

# Traces of Abjection and Depression in Search of Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Temporary Matter* Based on Julia Kristeva's Theory

Maryam Sadeghi

Department of English Literature, Mahshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahshahr, Iran

## Abstract

Julia Kristeva (1941) is a French Philosopher, Psychologist and Feminist who has been influenced by Lacan's Postmodern idea. According to her, motherhood is superior to father's law and there is a distinction between semiotic and symbolic. She believed that maternal rules are significant in shaping identity. Moreover, she points out killing the mother symbolically in patriarchal societies in which a subject must do it in order to acquire an independent identity which is called abjection and finally it would result in depression. *The Interpreter of the Maladies* (1990) by Jhumpa Lahiri – reflects the tension and challenge of both laws of parental and maternal laws within the characters. In works by Lahiri, the new culture for the characters function as the symbolic order which requires the characters to go through abjection and get rid of maternal rule. How these processes take place which result into depression is the main argument of this article. It can be concluded that, in Lahiri's works, for some of the characters, abjection takes place; however, when a child is absent, abjection does not happen. Eventually, it can be said that the role of motherhood and the relationship between the mother and children are really important.

**Key words:** Semiotic, Symbolic, Abjection, Depression, Lahiri

## INTRODUCTION

It is believed that the female oppression has been started from the families; "for centuries, and all over Europe, there were families who disposed of 'unnecessary' or unmarried daughters by shutting them away in convents" (Walter 1). The idea of female oppression has penetrated into all layers of society among both educated and uneducated people even the most educated people like "Aristotle [who] declared that 'the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities', and St Thomas Aquinas believed that woman is an 'imperfect man'" (Selden et al. 115). Women have been silent in different fields including education, economics and politics, therefore, "examining the dualistic nature of western political thought provide

us with the tool to uncover the profound, but often silent, role of gender in politics" (Arneil, 7).

Due to such oppressions among women, the need for a system of thought in which women could be heard was felt. Therefore, feminism emerged as a system of thought for female expression. This system has challenged all the ideologies regarding the stereotypes about women. According to Wilfred et al., "feminism is an overtly political approach and can attack other approaches for their false assumptions about women" (223).

Julia Kristeva (1941), who was affected by linguistics and Lacanian psychoanalysis, has had a new insight towards female identity. She has devised a system – semiotic chora – which is a signifying system that resists the patriarchal discourse and regards maternal body to determine meanings. In the other words, semiotic chora refers to the imaginary order in which nonverbal communication between a mother and her child dominates.

For Kristeva, the speaking subject is made up of two dissimilar elements: the semiotic and the symbolic which are closely related to the concept of the abject. To work on

Access this article online



www.ijss-sn.com

Month of Submission : 06-2017  
Month of Peer Review : 06-2017  
Month of Acceptance : 07-2017  
Month of Publishing : 07-2017

**Corresponding Author:** Maryam Sadeghi, Department of English Literature, Mahshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahshahr, Iran.  
E-mail: m.sadeghi45@yahoo.com

semiotic concept, she opposes Lacan; indeed, in Kristeva's theory of language, the semiotic, which is associated with femininity and maternity, disrupts and interrupts the symbolic, which is the symbol of masculine culture.

The concept of abjection literally means the state of being cast out. In Kristeva's theory, the abject disturbs identity, system, order. To give a more clear definition, "the abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself. It encompasses a kind of borderline uncertainty which is ambiguous, horrifying, and polluting" (McAfee 5). This concept must be realized metaphorically as it refers to the existence of an external force within a subject. In other words, according to Kristeva's notion of abjection, the traditional sense of identity is no longer valid and the subject has to go through this self-loathing stage in order to reach a new image of self.

Kristeva identifies that a subject experiences abjection once she is separated from the mother. She recognizes that abjection depicts a revolt against what makes subject's existence. At this point the child enters the symbolic realm, or law of the father. Thus, when subject confronts the abject, she fears and identifies with it. It takes the subject into a state of being before signification in which a sense of helplessness takes over the subject.

Jhumpa Lahiri (1967) is a writer of South Asian origin who grew up in the United States, and the stories in her collections all relate to the Indo-American. The first collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) can be put among the best literary works and all of the short stories feature female protagonists. However, since the female protagonists are originally from India but living in American context, they are treated differently. Besides having a daily life as female, they can feel emptiness in their life and their relationship with men and in their marriage.

"A Temporary Matter" one of the short stories in this collection, shows the gap between a husband and a wife who do not know each other mentally, and they do not talk very much. However, when there is black out, they start talking to each other. In fact, this darkness can be symbolically interpreted since women are not able to talk to men because they are manipulated by men. They have their own ideal of themselves in imaginary order but they were forced to feel abjected by men to get a complete image of themselves. Through flashbacks and pieces of memory, the reader can understand why the wife is feeling depressed due to her marriage. It could be realized that the wife suffers from emotional strife that has caused such deeply woven alienation from each other. The wife mourns for their stillborn baby. This traumatic loss casts a tone of depression for the rest of the story and the couple's effort

to rekindle their marriage fails. This shows how women feel in symbolic order which is filled with abjection that can never be got over particularly for the women who are far from their mother land and live in another country with a different contextual culture.

The researcher intends to find the traces of abjection and depression within female characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter". In this article, the researcher is going to find how female characters experience abjection and depression in such a cultural background. In fact, the external forces that are mostly social and cultural and shape female identity will be examined in light of Kristeva's theory. In this article, it is attempted to apply Kristeva's theory into Lahiri's short story.

Jhumpa Lahiri (1967) is an Indian writer who has grown up in America. Lahiri mostly depicts the life of women in a different cultural context and their relationship with men; they are Indian women who are living in America into which they have been born or migrated. These female characters feel disappointed by their marriage or relationship with men and they are led into depression as in one of the stories it is said that "for some reasons the room did not haunt him the way it haunted Shoba" (TM 8).

*Abjection, Melancholia and Love* (1990), by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin explores the theme of abjection, melancholia, and love throughout major novels by different novelists.

Erin Wood Bodner, in his master thesis, "Murmur It to the Mud": The Speaking Subject in Samuel Beckett's *How It Is* (2003), emphasizes the access to language of the subject in Samuel Beckett's *How It Is*. He interrogates multiple theories of the constitution of the subject, focusing on the linguistic theory of Julia Kristeva, and concludes that none of these theories adequately account for Beckett's speaker's language. Peter J. Sabo, in his master thesis, *Impossible Mourning: Lamentations As A Text of Melancholia* (2010), provides ample evidences for melancholia. He reads the text of lamentations as representing a melancholic who suffers from several of its symptoms. The second chapter of his thesis relates Julia Kristeva's theory of melancholia to lamentations.

Peter J. Sabo, in his master thesis, "Impossible Mourning: Lamentations As A Text of Melancholia" (2010), provides ample evidences for melancholia. He reads the text of lamentations as representing a melancholic who suffers from several of its symptoms. The second chapter of his thesis relates Julia Kristeva's theory of melancholia to lamentations.

Lahiri's works have been published recently; therefore, they have not been subjected to many analyses. Ramona-Alice Bran, in her thesis master titled "Immigration: 'A Lifelong Pregnancy'? An Analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction" studies the effect of author's cultural background in her writing style. According to Ramona-Alice Bran, Lahiri "opens up her literary creations to a wider audience, and explores new cultural territories. At the same time, she makes it clear that her intention is not to circumscribe her work to 'pure' ethnic communities, but on the contrary, to delve into the heterogeneity of identities" (3).

## METHODOLOGY

As it has been mentioned, the focus of the study is on Kristeva considers language with two different aspects, the semiotic and the symbolic. In other words, she claims that there is a distinction between two heterogeneous types of signification in language. The semiotic is a discharge of drives, within language that shows itself in subject's tone. The symbolic is rule-governed elements of language but she never separates these two aspects from each other and believes that they have adialectic relation. She considers the semiotic as the maternal aspect of language and the symbolic as the paternal aspect. In fact, Kristeva is interested in the manner in which semiotic flows through the ordered form of meaning (symbolic) and conversely, the symbolic canalized into the semiotic.

Since the aim of the study would be on abjection and depression, the language that female characters use to describe their feelings would be the main focus of thesis. Therefore, character's female feelings, their expressions and their relationship with their surrounding environment would be examined. In other words, how men consider and treat the female characters in Lahiri's works must be studied. Since the focus of the study is on Kristeva's idea regarding semiotic and symbolic, female flashbacks and their memory from their past are useful to trace the abjection process and find the source of their depression.

## BODY

Throughout history, just it was mostly men who were considered as competent artist; however, in modern era particularly some decades ago, women were as important as male artists. One of the most import fields that women could be very effective has been literature and literary writing of women. The situation for female authors was so tense that some of them had to use a male name to publish their works. However, after feministic movements started to rise, many literary female figures could reach their real status in the society.

## Julia Kristeva

Julia Kristeva (1941) is a French philosopher, psychoanalyst, literary critics, and also a significant feminist who has had original thinking in feministic movement. The state of speaking is so important in her view that McAfee believes that "she is one of very few philosophers for whom the speaking being becomes a crucial constellation for understanding oral and written literature, politics and national identity, sexuality, culture, and nature" (McAfee 1). All of these forces are related to element of language and it can be said that they have a tight bond with one another so "where other thinkers might see these fields as separate domains, Kristeva shows that the speaking being is "a strange fold" between them all – a place where inner drives are discharged into language, where sexuality interplays with thought, where the body and culture meet" (McAfee 1).

Kristeva distinguishes between 'self' and 'subjectivity' in which the former refers to the mistaken belief about being fully conscious and the latter refers to "something altogether different...persons are subject to all kinds of phenomena: their culture, history, context, relationships, and language. These phenomena profoundly shape how people come to be. Thus, persons are better understood as subjects not selves" (2). She has had different ideas regarding literary terms in literary and feministic criticism. The most important ones are the terms such as 'intertextuality', and 'abjection' that are related to literary terms. The first term refers to meaning of a literary text in relation to other literary texts and has been an important concept in postmodern era since "the term intertextuality was initially employed by poststructuralist theorists and critics in their attempt to disrupt notions of stable meaning and objective interpretation" (Allen 3). She has used psychoanalysis to develop her idea of abjection. Abjection happens before mirror stage in which the infant starts to set up a border between himself/herself and the surroundings. In other words, "abjection is thus the psychic experience of a slippage across the boundaries of the self, and with that a partial erasure of the borders of the psyche which define the ego" (Wolfreys et al. 3).

Kristeva considers language with two different aspects, the semiotic and the symbolic. In other words, she claims that there is a dichotomy between two types of signification in language. The semiotic is a discharge of drives, within language that shows itself in subject's tone. The symbolic is rule-governed elements of language but she never separates these two aspects from each other and believes that they have mutual relation.

In 1999, Lahiri published her first short story collection entitled *Interpreter of Maladies*. *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine stories, set in America and India.

The nine stories have some common themes that can be applied to the people around the world. These topics include loneliness, exclusion, search for identity and lack of belonging. However, along with these negative themes, Jhumpa Lahiri has shown more optimistic issues including love, fidelity, tradition and. Moreover, there is a great variety of issues in this collection “such as communication and difficulties in communicating, and the extremes of carefulness and carelessness” (Brada-Williams 456). Lahiri's characters are from some Asian countries living in America. Lahiri's protagonists are both male and female; therefore, the reader can see the world that Lahiri has created through both genders.

### Plot Summary of “The Temporary Matter”

*The Temporary Matter* follows the life of a Bengali couple living in America. During a blackout, the couple talks about different matters. The blackout continues for several nights and the couple tells secrets to each other. At the end of the story, both of them weep together because of matters that they know now.

### Abjection

The first sign of abjection can be seen in this short story; Shoba was supposed to be a mother and “when Shoba went into labor, three weeks before her due date” (TM 9), she could not make it. In fact, if Shoba became a mother, she had to go through abjection process since “it is death infecting life. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object...and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us” ((Kristeva, *Power of Horror* 4). The maternal role for Shoba is the new beginning for the process of abjection which is shown by “Shoba...[standing] waving good-bye in her robe, with one arm resting on the mound of her belly as if it were a perfectly natural part of her body” (TM 9).

There is a child rising within Shoba's body; “her stomach suddenly immense, to the point where Shukumar no longer wanted to touch her” (TM 17). For this reason the process of abjection is needed and through this process the child would be able to reach the subjectivity. However, since Shoba cannot keep her own child, she does not experience the process of being abjected. In this situation, there would be no child for her to abject her and Shoba's body to reach autonomy.

### Semiotic

Semiotic is the complementary aspect for subjectivity; both mother and her child need to pass this stage, so that subjectivity gets completed. There are some drives and impulses particular to this stage that are necessary for acquiring identity. Although, there is no language and

process of signification in semiotic, a great deal of identity is shaped in this stage. It is believed that “the ‘semiotic,’ the mobile patterning of instinctual drives within the infant prior to the acquisition of language proper...when the speaking subject emerges as a distinct but unstable entity. (Cook 437). Shoba cannot experience this process since “the baby had been born dead” (TM 10). Therefore, the semiotic is not shaped for Shoba:

Shoba was lying on a bed, asleep, in a private room so small there was barely enough space to stand beside her, in a wing of the hospital they hadn't been to on the tour for expectant parents. Her placenta had weakened and she'd had a cesarean, though not quickly enough. The doctor explained that these things happen.... Shoba would be back on her feet in a few weeks. There was nothing to indicate that she would not be able to have children in the future. (TM 10)

The characters themselves did not experience the process of semiotic and they did not develop a mighty relationship with their own parents. Shukumar did not go through this process completely as “Shukumar hadn't spent as much time in India as Shoba had. His parents, who settled in New Hampshire, used to go back without him. The first time he'd gone as an infant he'd nearly died of amoebic dysentery” (TM 14). For this reason, “he wished now that he had his own childhood story of India” (TM 14). This is the reason that she cannot keep her own child. Since Shoba does not have a good memory of her own childhood with her mother. Therefore, she does not want her own child experience the same event; maybe unconsciously she wishes for child to die.

### Depression

The first sign of depression can be seen within Shoba after the death of her stillborn child; in fact she cannot take it since “within depression, if any existence is on the verge of collapsing, its lack of meaning” (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 3). In the other words the baby symbolized the loss of meaning for her: “She wasn't this way before. She used to put her coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, and she paid bills as soon as they came” (TM 11). The sign of depression can be realized even at their home when there is no connection between them. The depression that is seen in their life is rooted in the kid's death because “some sorrow or bereavement affecting...[her] relationship with dose relatives-such are often the easily spotted triggers of...despair” (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 3). Their relationship is filled with despair and disappointment which is reflected by Lahiri:

Tonight, with no lights, they would have to eat together. For months now they'd served themselves from the stove,

and he'd taken his plate into his study, letting the meal grow cold on his desk before shoving it into his mouth without pause, while Shoba took her plate to the living room and watched game shows, or proofread files with her arsenal of colored pencils at hand. (TM 12)

Shoba's mourning for the loss of child takes over her and she cannot deal with; moreover, she thought that child would bring Shoba closer to her husband since once Shoba gets abjected, the presence of father is needed to take Shoba's place. Shoba shows the signs depression in her own life because of her death of loved one. Since the baby was part of her body and Shoba could not go through abjection process, now she feels depressed. In other words, Shoba could not experience her maternal role and the relationship between Shoba and the child was not shaped:

He knew that when they returned from the hospital the first thing she did when she walked into the house was pick out objects of theirs and toss them into a pile in the hallway: books from the shelves, plants from the windowsills, paintings from walls, photos from tables, pots and pans that hung from the hooks over the stove. Shukumar had stepped out of her way, watching as she moved methodically from room to room. When she was satisfied, she stood there staring at the pile she'd made, her lips drawn back in such distaste that Shukumar had thought she would spit. Then she'd started to cry. (TM 16)

According to Kristeva, "Sadness is the fundamental mood of depression... sorrow is the major outward sign that gives away the desperate person. Sadness leads us into the enigmatic realm of affects-anguish, fear, or joy" (*Black Sun* 21). When Shukumar sees the vest which was his wife's gift, it can be the source of his sadness since it "depressed him... "You're married." (TM 17). Once more, the sign of depression is shown for Shukumar as "it sickened Shukumar... He was relieved and yet he was sickened" (TM 18). This is again related to the loss of a loved one "knowing that she had spent these past evenings preparing for a life without him" (TM 18). Shukumar suffers from this depression fearing her wife would leave him.

### *Symbolic*

From the very beginning of the short story, it can be realized that Shoba, as a woman, does not live as once she wished for. Everything that now she has as a married wife is different from how she pictured in her mind; even the way that now she dressed – "a navy blue poplin raincoat over gray sweatpants and white sneakers" (TM 9) is not what she has always wanted since it makes her "looking, at thirty-three, like the type of woman she'd once claimed she would never resemble" (TM 9). The way of Shoba's current life "inscribed in a symbolic system...in which...wanting

or being able to become" (Kristeva, *Power of Horror* 3) what she wants is impossible.

The condition of Shoba's and Shukumar's home show that Shoba is living in the symbolic pattern and nothing is based on her tendency. Lahiri has shown Shoba's inability in symbolic order metaphorically; "she looked at it as it for the first time, studying the wallpaper pattern carefully... Shoba and Shukumar hadn't celebrated Christmas that year" (TM 9). It is said that it is in symbolic stage that meaning can be implied since symbolic order is the site of signification for subjects. Shoba attempts to find meaning "through symbolic practices" (Kristeva, *Power of Horror* 7), so that:

These days Shoba was always gone by the time Shukumar woke up... and think(s) of her, dressed, sipping her third cup of coffee already, in her office downtown, where she searched for meaning which she could find it in "typographical errors in textbooks and marked them... with an assortment of colored pencils" (TM 10).

Shoba's searching for meaning has caused Shukumar trouble as a man; therefore "he envied her the specificity of her task, so unlike the elusive nature of his. He was a mediocre student who had a facility for absorbing details without curiosity... until he grew bored, gazing at his side of the closet which Shoba always left partly open, at the row of tweed jackets" (TM 10). The symbolic order in which Shoba dwells is the source of her pain and even Shukumar "knew it was something she forced herself to do" (TM 12).

It is in Symbolic order that man can enforce their own power over women since they control signs and language. Marriage becomes a path for man to dominate symbolic aspect and "since the marriage is of no account for the husband...very particular search for a father having a higher status is interpreted as maintaining" (Kristeva, *Power of Horror* 80) becomes the aim of a woman. Shukumar has chosen Shoba for her beauty and proving his own power. Shoba has chosen Shukumar to define herself since symbolic is the process of signification and making meaning. Lahiri depicts their marriage as the following explanation:

Each day, Shukumar noticed, her beauty, which had once overwhelmed him, seemed to fade. The cosmetics that had seemed superfluous were necessary now, not to improve her but to define her somehow. "By the end of the meal I had a funny feeling that I might marry you," (TM 15).

Semiotic and symbolic come together to complete each other. Lahiri knows that these two aspects – semiotic and

symbolic – complete each other; therefore, she puts the images of Shoba and Shukumar together:

It felt good to remember her as she was then, how bold yet nervous she'd been when they first met, how hopeful. They stood side by side at the sink, their reflections fitting together in the frame of the window. It made him shy, the way he felt the first time they stood together in a mirror. He couldn't recall the last time they'd been photographed. (TM 15)

Shoba and Shukumar can get a unified pictures of both symbolic and semiotic, "It surprised Shukumar that his words matched hers" (TM 15). At the end of the story, Shukumar confesses that he wanted to experience the role of father in symbolic order and how this process has been significant for him since as a father, his mission was to enforce his rules over his child. He has to experience the image of being a father in order to gain a complete realization of himself and his own ego. This means that the symbolic ego is a part of Shukumar's ego that must be experienced to develop his identity:

He'd arrived early enough to see their baby, and to hold him before they cremated him. At first he had recoiled at the suggestion, but the doctor said holding the baby might help him with the process of grieving. Shoba was asleep. The baby had been cleaned off, his bulbous lids shut tight to the world. "Our baby was a boy," he said... He had held his son, who had known life only within her, against his chest in a darkened room in an unknown wing of the hospital. He had held him until a nurse knocked and took him away, and he promised himself that day that he would never tell Shoba. (TM 18)

Shukumar at the end remarks the importance of his son for himself; although he has kept it as a secret, he knows that his son is part of his ego and his personality's development depends on his son to follow his rules in symbolic order.

#### **Law of father**

It is known that through the intervention of the father the child is released out of the imaginary world of infancy and enter into the symbolic universe of lack. Shukumar knows that the process of abject can affect him and makes his role more significant as a father. Therefore:

The last moment he saw Shoba pregnant, it was the cab he remembered most...he felt dwarfed in the backseat... he imagined a day when he and Shoba might need... to cart their children back and forth...He imagined himself... Shoba turned around to hand the children...these images of parenthood had troubled Shukumar, adding to his anxiety that he was still a student at thirty-five. (TM 9-10)

Although being a father was troublesome for Shukumar, he tended to hold his role as a father since parenting could give him power and approves his position as a figure who is in control of signification and language. The death of the baby had made him anxious; for this reason "after the baby died it was too late to withdraw from his teaching duties" (TM 10). Teaching was a tool for Shukumar to enforce his own power but the death of his baby robbed him of his power. Therefore, "his adviser had arranged things so that he had the spring semester to himself...the summer should give you a good push...You should be able to wrap things up by next September" (TM 10).

Raising a baby is both related to maternal and paternal body – semiotic and symbolic; however, the failure of raising a baby can result into "collapse of paternal laws" (Kristeva, *Power of Horror* 20). Since the death of baby, Shukumar feels that he does not have the power that he desired for. Even his image has been disrupted for his own wife:

But nothing was pushing Shukumar. Instead he thought of how he and Shoba had become experts at avoiding each other in their three-bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible. He thought of how he no longer looked forward to weekends, when she sat for hours on the sofa with her colored pencils and her files, so that he feared that putting on a record in his own house might be rude. He thought of how long it had been since she looked into his eyes and smiled, or whispered his name on those rare occasions they still reached for each other's bodies before sleeping. (TM 10)

Shukumar's flashbacks reflect Shukumar's tendency for the law of father as a husband since "it is because laws, connections, and even structures of meaning govern and condition" (*Power of Horror* 10) which makes a man powerful like the power that Shukumar used to have:

He remembered their first meals there, when they were so thrilled to be married, to be living together in the same house at last, that they would just reach for each other foolishly, more eager to make love than to eat. He put down two embroidered place mats, a wedding gift from an uncle in Lucknow, and set out the plates and wineglasses they usually saved for guests. He put the ivy in the middle, the white-edged, star-shaped leaves girded by ten little candles. He switched on the digital clock radio and tuned it to a jazz station. (TM 13)

Having analyzed the whole short story based on Kristeva's theory, it could be concluded that the female character tends to have children. The children are necessary for her to complete the process of abjection. Moreover, semiotic

becomes place to practice the maternal rules to make relationship with children.

## CONCLUSION

Based on Kristeva's theory, the child is dominated by his/her drives. These drives are destructive and chaotic; however, the child's relationship with his/her mother orients his/her drives (Kristeva, *Revolution* 27). As soon as the child enters the symbolic order, his/her drives are constrained by the social and the biological rules. Nevertheless, the traces of semiotic drives remain forever. Kristeva holds that language has two aspects, the semiotic and the symbolic. (Kristeva, *Revolution* 53). The semiotic aspect reflects the bodily drives in language and it is linked "to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsations of which Kristeva sees as predominantly anal and oral; and as simultaneously dichotomous and heterogeneous," (Moi, 160) and the symbolic aspect represents the social constraints on these drives.

However, these two aspects are interdependent and neither one is complete without the other one; these two aspects should be together to make a meaningful communication. The subject uses language and communicates with other people. Through using language, s/he gains her/his identity and expresses her/his desire. Besides, her/his relationship with people changes her/his subjectivity from time to time- what Kristeva calls subject in process. Not only can the subject's desires influence her/him, but also other people's speech and desire can influence her/him too.

In Lahiri's short stories, it is female characters that tend to get abjected by being mother. In "The Temporary Matter", Shoba was supposed to be a mother; however, her baby dies and she cannot experience this process which becomes the source of her depression later.

The next issue that has been analyzed and studied was the concept of depression. Lahiri has shown the issue of depression within the female characters in her short stories. In "Temporary Matters", the first sign of depression can be seen within Shoba after the death of her stillborn child. The sign of depression can be realized even at their home when there no connection between them.

In Lahiri's short stories, the semiotic aspect has been shown in females' tendency to become a mother. In "Temporary

Matters", this aspect is desired by Shoba to become a mother and makes maternal connection with her own child but she cannot. Moreover, the characters themselves did not experience the process of semiotic and they did not develop a mighty relationship with their own parents.

Lahiri has shown both symbolic and the law of father in different short stories. In "The Temporary Matters", Shoba, as a woman, does not live as once she wished for. Everything that now she has as a married wife is different from how she pictured in her mind. Shukumar, he tended to hold his role as a father since parenting could give him power and approves his position as a figure who is in control of signification and language.

Eventually, it can be said that, the role of motherhood and the relationship between the mother and children is really important. Semiotic and abject play the most important roles in shaping identity and absence of children could result into depression for Lahiri's characters. Lahiri has shown that in semiotic stage, the maternal rules take over the subjects. He has put emphasis on this stage in which children make a nonverbal relation with their mothers. Lahiri has signified the role of culture in symbolic order in which men want to control the discourse and language, and the women have to follow them.

## REFERENCES

- Arneil, Barbara. *Politics and Feminism*. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1999.
- Cook, Jon. *Poetry in theory: an anthology, 1900-2000*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.
- Fletcher, John and Michael Benjamin. *Abjection, Melancholia and Love*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- . *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- . *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- . *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. Boston, New York: Mariner Books, 1999.
- McAfee, Noelle. *Julia Kristeva*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Sabo, P. "Impossible Mourning: Lamentations as a Text of Melancholia". Diss. University of Alberta (Canada), 2010. Dissertations & Theses: Full Text, ProQuest. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.
- Seldon, Raman and Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Great Britain: Edinburgh Gate, 2005.
- Wilfred, L. Guerin and Labor, Earle and Morgan, Lee and Reesman, Jeanne C. and Willingham, John R. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2005.

**How to cite this article:** Sadeghi M. Traces of Abjection and Depression in Search of Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Temporary Matter* Based on Julia Kristeva's Theory. *Int J Sci Stud* 2017;5(4):125-131.

**Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.