

On the Intersection of Race and Gender: A Reading of Thanhha Lai's *Inside Out and Back Again*

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Abstract

In the age of transnational migration, the cognizance of the intersection of power systems is crucial to the multidimensional understanding of the identities of the displaced people. The cataclysmic effects of the Vietnam War lie at the heart of the mass exodus of refugees from South Vietnam. The paper elaborates upon the significance of the intersection of two crucial power systems, race and gender in shaping the ways of being and identity making process of the Vietnamese refugees in America. With Kimberle Crenshaw's theory on Intersection as the major interpretative tool along with post-structural feminist theories of Judith Butler on gender, an attempt is made to discern the ramifications of the intersection of the power systems. The paper calls for a need to consider one's subjectivity as crucial in shaping the understanding of gender as a fluid concept unfettered by the traditional boundaries of race and gender. The paper foregrounds the representation of gender through Ha, the protagonist in Thanhha Lai's *Inside Out and Back Again* and brings forth her understanding of gender within two different social systems, the Vietnamese and the American society. Building on these observations, an attempt is made to foreground the varied ways in which gender and race intersect in the novel and in a way reframes the traditional narrative of refugees as mere vulnerable beings.

Keywords : Intersectionality, gender, racial friction, linguistic vulnerability, hyper visible