

**EMBRACING DISOBEDIENCE: LESBIANISM,
ADAPTATION THEORY AND THE WORLD OF NAOMI
ALDERMAN'S *DISOBEDIENCE***

Dissertation

Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for

The award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

By

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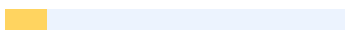
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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **EMBRACING DISOBEDIENCE: LESBIANISM, ADAPTATION THEORY AND THE WORLD OF NAOMI ALDERMAN'S *DISOBEDIENCE*** is a bonafide record of research done by **SAFA FATHIMA** (Register Number AIAVMEG015), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Place: P.Vemballur

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Introduction

"Sometimes I think that God is punishing me. For what we did together.

Sometimes I think that my life is a punishment for wanting. And the wanting is a punishment, too"(p.18). These lines are taken from Naomi Alderman's 2006 Orange Award winning novel *Disobedience*. The novel was later adapted into a film with the same title in the year 2017 by Sebastián Lelio. In the novel, Alderman explores the conflicts that exist between personal autonomy and eric duty in addition to the nuanced concepts of gender, sexuality and religious identity. This paper intends to bring out the identity crisis faced by Lesbian couples who belong to an orthodox jewish community, with reference to the novel *Disobedience*. The paper will further approach the novel from an adaptation theory perspective, especially it'll use the differences between the novel and its movie adaptation.

Inorder to do this, the paper is divided into five chapters namely, Introduction, where the novel, movie and author will be is discussed in detail. Chapter 2 deals with the religious and cultural background, as well as its elements in the novel. The third chapter will provide an overall idea of the two theories namely Lesbian and Adaptation theory, which are to be applied in the paper. The fourth chapter is the core of the paper, where all my arguments about the novel and movie will be proven. The fifth and final chapter is the concluding chapter, where a summary of the whole paper and my interpretations will be mentioned and with this the paper will be concluded.

The book *Disobedience* by Naomi Alderman has been the focus of numerous scholarly investigations and critical evaluations. A few to mention are, Jenna Grace Sciuto's article, "The Complexities of Disobedience in Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*, which was published in the Journal of Lesbian Studies, examines the various types of disobedience that appear in Alderman's book, such as sexual, religious, and gender

disobedience. According to the article, various types of disobedience are interrelated and pose a threat to patriarchal and heteronormative norms.

Victoria Palmer's article, "Disobedience and the Politics of Gender in Naomi Alderman's *Book*", on the novel's examination of gender roles and expectations in the Jewish Orthodox community was published in the magazine *Feminist Review*. The essay contends that the representation of disobedient women in the book might be interpreted as a protest against patriarchal systems and a plea for greater gender equality.

Krystina Osborne in her article "Reclaiming Female Sexuality in Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*", examines how the novel portrays female sexuality and contends that it is a form of defiance against patriarchal norms. It was published in the journal *Women's Studies*. The novel's portrayal of lesbian sexuality, according to the article, might be considered as a challenge to the predominant heterosexual paradigm.

Michaela Moura-article Koçolu's "Narrative Techniques in Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*" This article examines the novel's use of various narrative points of view and its portrayal of various forms of disobedience in the journal *Contemporary Women's Writing*. According to the article, the novel's investigation of power relationships within the Jewish Orthodox community depends on its storytelling techniques.

Aviva Atlani's paper, "Disobedience and Jewish Orthodoxy: The Politics of Representation in Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*", which was published in the journal *Modern Judaism*, looks at how Jewish Orthodoxy is portrayed in Alderman's book and makes the case that it does so in a complex way. The novel's challenges to conventional power structures within the Jewish Orthodox community are also examined in the essay.

Caroline Edwards, in her paper "Reconciling Religious and Sexual Identities in Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*", examines how the novel depicts the conflicts between sexual and religious identities in the journal *Literature and Theology*. According to the

article, the book presents a complex and nuanced portrait of these conflicts and, in the end, posits a potential truce between the two.

"Subverting the Patriarchal System: Naomi Alderman's *Disobedience*" is a paper by Elizabeth English. The novel's critique of patriarchal institutions in the Jewish Orthodox community is examined in this essay, which was published in the journal "Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion's". The novel, according to the article, presents a potent challenge to these structures and eventually gives a fresh perspective on gender interactions in this society.

Hannah Ebben's "Disobedience and the Queer Jewish Imagination", examines the ways in which the book offers a fresh perspective on gay Jewish identity and was published in the journal *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. The novel, according to the article, presents a potent challenge to conventional Jewish gender roles and expectations, and in the end, it offers a fresh perspective on LGBT Jewish identity.

These are just a few instances of the study and analysis that have been conducted on *Disobedience* by Naomi Alderman. Yet, nobody has approached the work in the light of lesbian theory or adaptation theory. The work has received a lot of praise for its examination of difficult subjects like gender, sexuality, religion, and power relationships.

Disobedience is the debut novel of Naomi Alderman. Naomi Alderman is an English novelist and game creator who was born in 1974. She was born in London, England, in 1974. Her science fiction novel *The Power*, which took home the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2017, is her best-known work. She is an expert in Anglo-Jewish history whose father Geoffrey Alderman defined himself as an unorthodox Orthodox Jew. Alderman studied politics, philosophy and economics at Lincoln College in Oxford and South Hampstead High School, respectively. After graduating from Oxford, she

edited publications for a legal business before working in children's publishing. She relocated to the US for employment, and while there she started reading fan fiction, concentrating on Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

Prior to becoming a novelist, she continued her education by studying creative writing at the University of East Anglia. She received The Sunday Times' Young Writer of the Year award in 2007. She was also selected by Waterstones as one of the 25 Authors of the Future in 2007. In 2012, Bath Spa University in England hired Alderman as a professor of creative writing. She was listed among the top 20 emerging writers on the Granta once every ten years list in 2013. At The Guardian, she publishes a monthly technology piece.

Throughout her teenage years, Alderman embraced feminism and has since backed women's rights, which has affected her writing. In a 2018 New York Times interview, she said, "The phrase "Feminism's Fights Are Won" was very popular among young women in the 1990s, when I was a teenager. Now, I believe it is eminently clear that is not the case." She cites the Me Too campaign as an inspiration and a source of comparable dialogue in *The Power*, which she authored to address issues raised by the fourth-wave feminism movement.

From 2004 through June 2007, Alderman served as Mind Candy's primary author on the alternate reality game Perplex City. She later rose to the position of lead writer for the 2012-released running app *Zombies, Run!* and the December 2013-released walking app *The Walk*. *The Walk* was transformed into a podcast in 2018 and distributed by Panoply Media.

Disobedience, a well-received, if somewhat contentious, book about a North London rabbi's bisexual daughter living in New York, marked Alderman's literary debut in 2006. It garnered her the 2006 Orange Award for New Writers, the 2007 Sunday

Times Young Writer of the Year Award, and a spot on the Waterstones 25 Writers for the Future list. Her life as a practising Jew was rejected as a result of it. "I started the book as a religious person, but towards the conclusion I wasn't. I excused myself in writing, "In 2016, she spoke with The Guardian's Claire Armitstead. *The Lessons*, her second book, was released in 2010.

In 2012, the paperback edition of her third book, *The Liars' Gospel* (Viking), which recast Jesus as the Jewish preacher Yehoshuah, was released. Reviewing the book for the Jewish Renaissance journal, Shoshi Ish- Horowicz described it as "While finding the story it portrayed to be "uncomfortable and troublesome," it was nevertheless a fun and interesting read. Your reaction to the idea that Jesus might have been an "insignificant preacher" will determine how much you love the book ". Between Pompey's Siege of Jerusalem (63 BC) and Titus' Siege of Jerusalem (70), it takes place in and around Jerusalem. It is told from the perspectives of four important characters: Mary, Judas Iscariot, Caiaphas, and Barabbas. All three books have been serialised on Book at Bedtime on BBC Radio 4.

She penned the story for Jey Biddulph's online interactive linear short story, *The Winter House*. In order to support the Story campaign, which was financed by Arts Council England, BookTrust commissioned the project. In June 2011, her Doctor Who book *Borrowed Time* was released.

Alderman was chosen by Margaret Atwood in 2012 to be a protégée as a part of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, an international philanthropic organisation that matches established artists with up-and-coming ones for a year of one-on-one creative exchange. *The Happy Zombie Morning Home* was co-written by Atwood and Alderman and self-published online on Wattpad in 2012.

The Power, Alderman's fourth book, was released in 2016. Atwood is honoured by The Power and has an impact on it. 2017's Women's Prize for Fiction went to The Power. After getting eleven proposals, Alderman has confirmed that she has sold the rights to The Power to Sister Pictures, the same studio that produced Broadchurch. In order to explore and go deeper into the world she imagined for The Power, she is aiming for a multi-season run.

Disobedience was initially published in the UK in March 2006; since then, it has been translated into 10 different languages. As a lesbian rabbi's daughter returns from New York to her Orthodox Jewish community in Hendon, UK, she is followed by *disobedience*. Despite the relatively contentious subject matter, the book was warmly praised and won Alderman both the 2007 Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award and the 2006 Orange Award for New Authors.

The book is told from the perspectives of both an omniscient narrator and Ronit Krushka, a 32-year-old non-practicing Orthodox Jew working as a financial analyst in New York and having an affair with her married male supervisor. Ronit returns to her old home in Hendon, London, where her daring behaviour angers the neighborhood's Orthodox Jews, due to the death of her powerful and estranged father. Ronit is forced to reconsider what she left behind when she learns that her cousin Dovid, who is also her father's chosen successor, is married to her ex-lover, Esti.

Before relocating to New York, Naomi Alderman, like her protagonist Ronit, grew up in the Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood of Hendon, and the novel is set in locales she is familiar with. Alderman has clarified that the book is not based on her personal experiences. Alderman claims that finishing the book caused her to stop practising Judaism.

The novel explores the intersections between on temporary and religious life, sexuality and spirituality, as well as our own aspirations and the expectations of our communities and the God we worship. The significance of change is discussed, as well as the things we unavoidably lose when we do. It talks on the strength of voice and quiet as well as the fundamental human trait of disobedience.

Mixed reviews were given to the book. Notwithstanding some novelistic flaws, Lucy Beresford of *The Telegraph* writes that Alderman's criticism on Orthodox Judaism in the twenty-first century is insightful and thought-provoking, and that she possesses the comic's ability to assassinate from within with compassion. The "acerbic and self-aware" *Ronit* was well received by Elsa Dixler of *The New York Times*, who also said that "the novel's plot is slightly creaky and its finale feels artificial, but the strength of this insular congregation is effectively depicted." "At her best, Alderman opens a portal into a world that is at once weird and terrifying, revealing its human failings as well as its spiritual beauty," wrote Sara Peyton of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Yet, the book sparked some debate in the Orthodox Jewish community. The *Jewish Chronicle* gave the work a critical review, while another Jewish paper refused to evaluate it. Dina Rabinovitch, an Orthodox Jew who reviewed books for *The Guardian*, said that the book "felt like writing-by-numbers" and that "[n]one of the individuals moves beyond the two-dimensional."

The novel garnered Alderman the 2006 Orange Award for New Writers and the 2007 Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award. Alderman was also picked as one of Waterstones 25 Authors for the Future. The book was a finalist for the 2007 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature and the 2008 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction from the Jewish Book Council.

An shortened serialisation of the book was initially read aloud in 10 parts on BBC Radio 4's Book at Bedtime in 2006. Sara Kestelman and Tracy-Ann Oberman read the radio version.

Sebastián Lelio, who also wrote the screenplay with playwright Rebecca Lenkiewicz, directed a movie version of the book in 2017. Alessandro Nivola plays Dovid, Rachel McAdams plays Esti, and Rachel Weisz plays Ronit in the movie. On September 10, 2017, it had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, and critics largely praised it. *Disobedience* was widely distributed in 2018.

Hendon hasn't spurred much literary endeavour, unlike, say, Jerusalem. Hendon is only briefly mentioned by London's historian, Charles Dickens, in *Oliver Twist* when Bill Sykes flees, whereas Hendon is only a signpost in Zadie Smith's nuanced depiction of suburban life, *White Teeth*. I'm done. Hendon is prominently featured in Naomi Alderman's first book; even the names of the shops and schools remain the same. It's a location where houses turn into synagogues: "houses that were scooped out and put together. I don't know why they did that, but I assume it was cheaper than creating something new "Ronit, one of the characters, muses wistfully after leaving New York.

The most recent example of a genre with London as its inspiration is *Disobedience*, a peppery neighbourhood tell-all. The city's spread encourages variety because it creates pockets of anonymity where strangers don't look one other in the eye. For a social gathering needing a bare canvas to build their own amenities on, Hendon is the epitome of faceless London. According to extensive pre-publicity, *Disobedience* exposes precisely such a group. It portrays the story of a love triangle in Hendon's orthodox Jewish community, one of the patchwork's more closely knit squares.

It is part of Alderman's schtick to sprinkle Hebrew terminology throughout her book, but she does it in a way that many Jews, let alone non-Jews, won't understand, and

she does so frequently without any narrative justification, making the language lifeless. Also, the plot is overly predicated on the novel. A renowned Jewish sage from Hendon has passed away. Ronit, the motherless and homosexual daughter of the rabbi, returns from her lapsed life in New York to collect her mother's candlesticks. Dovid, her father's selected replacement, is now wed to the young woman Ronit experimented with.

Alderman has produced some remarkable short stories, enigmatic and beautiful, but this feels like writing-by-numbers. She is aware of the mechanics of narrative — each chapter closes with the reader wondering what will happen next — but this isn't real life. She has taken a small portion of social history, pieced it together with certain ideas about Jewish legend, and then placed the novel framework over the entire thing in the Particular manner about which Ronit gripes.

Only novels require character, therefore this may have been effective. None of the characters in this are more than two-dimensional. Her characters are flattened by the heavy burden of meaning that each is required to carry, much like the interpretation-laden dreams she utilises to punctuate her story. In this book, nobody allows any room for misunderstanding. In New York, Ronit, a lesbian with proclivities, has an affair with her married male boss. This young New Yorker meekly accepts losing her job after he fires her because his wife found out. Instead of calling the sex discrimination attorneys, he does so. The message is: Be careful, girls—throwing off the confines of home isn't always roses. Dovid experiences migraines that make him see the world in shards of colour and feel smothered by his black and white education. In this pregnancy-centered environment, his wife Esti almost manages to land a fascinating plotline—she is unable to conceive—but Alderman fails to develop this strand in favour of a more sensational narrative. Storytelling is used as a blunt tool to drive home the point that tiny towns breed narrow-mindedness.

Disobedience is adapted to a movie in 2017 as a romantic drama film directed by Sebastián Lelio and written by Lelio and Rebecca Lenkiewicz, based on the 2006 novel of the same name by Naomi Alderman. The film stars Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams, and Alessandro Nivola. The film was produced by Weisz, Ed Guiney, and Frida Torresblanco.

Critics gave *Disobedience* largely favourable reviews. These are some quotes from renowned film critics:

The movie has a "quiet, furious intimacy," according to Stephanie Zacharek of Time Magazine, who also noted that "the way Lelio directs his performers - with an unfussy, almost classical restraint - is a type of craftsmanship of its own."

Variety's Owen Gleiberman described the movie as a "delicate and subtle drama," praising "the performances of Weisz, McAdams, and Nivola."

David Ehrlich from IndieWire gave the film a "A-" grade, characterising it as a "beautiful, sad, and completely necessary drama."

A "beautifully played exploration of faith, love, and personal freedom," according to Emily Yoshida of Vulture.

According to the consensus on Rotten Tomatoes, *Disobedience* has an 84% approval rating and "explores a variety of thought-provoking issues, supported by gripping work from leads Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams, and Alessandro Nivola."

The film's examination of difficult subjects including sexuality, religion, and individual freedom was acclaimed by critics. Many people also praised the major actors' performances, especially Weisz and McAdams, for their sensitive and nuanced depictions of the characters' emotions and inner problems.

"Lelio's portrayal of the emotional anguish that roils his characters is kind yet probing, enabling the audience to experience their pain and confusion without pushing them towards neat resolution," stated David Rooney of The Hollywood Reporter.

Disobedience received a rating of four out of five stars from Peter Bradshaw of The Guardian, who said, "*Disobedience* is a real and grownup picture about secret love and repressed impulses." According to Peter Bradshaw, "Weisz offers an intense, cerebral performance" and "Lelio's directing is flawlessly poised."

Nonetheless, several reviewers thought the movie dragged and that the ending wasn't quite satisfying. In spite of this, the movie got positive reviews for its delicate handling of difficult issues and characters.

Chapter 2

Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity

The history of Jews dates back over 4000 years to the time of Abraham, the father of Jewish people, as it is considered. The story of Jesus is one that of exile, persecution and survival. The Jewish people have in fact faced various challenges throughout their history, including ancient Egyptian slavery, the Babylonian Exile, and the Holocaust. Jews have had a significant impact on world culture, history and religion, and their story is one of resilience, perspective, and survival.

Jews have a rich cultural and religious heritage, which have been preserved through the centuries. The Hebrew Bible, which is also known in the name of Tanakh, contains the sacred texts of Judaism, including Torah, which has the first five books of the Bible, as well as the prophets and writings. The Talmud, which is a collection of Jewish teachings and laws, has been interpreted and studied by Jewish Scholars for centuries.

If we look into the history of Jews, we find that throughout history, the Jewish people have lived in various different parts of the world, including Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Americas. They have made contributions that are significant to many fields including philosophy, medicine, science, and the arts. Some of the well known Jewish figures include Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Karl Marx, and Anne Frank.

Unfortunately, the Jewish people have also faced discrimination and persecution throughout history, including expulsions, pogroms, and the Holocaust. Despite these challenges, the Jewish people have continued to thrive and create significant contributions to society. In ancient times, Jews were conquered and enslaved by many empires, including the Romans and Babylonians. During the middle ages, Jews were

expelled from various European countries and were forced to live. Today, the Jewish population is concentrated in mainly Israel and the United States, but there are significant Jewish communities in many other parts of the world as well. While Jesus continues to face discrimination and challenges in some parts of the world, they have also achieved remarkable acceptance and success in many others.

One of the most significant events in the history of Jews was the founding of Israel as a state in 1948. After centuries of living as a persecuted and dispersed minority, Jews finally got a homeland of their own. However, the establishment of Israel also led to many conflicts with neighbouring Arab nations, which to this is being continued.

It wasn't until about 500 BCE that Jews began referring to themselves as "Jews." The phrase "the sons or daughters of Israel," *b'nei Yisroel* or *b'not Yisroel*, is most frequently used in the Hebrew Bible and the Torah, the two texts that Jews hold in the highest regard. Along with "Hebrews," the term "Israelites" also appears.

Tracing the origin of Jewish people is rather a tricky part. Yet scholar Steven Weitzman has attempted to discuss the origin of Jew in his book "The Origins of Jews: The quest for Roots in a Rootless Age".

Apart from the original dimension, in the confluence of several ancient empires, particularly the ancient Egyptian Empire, the ancient Babylonian Empire, and the old Assyrian Empire, the Jewish people's origins can be found in the ancient Middle East.

Before 1000 BCE, ancestors of the ancient Israelites likely lived in what is now Israel, commonly referred to as the ancient Levant or the old Canaan. These individuals were connected by a sense of common history, myth, and ritual.

The ancient Jews thought they were descended from three people: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Bible renames Jacob to "Israel," indicating that Israelites shared a memory of a name change as a part of their history.

The Exodus story, which is found in the second book of the Hebrew Bible and tells the tale of freedom from Egyptian slavery, was the myth that brought the ancient Hebrews together.

The Israelites travelled to Egypt in quest of food during a time of drought in ancient Canaan, according to the story's condensed version. They were a minority and were finally reduced to slavery by the Egyptians, but God used the prophet Moses and supernatural plagues to intervene in time to free them.

God and Moses guided the Israelites on a trip through the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan after they were emancipated from slavery. They received heavenly guidance when they arrived at Mount Sinai. The "Promised Land," the region of Canaan where Abraham, Issac, and Jacob had lived years earlier, was where they eventually went back.

Regardless of whether the story of the exodus "really happened" or not, Israelites in 1000 BCE connected with it. When they were told the story about liberation from enslavement, they felt personally invested, in the same way Americans might feel connected to the story of America's independence from England and the events of 1776, even though they may not be directly descended from people who took part in that conflict.

People were united as a group by the compelling narrative of their independence from Egypt.

Part of the Israelites' shared story was the revelation of a sacred text known as the Torah, which literally means, in Hebrew, "instruction" or "teaching." In Greek, this term was translated as *nomos* or "law," and in the Christian Bible, references to "the law" often refer to the Hebrew Torah.

The first five books of the Hebrew Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—are referred to as the "Torah" in modern usage.

Several of the regulations included in the Torah, such as the prohibitions against murder and theft, are fundamental tenets of an orderly community and are found in other legal systems of the time.

Three specific aspects of Hebrew law stood out to ancient peoples: male infant circumcision, which takes place on the eighth day after birth; Sabbath observance as a day of rest; and dietary restrictions, known as kashrut or kosher laws, particularly the prohibition of eating pork and mixing meat and dairy.

The 1010–931 BCE period, under the rule of Kings David and Solomon, is referred to as the "Golden Era" of ancient Israel. King Solomon is credited with building the first major Temple in 957 BCE, while King David is credited with founding the city of Jerusalem, at the heart of ancient Israel.

According to legend, there were 12 tribes in ancient Israelite civilization, with 10 of them located in the north and two in the south.

When the Empire of Babylonia overran the minor kingdom of Judea in the sixth century BCE, the ancient Israelites suffered yet another catastrophe. Because the Babylonians deported the people who were most responsible for establishing and preserving the local culture in addition to destroying structures and looting money when they vanquished ancient peoples, this conquest might have been the end of Jewish history.

The majority of the Hebrew scriptures (Tanakh) were written in Hebrew, which has been the liturgical language of Judaism (known as *lashon ha-kodesh*, "the holy tongue") and the language of the Jewish people in daily conversation for generations. Aramaic, a closely related language, joined Hebrew as the primary tongue in Judea by the

fifth century BCE. Some Jews in the dispersion were speaking Greek by the third century BCE. Others were conversing in Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages of the Babylonian Talmud, such as in the Jewish settlements of Asoristan, known to Jews as Babylonia. Jews in Syria and Palestine at the time spoke dialects of these same languages.

Jews have spoken the local or dominant languages of the places they have migrated to for centuries, frequently creating different dialectal forms or branches that eventually formed independent languages. A Judaeo-German language called Yiddish was created by Ashkenazi Jews who immigrated to Central Europe. Jews from the Sephardic sect who came to the Iberian peninsula are known as Ladino, and they developed the Judeo-Spanish language. Judaeo-Georgian, Judaeo-Arabic, Judeo-Berber, Krymchak, Judeo-Malayalam, and many other ancient and distinctive Jewish languages of many communities have largely disappeared from use as a result of a number of factors, including the impact of the Holocaust on European Jewry, the Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries, and widespread emigration from other Jewish communities around the world.

The majority of books on Judaism were written in Hebrew, which was almost exclusively used as a language of worship for more than sixteen centuries. Some people even spoke only Hebrew on the Sabbath. Eliezer ben Yehuda, a Palestinian immigrant who arrived in Palestine in 1881, restored Hebrew as a spoken language. During the Tannaic era, it had not been spoken as a mother tongue. Israel refers to modern Hebrew as its "State language."

Hebrew is still not widely known among Jews worldwide, despite efforts to make it the Jewish people's official language again, and English has replaced it as the diaspora's primary language. Jewish languages like Yiddish and Ladino were widely used as recently as the early 20th century, but most Jews now lack the Hebrew literacy necessary

to study classic literature, and English has largely replaced most Jewish vernaculars. The three languages used the most by Jews today are Hebrew, English, and Russian. French and Spanish are two popular Romance languages that are also commonly spoken. Yiddish has historically been the language spoken by the greatest number of Jews, but due to the Holocaust and the adoption of Modern Hebrew by the Zionist movement and the State of Israel, it is now much less common. The native tongue of the Jewish community varies from that of the general populace or the majority group in several locations. For instance, in Quebec, the Sephardic minority speaks French as its mother tongue whereas the Ashkenazi majority has adopted English. Similar to how South African Jews choose to speak English over Afrikaans. Russian has replaced Yiddish as the language of Russian Jews as a result of both Czarist and Soviet policies, but these policies also had an impact on other populations. Several Jewish communities in several post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as well as Ashkenazic Jews in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan, speak Russian as their mother tongue today. Jews in North Africa had changed from a multilingual group to a monolingual one (or nearly so), speaking French in Algeria, Morocco, and the city of Tunis, while most North Africans continued to use Arabic or Berber as their mother tongue. Communities in North Africa are currently small and dwindling.

The theme of sexuality, love and identity is explored within the context of an orthodox Jewish community in North London in *Disobedience*. Both the author and the main characters of the novel come from a Jewish background. The novel also explores various themes of faith, tradition and conflict between personal desire and communal expectations, all within the same community.

The novel draws around the author's experience and knowledge of the Jewish faith and she has spoken in interviews on how her experiences and upbringing within the

community influenced the novel. The story revolves around people in the orthodox Jewish community. Their practices and beliefs play a central role in the story. The novel further touches on the conflicts and tensions that can arise between modernity and tradition as well as between different interpretations of religious texts and teachings. Though the novel is not a religious text or a work of religious scholarship, it engages deeply with various questions of faith and tradition, and it offers a complex and nuanced portrayal of the ways in which religion can shape and even influence people's lives.

The religious background of the novel is thus tied intimately to the beliefs and experiences of its characters who struggle with their faith in various ways throughout the novel. Specifically, the primary focus of the novel is on the relationship between two women who were raised in the orthodox Jewish community but have taken different paths in religious observance. One, Ronit, who has left the community and become secular, we often find her as the bold one, while the other Esti, has remained within the orthodox community marrying a man but struggles with her own feelings of attraction towards women.

The novel doesn't adhere to a particular religious doctrine or promote a specific religious system of belief. Yet it explores the complexities of faith and religious identity within the context of the orthodox Jewish community. Various rituals and beliefs of orthodox Jews are discussed throughout the novel. Such as synagogue, torah, sabbath, Kosher laws, Shiva, etc.

Synagogue is the central institution of religion in the novel. It is a place where the members of the Jewish community gather for prayer and religious observance. The community's connection to their Jewish heritage is represented by the synagogue. It also serves as a symbol of the shared traditions and history.

Torah is the Jewish holy book which is also referred to throughout the novel.

Torah is considered as the foundation of Jew's religious beliefs and practices. The Rabbi, Ronit's father, is known for his extensive knowledge of the Torah. The community places great importance to Torah study and Esti, a teacher at a religious institution spends most of her time studying and teaching Torah.

Shiva is the seven day mourning period in which visitors sit with the bereaved family and offer condolences. Shiva occurred in the novel after the death of Rav Krushka in the novel. This event sets the stage for the further exploration of religion throughout the rest of the novel.

Sabbath is another custom of Jews. It begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. And during this time, they refrain from their work, technology, and other worldly activities and instead focus on prayer, rest and reflection.

We also see some characters wearing traditional Jewish clothes such as Yarmulkes and Tzitzit, as a symbol of their faith and adherence to religious customs.

The novel provides insight into the history of Jews in North London. As we read the novel we come across a fictional orthodox Jewish community in Yen don, a suburb of North London, a place which is portrayed as resistant and insular to change. Hendl has a large orthodox Jewish community with numerous synagogues, schools and Kosher restaurants.

The novel also touches on the history of anti-semitism in the UK, as Ronit faces discrimination and hostility from some members of her community for the decision once she made to leave the community and for her unconventional lifestyle. There is also an instance in the novel where a character recounts a personal experience of being attacked on the street because of their Jewish identity. The same character also mentions the bombing of a Jewish school in London, which was a real incident that happened in 1992.

Those instances in the novel reflect the experiences of many Jews in North London, who have faced discrimination and anti-semitism throughout history.

The theme of tradition and modernity within the Jewish community in North London is discussed particularly through the experiences of the protagonist of the novel Ronit Kruska. One example of the conflict between traditional and modernity is Ronit's relationship with Esti, her childhood friend who is now married to David, Ronit's cousin. However Esti discloses her secret of being attracted to women even after marriage to Ronit, which leads to them having a romantic relationship which they both never thought would happen again.

The conflict is also evident in Ronit's experiences as she struggles to reconcile her secular lifestyle with her traditional Jewish upbringing. The novel depicts the rigid social norms and expectations imposed on her by the community, which clashes often with her individuality and desire for personal freedom. Ronit's departure from the community can be considered as an act of rebellion against cultural and religious norms and her return is met with mixed reactions from her family and community members.

Esti's conflict with tradition is rather two folded: not only her relationship with Ronit challenges the beliefs of the community in terms of gender roles and expectations, but also attraction to women at odds with orthodox teachings on sexuality. Esti is seen to reconcile her sexuality with orthodox Jewish faith. She is torn between her feelings for Ronit and her commitment to her faith and community. At the same time she feels trapped in a loveless marriage.

The conflict is further explored through the character of Dovid, Esti's husband and Ronit childhood friend who is now the Rabi and is ready to take over Ronit's father's position as the leader of the community. Dovid is very much committed towards holding the community's religious and cultural norms. He also represents the traditional view of

the Judaism. He is torn between his own desires and feelings and his loyalty to the community.

The conflict between tradition and modernity is in the portrayal of the orthodox Jewish community's attitude towards technology and the secular world. For instance, Ronit's father, the Rabbi is portrayed as being resistant to change and sceptical of technology. At the same time, some other members of the community have embraced modern culture and technology.

The conflict is further highlighted by the differences in attitude between the older and younger generations towards religious observance and lifestyle choices. The younger characters for instance, Ronit have a more liberal and secular outlook, whereas the older characters like Rav Krushka and his peers, are more traditional and conservative.

Alderman also portrays the tension between the orthodox Jewish community and the much secular world in Hendon. With strict religious observances and a rigid social hierarchy, the community is portrayed as insular. With the changing values in the society, the characters who represent this community struggle to reconcile their beliefs of religion. For instance, we have Ronit's father, a well respected Rabbi, is depicted as deeply conflicted about his daughter's decision to leave the community, but he can also be seen open to new ideas and perspectives, from the speech he gives in the opening part of the novel.

The conflict can also be seen in one of the characters, a gentle woman who is engaged to a Jewish man. She is portrayed as struggling to navigate the religious and cultural differences in her relationship with her fiancé.

Another example is Ronit's relationship with the synagogue of her father. Ronit's father, Rabbi Krushka was a well respected figure in the Jewish community of Hendon, and his death leaves a void that Ronit's return brings to the surface. Ronit's rejection of

her father's authority and traditional religious values are seen as a threat to the community's cohesion, and her attempts to disrupt the order of the synagogue are met with the community leader's resistance.

The novel also touches on the role of women within the orthodox Jewish community and the tension between traditional gender roles and modern feminist ideals. Ronit's mother for example is an accomplished artist. She was stifled by the traditional gender roles imposed on her by the community.

The novel portrays the individuals struggle with the orthodox Jewish community who seek to live according to their own desires and values, often in conflict with the norms and expectations of their community. Alderman explores the complexities of these conflicts and the impact it has on individuals and communities. A nuanced portrayal of the challenges experienced by those who struggle to reconcile their own desires and beliefs with the strict norms and expectations of the community can be found in *Disobedience*.

Disobedience further suggests that it is possible for people to find a way to reconcile their personal desires with the community's traditions, but it also requires a certain amount of willingness to challenge the status quo and to be open to change. The novel last suggests that the tension between tradition and modernity is an ongoing process and requires a willingness to challenge and question the established norms. The novel hence raises certain questions about the role of tradition in the rapidly changing world.

Chapter 3

Adaptation as Subversion: Unconventional Narratives of Desire

Adaptation theory in literature refers to the study of how literary works such as novel, story, or play are adapted into other media, such as television, film, video games and theatre. Adaptation involves various creative decisions and technological considerations, such as selecting the medium which is appropriate, deciding which element of the original work to include, and creating changes to the character or story to fit the new format. Adaptation theory looks at the changes that arise when a literary work gets transformed into a different medium, and further explores the reasons why certain elements such as the story, character, themes and style of the original texts are retained or altered in the adaptation process.

There are various approaches to adaptation theory in literature. Certain scholars focus on the ways in which adaptations reflect and respond to the changes in social and cultural contexts, while some others explore the psychological and emotional effects of adaptation on the viewers and readers. Still some others examine the stylistic and formal aspects of adaptation, including the ways in which adaptations make use of the different techniques and conventions to convey meaning and create emotional impact.

Adaptation theory seeks to understand how different media inspire and influence the adaptation process and how all adaptations can shape and reflect cultural values and norms. Adaptation theory looks into the relationship between the source text and the adapted work, and then considers certain questions such as how faithful an adaptation should be to the original work, what all cultural and historical factors influenced the adaptation process, and how the adaptation can reflect or challenge the themes and ideas of the original work. Adaptation theory is also interested in the adaptor's role, the one who is responsible for translating the original work into the new medium.

Some prominent adaptation theorists are Linda Hutcheon, Robert Stam, and Thomas Leitch. Hutcheon argues that "adaptations are a form of intertextuality, where the new work both draws on and transforms the original text". Whereas, Stam emphasises on the role of cultural context in adaptation, by arguing that "adaptations reflect the values and beliefs of the time in which they are produced".

Adaptation theory can be applied to a vast range of literary works and media, starting from Shakespearean plays adapted into films, to comic books adapted into television shows, to novels adapted into video games. While some adaptations are faithful to the original work, some others diverge significantly from the original work. Adaptation theory seeks deeply to understand the basis for these differences and their effects on the new work and its audience.

Adaptation theory assumes that the adaptation process involves a parlay between the original text and the new medium in which it is being adapted. In other words, we can say that the adaptation process is not a literal translation of the original text, but rather a creative transformation that considers the specificities of the new medium and the context in which it is produced. Either way, the goal of adaptation is to create a new work that has the capability to stand on its own while also paying homage to the original work.

A key concept in adaptation theory is fidelity, which refers to the extent to which the adaptation is faithful to the original text. Certain adaptations strive for high fidelity, attempting to represent the original text as faithfully as possible, while some others prioritize creative freedom and interpretative licence, considering the original text as a starting point for their own creative vision.

Another concept in adaptation theory is intertextuality. Intertextuality is the way in which adaptations reference and engage with other works of literature, film or culture. Intertextuality is very much relevant in the case of adaptations which draw on multiple

sources, such as remixes and mashups. In this view, adaptations are viewed as part of a larger cultural conversation, in which each new adaptation adds to our comprehension of the original work and its position in the cultural landscape.

Another approach to adaptation theory emphasises on the creative process of adaptation, by inspecting the choices made by the adapter and the techniques accustomed to translate the original work into a different medium. This can include analysing the methods in which the adapter takes advantage, the unique features of the new medium, such as the story telling techniques in the film and television visually.

Adaptation theory is based on the idea that each form of art has its own unique qualities and limitations, and that the process of adapting a work from one form to another is in need of careful considerations of these provided factors. For instance, a novel might be able to explore the inner thoughts and emotions of a character in great detail, but a film might rely on the visual cues and dialogues more to convey the same information.

Adaptation theory is based on the idea that works of literature are not static or fixed, but rather are subject to interpretation and interpretation, just as they are adapted into different media. This theory emphasises on the literary adaptations dynamic and creative nature and suggests that adaptations are not merely copies or imitations of original work, but instead are new works that draw on the characters, themes, and other elements of the original.

Film adaptations are the most prominent and significant form of adaptation. When we think of adaptation, though there are adaptations of works from various media to other media, it is adaptation of a novel of fiction or nonfiction to a movie that crosses our mind.

Screenwriter Michael Hastings in an article from Masterpiece Theatre (n.d), has mentioned that, "film is visual brevity... if the novel is a poem, the film is a telegram". A

much occurred debate in Masterpiece Theatre n.d as quoted from the article 'Issues and challenges of adapting a creative work' by Joshua Q. Axe is, "if a literal translation of a book can be a "betrayal" of the original work and whether the filmmaker should impart their vision of the story".

The success or failure of an adapted work depends on the various people who are involved in the process. Various expectations of an adaptation on the perspective of the author, adapter, and the audience. They all sincerely hope that an adaptation doesn't deceive the author of the original work and that adapted work will carry the essence and beauty as it is. Certain worlds such as, 'The Lord of the Rings', directed by Peter Jackson which is an adaptation of JRR. Tolkien's classic fantasy series, 'Pride and Prejudice', The BBC's adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel, Watchmen, HBO adaptation of Alan Moore and Steve Gibbons, etc. are considered as the best adaptations of all times.

On the other hand, 'The Cat in the Hat', the 2003 film adaptation of a beloved children's book by Dr. Seuss', 'The Dark Tower', an adaptation of Stephen King's epic fantasy series, 'Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief', an adaptation of Rick Riordan, etc are considered as bad adaptations.

Adaptation theory is a significant field of literary studies that focus on the complex and multifaceted process of adapting literary works from one medium to another. By analysing the ways in which character, stories and other elements of literature are transformed in adaptation, scholars can have a deeper understanding of the creative process that includes the adaptation of the literary world into different media.

So we can conclude that, adaptation theory in literature provides a framework in understanding the complex and dynamic relationship between literature and other forms of media, to analyse how literary works are transformed and later reinterpreted in different media, and also sheds light on the ways in which adaptations give back and

react to the social and cultural contexts on which they are created and explores the creative possibility in adapting literature to new medium. Adaptation theory is a rich field of study that includes a range of topics such as film studies, literary analysis, media studies, and more.

Lesbian theory refers to a range of feminist and queer theories that emphasizes the perspectives and experiences of lesbian women. Lesbian theory is infact a body of knowledge as well as analysis that seeks to explore and understand the experiences and perspectives of lesbians. It includes a range of disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, literature, cultural studies, and feminist theory. Lesbian theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, during the second wave feminism period as part of the broader feminist movement. It emerged as the lesbian scholars and activists sought to explore the unique ways in which sexuality, gender and power intersect in the lives of women who love women. The assumptions of male centred theories are sought to challenge by the lesbians. They also critique the heteronormative culture.

Lesbian theory focuses on the significance of understanding lesbian experiences as a valuable and distinct perspective within queer and feminist theory. The mainstream culture has constructed and perpetuated negative stereotypes of lesbian women, such as the fetishization of lesbian relationships by heterosexual men and myth of the "man-hating" lesbian, who were all criticised by the lesbians.

The politics of identity, intersectionality, sexuality and power, queer relationships, queer theory, heteronormativity, the lesbian continuum, compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia, etc are some of the key themes of lesbian theory. It critiques the ways in which society reinforces and constructs gender roles and the ways in which lesbians are marginalised within mainstream culture.

A key focus of lesbian theory has been the concept of heterosexism, or in other words the systemic privileging of heterosexuality and the marginalisation of non heterosexual orientations. Lesbian theorists in fact have argued that heterosexism pervades many aspects of cultural and social life, including religion, law, media, and education, and that it contributes to the marginalisation and oppression of lesbian and other non heterosexual individuals.

A key aspect of lesbian theory has been the exploration of lesbian identity and community, and also the ways in which these are created and negotiated in different cultural and social contexts. Lesbian theorists have analysed the role of language, politics, and culture in shaping lesbian identity and community, and have sought to construct spaces where lesbians can express themselves and support each other.

Lesbian theory explores a wide range of topics, such as the social construction of sexuality and gender, the intersection of lesbianism with other aspects of identity, the history of lesbian activism and culture, and the experiences of lesbian women in different political and social contexts.

Lesbian theory has influenced a wide range of academic fields, including queer studies, and gender studies. It has also had an impact on political and social movements, such as the fight for LGBTQ+ rights and growth of feminist and queer communities.

Lesbian theory emphasises on the importance of recognizing the diversity of lesbian experiences, and explores topics such as lesbian identity, relationships, community and desire. It further examines the ways in which lesbians are oppressed and marginalised by heteronormative society, and advocates for their recognition and inclusion.

The politics of identity is one of the key themes of lesbian theory. It examines how social and cultural forces shape our understanding of sexuality, gender and other aspects of identity.

Identity politics, in the context of lesbian theory, refers to the ways in which lesbian identity is created and negotiated and contested in different cultural and social contexts.

Lesbian theorists have argued that identity is not universal or fixed, but is instead shaped by cultural, political and historical factors. They have examined how lesbians navigate the complex intersections of sexuality, gender, class, race, and other aspects of identity and how these intersections affect their experiences of discrimination and marginalisation.

Lesbian theory has also explored the role of language and discourse in constructing and further shaping lesbian identity. For example, lesbian theorists have analysed the use of terms like "gay" and "homosexual" in scientific and medical discourses and how these terms have been used to marginalise and pathologize same-sex desire.

At the same time, lesbian theory has also celebrated the agency and power of lesbian identity and community. By constructing spaces for lesbian expression and activism, lesbians have been able to challenge the cultural norms which are dominant and assert their own experiences and identities.

Intersectionality is another concept in lesbian theory, which recognizes that individuals' experiences of discrimination and oppression are shaped by multiple and intersecting factors, including sexuality, gender, race, class, ability, and other aspects of identity. Lesbian theorists have explored the complex intersections of these diverse forms

of oppression and have sought to develop a more clear understanding of how they interact and reinforce each other.

Lesbian theorists have argued that the experiences of lesbians are not only shaped by their sexual orientation, but are also shaped by their race, class, gender, and other aspects of their identity. For example, lesbians of colour may face challenges, which are unique at times, related to racism and homophobia. Lesbians of the working class may face economic barriers that prevent them from receiving education or other resources.

At the same time, lesbian theory has also explored the ways in which the experiences of lesbians intersect with broader political and social struggles. For example, lesbian activists have worked often alongside other social justice movements, such as the anti-racism movement, and feminist movement in order to build solidarity and to challenge systems of oppression.

Overall, intersectionality is a central concept in lesbian theory, which acknowledges that the experiences of lesbians are shaped by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression, and seeks to develop a nuanced understanding of these factors that intersect and reinforce each other.

Queer relationships are another important aspect of lesbian theory, as they challenge power dynamics and traditional gender roles in relationships. Queer relationships reject the gendered expectations of heteronormative relationships in lesbian theory, such as the idea that one partner must be feminine and the other masculine.

A key aspect of queer relationships in Lesbian theory is the concept of "genderfuck", which contains playing with traditional gender roles and identities. This can include adopting behaviours or wearing clothing that are traditionally associated with the opposite gender, or eliminating gendered language altogether.

Queer relationships in Lesbian theory also give importance to consent and communication. Because these relationships often challenge the traditional power dynamics, hence it is important for partners to communicate openly about their desires and boundaries, and to make sure that all sexual activity is consensual.

Another aspect of queer relationships in lesbian theory is the identification of the diversity of sexual desires and orientations within the lesbian community. This includes the recognition of pansexuality, bisexuality, and other non-monosexual identities, as well as the recognition that some lesbians may tend to engage in sexual relationships with men.

Overall, queer relationships in lesbian theory reject the heteronormative and gendered expectations of traditional relationships, and instead embrace a range of sexual desires orientations, as well as a commitment to consent and communication.

Heteronormativity is also central. Concept in lesbian theory. It critiques the assumption that heterosexuality is the only normative sexual orientation.

Heteronormativity is a set of beliefs and practices that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the one and only acceptable or natural form of sexual expression. This system of beliefs in fact is pervasive in society, and can be found in everything ranging from popular media to legal and political institutions.

In lesbian theory, heteronormativity is considered as a form of oppression, because it stigmatizes and marginalizes non-heterosexual identities and desires. Heteronormativity reinforces stereotypes and gender roles, with men and women expected to conform to traditional feminine and masculine traits, respectively. This can lead to the devaluation and erasure of non-normative gender identities, like those of transgender and non-binary individuals.

Heteronormativity can also impact the experiences of lesbians specially, as it can create feelings of shame and isolation. Because lesbian desire is often dismissed or invisible in mainstream society, lesbians may feel as if they do not have a place in the large cultural conversation about sexuality. This can in fact lead to feelings of self doubt and marginalisation.

In response to heteronormativity, Lesbian theory focuses on the importance of celebrating diverse orientations and sexual desire, and rejecting the idea that heterosexuality is the one and only acceptable form of sexual expression. By recognizing and critiquing heteronormativity, lesbian theory seeks to create a more equitable and inclusive society for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Another central idea in lesbian theory is the "lesbian continuum", developed by the feminist writer Adrienne Rich in her essay " Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence ", published in the year 1980. The lesbian continuum refers to a range of relationships between women that occur outside of heteronormative expectations.

According to Rich, a wide variety of relationships between women, including romantic relationships, friendships, political alliances, etc are encompassed by the lesbian continuum. Rich argues that these relationships are dismissed and often devalued by mainstream society, which gives a higher value on heterosexual relationships.

Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum challenges the belief that sexuality is fixed and immutable, and instead identifies the ways in which sexual identity and desire are shaped by cultural and social factors. Rich further argues that all women have the ability and potential for lesbian desire and connection, and that the lesbian continuum represents a method of resisting patriarchal norms and creating alternative forms of connection and intimacy.

The concept of the lesbian continuum has been very much influential in lesbian theory and has been used to expand the scope of lesbian identity beyond subtle definitions based solely on sexual orientation and behaviour. The lesbian continuum acknowledges the diversity of relationships and experiences among women who desire other women, and emphasises significance of community and solidarity in resistance to heteronormative expectations.

Homophobia is another central concept in lesbian theory, as it refers to discrimination and negative attitudes that lesbians and other non-heterosexual individuals face in society. In lesbian theory, homophobia is seen as a kind of oppression, as it contributes to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of nonheterosexual identities and desires.

Lesbian theory recognizes that homophobia can take up many forms ranging from overt acts of violence and discrimination to more subtle forms of microaggressions and bias. Homophobia can lead to feelings of isolation, shame and self doubt among lesbians, as well as limit their access to support, resources and social networks.

In response to homophobia, lesbian theory emphasises the significance of celebrating sexual orientations and desires, and rejecting the idea that the only acceptable form of sexual expression is heterosexuality. Lesbian theory also advocates for political and social change to challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices, and to ensure that LGBT+ individuals are very well able to live their lives free from discrimination and violence.

Lesbian theory also recognizes the intersections between forms of oppression such as between homophobia and racism, ableism, and classism. For example, lesbians who are also members of some other marginalised communities may experience compounded

forms of oppression and discrimination, such as being discriminated against not just because of their socio economic status and race.

Overall, in lesbian theory, homophobia is seen as a damaging and pervasive form of oppression that must be resisted and challenged in order to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation.

The evolution of lesbian theory is closely related to the history of the feminist movement and the broader political and social changes of the 20th century. The development of lesbian theory can be tracked down through several key stages.

First, in the 1960s, the emergence of the feminist movement formed a space for women to challenge traditional gender roles and further to explore alternative ways of loving and living. This period actually saw the rise of lesbian separatism, a social and political movement that advocated for the first formation of women-only spaces and the dismissal of traditional heterosexual norms.

In the 1970s, lesbian theory emerged as a definite field of inquiry, with scholars such as Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde and Monique Wittig publishing influential works on lesbian sexuality, identity and politics. This period also saw the leap of queer theory, which challenged traditional binary understandings of sexuality and gender.

In the 1980s and 1990s, lesbian theory proceeded to evolve, with scholars focusing on issues like the intersection of lesbianism with race, disability and class, as well as the relationship between feminist politics and lesbian identity. This period also saw the unfolding of a more inclusive understanding of lesbianism, with scholars acknowledging the diversity of experiences and identities within lesbian communities.

In the 21st century, lesbian theory continues to progress, with scholars exploring new topics namely the relationship between trans identity and lesbian identities, the role

of technology in shaping lesbian community and cultures, and the impact of globalisation on lesbian politics and experiences.

Overall, the evolution of lesbian theory considers the ongoing struggle of lesbian individuals and communities to challenge traditional sexual and gender norms to claim their experiences and identities, and to promote greater acceptance, comprehension, and empowerment.

There were several lesbian authors who wrote extensively about same-sex relationships and desires, often using pseudonyms or publishing anonymously due to a legal and societal prohibitions against homosexuality.

One of the earliest known authors who wrote about lesbians was Anne Lister, a 19th-century English diarist who wrote about her relationships with women extensively. However, due to their explicit content, her diaries were not published until the 20th century.

Another notable lesbian author was Radclyffe Hall, a British writer who in 1928 published "The Well of Loneliness". The novel tells the story of a lesbian relationship. At the time of publication the work became controversial and faced censorship in several countries.

Other early lesbian authors include Djuna Barnes, who in 1936 wrote "Nightwood", and Gertrude Stein, who explored extensively the themes of same-sex desire in her writing.

It's important to note that the term "lesbian" was not used commonly to describe same-sex desire between women during the lifetime of these authors', and their works were often subtextual or coded in their depictions of queer desire. However, these writers paved the way for LGBTQ+ authors of the later generation to celebrate and explore their identities in literature.

Many contemporary lesbian authors have made significant contributions to literature. A few to note are, Alison Bechdel, who is Best known for her graphic memoir "Fun Home" and "Dykes to Watch Out For" which is her long-running comic strip. Then we have Jeanette Winterson, a British writer known for her themes of gender and sexuality and innovative writing style, such as in her novel "Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit".

Sarah Waters is another contemporary lesbian author who is an English novelist whose works often explore historical settings and lesbian themes, such as in "The Paying Guests" and "Fingersmith". Then there is Carmen Maria Machado, an American writer who explores the intersections of trauma, queerness and horror in works such as "In the DreamHouse" and "Her Body and Other Parties". Another author is Andrea Lawlor, an American writer whose debut novel "Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl" explores sexuality and gender in the context of the 1990s queer underground. Then there is Emma Donoghue, an Irish-Canadian novelist whose works include "Frog Music" and "Kissing the Witch", which both explore lesbian themes. Ocean Vuong, Nicola Griffith, etc are some other contemporary lesbian authors. These are just a few examples, but there are so many more talented lesbian authors out there making inevitable contributions to literature.

Chapter 4

Queering Tradition: Lesbian Identity and Adaptation in Naomi

Alderman's '*Disobedience*'

The relationship between tradition and sexual liberation is complicated, especially for people who identify as LGBTQ+. *Disobedience*, Naomi Alderman's 2006 book, investigates this area, focusing on the key ideas of faith, truth, and freedom in relation to lesbian sexuality. Sebastián Lelio directed the movie adaptation of the book in 2017. Lelio, like previous movies of its sort, effectively illustrates the gap between the frum (religious) and secular worlds and chronicles the personal cost of this gap in terms of sexuality. The structure of each chapter in Alderman's book around the Torah and the sages' interpretive works as the plot develops makes a dramatic distinction between it and the movie. This position is gently supported by a specific type of imaginative, challenging interpretation of the sacred text. The sacred writings are compiled and interpreted in such a way that violence towards women who display same-sex desire is disempowered. The importance of speech in defining and realising women's sexual liberation is highlighted in both Alderman's novel and Lelio's film. Alderman depicts this actual struggle in a heartbreaking way as the story develops. The twist occurs when the very texts and traditions that restrain it give birth to freedom to realise one's actual sexual nature.

Alessandro Nivola portrays the role of Dovid in the movie. Dovid is a good husband and a devout follower of tradition. Esti, on the other hand, finds Dovid's kindness, compassion, and goodness to be oppressive. Care and enchantment go hand in hand. In *Disobedience*, three people reflect on the value and cost of freedom, as noted by Zacharek. The novel's sympathies, according to Joel Streicker, who reviews it for the journal *Shofar*, "move from Ronit's rage and bitterness to Esti's expanding self-

understanding and self-assertion" (2008). While Ronit appears to have achieved a certain uneasy freedom in New York, one that is undoubtedly one on her own terms, Streicker notes that for Esti, it is actually God who creates space for every creature's freedom to break tradition—even though one "cannot avoid the repercussions of *Disobedience*" (2008, 204). There is always going to be a cost. This idea—that God might be an ally—is at the heart of the religion in both the movie and the book. According to Streicker, Alderman's book achieves "a reconciliation between Orthodoxy and lesbianism, between personal desire and societal restraints on it" (2008, 205).

Judaism does not strictly view homosexuality as a violation of the law. The Hebrew Bible does not mention it, and the Sages were only concerned about it in later times. Lesbianism was prohibited by the sages because they believed it to be harmful to society, to men's control over their marriages, and a sign of women's ostensibly rebellious nature.

The conflict between Ronit's sexuality and the traditional beliefs of the Orthodox Jewish community is one of the key causes of her identity crisis. Ronit struggles with the reality that her community considers her sexual orientation to be a sin throughout the entire book. For instance, Dovid, a buddy from their youth who is now a rabbi, informs her that her lifestyle is "an abomination" (Alderman, 40). In addition to being viewed as immoral, Ronit's sexual orientation is also viewed as a threat to the community's social and religious order. Because she is unable to completely accept her sexuality and keep her connection to her cultural history, Ronit feels lonely and estranged from her community.

Additionally, Ronit's relationship with Esti, her former best friend and lover, exacerbates her identity issue. Ronit is forced to face her sexual identity after being forced to remember her history by Esti's presence in the neighbourhood. Ronit is shocked

by how different Esti appears when she finally meets her after a long absence and experiences "an unusual fluttering in her breast" (Alderman, 22). Ronit's heart is fluttering as a result of her conflicting emotions regarding her former connection with Esti and her present lesbian identity. While Ronit becomes more at ease with her sexuality as she spends more time with Esti, she also becomes aware of how Esti's religious and cultural background complicates their relationship. Dovid and Esti's union is a crucial strand in the social fabric of the neighbourhood. So, Ronit and Esti's connection not only calls into question the community's moral principles but also poses a risk to its social structure.

The novel's opening makes Esti's identity struggle clear. She is a secret lesbian and married to Dovid, Ronit's cousin, who is destined to succeed her father as the new rabbi. Esti is dissatisfied with her marriage to Dovid, which is a fake. She struggles between her desire to uphold the standards and expectations of the community and her love for Ronit. In a moment in which she and Ronit talk about their past, Esti's predicament is highlighted:

Esti says, "I couldn't bear to be without you." But I also couldn't stand to be around you.

Esti's comment reveals her internal conflict, split between her love for Ronit and her duty to uphold the standards of the community. She is constrained and finds it difficult to balance her yearning with her Orthodox Jewish identity.

Esti's issues with her religious identity serve to illustrate her identity crisis. As an Orthodox Jew, Esti is required to follow stringent religious laws and traditions. She is compelled to conceal her true identity because the culture views her being a lesbian as a sin. This internal tension is illustrated in a scenario where Esti and Ronit discuss Esti's religious convictions:

"I don't think I can believe in a God who hates me," Esti says.

Esti's declaration illustrates her battle to balance her religious convictions with her lesbian identity. She struggles to reconcile her ideas with the expectations of the community since she feels rejected by it.

Dovid, Esti's spouse, who has a strong commitment to the Orthodox Jewish community and its ideals, only makes her identity struggle worse. Dovid is oblivious of Esti's sexual orientation and thinks their union is built on respect and love for one another. Esti struggles with choosing between her love for Dovid and her wish to live a truly lesbian life. In a scenario where Esti and Dovid talk about their relationship, this internal tension is highlighted:

Esti's statement illustrates her internal conflict as she struggles to live as a lesbian genuinely while still loving Dovid. She feels bad for tricking Dovid and finds it difficult to balance her desire with her need to uphold the standards of the society.

The work also looks at Esti's identity dilemma in relation to gender. Gender roles are firmly established in the orthodox Jewish community. Women are expected to be meek and obedient, whilst men are meant to be guardians and providers. Esti, who feels confined by the demands put on her as a woman, feels helpless as a result. Although she is expected to be a wife and a mother, these responsibilities do not satisfy her.

Esti's story highlights the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in conservative communities and the impact it can have on their mental health and well-being. Naomi Alderman's novel provides a powerful portrayal of the complexities of identity and the struggle to reconcile personal desires with societal expectations.

The conflict between desire and duty in the context of the Orthodox Jewish community is one of the novel's major topics. Ronit represents a desire that is perceived as being against the community's rigorous religious laws and norms because she is a

lesbian. The difficulties experienced by those who find themselves at odds with the demands imposed upon them by their religious traditions are highlighted by Esti's attempt to balance her affections for Ronit with her responsibilities to her faith and to her community.

Alderman depicts Esti's problems as a lesbian living in a society that does not recognise her sexual orientation throughout the entire book. Esti is compelled to conceal who she really is, and her union with Dovid is depicted as a façade intended to uphold the appearance of a conventional Orthodox Jewish household. The book also demonstrates the ability of love to triumph above cultural expectations and standards. In the end, Ronit and Esti's relationship serves as a catalyst for change in the community since their love for one another is shown to be a force stronger than any external pressure they encounter.

The novel raises important questions about the nature of love, identity, and the consequences of breaking with tradition.

In the Orthodox Jewish community, which places a strong premium on tradition and devotion to religious precepts, lesbianism is portrayed in the book as a form of rebellion. The community's expectations of women to marry males and adhere to established gender roles are challenged by Ronit and Esti's relationship.

Alderman examines the conflicts that arise between personal desire and societal conventions throughout the whole book, as well as the effects of defying those norms. The community views Ronit and Esti's relationship as a danger to its stability and reacts with hate and rejection.

The book also makes the case that defying authority can result in development and self-discovery. After her father passes away, Ronit, who had been living in New York and alienating herself from her Jewish heritage, goes back to London and makes

amends with her family and her past. Her meeting Esti again fuels their passion and forces them to face their desires.

Lesbianism is portrayed by Alderman in "*Disobedience*" as both a rich and subtle part of human identity as well as a method of resistance against societal and religious conventions. The book asks the reader to reflect on their own preconceptions and biases regarding sexuality and the community, as well as the value of being true to oneself and the repercussions of disobedience.

The complex themes of love, faith, tradition, and identity are explored in the book "*Disobedience*," which also depicts a rigid society with rigid laws and expectations for behaviour. Sebastián Lelio's film adaptation has to keep authentic to the source book while capturing the spirit of these ideas and societies for cinematic representation. The debate that follows will examine how the use of visual clues, dialogue, character development, and the portrayal of Orthodox Jewish life in the film "*Disobedience*" demonstrate the use of the adaptation theory.

Disobedience's use of visual cues to depict the characters' emotional and psychological states is one way the adaptation theory is demonstrated in the film. The complicated relationships between the characters are described throughout the book, and internal monologues and in-depth descriptions are used to show the characters' emotional development. The characters' rich emotional range had to be preserved in the film adaptation but the progression of their love was shortened. The directors depict the characters' complex emotional states through visual signals including body language, expressions on their faces, and looks.

The characters in the movie are identified as Orthodox Jews through their attire and hairstyles. Traditional and conservative hairstyles and attire are worn by the characters to conform to social norms. The audience is effectively informed of the

identities of the characters and the values of the community through this use of visual cues.

Both the text and the film depict the relationship between the two female protagonists, Ronit and Esti, as nuanced and multifaceted. Their relationship changes as the story goes on as their affections for one another gradually deepen over time. The movie adaptation condenses the growth of their relationship into a shorter timeframe by using visual signals to portray the intensity of their attraction to one another. Sebastián Lelio, the film's director, said in an interview that he aimed to get closer to the faces, skin, and flesh, intimacy, and subjectivity of the characters in order to focus on their features and expressions to convey the subtleties of their relationship. For instance, Ronit and Esti are interacting intimately in a scene where they are both standing in a garden. Esti even reaches out to touch Ronit's face. The intensity of their feelings for one another is shown by the camera's prolonged focus on their faces and hands. Despite having to compress the progression of the characters' relationship into a shorter time frame, this adaptation enables the filmmakers to capture the emotional depth of the relationship between the characters.

The camera lingers on their features as they stare at each other in one scene as Esti combs a hair from Ronit's face. This sequence effectively captures the strength of their romantic passion and the depth of their emotional bond. Its visual adaptation is also seen in the scene where Esti and Ronit reunite in a hotel room after a long absence. The scenario is filmed in a dimly lit room, with the camera fixed on their faces to show the range of emotions they are experiencing. The spectator is able to appreciate the depth of their relationship's emotions through the use of long glances and delicate touches that portray the intensity of their attraction.

The use of music is another way that the movie adaption successfully conveys the depth of Ronit and Esti's relationship. Matthew Herbert created the music for the movie, using it to amplify the emotional impact of significant scenes. While Ronit and Esti are laying in bed together in one scene, the music swells and intensifies to show the depth of their love. The audience's emotions are strongly evoked by this usage of music, which also effectively conveys the depth of their relationship's emotional connection.

Through the use of language and character development, the adaptation theory is also demonstrated in the film "*Disobedience*." The Orthodox Jewish community is portrayed in the book as restrictive and segregated, with rigid guidelines and standards for conduct. In order to appeal to a larger audience, the film adaptation needed to convey the essence of this civilization.

The stringent expectations and customs of the group are depicted by the filmmakers through speech. In the movie adaption, for instance, the rabbi preaches on the value of obedience and conformity, reinforcing the notion of the rigid laws and expectations of the community. The filmmakers are able to capture the essence of the community and make it understandable to a larger audience by using conversation to express the community's values and beliefs.

The characters from the novel were also changed in terms of their motivations and personalities by the filmmakers. Ronit is described in the book as a talented photographer who has drifted away from the Orthodox Jewish community and her roots. Ronit is portrayed as a writer in the movie adaption, and she is not as distant from her roots as she is in the original work. The change in the heroine's line of work gives the filmmakers an opportunity to deepen her character and her interactions with the other characters.

The portrayal of Orthodox Jewish life, with its stringent regulations and expectations for behaviour, is another important issue in the book "*Disobedience*." This

representation of the community has to be captured on camera while also being made understandable to a larger audience, according to the filmmakers. They did this by conveying the characters' Orthodox Jewish identity through visual cues like their attire and hairdo.

They also communicated the community's stringent norms and traditions through discussion and behaviour. For instance, the rabbi's speech in one scene emphasises the value of obedience and conformity, reinforcing the impression of the community's stringent regulations and expectations. To give context and complexity to the individuals and their setting, the filmmakers also inserted sequences of the local religious rituals, such as a Sabbath feast and a funeral.

The filmmakers had to strike a balance between their portrayal of Orthodox Jewish life and a sophisticated and nuanced picture of the experiences of the characters inside the community. When Esti attempts to reconcile her desire for Ronit with her dedication to the group, the story depicts Ronit as having abandoned the community and being estranged from her family. The filmmakers had to communicate both these subtleties and the community's broader cultural and religious context on screen.

The character of Ronit serves as another vehicle for the movie adaptation to depict the conflict between the Orthodox Jewish community and the wider society. Ronit, a non-practicing Jew who left the religion and became a prosperous photographer in New York, is a character in the book. She struggles with her identity and her role in the community when she comes back to London for her father's death. By emphasising the difference between Ronit's secular lifestyle and the Orthodox Jewish community, the movie adaption underlines this contradiction. In one scene, Ronit is seen having a cigarette in front of the synagogue while being surrounded by locals who are wearing traditional

attire and keeping Shabbat customs. This difference highlights the cultural gap between Ronit and the locals and highlights how challenging it will be for her to return.

The 1990s are the time period for Naomi Alderman's "*Disobedience*," whereas North London in the present day is the setting for Sebastián Lelio's cinematic version. The tale, the characters, and the subjects covered in both versions are significantly impacted by this shift in the time period. The discrepancies between the time frames of the novel "*Disobedience*" and the movie will be covered in this response.

The cultural and socioeconomic setting of the plot is one of the most obvious distinctions between the novel and the movie. In the book, the action takes place in the 1990s in a small Jewish neighbourhood in Hendon, North London. This group is represented as being deeply rooted in tradition and scrupulously observing Orthodox Judaism's laws and practises. On the other side, the movie is set in a more contemporary and multicultural North London, where the characters are still Jewish but practise their religion more liberally.

The way Ronit and Esti's relationship is portrayed in the book and movie is another important distinction. Their connection is described in the book as a defiance of the stringent social norms of their neighbourhood. In a setting where tradition and conformity are highly valued, the book examines the issues of tradition, identity, and disobedience. On the other hand, the movie focuses more on Ronit and Esti's interpersonal bond. The movie focuses on their love story and how their connection has affected both their own life and the lives of people around them.

The sexuality of Ronit and Esti's relationship is also depicted differently in the movie than it is in the book. The two characters' relationship is described in the book as more of an emotional bond with very little overt sexual element. On the other side, the

movie includes a number of explicit sex scenes between the two protagonists, which are utilised to show how intense their love is for one another.

The time period of the plot has an effect on how the Orthodox Jewish community is portrayed in the movie as well. When the book is set in the 1990s, the Orthodox Jewish community was far more segregated and cut off from the outside world. The Orthodox community in North London is now, however, far more globally linked and receptive to outside influences. The way the neighbourhood is portrayed in the movie reflects this shift in mindset. Although the community is still depicted as being traditional and conservative, there is a stronger sense of openness and acceptance of the outside world.

Finally, the time frame of the story impacts the portrayal of gender roles in the Orthodox community. In the 1990s, the Orthodox community was much more patriarchal, with men having greater power and authority over women. However, in the present day, there has been a shift towards greater gender equality, with women having more opportunities and more say in their own lives. This shift is reflected in the film's portrayal of Esti, who is shown as being more assertive and independent than her counterpart in the novel.

The story's speed is one of the most obvious variations between the two versions. In a society that prizes conformity and loyalty to tradition, the novel explores the themes of tradition, identity, and disobedience while taking its time developing the individuals and their relationships. On the other hand, the movie dives right into the heart of the plot, which is the rekindling of Ronit and Esti's romance.

Moreover, Dovid, Ronit's cousin and Esti's spouse, receives more attention in the movie's plot. Dovid is a relatively minor character in the book, and his major purpose is to serve as a counterpoint for the romance between Ronit and Esti. The character of Dovid is presented in the movie as being more complex and sympathetic, and more in-

depth discussion is given about his connection with Esti as well as his issues with his own faith.

Compared to the novel's conclusion, the movie's finish is less clear. The novel offers a more conclusive resolution to the story than the film does, leaving it up to the viewer to determine the characters' eventual destinies. The film's attention on the interpersonal connections between its characters and how their lives are influenced by the social, cultural, and religious environment in which they live is reflected in its uncertain conclusion.

The conclusion is clearer in the novel than it is in the movie. In a confrontation between Ronit, Esti, and Dovid, Ronit admits to Dovid that she formerly dated Esti. Dovid is upset and furious, but in the end he understands that Ronit is the source of Esti's happiness. The book concludes with Esti and Ronit driving off into the distance as they part ways.

The movie's ending, on the other hand, is less clear. Dovid questions Ronit and Esti about their relationship after they proclaim their love for one another. The final outcome of the characters is left up for interpretation in the movie. In the film's last scene, Ronit and Esti leave Dovid standing by himself in the street as they walk away.

The understanding of the plot and its themes is significantly impacted by the variations between the novel's and the film's endings. The conclusion of the book is more conclusive and gives the narrative a sense of closure. The book resolves the tensions between Ronit, Esti, and Dovid by forcing the three of them to face their emotions and the results of their choices.

The movie's conclusion, on the other hand, is more unclear and open to interpretation. The focus of the movie is on the protagonists' close friendships and the social, cultural, and religious context of their daily lives. The characters' final outcomes

and the effects of their decisions are left up to the viewer's interpretation in the ambiguous conclusion.

The two ends also illustrate how differently the Orthodox Jewish community is portrayed in the two works. The community is characterised in the book as being closed off and unreceptive to change, with a rigid hierarchy and a focus on tradition and conformity. The community views Ronit's defiance of tradition as a source of stress and conflict, and her separation from the group is considered as a necessary step for her to pursue her life independently.

The disparate conclusions also capture the divergent perspectives on disobedience and revolt in the book and the movie. In the book, Ronit's defiance of convention is portrayed as an essential step in order for her to live her life according to her own standards. The book presents rebellion as an essential step on the road to development and fulfilment.

Conclusion

The work used for dissection is *Disobedience* by Naomi Alderman. The theme of sexuality, love and identity is explored within the context of an orthodox Jewish community in North London in *Disobedience*. Both the author and the main characters of the novel come from a Jewish background. The novel also explores various themes of faith, tradition and conflict between personal desire and communal expectations, all within the same community. The story revolves around people in the orthodox Jewish community. Their practices and beliefs play a central role in the story. The novel further touches on the conflicts and tensions that can arise between modernity and tradition as well as between different interpretations of religious texts and teachings.

Both lesbian theory and adaptation theory is used to approach the work. And various conclusions were drawn from the research done. The identity crisis faced by lesbian couples in an orthodox community is well depicted in this paper. The relation between tradition and sexual liberation is quite complicated. The level of complication is accelerated further in the case of people who belong to the LGBTQ+ community.

The identity crisis that a lesbian couple experiences is a difficult and nuanced subject, and Naomi Alderman's book *Disobedience* offers a thorough and thought-provoking treatment of this matter. Through the project, the experiences of the two major characters, Ronit and Esti, as well as how difficult it was for them to reconcile their sexual orientation with their religious and cultural upbringings were all looked at.

According to this research, the identity crisis is a problem that affects a lot of LGBTQ+ people, and the demands and expectations that society places on them can frequently make this struggle more harder. Themes and motifs in "*Disobedience*"

illustrate the complexity of these problems, and we have seen how Ronit and Esti's experiences can shed light on the larger difficulties that the LGBTQ+ community faces.

Overall, the initiative of this research has emphasised the value of comprehending identity complexities and the difficulties faced by those who do not cleanly fit into cultural norms. We may better comprehend the challenges experienced by LGBTQ+ people by looking at Ronit and Esti's experiences in "*Disobedience*," and we can hopefully work to create a society that is more tolerant and inclusive and that values diversity and individuality.

The paper further looks at the novel in an adaptive theory perspective. This project looked into the void that might appear when a book is turned into a movie with a focus on Naomi Alderman's "*Disobedience*." Through the investigation, a number of important elements that can contribute to this gap were pinpointed, such as the visual medium's limits, the necessity to alter the narrative structure, and the difficulties in accurately portraying inner thoughts and feelings on screen.

This research has also emphasised how crucial it is to recognise the distinctions between the novel and the film as two distinct works of art, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. While the "*Disobedience*" movie adaptation made some substantial alterations to the original book, it also succeeded in capturing the spirit of the novel's ideas and characters, and in some cases, even improved them. To note a few, both the novel and the movie "*Disobedience*" present characters, ideas, and cultural environment in different ways depending on the time period of the plot. The histories of the people and how the Orthodox Jewish community is portrayed reflect how the story's cultural and social environment has changed. The way Esti is portrayed in the movie also reflects the shifting gender roles in the neighbourhood. Ultimately, the plot, the

characters, and the topics discussed in both versions are portrayed differently as a result of the alterations in the story's chronological frame.

There are a number of notable ways in which the plot of the movie "*Disobedience*" departs from the plot of the novel. The story's main conflict is introduced earlier in the movie, and the interpersonal interactions between the characters are given more attention. Also, the movie emphasises Dovid's character more than the book does and has more graphic sexual scenes. The film's representation of the Orthodox Jewish community is also more complicated, and the conclusion is less clear. Due to these variances in the plot, the story, the characters, and the ideas are all presented in a different way.

The movie, however, underscores the complexities of disobedience and resistance. The conflict between the protagonists' individual aspirations and their cultural and religious traditions is depicted in the movie, as well as the results of their choices. The unclear conclusion raises the question of whether disobedience and rebellion lead to personal development and fulfilment or to conflict and suffering.

Also there are substantial differences between the conclusion of the book "*Disobedience*" and the movie adaptation. The novel's conclusion offers a feeling of finality to the plot and is more conclusive than the film's, which leaves more room for interpretation. With regard to how the Orthodox Jewish community is portrayed, how rebellion and disobedience are viewed, the complexity of the characters' relationships with their community, and their struggle to balance their individual desires with their cultural and religious traditions, the various endings are indicative of these differences. In the end, the variations in the conclusion lead to a distinct reading of the narrative and its themes.

Overall, this experiment has demonstrated that, despite the possibility of discrepancies between a novel and its film adaptation, neither work necessarily suffers as a result. By analysing the omission that occurred in the "*Disobedience*" adaptation, we have developed a better understanding of the difficulties involved in adapting a well-known work of literature to a different format.

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