

# Lonesome Female Character's Art of Writing Epistles as An Escapism from Aloofness: An Examination of Daddy-Long-Legs by Jean Webster and Dear Rachel Maddow by Adrienne Kisner

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Received: August 7, 2023

Accepted: September 12, 2023

Online Published: October 5, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n8p418

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n8p418>

## Abstract

An epistle provides a trackway in bringing out the thoughts and emotions of a writer, wherein it helps the sender in conveying information and feelings and kindles the imaginations and sentiments of the receiver as well. An epistolary novel is one such literary work that makes use of messages that have been returned or electronically transmitted to support and enhance its story or exhibit the points of view and innermost feelings of the character(s). The focus of this paper is to showcase that female character(s) in isolation avail epistolary as a personification of a living creature, especially a partner or a friend. The objective of this work is to expose that women in novels take the aid of correspondences and modern communicative tools to break free the desertness and to share their experiences and dark secrets. It takes up two primary sources namely, *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster and *Dear Rachel Maddow* by Adrienne Kisner to justify its arguments and to attain its objectives. It provides a comparative study of the two select novels to unveil that women characters in novels from the past till date have been using some form of epistles as one of the techniques to get away from their lonely lives. The paper foregrounds itself on the theory of Psycho-Analytic Literary Criticism to support its statements of projecting that women in novels psychologically present themselves through epistolary writings.

**Keywords:** Epistles, Isolation, Personification, Suffering and Escapism

## 1. Introduction

In literary works, writings have been registered in novels through countless kinds of narrative forms, within which epistles are one among those to be noticed. Fiction have been including correspondences to communicate and establish the emotions and desires of a character for centuries. Epistolary writings in novels have been used as narrative techniques, wherein the novelists use missives to build storylines and to evoke interest in the readers. It creates twists and turns in fiction, thereby keeping hold of the suspense prevailing within the literary piece of work. It renders opportunities for characters in a novel to get insights into the minds of the writer as well.

### 1.1 Objectives

The main aim of this paper is to disclose that in novels the female characters in isolation consider epistles as a personification of a person who could be an anonymous or invisible partner or a friend. The important point of this study is to bring out that female characters in fiction with loneliness utilize epistles as a tool to vamoose from aloneness. Its purpose is to reveal the sentiments and hidden facets of women in fiction through the aid of traditional and contemporary correspondences too. It also uncovers that female fictional characters who experience seclusion regard their epistolary writings as supporting objects, saving tools and healing hands of their problems and mental imbalances.

## 2. Materials Studied

Two famous epistolary novels are the focus of this paper, where the study concentrates on character analysis of the protagonists of select fiction. The select novels are *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster and *Dear Rachel Maddow* by Adrienne Kisner, whose narrations entirely or partially take place with the help of epistles.

Jean Webster has been one of the greatest writers of America, whose works have predominantly centralized women and girls. Her writings have reflected her welfare to society, wherein the characters of her works fight against dissolutions and injustices. She has been popularly known for her novels and short stories. She has also been a writer and an editor for several magazines. (McCauley, 2022)

Webster has been a member of many charity associations and an active participant in various reformatory movements, and a funding agency is started in the year 1981 under the name "Jean Webster Faculty Salary Fund". A bronze statue which has been called "The Awakening" has been erected in June 1921 to honor Jean Webster. Jean Webster's masterpieces comprise *When Patty Went to College* (1903), *Jerry Junior* (1907), *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912) and *Dear Enemy* (1915). (McCauley, 2022)

The first primary source of this paper is the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster. The novel is initially serialized in "The Ladies' Home Journal", which is later compiled and published as a novel. It has been dramatized two years after its publication, where it has been successfully staged for nearly 300 shows in New York City. The novel is about an orphan girl who writes letters to her benefactor informing him about her studies, interests, exciting encounters and life decisions.

Adrienne Kisner is a well-known writer from Massachusetts, who obtained Master's and Doctoral degrees from Boston University. She is also a graduate of writing for children and young adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She is an editor who edits books and novels by young and reputed writers. Kisner's major works encompass "Six Angry Girls", "The Confusion of Laurel Graham" and "Dear Rachel Maddow". (Macmillan, n.d)

The second primary source that has been undertaken for this study is the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow* by Adrienne Kisner, that is published in the year 2018. This is Kisner's debut novel, in which she mentions that the inspiration for it has come from students belonging to high schools and colleges. The novel orbits around a desolate high school girl, who drafts several emails to MSNBC host Rachel Maddow to deal with her lesbian love, school politics and her life after she has lost her brother.

The paper intends to look into the character picturizations of Jerusha Abbott from the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* and Brynn Harper from the fiction *Dear Rachel Maddow*. It makes use of these women characters to establish its focal points of projecting that the female characters with aloofness take the aid of traditional or modern epistles to escape their loneliness. The paper also explores and examines the letters that have been sent by Jerusha and the emails that have been drafted by Brynn to enquire the mental states of both the girls, thereby disclosing how epistolary writings in fiction avail lonesome women Dramatis personas to turn away from their friendlessness and forlornness.

### 3. Area Descriptions

A literary piece of work incorporates numerous forms of correspondence into its plot, where the work can be commonly referred to as epistolary fiction. Sarkar (2021) points out that the word epistolary has its emergence from the Latin word "epistlola" which means "a letter", where during ancient times the word epistle has been commonly used to denote letters (P. 3).

Aşçı (2020) defines epistolary fiction as a kind of novel that comprises several letters or epistles (P. 6). Selvi (n.d) puts forth that letters in a novel are of two types, where "Showing method" is letters that have been shown to the readers which have been written by character(s) in a novel and "Telling method" is the descriptions that have been provided by the author about the letters that have been written by character(s) in a novel (pp. 7-8).

According to Todd (2000), Richardson's *Pamela* which follows the method of epistolary writing which has been different from the historical documentation serves as a generic model to his supporters, contemporary and later writers (P. 4). Nair (2022) verbalizes that the epistolary novels have flourished during the 18th century, where that period has been popularly referred to as the "Great Age of Letter Writing" (P. 432).

Huttar (2016) defends the views of critics that the epistolary novel has died by mentioning that though the dominance of epistolary in novels has faded since Jane Austen abandoned the epistolary form, it has been visible that the fictional writing style never has disappeared as a narrative technique (P. 8). In parallel to Huttar's argument, El-Hindi (2019) says that the epistolary novels have died in the past and have eventually resurrected by the Modernist and Post-Modernist writers of the 20th century. She also avers that they have made changes in the traditional formats of the epistolary novels to suit their requirements and have adopted numerous techniques to improvise the age-old structure in the evolutions taking place in women's literature (P. 295).

Heaton (2023) argues that the original description of epistolary is in the procedure of updation, where any work that uses words or phrases which has been written by another person that has been either an email or a text can also be grouped under the umbrella term called epistolary (P. 3). Santini (2019) states that there has been a hyphen introduced when referring to novels that use epistles, where fictions with traditional letter writings have been denoted as epistolary novels and stories that use modern modes, channels and forms of communicative exchanges have been denoted as epistolary novels (P. 203).

The research revolves around epistolary fiction as the novels that have been selected for this study belong to this genre, where *Daddy-Long-Legs* is a traditional epistolary novel that uses letters that have been written by Jerusha and *Dear Rachel Maddow* is a modern epistolary novel that avails emails drafted by Brynn in its narration.

#### 3.1 Feminist Genre

Epistolary fiction has commonly been identified to circle women, wherein they possess direct or indirect connections to the female gender. Messina (n.d) vocalizes that letter writing in fiction has been the prominent and overly used kind of writing that has often been restricted to the female voice (P. 2), which is also appropriate to other types of epistolary in fiction. Jørgensen (2011) says that the classic epistolary novels hold a peculiar aspect of having an association with women (P. 16), which is true to the contemporary novels that incorporate new types of epistles.

According to Patch (2014), the epistolary novel is regarded as a female genre since it has been presented in the writing style that has been adopted by women and has been for womankind (P. 14). He also mentions that the electronic communications that have been availed in novels aid women to take complete ownership of the epistolary genre, where it has been regarded as a female genre for centuries that has

suppressed women and dominated men (P. 44). Hence, *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Rachel Maddow* have too been feminist epistolary novels as they wheel around two female protagonists and their letters and e-mails respectively.

#### 4. Methodology

The paper undertakes the qualitative approach, where it makes use of the textual analysis of two popular epistolary novels to attain its objectives. *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster and *Dear Rachel Maddow* by Adrienne Kisner are the two famous epistolary novels that have been taken up for the study. The paper lends a comparative study of the select novels, as both the epistolary fictions avail letters and emails to help the female protagonists to come out of their aloofness respectively.

##### 4.1 Theoretical Framework

The work centers itself on the theory of psycho-analytic literary criticism to display the psychological perspectives of the female characters in select novels. Hasa (2016) states that the concept of psycho-analytic literary criticism acquires its basis from Psycho-Analysis, which mirrors the psychological effects on both literature and literary criticism. She also comments that Sigmund Freud's and Carl Young's definitions of psycho-analysis have paved the way to the origin and development of Psycho-Analytic literary criticism (P. 3). Moazzam (2023) says that the etymology of the word psycho-analytic is that the word psycho gets its origin from the Greek word "psyche" which means "soul", and "analysis" which means "study or examination of a particular thing" (P. 2).

In parallel to Hasa's statements, Delahoyde (n.d) vocalizes that Psycho-Analytic Literary Criticism borrows much of its reading methods of understanding, decoding and interpreting texts through a psychological lens from Freud, Young and many later theorists. He mentions that this theory studies and evaluates the importance of a literary work, as it has been built upon the literary aspect of analysis. He adds that similar to the Psycho-Analysis, this theory figures out the evidence responsible for the psychological conflicts, guilts, unresolved emotions and ambivalences, which in turn causes the text to be ununified (P. 1).

Moazzam (n.d.) articulates that the theory studies the psychological motives, conflicts and desires of a specific character in a story that leads to the unconscious actions and behaviors of the character (P. 2). This Psycho-Analytic literary criticism is the main focus of the paper as it tries to critically examine the mental states of women characters in the primary sources.

#### 5. Isolation-The Reason for Epistolary Writings

From the past till the present aloofness has been a common subject in literary fiction, where Jasim (2011) puts forth that the themes of isolation and loneliness have been common in modern literature as well (P. 104). It has been noted that women in novels who have been secluded begin writing epistles, which have been relevant to the plot to untie the connections they have with loneliness. Heaton (2023) says that letters in novels pave the way for women characters who have been alone to escape their aloneness (P. 5), which can also be applied to many other epistolaries.

Vera (1992) utters that Jerusha in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* writes letters by taking up her birth name Jerusha and her other name Judy which indirectly exposes the dichotomy prevailing between herself and the trusty (P. 39), where the Dichotomy refers to the differences in status and family backgrounds of Jerusha and her benefactor. Theodorou (2013) states that Jerusha conceals her identity as an orphan from her peer groups (P. 59), where the gaps in her letters have been denoting the discrepancies existing between herself and the patron (P. 61). Jerusha fears that she would be left alone due to the variations present between her and others which have been reflected in her letters. In correspondence to these statements, it can be put forth that Jerusha's status of being an orphan brings her the lonesomeness that travels like a shadow along with her. "Please be thinking about me. I'm quite lonely and I want to be thought about" (Webster, 2011, pp. 157-158).

Ondrus (2014) argues that accessing the thought process of a character has been immensely impacted by isolation, wherein the seclusion renders chances for communication and thoughts to be directed outside (pp. 44-45). Similarly, Patch (2014) articulates that the heroine of an epistolary novel has to rely wholly on her letters for communication as she has been deserted from others (P. 35), where these protagonists take up modern epistolary too. In *Dear Rachel Maddow*, Brynn sketches e-mails to Rachel Maddow when she has felt that she has been secluded from her parents and friends. She writes several e-mails that have been unsent while experiencing lonesomeness during her school elections and her separation from Michaela. "I tuned in to you. But being alone with only my own head, even with you there, drove me bonkers" (Kisner, 2018, P. 240).

#### 6. The Absence of Recipient(S)

It has been visible that female characters longing for friendship or companionship write letters or other forms of epistles to themselves or to receivers who are absent or dead to break loose their desert-ness. "Apostrophe" is a literary device that refers to the speaking that has been carried out or addressed to a person who has not been present, or the personification of an object (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d). The word "Apostrophe" comes from the Greek word "Apostrophein" which means "to turn away" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d). Sayakhan (2018) mentions that an Apostrophe can be a personification when it addresses an object as a human being (P. 101). This literary device can also be applied to an epistolary novel, in which an epistle has been addressed by a sender to a receiver who has been absent or dead.

Jørgensen (2011) argues that writers in epistolary novels sometimes write to a person but they generally write to themselves to calm down their sentiments and to figure out a new catharsis (P. 25), where it has also been identified that heroines in novels have also been writing

correspondences to receivers who have not been present. Goyal (2016) puts forth that it is not essential to post letters, as letters would have been honest when they have been undelivered. He adds that a letter camouflages the original emotions and feelings of the writer when he/ she has been obliged to send the letter (P. 2).

The penning and sending of letters by desolate female characters to eradicate their aloofness is seen clearly in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs*, in which Jerusha keeps on writing letters to her benefactor although knowing that he would not respond to any of the letters. Hammonds (2019) voices out that Jerusha has been told that her benefactor would never meet or make any contact with her and has been advised to write him a letter every month which will go unread and unanswered. (P. 26). “but you are to write a letter telling of the progress in your studies and the details of your daily life... He will never answer your letters, nor in the slightest particular take any notice on them” (Webster, 2011, P. 9).

Hammonds (2019) also mentions that Jerusha feels happy about the man’s communicative deficiency and writes lots of letters than she has been required (P. 26). “You only wanted to hear from me once a month, didn’t you? And I’ve been peppering you with letters every few days! But I’ve been so excited about all these new adventures that I MUST talk to somebody; and you’re the only one I know” (Webster, 2011, P. 21). Alkalay-Gut (n.d) states that in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs*, Jerusha does not get any letter from the trustee in the 4 years of her college (P. 92).

Alimen and Kalaycıoğlu (2021) point out that Jerusha continuously shares her experiences with her patron, yet she has not been provided with any response (P. 86). In correspondence to Alimen’s argument, Hollander (2015) says that the novel anchors on the observations, exposures and perspectives of Jerusha as she is the only person who writes letters to her trustee since he avoids writing letters to her, where he rarely replies through his secretary (P. 192).

Like Jerusha in the novel *Daddy Long Legs*, who writes letters to her anonymous benefactor which has not been provided any response, Brynn in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow* too has been drafting e-mails to Rachel Maddow unveiling her daily encounters and experiences in school. She has never sent the e-mails that she has been drafting for months as she uses them only to expose her good and bad times. “I look at all of these e-mails I’ve written to you. There are probably at least a hundred pages of them here. For what? Nothing useful. Nothing good. Just words alone with no one to read them. I’ll finish this last letter and then delete it with the rest of them” (Kisner, 2018, P. 235).

## 7. Bridging the Gap

In fiction, an epistle has been utilized by women characters who have been secluded to gain acquaintances and to fill the gap between them and the other characters. Celdran (2013) avers that an epistolary writer takes up writing to connect with the rest of the *Dramatis personae* available in the literary work and with the outside world (P. 4). Similarly, Altman (1982) also utters that an epistolary author has been given the right in choosing between the distance or the bridge while emphasizing the function of the letter has been to connect two different points like a channel between the writer and the reader (P. 13).

Sanford (2018) comments that letters can be helpful in the communication between people across boundaries despite the differences in time and place (P. 6). Likewise, Heaton (2023) articulates that an epistolary novel gives opportunities for a character prevailing in its storyline to familiarise with the other characters (P. 5), where it renders numerous chances to eradicate the gap present between the protagonist who has been alone and others.

Nelson (2016) mentions that the need or the wanting to preserve the attachment to a person despite the fragility of the relationship paves the way for the necessity of letter writing (P. 6), which is appropriate to the other forms of epistles prevailing in fiction as it helps in reducing the space between the sender and the receiver. All these opinions are apparent in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* as well because Jerusha, who has been an isolated orphan has repeatedly been sending letters to her philanthropist to develop a bond with him and to reduce the distance between him and her.

## 8. The Liberty of Conveyance

Fictional female characters who have been secluded take up age-old or contemporary communicative techniques to express their feelings, voice out many things and break the constraints that have been imposed upon them by society. El-Hindi (2019) declares that women in epistolary novels use writing to break free from the restrictions that have been forced by society (P. 294), where she articulates that the letters have been capturing the emotions and reflections of a character that have been genuine as they have not been interrupted and biased by other characters (P. 296). In response to this statement, it could be stated that epistles in fiction provide a platform for the characters to exhibit their opinions and sentiments without being confined.

Mijares (2005) utters that as a literary device letter writing has been providing glimpses of the mind of the writer without the interference of authorial things and perspectives of the reader (P. 1). Denkova (2015) avers that the epistolary novels render the intimate views of the character which could be his/ her thoughts and feelings without the obtrusion of the author, in which the dramatic scene that follows would be immediate (P. 8).

Celdran (2013) states that epistolary can be considered as a kind of self-writing that has been barricading the imposed expressions of identity and love (pp. 48-49). He adds that the prevailing I-you paradigm in epistolary helps the fictional protagonist to voice out their point of view (P. 198), which has even more been helpful to fictional heroines in desertness. He also stresses that letter writings in novels

have been the means of recuperating and exposing the thoughts and emotions of a character that has been restricted from all these due to social and political structures (P. 201).

These have been mirrored in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* where Jerusha uses letters that have been written to her patron to make herself be heard to the outside world. Hollander (2015) comments that the epistles present in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* have been the locus of the female voice (P. 198). In parallel to this line, Vera (1992) articulates that Jerusha's writings to the trustee aid her in formulating trackways to the world and in building a road to help her attain freedom (P. 32).

Ramsey (2016) comments that the missives in a novel aid the female characters to challenge and de-structuralize the roles that have been put forth at them to acquire freedom (P. 7). It can be seen that drafting emails has given Brynn in *Dear Rachel Maddow* the pathway to freely express her thoughts and sentiments, as she has not been intervened by a recipient or a reader.

### **9. Psychological Perspective(S)**

Epistolary novels have been acknowledged to contain the elements of a psychological novel by providing psychological insights into the character(s), especially women. Nair (2022) puts forth that the letters in novels aid the characters in exploring themselves, where the opportunities that have been given to the readers to get glimpses about the psychology of the protagonist have led to the development of this genre (P. 432).

Vera (1992) says that the protagonist of the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* uses the name Jerusha when she is an author and uses the name Judy when she is an ordinary girl along with her roommates and when belonging to the basketball team. She adds that it has been Jerusha who has been writing harsh letters when been denied permission to go for a trip, while on the other hand, it has been Judy who has been apologizing for her harsh letters (P. 39). Thus, the language and tone of letters in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* renders an inspection into the mindset of Jerusha, who has been facing psychological imbalances throughout the fiction. "Please forget about that dreadful letter I sent you last week" (Webster, 2011, P. 37).

Zhou (2009) avers that a letter in a novel gives subjective views of the character which has an effect that is similar to the effect that has been created in a psychological novel (P. 288). The novel *Dear Rachel Maddow* also provides an insight into the psychological condition of Brynn, who has been in a confused mental state when referring to her relationship with Sara and Michaela and while addressing her participation in her school elections which drives her to become inebriated in consuming alcohol. "But Michaela and Sara were all I could think about for the rest of the day. Michaela and Sara, Sara and Michaela" (Kisner, 2018, P. 76).

### **10. Sharing Life Experiences, Secrets and Interests**

The lonely female characters in fiction find solitude when writing epistles in which they consistently share their daily routine, everyday encounters and innermost thoughts, wherein Nair (2022) says that the epistolary form provides a route to express the experiences of a character in literary works (P. 432). Likewise, Aşçı (2020) utters that epistolary novels have not only been the pathway for communication to take place between characters but have also been the projector of the events occurring within the literary work (P. 6). Similarly, Nelson (2016) states that in epistolary fictions the letter writer turns into being the narrator of his/ her own life (P. 42), that is also ideal to the other kinds of missives.

This is greatly noticeable in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs*, where Jerusha constantly shares her involvement in college activities and sports, opinions on political and religious issues and narrates about how she has developed a bond with her college mates and Jervis Pendleton. Keely (2004) voices out that Jerusha writes letters to her unknown benefactor through which she describes her classes, developing views on politics and religion, adjustments to the world outside, struggles in writing and the acquaintances she builds with Jervis Pendleton (P. 364). In the same way, Khasanah (2014) stresses that Jerusha with the help of her letters reveals her familiarisation with her classmates and how she has competed with them in her studies (P. 3).

According to Stanley (2004), letters are references to the life of a person and the evidence of certain events or specific people (P. 202), which can be seen in the communicative exchanges by female characters in novels as well. As Selvi (n.d.) reports, letters in novels expose the life, behavior and biography of a character in, accordance with its storyline (P. 14). This is also seen in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow*, where Brynn utters about the happenings in her life and in college through the emails she drafts to Rachel Maddow as a road to solitariness. She continuously expresses her encounters in her daily life, her growing relationships with Lucey and Michaela and her revolts against Adam and Sara. She also gives an account of the disputes taking place between her parents and her.

Fictional lonesome female characters disclose their dark secrecies with the aid of epistles as they have not been able to project it to anybody around them. Alimen and Kalaycıoğlu (2021) mention that Jerusha avails the letters that she writes to her patron as a passage to open up about her confidentiality (P. 86), where Jerusha unconsciously grows closer to the trustee who avoids responding thereby making her exhibit her hidden life portions or events through letter writing believing that her letters would be the connecting instrument of expression. "Do you want me to tell you a secret that I've lately discovered? And will you promise not to think me vain? Then listen" (Webster, 2011, P. 117).

Goyal (2016) comments that the trust and faith that have evolved in a relationship due to bondage leads the sender to open up about their private life (P. 10). This has been reflected in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow*, in which Brynn too uses e-mails that have been composed to shed light on her attraction towards girls and her lesbian love with Sara and Michaela, which she avoids to disclose with her parents, friends and school mates. "Girls in skirts kill me... Girls who move on to other girls also kill me" (Kisner, 2018, P. 29)

Fictional female characters in aloofness take up the form of epistolary writing to showcase their likes, dislikes, interests and disinterests. Selvi (n.d.) says that the main objective of letter writing has been to unveil personal interests either good or bad (P. 14), which has been witnessed in the epistles written by women characters who have been aloof in fiction.

According to Hammonds (2019), Jerusha in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* makes use of the letters that she writes to her benefactor to display her interest in writing, sports and politics, and her curiosity in getting to know the trusty's appearance and activities (P. 26). "It is very difficult thinking about you in the abstract like a theorem in geometry... what does he look like?" (Webster, 2011, P. 23).

Like Jerusha, Brynn in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow* also takes up email drafting as a means of illustrating her liking towards school politics and writings for the school's paper. "I like listening to books about faraway worlds that exist only in the imagination. Or I watch or listen to you" (Kisner, 2018, P. 27).

### 11. Seeking Advice

Letter writing and other types of epistles written for a recipient who has been absent or to themselves by fictional female characters help them to obtain advice and solutions for a problem when they have been through a confused state. As Alkalay-Gut (n.d.) puts forth, Jerusha uses the letters that have been sent to her trusty as a medium to let out her dilemma in her affection towards Jervis Pendleton, wherein she refuses the love proposal from Jervis for which she later regrets (P. 92).

In parallel to Alkalay-Gut's argument, Hammonds (2019) articulates that Jerusha avails the letters to seek help and advice from her benefactor regarding the proposal that she receives from Jervis Pendleton despite knowing that he would not reply to her letters (P. 37), thereby considering her letters as a means of intimidation. "Something has happened and I need advice. I need it from you, and from nobody else in the world" (Webster, 2011, P. 159).

### 12. Revealing Failure and Wretchedness

In a novel, a lonely female character undertakes epistles to bring out her failure, downfall and devastation. Adhering to this comment, it has been seen that Jerusha in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* discloses her downfall in writing a book with the aid of her letters to her philanthropist. "With my own hands I chucked it in. I felt as though I had cremated my only child!" (Webster, 2011, P. 139). This has also been witnessed in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow*, where Brynn expresses her defeat in the school election in her emails to Rachel Maddow which have been undelivered. "And failed, Rachel again" (Kisner, 2018, P. 224).

Ramsey (2016) vocalizes that the self-destruction of the fallen women goes hand in hand with epistolary fiction. She adds to this argument by stating that when the fall has been by force then shame and fear take over the female characters where they use epistles as a protection and privacy of the genre. In continuation to this statement, she avers that if fallen by choice the women in novels avail correspondences to challenge the stigmas that have been imposed on them to liberate (P. 6). These opinions of Ramsey have been indirectly mirrored in *Dear Rachel Maddow*, where Brynn in her e-mails that have been composed to Rachel Maddow has reflected of how she has become inebriated after she has lost in the school elections and her intension on extricating herself. "It wasn't that I wanted to die. Just wanted to feel something other than loss for a change" (Kisner, 2018, P. 240).

In fiction, women dramatis personae who have been deserted make use of epistles to vent out their sufferings and depressions. Selvi (n.d.) utters that some letters show the happiness of the writer while others express pain, sorrow and anger according to the development of the storyline (P. 13), which can be visible in epistles other than letter writings present in novels. Hamdan and Abbas (2021) aver that when writing expresses the profound feelings and thoughts of an individual it would aid him/ her in escaping long-term agony (P. 275).

This expression of distress in letter writing is visible in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs*, where Jerusha exposes her frustration in being an orphan. It has also been picturized in the epistles drafted by Brynn to Rachel Maddow in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow*, wherein she projects her hardships while encountering continuous failures in her school elections.

#### 12.1 Loss or Detachment

Fictional female characters in aloofness express their disconnections from others with the help of traditional or modern correspondences. Nelson (2016) mentions that anger, anguish, loss, pain, bewilderment and anxiety frame down the purpose of letter writing to a person who is absent by the interest of the writer or by circumstances that have been under the control of the sender (P. 6), which is suitable to contemporary epistles that have been availed in novels. Similarly, Dodge (2001) comments that letter writing becomes essential when characters in novels undergo separation (P. 12), where it has not been limited to only the letter writing format in epistolary novels.

This is observable in the novel *Dear Rachel Maddow*, where Brynn sends emails to her father as she misses him and drafts emails to Rachel informing her agony from the death of her brother. Brynn undertakes emails as a medium to expose her miseries when she has been separated from her father and brother. "I splurged and bought a bouquet of yellow and white roses to put on Nick's grave... "Miss you," I said to his grave" (Kisner, 2018, P. 57).

### 13. The Themes of Family, Friendship and Love

Family, friendship and love have been the prominent topics in novels that consist of epistles, where the subjects of love are noticeable in both the novels *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Rachel Maddow*. Campbell (1995) mentions that the most common area of epistolary novels in the past has been identified to be love and seduction (P. 334). Ondrus (2014) mentions that a heroine of an epistolary novel finds satisfaction while writing letters rather than being in love (P. 242), which also suits to female protagonist who writes other kinds of

correspondences to expose her love life. Hart (2014-2015) says that the subjects of love and relationships have been pervading the female epistolary discourse in novels, where they use epistles as a tool to impress or inspire others which have nevertheless been insincere at times (P. 10).

Jerusha in her letters to her benefactor expresses her growing love towards Jervis Pendleton. In support of this statement, Keely (2004) remarks that the major part of Jerusha's letters in *Daddy-Long-Legs* contains details about Jervis Pendleton for whom she develops an attraction (P. 364). In parallel to Keely's statement, Hammonds (2019) also argues that a large portion of Jerusha's letters have been about her romantic relationship with Jervis Pendleton (P. 26). Brynn in *Dear Rachel Maddow* also exposes her lesbian love towards Sara and Michaela by drafting emails to Rachel Maddow.

Moran (2011) remarks that Patrician women have constructed their family memories through daily events that they have encountered in their households, and have later shared those observations and opinions in letters to their counterparts and friends (P. 196). This statement of Moran is also suitable for lonely female characters other than aristocratic women in novels. In connection with this argument, the subjects of family and friendship have also been reflected in both the select novels. Jerusha reveals her state of being an orphan and her acquaintances with her roommates and college mates in most of her letters to the trustee. Likewise, Brynn exhibits about her family and the death of her brother Nick in almost all her emails that have been drafted to Rachel Maddow.

#### **14. Transformation and Identity**

In fiction, epistolary provides a helping hand to the female characters to transform, rediscover and secure an identity for themselves. Wasserman (2003) states that the interior monologue that has been expressed through letter writing in fiction has ultimately led to understand better and the transformation of the character (P. 48). This statement of Wasserman can also be applied to many other forms of epistles that have been identified in novels as well.

Lee (2015) voices out that emigrant children in novels avail epistolary narratives to imagine nations and to construct their identities in an entirely new culture and geographical power (pp. 12-13). This argument of Lee is not only appropriate to children who have been displaced in fiction but also to female orphans and women dramatis personae who have been isolated in novels. Epistles pave the way for Jerusha and Brynn to redefine, transform and figure out their identities in select novels respectively.

Ondrus (2014) articulates that the epistolary genre has been contributing to the self-consciousness of the character since the character has been jotting down their thoughts and feelings into epistles which in turn enables them to examine themselves (P. 34). Jerusha in the novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* witnesses a steady growth in her character and recognizes her identity as an author with the aid of her letters to her patron, where Hollander (2015) informs that Jerusha makes use of the letters that she writes to her trustee as a vehicle to reinvent herself and thereby creatively involving herself to experiment her independent identity in religious, political and vocational things (pp. 191-192). "I am getting quite independent, you see. You have put me on my feet and I think I can almost walk alone by now" (Webster, 2011, P. 130).

Habibova (2022) vocalizes that when considering the character element in the epistolary novel, the letters have been used to develop the character as the letters have been utilized to expose the thoughts and opinions of the character (P. 208), which have also been spotted in the modern epistles present in fictions too. It has been clear that Brynn in *Dear Rachel Maddow* finds a transformation in her character and personality, thereupon determining her identity as a writer and an editor of her school newsletter and a well-known political personality after her school elections. "With all of that academic achievement (2.5!), I am back at the school paper with everyone's blessing" (Kisner, 2018, P. 262).

#### **15. Conclusion**

For decades now, there have been countless fiction that comprise both the traditional and modern forms of epistles that have been suitable for the development of the novel. There have been several uses and functions of letters, wherein Mastrantonio (2021) brings out that letter writing has been constituting actions and producing effects, mobilizing various manifestations, declaring many wars and have also been inspiring numerous people (P. 4). This statement of Mastrantonio not only applies to letters, but also to other kinds of epistles present in fictions.

Santini (2019) voices out that apart from emails replacing letters, other forms of e-messages like SMS, MMS, blog entries and voice mails as transcripts have also been included to develop and remodel the storyline and to reshape the communicative practices in the contemporary fictional world (P. 211). Patch (2014) verbalizes that the century-old format of letter writing in epistolary novels has faded away over time, wherein authors have begun to use blogs, emails, memos, instant messages and other kinds of present electronic communications to match the plot. He adds that there have been incorporations of train or plane tickets, drawings, paintings and replicas of menus too (P. 6). Hand (2015) remarks that letters, diaries, journals and many other forms of private writing discourses have been the metaphorical representations of the minds of the writer and the self (P. 5), which could have also been made applicable to rest of the epistolary.

Literature has been striving to use epistolary to unveil the suffering and sorrow that have been experienced by female characters and help in disintegrating and escaping their lonesomeness. The paper unveils that epistles have been commonly used by female characters and thus epistolary novels can be regarded as literary works belonging to the feminist genre. The research has tried to exhibit how female characters have been making use of epistles to expose their seclusions and have been availing them as instruments to break free the

loneliness. The work discloses that lonely female characters take up epistles to showcase that it helps them find companionship, share experiences, seek advice and attain freedom and identity. It also brings out that the psychological state of fictional women is greatly projected through traditional and modern correspondence. The study would like to point out that there has to be an increase in the usage of many more modern epistolary like blogs, posts in social media and other messaging platforms into fiction. This will enable the reader to get to know that contemporary forms of epistles too provide a helping hand for female characters who have been isolated to shatter their aloofness.

### Acknowledgement

I am thankful to my Supervisor Dr. V. Vijayalakshmi, who has aided me in writing this paper. She has supported me throughout this research and has provided me with insights about the study which has helped me in enhancing the work. She has also assisted me while checking the content and during the final stage of the completion of this paper.

### Conflict of Interest

The researcher has no conflict with this paper.

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