

TIE OF TRUST AND HOPE IN FRIENDSHIP: THE RESTORATION OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT IN MEREDITH RUSSO'S *IF I WAS YOUR GIRL*

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Abstract

People who identify as transgender are bisexual and neither masculine nor feminine. Sexual orientation has no bearing on them. They have gender dysphoria and were generally referred to as transgender. Due to the abuse, stigma, prejudice, and lack of acceptance they endure on a regular basis in society, they have higher rates of mental health difficulties than the general American population. The thesis primarily examines the relationships between the main character and other characters in Meredith Russo's book *If I Was Your Girl*. Rationale everyone in general population benefits from having strong social interactions in terms of their health and wellbeing. Due to their disadvantaged status in society, transgender people may find that having close, supportive connections is essential to their general health and wellbeing. By using the analytical-descriptive approach and the Aristotelian theory as support, it is evident that the main character has encountered two distinct types of friendship, which have had an impact on her social life. The story *If I Was Your Girl* depicts Andrew, the main character, as he faces hardships and eventually changes into a transgender with a name. Friendship is based on trust, and this paper emphasizes the existence of a transgender person in contemporary society while focusing on the moral principles that define a full human being.

Keywords: Friendship, Trust, Hope, Transgender, Human being, Support.

Introduction

Third gender has existed since prehistoric times and is still prevalent currently. The first occurrences of gender dysphoria were thought to have occurred in the medieval period when people who lamented being born a male rather than a female were thought to have existed. Because of erroneous ideas and cultural practises, transgender people are oppressed and currently confront a number of problems regarding their rights and identities. Due to their gender identity issue, they have been dragged down to alienation by their family and society. Different places, cultures, mindsets, traditions, and customs have different attitudes towards transgender persons.

Everyone in the general population benefits from social relationships in terms of their health and wellbeing. Because of their societal marginalization, transgender people may find that having close, supportive relationships in their lives is essential to their general health and wellbeing. Despite the significance of social connections to overall health and wellbeing, the social connection experiences of transgender people and their relational partners (such as relatives, close companions, romantic partners, and coworkers) have been very sluggish to emerge and remain limited.

The social connections that transgender persons make may reveal consistent and unique sites of resilience and stress throughout a range of encounters, providing potential locations for therapeutic support and intervention both during and after gender transformation. For transgender patients to receive quality medical care, it is essential to comprehend the social context in which they are entrenched. Social connections were the key element in reducing the negative impacts of stigma and enhancing wellbeing. Positive transition results in the social and medical spheres were enabled by supportive companions. The most important ways to improve transgender health is to provide support for creating solid social bonds.

Statement of the Problem

Social relationships play a crucial role in promoting everyone's health and wellbeing in society. Due to their disadvantaged status in society, transgender people may find that having strong, supportive social interactions is essential to their general health and wellbeing. This overarching themes in the novel *If I was your girl* show the potential characteristics that assist in the health-

buffering role of social relationships for transgender people and their partners. Of particular note, the transgender people and their partners have open communicative social relationships which has positive effects on self-conceptualisations of identity, which were inferred to protect against the damaging effects of stigma.

Objectives of the study

This assessment attempts to discover what testimony currently exists on transgender people's observations in social relationships with their intimate companions (including relatives, friends and partners).

Review of Literature

Throughout this research's literature review, a list of meticulously examined papers was used as a source. Henny Suharyati's ANXIETY ASPECT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL IF I WAS YOUR GIRL BY MEREDITH RUSSO is to examine the primary character's experiences with anxiety. The author also comes to the conclusion that the main character has experienced anxiety using the analytical descriptive approach which is reinforced by psychoanalysis theory. This conclusion has an impact on her social life. Milla Tynnyrinen's TRANSLATING GENDER IN THE NOVEL IF I WAS YOUR GIRL investigate the connection between sexuality and translation. Additionally, it's subjected from a feminist perspective and tries to engage in feminist translation and how this could be accomplished.

Research Methodology

The current investigation was performed with first-hand information and an appraisal of the literature available on Meredith Russo's *If I Was Your Girl* encompassing documents, online resources, and journals.

A hypothetical framework of friendship

A crucial component of social relationships is friendship. According to Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, the Greek word for happiness or human flourishing, is the end purpose of all human endeavour. *Eudaimonia* is a function in that it could be attained by humans via cultivation and that it serves as the ultimate objective and the reason behind performing all other actions. Therefore, happiness is a function that serves as the motivation for all of the activities and endeavours that we humans engage in on a daily basis. *Philia*, often known as friendship, is cultivated and contains virtue. Despite the fact that friendship is vital, there are several kinds of friendship that have varied degrees of depth in terms of one's well-being, each of which arises from a unique set of circumstances for Aristotle.

Aristotle asserts that it is crucial to be conscious of the fact that all people are seeking the good in order to determine the type of friendship one has with another. This is a very important distinction for Aristotle because it helps us understand the kind of friendship that will grow by defining what we mean by "good." These include friendship based on pleasure, utility, and ethics.

Friendship of Utility and Pleasure

Utility-based friendships develop as a result of business relationships. One person can be looking for something helpful, while another person might be able to offer that good or service. Such an association is potentially transient in the sense that the friendship would end abruptly as soon as the desired good or service was no longer desired. This occurs because there was no genuine concern for the other party and the connection was founded on utility, i.e., for the purpose of something else rather than friendship itself. Pleasure-based friendships have the potential to be just as transient. This is due to the fact that the object of pleasure fluctuates a lot, and when this happens, a friendship of this nature ends up being short-lived.

Utility and pleasure-based friendships are typically transient, and they are not the greatest kinds of friendships to seek out because it is conceivable for a virtuous person to become friends with a wicked person in these kinds of friendships. As Aristotle states: Because of pleasure or utility, then, even bad men may be friends of each other, or good men of bad, or one who is neither good nor bad may be a friend to any sort of person, but clearly only good men

can be friends because of themselves; for bad men do not delight in each other unless some advantage come of the relation. (Aristotle 16-20)

Friendship of Virtue

The perfect type of friendship is one based on the good, and this is the kind of friendship we should look for. Because this is a friendship between two moral individuals, it exists solely for that purpose and no other. Aristotle's comment on virtue:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good-and goodness is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and other like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or like. And such a friendship is, as might be expected, permanent, since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have. (Aristotle 6-19)

If the relationship holds up throughout time, we may say with confidence that it is the definition of a perfect friendship. A perfect friendship does not contain the evil or the non-virtuous, which is another difference. However, because truly virtuous individuals are rare or uncommon, such ideal friendships are not frequently found. On the subject of perfect friendship, Aristotle states:

But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare. Further, such friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other till they have 'eaten salt together'; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not. (Aristotle 25-32)

Indispensability of social relationships to an individual

In Meredith Russo's transgender novel *If I Was Your Girl* (2016), social relationships involving transgender people acquire a more antagonistic component. The first transgender author in United States, Janet Mock, uses her autobiography, *Redefining Realness*, to advocate for third gender rights. Meredith Russo, who identifies as third gender, has included the difficulties and conundrums experienced by third gender individuals in her debut novel through the character Amanda Hardy. She aspired to create a book with a joyful conclusion that featured a transgender character.

The protagonist of the novel is transgender teenager, Amanda Hardy. She intended to kick off her new life with a new identity after making changes to her existing one. Amanda made the decision to go with her father to Lambertville, Tennessee. Her desires to acquire friends and interact with new people just like the other girls. She recently transferred to a new school for a purpose, and she also had a reason for keeping her distance from everyone. She becomes friends with a gang of popular girls, including Anna, Layla, and Chloe. Additionally, Amanda has grown close to Bee, an aspiring bisexual woman with whom she shares an LGBT affinity. She eventually met Grant Everett. Grant was open, honest, and kind, which made her unable to resist letting Grant join her life. He was also very different from the other people she had encountered. His best friend was Parker, a football player. A belligerent Bee approaches Amanda in the restroom when she is still intoxicated. After Amanda rejects her, Bee rushes outside and informs everyone in the school that Amanda was born as Andrew. Walking home alone, Parker assaults her sexually and brutally. Chloe and Layla stumble discover them and aid Amanda by frightening Parker. Outraged by the entire incident, Amanda goes back to Atlanta. However, she decides that she wants to complete her senior year of high school. Her pals are happy to see her return at school and give her a warm welcome. The book concludes with Grant and Amanda discussing their relationship in more detail.

In addition to discussing how the protagonist and her family members engage socially, the Russo also examines how the protagonist and her environment interact socially. Amanda decided to leave her old house. Amanda decided to go to Lambertville because her mother had requested it. "She was worried about you," he said. "She said you weren't safe where you were living" (Russo 5).

Amanda's mother believed that she was not safe with her. Because too many people were aware of Amanda's true identity. Amanda, as a result, frequently experiences negative treatment. Conflicts emerged when Amanda received harsh behaviour from her friend's family. Amanda is forbidden from interacting with their toddler once more since he insisted on dressed liked a woman. The opportunity to wear his shirt went away while he was playing with his girlfriend:

"I've wanted to wear girl clothes for as long as I can remember."

"Have you ever done it?"

"When I was in first grade, the girl next door let me. Her parents caught us and I wasn't allowed to go back". (Russo 30)

After that occurrence, Amanda's parents forbid her from playing with their child again. Amanda did experience rough treatment from her peers frequently when she was younger. She recalls the moment a friend she thought was important insulted her and left her. Because their friend discovered Amanda's diary. Aristotle theory of friendship serves as the archetype for Amanda's relationship with her friends. Friendship based of pleasure has implied by the name, this friendship has a passion for sexual and recreational activities as well as games. If two people fulfil each other's beneficial needs, they are friends for life. As long as the object shared is optimally supplied, one wishes the other well, but this goodwill is never extended for the other person. The below mentioned lines states the friendship based on pleasure:

"Boys call them journals, faggot," he said in a low, dangerous voice ... "*So glad I haven't hit puberty yet. Maybe I'll be lucky and I never will, or maybe everybody is wrong and when I go through puberty I will turn into a woman like I'm supposed to. Probably not, but at least I can dream*". (Russo 172)

Friendship for pleasure appears to be motivated by passion because it is more common in young people who are eager to act on emotion-driven impulses and pursue what's practical. Even while it is simple to find among this group of people (teenagers and young adults), it is fleeting since the duration of a particular passionate need is short, and the friendship ends as that stage ends. As of now both parties experience the same amount of joy and ease in developing a friendship, it is possible to extend this type of friendship to a large number of people at once. Character and environment are clearly at conflict with one another. His surroundings are incredibly unforgiving. His school environment constantly has a negative impact on him. Even teachers who are aware of what occurred do nothing, this is reflected in:

I remembered all the times boys at my old school had cornered me out of the sight of a teacher and hit and kicked me in places that couldn't be seen through my clothes. I remembered how I was certain teachers knew what was happening and how they did nothing. I remembered the boys warning that nobody would care if I said anything anyway, and if I ever did get them in trouble they would put me in the hospital. (Russo 121)

He consistently receives harsh treatment from his surroundings. Nearly everyone in the area treats Andrew equally. Despite all of the abuse Andrew has endured, his aim is to complete his education. His genuinely aspires to be able to fulfil his dreams. He believes he will be able to leave her hometown and meet new people who might be accepting of him.

Despite the fact that Andrew's ultimate desire came true. He succeeded in achieving his goal of transforming into a woman. He will have surgery and create hormones to help him achieve his goal. "Amanda," I said then. "It's. . . I mean it's not my name, but I always wanted it to be. So, Amanda, I guess" (Russo 51).

He underwent name changes as well; first, he went by Andrew, but he later changed it to Amanda. Because Andrew likes the name Amanda, he ultimately decided to alter it. Amanda, who is seeking a new beginning, decides not to disclose her gender identity to anyone at her new school. She occasionally feels internal conflicts that drive her to act in the ways she does. She was desperate to let everyone know who she really was. But she was concerned about what may happen if she revealed her real self. The fear of Amanda is disclosed in her words:

I thought of going the rest of my life pretending I sprang to life from nothing at sixteen years old and felt my cheeks flush with shame and anger. I was so tired of cowering. I was so tired of hiding. I wanted to tell the truth to say it out loud. But, when I went to speak, nothing came out. "I'm sorry," I said finally. My eyes felt dry. "I know what I need to say, but I just . . . can't". (Russo 46)

The young bisexual woman Bee, with whom Amanda develops a close friendship, is a member of the LGBTQ community. Amanda informs Bee at Lambertville High School about her transition for the first time. As soon as Bee comes out as bisexual, Amanda tells her the complete truth about her background. Because they have a lot in common, the two girls become great friends and develop closer. Amanda is constantly torn inside. This time, it was about telling Grant who she was. Amanda succeeded in telling Bee who she really was, but she was unable to do the same for Grant. She feared Grant wouldn't comprehend the circumstances:

"I can't do it," I said to nobody in particular. I'd been able to tell Bee because I'd gotten swept up in the moment, and because I knew that even if she didn't understand, she'd try to. But what about Grant? Was it crazy that I wanted to tell him everything? Was it crazy that I felt like I couldn't keep seeing him without at least trying? (Russo 182)

In the lavatory, Amanda is approached by a belligerent Bee who is visibly intoxicated. Bee exits the dance after Amanda rejects her and informs everyone in the school that Amanda gave birth to Andrew. The coming out process happens as a result of someone else's actions, not Amanda's:

"But I saved the best for last, y'all," she said. "Look at our homecoming queen. Ain't she sweet? Ain't she beautiful? She's livin' the dream, right? I bet a lot of you guys've thought about her in the shower. Smart, pretty, but not pushy or intimidating . . . she's everything this fucked-up place wants a girl to be." The chapter one was mounting the steps. I couldn't stop shaking. Grant held me close and in that moment I loved him so much. "But guys, guess what: she's a *he!*" (Russo, 222)

Amanda finally acknowledges who she really is. Even harder, but she had no other option "I'm not," I said, my voice still low and soft, and for the first time I noticed the crowd behind us, listening intently. "'I was . . .'" I swallowed. "I was born a boy." We were both quiet for a moment. "What?" Grant said, his voice rising (Russo 225). It is clear from the afore mentioned remark that the friendship of the bee is a metaphor for the friendship of pleasure. The Bee begins to have feelings for Amanda on a sexual level, but she keeps it a secret. By disclosing the secret, Bee betrays Amanda's faith and optimism.

The second archetype of friendship expressed by Amanda was with the first group of famous girls at her new school in Lambertville are Anna, Layla, and Chloe. These females are always willing to assist Amanda even if they are unaware that she is transgender. Amanda does not trust them, so she does not reveal her secrets to them. This type of friendship, which Aristotle considers as a benchmark for all others, was highlighted more by the philosopher. He also refers to it as friendship without restrictions, not as a trait or a virtue. A perfect friendship is one that exists between two excellent and morally similar guys. A decent guy can recognise the good in the other person because he can tell the difference between the good and an apparent good. Because he sees his moral friend as a reflection of himself, he likes him. So, in the same way that he wishes his own well-being, he also offers this kindness to his friend, not so much for his own benefit as for that of his friend.

The other incident where is saved by her true friends. When Amanda flees the party after Bee embraced her and revealed that she was actually born a boy, Parker is the boy who sexually assaulted her. Parker escapes punishment after the attack, but Amanda is saved by her friends and taken home by Anna, Chloe, and Layla. "'I knew you were a creep", a girl's voice said. A beam of light landed on us, revealing Chloe's silhouette holding a rifle pointed at parker's back" (Russo 251).

By knowing the truth of Amanda, she was warmly welcomed by her friends. This made her understand the virtue of friendship through Anna, Layla and Chloe. "And if I ever do or say anything homophobic or transphobic, y'all just let mw know, okay? And I'll have a talk with the folks at church, Amanda, 'cause everybody loved you and I want you to feel comfortable coming back" (Russo 285).

Conclusion

Friendship is a crucial element of *eudaimonia* because it verifies our potential goodness, cultivates all of our virtues, and promotes human flourishing among all of humanity by seeing a person for their own sake and no other reason at all. This reciprocal well-wishing occurs among friends, family, business relationships, and even between states. Although the definition of friendship in modern society is considerably narrower than what Aristotle defines *philia*, different friendships do develop in a variety of contexts throughout our daily lives, and if two individuals happen to share virtues, a

true friendship may develop. Aristotle claims that because such a thing is uncommon, a virtuous person would only consider a select few to be their genuine friends. In light of this, friendship can be defined as a relationship built on reciprocal well wishes with people we love and who share our values. All people and nations ought to make an effort to foster strong friendships because doing so makes the best endeavours that promote human flourishing obvious and acknowledges them for their intrinsic worth and significance. However, moral individuals will look for friends who are thought of as second selves, and the acquisition of such friends will help to achieve the permanent possession of human flourishing and the possession of a life well lived. Luck and chance will determine who we meet. Amanda is blessed with the virtue of friendship with Anna, Layla and Chloe.

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