



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***THE SPINSTERS' DESCENT INTO STEREOTYPE IN SELECTED
MALAYSIAN AND SINGAPOREAN SHORT STORIES***

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MALAYSIAN AND SINGAPOREAN SHORT STORIES**

By

NABILAH BINTI MOHD NOR

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts**

March 2017

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

MAMA AND BAPAK

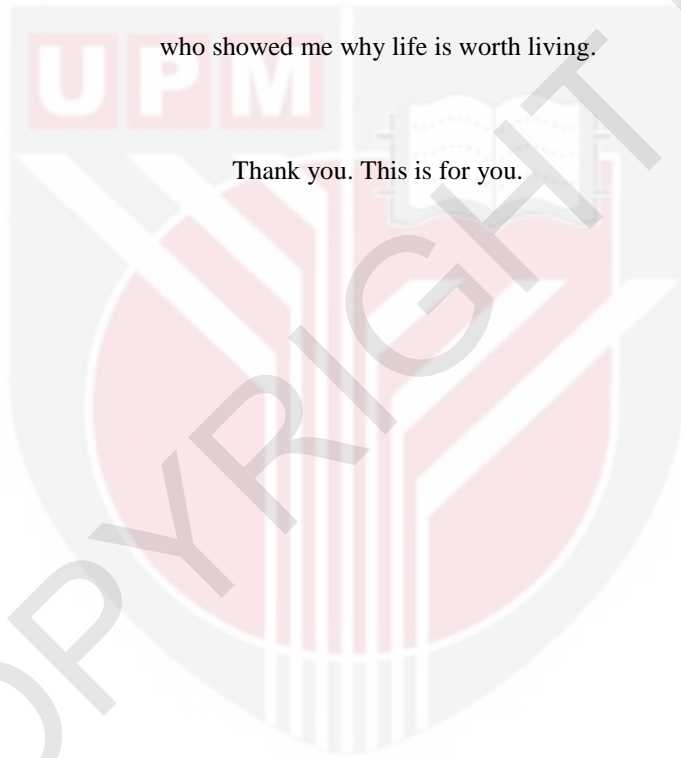
who nurtured me into this world

and

BONDA

who showed me why life is worth living.

Thank you. This is for you.





Abstract of Thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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By

NABILAH BINTI MOHD NOR

March 2017

Chair : Assoc. Prof. Rosli bin Talif , PhD

Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

Throughout history, spinster characters have been given clashing portrayals in literature. Her famous representation in the classics, as seen within Miss Havisham (*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens) and Emily Grierson (*A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner); had been romantic wrecks who had channelled their desires and frustrations through the elements of grotesque. The modern spinster on the other hand, were projected to be promiscuous free-spirits through their self-autonomy and sexuality, as done with Bridget Jones (*Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding) and Samantha Jones (*Sex and the City* by Candace Bushnell). While given different treatments with the progression of time, spinsters had yet to escape the stereotypical traits inflicted upon them. The continuous appearance of stereotypical themes were found not only in Western narratives but also in its Eastern counterparts, as found within the short stories selected for this research. The similarity from different eras and cultural backgrounds inspires the question of how the individual spinster arrives to her stereotypical identity - as either romantic wrecks or promiscuous free-spirits. Believing in the need of a study that examines spinsters beyond the judgement of her society and culture as the Other, this research seeks to provide an inward investigation of spinsters as free individuals capable of shaping their own identity - reading them from the perspective of the Self. Such would indicate the evaluation of their beliefs and choices, which is best navigated by Jean Paul Sartre's version of The Freedom of Choice. It is applied within the investigation of the characters' relationships with men, as spinsters are commonly recognized as women who are without the association of husbands. The study of her perception in such relationships would reveal how the characters' qualify into spinsterhood, as well as the acquisition of their general stereotypes. To achieve its purpose, this study aims to fulfil two objectives. The first is to identify the cause of the four spinster characters to be unmarried. The fulfilment of this leads towards the second and most impactful objective of this study, which is to explore the characters' individual progression towards acquiring their identity as stereotypical spinsters. Both contain the direct address upon the characters' heterosexual relationships with men, whether romantic or sexual. Textual analysis will be conducted as the characters' related experiences, thoughts and choices are examined under the frames of anguish (whether of the future or past), bad faith and authenticity. Parallel to its intention to

study spinsters from the inward perspective as the Self, this study scrutinizes the characters to reveal the employment of misdirection strategies (omission and emphasis, or ambiguity and vagueness) as well, as the types of denial (denial of facticity or transcendence) that they were experiencing. The use of these components within the framework would describe the spinster's state of bad faith in detail, as it unravels the use of her consciousness to navigate herself against the situation within her spinsterhood. The completion of the analysis reveals the spinster character's freedom in deciding the course of her actions, in contrast to the usual beliefs that her identity is the consequence of unfortunate circumstances and societal governance. The short stories used in this study are *Cik Jamilah* (by Melissa Maureen Rizal) and *Sara and the Wedding* (by Karim Raslan) from Malaysia; as well as *The English Language Teacher's Secret* (by Catherine Lim) and *Heat Wave* (by Nalla Tan) from Singapore.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sastera

HALA TUJU STEREOTAIP WATAK ANDARTU DALAM CERPEN TERPILIH DARI MALAYSIA DAN SINGAPURA

Oleh

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Sepanjang peredaran masa, gambaran watak andartu yang paling diingati dalam karya sastera Bahasa Inggeris telah dibina dengan ciri-ciri yang bercanggah. Representasi watak andartu popular dalam karya klasik seperti Cik Havisham (dalam novel *Great Expectations* oleh Charles Dickens) dan Cik Emily Grierson (dalam cerpen *A Rose for Emily*, hasil nukilan William Faulkner) digambarkan terjejas teruk akibat kisah cinta mereka yang tidak kesampaian, di mana mereka menyalurkan kekecewaan dan keinginan terpendam mereka melalui elemen grotes. Figura andartu terkemuka dalam karya moden seperti Bridget Jones (dalam novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* karya Helen Fielding) dan Samantha Jones (dalam novel *Sex in the City* ciptaan Candace Bushnell) pula diberi gambaran sebagai wanita yang tidak mematuhi norma masyarakat. Hal ini berlaku akibat kebebasan seksual dan penguasaan diri yang diamalkan oleh mereka. Walaupun digambarkan dengan efek perbezaan zaman yang ketara, watak andartu masih belum terpisah dengan unsur-unsur stereotaip yang diterapkan terhadap mereka. Tema dan gambaran stereotaip andartu yang digunakan dalam naratif di barat juga telah dikesan dalam karya dengan latar belakang budaya timur, seperti yang terkandung dalam cerpen-cerpen yang dianalisis di dalam kajian ini. Persamaan umum tersebut telah menarik perhatian kajian ini untuk menyiasat perjalanan watak-watak cerpen itu dalam mengecapi stereotaip yang serupa. Dengan pendapat bahawa watak andartu perlu diasiat dari sudut yang melangkaui tanggapan masyarakat dan budaya terhadapnya, kajian ini berazam untuk menawarkan perspektif yang lebih peribadi dengan paparan watak andartu sebagai individu bebas yang mampu membentuk sendiri identiti dirinya; melalui medium pilihan. Dengan itu, kajian ini bercadang untuk menyiasat perjalanan watak-watak andartu tersebut ke arah pencapaian identiti stereotaip dari perspektif eksistensialisma (*Existentialism*). Perspektif ini dikemudi oleh konsep kebebasan memilih (*freedom of choice*) berdasarkan ide-ide Jean-Paul Sartre berkaitan unsur-unsur kegundahan (*anguish*), kepercayaan palsu (*bad faith*) serta ketulenan (*authenticity*). Selaras dengan perspektif kajian untuk mengkaji watak andartu sebagai Diri (*the Self*), ia menggunakan rangka eksistensialisma Sartre yang menghuraikan proses penghasilan kepercayaan palsu. Ini melibatkan penggunaan strategi mengalih arah (*misdirection strategy*) serta penafian (*denial*). Melalui kaedah analisis tekstual, unsur-unsur ini diterapkan atas hubungan watak-watak wanita

berkenaan dengan lelaki untuk menggupas kronologi pencapaian identiti andartu stereotaip. Dua objektif utama telah digariskan untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut. Objektif pertama adalah untuk menyiasat sebab watak-watak tersebut tidak berkahwin, diikuti dengan objektif kedua iaitu sorotan watak-watak tersebut ke arah pencapaian stereotaip andartu mereka. Dengan tercapainya objektif tersebut, kajian ini membuktikan bahawa watak-watak andartu yang dikaji ternyata memiliki kuasa pilihan dalam pembinaan identiti mereka. Ini bercanggah dengan cadangan kajian sedia ada yang cenderung mengunjurkan bahawa identiti stereotaip andartu merupakan kesan langsung dari nasib buruk atau penglibatan masyarakat. Cerpen-cerpen yang terlibat dalam kajian ini ialah *Cik Jamilah* (karya Melissa Maureen Rizal) dan *Sara and the Wedding* (karya Karim Raslan) dari Malaysia; serta *The English Language Teacher's Secret* (karya Catherine Lim) dan *Heat Wave* (karya Nalla Tan) dari Singapura.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 2 March 2017 to conduct the final examination of Nabilah binti Mohd Nor on her thesis entitled “The Spinsters’ Descent into Stereotype in Selected Malaysian and Singaporean Short Stories” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the intended structure of the research through its background, identified problem, objectives, conceptual framework, methodology, scope and limitations, as well as significance.

1.1 Background of the Study

“Whom to marry, and when will it happen – these two questions define every woman’s existence, regardless of where she was raised or what religion she does or does not practice. She may grow up to love women instead of men, or to decide she simply does not believe in marriage. No matter. These dual contingencies govern her until they’re answered, even if the answers are nobody and never.”

Such is the introductory paragraph written by journalist and cultural critic Kate Bolick in the first chapter of her book *Spinster: Making A Life of One’s Own* (2015); in which this research admiringly borrows to initiate itself. Speaking in the voice of a genuine post-feminist, Bolick (1) addressed the situation of women and marriage in the era of various opportunities for feminism. Compared to their fore-mothers in the first and second waves, today’s daughters live in a world which grants them more sexual equality and freedom. In the present day, gender role expectations and stereotypes are beginning to change; and feminism is made universal. While gender roles are changing, the need for sex and survival of the species remains. To legally satisfy instinctual needs for sex and continuity, a human being is expected to participate in marriage. However, despite today’s modernity, marriage could be considered the last remaining contract which socially requires a heterosexual woman to practice her traditionally submissive gender roles. It is in this context that women become compelled to adhere to the ideals of heterosexuality, which are often forged by societal preferences. To secure her chances of becoming a validated bride and wife, she is expected to comply to a certain code of image and conduct to attract potential husbands. The woman who is not married past the age her community deems appropriate will be termed an old maid - a spinster.

Where did the term come from, and what image has it carried? In her discussion on spinsters, Amy Froide pointed out that the term itself began originally to denote a person who spins thread and clothes, until its decline into negative misconception by the seventeenth century. This was due to the rising number of unmarried women who took up spinning as a way to earn their own income, as they were not financially secured by a husband or family. The trend of being unmarried for both men and women began to achieve prominence at the same time, hence surfaced the spinster stereotype (Froide in Litzenberger and Lyon 25). Froide’s recount of the stereotype stated Richard Allestree as one of the earliest writers to construct a negative and satirical depiction of spinsters in *The Ladies Calling*. Referring them as “superannuated virgins”, Allestree

commented that the “old maid is now thought such a curse as no poetic fury can exceed, looked on as the most calamitous creature in nature”. Later writers went down this trail to further develop the spinster stereotype, as summarized by Froide, to be “characterized as ugly, unattractive, and old”. She also stated the additional assumption for these women to be “isolated, lonely, useless individuals, as opposed to wives and mothers who were kept busy and fulfilled by their families” (Froide in Litzenberger and Lyon 25). Failing to score in the criteria prized within the heterosexual society, the spinster is not able to move on into the economic protection of a husband. Kathryn Kent commented that the absence of such protection would often “doom white women to abject poverty or to the tyrannies and whims of their brothers or fathers”. She also asserted that “women who did not participate in the ‘natural’ feminine functions of wife and mother were socially ostracized and culturally ridiculed” (Kent 24).

What usual portrayals have spinsters been given in literature, then? Matthew Sorrento commented that “hardly trustful if noticed at all, the figure existed in novels and films as a side player, usually quirky if allowed to reveal any character” (Sorrento 37). Trapped between romance and socioeconomic propriety, some of the earliest and most memorable portrayals of the spinster protagonists were eccentric and gothic, as discussed by Maryhelen Harmon upon the representations in Charles Dickens’ novel *Great Expectations* (1861) and William Faulkner’s short story *A Rose for Emily* (1930) (Munson Deats and Tallent Lenker 106-107). Both were romantic tragedies, courted and abandoned by their lovers. Miss Havisham - claimed by Camilla Nelson to be “the archetypal fictional spinster” (*From Grotesques to Frumps - A Field Guide to Spinsters in English Fiction*) - was Dickens’ bitter shut-in who dwells in the dark Satis House, haunting the decaying banquet in the yellowing remains of her bridal garments. There the clock remains pointed at twenty minutes to nine – the moment when the heiress was deserted by her fiancé Arthur Compeyson. She then spent most of her life in aspiration of futile revenge, by rearing her niece Estella to become a cold-hearted beauty who would break the heart of her admirer. Harmon saw this as a “grotesque fairytale”, in which Miss Havisham played the part as “the wicked fairy godmother/evil stepmother/witch” upon Estella and her admirer Pip; Satis House her “enchanted palace” where she lives in “enforced darkness” (Munson Deats and Tallent Lenker 107). To this Harmon added the observation of Bert G. Hornback, who insisted that what Miss Havisham “is defending herself against is change”, which follows the moments after “twenty minutes to nine” (Munson Deats and Tallent Lenker 107). For her, change and time had ceased to exist.

Although different in its nature of retribution, this defense against change could also be found in the story of Miss Emily Grierson, Faulkner’s conservative recluse. The story was told by a narrator representing the townspeople of Jefferson, who recounted the details publicly known about her life after her passing. Miss Emily was known to have several brushes with the town council, in which she sought exclusion from societal legislation through awkward defenses; such as the denial of the deaths of her father and a town official. Her youth was spent “under the watchful eye of her overprotective father”, whose death had brought her to “withdraw from the world and spend her remaining years shut away in the house she inherited” (O’Bryan-Knight 328). She was romantically involved with a Yankee construction foreman named Homer Barron, whom she poisoned after his attempt to discontinue their relationship. It was after Miss Emily’s death that the townspeople discovered Homer’s skeletal remains in a locked room

upstairs her house, with a strand of her own gray hair next to it. Harmon commented that Miss Emily had “rearranged reality to her own purposes, and denied the death of both her father and the tax pardoner Colonel Sartoris; she also refused to accept the smell, her tax bills, a postal address, or the role of spinster for forty years, preferring a dead lover to none” (Munson Deats and Tallent Lenker 111). Her attempt of denial to flee legal obligations and necrophilia indicates Miss Emily’s refusal to move on from the past, as well as her “reluctance to embrace change and progress” (Fargnoli, Golay and Hamblin 243).

In modern day narratives, the spinster portrays a much enlightened identity; “the nineteenth-century harbinger of the liberal feminist ideal of the ‘autonomous woman’ or the radical feminist ideal of the woman who exists outside patriarchy”, as put by Kent, by reading her as a “self-exile from bourgeois reproductive heterosexuality” (24). Naomi Braun Rosenthal pointed out that the “spinster portraiture was accomplished by the efforts of several generations of rebels as well as traditionalists; inscribed and tested through the agency of the mass media; and codified and revised according to audience reaction” (2). Such comments would suggest the spinster’s escape from her classic submission to patriarchy. Walking past the bruised image implied by the Western culture, Bonnie Zimmerman chose to highlight the feminist interpretation of the term spinster as “a woman who chooses her own definition, and is autonomous, and without connections to husband or children” (736). The modern spinster is no longer locked up in her home morbidly mourning her lost love; she moves on by going out and about to establish herself. Compared to unmarried women in earlier centuries, financial insecurity is not the matter that weighs the spinster down today. Rather, the concern that plagues her is directly her own heterosexual fulfillment. To balance herself in this account, the spinster is likely to participate in sexual adventure(s). In this direction, Lauren Rosewarne brought forth that “compulsory heterosexuality, compounded with demographic realities, may result in a single woman deeming an affair to be a solution and as the only way for her to be perceived – and also to perceive herself – as regular and normal” (13). She argued that for women, the expectation of acting on one’s sexuality and couple is essential towards being accepted as “normal, heterosexual, and conventionally [read: *femininely*] attractive” (Rosewarne 13). Rosewarne also added that a spinster’s affair provides her the chance to “actively participate in heterosexuality”, “feel desirable and worthy”, as well as to join in “a life more interesting than what they may be used to” (86). Such issues and practices could be seen in Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones Diary* (1996) and Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City* (1997), both novels with successful screen adaptations.

Helen Fielding’s first *Diary* records the story of single thirty-three-year-old Bridget Jones, who was on a journey to find inner poise and simultaneously, the right man. Bridget, in the words of Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, “rejects the pejorative label ‘spinster’ and its negative connotations by unattractiveness, loneliness and social ineptitude, and redefines her status by coining the term ‘singleton’”. While trying to shed off the stigma that comes with her position as a spinster, she is continuously haunted by her fear and ‘existential angst’ of ‘dying alone and being found three weeks later half-eaten by an Alsatian’ (Fielding in Genz and Brabon 88). Bridget’s mission of constructing a new identity for herself however, was very much focused towards improving her physical image. Genz and Brabon discussed her “incessant calorie counting and weight monitoring at the beginning of her diary entries” as examples of

how the “much empowered and emancipated women” were “neurotic and preoccupied with finding a man and scrutinizing the size of their bodies”, compared to their previous fore-bearers (85). Between the struggle to keep her cigarette, alcohol and food consumption in check; Bridget was attracted to her boss, Daniel Cleaver. Constantly flirting at work, the two became sexually involved. The relationship failed however, as she discovered him to be a womanizer who juggled multiple women for sexual purposes. Although constantly ending up in awkward situations during their escapades, she found deep pleasure and comfort in her relationship with him. Bridget’s version of a ‘proper’ relationship was based on a man’s pursuit of her, hence requiring her to be femininely appealing to impress and attract the pursuer. Thus, her romance with Daniel has rewarded and relieved Bridget from the monotony of her campaign against her insecurities. Flirting and sex had provided Bridget the reassurance that she was attractive, desirable and hence, womanly - exactly the thoughts she needed to improve her self-esteem. Even during the anxious consideration of pregnancy, she was “all nesty and gooey about Daniel, smug about being a real woman — so irrepressibly fecund” (Fielding 64). Despite realizing the minuscule prospect of their relationship to become a solid and healthy partnership, Bridget felt that her affair with Daniel had validated herself as a “real” woman, whose prominent quality of being attractive and biologically productive could not be achieved without the participation of a male partner.

In *Sex and the City*, Bushnell pursued the similar path of focusing on independent women who seek fulfilment in their professional and romantic lives. The story was told from the view of Carrie Bradshaw about the sisterhood with her three best friends – Miranda Hobbes, Charlotte York and Samantha Jones. While all four have differently attractive personalities as individual women, it is Samantha who appeals the most to this research. Aged in her early forties in the beginning of the series, Samantha is the most sexually active and adventurous among the four women. Marian Jordan described her as “the sexual power player of the series”, where she was “bold and aggressive”; “viewing sex as a means of power, pleasure and personal glory (Jordan 106)”. Jordan continues to explain that sex was a “sport” for Samantha, and that she alleges to be “the future for women”; having “evolved past pesky emotions and that old-fashioned need for commitment.” While marriage was never really in her to-do list, Samantha was said to have feared a “real relationship” (Jordan 19). Amy Sohn and Sarah Wildman however, pointed out that after years of having sex, Samantha soon learned that she needed love. Such was based on the scrutiny in which every season, despite her “predilection for fast, emotional-free sex”, Samantha had a lover she cared deeply for - James, Dominic, Maria, Richard and Smith, respectively (Sohn and Wildman 105). For both Bridget and Samantha Jones, sex had been a benchmark of feminine achievement – although different in attitudes. While sex represented feminine validation and normality for Bridget, it was a symbol of power and sovereignty for Samantha. What was apparent in both cases however, was the function of sex for the modern unmarried women to survive their single lives.

Generally comparing both classic and contemporary fiction above, it could be seen that the women of both categories were portrayed to have chosen different methods in dealing with their status as unmarried women. Upon their single status, Miss Havisham and Miss Emily Grierson had generally chose to defend themselves from change; by refusing to move on past the failure of their romances and building new opportunities for heterosexual fulfilment - the feeling satisfaction gained from being a heterosexual

woman. Bridget and Samantha Jones on the other hand, sought progress through the affiliation of sex to neutralize their heterosexual needs as unmarried women.

The summary of the four spinster characters in the earlier discussion resonates to a few nuances drawn by Camilla Nelson in her essay, *From Grotesques to Frumps - A Field Guide to Spinsters in English Fiction*. While conceding that “spinster classifying is not an exact science”, Nelson attempted to categorize the types of spinster characterization throughout the times had brought forth five nuances - The Grotesque, Prattler, Hysteric, Pseudo, and New Spinster (further reviewed in Chapter Two). The archetypal Miss Havisham is the very face of the Grotesque with her witch-like representation, vengeance and ill-intentions towards men, as well as mental and emotional degeneration symbolised by the increasingly threadbare wedding-dress that she wore (*The Conversation*). Miss Emily would reflect the qualities of the Hysteric, as she insisted on a reality that was no longer valid and spent the last years of her life with the corpse of her former lover in her house. Nelson qualifies Bridget Jones as a Pseudo Spinster, “a character that is well past marriageable age but is saved from a ‘fate worse than death’ by a belated proposal of marriage”; although this is fully materialized in a much later sequel (*The Conversation*). Bridget however, qualifies soundly in this category as she participates in heterosexual coupling, even if as a discreet affair. Samantha Jones would fit the likes of the New Spinster, the much contemporary version of the unmarried woman. Citing the views of Rebecca Traister and Kate Bolick, the New Spinster reflects independent women with the idea that “spinsterhood is apparently ‘a state of mind’ in which marriage is a mere technicality” (*The Conversation*). While she enjoys free sex and sometimes finds herself attached to people, Samantha’s values her single status more than the aspiration to marry.

In a closer perspective, this research notices similar nuances within Malaysian and Singaporean short stories. The Grotesque and Hysteric were found in Melissa Maureen Rizal’s *Cik Jamilah* and Catherine Lim’s *The English Language Teacher’s Secret*; while Karim Raslan’s *Sara and the Wedding* and Nalla Tan’s *Heat Wave* featured The Pseudo- and New Spinster. Although spared from the much grotesque portrayals as done upon Miss Havisham and Miss Emily, teachers Cik Jamilah (*Cik Jamilah*) and Miss Ponniah (*The English Language Teacher’s Secret*) were depicted to be broken down by their unsuccessful romances. Both were narrated to have preferred dwelling in the past where they had been happy and loved by a male partner, yet dis-attached from their present life as single women. While vividly clinging on a fabricated or past reality could be considered abnormal and pitiful enough, the dispute against their heterosexual fantasies results to the hints of mental instability within their appearances. Karim Raslan’s attorney Sara shares her resemblance with Bridget Jones, who felt socially prejudiced and unfulfilled due to the awkwardness of her plus-size figure and appearance. Her unlikely participation in non-marital sex however, had compromised her insecurities and introduced her to a new sense of empowerment. Nalla Tan’s lecturer Swee Lean is depicted to have the likeliness of Samantha Jones. Completely comfortable with her single status, Swee Lean has no marital expectations of men nor care of the society’s suspicion of her independence. While not exactly a sport as perceived by Samantha, sex had been portrayed as a tool in her career, if not a seasonal craving which she avoids admitting to.

Despite their cultural differences, it is interesting to find similar nuances in the spinster narratives from both the West and East; especially the appearance of the age-old Grotesque and Hysteric in the modern era of female independence. Jamilah and Sylvie Ponniah, characters brought to light in 2002 and 1987 respectively, were portrayed with the similar essence in Miss Havisham and Miss Emily Grierson. Jamilah, “a short, wiry woman with frantic, panicky eyes, a mouth that never smiled” (Melissa Maureen Rizal 102), is a fraying single woman who resents her singleness, prefers to live in a suspicious portion of the past and shows envy towards her student’s blissful family background. Jamilah’s tale has several similar motifs to Miss Havisham’s: apparel to signify forlornness and decay (Jamilah was known to wear an array of *baju kurungs* with the worst combination of colours), a moment of the past that they refuse to move on from, and the use of a young girl to accentuate their own forlorn lives as matured unmarried women. The most similar however, was the employment of a darkened, witch-like image to represent both spinster characters. Sylvie and Emily were also characters who had resisted change. Their refusal to move on from their past romance was developed to resemble an obsession, which lead to tragic endings with hints of insanity. To preserve her love, Emily was hinted to have poisoned her former lover and kept him in a bridal bed; the trace of her own silver hair by his remains suggesting very close proximities to the deceased. Sylvie defied the expiry of her love by worshipping the love letters from her past, suffering a nervous breakdown as she faced the reality of the present. While Emily’s tale was definitely darker than Sylvie’s, both were hysteric, depicting a state on mental illness within the nurturing of their romantic obsessions. The similarities within the narratives reflect how darkness and insanity continue to be the essence of the spinster character, regardless of the decades of improvement for women.

Nelson’s Pseudo and New Spinsters on the other hand, represented single women who seek progress with their sexuality and simultaneously the challenges that come for single women in postfeminist times. The stories of Pseudo Spinsters Bridget Jones and Sara Fakaruddin have featured singleness as an effect of not being femininely desirable by society. In search for the right man, both characters saw heterosexual coupling as the means of normality and a sense of achievement in life, and despite the efforts of making their awkward single status a bearable one. Mocked by society for failing to nab a husband, Bridget’s sexual relationship with Daniel assured her that she was self-worthy, as did Sara’s sexual fling with her cousin Ramli. Marriage was no longer a pressing issue in the end of the stories; as both Bridget and Sara have enjoyed the pleasure of coupling and self-discovery. Unlike the previous nuances, New Spinsters Samantha Jones and Lim Swee Lean do not consider marriage a priority. Both characters enjoy being independent, and more importantly, enjoy being women - Samantha and Swee Lean were very comfortable with their single and sexually active lifestyles. Despite being socially adept and physically desirable, these women do not aspire towards marriage nor committed relationships. In the case of Samantha and Swee Lean, their confidence in remaining single seem immensely boosted by the sexual adventures outside marriage. While the single lifestyle seem to work out for these women, their narratives exposed an ambitionless cycle. Behind the excitement of sexual endeavours laid a hint of anguish within the characters, where these affairs only brought pleasure to their bodies but do not supply enough meaning to enrich their individuality. Samantha’s long list of affairs has certainly built her reputation as a fearless woman who fully embraces her sexuality, but does not contribute much depth to her individuality aside her gender. The same goes for Swee Lean, whose workplace

affairs reveal the mundaneness of her life as a single career woman without the sexual flings.

The general comparison of these works under the nuances described by Nelson hold two significances within the concerns of the study. The first would be to highlight the employment of similar methods to draw the spinster's grim portraiture, through the use of grotesque elements within her story in two different eras and cultures. The second is to point out the parallel development of the spinster portraiture between the two cultures, with similar issues within the characters in the selected stories. While the Pseudo and New Spinster narratives from the east portray the characters as women with lively heterosexual pursuits, the reused Grotesque and Hysteric recipe within stories show us that these old stereotypes are not easily shed off in spinster narratives. In the context of these selected works from Malaysia and Singapore, it could be seen that spinster portraiture has shown diversity by exhibiting both conventional and conservative representations of single women. The observation of Nelson's nuances also suggests two primary themes upon spinster portraiture, where heterosexual progress is concerned. The typically conventional spinster stereotypes, like the Grotesque and Hysteric, would draw her up as a *romantic wreck* - a person who becomes physically and psychologically unstable due to the failures in their love life. The more modern and individualistic variations, like the Pseudo and New Spinster, would portray her as a *promiscuous free-spirit*, having broken past the heterosexual norms set by society by attempting to thrive on being single. They are also usually sexually active, indulging into pleasures that are considered socially taboo outside marriage.

Running through their stories, the most visible difference between these two generalized spinster categories is how they project their heterosexuality. While romantic wrecks are consumed in reminiscing the highlights of their past love life, promiscuous free-spirits move on towards new romantic and sexual adventures to meet new partners. Perhaps this is related to the most celebrated theme in postmodern feminism - freedom. Seeing the resemblance of the fictional spinsters in two different times and cultures, this research ponders on more specific questions - how did these unmarried characters arrive at the similar stereotype? Are they free to build their own characters? Is freedom significant within the achievement of these stereotypical portrayals? If they were, what sort of choices have they made to define their identity as unmarried women?

1.2 Statement of Problem

In accordance to the ever-progressing era of feminism, studies to understand the faces of spinsters in literature continue to bloom. Spinsters, once hidden between the folds of stories and society, have now increased to be openly considered and featured in academic discussions. However, most of these studies were done based on the western cultural background and powered by general feminist conventions, lacking critical focus upon the spinster's individuality.

Deborah J. Mustard's work could be considered one of the earliest attempts that paved the road towards cataloguing the spinster stereotype (*Spinsters: An Evolving Stereotype Revealed Through Film*). Based on Hollywood films, her discussions principally contributed towards setting three aspects of the spinster stereotype which are visual image, social relegation and psychological profile. Following the trail set by Mustard is Ann Chang's 2015 research, set on unmarried women in selected Irish short stories. Her work focused on the depiction of spinsters as subjects under the dominance of society, as well as their appointment as "societal mothers". As Mustard provided the literature describing how the spinster is familiarly recognized by the people around her, Chang proceeded to trace similar elements of the spinster stereotype in the short stories. Her focus was on society's attitudes towards the spinster, with the additional highlight upon the selected writers' attempt to deviate from convicting their characters upon the stereotype. Despite the variation brought by the latter, the knowledge extracted on the literary spinster remains around the perception of society and culture – whether to condemn or defend her. These researches have viewed spinsters as women outside the ability to shape their own existential circumstances, due to their oddity of not being in matrimony.

For many generations, the spinster's trait of being 'alone' had been responded to by society with mixed feelings, often anxiety and sympathy. Her popular representations in literary works have been opposites in nature, most commonly as romantic wrecks or promiscuous free-spirits. What should be taken into consideration however, is the influence of the spinster's heterosexual experience with men upon the development of her stereotypical character. Here surfaces the lack of academic calculations, pertaining the literary spinster's accounts upon deciding her own identity; even if it does reach a predictable or stereotypical end. The existing research to describe spinsters in fiction had revolved around how the society sees her, which often results to the loss of her individual perspective. While her circumstances have been continuously portrayed and contemplated by others, the spinster's freedom to make her own choices within the age of independence remains shielded from scrutiny. Such calls for a research that studies the spinster not as the Other, but the Self.

To perform an investigation honouring the freedom to construct her own identity as a single woman, it is essential for a research to address a spinster's romantic and sexual relationship with men. With reference to the selected texts for this study, it could be said that the manipulated variable within the spinster portraiture would be heterosexual fulfilment. Such would generally refer to the extent of satisfaction gained by women from their heterosexual relationship with men, whether in a romantic or sexual nature. To find heterosexual fulfilment as an unmarried woman would bring the character to the likes of a free-spirit (as did Bridget Jones and Samantha Jones), while being deprived of it would point her towards being a wreck (like Miss Havisham and Miss Emily). To find the spinster's authentic self as an unmarried woman then, would be to trace her personal journey towards reaching the stereotypical portrayal she is known to be at the end of the story. In order to address the spinster's heterosexual fulfilment, a few key questions are lined out - how much has the spinster progressed as an eligible heterosexual woman? Has she achieved any sense of fulfilment from her heterosexual relationship, and how do these achievements help portray her as a single woman? Such would bring us closer into getting to know the spinster within the faculty she is thought to lack in, as she is commonly identified as a woman without a man to marry or couple

with. It is important to center the investigation upon the spinster's heterosexuality, where a male partner is present for her to have a romantic and/or sexual relationship with - to explore how the spinster treats her heterosexual relationship with men. This would reveal why and how she passes by the chance of being married, as well as how she proceeds to define herself without the association to a husband and children. Such would mean the study of her beliefs and choices, which would be best navigated by the Existentialist notions of Jean Paul Sartre; revolving around his version of The Freedom of Choice.

Scrutinizing the spinster under the Sartrean concepts of anguish, bad faith and authenticity would reveal the nature of her existence as a single woman. Spinsterhood itself could be taken as a background for anguish, where the character exists as a woman who seems bound to the predicted consequences of not being married (to be neurotic or free-spirited) but is yet to experience its entirety. The spinster's personal perspective and choices to define herself within her setting would allow us to see her conundrums, revealing if she remains in bad faith or moving towards authenticity. To apply a Sartrean framework upon the spinster's heterosexual life would reveal not only the process of how she descends into stereotype, but also the extent of control she has upon her own Self. This method of reading the spinster would be different from the usual attempts to document how society views her, by paying specific attention to how she utilizes her free will to project herself as a woman.

Witnessing the repeated employment of societal views to describe the spinster as the Other, it should be considered that her individual perspective of the situation to be explored. Such is what this research aspires to do, based on the selected Malaysian and Singaporean short stories with stereotypical spinster protagonists. This would be made possible by utilizing an inward Existentialist framework derived from the Sartrean reading of anguish, bad faith and authenticity. It believes that whatever ending the story takes her to, the spinster remains to hold her freedom of choice in the matter of defining her own identity.

1.3 Research Objectives

With its aim to explore the spinsters' individual outlook towards entering their stereotype, it would only be fair for this research to firstly understand the circumstances that establish the characters as unmarried women. Such is the target of Research Objective One, which is to identify the cause of the four spinster characters to become or remain unmarried. This would mean to follow the chronology on to how they miss or evade the opportunity that could have promoted them into matrimony. Such also includes the reasoning of their inability or refusal to marry, hence progressing into spinsterhood.

Having been prefaced through the enlightenment of why the characters are not married, the research proceeds to pursue its second and most impactful objective. Research Objective Two seeks to explore the characters' individual progression towards acquiring her identity as a stereotypical spinster. This is achieved through the scrutiny

of the characters' choices, which follows their acquisition of the spinster title. Such scrutiny would involve the inspection on the characters' relationship with men. Often seen as the woman who is 'alone', the current heterosexual spinster's struggle is the compliance to her own heterosexuality; which is normally stabilized by a husband in marriage. A spinster is of course absent of this, hence the further development of her identity would much revolve around her efforts to balance the heterosexual deficits, fulfilled through her relationship with men. This research believes that her heterosexual relationship with men, whether in an active or passive manner, is involved within the spinster's choice in the construction of her identity and simultaneously, stereotype.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

1.4.1 Introduction

In attempt to read spinsters as self-autonomous individuals, this research elects the Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre to govern its headings, mainly borrowing related concepts from one of his most prominent works, *Being and Nothingness* (1943). Generally aiming to learn the spinsters' own perception on their situation as unmarried women, this research sees fit to adapt to the notions which reveals the process of creating existential meaning. With this in mind, it pursues the path of one of the central claims of existentialism – existence precedes essence, in Sartre's point of view. Its main concern however, revolves around the notion of freedom of choice and the conditions within it; particularly bad faith.

1.4.2 Beings: In-itself and For-itself

In his complex ontological discussion, Sartre invented new terminologies to support his ideas. Among them is 'being', a term with an abstract and limitless coverage of representation. Anything and everything could be a 'being', as long as it carries the nature of appearance. In an attempt for specific connotation, any object or entity that could be attached to the 'be' verb and its variations ('are', 'is', 'am') would qualify as a 'being' (Natanson 21). Sartre acknowledges two realms of beings, known as being-in-itself (the *en-soi*) and being-for-itself (the *pour-soi*). In *A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology*, Maurice Natanson generalized the being-in-itself as the respondent to the realistic element in a being, while the being-for-itself to the idealistic.

David Detmer referred for-itself to be the being of consciousness, while in-itself as the being of things, of objects for consciousness of unconscious beings (*Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity* 64). He also adds that the being-for-itself is of a purposive nature, while being-in-itself is fully positive and not purposive. Purposive, in the matter of this discussion, is a state made valid by the possession of consciousness; an entity most crucial in the creation of meaning and choice. A conscious being, as explained by Detmer, "exists for-itself in the sense that it is aware of itself, stands apart from itself, thinks about itself, and has a relationship with itself". A being in-itself opposes such existence, by being "identical with itself, at no distance with itself, having no awareness of, or relation to itself" (Detmer 64). Such is the justification for

the in-itself trait of being ‘fully positive’, coherent with its lack of consciousness and consequently; purpose. The being-for-itself on the other hand, attains its consciousness and purposive status through Negation within itself, resulting to a state of co-existence within a being. The unpurposive state of being-in-itself could be turned to the purposive for-itself, through the process of nihilation. Nihilation is the process of “nothing making”, an introduction of Negation. The conversion from in-itself to for-itself through nihilation works similarly to the concept of negative sculpting, as how a sculptor would remove parts of a full slab of stone to bring forth his sculpture (Detmer 65). From Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, Detmer identifies three strategies of negation which are Interrogation, Destruction and Absence. Although different in their manners of execution, all three strategies involve the consciousness to act by freely choosing a perspective from all possibilities in each situation (Detmer 66-71).



Figure 1: Conversion of Beings from In-Itself to For-Itself.

1.4.3 Anguish

While consciousness is always free, it also has the ability to stare at its own freedom through an act of reflection. This condition is made possible through its nature of being separate, as put by Sartre, by being “what it is not, and not what it is”. Sartre highlights that the reflective consciousness of freedom is called anguish (*angoisse*), and it is “in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom” (Sartre in Detmer 71). In precision, Sartre puts out anguish as the “consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not being” (*Being and Nothingness* 68). Anguish involves the consciousness’ concern of the future in its current being. As sketched by Christine Daigle (60), it is the separation of the being-for-itself as it ‘is’ now and as it will be, between it and its self (as an essence). Due to its nature of being separate, consciousness is free. Such freedom also indicates that it is exposed to numerous possibilities, from which it needs to draw a decision out of. This ever-present freedom and possibility to nihilate the given could be burdensome, causing the being to wish to leave its charge of choice-making to its personality, resolutions, motives or situations; rather than to its consciousness. What it would find however, is that the objects of consciousness would fail to perform its desired function and refers it back to its own freedom (Detmer 71).

Daigle pointed out that Sartre speaks of two types of anguish in his writing. The first (and perhaps most common), “Anguish before the Future”, is experienced when the being-for-itself realizes that it is not bound to any course of action. It wishes to, but it is

not the self in that moment just yet, thus remaining to be in the sphere of freedom (Daigle 60). The second type of anguish is set “before the past”. In this case, the being-for-itself realizes that it is free to choose for its current situation despite having made a decision pertaining the same matter in the past, and that the present choice it makes would differ from or nullify the one it had made before (Daigle 61). Both types of anguish would refer the being-for-itself back to its freedom of choice, including the intricate procedures that the consciousness has to undergo to produce a decision. To escape this considerably “irksome obligation” of choosing and taking responsibility for its choices, the being-for-itself is motivated to flee anguish by denying its freedom (Detmer 75). Such is done through the employment of self-deception, which is the basis of bad faith (*mauvaise foi*).

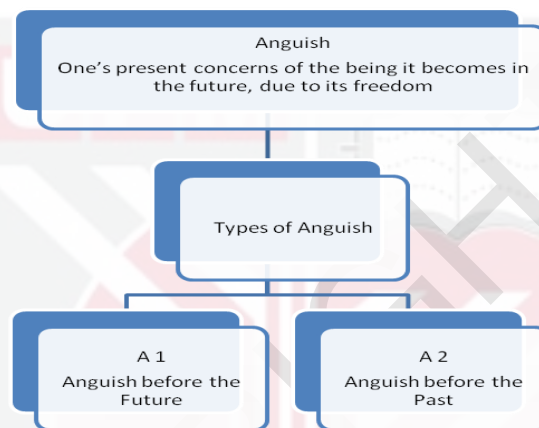


Figure 2: Anguish.

1.4.4 Bad Faith

Bad faith is a phenomenon where a being of consciousness deceives itself regarding its freedom. Joseph Catalano (*A Commentary On Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness* 79) pointed out that to further explicate the definition of bad faith, Sartre compares it to the common process of lying, which is made of three basic steps. The first is to believe something to be true. The second step would be to express the opposite of this belief to others. The third step which secures the success of the lie, is for the others to believe in the statement expressed. While holding similarities with the process of lying, bad faith differs slightly in its fundamentals, as the lying is done to one's own self. Detmer draws out that to be in a position of bad faith, the being “knows the truth (so that its denial constitutes a lie, rather than a mere error) and not know it (so that it is genuinely deceived)” (75). In simpler words, a being who is in bad faith is both the liar and the believer of its own lie.

The trick of securing the success of such lie is through the skilled manipulation of perspective. This would mean that the being would learn to avert its gaze from unpleasant matters in a scrupulous and consistent manner. At the same time, it keeps other matters topmost in its mind (and perhaps exaggerates them), and thereby

convince itself of misleading partial truths (Detmer 77). It could train itself to avoid the consciousness' clarifying gaze upon vaguenesses and comforting falsehoods, so that they remain hidden from the scrutiny which would reveal their true conditions. These maneuvers are made possible by the nihilating powers, self-division, and ambiguous being that Sartre claims characterize one's consciousness (Detmer 78). From these observations, we could identify two misdirection strategies used in bad Faith – "omission and emphasis", as well as "ambiguity and vagueness".

Bad Faith is also made possible through the fact that we are always in a situation, which Sartre describes as an ambiguous synthesis of two components. The first is facticity, which refers to the factual givens of our lives. The second is transcendence, which could simply be put as our way of living to surpass facticity. Some of the steps involved in the process towards transcendence includes focusing solely on certain selected features, performing specific interpretation upon them, and initiating projects with reference to them (Detmer 78). Both components provide a background for the practice of self-deception. The first is through the "denial of transcendence", where one restrains itself by setting a boundary to limit the freedom of its consciousness. This is accomplished through defending its state of facticity. It eliminates the option of setting its consciousness upon facticity, thus rejecting any attempts to go beyond it; especially the process of negation which would cause it to evolve. One who denies transcendence would be most likely to portray itself as someone who is forced to succumb to the situation it is in ("I can't help it"), or to the object of its being ("That's just the way I am") (Detmer 78). The second type of self-deception would be the "denial of facticity", where one refuses to believe in the facts and reality that is part of its existence. Perhaps this would be the more straight-forward of the two types of denial, as it is done by simply denying the action and occurrence one had participated in; normally to escape the effects of its consequences. One who denies facticity defends itself from the reality that is unpleasant to it, by resisting to accept its entire truth. Supporting this resistance is the shift of its conscious gaze to a better account of itself. This account however, could be real and also fabricated.

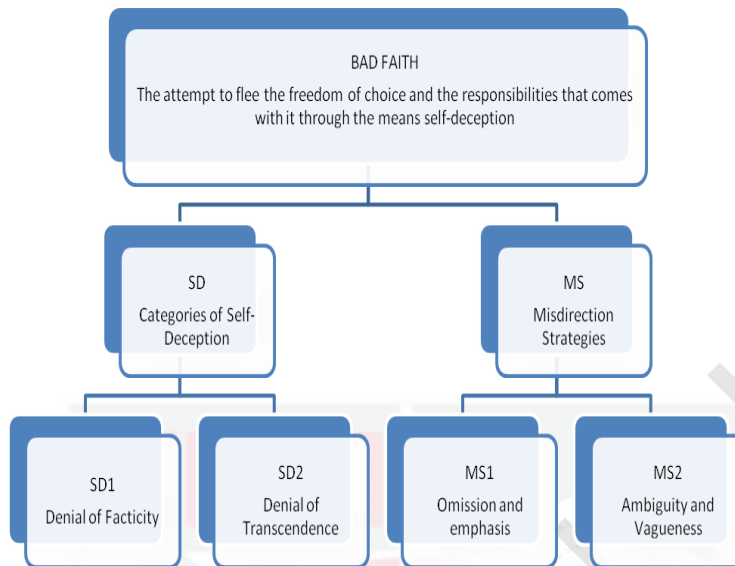


Figure 3: Bad Faith.

1.4.5 Authenticity

While *Being and Nothingness* has intensely focused upon illustrating the concept of bad faith, it had also hinted of a paradox known as authenticity. T. Storm Heter suggests that Sartre's clearest definition of authenticity however, was found in his critical essay *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946):

"If it is agreed that man may be defined as a being having freedom within the limits of a situation, then it is easy to see that the exercise of this freedom may be considered as authentic or inauthentic according to the choices made in the situation. Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate." (Sartre 90 in Heter 77-78)

With reference to his original definition, there are two prominent features of Sartre's authenticity. The first would be the possession of a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, followed by the acceptance of the assumed responsibilities and risks within it. Both elements however, are linked by the temporal aspects within one's existence. From Sartre's definition, Gary Cox (*The Sartre Dictionary* 168) described authenticity as "the positive *affirmation of freedom*" as it requires a person to "take full *responsibility* for all his choices; those he has made and those he will make". Cox pointed out the inclusion of a person's past within the construction of his or her future by choosing and being responsible for such choices. This is the core contrast to the concept of denial that is represented by bad faith, as authenticity generally requires a being to fully accept both his freedom to choose and the consequences that follow his choices.

While Cox accentuates the nature of totality within Sartre's concept of authenticity, Chen Xunwu's discussions imply its dynamic feature. In his book *Being and Authenticity*, Chen drew three principles in attempt of describing Sartrean authenticity:

Principle 1: An authentic self's being has a focus, a central theme, and particular truth in its being and is not an anonymous nobody. Such a self's sentiment of being is the sentiment of self-defining, self-creation, and self-realization" (Chen 37).

Principle 2: When a self identifies itself completely with its "is" or what is presently actualized, it turns itself into a thing and becomes inauthentic" (Chen 53).

Principle 3: An authentic self is and is not its past and present simultaneously; an authentic self is more than its past and its present (Chen 53).

His discussions resulted to the main understanding of authenticity as a phenomenon involving focus and progress. The self must accept the entirety of its being to surpass itself in a situation, in order to transcend. He also pointed out that an authentic self "never completely identifies itself with its past or its present" and that it is "not a thing realized or a work performed" (Chen 53). Such suggests that authenticity is a continuous project for as long as the self exists, where it seeks to define its freedom in each situation.

In account of Sartre's original terms with Chen's highlight of the progressive aspects of his discussions, it could be considered that authenticity generally requires three conditions. The first condition is the possession of a true and lucid consciousness. This refers to the exclusive and active hold of one's consciousness, where the individual is fully aware of her own freedom to choose, and does not entitle its sovereignty to any elements outside her consciousness. The second condition is the total acceptance of circumstances, in which the individual acknowledges the facticity within her situation, even if it is potentially unpleasant. The third condition would be the effort to transcend, which refers to one's attempts to go beyond the situation after compromising and drawing personal meaning out of it. The third condition requires the acquisition of the previous two; for without consciousness and acceptance, the individual continues 'cheating' his or herself. This condition towards authenticity requires choices that initiates change and progress, bringing the person to directly and significantly surpass her situation than to remain within the monotony of its conquest.

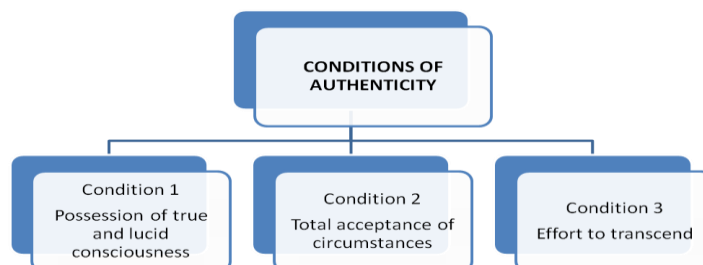


Figure 4: Conditions of Authenticity.

1.5 Research Methodology

Governed by the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, this research intends to observe the journey of the unmarried female protagonists towards entering the spinster stereotype in selected Malaysian and Singaporean short stories. The chosen stories from Malaysia are *Cik Jamilah* by Melissa Maureen Rizal and *Sara and The Wedding* by Karim Raslan; together with Singapore's *The English Language Teacher's Secret* by Catherine Lim and *Heat Wave* by Nalla Tan. Through the method of close reading, the stories are analyzed textually to extract the information needed to answer the previously laid out objective. The discussions will also be aided by other legitimate academic materials including journals, articles and books; where suitable. The four characters in focus are Jamilah (*Cik Jamilah*), Sara Fakaruddin (*Sara and The Wedding*), Sylvie Ponniah (*The English Language Teacher's Secret*), and Lim Swee Lean (*Heat Wave*). The analysis of the stories are divided into two general steps. Being an analysis of choices, each decision would be valued and explicated through Sartre's freedom of choice and the elements within it; as described in the previous section of this chapter (Section 1.4 - Conceptual Framework). This would mean the discussion of the stories would be made through the perspectives related to anguish, bad faith (including the types of denial and misdirection strategies) and authenticity (where significant).

The initial steps of the analysis are aimed towards achieving the target of Research Objective One, which is to identify the cause of the spinster characters to remain unmarried. To fulfill this, the research assigns its first step (Step One) towards tracing the details of the spinsters as heterosexual women in their prime for marital partnership. It seeks to outline the choices they make in the attempts to attract and secure male partners. This is done as an introduction of the characters as single women, before they proceed into spinsterhood. The introduction would contribute towards the next discussion, in which the analysis attempts to describe the causes that disables the characters to be married. Here the research considers the turn of events which hold opposing effects against the characters' chances and efforts towards legitimate coupling, as well as their decisions in facing such events. The fulfilment of this objective is mainly anticipated to be in the discussion of the characters' anguish, although it is not impossible to be found under the discussion of bad faith.

The second and final step in the research analysis (Step Two) is designed to fulfill Research Objective Two, which seeks to investigate the characters' individual progression towards acquiring the identity of a stereotypical spinster. Following up the previous step, it ventures to study the characters as spinsters; considering that they are aging pass the youthful prime of courtship and marriage. In clearer words, Step Two would be to illustrate the characters' current effort to practice their heterosexuality without a partner committed by matrimony. To do this, the research would center its focus on how the characters choose to perceive and pursue their relationships with men, this time as spinsters. The related decisions for analysis would circulate around how they utilize men to balance their heterosexual needs, in both active and passive manners. The fulfilment of this objective is anticipated within the discussion of bad faith, although there are possibilities that it could be found within the discussion of authenticity (where relevant).

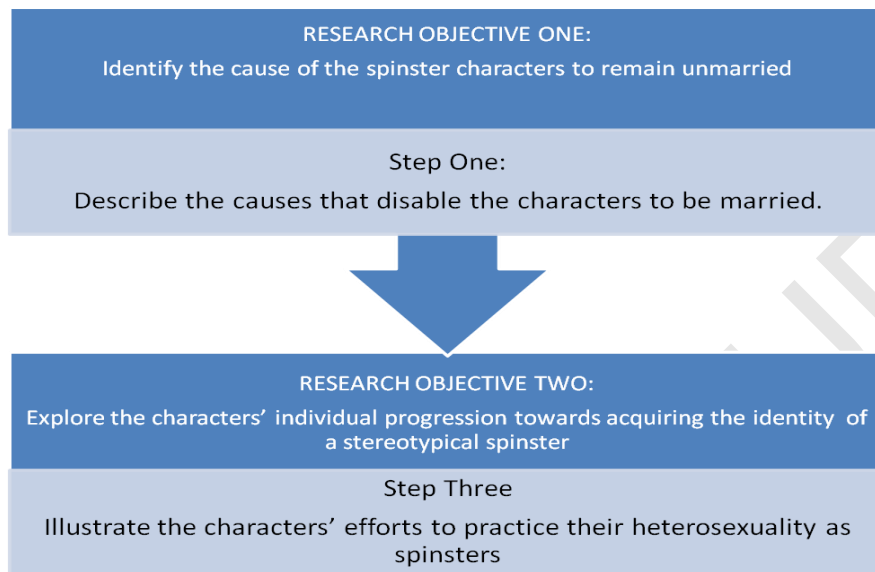


Figure 5: Methodology of Research.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

Pertaining the selected stories, a few restrictions should be clarified to ensure the validity of this study. To keep the analysis balanced and organized, the study shall focus only on the main characters of the four stories which are Cik Jamilah (*Cik Jamilah*), Miss Sylvie Ponniah (*The English Language Teacher's Secret*) Sara Fakaruddin (*Sara and The Wedding*) and Lim Swee Lean (*Heat Wave*). These short stories are selected as their main characters were inflicted with stereotypical spinster themes and traits which were similar to the western stories they were previously referenced to (previously highlighted in Section 1.1 - Research Background). Such indicates the potential for them to be studied as stereotypical spinsters, despite the difference in era and cultural backgrounds. All four stories had included the existence of a male interest for the characters, as well as sufficient narration to allow the study of the spinster characters as individual entities. Despite the existence of supporting characters who are also unmarried women like Miss De Silva (*The English Language Teacher's Secret*) and Kak Tipah (*Sara and the Wedding*), they will not be discussed in depth due to the lack of details on their existence and actions for textual analysis, compared to the main characters.

Regarding the literary framework, this research aims to achieve its objectives through the concepts within freedom of choice, contained in the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre. It chooses to keep its views within the related notions of freedom of choice, which respectively includes the discussions on anguish and bad faith. While each selected short story will undergo the scrutiny of anguish and bad faith, not all of them shall proceed into the discussion of authenticity, due to the variation within their plots.

Although the appearances of terms such as repression and neurosis are possible, they are not meant to represent any dominant application of psychoanalysis within this study. The terms, if apparent, would be put for descriptive purposes only, mainly to depict the consequences of the characters' choices. The same also applies to Faludi's notion of backlash, where it is included for the purpose of highlighting the recurring issues within the waves of feminism, in order to justify the transition of perspectives from feminist to existential (contained in Chapter 2 - Literature Review).

It should also be taken into consideration that this research does not intend to pay elaborate attention on any cultural notions within its analysis, although the characters' society of multiple ethnicities were portrayed to be commonly unsupportive towards a woman's unintended or deliberate single status. Aiming to stay true to its purpose to investigate the achievement of spinster stereotypes through the means of choice, this research establishes the view of its selected subjects as unmarried women who possess free will. While the element of patriarchal culture would still appear in the analysis, the research remains to prioritize the investigation of self-autonomy from the spinster character's perspective. This is supported by its methodology, which is generated by the characters' choices within the experiences related to the construction of their identity as single unmarried women – how to perceive situations, people and even their own selves; as well as what actions to be taken to deal with their surroundings. The characters' choices are agents which represent their essence, hence made the primary source of data to fulfill the objectives of this research.

Next, it should be noted that the study seeks to trace how the characters cope with their heterosexual needs to define themselves as unmarried women. It locks its focus on heterosexuality (in this case, being attracted to men). To remain true to its focus, the study does not include robust discussions pertaining other factors that cause women to not be married to men; such as religious celibacy or homosexuality. It chooses to keep its scope to a background where marital relationship to men is possible and desired, as a first step to read spinsters from an existentialist point of view. It is also done to keep a relevant background to romantic wrecks and promiscuous free-spirits, where their main difference in character lies within the projection of their heterosexuality.

Lastly, it should be kept in mind that there are several terms used to generally describe the recurrent motifs in spinster portraiture. This mainly refers to the terms 'romantic wrecks' and 'promiscuous free-spirits', which are used to provide the spinster characters a general category to describe their similarities. Both terms are used to describe the spinster based on how she is portrayed in the stories, especially upon the impact of how she projects her heterosexuality. This also covers the use of Camilla Nelson's nuances, which is brought in only for the purpose of priming the readers upon the types of spinster portraiture that have existed within fiction throughout time. It is used to familiarize and bring the readers' attention towards the repeated portrayal of spinster characters, especially to relate them to the four spinster characters chosen to be analysed in this study. These terms are coined and borrowed only to describe the existing spinster stereotypes, which would aid the study to explore how the characters move towards becoming stereotypical spinsters from an existentialist point of view.

Further concerning the perimeters of this study, it should be noted that its arguments and findings are applicable only within its significance as an academic research. It does not attempt to project hostility upon any particular groups, individuals, cultures or beliefs beyond its conceptual discussions.

1.7 Significance of The Study

Primarily being a concern of gender, it is natural for spinster characters in literary texts to be viewed under the governance of the feminist theory. Throughout the years, existing studies have mostly attempted to characterize the spinster in general, as well as to track the development of her identity throughout the changing times. This study however, intends to offer an alternative outlook on the spinster by emphasizing on her individual being first, before her gender. Unlike the previous studies which focused on building the spinster stereotype by observing her throughout history, this research offers an insight of how the spinster enters the stereotype, by her own will of choice. Instead of pursuing the conventional paths of describing spinsters from the exterior viewpoint, it intends to study them from an inward and more personal perspective. Such is done by studying their process of choice-making in their journey of identity construction, as their choices reflect their deepest thoughts and emotions which are not made obvious to the public eye.

Here lies the uniqueness of this research, where it offers to illuminate the true nature of the spinsters' being from their own standpoint as the Self, in contrast to the Other that society commonly distinguishes them to be. It is only appropriate then, for this research to be navigated by a conceptual framework which focuses on the detailed process of self-creation within the progress of life, hence making Sartre's existentialist notions the best candidate for the task. The framework with elements of anguish, bad faith and authenticity would thoroughly explicate the characters' portrayal as unmarried women; through unraveling the intricacy involved within one's choices to shape their mode of existence in a selected context.

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