila and Elena which is rife with gendered violence. Michel Foucault introduced the notion of heterotopia in 1967, relating it to the study of space and hence focusing on the places which act as "spaces of otherness". Heterotopia, in contrast to utopia, can be defined as a representation of space which contains undesirable and imperfect aspects; where it is difficult or impossible to belong (Richardson 3). According to Foucault, heterotopia of deviation are the places where "the individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (Foucault 25). Thus, Rione is such a dialogic heterotopia where Lila and Elena are marginalized and hegemonized for not conforming to the gender norms. They venture out of the prescribed margins by wanting to pursue education, by attempting to put an end to exploitation and violence, and wanting to demasculine power.

Lila and Elena make their own space within male dominated Rione. Lila's ambition and desire becomes her perversity. The Rione is so vengeful, extreme and heightened and jealous of anyone who has the means to step outside and to raise oneself raise financially.

Lila and Elena live in a periphery as they not only belong to the lower strata of the Rione but also because of being women. “It’s a filthy place,” he had said, “a sewer: the more wealth it produces, the more poverty increases, and we can’t change anything, even if we’re strong” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 431). Rione is an underworld of violence and crime, an underworld governed by patriarchal system where women are punished for any transgression or desire or simply existence.

Pinnucia, now Rino’s wife, is beaten to the point of being unrecognizable. She is nervous, and extremely thin, “resigned to her fate, she bore the marks of the beatings that Rino continued to give her, taking revenge on Stefano, and, in her eyes and in the deep creases around her mouth, even more obvious traces of an unhappiness with no outlet” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 430). Pinnucia is a foil to Lila and Elena, representing the generation of women that belong to Rione. Rather than resigning to their fate like Pinnucia, Elena continues to pursue her studies and Lila manages to get away from abusive relationship with Stefano after enduring years of abuse and exploitation. “...he doesn’t want me to have even a thought of my own and if he discovers that I’ve hidden even some insignificant thing he beats me” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 386). Lila is beaten and insulted and betrayed by her husband. Ferrante spins words subtly while she weaves the account of Stefano resorting to sell Lila to save his old grocery store from Solaras.

Elena, on the other hand, takes the fear bestowed by her place of origin everywhere she goes. Her achievements and identity is always branded by the effects of violence from Rione. Her identity is plagued by the fear of being *almost*.

Had I made it? Almost. Had I torn myself away from Naples, the neighborhood? Almost. Did I have new friends, male and female, who came from cultured backgrounds, often more cultured than the one that Professor Galiani and her children belonged to? Almost. From one exam to the next, had I become a student who was well received by the solemn professors who questioned me? Almost. Behind the *almost* I seemed to see how things stood. I was afraid. I was afraid as I had been the day I arrived in Pisa. I was scared of anyone who had that culture without the *almost*, with casual confidence. (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 391)

She is constantly afraid of not being enough and not being able to fit in. “I would always be afraid: afraid of saying the wrong thing, of using an exaggerated tone, of

dressing unsuitably, of revealing petty feelings, of not having interesting thoughts” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 391).

The Neapolitan Rione is a dialogic heterotopia, where gendered violence hegemonizes growth, agency and identity. It is space of troubling and troubled identities as a consequence of ubiquitous violence. Violence, fear, hatred finds its way into present. “We didn’t know the origin of that fear-rancor-hatred meekness that our parents displayed toward the Carraccis and transmitted to us, but it was there, it was a fact, like the neighborhood, its dirty-white houses, the fetid odor of the landings, the dust of the streets” (Ferrante, *MBF* 19). Lila and Elena internalize their parents’ fear, silence and conformity.

The patriarchal order of the Rione imposes a check on the female desire and transgression. The Rione is a physical imposition of patriarchal logic, physical violence and pervasive fear. The gender structure of Naples is saturated with violence and abuse of female bodies. “In the neighborhood terrible things could happen, fathers and sons often came to blows, like Rino and Fernando, for example” (Ferrante, *MBF* 197). Naples is a male governed space where men crush and torture women, where women feel the weight of the male city on their on their existence. Family unit, the very basic form of human existence is contaminated and destroyed by criminal presences. It is the violence that doesn’t let Lila do anything.

...everyone’s anger was unloaded on her: her brother’s anger because she had abandoned him to his fate as the slave of their father while she set off on a marriage that would make her a lady; the anger of Fernando and Nunzia because she was not nice to Solara but, rather, treated him like dirt; finally the anger of Marcello, who, although she hadn’t accepted him, felt increasingly that he was her fiancé, in fact her master, and tended to pass from silent devotion to attempts to kiss her, to suspicious questions about where she went during the day, whom she saw, if she had had other boyfriends, if she had even just touched anyone” (Ferrante, *MBF* 204).

There are things that women cannot do even if they are brilliant. They have bodies that can be destroyed. Lila makes her husband promise that Solaras would not come to the wedding and he waits until after the ceremony. Solaras arrival is her husband’s betrayal to her. He beats her and threatens to kill her because of the presence of a female body.

Casual violence is a fact of life in the Rione. Moreover, Lila working in a sausage factory shows the degradation of someone so beautiful and brilliant is brought to because of violence.

Gendered violence is not only perpetuated by older generations. Rather, it engulfs everyone in a cyclic storm. Rino, who is patient and pro education for Lila at the start of the novel, becomes a victim of socio-economic angst, exploits and beats her and joins the corrupt families of Rione. The shoes that Lila designs require resources for manufacturing that the Cerullo's cannot afford. Hence, when Marcello Solaras sends a proposal for Lila, who is not yet fifteen, Rino sees a chance of becoming wealthy. Rino takes out his frustration by shouting, slapping and insulting Lila. Lila's did not speak of school again. She is occupied with how to soothe her brother, help her mother, do the marketing, wash the clothes and hang them in the sun and never go to the shoe shop again. Rino threatened to kill himself, terrorized the family and the neighbors. Lila had to stop pursuing her dreams and become something that could bring her brother a fortune. Marcello kept pursuing Lila even when she refused his proposal. He then resorted to doing favors for her family and Rino saw a chance there. When Lila showed that she would not support Rino is partnering with Solaras, he treated her worse than a servant, invalidated her existence as no more than the object that is obligated to bring him wealth. He threatened her that if she would refuse this "proposal of importance, he would break every bone in her body. Elena recalls Lila as having a fresh bruise every day. Lila's faith is shattered in everything she believed. She sees her brother turned into a mad beast. Rino becomes one with city. Lila, however, uses the inherent oppressive power of the Rione in cleaning it. She chooses to stay back and rebel against Rione's grim violence. "She wrote obscurely, good and evil are mixed together and reinforce each other in turn" (Ferrante, *MBF* 204). Lila dissolves in the city.

The post war disease ridden, execrated, and impoverished neighbourhood could not offer any growth. The Solaras brother are a new wave of terror and corruption after Don Achille. They would take liberties wherever they wanted — be it girls or black money. Ferrante implies a rape incident after which Lila and Elena become more defensive. They had no choice but to just ignore the obscenities they so boldly hurled towards them. "I myself— especially after the incident with the Solaras—had learned instinctively to lower our eyes, pretend not to hear the obscenities they directed at us, and keep going (Ferrante, *MBF* 127). The Solaras brothers own a bar which is the hub

of gambling, smuggling and loan sharks. They were also a part of the infamous syndicate, Camorra. The girls come to know these facts when they gain a little political awareness, mainly at first their friend Pasquele who is well versed in Left-wing politics. Along with Solara brothers, Don Achille and his sons are also involved with black money and syndicates. Pasquele tells them that the Bar Solara had always been a place for loan sharks from the Camorra, that it was the base for smuggling and for collecting votes for the monarchists.

He said that Don Achille had been a spy for the Nazi Fascists, he said that the money Stefano was using to expand the grocery store his father had made on the black market...these people's money comes from the hunger of others, this car was bought by selling bread adulterated with marble dust and rotten meat on the black market, that butcher shop had its origins in stolen copper and vandalized freight trains, behind that bar is the Camorra, smuggling, loan-sharking (Ferrante, *MBF* 133-134).

This pertinacious violence opted and perpetuated by men to take revenge or to defend their women's honors seeps towards the female strata who in turn are destructive to each other. The men absorbed this masculine violence and frustrations of everyday dealings and transferred it to women who, in turn, themselves are equally destructive to each other. This replication of masculine violence causes disruption between female relations. Elena always found her mother disapproving and unappealing. She never can open up to her. "The problem was my mother; with her things never took the right course. It seemed to me that, though I was barely six, she did her best to make me understand that I was superfluous in her life. I wasn't agreeable to her nor was she to me" (Ferrante, *MBF* 32). Her mother is disagreeable as she has pushed her limits to keep Elena in school while she barely manages to attend to household chores and makes the ends meet in their narrow financial condition.

Similarly, Lila's father cannot keep Lila in school and Lila has to forsake her education at the end of the elementary school. Lila grows closer to her brother when he stands up for her right of education. In adolescence she works in her father's shop on shoe designs which will make her family rich. After a while she grows to sense a change in Rino's behavior who mirrors the violent tendencies displayed by everyone else. "And the disgust, who knows why, was concentrated in particular on her brother Rino, the

person who was closest to her, the person she loved most. She seemed to see him for the first time as he really was: a squat animal form, thickset, the loudest, the fiercest, the greediest, the meanest (Ferrante, *MBF* 74). Lila accepts her destiny to acquiescing to help her mother in house and work at shop to make shoes. Lila invents shoes which were truly remarkable but her father's disapproval hinders her. Lila was still preoccupied with her aspirations of leaving the neighborhood behind and break the shackles of the wealthy mob of the area, headed by the young Solara brothers. Here, this escapism is not about avoiding or denying, but about finding balance and separation as this is not a world that feels safe as Elena and Lila's home is rife with violence, misogyny, and terror.

“You know why the Solara brothers think they're the masters of the neighborhood?”

“Because they're aggressive.”

“No, because they have money” (Ferrante, *MBF* 100).

When Elena breaks the news of joining high school, the trauma of what Lila had to give up is visible.

“She looked at me perplexed. “What is high school?” she asked.

“An important school that comes after middle school.”

“And what are you going there to do?”

“Study.”

“What?”

“Latin.”

“That's all?”

“And Greek.”

“Greek?”

“Yes.”

She had the expression of someone at a loss, finding nothing to say” (Ferrante, *MBF* 114).

She feels the longing for what she could have had if she studied. The feelings of loss degradation, humiliation cloud her. On the other hand, when Elena goes to the isles for the summer, she feels assured and powerful. She assumes the role of an active subject here.

At that tremendous moment, full of light and sound, I pretended I was alone in the newness of the city, new myself with all life ahead, exposed to the mutable fury of things but surely triumphant: I, I and Lila, we two with that capacity that together—only together—we had to seize the mass of colors, sounds, things, and people, and express it and give it power. (Ferrante, *MBF* 120)

However, Lila tried to escape the quicksand of the violence, could not do so. Her brother Rino comes to despise her when they could not realize their dreams of opening a shoe factory and surpass the corrupt Solara brothers. To veil his incompetency, he would associate the invention of shoes to himself in her absence; seizing Lila's creation and later her independence by forcing her to work in a business partnership with Solara. He would take credit for her sister's ideas and work. Lila's trust shatters and she comes to despise her brother too.

When he was boasting like this, however, it was crucial that his sister not be present...He realized that Lila was giving him a distrustful look, as if he were betraying a secret pact of behavior...and so he preferred not to have her around; they were working together all day anyway in the shoemaker's shop. (Ferrante, *MBF* 125)

The class warfare is a lethal part of the Ferrante's heterotopia. All the families in the neighborhood were entwined in vicious circle of crimes by an acquiescent compliance with the dominant families. All of this was part of Lila and Elena, wherever they go, the misdeeds of their loved ones will haunt them. "I hoped to detach myself from that sum of the misdeeds and compliances and cowardly acts of the people we knew, whom we loved, whom we carried – she, Pasquale, Rino, I, all of us – in our blood (Ferrante, *MBF* 135).

Day by day, this violence only increased which further hegemonized the females. Rino could not tolerate Lila anymore. He wanted to get rich by hook or crook. "He shouted that he wouldn't stay forever in that wretched place to be his father's servant and watch others get rich. He grabbed the iron foot, pretended to throw it at her,

and if he really had he would have killed her” (Ferrante, *MBF* 144). His singular pursuit of escape the neighborhood entices him to join the Solara brothers. Lila, in an attempt to gain parallel status as Solara brothers and to get rid of Marcello Solara’s aggressive attempts to court her, marries Stefano – son of Don Achille – only to be betrayed by her brother and sexually and physically assaulted her husband. “Marcello had on his feet the shoes bought earlier by Stefano, her husband. It was the pair she had made with Rino, making and unmaking them for months, ruining her hands” (Ferrante, *MBF* 303).

Foucault’s conceptualization of heterotopia helps in understanding the nuances of gendered violence, its relationship with class warfare, social stratification, contesting monologic and dialogic voices in the selected Ferrante’s texts. Rione is a heterotopia where gendered violence is an omnipresent phenomenon which creates a space of otherness for women. It hinders their agency, safety, right to education, independency, mental peace, and a stable identity.

4.4.2 Reconfiguring Power in Ferrante’s Heterotopia

Lila and Elena break the monologic patriarchal authoritarianism with their dialogic existence. Ferrante shows a gradual power shift from men to women, from Solaras to Elena and Lila. She centers the power in Elena through education and, then, by giving her a new identity of an author. “In the spring the book came out, which, much more than my degree, gave me a new identity (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 459). Elena is able to garner some agency over her identity because of now having something that extends her beyond the Rione. She is a stranger in her neighborhood. Her distinguished attire and manners still place her in a periphery within Rione. She cannot bring all that she has become back to her origin. This amalgamation of her nativity and foreignness create a dissonance in her identity. She arrives back in Rione careful not to alert anyone about herself as she takes a bus when she actually wants to have the service of a taxi. “...something about me must have been different”, she is greeted by Ada, who was taking her baby out for a walk, looked at distractedly, and walked by but then “she stopped, turned back, said, “How well you look, I didn’t recognize you, you’re different” (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 458). There is no one in the neighborhood to appreciate her for her success. Not entirely happy and comfortable with this change, Elena moves forward to a journey of self-assurance.

Elena Greco, me, breaking the long chain of illiterates, semi-literates, an obscure surname that would be charged with light for eternity. In a few years—three, five, ten, twenty—the book would end up on those shelves, in the library of the neighborhood where I was born, it would be catalogued, people would ask to borrow it to find out what the daughter of the porter had written. (Ferrante, *TSOANN* 440)

Though hindered by the authoritarian and violent aspects of the Rione, Lila and Elena start to defeat the beast. Lila becomes one with the city, retaining all its preposterous qualities but at the same time she has her own internal discourse that directs her to leave Stefano and all the monetary comforts with it. She chooses a life of struggle but refuses to be a part of exploitation anymore. Towards the end of the second book in Ferrante's quartet, there is centering of power in female protagonists. Also, the dialogics of Elena and Lila impact the Rione if not completely reconfigure it. There is a reconfiguring of the male power as the focus shifts to Enzo, who studies by himself, got his diploma and makes a different life for him from one that is destined for him in the neighborhood.

Finally, Rione is a heterotopic space where monologic, dialogic and heteroglossic voices exist together. They contest and alter each other while being shaped and reshaped. This juxtaposes hegemonic discourses like patriarchy, class, and finance and gender violence with resisting forces. In this particular case, gender violence hegemonizes Lila and Elena's agency and identity, creating a space of otherness and marginalization.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) by using Connellian idea of hegemonic masculinity, Bakhtin's notions of monologism, dialogism, monoglossia and heteroglossia and Foucault's concepts concerning heterotopia, discursive power structures and their role in obstructing identity and agency.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have concluded the findings of my study. This research has explored Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) by using Connellian idea of hegemonic masculinity, Bakhtin's notions of monologism, dialogism, monoglossia and heteroglossia and Foucault's concepts concerning heterotopia, discursive power structures and their role in obstructing identity and agency.

Gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity are the umbrella terms for this study. Further, in this qualitative research, textual method is used for analysis of the texts which is explained by Catherine Belsey in "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" in Gabriele Griffin's book titled *Research Method for English Studies* (2013). Hence, the researcher has tried to examine Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) to find the answers to the questions of the research.

The research questions inquire about factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity which in turn espouses masculine and feminine violence that confounds the female identity, the working of monologic power relations at micro-level in post-war Italian society which hinder the dialogic ambits and the dynamics of gendered violence, as a result of the intersections of class and gender authoritarianism, impeding and hegemonizing growth, power and identity as portrayed in the heterotopic Neapolitan society through the female protagonists.

As per the thesis statement, the study particularizes the monologic power relations which infiltrate the micro levels of society in the postwar Italy to hinder and resist the dialogic ambits as portrayed by Ferrante in *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012) and investigates the factors that prompt the hegemonic violence which espouses masculine and feminine violence and in turn obstructs female growth and identity. Subsequently, it exposes the nuances of gendered violence as a result of the intersections of class and gender authoritarianism impede and hegemonize growth, power and identity as portrayed in the heterotopic Neapolitan society through the female protagonists.

The title of this project reveals the primary focus of the research in tracing the impact of gendered violence and hegemonic masculinity on the life of the characters within the selected texts, especially the protagonists. Further, it relates to the different components of the research as hegemonic masculinity is linked with gender aggression and oppression, class warfare and authoritarian discourse. The dialogue of gender difference enters the narrative early on in the story along with class stratification and evolves into resultant hegemonic and oppressive dichotomies.

In the investigation of Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012), the aim was to assess the authoritarian monologism and resulting contesting heteroglossia, the hegemonic masculine strains and resultant masculine and feminine violence, the pervasive monologic power relations in the microcosmical heterotopic society and resulting hindrance in the dialogic ambits, and gendered violence as a result of the intersection of class and gender authoritarianism as a hegemonizing agent for the power, identity and growth of the protagonists.

This study has identified the factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity in the Neapolitan society. These factors are situated in politics of class, social and financial capital, and gender. The first factor that causes hegemonic masculinity operates on the principle of a constant negotiation between violence and survival.

There is a constant struggle of survival in the poverty ridden Rione due to which aggression, fear, assaults, killings, brawls, fights, and exploitation is a causal phenomenon of daily life. This violence existed before Lila and Elena's birth and it is something that is transferred in the DNA of the people in Rione. The children internalize the gender roles from a very young age which manifests in their interactions early on in the texts.

The only way to survive in the Neapolitan society is doing harm before someone could harm you. Functioning in such rigorously competitive and violent society, men had to conform to the standard of being a man in Rione, which in other words, is to be a provider and protector for the family, be aggressive and violent, be clever to take what you can through hard labor or exploitation and manipulation, and not show an inclination to books, art, education, writing or politeness in which case, they would be labeled effeminate. Thus, the primary factor in instigative hegemonic masculinity is having to conform to the monologic discourse of masculinity men in order to survive.

The second factor that the study has established as majorly contributing in propounding hegemonic masculinity is the finance. Rione is permeated with a culture of loan sharks who then are connected to black market. Impecunious families are dependent on the loan sharks to sustain themselves. This enables a specific class to spread terror through violence to subjugate the people in their locality and hence set the tone for being a man in the society. Being a man in the Neapolitan society means being aggressive, authoritative, tough, and inexpressive. It means practicing toxic tendencies like bullying, sexual, physical and emotional violence, manipulation, hiding sensitivity and subordinating all men and women who do not conform to the prescribed identities.

The third most obvious finding to emerge from this study in shaping the hegemonic masculinity is the rigid gender roles. Men are supposed to be providers, the financially deft ones and women are either supposed to maintain homes and rear children or work in the capacity of subordinate to their men. The Carracci women help in the grocery store but the owners are the Carracci men. The shoes that Lila manufactures are supposed to bring her brother the financial stability and glory and later, they are to be capitalized upon by her husband. Lila's talents are a commodity to be sold and harnessed for first her brother's gains and later for her husband's. Donato Sarratore's willingness to help Melina, a widow, read and write poetry is considered womanish. Hence, the monologic structure of gender roles in the Rione shape hegemonic masculinity.

Further, another crucial finding that stems from the above mentioned factors that prompt hegemonic masculinity is that hegemonic masculinity espouses masculine and feminine violence. In Rione, masculinity rests on displaying violence in personal and public spheres. Women are silent witnesses of masculine violence which put them in a constantly passive aggressive existence. Men are infected with rage but they calm down at the end owing to the grand violent gestures that they can afford. Women, however, appear to be silent and compliant but wallow in a rage that has no end. Domestic violence is another perpetual aspect that instills silence fear, silence and a sense of subordination in women which results in confounding their identity.

Men returned home embittered by their losses, by alcohol, by debts, by deadlines, by beatings, and at the first inopportune word they beat their families, generating a never ending cycle of wrongdoings. Stefano has to live up to the traditional idea of

masculinity by hegemonizing Lila's body and intellect. There was no acknowledgement or reprimand on Lila's marital rape or beatings. In fact, this is all too normal, aligned with how a man should behave with his woman to keep her in line. These consequential wrongs of hegemonic masculinity carried by men are manifested into women as passive aggression and confounded identity as discussed through Lila and Elena's struggles.

Moreover, this study traced the monologic authoritarian powers in contest with dialogic voices. Rione is a microcosm of monologic power relations which hinders the dialogic ambits. Lila and Elena's strong dialogic voices threaten the monologic authoritarianism creating a contesting interplay of monologism and dialogism. Monologic power manifests itself through class stratification, patriarchal authoritarianism, and financial strains which hegemonize female agency and identity.

Lila and Elena's existence is a refusal to participate in the business of reproducing society with all its identities intact, which gives birth to feminine dialogics. Post war Neapolitan Rione is a deeply patriarchal society. Ferrante uses the feminine voices to disrupt the patriarchal harmony. Rione is a male dominated and crime ridden neighborhood which means pervasive subjugation of the weak, especially of women. Both Lila and Elena are deviants in such society.

Lila embodies such brilliancy and fierceness which is unparalleled in Rione. She teaches herself to read and write at the age of three but when it comes to continue her studies, she is disadvantaged due to financial and patriarchal strain. She faces beatings when she resists against the hindrance in her education. Recognizing the financial gap between her and her dreams, she invents shoes in hopes of making her family wealthy but she is betrayed and humiliated by her brother and father. She marries in hopes of ending the cycle of exploitation and violence but finds herself in the clutches of generations old cycle of violence and corruption. Lila stays in a marriage where she is sexually, emotionally and physically assaulted. She always has a dissonant attitude towards the monologic powers. She helps men and women when she has money. She refuses to give in to Solaras. Her body rejects motherhood. There is a contradiction between her inner dialogic narrative and outer monologic powers causes her identity turmoil. Bakhtin's theorization on monologism versus dialogism has been enlightening

in identifying the encroachment of women in Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) and *The Story of a New Name* (2012).

Another equally important component of this investigation is examining heteroglossic othered constitution of Lila and Elena whose dialogic voices are a challenge to monologic structures. Applying heteroglossia to the Rione meant that every voice relates to, is competing, conflicting and is shaped by other voices. Lila and Elena display the heteroglossic diversity of voices when they aspire to rise above the place of their birth by educating themselves or by making money. Early on in the novel, Lila is attacked due to over smarting the boys in the class. She is othered due to being a girl and having a better aptitude, which challenges the monologic norm of male supremacy.

Furthermore, Lila and Elena are shaped by each other as much as they are shaped by the violence around them. Lila and Elena form a dialogic interdependence. The unafraid spirit of Lila encouraged Elena to push her boundaries too. Elena is fascinated by Lila's courage and intellect. Holding onto Lila means that Elena has more than her violence prone and poverty stricken existence in Rione. It is what sets her apart and endorses her dialogic ambitions. Lila's fierceness meant freedom. On the other hand, Elena's chances to pursue her education and escape their origins is what Lila envies. With all her brilliance, Lila could not avoid victim to Rione's merciless cycle of violence.

Another example of dialogic voices being shaped by monologic authoritarianism is that Lila is forced to take on the violent attitudes that she detests to get the work done because that is the way Rione works. She shouted, and cursed while getting the business dealings for the grocery store done. Hence, the monologic control over public and personal space has a rippling effect that alters the dialogic voices and causes a dissonant identity.

The established status quo uses its dominance to preserve the monologic power structures and resist all social change that could affect their privileges. Along with the above mentioned instances, Lila's resistance to raise her kid like other neighborhood kids, struggle to non-conformity to the roles in marriage, attempts to escape the abusive marriage is a dialogical resistance to the male order of her world.

Another significant finding in this investigation is that dialogism and heteroglossia establish self as a multiple phenomenon. The dialogic becomes accompany heteroglossia as the utterances of a single individual represent diverse viewpoints which coalesce and collide through the past, present, and future; and are mediated through socio-cultural and historical circumstances. Elena, as an educated woman has a heteroglossic othered existence in the neighborhood.

Also, she is as much affected by violence in Rione as Lila. She grows up witnessing her mother, and neighborhood women becoming victim to domestic violence, harassment, abuse, and rape. Her tense relationship with her mother is a metaphor of her struggle of not turning in to a typical woman from Rione. Elena adopts people pleasing attitude to stay teacher's favorite or to keep herself attached to Lila. Detaching herself from her mother is her first heteroglossic act. For her, Lila is relentless in the face of any adversity so she decides to model herself after that rebellious girl. She forms a dialogic pact with her. Elena's mother is her first monologic challenge.

Finally, Rione as a complex socio-cultural space, has been productively interpreted in the light of Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Neapolitan novels act as a heterotopia, a marginalized and hegemonized place for Elena and Lila's identity. Rione is a space of otherness for both Lila and Elena which is rife with gendered violence. The analysis confirms that Rione is such a dialogic heterotopia where Lila and Elena are marginalized and hegemonized for not conforming to the gender norms. They venture out of the prescribed margins by wanting to pursue education, by attempting to put an end to exploitation and violence, and wanting to demasculine power.

Rione is an underworld of violence and crime, an underworld governed by patriarchal system where women are punished for any transgression or desire or simply existence. Pinnucia, now Rino's wife, is beaten to the point of being unrecognizable. Pinnucia is a foil to Lila and Elena, representing the generation of women that belong to Rione. Rather than resigning to their fate like Pinnucia, Elena continues to pursue her studies and Lila manages to get away from abusive relationship with Stefano after enduring years of abuse and exploitation. Elena, on the other hand, takes the fear bestowed by her place of origin everywhere she goes. Her achievements and identity is always branded by the effects of violence from Rione.

The patriarchal order of the Rione imposes a check on the female desire and transgression. The Rione is a physical imposition of patriarchal logic, physical violence and pervasive fear. The gender structure of Naples is saturated with violence and abuse of female bodies. The class warfare is a lethal part of the Ferrante's heterotopia. All the families in the neighborhood were entwined in vicious circle of crimes by an acquiescent compliance with the dominant families. Thus, the Neapolitan Rione is a dialogic heterotopia, where gendered violence hegemonizes growth, agency and identity. It is space of troubling and troubled identities as a consequence of ubiquitous violence.

Additionally, the findings of this study have significant implications of how heterotopias allow dialogic voices to reconfigure power. Lila and Elena cause cracks and furrows in the monologic patriarchal authoritarianism with their dialogic existence. Ferrante shows a gradual power shift from men to women, from Solaras to Elena and Lila. She centers the power in Elena through education and, then, by giving her a new identity of an author. Though hindered by the authoritarian and violent aspects of the Rione, Lila and Elena start to defeat the beast. Lila becomes one with the city, retaining all its preposterous qualities but at the same time she has her own internal discourse that directs her to leave Stefano and all the monetary comforts with it. She chooses a life of struggle but refuses to be a part of exploitation anymore. Towards the end of the second book in Ferrante's quartet, there is centering of power in female protagonists. Also, the dialogics of Elena and Lila impact the Rione if not completely reconfigure it. There is a reconfiguring of the male power as the focus shifts to Enzo, who studies by himself, got his diploma and makes a different life for him from one that is destined for him in the neighborhood.

Lastly, this is the first study of substantial content which examines associations between hegemonic masculinity and gendered violence as monologic authoritarian discourses, and Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and heteroglossia and its close proximity with Foucauldian notion of heterotopias. I have aligned this capability of juxtaposing several incompatible sites in a single heterotopic place as an affirmation of Bakhtinian notions of co-existence of monologic and dialogic voices in the Neapolitan Italian society where a patchwork of conflicting voices contest each other.

5.1 Recommendations for Further Research

Ferrante's Neapolitan novels are rooted in complex social experience and hence they offer a wide scope of further studies. One area that has come to light while conducting this study is lack of literature on the political representation through characters in Ferrante's Neapolitan novels. Another under explored area is the neorealist tradition in Ferrante's work.

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