

**Power, Fame, Identity, and Love: The Representation of a Queer
Latin Protagonist in the Novel “The Seven Husbands of Evelyn
Hugo” by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED

As the Fifth Paper

OF

M.A. (English) 4th Semester Exam, 2026

to

C.S.J.M. UNIVERSITY, KANPUR

By

TUSHAR SINGH

(ROLL NO. – 24026000750)

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

PROF. SUMAN SINGH

Department of P.G. Studies & Research in English

Pt. Prithi Nath (PG) College, Kanpur

Year – 2026



Pt. Prithi Nath (PG) College, Kanpur

96/12 MAHATMA GANDHI MARG, KANPUR



Scan details

Scan Time
April 9th, 2026 at 08:50 UTC

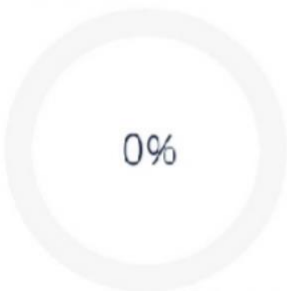
Total Pages
52

Total Words
15434

Analysis Report

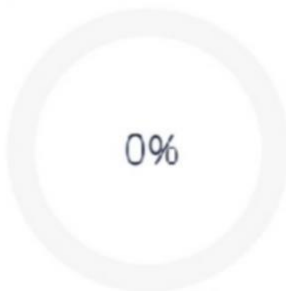
Plagiarism Detection and AI Detection Report
evelyn hugo body - 3.docx

Plagiarism Detection



Plagiarism types	Text coverage	Words
Identical	0%	0
Minor Changes	0%	0
Paraphrased	0%	0
Excluded		
Omitted Words		14

AI Detection



	Text coverage	Words
AI Text	0%	0
Human Text	100%	1
Excluded		
Omitted Words		14

Certificate of Originality

I, _____ hereby certify that this Dissertation/Research
Project/Survey Work/Industrial Training/Internship entitled

Has been carried out by me at the department of _____

(College Name) _____, C.S.J.M. University, Kanpur.

The Dissertation/Project report has been subjected to plagiarism check

by _____ software and the similarity found to be

_____% . The work is submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of

M.Sc./M.A./M.Com. degree.

(Name and signature of the student)

Forwarded

(Name & Signature of Supervisor)

Declaration

I, **Tushar Singh**, student of M.A. 4th Semester, hereby declare that the research project entitled “**Power, Fame, Identity, and Love: The Representation of a Queer Latin Protagonist in the Novel 'The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo' by Taylor Jenkins Reid,**” submitted to **The Department of English, Pt. Prithi Nath (PG) College, Kanpur**, is a record of original work done by me under the supervision of **Prof. Suman Singh**. This work is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of M.A. 4th Semester. The results embodied in this research project have not been submitted to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

Tushar Singh

24026000750

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my guide **Prof. Suman Singh** deeply for her valuable assistance, immense patience, and constructive criticism during the development of my dissertation. This thesis could not have been possible without Prof. Suman Singh's knowledge in this area and her support in exploring the issues of intersectionality in literature.

Thanks to the members of **the faculty of the Department of English at Pt. Prithi Nath (PG) College** for creating such an inspiring atmosphere.

Special mention goes to those people who shared their views on the books of Taylor Jenkins Reid and the character of Evelyn Hugo. They helped me to get a better perspective on "picaresque heroine" and queer Latinx.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents, who have been a constant source of strength throughout this entire research journey.

Tushar Singh

24026000750

Preface

The completion of this dissertation, titled "Power, Fame, Identity, and Love: The Representation of a Queer Latin Protagonist in the Novel "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" by Taylor Jenkins Reid," marks the culmination of an intensive academic journey into the realms of contemporary literature and critical theory. My fascination with this text began with the realization that Evelyn Hugo is not merely a fictional Hollywood icon, but a profound vessel for exploring the historically silenced voices of underrepresented communities. By examining her life through the lenses of Queer Theory and Intersectionality, this research seeks to uncover how power, fame, and identity operate within the restrictive, heteronormative framework of mid-20th-century society.

This project was born out of a desire to understand the complexities of a protagonist who subverts traditional female archetypes. Unlike the morally "perfect" heroines often found in popular fiction, Evelyn Hugo is presented as a realistic, ambitious, and often morally ambiguous figure—a picaresque heroine who reclaims her agency in a world that consistently attempts to commodify her. Her journey from a marginalized Cuban girl in Hell's Kitchen to a cinematic legend provides a critical commentary on ethnic erasure, performative identity, and the high price of living authentically.

The process of writing this dissertation has been both intellectually challenging and deeply rewarding. It required a rigorous engagement with the works of Kimberlé Crenshaw, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault to build a framework capable of handling the multifaceted nature of Evelyn's experience as a queer Latina woman. Through this study, I hope to contribute to the broader academic conversation regarding LGBTQ+ representation and the evolving status of women in the global film industry.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor Prof. Suman Singh for her guidance throughout this process. Their insights into gender marginalization and the illusion of diversity in Hollywood were instrumental in shaping my arguments. This dissertation is more than an academic requirement; it is a tribute to the resilience of those who, like Evelyn, must navigate the crossroads of race, gender, and sexuality to claim their true selves.

Date –

Tushar Singh

24026000750

Table of Contents

Chapter Number	Title	Page Number
	Preface	
Chapter I	Introduction	1-11
Chapter II	From Herrera to Hugo: Analysis of Evelyn Hugo as a Latin Female Queer Character	12-41
Chapter III	Conclusion	42-46
	Bibliography	47-48

Chapter – I

Introduction

In contemporary times, the voices and representation of underrepresented and oppressed communities in literature have been steadily increasing, offering a platform for voices that have been historically silenced. American novelist Taylor Jenkins Reid comes as one of the strong and widely read voices of the 21st century for delving in the themes of representation of gender and sexuality in literature, particularly through her focus on bisexual and sapphic narratives. Her novel "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" showcases an intersection of power, fame, and identity through the struggles of an unapologetic, strong queer Cuban woman in old Hollywood. Through her openness about her own sexuality in TIME and her own connection to the LGBTQ+ community, Taylor Jenkins Reid brings Evelyn's story such depth and reality that people feel a connection to Evelyn as if she was a real-life historical figure. The character of Evelyn deviates from the typical portrayal of female characters, who are perfect, ideal, and moral in the most adverse situations; instead, Evelyn Hugo represents a realistic description of a woman who refuses to submit herself to patriarchy. She chooses herself and her freedom by turning every obstacle in her life into a merit. Evelyn represents a character that is driven by madness of glory, fame, and success, the kind of characterization reserved mostly for male characters. It highlights the hypocrisy of society, how an ambitious male character becomes 'a great power to reckon with' while an ambitious woman becomes 'too much to handle' or 'deviant' in the eyes of society.

The novel follows the journey of an ambitious and career driven girl named Evelyn Elena Herrera. Her hard work, perseverance and wit led her to become an Icon and legendary Oscar-winning actress in Hollywood. Throughout her ascent to fame, she sparked many controversies to stay relevant, married seven times, used her sex appeal to seduce men, and led a very mysterious yet very tumultuous life.

Initially, the narrative starts from the point of view of Monique Grant, a journalist who was struggling with her relationships and career. Out of the blue, she got called by Hollywood superstar and icon Evelyn Hugo, who picked Monique to write her true unfiltered biography. Evelyn tells her story to Monique, how she used to live with her abusive father, and how she fled her house to become an actress, where she first seduces an older director to get some small roles in movies. There she also meets her best friend, Harry Cameron, he helped her throughout her adverse journey. She changed her accent, her name, dyed her hair

blonde, and started dating actors to get big roles to get acceptability in white dominated Hollywood, where being non-white left very narrow scope for a career.

After dating a few actors just for fame and publicity, she fell for Don Adler and married him. However, after some time, Don started being abusive towards Evelyn, but her relationship with Don ended when she met another actress, Celia St. James and fell in love with her. Evelyn explores and found out about her sexuality; she finds that she is bisexual. However, she continued her relationship with Celia in private, as homosexuality was a taboo at that time period. Being homosexual meant losing career, fame, and everything she worked for throughout her life relentlessly.

After divorce from Don Adler, Evelyn made a French movie with director, Max Girard, to revive her career. To avoid any rumors of her dating Celia, she seduces and married Mick Riva. After creating enough controversy, she divorced him. However, Evelyn gets pregnant and has an abortion, and Celia, furious and feeling betrayed, leaves her. Evelyn and Celia did not spoke to each other for five years. Evelyn missed Celia, but she chose her ambition for fame and accolades over her love, and she kept on creating scandals to stay in limelight like marrying her co-star Rex North, then marrying her best friend Harry, who was homosexual. The novel continues with Evelyn and Celia getting back together and then again separating, Evelyn having a baby girl, Celia dying of emphysema, Harry dying in a car accident and killing an innocent man who turns out to be Monique's father. In the end, after sharing her true story with Monique, Evelyn takes charge of her life and ends it in her own terms.

Throughout the narrative, readers feel a certain judgment towards Evelyn Hugo for her self-centered motives, scandalous and unapologetic behavior, but at the same, readers also feel certain empathy and praise for her character, her struggles, resilience, ambition and love life. She did what it took to survive in the industry. In that sense the Evelyn Hugo is picaresque heroine of the novel, coming from rags and slums and surviving through any possible means on her journey to success.

Her characters represent how hard it was for a Latinx woman to get work in Hollywood, and how people of different sexualities had to live as a different being from what they truly were and how things have evolved for the better, how women were just treated as merely ornamental beings and how they had to constantly evolve themselves and reinvent themselves to stay relevant.

Through Evelyn's story, the book explores themes like love, identity, ambition, sacrifice, and the price of fame.

While the public has always been fascinated by the tumultuous life and scandals of Evelyn's marriages, but her true story is one of resilience, survival, self-discovery, struggle against patriarchy and misogyny, and a quest for love and fulfillment that transcends the superficial and materialistic world of Hollywood. Ultimately, Evelyn's journey is about finding her own voice and coming to terms with the secrets she's kept hidden for decade.

The novel is rich in themes about women's rights, LGBTQ+ identity, and the cost of living a life in the public eye. It's also a poignant commentary on the ways we're all shaped by the people and events around us and the lengths we go to in order to protect those we love.

This dissertation conducts an analysis of Evelyn Hugo, a complex and queer Latina character, who exploded into fame and dealt with many issues surrounding her identity, her love life, her sexual orientation, her ambitions, and patriarchal society. The model of intersectionality, dealing with her fame and these struggles with her sexuality, heritage, gender, and identity, will be used throughout this study to investigate how these two characteristics work together as well as provide insight into how this novel adds to the larger discussion around the representation of LGBTQ+ characters in literature.

The larger implication of this study is to examine how this text subverts traditional character archetypes by providing a multi-faceted representation of a central character who has a desire for autonomy to connect with modern conversations on gender, race, and queer representation. This study will critique and evaluate the representation of a queer Latina protagonist through the lens of her Latin American experience and her queer experience in Taylor Jenkins Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

The focus of this research is on how power, wealth, and fame have shaped Evelyn's growth as a character; moving from a maltreated small Cuban girl to an enormous star in Hollywood. It will examine her swagger, ambition, independence, strength, intense self-absorption, and the hardships she has endured due to sexuality, career, love, and acceptance as a bisexual Latina, as well as how this has impacted her decision-making in both her business and private life. The significance of queer relationships will also be evaluated in this study, along with the impact of the emotional connections and social expectations of women of color who date women. Furthermore, this research will provide insight into the treatment and status of women in Hollywood from the 1950s through today.

This dissertation constructs a theoretical framework around the protagonist, Evelyn Hugo, by drawing on multiple critical lenses, with Queer Theory and Intersectionality serving as the predominant frameworks. The foundation of this research will be Intersectionality and the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term, and is a tool used to examine systems

of oppression that are interdependent. This research will be analyzing how both Evelyn's Latinx heritage and her sexuality intersect and create the foundation of Evelyn's experience in Taylor Jenkins Reid's novel.

Queer Theory will be used to analyze the aspects of Evelyn's emotional experience and the expectations from society that shaped her character. This will allow for exploration into the contention of Evelyn's public identity and her private "unfiltered" self. In addition, through the lens of Queer Theory, this research will demonstrate how Evelyn combats the heteronormative constraints placed upon her identity by the mid-20th-century film/tv industry.

Intersectionality is a framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw for analyzing how different aspects of an individual's identity interact and affect their experiences with discrimination and privilege in society, including history, politics, social life, biology, and economics. Characteristics can include sexual orientation as well as gender, race, social status, etc., combining to create challenges to stardom for Evelyn. In order to become a star, she modified her identity and appearance numerous times; she adopted an American-sounding name (from Herrera to Hugo), changed her hair color to blonde, altered her accent to a North American standard, and learned the behaviors of white men. Rather than experiencing sexism and homophobia at separate times, she experienced unique combinations of these forms of discrimination specific to being an individual identified as female and a person of color in a predominantly white industry. In contrast to others who acted in films on the screen, she acted throughout her entire life, concealing her actual self, her identity, her history, her sexual orientation, and her desire to be able to live a "normal" life with her partner Celia.

She also had to constantly think about re-inventing herself and paint herself as attractive and desirable, in order to stay relevant in the male dominated industry, where women were treated as commodity. They consider a woman relevant and useful only when she is young, gullible, pleasing to male gaze and had sex appeal. In this scenario, Evelyn grabs her agency by toying and playing with these social rules even though that made her scandalous in the eyes of society.

Queer theory, developed by Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the late 20th century, is a post-structuralist critical analysis that questions the conventionality and normalcy of existing gender and sexual identities while rejecting heteronormativity and society's present values on gender fluidity, diversity, and gender nonconformity. In her book,

Gender Trouble (1990), Judith Butler argues that gender is a product of social construction and is represented through non-innate, performative acts or actions. She contends that gender identity does not exist prior to the outward performance of gender; rather, gender identity is created or performed through the very outward performance of gender roles (or acts which result from the performance of gender). Taylor Jenkins Reid illustrates gender norms through her work, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*, where the main characters Evelyn, Celia, and Harry perform their socially constructed gender identities (or performative acts) outside of their true desires in order to fulfil society's gender norms.

In 'The History of Sexuality,' (1976-1984), French philosopher Michel Foucault outlines how institutions control and regulate sexuality by creating norms that serve to exclude and marginalize individuals whose sexuality is considered 'non-heterosexual'; and this also illustrates how institutions of power impose silence and invisibility onto queer communities. In her book, 'Epistemology of the Closet' (1990), USA-based feminist scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to the cultural pressures that keep individuals with queer identities hidden away from view. Sedgwick uses the metaphor of the 'closet' to describe the tension produced by being both revelations of identity and veiling one's identity, and the ways in which revelations of one's true identity create stigma and resistance from others. Due to the stigma and cultures of resistance against open identification as queer, Evelyn suppressed her identity and lived within the confines of the 'closet,' as revealing her identity would have ended her long struggle for a solid career and fame.

To set out the parameters of this research. This research aims to look into how the variables of power, fame, identity, and love are not simply abstract concepts, but instead are the forces that shape Evelyn Hugo's development from a marginalized Cuban girl to a worldwide cinematic icon. The definition of these concepts provides a framework for examining the intersections of a queer Latin identity within the restrictive and heteronormative context of mid-20th century Hollywood. An analysis of this protagonist's complex journey is necessary to establish.

The definition of power is the ability to influence others and control their environments, specifically in a patriarchal society within the white male monitored system of Old Hollywood. The sense of power that Evelyn Hugo gains throughout her journey changes from being merely a source of strength to being about agency (ability to control your own narrative in a repressive system) and ultimately providing her with a sense of control.

Initially, Evelyn used her "sex appeal" and "wits" to survive an abusive father, but later, as she tells her true unfiltered biography, she takes charge of her life and uses her power as a source for leaving a legacy for those who come after her.

Fame is the state of being widely accepted or recognized in the world, which, during the 20th century, was achieved by conforming to strict standards of "heteronormative constraints" and following "traditional archetypes". Throughout the paper the analysis of fame will be treated as a double-edged sword for queer people. On one hand fame was/is used by Evelyn to accumulate resources and security while on the other hand produces the "closet", a term used by Eve Sedgwick. In order to keep up with her "mega star Hollywood" status, she must always "reinvent" herself and "dye her hair blonde" to ensure that her image continues to associate her with mainstream society.

Identity in this thesis is examined using the lens of intersectionality, focusing on the tensions between a person's "public persona" and their "private self." Identity is a complex construction and formed by the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Through her journey as a "bisexual Latina," Evelyn has undertaken a "quest for agency." Although her identity is "performative," she adopts new names (i.e., she changes her name, "Herrera to Hugo") and conceals her "queer identity" in order to survive within a system, which views her as a "commodity."

Love is defined as an authentic emotional and romantic bond opposed to the strategic, "scandalous" marriages Evelyn enters into to gain fame and notoriety. The novel juxtaposes love with the ultimate act of sacrifice, and as the only force capable of transcending the "superficial world of Hollywood." While Evelyn marries seven times to acquire power and notoriety, her "quest for love and fulfilment" ultimately resides settling her own heart with Celia St. James. Furthermore, the book explores the "emotional dynamics" of the relationship and how Evelyn ultimately opts for "love life" instead of the "price of fame" at the conclusion of the narrative.

Review of Literature

“Woman Domination: A Study of Taylor Jenkins Reid’s *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*” by Syifa Kartika Aristawidya (2023) is a study on the theme of woman domination through an analysis of Taylor Jenkins Reid’s novel “*The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.” It examines how women play a role in breaking stereotypes and retaining independence in a patriarchal society. Qualitative content analysis and feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir were employed to examine how Evelyn Hugo’s seven marriages were strategic decisions to deal with societal pressures. Evelyn is not portrayed as a victim of patriarchal oppression but rather as an agent who exerts control over her decisions, even in not-so-ideal or unpleasant situations.

“Escaping from Women’s Marginalization in Hollywood Film Industry in T.J. Reid’s *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*” by Putri Izzah Jurianto, Rina Saraswati, and Rizal Octofianto Datau (2023) This aims to examine the marginalization of women in Taylor Jenkins Reid’s **The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo** using Betty Friedan’s concept of feminine mystique. The concept of feminine mystique is applied to examine the marginalization of Evelyn Hugo in three areas of her life: her home life, her work life in Hollywood’s film industry, and her life in the public and media arenas. The defiance of Evelyn Hugo against gender marginalization in these three areas of her life has allowed her to escape women’s marginalization and become a successful female icon in Hollywood’s film industry.

“Evelyn Hugo’s Defiance Against “True Womanhood” and Her Agency in *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*” by Florencia Elanie and Jenny Mochtar (2025) analyses the book, focusing on the way the main character, Evelyn Hugo, deals with the ideals of True Womanhood in the 1950s. During the 1950s, women were expected to play the role of traditional homemakers, and Evelyn, being a young woman, openly defies these ideals, deviating from the path set for women. Thus, Evelyn Hugo is depicted as a feminist icon, making use of her rebellion to establish her independence in a patriarchal society and displaying the progressive attitude of the era.

“Tracing the differences in the representation of ‘Queer’ identity found in few 20th and 21st Century novels” by Onty and Jannatul Ferdose (2021) explore the changing portrayal of “queer” characters in literature from the 20th century to the 21st century, as portrayed in novels like “*Anne of Green Gables*,” “*Nightwood*,” “*Crossing*,” and

"Call Me By Your Name." The portrayal of "queer" characters in these novels is a complete contrast to each other, showing the impact of various movements that fight for the rights of "queer" people.

“Queer Representation in Literature: A Cycle of Digestible Queerness & Violence” by Scott, Rith (2024) explores the link between systems of oppression and the queer identities which are most commonly represented in literature, with reference to the framework of literary and women and gender studies. Moreover, the text also creates a link between the lack of diversity and intersectionality of LGBTQIA+ individuals in literature and the presence of anti-queer violence.

“Hollywood – Patriarchal View and the Illusion of diversity and Inclusion” Ana-Maria Clep (2021) argues that, despite the industry's attempts to convince the world of its progress, the mainstream film industry remains rooted in the idea of conservatism and patriarchy, with the "illusion of diversity and inclusion". She goes on to explain how the stories created in the Hollywood film industry are more than just attempts at providing entertainment; they are, in fact, shaping the way society and ideology think, creating specific forms of racial, gender, and class inequalities. Through her analysis of the major Disney productions and the whitewashing of roles, whereby white actors play the roles of those of other racial backgrounds, she goes on to show how history and stereotypes continue to marginalize minority groups. She ends her argument with the idea that, despite the attempts at political correctness, the foundations are being laid for further forms of exclusionary practice, based on the fundamentally compromised and discriminatory history of the industry.

Chapter – II

From Herrera to Hugo: Analysis of Evelyn Hugo as a Latin Female Queer Character

2.1 Foundations of Identity: From Hell's Kitchen to Hollywood

The character of Evelyn Hugo is very complex, and there are multiple layers to her personality, and these layers make her connection to readers a very bittersweet one; one part of the reader feels judgmental towards her and finds her values and her ways morally ambiguous, but on the other part, they also feel a kind of sympathy and appreciation for her strength and resilience to survive in a white, male-dominated field. This dichotomy of personality makes thousands of women and people of queer communities resonate with her.

Evelyn came from a Cuban immigrant family; her journey started in a small apartment, where she lived with her mother and father. She called that place Hell's Kitchen because of the poor and cruel condition of that place. As illustrated through the life of Evelyn and her upbringing, there is a commentary on the concept of the American Dream. Her family illustrates the harsh reality of an immigrant transitioning into a life of economic hardship. The only beam of hope in Evelyn's life was her mother. "My mother was a saint. I really mean it. She is stunningly beautiful, an incredible singer, and has a heart of gold. For years before she died, she would always tell me that we were going to get out of Hell's Kitchen and go straight to Hollywood" (Reid, 34). But when her mother died, Evelyn was left with a void in her heart, feeling hopeless and helpless. She felt as if she would never be able to leave that place. Her father was no help, and he had the least bit of affection for her daughter. Evelyn knew that if she stayed in Hell's kitchen, her father would marry her off to anyone for financial gains, or he might harm her. She is an embodiment of the vulnerability that daughters face in traditional patriarchal families, where the future of a young girl is not in her own hands but is shaped by her father's hands. Their conditions were so poor, Evelyn couldn't manage studies. "We were so broke that we stole electricity from the apartment above us. If I needed to do homework after dark, I plugged in a lamp in that outlet and sat underneath it with my book." These situations dismantle the idealist notion of "women pursuing studies and then achieving financial and social independence" by exposing how poverty raises a hindrance between aspiration and reality and Evelyn's constant fear of being married off to someone and condemned to move from one hell's kitchen to another highlights the constant oppression, fear, and pressure women endure regarding their freedom. It was

either conforming to societal norms and being locked up in hell's kitchen forever or becoming a deviant in the eyes of society and choosing her freedom and dreams. Evelyn chose the second option; this act of resistance sets her apart from the typical female characters of popular fiction, marking her as a figure who reclaims agency in the face of systemic constraints.

Evelyn first use of sexuality as her agency to power was when a boy named Billy tried to force himself on her, in that moment, fourteen-year-old Evelyn realises that she cannot escape him so she decided to outmanoeuvre him. "So, I had two choices. I could do it for free. Or I could do it for free candy" (Reid, 43). While this situation highlights the sexism and oppression women face on a daily basis, it also shows Evelyn's ability to gain something for herself even in the worst situations and her ability to turn her weakness into power. She felt vulnerable, but she also felt power and control for the very first time. "Here is my value, my power."

Getting things she needed was not enough for Evelyn; she craved a lot more. She wanted to get out of hell's kitchen as soon as possible; she desired absolute freedom, power, money, and fame. She saw Hollywood as her ticket to all of her heart's desire. She strategically seduces Ernie Diaz, a man much older than her; she lied to him about her age. Her plan to make Ernie fall in love with her worked, as he was already infatuated with Evelyn's beauty. Evelyn and Ernie got married, and Evelyn Elena Herrera became Evelyn Diaz. The moment she reached Hollywood; she started going to celebrities' hotspots in the hope of getting discovered by some director or talent manager. She worked in a café as a waitress, waiting tirelessly for someone to discover her, and luckily four months later a producer from a very big studio, Harry Cameron, saw her and decided to give her a chance. However, the roles she got were not enough for her; they were very small side roles that she felt didn't do justice to her potential, but she put all of her efforts into acing those roles, hoping to get some better roles, but it didn't happen, so she decided to take charge and change that.

She knocks at Harry Cameron's door and bluntly asks for the lead role in a major movie. She looks at Harry, a very handsome gentleman, but she found something very unusual and peculiar about him; he was the first man she met who didn't see her with any malintent. "Harry was one of the only men on the lot who didn't stare directly at my chest" (Reid, 47). In this narrative monologue, we see a very harsh reality of society; the image of

men in Evelyn's is one of the ambush predators, who attack their prey in their vulnerable moment, Harry being an exception, and not treating her as a commodity genuinely startles Evelyn. This marks a significant turning point in her perception of men and power. However, it also worried her. "It actually bothered me, as if I'd been doing something wrong to not get his attention. It just shows that if you tell a woman her only skill is to be desirable, she will believe you," highlighting how it was inculcated in her that her sexuality and body are her only true worth.

2.2 The Architecture of Stardom: Ethnic Erasure and Performative Acts

The dialogues between Evelyn and Harry in chapter 6, highlight how Evelyn's Latinx heritage was an obstacle between her and her desired roles.

"Ari Sullivan is never going to approve you for that part"

"I want to know why"

"Your name is Evelyn Diaz"

"So?"

"I can't put in a movie and try to pretend you're not Mexican"

"I'm Cuban"

"For our purpose, same difference"

(highlighting the ignorance, To the white-dominated industry, all Latinx were same grouped into one category)

"You can't play a romantic lead with Gary Dupont"

"Why not? because I'm Mexican?"

"Because the movie with Gary Dupont needs a nice Blond Girl."

Their conversation shows the blatant racism in Hollywood in the era of the 1960s. Harry telling Evelyn that she will never get the role because of her name, "Evelyn Diaz," shows the challenges she faces because of her ethnic background. The statement "nice blonde girl" shows how Hollywood enforced Eurocentric beauty standards. To be a "romantic lead," a woman had to appear non-threatening to the white audience. It perfectly highlights the intersectionality of Evelyn's struggle as a woman and an ethnic minority.

After losing the argument with Harry, Evelyn chose a different route; she seduced Ari Sullivan, the director of the movie, who was more than twice the age of Evelyn. Evelyn got the role of Jo in the movie adaptation of *Little Women*.

For such major role, Evelyn was made to hire a stylist who dyed Evelyn's hair blonde and turned her into a white girl, a nutritionist who made Evelyn lose six pounds by making her a diet of cabbage soup and cigarettes, an elocutionist, who helped Evelyn to get rid of her Spanish accent, and at last a researcher who told Evelyn to change the story of her real past. "From now on, your mother died in an accident, leaving your father to raise you. He worked as a builder in Manhattan, and on weekends during the summer, he'd take you to Coney Island." This transformation of Evelyn indicates the toxicity, exclusiveness, artificiality and superficiality of Hollywood, where people are created like products in laboratory, their stories are fabricated, and also the scope of only white people to make it big in movies. The last nail on board was when Evelyn was asked to change her name, the very name that her mother gave her, but Evelyn couldn't do it so she thought of altering her name slightly, and that's how Evelyn Elena Herrera becomes Evelyn Hugo. This transformation is a clear example of ethnic performativity, where Individuals perform ethnicity by exhibiting certain acts, speech, and clothing, and by following certain scripts, all in an attempt to comply with the expectations of a dominant culture and/or to carve a niche in their own culture.

Following Judith Butler's logic that identity is 'performatively constituted' by repeated expressions, Evelyn's change of name, hair colour, and accent are the 'repeated acts' she uses to perform a white, American identity.

To get ready for a new glamorous career, Harry asks Evelyn to go on dates with multiple young actors of Hollywood to get the attention of the media and press. Evelyn was also asked to divorce Ernie Diaz and end everything with him to portray her as an eligible bachelorette in media. Evelyn divorces Ernie, but seeing Ernie cry made Evelyn feel pity for him. This incident also evokes a sense of hatred in the hearts of readers for Evelyn's mean and opportunistic behaviour, but Evelyn tells her side boldly.

I also needed to leave hell's kitchen. I know what it feels like not to want your father to look at you too closely, lest he decides he hates you and hits you or decides he loves you a little too much. And I know what it feels like to see your future ahead of you – the husband who's really just a new version of your father, surrendering to him in bed when it's the last thing you want to do,

making only biscuits and canned corn for dinner because you don't have money for meat."

She says it was a necessity for her to do what she did; she doesn't feel proud about it. But how can I condemn the fourteen-year-old girl who did whatever she could to get herself out of town? And how can I judge the eighteen-year-old who got herself out of the marriage once it was safe to do so?" However, as compensation, Ernie was given a large sum of money and lived a good life.

2.3 The Commodity of Beauty: The Male Gaze and Domestic Constraints

Evelyn goes on dates with a few rising stars of Hollywood; their interaction with Evelyn highlights how much power and superiority complex these male actors held over their female counterparts. It also highlights the artificiality of Hollywood, where everything, including human relationships, is manufactured for consumerism. Brick Thomas, one of the actors she goes on to date, turns out to be the epitome of male ego and narcissism, who thought of himself as the messiah of Hollywood.

Harry insists Evelyn go on a date with Don Adler, son of a famous celebrity couple. Don turns out to be a charming and young gentleman; he impresses Evelyn with his charm. We see a soft feminine "young girl in love" side of Evelyn for the very first time in the novel. However, in the past, Evelyn had been through a lot of terrible experiences; every man she ever met wanted something from her for himself, so even the smallest courtesy from Don Adler seemed like a big gesture to her. Don also had so much power and connections in Hollywood, which made Don look like an ideal man in the eyes of Evelyn. They both liked each other, and their chemistry was loved by the public too; they made big headlines on their first date.

Evelyn's new movie was a big success; she was introduced as a big rising star, adored by everyone in the studio. On the other hand, her relationship with Don was going great; she was experiencing true love for the very first time in her life. "I found myself brightening up the moment I set eyes on him, always finding reasons to touch him, reasons to bring him up in conversation when he wasn't around." Evelyn also made progress in making new acquaintances, but she was very aware that, like her, everyone and everything in Hollywood is fake and artificial. "Sometimes Ruby and I, and some other girls on the lot, would grab lunch and gossip about various goings-on, but to be honest, I would've thrown every single

one of them in front of a moving train to get a part. And I think they would have done the same to me” (Reid, 660).

Don and Evelyn get married in the grand wedding; their wedding made a buzz in all of the news headlines. A few months passed very pleasantly; it was all Evelyn had ever hoped for. “In the right moment, for him, I’d do anything he wanted.” However, as they began to focus on their career, things began to go south. Don’s last movie was a flop, people find his acting underwhelming, and critics and news headlines bashed him. On the other hand, Evelyn’s stardom rose; she won accolades for her acting, and that’s where the bitterness in their relationship starts. Don started taunting and subtly humiliating Evelyn about every little thing. “I had quickly learned that Don was only kind when he was happy, and he was only happy when he was winning. I had met him on a winning streak and married him as he was ascending” (Reid, 75). He started asking to change her name from Evelyn Hugo to Evelyn Adler, but Evelyn refused, as the name Evelyn Hugo was now an established and well-known name. This act isn't just about tradition; in fact, it highlights toxic masculinity and Don’s attempt to overwrite Evelyn’s individual brand and legacy with his own; he tried the erasure of Evelyn's identity. However, that was just the beginning; he started to mentally pressure her into leaving acting and starting a more domestic life. Evelyn being more adored began to get on Don’s nerves, and Evelyn was stunned to see this side of Don. “We are not equals, love. And I’m sorry if I’ve been so kind that you’ve forgotten that.” Don began to displace the frustration of his failures onto Evelyn. His insecurity and envy from Evelyn’s success indicate the fragile male ego, where a woman getting more fame and recognition is seen as a threat by the toxic masculinity of Don. His patronizing of Evelyn to show his superiority over her highlights his covert narcissism.

Taunting soon turned into verbal and physical abuse. He would beat Evelyn on any occasion when he felt like it; her body held so many bruises and pain. However, every time he’d beat Evelyn, he came back crying and sincerely apologized to Evelyn. The first few times, Evelyn believed him, but later on, she realized that nothing was going to change. “A man hits you once and apologizes, and you think it will never happen again. But then you tell him you’re not sure you ever even want a family, and he hits you once more. You tell yourself it’s understandable what he did.” However, she kept her silence to save her marriage and the fact that she loved her. Don’s act shows the nature of patriarchal society, where men are thought to possess and have absolute authority over their wives, leading them to think they could treat them however they want. It also highlights the predatory nature of men like

Don who think they could gaslight the naïve and gullible women through their fake act of apology.

Harry came to give Evelyn the good news for the shoot of *Little Women*, but he saw bruises on Evelyn's body; he understood what happened. Enraged, he decided to confront Don, but Evelyn stopped him. In his heart Harry also knew about the influence of Don and his family in Hollywood; they could easily destroy the career of a newcomer like Evelyn, so he reluctantly agreed. This highlights the importance of power dynamics in Hollywood, when money, power, and connections were prioritized more than talent.

Evelyn had something more to worry about: a newcomer, Celia St. James, was cast for the role of Beth. Celia had already been a news headline for her acting skill, and now she got the role of Beth, which was the most intense and emotional role in the movie. Evelyn was worried that Celia would take all the spotlight. On their first acquaintance, Evelyn said some mean things to Celia, but Celia's innocence and naiveness made Evelyn instantly regret her choice. Evelyn's insecurity with Celia and the constant feeling to compete with her peers highlights the toxic nature of Hollywood, where people constantly have stress about their looks, body, talent, politics, and reputation to stay relevant.

Don and Evelyn discussed Celia's presence in the movie. Don asked Evelyn if she wanted Celia removed from the movie, as Don or any big male actors held a massive influence over the studio; they had the choice to remove and demand anything they wanted. However, something inside Evelyn stopped her from doing it; she told Don not to worry for her. Evelyn still was the main lead, and Beth was the supporting actress.

Celia and Evelyn started meeting each other regularly as the shooting for the film began. Celia asked Evelyn to go out with her for something to eat. Evelyn knew that it was a trick to get Celia on the news headlines with Evelyn, and that is why Evelyn refused to do so. "I was putting things in place. I wasn't going to be photographed with her unless I wanted to be, unless it was my idea. I certainly wasn't going to be pushed away by somebody less famous than I was" (Reid, 94). Despite her coldness, she gave Celia some harsh and realistic life advice for people who want to succeed in life, especially women. "First, you have to push people's boundaries and not feel bad about it. No one is going to give anything if you don't ask for it. You tried. You were told no. Get over it" (Reid, 95). And the second thing. "When you use people, be good at it." Celia asks Evelyn if she is proud of everything, she does. Evelyn replies to her, saying that she is proud of where it led her and how she transformed

her life by grabbing every opportunity she got. Society has never been kind to women; it has always tried to control and restrict them, and if one doesn't get freedom by playing nice, then they should grab it by playing a little twisted.

The unapologetic nature of Evelyn Hugo attracts Celia, she passes a proposal that if Evelyn will agree to get her some limelight and help her in being a star, Celia in return will help Evelyn be a better actor. After a discourse they both agreed. This agreement marks the beginning of a complex friendship that would eventually shift both of their life trajectories. While the world views Evelyn's life as a series of "scandals" and "self-centred motives," this pact shows that her path to "self-discovery" was often built on these types of practical, mutually beneficial partnerships. It highlights her "determination to take charge of her life" by choosing allies who can help her "reinvent herself" and "stay relevant" in a "white, heterosexual, and patriarchal society."

Just when Evelyn was going through the marital abuse with Don Adler, news headlines began to spread about Don and Evelyn's personal life causing frustration in both of them.

Why would a beautiful couple with gorgeous five-bedroom home not be interested in filling it up with a brood of children?" "All Evelyn talks about is her career, she's out at Schwab's with single girls like Celia St. James! Poor Don at home, yearning for child, while Evelyn's out having the time of her life. It's all Evelyn, Evelyn, Evelyn in that house. And she's left a very unsatisfied husband. (Reid, 99)

This particular section highlights how cruel and inhuman media can be to women, meddling in matters that are very personal. This instance also reeks of misogyny, asserting that a woman's worth is tied to her childbearing ability, and those who don't follow these rules are painted as social deviants. Men are always assumed victims if the woman is successful and free beyond the comfort of patriarchy.

The controversy worried Evelyn because she didn't want to get hated at the time of her biggest movie premiere; she knew that people saw movie stars not as humans, but as ideals, who should always be perfect, especially women. Once they made an image in their mind, they judged actors on screen based on their personal lives. This controversy also made Don worried, as society doesn't take seriously men can't control their wives. "People don't

find it very sympathetic or endearing, a woman who puts herself first. Nor do people respect a man who can't keep his wife in line. So, it didn't look good for Don, either" (Reid, 102).

Evelyn knew that sympathy is one thing that can save both hers and Don's public image. So, she devised a plan to fake her miscarriage to get pity from the public. Though it hurt the Don's ego to get pitied, they knew it was the only way to get out of these controversies. There is a pattern behind every controversy and scandal of Evelyn Hugo; everything she did was a response to what was thrown at her. She never started it; she created scandals only to dodge the controversies. While people blamed her, it was media, industries, and society that perpetrated obstacles to her. Just as she chose "free candy" when Billy tried to assault her, she chose a "fake miscarriage" when Don and the media tried to control her. In both cases, she turned her "weakness into power." Like a masterstroke, Evelyn's plan worked; the next day's news headlines were "Bless Don and Evelyn!" They need it!"

Evelyn and Celia became close, as they shared their weaknesses and their past with each other, and they were very appreciative of each other. "All the more reason for me to admire you the way I do. Everything you have you went out and got for yourself." The conversation between Evelyn and Celia is something very uplifting, real, and empowering, something that comes naturally for Celia, but for Evelyn, she experiences it for the first time since the death of her mother. All she ever saw was a woman who could potentially be a competition, but Celia's true nature changed that for Evelyn. "This section is essential because it marks the shift from Evelyn's 'transactional' view of people to the discovery of authentic love."

Celia asked some questions about Evelyn's and Don's relationship; she asked if she really loves him or if it is just another game of hers. Evelyn thought for a minute and replied, "It's hard to say I do or don't love him or to say I'm with him for one reason over another. I love him, and a lot of time I hate him. And I'm with him because of his name but also because we have fun. We used to have a lot of fun, and now we still do sometimes. It's hard to explain." This statement highlights the bittersweet relation of Evelyn and Don, but in the narrative, we see bitterness is from only Don's part; all Evelyn does is to forgive him and try to save their marriage. She feels as if she deserves it; it's all she is worth, even though her character is very cunning, but her love for Don allows her to be gaslighted by Don, something which is true in all patriarchal societies. This is a telling example of the way in which misogyny operates; it has the power to make even the most "ambitious and career-driven"

woman feel small and alone. In her efforts to be the “perfect wife” for the sake of her “public image,” Evelyn momentarily forgets her own strength.

Don's career revived as critics started writing positively about him. This certainly helped in boosting up the Don's ego and keeping his temper cool. On the other hand, Evelyn was happy because the new *Little Women* was premiering. All the main cast of the film reached the premiere event with their partners: Evelyn with Don, Celia with Robert, and Ruby and Joy with their partners. Evelyn being the lead actress in the movie made the most buzz. Don said in Evelyn's ears, "You're the most beautiful woman here," but Evelyn knew that it was true because “I knew, very acutely, that if he did not believe that, he would not have been with me” (Reid, 116). Indicating that Evelyn was blindly in love with her, but she was aware of her place in Don's life, she knew that for Don she was a trophy wife; he wanted to possess her life as an exotic thing people want to add to their collection of things. Evelyn adds, “Men were never with me for my personality,” showing her inner vulnerability; she felt that her physical attributes were all she was worth, because that was all every man she met ever cared for. “I'm not suggesting that charming girls should take pity on pretty ones. I'm just saying that it's not great being loved for something you didn't do.” Evelyn is not saying being pretty is a con; in fact, she believes that her physical beauty is the driving factor of her success, but being adored only for it feels a little vain because it's something you are just born with. This shows her longing for an identity that is beyond the male gaze. In a "patriarchal society" in which women are appreciated only when they are "young, gullible, and pleasing," Evelyn finds it difficult to establish a sense of self-worth that is not dependent on her use value as a "product" of the industry.

At the movie premiere, everyone saw the movie. The minute Celia's act came, everyone, including Evelyn, knew that Celia was taking the Oscar, which bothered Ruby, Don, and others, but Evelyn was happy for her friend's success. Evelyn's non-bothering avatar bothered Ruby as well as Don, but Evelyn didn't care.

2.4 Negotiating the Closet: Strategic Marriages and Queer Resistance

When the film ended, Ruby confronted Evelyn, telling her to do something to stop Celia, but Evelyn did not pay much attention to Ruby, which made Ruby angry. In retaliation, Ruby told Evelyn that her friend Celia is homosexual. "She's a lesbian, Evelyn," using

homophobic rhetoric as a weapon of social sabotage. Ruby also revealed Don's infidelity to Evelyn: "You should probably get a better handle on your husband." This was all so much to take for Evelyn, the husband she loved, for she had suffered months of mental and physical abuse and had betrayed her, but surprisingly Evelyn was more worried about Celia and ran to her; she confronted Celia on her sexuality, and in the act of confrontation, Evelyn kissed her. This was something even Evelyn couldn't understand. She was always taught that boys are attracted to girls and girls are attracted to boys, so it was hard for her to grapple with her feelings. However, this change in her emotional priority order suggests that her "quest for love and fulfilment" was already in progress to move away from her "heteronormative constraints" and towards something that was more authentic and realistic.

Evelyn also confronted Don by calling him out for cheating, and like always, Don started apologizing and asking for a second chance, but Evelyn moved out from the party and went to Harry's home to stay for a night. Harry was not surprised by the behaviour of the Don, but he and Evelyn both knew that there would be dire consequences of confronting Don. However, Evelyn decided that she would divorce Don entirely, showing boldness, resilience, and fierceness. The next morning when Evelyn reached her house, she found out that Don was not there; instead, Celia was there waiting for her. Evelyn instantly realized her marriage was over, but that decision was taken before she could say anything. "I knew that moment that our marriage was over and that decision—the one I thought was mine to make—had been made for me."

The narrative shift into present day, where Monique was interviewing her for her biography. Monique asked the question that everyone wanted to know: "Evelyn, who was the love of your life?" Evelyn answered Celia St. James, "I feel like I spent my entire life loving her" (Reid, 123). And this was the first time Evelyn confessed this to anyone other than Harry; it felt so relieving to her to finally tell her truth without any shame. It felt like a victory to her after living decades of life living in darkness and fear.

Monique reconfirms, "You're ready to come out as a gay woman in your biography?" which bothered Evelyn; she told her, "Haven't you been listening to a single thing I've told you? I loved Celia, but I also, before her, loved Don. I'm bisexual; don't ignore half of me so you can fit in a box." With this statement, she called out the ignorance of the entire heteronormative culture that puts people into labels, and people who do not fit into those labels have to live a life feeling isolated, different, and ashamed. Monique tried to put

Evelyn's sexuality into a box. In a heteronormative society, things are either black or white; they try to label people as either straight or gay. They ignore the other spectrums, like Monique ignored the other half of Evelyn, who once loved Don Adler. Evelyn calls her out for the bisexual erasure.

The narrative shifted again to the story of Evelyn and Celia. Amidst the chaos and betrayal of Don, Evelyn lived with Celia and found happiness in Celia. They tried figuring out about their sexuality and likings. To Evelyn, it was awkward because she was implicitly taught by the society to be attracted to and love the opposite sex, but now she felt love and sexual desire for a female, the same sex. This marks Evelyn's beginning to the resistance of the heterosexual matrix and breaking way from the performative nature of the gender. The stereotypes and prejudices against queer people made Evelyn and Celia feel like they were misfits; they tried to seek each other's validation just to believe that they were normal.

The next day Harry came with some news and Evelyn's divorce papers: "Don had filed the divorce on the grounds of abandonment." In order to keep Evelyn quiet about his infidelity and dark deeds, Don had offered Evelyn a large sum of money and a house. Evelyn felt happy about the deal, but she was clever enough to know that there was a catch; after leaving Evelyn, Don would never want her to succeed in her career, so he made sure the studio that controlled Evelyn's career dropped her and put her deliberately in the movies that were doomed to be flops. This is a classic case of masculine ego and narcissism, where "if Don doesn't want you, he doesn't want anyone to have you" (Reid, 136). Evelyn was replaced in every movie she signed; she was removed from getting nominations from award shows, her career went in the trenches, she was boycotted by the whole movie industry, and all this just to please and satisfy a male star's ego. This shows the truth and bitter reality of Hollywood, where men were allowed to have absolute power; they could make careers of people as long as they complied with desires, and once they got tired, they could destroy their careers and leave them on their own.

The injustices perpetrated on Evelyn signify how women are vilified in society and how they get punished for the crimes that men do. In this case, it was Don who abused and cheated Evelyn, but the world punished Evelyn by taking her opportunities and sabotaging her career. They vilified her and presumed about her without knowing her side. This illustrates how patriarchy influences and punishes ambitious women in the society.

Evelyn, resilient as ever, consoled herself that she could revive her career once again, though this time she was worried because the industry and the media sided with Don Adler; news headlines declared Evelyn's career dead and painted her as the antagonist. The next day's headline was that "we've heard rumblings that Don's star is set to rise even higher, and Evelyn was getting jealous and catty" (Reid, 139).

For the time being, Evelyn found solace in Celia; they both confessed their emotions to each other. However, they limited their interaction with each other in public, fearing that people would find out about them. Media took this gesture as jealousy of Evelyn, saying, "Evelyn can't handle the fact that Celia received the most promising female personality award. Looks like Evelyn's green with envy." But the love of Celia and Evelyn was unaffected by the absurd comments of people. Celia won an Academy Award for her role in *Little Women*; Evelyn's heart was rushed with joy as if her own dream of getting an Oscar was fulfilled. This shows the unconditional love Evelyn had for Celia; it was beyond any materialistic motives, giving the reader a sight at Evelyn's different side, a side that was caring and capable of unconditional love.

Evelyn's career was dead and media was against her; she stayed at home watching television, spending time with Celia, and devising a plan for her revival. And she thought of a brilliant plan. Hollywood had boycotted her, but she could still make a buzz in the European film industry, which was highly regarded in America as well. She decided she would go to France and look for work there. She came across a French director, Max Girard. Max was captivated by the looks of Evelyn. He offered her a role, Evelyn, in his upcoming movie, *Evelyn*. Knowing how to play her cards, she showed little interest and nonchalantly said to consider him if she'd like the script, though she was in dire need of work, but she certainly knew how power play works. Eventually she agrees to work for him; the movie was about a charming girl caught in a love triangle, and the movie required nudity. Evelyn thought about it; she knew that it was the perfect thing to do if she wanted to make a comeback in Hollywood, so she agreed. She even made changes in her scenes, saying that she knows what the audience wants, and the movie turned out to be a huge hit.

This instance of the novel again shows the hypocrisy of the society, how on one side it criticizes Evelyn on her morality and on the other hand it forces women to resort to letting their bodies be commodified in order to get success. Evelyn doesn't feel remorse for what she does because she knows the hypocrisy of society; she knows everything she does is what

society has led her to do. However, she, resilient as ever, makes a comeback, turning the sticks and stones thrown at her into shelter.

News headlines that followed after Evelyn's success were, "Recently divorced pop star Mick Riva gave an interview regarding Evelyn's role in her new French movie, 'I've seen Boute-en-Train' three times now. Evelyn decided to go to Mick's concert with Celia and Harry, not for fame, just to enjoy time with Celia. A woman saw Evelyn holding Celia's hand; Evelyn left Celia's hand instantly, fearing that people would know their truth. Celia and Harry tried to calm her down, but she was scared. To divert people's attention from them, she started jumping and screaming for Mick Riva like a teenager, and Mick Riva gladly noticed her. However, what Evelyn feared had happened; a new article the next day questioned her and Celia's sexualities. "Insiders are saying the two are quite a pair of thespians" (Reid, 167).

To divert people's attention from this news, Evelyn knew she had to do something big and scandalous; she told Celia that she was going to date Mick Riva for some time. Celia was taken aback by the statement; she was totally against the idea. They fought and argued. Evelyn explained the consequences of being caught as homosexuals: "We will lose our jobs, we'll lose our homes, we'll lose our friends, and police will come for us." She made Celia understand that even if they weren't wrong, society would treat them like deviants, their careers would be over, and they'd lose everything for which they worked only because they were not a part of heteronormative culture, and not to forget, homosexuality was a serious crime in the 1960s that could lead to severe punishments and persecutions.

Evelyn strategically seduced and attracted Mick Riva; she did it so nonchalantly that Mick thought he was the one in control and Evelyn was foolishly in love with him. As per the plan, she made him go to Las Vegas to marry him. She made him feel special; for a moment she thought that she was using him unkindly for her benefit, but she knew that Mick Riva was the kind of man who just wanted to go to bed with her, and once he did that, he would divorce her, which was true. Mick made all efforts just to get Evelyn, and once he was done using her, he divorced her the next day. "It doesn't matter how gorgeous a woman is; to a man like Mick Riva, she's always less attractive after he's had sex with her." But that was the part of Evelyn's plan. Everything worked out just as Evelyn had imagined it. Next day's headlines were "Riva and Hugo lose their minds." "Poor Evelyn's had such a hard time finding love after Don left her—it's no wonder she would throw herself into the arms of the first handsome man to come along" (Reid, 183).

The next few months were quiet and peaceful; Evelyn had fooled the media by sacrificing her reputation. She lived with Celia and prepared for her upcoming movie, *Anna Karenina*. But then Evelyn realized she was pregnant with Mick Riva's child. She didn't want to lie to Celia, so she told her about her pregnancy. Celia was broken with the revelation, she knew about Evelyn dating Mick, but she never thought that Evelyn would sleep with him, Celia felt cheated. Celia and Evelyn fought and argued. Evelyn tried to explain why she did what she did to Celia: "I did it for you." But Celia packed her bags and moved out of the house, saying maybe we are not meant to be together, calling Evelyn a coward and a whore. Evelyn tried her best to control her, but at last she lost her temper and told her that everything she did was to protect Celia and to build a life with her. She could've loved a man and started a family, but Celia was incapable of loving a man. Evelyn sacrificed her image and her career for Celia, but she was blind to not see it. At last Evelyn let Celia go.

Celia and Evelyn didn't see each other for years; Evelyn yearned to see glances of Celia. She read magazines and asked Harry about her new life. However, in her heart she knew that Celia would come back in her life, but for the time being she had to focus on her career.

For her new film, Evelyn was playing *Anna Karenina*, marking her most anticipated comeback after the divorce with Don Adler and two constant flops. This was also going to be the first movie of Harry Cameron outside of his previous studio, and the actor Rex North, who was playing Count Vronsky, needed the film to prove himself as a serious actor; a lot was at stake, so they needed to do something big to get people to watch the movie. Evelyn and Rex decided to enter into a fake marriage to create anticipation in the public for their upcoming movie. Their marriage was purely transactional; however, Rex tried to charm Evelyn like he did with many naïve actresses before, but Evelyn resisted his efforts and humbled him. She knew actors like Rex who think of women as their toys; they play with them and discard them. Evelyn's refusal of his advances represents her power and resilience.

A scene where Evelyn's new house helper Luisa, who was from El Salvador, talks to her mother in Spanish made Evelyn miss her Latin roots. On talking with Luisa in Spanish, Luisa said to Evelyn, "You don't look Cuban." Luisa's remark is significant as it reveals the tragedy of Evelyn's success: In order to conform to the Eurocentric ideals of beauty that Hollywood demanded, Evelyn had to become unrecognizable to her own people. She understands that she has become famous at the expense of her "heritage, culture, and

language." Luisa's remark reveals one of the key tenets of intersectionality: a woman of colour living in a "white-dominated industry" is forced to choose between her "authentic self" and her "professional survival." By dyeing her hair blonde and trying to eliminate her accent, Evelyn didn't merely act on the screen; she acted out a new ethnicity, creating a deep "void in her heart" and a sense of "hopelessness" about her true origins.

Evelyn and Rex's plan worked; the movie was a big success at theatres, and both Rex and Evelyn were nominated for Oscars for their roles. However, in the midst of all the revelry, Evelyn heard the news of Celia getting married to John Braverman; she knew that it had to be a publicity stunt, but it still worried her.

Rex and Evelyn both lost the Academy Award, but they kind of expected it; there is a certain prejudice in Academy Awards; glamorous and popular actresses such as Evelyn are often seen as just ornamental pieces, which serve only as eye candy for the male gaze. Their talents are often looked over and ignored. Meanwhile actresses like Celia, who do modest, socially conformist, or serious types of movies, which are seen by the academy as less threatening, are seen as worthy of accolades. This reveals the dichotomy of the hypocritical society where, on one side, Evelyn is criticized for her bold and glamorous presence; on the other hand, the more sensual role she played in the movie, the more it became a commercial success. Towards the end of *Anna Karenina*, Evelyn had become the highest-paid actress of Hollywood. One thing that worried actresses like Evelyn, who are categorized as "the glam actress," was that physical beauty is ephemeral; once they'd hit forty, they'd stop getting roles. "Celia would keep getting work because people were hiring her for her talent. I wasn't so sure they would continue hiring her for talent. I wasn't so sure they would continue hiring me once the wrinkle set in" (Reid, 240).

Following the success of *Anna Karenina*, Evelyn and Rex got a contract doing three films together, for which they agreed to continue their fake marriage for a longer period. Evelyn began to admire Rex North platonically, as he turned out to be a man of his word and respected the boundaries set by Evelyn. "I told him no, and he walked out my door. Not every man would do that. Not every man did" (Reid, 209). While the statement she makes is for admiring Rex North, it reflects the condition of society where consent and boundaries set by women are violated. It exposes the systemic misogyny women endured. For Evelyn, a man simply accepting "no" is so unusual that it becomes a defining reason for her to admire him.

During the shoot of their last movie together, Rex confessed to Evelyn that he has fallen in love with an actress and wants to marry her. While Evelyn congratulates him, she suggests him, to wait till their last movie release, and then they'll divorce and to make it look like they fell out of love and started seeing other people. For herself, Evelyn chose Harry because "I don't want to get to know someone else; I'm sick of trying to pretend I'm happy." "At least with you, I'll be pretending to love someone I really do love" (Reid, 215). This situation underlines the contrast between the situations of Rex North and Evelyn Hugo, where Rex could move on and start a family after all is done, whereas Evelyn had to start the game of pretension all over, only because the love of Rex comes under the heterosexual matrix, and Evelyn's love comes outside of the heterosexual matrix, and that difference legitimizes and illegitimizes their choices.

Celia and Evelyn met each other in Oscars; they both lost their nominations. They talked about their communication gaps and admitted their mistakes, patching up their relationship once again. Harry and Evelyn married in a grand wedding. In the eyes of the world, they both were a perfect couple, but in reality, Harry lived with John, and Evelyn lived with Celia. They all went together as pairs of heterosexual couples; there were all sorts of rumours about them. Some called them "America's favourite double daters," but some called them "swingers." Even though it was considered morally wrong, it was far more acceptable than homosexuality. Evelyn calls out society's hypocrisy on it: "People were eager to believe we were swapping spouses but would have been scandalized to know we were monogamous and queer" (Reid, 234).

During the early 1970s, the queer rights movement rose, and queer people came out and protested against the prevailing norms and the prosecution of queers. The movement lit a ray of hope inside Evelyn and others. For the first time in their lives, they felt inclusive; they felt they were not alone and people like them existed. Evelyn and Harry decided they will support the cause, if not on the front foot, then on the back foot, by providing financial aid to them.

"To Evelyn, who has lit up every goddamn room she ever walked into. And who, day after day, makes us feel like we're living in a dream." The line said by Celia highlights the independent and free personality of Evelyn, earning and spending money on herself and her family, traditionally something that only the patriarch of the family does; through this act, Evelyn challenges the misogyny and the notion of "men as breadwinners of the family."

After a lot of discussion and thoughts, Evelyn and Harry had their baby with the permission of Celia, though the thought of Evelyn and Harry together breaks Celia. Even though she knew Harry was homosexual, Celia agreed for the sake of Evelyn's happiness. After having Connor, Evelyn got busy taking care of her, pausing her career, but then Celia told her about the new Max Girard movie, saying that she should do it. Celia hated Max, but she knew that this was a rare chance for Evelyn to prove that she is still the woman she was before giving birth to a child, because after a certain age, the film industry offers women only the roles of mothers and old women, while the actors who were once their opposite leads stay as relevant and 'on demand' as they were before.

Evelyn liked the script of the movie, but the lead opposite to her was Don Adler. After a lot of thought, she said yes to the film. There was a time when Evelyn used to be scared of Don, but the time has changed; Evelyn is now more relevant and influential than Don. In their meeting, Don apologized to Evelyn for his past behaviour and assured her that he was a changed man. She did not accept his apology but chose to stay cordial to him.

As the shoot of the new film began, Evelyn became distant with her family, though she called and wrote to them as much as possible. During the last months of the shoot, Max explained to Evelyn that the movie needed intense and graphic and sexual scenes. Evelyn liked the idea of these scenes because those scenes portray female power and agency; these weren't the commercial and ornamental sex scenes she did before. "The idea that I'd be shown to enjoy my body, to desire the male form just as strongly as I was desired, to show a woman putting her own physical pleasures at the forefront...it felt daring." She wanted to do the role, but she knew the idea of her having intimate scenes with her ex-husband would not sit right with Celia. However, with a guilty conscience, Evelyn agrees to do the scenes without discussing it with Celia. But when Celia got to know about Evelyn's doings, she broke down. Evelyn tried to make things right by begging and pleading with her, but Celia had made up her mind, even though she knew that those scenes were just an act, but she felt that she was not strong enough to see Evelyn with someone else. "I feel like I'm failing you. But I can't do it. I can't. I know myself well, thinking of you with him. I want to be stronger for you, I do." Celia divorced John.

The movie was a hit, but just as Evelyn expected, Don won an Oscar for his role, and the only thing she got was moral scrutiny and criticism. "It was too scandalous, too explicit. It got people excited; they had to blame someone, and they blamed me." It was common for

men to play these sorts of roles, but when Evelyn played it, society called her a 'tramp.' She called out the hypocrisy of the society: "They were going to watch it alone in a dark theatre and then chastise me in public." And this was true because even after the harsh criticism, she got more roles and more money as the demand for Evelyn Hugo rose.

Evelyn was at the peak of her career, but somehow it all felt like nothing to her without Celia. In her heart she blamed herself for being too ambitious. "I lost the woman I loved because I cared about being famous as much as I cared about her. Celia may have left me in a huff, but it was a death by a thousand cuts" (Reid, 270).

Tragedy struck as John died of a heart attack; Harry broke down as if joy had escaped his soul. During his funeral Celia came, but Connor did not recognize her, and that was the moment when Evelyn realized that "her family had truly disintegrated." To keep Harry distracted from grief, Evelyn kept pushing him to work in the movies with her.

On the set of 'All for Us,' Evelyn grew closer to Max Girard. When the movie came out, Harry, Evelyn, and Max, all three, got their first Oscar. On her winning speech Evelyn thanked Celia discreetly without saying her name, but she addressed her with the pronoun 'she'; this was the farthest Evelyn had ever gone to express her love for Celia in public. A day after Max confessed his love for Evelyn, proposing marriage. After a lot of thought Evelyn accepted his proposal.

After their wedding, Max still addressed Evelyn with her full name 'Evelyn Hugo', collected every magazine that talked about their wedding, boasting over the fact that he has now married the most famous and beautiful woman in the world. It took Evelyn months to realise that Max was infatuated over the girl he saw during the shoot of *Boute-en-train*, like everybody else, and he was still in love with her, not the real Evelyn Hugo. "It took me about four months to realise that Max had no intention of even trying to love me, that he was only capable of loving the idea of me" (Reid, 298). From society's eye, Evelyn had many marriages and relationships but it was only the second time Evelyn really tried to marry someone believing she could be loved, she craved for intimacy but this time too she was just a trophy wife for her husband, Max was just happy because what everyone in the world wanted, he had possessed. Evelyn was aware of the situation and felt heartbroken but she did not bother to confront or file for divorce, probably because she was tired, tired of another scandal, pretension and another attempt to find love. All of her past experiences show that no matter how beautiful and pretty a woman is, an ideal love is not promised. After wedding,

Evelyn Hugo was just another woman for him, his initial adoration and admiration for her changed, he even admitted cheating on her. When he found out about Evelyn and Celia's affair, he insults her with homophobic slurs and threatened to out her, older version Evelyn might have got frightened but the new Evelyn didn't care and left him on his own.

After their wedding, Max still addressed Evelyn with her full name, 'Evelyn Hugo,' and collected every magazine that talked about their wedding, boasting over the fact that he has now married the most famous and beautiful woman in the world. It took Evelyn months to realize that Max was infatuated with the girl he saw during the shoot of *Boute-en-train*, like everybody else, and he was still in love with her, not the real Evelyn Hugo. "It took me about four months to realize that Max had no intention of even trying to love me, that he was only capable of loving the idea of me" (Reid, 298). In society's eyes, Evelyn had many marriages and relationships, but it was only the second time Evelyn really tried to marry someone believing she could be loved; she craved intimacy, but this time too she was just a trophy wife for her husband. Max was just happy because what everyone in the world wanted, he possessed. Evelyn was aware of the situation and felt heartbroken, but she did not bother to confront or file for divorce, probably because she was tired—tired of another scandal, pretension, and another attempt to find love. All of her past experiences show that no matter how beautiful and pretty a woman is, an ideal love is not promised. After the wedding, Evelyn Hugo was just another woman for him; his initial adoration and admiration for her changed, and he even admitted to cheating on her. When he found out about Evelyn and Celia's affair, he insulted her with homophobic slurs and threatened to out her; the older version Evelyn might have gotten frightened, but the new Evelyn didn't care and left him on his own.

As Evelyn was growing older, her willingness to hide and pretend was fading; the roles she was being offered were not good and not exciting enough for her, but she was glad she outlasted her peers. When Celia won her second Oscar, Evelyn sent her letter to congratulate her, but this time not as Edward but as Evelyn. This shows her willingness to resist the fear of being caught and also an apology to Celia. Evelyn also pleaded with Celia to meet her one time; Celia reluctantly agreed. When they met each other, Evelyn begged Celia to forgive her and take her back; she was willing to redeem herself by sacrificing her career. However, Celia had changed; she had grown mature. She admitted that Evelyn might have been extreme, but she was never wrong; everything she did was to protect everyone. But instead of thanks, all she ever got was blame. Celia understood the repercussion of coming

out would be disastrous; it would risk Evelyn, Harry, and Connor. People like Rock Hudson, who came out of the closet, didn't end well for them. After a lot of discussion, Celia revealed something very unfortunate; she was suffering from emphysema and had very few years to live. But they both decided to live those years together, far from the crowd. This shows the transition of Evelyn, who was once ready to do anything for her career. She had a desire to be on the top of the pyramid, to prove her worth. Now that she had done it all, she was ready to change her routine and retire from the tumultuous aura that came with the name Evelyn Hugo and spend the rest of her life with her daughter and Celia.

Evelyn was going out to meet Harry and his new lover, and she saw Harry's car crashed into a tree. Harry was in the driver's seat, barely breathing, and the man beside him was dead. The scene traumatized Evelyn, but she didn't want Harry to get the blame for killing someone, so she got Harry to the hospital secretly and put the dead friend of Harry into the driver's seat. And this is how Evelyn is; she could go to any lengths for the people she loved. However, Harry could not be saved. After Harry's death, she cried for days, remembering how he was the only one who had been consistent with her through her ups and downs, and now he was gone.

After Harry's death, Connor was hard to manage for Evelyn. A few paparazzi caught her having drugs and in an obscene condition. Evelyn knew that living between the lights and camera and losing her father was hard for Connor, so she decided to take her away from the spotlight. She explained to her that she loved Celia and was going to marry her brother Robert to her and Celia's relationship. After the wedding, Robert became a father figure for Connor and was great help to Evelyn. Evelyn, on the other hand, tried to make every moment count with Celia. She did a playful wedding with her. Though their wedding was not legal or legitimate for society. But it marked their resistance of the heteronormative social norms. After that, in the summer of 2000, Celia died, leaving an irreplaceable void in the heart of Evelyn. At Celia's funeral, Evelyn went to Harry's grave, as if she needed a shoulder to cry on. This act showed that even though Evelyn was a global icon, known by everybody, no one truly knew her. During her last years she had no one; everyone she considered family was gone except her daughter. That was the price she paid for her fame, power, sexuality, and love. But that was not the end of her misery; Connor got diagnosed with breast cancer. After eighteen months she also died. In the end it was only Evelyn who lived alone.

2.5 The Final Autonomy: Moral Ambiguity and the Unfiltered Truth

During the last days of her interview with Monique, Evelyn revealed one of the reasons why she picked Monique for her biography: the first reason was the article Monique wrote, supporting people who want to die with dignity; the second reason, which shook Monique, was that the person who was with Harry on the day of the accident was Monique's father, James Grant. Evelyn knew that Monique would hate her after knowing the truth, but she told it anyway, believing it was Monique's right to know how his father died and how much he loved her. This incident encapsulates the character of Evelyn Hugo perfectly; she'll do mean things, but those things will have significance about them. This makes her character very morally ambiguous, not easy to put in a love or hate category; she cannot be labelled as either a heroine or a villain, unlike conventional female characters. She does not fit into "traditional character archetypes." By ending her story with this discovery, Evelyn establishes her own agency and guarantees that her "true story" is being told without "superficial" Hollywood glamour.

Evelyn also revealed to Monique that like Connor, she also has breast cancer; she thought the very thing that helped her navigate the hurdles of Hollywood for years was the thing that was going to let her down.

Throughout the novel we see Evelyn talk about how her beauty and her body were the only tools that helped her in achieving success, but in reality, that was what society had made her believe. Evelyn's success was driven by her determination and her talent, and Monique realizes that the minute she sees Evelyn in front of the camera for the last time.

Evelyn was born to be famous. I think her body helped her. I think her face helped her, but for the first time, watching her in action, moving in front of the camera, I get the sense that she sold herself short in one way: she could have been born with considerably less physical gift and probably still made it. She simply has it. That undefinable quality that makes everyone stop and pay attention.

This scene is also a significant subversion of the 'male gaze' and the 'patriarchal society' that Evelyn had been fighting all her life. While Evelyn had been forced to associate herself only with her physical attributes by the industry, Monique's remark reveals that it was actually Evelyn's 'determination,' 'resilience,' and 'inner strength' that had enabled her to achieve success. This statement also shows that even though Evelyn was very aware of herself, she did not let social norms decide how to be, but she was still the victim of

patriarchy, which let her attach her worth to her physical aspects. She had internalized the idea of her being a product, overlooking her talent, her heart, and her positive side that supported women and marginal communities and wanted love.

After saying one last goodbye to everyone and ending all her unfinished business, Evelyn ends her life. This scene exudes sheer power as it shows Evelyn's ability to claim her agency even from death. She couldn't let a disease dictate how she must die; she refused to die through suffering. Throughout her life she chose how she would live; in the end she also chose how she would die. Thus, the story of Evelyn Elena Herrera, the poor immigrant girl who made herself into a literal legend, comes full circle, just as it started, with her refusal to succumb to outside influences. Her story is not just another "scandalous" Hollywood tale; it is "a powerful story of courage, defiance, and resilience." By ending her life on her own terms, Evelyn finally accomplishes her "quest for autonomy," demonstrating to herself and to everyone else that although the "superficial world of Hollywood" can control her physical appearance, it can never possess her spirit.

Chapter III

Conclusion

After analysing the Character of Evelyn Hugo, from the novel “The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo” by Taylor Jenkins Reid, we can conclude that the representation of Evelyn Hugo as a queer Latinx character is done brilliantly. Taylor Jenkins has showcased the intricate nuances, flaws, vulnerabilities, positives, negatives, ups and downs of Evelyn very realistically and presented an iconic unapologetic female character that resonate with the readers. What makes the Evelyn’s character so special is the fact that, in act of showing Evelyn as a great, unapologetic, bold, resilient woman, Taylor did not portray her as a non-realistic “God-like” figure who overcome every hurdle with ease, she showed her struggles with patriarchal society, heteronormativity, and ethnic marginalization, illustrating what women especially when they come from marginal background had to face in order to survive in a white male dominated society. Other striking feature about Evelyn character is her diversion from typical female archetype, unlike popular women characters which are written by male authors, that are very idealistic, moral and bound to the societal norms, Evelyn contrast all these traits, her character is dominant, ambitious, morally ambiguous – a “picaresque heroine”, and a deviant to the social norms. Her journey from Evelyn Elena Herrera to the iconic Evelyn Hugo is not simply the journey of a star, but also of the strength it takes to survive the crossroads of race, gender, and sexuality in a system of repression.

Through Evelyn’s journey Taylor Jenkin Reid challenges idealist notions of Women’s morality, for a woman in Evelyn’s situation, morality is something she cannot afford, and the “scandals” she caused are actually a means of survival. There is a clear pattern in the life of Evelyn Hugo: she does not cause scandals randomly; she causes them as a “defence” against the challenges she faces from the media and society. She causes scandals in order to avoid other controversies that might affect her “power and accolades.” Even though she is blamed for her “scandalous behaviour,” it is actually the “misogyny” and “heteronormative constraints” of the film industry that forces Evelyn to live a life of deception. By “toying and playing with these social rules,” Evelyn takes control of her life and secures her survival in a world that has treated her like a “commodity”.

This study also proves the point of Judith Butler, that the gender roles are performative, they are performed by us in order to get validation through the society, like it was ingrained in Evelyn’s conscience that she is a woman so she should love a man, but

when she felt attraction towards Celia, she felt as if it was a crime and a certain guilt consumes her, her fear of being different and losing the power and fame caused her to perform an act where she performed the role of a heterosexual woman. The "guilt" that Evelyn is consumed by is a direct result of the "cultural pressures" and the "stigma" of queer identity in the mid-20th century. Her intense fear of being perceived as being "different"—and the very real risk of losing the power, prestige, and wealth she had so diligently built up over her life—meant that she went into a lifelong "act." She played the role of the heterosexual "trophy wife" and the "glamorous icon" not out of desire, but out of a calculated "veiling of her identity" in order to survive in a "white male monitored system." This demonstrates that performativity is a "survival mechanism" for marginalized individuals and not a choice, and speaks to the "isolated position" that Evelyn found herself in throughout her rise to stardom.

The construction of Evelyn's "unfiltered biography" signifies the final act of deconstruction of the "closet," a metaphorical space of enforced invisibility that is described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. For many years of her life, Evelyn lived in the tension of being a "revelation of identity and veiling one's identity." Her use of strategic marriage and her "manufactured identity" in Hollywood were intended to allow her to survive in a heteronormative environment. Her decision to reveal her authentic self to Monique signifies her rejection of the "stigma and resistance" of her past and her decision to merge her "performative identity" and her "authentic identity." This act of self-revelation signifies her transformation from a "merely ornamental being" to a woman of considerable "agency," as she ensures that her "unfiltered identity," including her bisexuality and her love for Celia St. James, is recorded without the superficiality of the male-dominated system. The act of self-revelation signifies her ability to reclaim her identity and prove that while she lived her life in the confines of the closet to ensure her career success, her final legacy is a testament to her unapologetic commitment to her own identity.

The most important discovery of this particular research is the way in which Evelyn ultimately subverts the "male gaze" that dominated her entire career. The 20th-century Hollywood film industry was a patriarchal system in which women were considered "merely ornamental beings" whose "sex appeal" and youth were directly linked to their "worth" as a commodity. Evelyn, at first, identifies with being a commodity, thinking that her physical attributes were her only tools to achieve success. Nevertheless, Evelyn's later life, particularly her struggle with breast cancer, represents a revolutionary departure from such an ideology.

By choosing to die on her own terms, as opposed to allowing a disease or a "sympathetic" media to define her last moments, Evelyn takes back her body from the world. This "reclamation of autonomy" ultimately proves that Evelyn's power was not physical, as she had initially thought, but psychological, allowing her to survive a system that sought to consume her. This particular research has shown that Evelyn's story is not a tragedy of a fallen star, but a triumph of a woman who has managed to transition from being a "commodity" to being the sole "architect of her own legacy".

Moreover, this dissertation will emphasize the importance of Evelyn's demand for bisexual recognition. In a heteronormative world that sometimes follows a binary structure, in which individuals must be either "straight" or "gay," bisexual individuals often fall prey to the idea of "erasure." However, when Monique Grant tries to place Evelyn within the category of a "gay woman," Evelyn's correction of this notion becomes a pivotal moment in the reader's understanding and in the academic world of queer literature. Evelyn refuses to allow half of her life to be erased in order to fit into a box that she knows does not fully represent who she is. This dissertation will prove that Evelyn's marriages were not only a scandal but a strategic response to a world in which there was no safe space for bisexual individuals. Evelyn, in maintaining her unfiltered truth in her autobiography, ensures that future generations of the LGBTQ+ community can learn from her story and know that their identity, too, can be complex. Evelyn's story contributes to the overall discussion of representation because it ensures that queer identity, too, can be complex and not monolithic.

Finally, the assessment of Evelyn as a "picaresque heroine" is meant to offer the reader a much-needed corrective to the way in which literary archetypes function. Typically, the female protagonist is meant to be "perfect, ideal, and moral" even in the midst of oppression. Evelyn Hugo is the antithesis of this, being "self-centred," "ambitious," and "morally ambiguous." It is the assessment of this research that, for the oppressed Cuban girl in the middle of the 20th century, "traditional morality" was something she could not afford. Her "mean acts," such as faking her miscarriage or manipulating the crime scene to protect Harry Cameron, were not those of the villain, but the sophisticated "survival mechanisms" that allowed her to gain agency in the world, even as it attempted to keep her in the "hell's kitchen" of her youth. Indeed, her life is meant to serve as a commentary on the extent to which the oppressed will go to ensure the safety of those she loved and to find her own place in the world, which was not designed to include her.

In conclusion, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is a landmark text that challenges the "illusion of diversity and inclusion" in historical and contemporary media. Through the critical lenses of Queer Theory and Intersectionality, this dissertation has demonstrated that identity is a lifelong "performance" that masks a deep, authentic struggle for fulfilment. Evelyn Hugo's ultimate victory is not her seven marriages or her Academy Award, but her final "unfiltered" voice—a voice that echoes the resilience of every woman and queer person of colour who has ever had to reinvent themselves to survive.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Taylor Jenkins Reid. *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. New York, Washington Square Press, 13 June 2017.

Secondary Sources

Aristawidya, Syifa Kartika. "Woman Domination: A Study of Taylor Jenkins Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*." *Fonologi: Jurnal Ilmuan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, vol. 1, no. 4, Dec. 2023, pp. 118-26.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

Clep, Ana-Maria. *HOLLYWOOD -PATRIARCHAL VIEW and the ILLUSION of DIVERSITY and INCLUSION*. fdap.tibiscus.ro/images/pdfs/anale-drept/2021/Ana-Maria_CLEP.pdf.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241-99.

Elanie, Florencia, and Jenny Mochtar. "Evelyn Hugo's Defiance against 'True Womanhood' and Her Agency in the *Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*." *KaTa Kita*, vol. 13, no. 1, Petra Christian University, Mar. 2025, pp. 42-48, <https://doi.org/10.9744/katakita.13.1.42-48>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, 1978.

Feldman, Lucy. "How Taylor Jenkins Reid Became a Publishing Powerhouse." *TIME*, Time, 15 May 2025, time.com/7284944/taylor-jenkins-reid-atmosphere-interview/.

Jurianto, Izzah Putri, et al. "Escaping from Women's Marginalization in Hollywood Film Industry in T. J. Reid's 'the Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo.'" *Lite: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya*, vol. 19, no. 2, Feb. 2024, pp. 89-102, <https://doi.org/10.33633/lite.v19i2.8421>.

Onty, Jannatul Ferdose. *Tracing the Differences in the Representation of 'Queer' Identity Found in few 20th and 21st Century Novels*. 2021. Brac University, MA thesis. Accessed 25 Mar. 25AD.

Scott, Rith. "Queer Representation in Literature: A Cycle of Digestible Queerness & Violence." *Illinois.edu*, May 2024, www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/130201. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press, 1990.