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The Consequence of Restriction:

Examining Women's Fates in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Chekhov's *Three Sisters*

Women are pressured to be less mobile and autonomous than men because of their sex, despite their abilities or desires. Such is the context wherein Gustave Flaubert places his novel, *Madame Bovary,* and Anton Chekhov his play, *Three Sisters*. These stories follow the plights of women in two different societies: the former, mid-1800's France, and the latter, early 1900's Russia. The audience (both reader and viewer) is presented with an opportunity to engage in the struggles that the female protagonists face, and becomes an eyewitness to their subsequent plights. The sorrows each of these women face blooms from their gender-based restriction of freedom. Their status as women leaves them with little mobility or opportunity for choice, forcing them to forfeit their dreams or pursue them as best they can with the limited tools that they are given. Both of these works examine how their female protagonists, in search of a fulfilling life, utilize escapism and vicarious mobility in an attempt to combat this forced repression and achieve a version of the freedom and choice that they have been denied, ultimately failing them.

A desire for something beyond reach is found in the hopes of Emma and the sisters. Raised on a farm in the country, distant from high society, Emma's exposure to fantastic stories and an education at a convent school leaves her entranced. She idolizes a list of "illustrious or ill-starred" female historical figures who "stood out like comets in the vast darkness of history", and on some level men and their accomplishments but, far from the comets, they are "less clearly distinguishable among the shadows" (Flaubert 36). She is

attracted to the dramatic and the powerful. The women listed, from Joan of Arc to the Agnes Sorel, are vastly different, ranging from poets to great leaders to the mistresses of great leaders. Despite their differences, all of these women have romantic stories attached to their names and have some form of power. Emma, admiring great and tragic histories across the board, sees the stories of women, people like her, brighter and more meaningful than those of men. This highlights Emma's attraction to power, specifically, powerful women who despite of or because of their sex, depending, have made waves in history. In school, she shows promise, "it was always she who answered the curate's most difficult questions", displaying her intelligence (Flaubert 34). She is a romantic, listening "intently" to stories and "quivering" at the sight of beautiful things (Flaubert 36-37). These experiences shape her longing for unobtainable romanticism. Emma is more interested in superficial beauty than depth, but this does not lessen the limitations society places on her, due to her sex, and despite her abilities as an intelligent person, to seek this desire. Emma struggles against the confines of her society, and at the convent "she became increasingly irritated by discipline, which was antipathetic to her nature", despite it being exactly what society expects of her (Flaubert 38).

The sisters, like Emma, feel unsatisfied with the lot they have been doled, and feel trapped in their current situation. The sisters have also been educated beyond the level of their peers and have greater intellect, thanks to the education instilled in them by their father, which is a luxury that Masha finds to be "not even a luxury, but an unnecessary encumbrance" as it is no use in their current lives and, if anything, serves as a reminder of their misplacement, highlighting their roots to something greater than what they have before them (Chekhov Act I). Despite attempts at argument, the sisters still feel that they

cannot be satisfied where they live. Olga feels her "strength and [her] youth oozing away from [her] every day", and Irina declares that "life for us three sisters hasn't been beautiful yet, we've been stifled by it as plants are choked by weeds". (Chekhov Act I). They crave stimulation: Irina sees work as the answer, Olga marriage, and Masha liveliness, but they only find entrapment.

The female protagonists associate their unhappiness with physical entrapment, but ultimately the idealized cities they seek are a stand-in for mobility and freedom. In the case of *Madame Bovary*, Emma wishfully longs for the city, ideally, Paris, where she wants "both to die and to live" (Flaubert 59). She associates the city with stimulation and the beautiful treasures of her stories, a contrast to the country that she has known and that has disappointed her. To her, the city, "with the noise of the streets, the buzz of the theatres and the lights of the ballroom", is where she imagines her former schoolmates "were living lives where the heart expands, the senses bourgeon out. But she—her life was cold as a garret whose dormer window looks on the north, and ennui, the silent spider, was weaving its web in the darkness in every corner of her heart" (Flaubert 43). Her loneliness and boredom is contrasted directly with what she imagines to be the opposite experience of stimulation in the city. Even Charles associates her unhappiness with place, believing that "something about the town…must be causing her illness"(Flaubert 66). Though moving does little to improve Emma's overall position, despite her belief that "things could [not] be the same in different places" (Flaubert 82). Emma is continually disappointed, finding the new town of Yonville comparable to the old town of Tostes. Here too she finds herself with grander ideas than the rest of the town's inhabitants, leading her to continue idealizing the city and using its promises as an escape from her daily oppression.

The sisters in *Three Sisters,* similarly to Emma, escape to a city as the source for their unobtainable happiness. This city is Moscow, the city of their youth. Where they currently live, their education is useless, and they find themselves above their fellow townspeople, within whose population "there are so many rude, ill-mannered, badly-brought-up people" (Chekhov Act II). Natasha, their brother's crush turned wife in the course of the play, is one of these townspeople, and she is initially faced with criticism and dislike from the sisters because of this. In contrast, Moscow is flawless in the eyes of the sisters. Masha believes that "happy people don't notice whether it is winter or summer. I think if I lived in Moscow I wouldn't mind what the weather was like . . .", symbolizing her belief that no matter what the circumstance, Moscow would offer her happiness (Chekhov Act II). The sisters believe that Moscow will solve their feelings of entrapment, but the play sneaks in such disasters in the city such as deaths by overeating and frost in the lines of other characters, bringing to light the imperfections of Moscow (Chekhov Act II, IV). Additionally, the play mentions that "Balzac was married in Berditchev", showing that a great person can make a small, seemingly useless town seem great, while the sisters continue to believe that place makes person, not the other way around (Chekhov Act II). Moscow is not the answer to their pains, but it used as a replacement for a sense of freedom, and the sisters cling to the city as an escape from their painful reality.

The women of these stories long for and rely on men in the same way that they long for the cities; their longing is misplaced, filling the hole of the independence that they are not granted because of their sex, making them seek vicarious mobility through men. Emma marries Charles because the changes he initially brought to her life stimulated her enough to mistake her feelings for love (Flaubert 39). She does not crave him. She craves the

intellectual and emotional stimulation that comes from independence. It is stated that "a man, on the contrary, should he not know everything, excel in manifold activities, initiate you into the energies of passion, the refinements of life, all mysteries?" (Flaubert 40). The key word, initiates, highlights the integral role a man plays in the life of his wife: he is a gateway for her to explore the world because she is not in the position to do so herself. When Charles fails her, Emma tries to be morally good, but she falls subject to the cunning promises of Rodolphe and the possibilities of passion and status that come with him. When she first meets Rodolphe, his scent reminds her of her waltz with the viscount, showing that she is attracted to him for his associations with high-class status (Flaubert 139). She interprets the affair as love, but she desires to see Rodolphe to "tell him she was bored, that her husband was odious and that life was horrible" and pressures him to run away with her. Her motivation is her unhappiness, not on Rodolphe's personhood, as "every day her love for him was increased by the repugnance she felt for her husband" (Flaubert 183). Furthermore, her next affair with Leon eventually fails to suffice as well. Despite having a lover who indulges her, "she was not happy, and had never been". The narrator continues:

> Why was life so unsatisfying? Why did everything she leaned on instantly crumble into dust?...But if somewhere there existed a strong, handsome man[…] why was it not possible that she might meet him someday? Nothing was worth seeking – everything was a lie! Each smile hid a yawn of boredom, each joy a curse, each pleasure its own disgust; and the sweetest kisses only left on one's lips a hopeless longing for a higher ecstasy. (Flaubert 279)

The structure of these questions links a dissatisfying life to Emma's inability to find something to lean on, to a dream of an ideal man, indicating that she sees men as a pillar to lean on, and it is the disintegrating pillars around her that cause her unhappiness. Since everything that Emma leans on turns to dust, and this is the cause of her unhappiness, she must learn to stand solidly without leaning on anything to be truly happy. In other words, Emma must not rely on men to support her. The catch is that in her society, her only form of freedom is through dependence on men, leading her to seek out men who have the possibility of giving her the desires she cannot give herself.

The Prozorov sisters use men as a substitute for freedom as well. Their brother Andrey holds the key to their home and their mobility, as Irina states that she wishes that Andrey would "hurry up and lose everything, then perhaps we'd go away from this town", drawing the conclusion that he is responsible in large part for their current location (Chekhov Act II). Eventually, he mortgages the home without telling his sisters despite that "the house doesn't belong to him alone, but to [all of the siblings]", showing that his freedom is greater than that of his sisters, and that they must trust him to use this to protect their wellbeing, though he fails (Chekhov Act III). Masha, most similarly to Emma in circumstance, "was married at eighteen, when she thought [her husband] the cleverest of men", as he had been a teacher when she was just out of school, but as she grew older, he proved to be less clever than she had thought, leading her to boredom (Chekhov Act I). Masha's boredom is temporarily resolved in her love affair with Vershinin until he leaves, wherein she declares that her "life's a failure, . . . [she wants] nothing now. . . .", showing her

dependency on men (Chekhov Act IV). Upon discovering that the brigade is set to leave, Irina exclaims her respect for the baron and that "[she'll] marry him, I consent, only let's go to Moscow! I implore you, please let's go! There's nothing in the world better than Moscow!" (Chekhov Act III). She speaks of the baron not in terms of love, but in terms of respect, and excitedly processes how marriage to the baron would serve a gateway to be reunited with Moscow. With little self-driven mobility available to her as a woman, she sees an opportunity to use the baron's mobility to her advantage. Olga, the sister with no marriage prospects, experiences a desire for a man in her life as well. She believes that "a person doesn't marry for love, but to do her duty", continuing to say that she would marry even an old man as long as he were good (Chekhov Act III). Due to the lack of independence that society offers women, it is their duty to marry.

Ultimately, the efforts to women make to satisfy their thirst for freedom through substitution is futile, and their stories end tragically. Emma has racked up an obscene amount of debt, while being taken advantage of by Monsieur Lheureux who uses her position as a wife to manipulate her. She flounders to try to pay off the debt by begging anyone she can think of, from a notary who offers to help her for sexual favors, further showing her vulnerability to manipulation because of her sex, to past lovers. When it is clear that she will be unable to pay them, she kills herself and feels "what was almost the serenity of a duty well done" (Flaubert 310). She imagines it her duty to kill herself, as her life is granted little worth by society. Had Emma had a greater opportunity for autonomy, conceivably she would have been able to take responsibility for her purchases and been better educated on monetary

affairs, and Monsieur Lheureux would not have been able to take advantage of her role as a wife. The sisters' end their story with less dramatics, but are left feeling hopeless and confused by the futility of their lives as the brigade leaves them permanently and they are left with only each other. Had they had access to greater freedom and mobility, they others leaving would not have been so dramatic, as they themselves would have been able to leave.

Women are not the only ones who suffer in these works, but their suffering has been related to their lack of freedom; the men in these works, on the other hand, have freedom, but suffer in spite of this freedom because of their defects. Charles, for example, has a background in a good school, but he is dimwitted. He is a doctor, but he fails in major ways, including causing a man to lose his leg (Flaubert 180). He has freedom of mobility, but "he had never had the curiosity, he said, while he lived at Rouen, to go to the theatre to see the actors from Paris" (Flaubert 40). He is in a position of freedom, and he does not use it to his advantage. He is heartbroken and destitute by the end of the novel, but never understood Emma in the first place, and often seemed unaware of her suffering (Flaubert 105). Rodolphe is prideful over his triumphs over women and sees them as pawns, and neither he nor Leon help Emma when she is in trouble, and both shown to be peaceful despite her death (Flaubert 335). In *Three Sisters,* Andrey is the one with control over the home. He is talented and well educated, but seeps into decline as he loses his money gambling. He has the power to decide the fates of many. He, like Rodolphe, looks at women as less-than, as he believes that "a wife is a wife. [Natasha is] a straightforward, upright woman, kind, perhaps, but for all that there's something in her which makes her no better than some

petty, blind, hairy animal. Anyway she's not a human being" (Chekhov Act IV). Andrey holds the cards of freedom in his hands, yet fails to utilize it to better his life.

Both of these texts feature women whose repression leads them to the traditionally negative behaviors of hollow idealization and adultery. These women are too big for the box that society has trapped them in and, in an effort to obtain a semblance of freedom, they seek the escapism of idealized places and the love of men, who offer possibility of a diluted mobility. In both cases, the audience is set up to identify with the female protagonists, leading them to sympathetically observe their plight. In the face of these themes, it is important to acknowledge that both of these works are written by men. The protagonists in the stories depend on men for their freedom, attempting to leverage their mobility in order to have a semblance of it themselves. Like the protagonists in the texts, the women of these times and places do not have the freedom to a powerful voice and must depend on men to interpret their stories and represent them for the generations to come.

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The Balancing Act: Motherhood in *Pather Panchali*

Motherhood is more than simply a being a mother, motherhood is a state filled with nuanced responsibilities, wherein a mother is not only responsible for herself, but for the wellbeing of her children. The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology defines motherhood as "the social expectations, experiences, and structures associated with being a mother" (Walzer). This complicated portrayal of motherhood is often overlooked in art, but Satyajit Ray's film *Pather Panchali* (1955), a film that depicts the life of a family in rural India in the 1950s, offers an intimate portrait of motherhood through its mother figure, Sarbojaya. This portrait is illustrated by elements inspired by the Italian neorealist movement

Stemming from the cultural shift that followed World War II, Italian neorealism combines and extends elements of other movements, such as melodrama and propaganda film, to form a unique genre of its own. It is known for breaking down barriers between fiction and nonfiction by using documentary style methods to create fictional films that have a sense of realness, oftentimes filming on-location as opposed to a set and highlighting scenes of everyday life. Additionally, Italian neorealist films tend to focus on those of lower social class and have a humanist approach (Thompson and Bordwell). Though not a true Italian neorealist film, *Pather Panchali* uses these tools to create a convincingly true-to-life portrayal of motherhood.

The film shows Sarbojaya's attempt at balancing her own household cares and raising her children responsibly with ensuring her children's wellbeing. The series of shots depicting Durga helping Sarbojaya at 29:05-29:54 offer a glimpse into this relationship. The shots offer a documentary-style approach that puts the audience in a position of feeling as though they are watching something without the subject knowing they are being watched. The first shot of Sarbojaya is a medium close-up with a stilt down the center, that, when Durga appears, acts a

visual division between the two. As though to get a better view, the shot pans to the right so that the stilt is no longer visible, offering a sense that the viewer is peering in on an actual private moment. The two women are shown doing everyday household chores, and Sarbojaya speaks of Durga's need to participate less in child's play and more in the daily work of chores and religious rites that come with growing up. Her tone abruptly changes when she senses that Durga may have a fever, and her frustrated tone turns to concern as she looks at Durga and feels her forehead. Her frustration at trying to raise Durga properly is halted when she senses that she may need her care. The reality of this scene is found in its use of documentary-style shots, on-location filming at the household, and everyday subject. The scene is not concise but, as director Satyajit Ray claims, "retains the 'rambling quality of a novel' because 'life in a poor Bengali village does ramble'" (Majumdar).

As a mother, Sarbojaya's intimacy with the household is far greater than that of her husband, Harihar, who, while Sarbojaya spends her time working in the home and caring for the children, her husband explores money-making options outside of the home. The series of shots beginning at 52:02 and ending at 53:50 show in intimate detail how the pressures of the home weigh more greatly on Sarbojaya than her husband. The family's lower economic class is highlighted in this conversation, much in keeping with Italian neorealist tradition. Another medium shot is used to open, giving the audience a sense of intimacy with the subjects without getting close enough to be part of the scene. Harihar goes on happily about this and that opportunity to make money, while Sarbojaya remains unaffected. Soon the shot cuts to a medium close-up of Harihar continuing his enthusiastic report. He states that if he were to accept too soon, people may think lowly of them, tossing aside that Sarbojaya may gossip, because she is a woman, making them look bad. Out of the corner of the shot, the fan that Sarbojaya has been

moving stops. The documentary style is broken with a close-up of Sarbojaya that relates the intimacies of her offence at this statement. She says that she "has better things to do with [her] time", and her face reveals traces of irritation at Harihar not recognizing the work that her role as a mother entails. As the scene continues, this method of cutting to a close-up of Sarbojaya is repeated when she disagrees with her husband. Her husband wants to buy new clothes and shawls for the family, while Sarbojaya is more concerned with their debts and the household repairs, showing her intimacy with the home. One close-up shot at 53:32 shows Sarbojaya looking into the distance, giving the audience a view into her deep concern for the wellbeing of her family, which is directly related to her husband's income. Like Italian neorealism, this scene shows not "merely representing poverty but also analyzing it", as we don't simply see an impoverished family, but are forced to confront their struggles alongside them (Mujumdar). The establishing shots keep the audience at a distance, creating a sense of "realness" while the close-ups break the documentary style to offer the audience an intimate look at Sarbojaya's perception of her reality. Additionally, the scene focuses on a conversation that seems as though it could be found in reality, and the everyday worries of the family are the focal point.

The influence of Italian neorealism's approach to realism in cinema acts as a tool to depict the complicated emotions and responsibilities of motherhood. The film offers an insightful view into class strains on motherhood and offers us glimpses into how the strains of class and motherhood affect Sarbojaya's personhood, which is inherently tied to her female gender. Motherhood is a woman's state, and the strains of motherhood are directly tied to her womanhood. Sarbojaya's role as a mother and as a woman create a tight space wherein she cannot access the same path her more mobile husband, who is not often shown in the home, does. She confronts him during a close-up shot at 1:35:00, saying that "you eat and sleep and go

about your work, unconcerned whether you're paid or not. I had lots of dreams too. All the things I wanted to do...", she carries on, looking with painful longing into the distance at these things that never came to pass, and her lack of specification of what these things are adds to the futility of wishing for them any longer. *Pather Panchali* shows how Sarbojaya's role as a mother and as a woman in society has obstructed the path towards her goals, and she is left to attempt to make the future for her children and, by the end of the film, her child easier than her present.

The Underestimated Ordinary:

The Significance of Everyday Occurrences Amidst Unrest

In times of unrest, the ordinary, the commonplace, everyday aspects of life, is often overlooked. Issues of the ordinary are skirted in favor of focusing on the overarching turmoil affecting the greater whole. There exists an "anthropological convention that places state and society at some remove from personal life, as if they were merely natural or neutral setting for action" (Mertz 1). This convention does not exist merely in research and studies, but in art produced from places of turmoil. Through the examination of the films *Chronicles of a Disappearance* and *Ok, Enough, Goodbye,* as well as the book *Ordinary Affects,* th*e* importance of the ordinary within spaces of unrest will be analyzed and explored.

The overarching unrest is significant because of the trickle-down affect it has on the lives of the ordinary. The reason that events can be considered shocking is because they have something to be compared to. This something is the ordinary, that which does not unsettle or shock, that which is expected. Imagining a world without the ordinary is an impossible task, as this would mean there is no semblance of a constant. According to Kathleen Stewart's analysis of the ordinary in her book *Ordinary Affects,*

> "the politics of ordinary affect can be anything from the split second police decide to shoot someone because he's black and is standing in a dark doorway and has something in his hand…There's a politics to difference in itself—the difference of danger, the difference of habit and dull routine, the difference of everything that matters" (Stewart 16).

This is to say that politics and other major forces of a society are woven through ordinary circumstances. They are found in the everyday, and their existence can create events, such as shooting someone, that can perpetuate the broader unrest. This further emphasizes the need to look at the ordinary and political unrest together, as they interact with each other and can play a role in perpetuating or resisting movements. Take, for instance, the opening scenes of Ok, Enough, Goodbye, in which Tripoli is described as being known in the past for its orchards and their smell. This is the baseline, this is the everyday, and the fire and turmoil found in the scenes that follow are shocking because of their comparison to the former everyday. Aside from these moments, the film chooses not to focus on the grand ideas of unrest, but on the very personal, small-scale life of one man. This personal life is influenced by the surrounding unrest in a variety of ways, but it never overshadows his life, nor those lives surrounding him. The unrest in the surrounding city is the cause for frequent power outages that have become a norm for the individuals in the society. As he dyes his mother's hair—an ordinary occurrence—the electricity goes out. What may not have always been considered usual has now moved into that domain as neither of the characters react in a surprised way. "There goes the electricity," the mother says calmly, almost in the same breath that she tells her son "don't stain my neck". The viewer is unsettled by the sudden darkness on the screen as that is not the norm for films, but the

characters in the film are used to this ordinary, and their lives move within this realm. A scene in *Chronicle of a Disappearance* shows a man feeding a bird with the background of a neighboring child crying. The scene is very rooted in these scenarios, yet the background radio tells the story of killing and unrest. In this scene, the unrest is literally the background noise to the ordinary; it is present, but it is not the focal point of the scene. In another scene, a woman named Adan is trying to find a flat to rent but is constantly turned down because she is an Arab. This is a trickle-down affect of greater social and political issues that are occurring in the country between Israel and Palestine, but none of this is explained or emphasized in the film. The emphasis is not on these broad issues, but on how their existence affects the day-to-day lives of the people who live there. This is Adan's ordinary, created and influenced by the political sphere, but ultimately affected Adan in a very personal, ordinary way that takes the shape of a phone call.

Personal experiences have the ability to have a greater impact on personal lives than the broader social or political turmoil. Tripoli is defined as a space of upheaval and unrest, yet the lives of the characters in *Ok, Enough, Goodbye* seem relatively stable as the film unfolds. The man lives with his mother, they have small arguments, they have routines. This is until his mother leaves and the man is left to flounder around what this new ordinary without her entails. This is the pivotal point in the film: when the mother leaves, not any major social or political point of upheaval. This moment is the one that affects the man most, the one that changes his trajectory; this is his personal unrest. The film chronicles the man struggling to compose his own sense of being and his new sense of everyday without the constant that he has been accustomed to, amidst the barely acknowledged upheaval in Tripoli. This scenario exhibits how events in personal lives can

be more dramatic than those in the surrounding area, which negates some of the power that is put into these modes of unrest and turmoil. Focusing solely on major modes of unrest and turmoil can overshadow the importance of personal upheavals, and the importance of these personal upheavals prove that there are problems found in the mode of thought that deems social and political turmoil most significant. A scene from *Chronicle of a Disappearance* shows a man speaking directly to the camera, telling the story of his grandfather who was stationed in Istanbul as part of the Turkish army. The grandson asks his grandfather to recount a story about Istanbul, and instead of a story relating to the unrest or any kind of grand adventure story, the grandfather tells a story about the food he would eat when he had the extra money, lamb heads. He ended the story with the words "the beauty of Istanbul is beyond compare". It was a simple story, including details of the stores he would pass and how he would throw the remains in a trash bin, that never changed no matter how many times the grandson would ask the grandfather to tell him a story of Istanbul. The grandfather repeatedly chose to focus on this moment, which is the essence of ordinary, as opposed to other more striking moments that he surely experienced during his time in the army, showing how the ordinary can overshadow the grander experiences. In *Ordinary Affects,* Stewart describes how "the little accident [a biker couple hitting a deer on the road] will compel a response. It will shift people's life trajectories in some small way, change them by literally changing their course for a minute or a day" (12). Something so small in the big scheme of things has the ability to shift the lives of individuals.

The everyday is what pushes and moves the world. The everyday is what creates clichés, when "disparate things come together differently in each instance, and yet the

repetition itself leaves a residue like a track or a habit" that creates a cliché (Stewart 30). Cultures and perceptions of society can be considered a cliché. Yet so often these are overshadowed by elements of unrest and turmoil. It is a hasty move to define a society by one mass mode of unrest while ignoring the repetitive elements that shape it into what is commonly experienced. The use of the transition "the day after" in *Chronicle of a Disappearance* and the repetitive nature of the scenes (including the fight between friends outside of the car, etc.) are depictions of these tracks or habits that Stewart describes as creating a cliché. The vignettes of *Chronicle of a Disappearance* are all of ordinary scenes such as souvenir shop set-ups, video-game playing, and reading the newspaper. These scenes are what move the film, not any specific plotline or major event, simply short, ordinary scenes which represent the everyday, mimicking life. "A still life is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of unfolding", meaning that found in a simple still-life of the ordinary and every day can be a mass of meaning and understanding, a picture into what it means to be in that moment and offers insight into the everyday, giving it life and dimension (Stewart 19). Even a still life can be used to propel ideas forward, a technique used often in *Chronicle of a Disappearance.* The still-life in the film spans across various modes of the ordinary, from outdoor scenes, to souvenir shop images, to personal homes, and fill the space with a sense of connection to the ordinary found here, even with no or little action present. The ordinary propels *Ok, Enough Goodbye* forward in a similar fashion. The violence of Tripoli is barely mentioned throughout the film, and is not even the primary concern of the characters. For example, the mother is exceedingly frustrated with her son smoking cigarettes and with the child from next-door tossing his ball into her

garden. Yet when the plumber mentions wanting to join a protest against the electricity rations that the town is experiencing, she supports their cause but questions his desire to go join them, saying that they're already taking care of it. Her life is not in the middle of the action, it is in the ordinary outskirts of the action. The film takes moments out of its narrative to conduct interview-like monologues with the characters, in which they look at the camera and speak about something, and be it sewing or child-like thoughts, it is always about something personal, something ordinary, and something detached from the turmoil that Tripoli is experiencing. This shows a side of life and a side of personal interviews that go beyond the confines that the turmoil of the time generally dictates. It is not often that one sees personal accounts such as these from places of unrest, because people are too busy focusing on the unrest itself to see beyond to the people whose lives are made up of more elements than just the unrest, elements that interact with the unrest but at times can be considered of more importance. The film is filled with scenes of mother and son living a very ordinary life that includes hair dye, board games, folding clothes, and visiting friends to talk about marriages; like *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, these ordinary aspects of life are the propelling force, despite the unrest that surrounds the situation.

The films create a sense of irony as commentary on the obsession with unrest. A scene in *Ok, Enough, Goodbye* depicts the young neighbor boy showing off his guns. With child-like glee he shares the knowledge of the names of each gun. He mentions rifles and machine guns, instilling a sense of fear in the audience, but the last one he points to is a glue gun, said in the same tone as the others without a hint of irony in his voice—only emphasizing the irony of the scene. Just because a child plays with guns does not mean he is violent, he even mentions his wish not to truly harm. The filmmaker plays with the idea

that unrest must breed its way into everyone. *Chronicle of a Disappearance* plays with this irony in several instances, most notably the scenes of the police peeing on a wall and breaking into Suleiman's home to inspect it. Both scenes are relayed in a comical fashion, with light-hearted music in the background. The police are shown to be ridiculous peeing in a row against a wall, one having to run to jump back into the truck, and it is heard over the police radio after the home search that they reported very average, ordinary things— such as the number of windows in the home— as Suleiman is shown eating spaghetti in the background. These scenes laugh at the drama of the unrest, not to discredit its serious damage, but to subvert the notion that every moment of life in these areas is filled with instability and violence. These places may be chaotic but there are, in fact, times and places where ordinary people live in ordinary homes and eat spaghetti.

The separation of the personal, the everyday, the ordinary, from social and political upheaval, unrest, and turmoil is an impossibility. Unrest affects the ordinary, and the ordinary continues to move, evolve, and adapt in light of the unrest that it is thrust in. Some elements of the ordinary may not change, other may change dramatically. It is the accumulation of the ordinary that composes the social sphere of a place, and it is important not to overshadow the everyday lives of people in places of turmoil with the events and ideas surrounding the turmoil itself. Doing this is painting broad brushstrokes over the intricacies of everyday lives and paints a false perception of cultures. The ordinary is the heart of who a society is, and the ordinary evolves with the events surrounding it—be it disorder or tranquility, but it is neither of these. The accumulation of a society's usual and regular, their not-so-shocking, that is its ordinary, and that is what cannot be

overshadowed by dramatic events, but rather engaged with them to create a narrative that is true to a society.

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